

# Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia

*Edited by*

Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig

Routledge Studies in the Modern History  
of Asia



Routledge  
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## Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia

Colonial armies were the focal points for some of the most dramatic tensions inherent in Chinese, Japanese and Western clashes with Southeast Asia. In this volume, an international team of scholars takes the reader on a compelling exploration from Ming China to the present day: examining their conquests, management and decolonisation.

The journey covers perennial themes such as the recruitment, loyalty, and varied impact of foreign-dominated forces. But it also ventures into uncharted waters by highlighting Asian use of 'colonial' forces to dominate other Asians. This sends the reader back in time to the fifteenth century Chinese expansion into Yunnan and Vietnam, and forwards to regional tensions in present-day Indonesia, and post-colonial issues in Malaysia and Singapore.

Drawing these strands together, the book shows how colonial armies must be located within wider patterns of demography, and within bigger systems of imperial security and power—American, British, Chinese, Dutch, French, Indonesian, and Japanese—which in turn helped to shape modern Southeast Asia.

*Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia* will interest scholars working on low intensity conflict, on the interaction between armed forces and society, on comparative imperialism, and on Southeast Asia.

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**Edited by Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig**



LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2006 by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX 14 4RN  
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 270 Madison Ave, New York  
NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*  
This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of  
thousands of eBooks please go to <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>.”

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by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including  
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in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data* A catalogue record for this book is available from  
the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data* Colonial armies in Southeast Asia/edited by  
Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig. p. cm.—(Routledge studies in the modern history of Asia) Includes  
bibliographical references and index. ISBN 0-415-33413-6 (hardback: alk. paper) 1. Asia,  
Southeastern—Armed Forces—History—19th century. 2. Asia, Southeastern—Armed Forces—  
History—20th century. 3. Imperialism—History—19th century. 4. Imperialism—History—20th  
century. 5. Asia, Southeastern—Politics and government. I. Hack, Karl. II. Rettig, Tobias. III.  
Series. UA832.8.C66 2005 355'00959'09034—dc22 2005009684

ISBN 0-203-41466-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-69278-0 (Adobe eReader Format)  
ISBN10:0-415-33413-6 (Print Edition)  
ISBN13:9-78-0-415-33413-6 (Print Edition)



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## Preface

The editors wish to thank all the contributors to this volume, and all the participants at the 2001 EUROSEAS panel on colonial armies, as well as their ever-patient and helpful publishers. In particular, we also wish to thank Ian Brown for his support of Tobias's initial idea and for his help in organising the 2001 panel, and for much more since, and Bob Taylor for helping to open the panel on the day.

We are also grateful for permission to publish material given by the following: John Edmondson and IP Publishing; Imperial War Museum, London; Shaw Renters (Singapore) Private Limited; NIOD (Netherlands Centre for War Documentation, Amsterdam); Virginia Military Institute, United States; KITLV (Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, Leiden); and the United Nations Cartographic Section.

We enjoyed superb and generous assistance from archivists and scholars in helping us to trace images. But particular thanks must go to Jaap An ten for his meticulous guidance at KITLV, and Peter Keppy and his colleagues at NIOD. We thank them, and all our contributors, who put up with the editors' demands.

Last and in many ways most important, we give heartfelt thanks our long-suffering and supportive families. Our colleagues at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the School of Economics and Social Sciences, Singapore Management University, and the Humanities Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore have provided the two authors with outstanding academic homes during the creation and production of this book. Karl Hack would like to thank in particular his colleagues Radin Fernando, Kevin Blackburn and Wang Zhenping, who have always been ready to help when needed. Tobias would like to express his gratitude to those who provided safe havens throughout this project: Gerda Seedorff in London; the Lue family and Shirley Gwee in Singapore; and Pauline Lue for her efficient proofreading skills.

Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig

## Acknowledgements

The authors and publishers would like to thank the following for granting permission to reproduce material in this work.

IP Publishing and in particular its director, John Edmondson, for their kind and generous permission to use chapters developed from the following articles, which first appeared in *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (November 2002), with the exception of the article by Robinson, which appeared in 9, 3 (November 2001).

Geoffrey Robinson, 'People's war: militias in East Timor and Indonesia', pp. 271–318.

Karl Hack, "'*Biar mail anak:Jangan mati adat*" [Better your children die than your traditions]: locally raised forces as a barometer for imperialism and decolonization in South East Asia', pp. 245–75.

Henri Eckert, 'The Native Army in Indo-China: conquering force or bone of contention? *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, *Chasseurs Annamites* and militiamen in the 1880s', pp. 277–307.

Richard Meixsel, 'The Philippine Scout Mutiny of 1924', pp. 333–59.

Gerke Teitler, 'The Mixed Company: fighting power and ethnic relations in the Dutch colonial army, 1890–1920', pp. 361–74.

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## Abbreviations and glossary

ABDA	American-British-Dutch Area
<i>adat</i>	Malay custom
<i>alang-alang</i>	long elephant grass
ANZAG	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
<i>attap</i>	thatch constructed from the <i>nipa</i> palm
AWM	Australian War Memorial
battalion	a unit of about 600–1000 men, divided into companies
battery	a group of guns controlled as one unit, though they might be placed some distance, even several hundred feet, apart
brigade	a unit comprising about three battalions in the British Army, or two or three Regiments (each of two battalions) in the Japanese Army
CIC	Commander-in-Chief
GIGS	Chief of the Imperial and General Staff
CO	commanding officer
COS	Chiefs of Staff
FMSVF	Federated Malay States Volunteer Force
<i>giyugun</i>	(also written <i>giyuugun</i> , <i>giyūgun</i> ) Japanese-created voluntary defence forces in occupied Southeast Asia, most notably Malaya, Sumatra and north Borneo
<i>giyutai</i>	(also <i>giyuutai</i> , <i>giyutai</i> ) Japanese-created, decentralised, voluntary policing corps in occupied Malaya
<i>GMD</i>	Guomindang (Kuomintang) Chinese National Party of Sun Yixian (Sun Yat-sen) and later Jiang Jiehe (Chiang Kai-shek)
GOC	General Officer Commanding
<i>godown</i>	a warehouse
<i>heiho</i>	Japanese-recruited auxiliary forces
HKSRA	Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery. A force raised in India, mainly from north Indians, for service in the Far East
IMT	Indisch Militair Tijdschrift
INA	Indian National Army
<i>INS</i>	<i>Intelligence and National Security</i>

JIG	Joint Intelligence Committee
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>JMBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSEAS</i>	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>
<i>kampung</i>	a Malay village, often of houses built on stilts and/or roofed with palm thatch
<i>keris</i>	traditional Malay and Indonesian dagger with spiritual significance
<i>kirpan</i>	traditional Sikh dagger
<i>klewang</i>	a short native sword/sabre for close-quarter fighting in jungle and scrub
<i>KMT</i>	see <i>GMD</i>
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>Marechaussee</i>	small, mobile, elite counter-guerrilla formation introduced by the Dutch in Aceh
<i>MBRAS</i>	Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
<i>MCP</i>	Malayan Communist Party
<i>MPAJA</i>	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
<i>NCO</i>	non-commissioned officer
<i>padi</i>	dry rice fields
<i>padang</i>	an open green or recreational space
<i>Peta</i>	Japanese-created Army of the Defenders of the Homeland (Sukarela Tentera Pembela Tanah Air) on Java and Bali
<i>perahu</i>	Malay for a sailing craft, sometimes also powered by oars
<i>pulau</i>	island
<i>regiment</i>	a unit of troops. Japanese infantry regiments normally comprised three infantry battalions (about 2600–3500 men)
<i>romusha</i>	(also <i>roumusha</i> , <i>rōmusha</i> ) Japanese-recruited forced labour
<i>SEAC</i>	Southeast Asia Command
<i>Sook Ching</i>	purification through purging. The Japanese screening of Chinese males to identify and eliminate 'anti-Japanese' elements. Since most survivors experienced only the screening, it is also remembered as the 'selection'
<i>UNAMET</i>	United Nations Mission in East Timor
<i>VOC</i>	Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or (Dutch) United East India Company
<i>WO</i>	War Office/War Office documents

# **Part 1**

## **Background**

# 1

## **Imperial systems of power, colonial forces and the making of modern Southeast Asia**

*Karl Hack with Tobias Rettig*

Why do colonial subjects choose to enlist and to court death under the command of officers who come from thousands of miles away? Under what conditions do they stay loyal? When, why and with what results do they revolt?

Questions such as these can be answered only with the greatest difficulty. In part this is because comparative work on colonial forces is rare, restricted to a few short introductions to edited volumes, whose collections of articles at first seem to invite contrast, rather than comparison.<sup>1</sup> This is compounded by a second problem: the careless use of concepts. The terms colonial armies, colonialism and imperialism have been employed so loosely as to spread confusion.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, we must begin by examining the terminology surrounding ‘colonial armies’ and what we call ‘imperial systems of power’.<sup>3</sup>

### **The linguistics of domination**

First of all, colonialism must be distinguished from colonisation. ‘Colonisation’ is the settlement, by members of one cultural group, of a territory occupied by people distinct from them, when also accompanied by an attempt to dominate the space settled. Where fully successful, this constitutes a settler colony, as defined under Fieldhouse’s fivefold classification of colonies as: settler, mixed, plantation, occupation and trade (Table 1.1).<sup>4</sup>

Settlers have a strong interest in arming themselves, at their own expense, against people whose lands they intrude upon. When settlers win independence their armies can in turn become instruments of oppression against indigenous remnants, employing their own ‘colonial’ forces. One example of this is the Native Americans who were formally recruited as Scouts from 1866 by the United States Army, and used in campaigns against other Native Americans.<sup>5</sup>

Colonisation is thus one subcategory of the wider phenomenon of colonialism. For political scientists, the term ‘colony’ or colonial territory has come to mean a territory with three key attributes. First, it is ruled as a unit that is administratively distinct from a ruling power’s core territory. Or at least it comes to be treated differently, if only as a result of local revolt.<sup>6</sup> Second, there is a lack of consent from the population ruled.<sup>7</sup> Third, the majority of the colonial territory’s population is culturally distinct from that of the ruling power.

*Table 1.1* Fieldhouse's fivefold definition of colonial territories

<i>Typology</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Pure settlement colony	Often separating settler from indigenous lands to form a racial frontier of exclusion	United States, Canada and Australia
Mixed colonies	Settlers have lower relative numbers and a higher requirement for indigenous labour	Algeria
Plantation colonies	With a small, dominant settler core, often using slaves and/or bonded labour, and with a resulting mixed population category	Jamaica
Colonies of occupation	Dominated by small numbers of non-resident military and civilian personnel	Philippines and Cochinchina
Trading settlements or factories	Enclaves where extraterritorial rights are granted, often for limited purposes	International Settlements such as those set up in Shanghai

With regard to the lack of consent, for settler and occupation colonies, this often means acquisition by force. For territories subject to formal agreements (such as protectorate treaties), it may mean submission in fear of violence (perhaps under the glare of gunboats) or by a narrow elite who take a collaborative role. The point where a distinct sense of identity exists, meanwhile, can vary from first contact to a time when the population of a previously quiescent area gains a new sense of sharply differentiated identity and interest.<sup>8</sup>

The core requirement for defining colonial forces is that they are raised from within territories that qualify as 'colonial' in the above sense; or they are raised from non-metropolitan populations for the purpose of dominating overseas territories. Additional tendencies include being at least part-funded by the territories such forces are raised in or stationed in. Colonial forces are not necessarily 'indigenous', however, either to the country of recruitment or to the country of posting. They may be, though. For instance, the Malay Regiment was constituted from Malays from British Malaya, and remained locally based. Timorese, meanwhile, were encouraged to form pro-Indonesia militia groups in East Timor in the 1970s to 1990s. A special case would be those colonial guardians who were local-born or resident but not 'indigenous', such as many of Singapore's nineteenth-to early twentieth-century volunteers (part-time territorial forces). These included separate companies for Europeans, Eurasians, Chinese, Indians and Malays, with rates of compensation differing by 'race'.

More often than not, however, colonial troops are not indigenous to the country they are serving in. Hence the Algerian *Zouaves* for France, like the Gurkhas for Britain, were widely deployed outside their area of recruitment, notably in Indochina; likewise, the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* from French West Africa served elsewhere, and also the Indian troops garrisoned in British Burma and Malaya. Similarly, Southeast Asians were also deployed in areas they were alien to: Vietnamese soldiers served in East Asia, Europe and Africa, while Moluccan, Timorese, Alfurian and Madurese soldiers took part in the



Dutch conquest of Indonesia. In this way, the forces in any one colonial territory may include local conscripts, full-or part-time volunteers or militias (variously drawn from indigenous peoples, settlers, 'mestizo' recruits or even recent immigrants) and recruits from other colonial territories.

The important distinction for 'colonial' forces is thus the contrast between their recruitment at a periphery, in contrast to control emanating from a distant, and for the most part culturally distinct, core or 'metropolitan' territory. Their functions may vary greatly, from contributing to the security of a single colonial territory, through posting abroad in service of transcolonial security, to service in defence of the core territory that controls them, either directly, or indirectly as war industry labour and auxiliaries.

'Colonial forces' might thus be thought of as encompassing all who serve directly and indirectly in support of an imperial military system. This might require new typologies, which recognise a whole spectrum of forces, from the elite volunteer, through conscripts, militias, partisans, auxiliaries, coolies and defence labourers, to military and sexual slaves. In the Japanese case these categories encompass both the 250,000 Asian *romusha* (labourers inveigled by a mix of coercion through local leaders, and deception over conditions), of whom at least 60,000 died helping to build the Burma-Thailand railway in 1942–3, and the 'comfort women' or military sex slaves of 1931–45.<sup>9</sup>

### *Core definitions of imperialism and colonialism*

Imperialism itself we take to be the domination by one state—a core—of the effective sovereignty of one or more separate areas—'peripheries'. Colonialism is a subcategory of imperialism. In colonialism, domination involves *de jure* or *de facto* metropolitan rights and responsibilities over the dominated area. This is described below as formal imperialism. As such, colonialism can be thought of as further subdividing into Fieldhouse's five types of colonial territory, spanning from settler colony to protectorate and 'factory'. Beyond colonialism, imperial policies may dominate other areas while disclaiming permanent or semi-permanent rights. This is another subcategory of imperialism, described below as informal imperialism.

Either way, the policy areas dominated may include either internal or external policies, or a combination of both. The 'periphery' so dominated may be contiguous, or lie over the seas. But it must constitute a separate administrative unit, be dominated without the explicit consent of most of its people and have a population that has, or develops, a distinct culture and sense of identity and interests. Imperialism encompasses the whole process of such domination.

### *Formal imperialism*

Formal imperialism or colonialism involves the core territory assuming responsibilities for a peripheral area. The area so dominated tends to be styled a colony if domination extends over both internal and external policies. If there is an agreement transferring more limited aspects of sovereignty—for instance, defence and external affairs only, or limited to the right to 'advise'—it is likely to be given a term reflecting this limited scope, such as protectorate.

Formal imperialism or colonialism is largely a matter of a legal or *de facto* international status, by which the core's rights and responsibilities over the periphery are made manifest. But that does not tell us how a colony or protectorate is protected. The style of dominance can be further divided into methods of direct imperialism and of indirect imperialism.

### *Direct and indirect imperialism*

At its extreme, direct imperialism implies a monopoly or near-monopoly over the key functions of state in the peripheral area. Such functions include the use of force and judicial and tax-raising activities. Direct imperial methods include raising regular, and regularly paid and drilled, police and soldiers. Such soldiers might serve under non-indigenous officers down to at least battalion, if not company or platoon, level, with indigenous NCOs helping to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between foreigner and colonial recruit.

Indirect approaches to imperialism involve devolving significant aspects of state functions to subordinate, localised authorities. These authorities are as often as not declared to be traditional or entrenched 'native' representatives: sultans, rajas, chiefs, penghulu (village heads) or even Kapitan China (prominent Chinese allowed to hold sway over their own community in specified areas) and secret society leaders. The subcontracting of state and military functions to a third party, such as mercenaries or companies, could also be classified under this rubric.

This means that 'colonial armies' also include 'indirect' colonial forces; that is, the enforcers enlisted by lesser, local authorities. In the nineteenth-to early twentieth-century Netherlands East Indies, some local officials relied on *jagos* (literally fighting roosters or cocks) or village toughs to help to enforce their decisions, while in the American-ruled Philippines prominent families developed what became virtually private armies.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, it has been argued that this left, and still leaves, a postcolonial legacy of non-state violence, which colours politics and governance for the worse.

In terms of colonial armies, the English East India Company on the Indian subcontinent took an increasingly direct approach from the mid-eighteenth century, recruiting Indians as sepoy (soldiers), directly in company pay, under British officers. Yet in nineteenth-century Malaya and Singapore the British initially took a more indirect approach, encouraging the cooperation of Kapitan China. The Portuguese in East Timor, meanwhile, still placed a significant emphasis on raising native levies through local chiefs, the *liurai*, into the early twentieth century. These levies perpetuated militia 'repertoires of violence', which were later tapped by pro-Indonesia militias, right up to 1999.<sup>11</sup>

Direct and indirect approaches are not mutually exclusive. Territories might employ a mix of both, typically beginning with greater elements of indirect rule, and moving towards using more direct methods as state formation and increased tax revenues made this possible.

### *Informal imperialism*

In addition to the contrast between direct and indirect techniques of dominance, there is a contrast between formal and informal imperialism. Formal imperialism involves assuming *de facto* or *de jure* responsibilities for an area; informal imperialism functions in the absence of these. It employs threats, financial dominance and ‘gunboat diplomacy.’

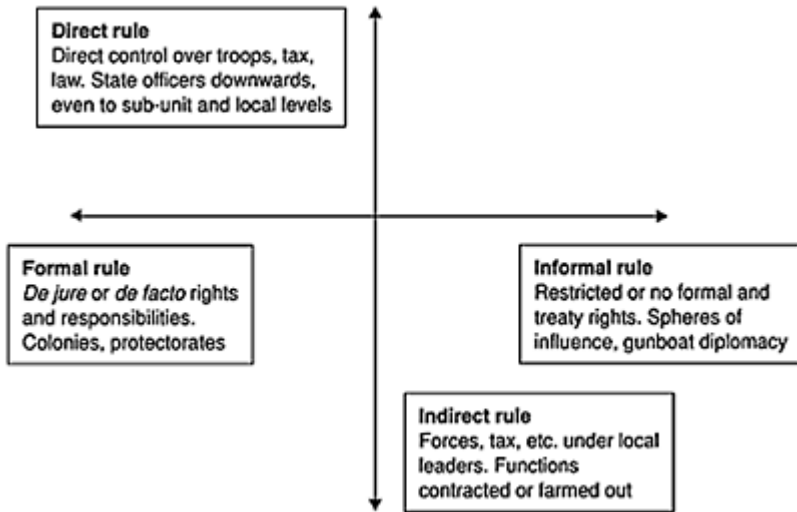
Domination is taken to mean the ability to influence policy in a fundamental and persistent manner, as and when needed; for instance, by enforcing extraterritorial rights or replacing unsatisfactory rulers. When people talk of a Pax Britannica, or of a twenty-first-century American Empire, or of a fifteenth-century maritime Pax Ming, it is informal imperialism that is meant, with its determination to dictate developments in ‘failed’ or ‘rogue states’, and states that are seen as threatening international norms of trade and diplomacy. Examples range from Western imposition of extraterritorial jurisdiction on a range of Asian states such as China and Thailand (allowing Westerners to be tried under their own laws), to American intervention in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003).<sup>12</sup>

Such ‘Pax’, informal imperialism and ‘spheres of influence’ tend to be a function of empires operating towards the outer reaches of their geographical limit, or of world powers wishing to avoid excessive accumulations of extra colonies and responsibilities. At this margin, the imperial powers tend to prefer informal domination to direct rule, and to keep the duration of any intervention limited.<sup>13</sup>

### *Imperial systems of power*

Beyond these terms, we refer in this chapter to imperial systems of power. Why distinguish this extra layer? Here we note that some historians and political scientists have argued that imperialism should be distinguished from colonialism.

For Jürgen Osterhammel, ‘colonialism’ involves the intricacies of ruling individual colonies; it is the art of domination. By contrast, he argues that ‘imperialism’ is about creating systems of power, and the related attempt to exercise great power politics. For Dominic Lieven, an expert on Russia, empires are ‘very great powers’ that dominate many territories and peoples and influence global politics. For him, the greatest empires also espouse something like a high religion or culture. They seek to impose their worldview, not only by means of the stick and carrot, but also by providing an overarching hegemonic idea for emulation.



*Figure 1.1* The spectrum of formal/informal and direct/indirect domination.

One thinks of Britain's economic globalisation (free trade imperialism) of the nineteenth century, and of George Bush's declaratory political globalism (supporting the spread of democracy and freedom). The latter was boldly stated at the swearing-in ceremony for his second term as President in January 2005.<sup>14</sup> For these authors, then, empire is more than colonial. It is transcolonial, and global: it involves relations between the parts of a wider imperial system. On this model, colonial security would be the art of dominating and protecting individual states, while imperial security would be the art of operating broad power systems. Colonial security would concern itself with this frontier and that garrison, while the imperial system broods over strategic reserves, and how to keep major shipping ways flowing, such as the Suez and Panama Canals, and the Straits of Hormuz and Melaka.<sup>15</sup>

We hold that reserving the title of empire for these largest few systems, and the name of imperialism for their practice, is as philologically illogical as it is appealing in its clarity. Except for narrow heuristic purposes, it is doomed by its defiance of common usage and dictionary definition. It is also unsatisfactory in excluding events within a single colony, or acts by a minor power, from the category of imperial, and in focusing on scale more than the qualitative nature of imperialism. We reject this imperial versus colonial distinction. Instead we adopt a further idea—that of an imperial system of power—to describe the military-political—economic—diplomatic matrixes developed to preserve dominance on a wider scale.

If it is necessary to identify the very greatest superpowers from common or garden empires (superpowers that have built security systems spanning most of the world known to them, such as Rome, Spain, Britain, the Soviet Union and the contemporary United States), one might define them as having, or seeking, global imperial systems of power.

The idea of a system of imperial power is useful, because it also highlights how the term 'colonial armies' is too narrow in focus. In choosing to use 'colonial armies' in the title, we are not so much affirming traditional notions of their study as beginning a campaign to reexamine, redefine and relocate them. Imperial domination has as often as not relied upon complex and variegated complexes or systems of power, of which armies are but one part.

Imperial systems of power also have defining characteristics, despite not necessarily being self-consciously operated as systems. They are transcolonial or global rather than merely colonial, and they must be underpinned by financial strength.<sup>16</sup> They project power not only by metropolitan armed forces, but also by some combination of overseas reach in the forms of bases, aircraft, alliances, disbursements and, in the case of maritime empires, ships. In this regard, Chapter 2, 'The demography of domination', looks at the vital role steamships and gunships played in the 'new imperialism' of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The 'colonial army', then, is just one component of any given system, though one that remains vital if domination is to prove sustainable in manpower and financial terms.<sup>17</sup> Max Boot has argued that the lack of such 'colonial' or at least 'foreign legion' troops is a formidable barrier to the United States taking the challenges of world policing more seriously. Who is to do the dirty work of 'nation-building' in failed states, and of browbeating rogue states, as the body-bags flow from the likes of Iraq? He suggests that a foreign and illegal immigrant-manned 'Freedom Legion' can provide the shock troops for this. These politically expendable imperial forces—more acceptable body-bag fillers than boys from the Midwest and New York—could have citizenship as their reward. Why citizenship should be needed in addition to a good salary relative to their homelands is unclear, unless it is to avoid the tag 'mercenary'. Presumably such forces would fit into the larger post-2001 picture of the United States cobbling together 'coalitions of the willing' for specific interventions, and subcontracting military and intelligence functions to commercial companies and other governments.

Max Boot's British and French predecessors would have shuddered at this financial imprudence. For colonial armies were important not only for their willing and expendable recruits, but also because local salaries were cheaper than metropolitan. Even then the colonies usually paid. This reveals a serious tension in the contemporary American position. It has the most far-reaching system of imperial power the world has seen, but without colonies to fund a true 'colonial army'. Hence the core power has to pay for most things. Unless, of course, Max Boot and American neoconservatives revive Athens' wheeze in the Delian League, and have key allies' bankrolling of American-raised forces made regular, rather than *ad hoc*.<sup>18</sup>

Colonial troops in the narrow sense thus constitute a vital component of imperial power, but are still only one of several components. They are also just one way in which imperial territories can be turned into security producers, rather than mere security consumers, with others hosting bases, providing labour and making financial contributions.

Taking all these definitions and issues together, this book does not merely take 'colonial armies' as unproblematic, and offer chapters on micro-aspects of such forces. Instead, it offers a series of chapters that provoke questions about the very nature of imperial force.

### **Three themes: imperial systems; discourses of loyalty and revolt; and Asian imperialism**

The chapters in this book fall into three broad themes, namely: imperial systems of power; discourses of 'martial races', loyalty and revolt; and the need to extend the imperial paradigm to Asian-run 'colonial armies' and to the 'postcolonial' era.

#### *Systems and patterns of imperial power*

Several chapters touch on the issue of wider systems of imperial power: some by looking at the macro-picture; others by examining microcosms that reveal systemic stresses. Gerke Teitler's Chapter 6, 'The mixed company: fighting power and ethnic relations in the Dutch colonial army, 1890–1920', shows how difficult it was for the Netherlands to raise enough troops to secure the Netherlands Indies. The Dutch had one of the smallest domestic populations. In 1900 this meant five million, compared to 40 million subjects spread over the several thousand islands in the Indies. The Dutch struggled as a result to find sufficient European officers—despite recruiting many non-Dutch Europeans—and to find sufficient troops from groups they trusted, such as the so-called 'Ambonese'. The latter were mainly Christian converts from small spice islands over a thousand kilometres to the east of Java.<sup>19</sup>

Henri Eckert, meanwhile, shows how, in Indochina in the 1880s and 1890s, the shaping of colonial forces had as much to do with debates between republicans and royalists in France, between Navy and Army officers in Vietnam and between the French army and civilians as with events on the ground. His Chapter 5, 'Double-edged swords of conquest in Indochina: *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, *Chasseurs Annamites* and militias, 1883–1895', shows just how far European games were played out in Asia, as well as revealing the tensions between direct and indirect approaches to early colonial armies. While Teitler's chapter looks at recruitment issues and Eckert's at issues of control, the editors tell in Chapter 2 of the French use of Indochinese soldiers and labour in Europe from the middle of the First World War.

Three chapters take a more explicitly macrocosmic approach to systems of imperial power. Abu Talib Ahmad in Chapter 9, 'The impact of the Japanese occupation on colonial and anti-colonial armies in Southeast Asia', surveys the impact of the Japanese period on Southeast Asia, covering anti-Japanese armies as well as Japanese-sponsored forces, and militias as well as regulars. He shows how Japanese weakness as much as Japanese strength fuelled increased use of local militias after 1943, as well as permitting a growth in the scale and influence of anti-Japanese armies in Burma, Malaya and the Philippines. Both Japanesepponsored and anti-Japanese forces were to mark the postwar period, and Abu Talib notes the importance of the Japanese emphasis on *seishin* in training, their version of disciplined, hardened, indomitable martial spirit that could make up for technological inferiority.

Karl Hack's Chapter 10, 'Imperialism and decolonisation in Southeast Asia: colonial forces and British world power', surveys a still broader period, from the nineteenth century to the present day. It argues that British territories in Southeast Asia produced as well as consumed security. It does this by showing how the area consumed security in the form of troops from India and Royal Navy protection, but produced it in terms of bases,

agreements, guaranteeing the free flow of international trade in the Melaka Straits (then written 'Straits of Malacca') and being an imperial 'dollar arsenal' to the 1950s and beyond.<sup>20</sup> That is, Malaya's dollar-earning rubber and tin helped to subsidise Britain's dollar-deficient trade from the interwar to the Cold War periods.

Hack's chapter further shows how only a systemic approach can make sense of British decisions and forces in the region. This ranges from Britain's use of indirect models of imperial security—for instance, using Chinese leaders to control Chinese subjects—to the decisions that led to a relatively benign post-1945 decolonisation process. The latter happened as Britain—once it had accepted that a gradual evolution towards self-government was inevitable post-Second World War—prioritised the development of working relationships with stable, friendly postcolonial elites. Such relationships were seen as the key to producing postcolonial states that would cooperate with Britain, and so underpin continuing British world power.

Perhaps even more intriguingly, Geoff Wade's Chapter 3, 'Ming Chinese colonial armies in Southeast Asia', takes the systemic approach back in time. His chapter challenges us to see fifteenth-century Ming Chinese expansion into western Yunnan and Vietnam, and the epic voyages of Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho) across the South Seas and Indian Ocean, as Asian, and more specifically Chinese, forms of imperialism. As we will argue below, reflection on the chapters by Abu Talib, Hack and Wade leads to a further theme, which is just how the biggest 'global' systems of imperial power—Ming, Japanese and British—helped to shape Southeast Asia.

### *Discourses of loyalty, revolt and 'martial races'*

The second big theme is discourses and practices of martial races, loyalty and revolt. Every imperial power wrestled with the fear that the main populations it ruled—Burmans, Javanese, Malays, Vietnamese and Tagalogs—might prove unreliable. Each constructed 'knowledge' about its populations, and the 'martial' qualities of these, in a way that was designed to underpin control. Put bluntly, Europeans in particular employed a 'divide and rule' approach that produced 'plural armies' to rule over plural societies.<sup>21</sup>

Hence Taylor writes in his Chapter 8, 'Colonial forces in British Burma: a national army postponed', that the true martial race of Burma, the lowland Burmans who were feared enemies of the Siamese, were marginalised. The British turned instead to Indian soldiers from the Raj, and Burmese ethnic minorities, notably hilltribes that had been converted to Christianity.

Burma was conquered in three phases between 1824 and 1885, and then made into a province of British India. By 1931 Burmans made up 75 per cent of the population but just 12 per cent of the indigenous troops, as opposed to Karens, Kachehs, Chins, Anglo-Burmese and Indians. The rise of nationalism seems to have made the British no less averse to recruiting Burmans, though Burma's separation from the British Raj as a distinct colony in 1937 (with limited internal self-government), and the approach of war, made compromise inevitable. In 1939–41 the percentage of Burmans among new recruits rose to 28.5 per cent. But this still left a severe underrepresentation as a proportion of the regular army (19 per cent), and more so in the armed services as a whole (13 per cent).

Taylor notes that, in response to these limitations, nationalists raised militias. More famously, Aung San and the 'thirty comrades' left the country to receive Japanese

military training in 1941, only to return with their Japanese sponsors at the head of what became a 'Burma Independence Army', and ultimately the 'Patriotic Burmese Forces' after they switched sides to the British in 1945. Taylor shows how parts of this predominantly Burman force were integrated into the postwar army, and its leaders rose to high position.

It seems that colonial discourse on martial races was a technique of 'divide and rule' that cemented control before 1941, but backfired afterwards. It helped to produce a postwar country where minorities possessed military traditions cemented by the British training, but where a Burman elite was determined to limit the former's regional autonomy. This Burman elite also emerged with a distrust of the British who had refused to recruit them in large numbers before the war. This history helped to underpin endemic conflict between government and minorities from 1948 onwards.<sup>22</sup>

For French Indochina, Chapters 4 and 5 by Womack and Eckert, together with Re trig's article in *South East Asia Research*<sup>23</sup> on 'French military policies in the aftermath of Yên Bái mutiny, 1930', show how the French failed to recognise the ethnic Vietnamese (*kinh*) as a potential 'martial race'. This despite a history of fierce anti-Chinese struggle, of an often bloody Vietnamese colonisation drive southwards and of internal wars.

Locally recruited French forces in Indochina did come to be composed mainly of *kinh* soldiers. But this was a matter of grudging necessity, since France did not have a virtually inexhaustible 'barrack in the eastern seas', as the British did in India. Nor could they rely heavily on ethnic minorities, as the hill tribes were subjected after the conquest of the lowlands and delta regions. Instead, the French tapped into precolonial Vietnamese administrative traditions—themselves Chinese-influenced—to conscript local soldiers. Even when hill tribes were recruited, notably from the 1920s when rising Vietnamese nationalism worried the French, their small numbers limited their potential.

The ironic exception to French refusal to use the Vietnamese as a 'martial race' is noted by Sarah Womack's Chapter 4, 'Ethnicity and martial races: the *Garde indigène* of Cambodia in the 1880s and 1890s'. Womack looks at French tactics in putting down a revolt in its Cambodian protectorate, in 1885–6. She argues that the French discourses on the Khmer and Vietnamese formed images of both as poor and untrustworthy soldiers. But despite this, Womack demonstrates how non-Khmer Vietnamese (then called Annamese) of the Civil Guard were deliberately deployed in Cambodia. Divide and rule temporarily took precedence over stereotypes of the Vietnamese as poor soldiers and police.

The Dutch in the East Indies and the Americans in the Philippines also had problems identifying acceptable 'martial races', as shown by Teitler's Chapter 6 on the Netherlands Indies and Richard Meixsel's Chapter 7 on the Philippines. Forty years of dogged resistance (1873 to the early twentieth century) turned the Acehnese, in Dutch eyes, into Muslim fanatics rather than a reliable martial race. Nor did the Dutch see the Javanese as made of the right stuff. The Javanese, who provided the bulk of the Indies' population, could too easily turn out to be a threat to Dutch supremacy if predominant in the army.

Hence from the second half of the nineteenth century the Dutch nurtured Moluccans, peoples from the east of the archipelago who had been subjected during the conquest of the spice islands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In particular they turned the so-called 'Ambonese' into a privileged 'martial race'. The Ambonese became so closely



identified with Dutch service that they were sometimes referred to as black Dutchmen. As with the French, however, the preferred martial races were small in number compared to the overall population, and the result was grudging reliance on the Javanese as the largest recruiting pool for a colonial army that was also very much a plural army.

The United States also chose to minimise recruitment of Tagalogs as Scouts, the American term for their Filipino troops. The Tagalogs, the majority on the most populous island of Luzon, had been at the forefront of the Philippine rebellion against Spain from 1896, and then of the resistance against American takeover in 1898–1901. In 1924, only 5 per cent of the Philippine Division was Tagalog. The Americans preferred to recruit from other ‘tribes’, most notably the Macabebe, who had been recruited first for the Spanish in 1896.<sup>24</sup> Only the growing need to recruit more educated soldiers, and distance from the events of 1898–1901, allowed more Tagalog recruitment. Overall, however, the Americans appeared relatively uninterested in their local soldiers. Tours of duty for American officers were generally as short as two years, and these same officers were too often of mediocre quality, or demonstrated a lack of interest in the indigenous rank and file. The advent of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935 threatened more dramatic developments in local forces, but delivered little before the Japanese swept across the islands in 1941–2.

For the most part, then, and in contrast to the British in India, the other European powers refused to see candidates for large-scale ‘martial races’. This was partly a matter of reluctance to overrely on recently conquered and pacified majorities, but was also partly due to cultural prejudices, which resulted in a kind of martial ‘orientalism’. Asians might be disparaged as effeminate or not steady in open, shock battle, or Asian martial traditions were written off as marauding and piracy.<sup>25</sup> Womack’s Chapter 4 describes, for instance, the perceived femininity of the longhaired and small Vietnamese soldiers. Europeans may have suffered from a superficial confusion between outward appearance and social graces, and martial ability. Local styles of warfare may also have played a part, by failing to conform to Western conceptions of manly behaviour. In many cases Southeast Asians did not seek open battle if they thought that losses might be excessive. This was in stark contrast to some colonial encounters in Africa or India.

This lack of appreciation of local styles of warfare, and the need to maintain European superiority by denying native soldiers manly qualities, meant that the majority of those recruited must have been aware of their colonial masters’ ambivalence. They would have felt that they were not being groomed as an honoured military caste, when contrasted to the more favoured troops from other colonies such as British-recruited Indians or French-recruited *Zouaves*, and from the minorities of their own lands. By contrast, the favoured few showed how a sense of being a military caste could be created. This was the case with Moluccan soldiers subject to high expectations and good pay.

It seems that colonial powers created for themselves a dilemma. The very nature of colonial rule—which required people to take higher risks in distant lands, and to endure absence from metropolitan career ladders and networks—required payment of a premium to secure ‘white’ officers. In addition, the recruitment of minorities, by their nature providing smaller recruitment pools, as rank and file and as NCOs often required their preferential treatment.

The result of treating Europeans and minorities differently was that colonial armies were plural armies, though the particular approach to plural forces varied from one

European power to another. For instance, the British recruited groups into communally distinct platoons and even battalions, the Dutch did likewise to begin with, but then mixed different ethnic groups from the Acehnese war, and the Philippine Scout companies tended to see a single group predominate in each one, but were also mixed.

The reliance on minorities and specific groups could work well where indigenous martial traditions could be successfully drawn on, as in British India. But the reality by the 1920s and 1930s was that expanding armies increasingly had to rely on the majority populations for recruitment if they were to keep abreast of increasing domestic and international threats. That meant more Vietnamese soldiers in Indochina and more Javanese in the Indies. Britain found itself in a similar dilemma. It reluctantly increased recruitment of the Malays in Malaya (into the Malay Regiment from the 1930s), though it scarcely used the numerous Chinese there at all. In Burma, Burmans remained a small minority in the army despite their percentage in the military more than doubling between 1931 and 1939.

There was thus a tension between imperial ambivalence about majority populations and the need to increase their recruitment if colonial armies were to face the growing international threats of the 1930s. Additional tendencies included the clash of the imperial prerogative of white control with the requirements of efficiency, and for colonial forces to become under par for modern warfare. The implications of all this were made clear by the Japanese onslaught, which crushed British, American and Dutch controlled armies between December 1941 and early 1942. In short, colonial armies were fine for policing, but a recipe for disaster in a modern war, weakened by racialised hierarchies, the absence of ethnic cohesion and a lack of a common sense of mission. There were echoes here of Habsburg Austria's performance during the First World War.<sup>26</sup> The catastrophic series of failures from December 1941 called the whole basis of the colonial paradigm into question.

We should not overdo the gloom or the deterministic slant. In many ways, the amazing thing is that the vast majority of colonial forces proved so loyal up to and including 1941. In the American Philippines, for instance, the only notable mutiny, of 1924, was a 'loyal' revolt for better pay and conditions. Meixsel's Chapter 7 shows that despite problems, including a dismal linguistic gap between American officers and Filipino rank and file, the Filipino elite rallied behind the Americans to condemn the 1924 Scout mutiny.

Perhaps even more pertinently, Philippine soldiers' main fear in the 1930s was that nationalism might undercut their relatively privileged position, in the sense of pay and security compared to the alternatives. The establishment of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935 with a large measure of self-government and the new government's determination to build up its own defence force—raised the spectre of a larger local military, and so the erosion of their status and conditions. In fact, the Scout mutiny was soon forgotten, and remained neglected in American and Filipino narratives of the American colonial period. For colonial soldiers, the comparison that mattered was sometimes not their inferior pay and status to European officers, but their superior pay and security compared to alternative forms of employment.<sup>27</sup>

Even in what was arguably the most troublesome territory by the twentieth century, Vietnam, the colonial army performed better than a quick glance might first suggest. A nationalist-inspired mutiny of February 1930 proved abortive, most dramatically at Yen Bay in northern Vietnam. Rettig's 2002 article on Yen Bay has already traced these

themes. It shows how the vast majority of the army remained reliable, despite a history of localised revolts, notably between 1908 and 1918. The nationalist-engineered Yen Bay mutiny of 1930 represented something new. Though nipped in the bud by loyal forces, it was part of a Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD, Vietnamese Nationalist Party, along the lines of China's GMD) plan for simultaneous mutinies and insurrection. Rettig discusses the French paranoia and harsh surveillance and control measures that followed, including executions and imprisonment, dismissals, rotating the majority of soldiers, increased surveillance and largely futile attempts to keep a better balance between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese troops. More than 4.5 per cent of Tonkin's 12,000 indigenous soldiers received some form of punishment. But he also notes that Vietnamese militia forces (*Garde indigène*), and later troops as well, proved reliable when used against a communist-directed, rural-based revolt that followed hard on Yen Bay's heels: the 'Nghe-Tinh' revolt of May 1930 to August 1931.<sup>28</sup>

In Malaya, meanwhile, the British went one better. Both Hack's Chapter 10 and Kevin Blackburn's Chapter 12, 'Colonial forces as postcolonial memories: the commemoration and memory of the Malay Regiment in modern Malaysia and Singapore', demonstrate how the British, belatedly and in slightly sceptical mood, did test a majority Southeast Asian population against its criteria for a 'martial race'. Their chapters explain how the British, by tapping Malay traditions of martial valour, and loyalty to their Sultans, produced a small and initially experimental Malay unit in 1933. This blossomed into the Malay Regiment, whose 1400 men fought the Japanese bitterly in February 1942, even as white forces melted away around it.

Blackburn goes further still. He shows how discourses of loyalty and martial tradition have been harnessed by postcolonial states for nationalist reasons. The final stand of the Malay Regiment at Pasir Panjang, in Singapore, on 13–14 February 1942 became the subject of contrasting nationalist historiographies in Singapore and Malaysia. For Malaysia the Regiment became defenders of Malay culture, martial tradition and self-confidence. For Singapore the Regiment became one example of different groups who fought, each in their own way, in defence of what was to become a multiracial, meritocratic, independent Singapore.

Issues of colonial force thus remain relevant into the 'postcolonial era', in which they occupy places in memory in some cases as nationalist icons, as Blackburn shows, and in others as anti-independence fighters. Indonesia, for instance, offers examples of those who fought against independence as envisaged by core nationalists in Java and Sumatra. Three and a half thousand Moluccans (including Ambonese) notably refused assimilation into the Republican Indonesian army they had fought, and after independence in 1949 accepted temporary and eventually permanent exile in the Netherlands instead.<sup>29</sup>

Blackburn's contribution hence suggests a distinct area of studies, namely postcolonial discourses about 'colonial forces'. This theme remains a potentially explosive subject in East Asia as well as Southeast Asia, with, for instance, more than 130,000 Koreans having served directly in the Japanese military (many as volunteers), together with over 80,000 Taiwanese.<sup>30</sup>

To return to Hack's chapter, the British approach to martial forces fell hardest in 1942. The surrender of over 100,000 troops to Japan in Singapore, on 15 February 1942, dealt a terrible blow to the idea of imperial guardianship. The British response to the failure of their plural army in Malaya—it was almost half Indian and comprised only a small

percentage of locally recruited Asian regulars—was dramatic. They returned in 1945, eschewing the model of trusteeship over largely passive plural societies, and seeking partnership with populations.<sup>31</sup> They aimed to turn Chinese, Indians, Malays and Eurasians into a ‘Malayan nation’, which would find a home in what might eventually become a ‘Dominion of Southeast Asia’, and so underpin a ‘Malayan’ army comprised of men from all races. All this came at a time, in 1942–7, when Britain began to envisage Dominions such as Australia, and perhaps India after independence in August 1947, partnering Britain in the coordination of their regional defence.

In short, finally and rather belatedly, the British abandoned the Europeans’ favoured mode of divide and rule, and instead aimed to ‘unite and quit’ by means of nation and state-building, in a way that would produce postcolonial states willing and able to cooperate in international defence. In fact it never quite worked. Malay insistence on retaining the ‘Malay’ character of the ‘Malay Regiment’ ensured that it continued to be both racially exclusive and the dominant core around which multiracial supporting arms were assembled.

The other European colonial powers were all but extinguished during the Second World War, and arguably had less developed images of postwar colonial armies and postcolonial defence cooperation. Their main task after 1945 turned out to be reoccupation—a second colonial occupation—and then fighting insurgencies that ultimately overstretched them, first the Dutch by 1949, then the French by 1954. The fact that neither Dutch nor French really recovered their colonies’ rural and hill hinterlands re-emphasises the importance of the Japanese occupation, as described in Abu Talib’s Chapter 9. It undermined colonial legitimacy, and produced large numbers of colonial subjects with the military training, spirit and organisation required to mount sustained guerrilla campaigns.

These issues, of discourses of martial races and colonial forces, thus persist across periods. The book emphasises this most forcefully by its choice of opening and closing specialist chapters, namely Chapter 3 by Geoff Wade on Ming China, Chapter 11 by Geoffrey Robinson on East Timor across the centuries and Chapter 12 by Blackburn on the postcolonial memory of the Malay Regiment. What these early and late chapters also have in common is that they raise issues of Asian imperialism, and Asian memories of imperialism. This forms our third overarching theme.

### *Asian imperialism and Asian memory of imperial armies*

Colonial forces are not specifically a phenomenon of Western raising of Asian forces, but also one of Asian raising of forces in peripheries, and to police peripheries. Nor can imperial force be kept only as a category for analysing a supposedly colonial pre-1960s, as opposed to a mythically ‘postcolonial’ post-1960s. Whether or not the imperial paradigm is useful depends on the nature of core to periphery relations, not on questions of date or race.

While Blackburn’s treatment of the Malay Regiment is alluded to above, Robinson’s chapter on the genealogy of ‘repertoires of violence’ in Indonesia, demands additional explanation. His Chapter 11, ‘Colonial militias in East Timor from the Portuguese period to independence’, starts by asking how we explain pro-Indonesian militias’ rampage of destruction in 1999 East Timor, around the time of that territory’s vote for independence.

His answer is that two things combined. First, there was political manipulation of local forces by members of the Indonesian army intent on hiding behind subcontracted forces. Second, there was the nature of the Timorese militias themselves. Robinson argues that these drew on traditions, or violent ‘repertoires of action’, that can be traced back to Portuguese times and beyond. Local levies, historically raised under *liurai* or local chiefs, had repertoires of action stressing demonstrative display and destruction, and the taking of heads. The aims included terrorising and intimidation.

Robinson’s picture hints at a wider pattern of Indonesian manipulation of militias acquired in various anti-communist, anti-secessionist and anti-militant Islam campaigns. These were waged not only in outlying territories but in Java too. The generals and commandos who had been used in the massive purge of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965–6, for instance, included officers who had participated in the repression of the Outer Islands Revolt of 1956–8, the Darul Islam Rebellions, and the infiltration of Dutch New Guinea in 1961–2, and who would later use this knowledge in the conquest of East Timor, the maintenance of Suharto’s regime and the fight for Aceh.

Robinson thus links precolonial, colonial and present-day Timor and Indonesia in a way that raises questions about the presence of ‘imperial’ forces in modern Southeast Asia. It was in this spirit of pushing the boundaries that Geoff Wade was invited to contribute Chapter 3, ‘Ming Chinese colonial armies in Southeast Asia’. Where Blackburn and Robinson push the boundaries of ‘colonial armies’ forwards in time, Wade pushes them backwards. He asks whether one can talk of Ming Chinese imperialism in Southeast Asia. Were the forces China sent south and west ‘colonial’, and if so to what effect?

We may find it easier to answer these questions, and to envisage in concrete form what imperial systems of power and discourses of martial races mean, by immersing ourselves in case studies. We now offer two of these, at opposite ends of the scale. The second case study looks at the colonial soldier as military careerist and part of an imagined military tradition, in the form of two Malay Regiment soldiers. The first, by contrast, examines a whole system. It describes Geoff Wade’s Ming China as an imperial system of power, makes comparisons to other systems, and asks how the Chinese impact may have helped to shape modern Southeast Asia.

### **Case study I: Ming China and its impact on Southeast Asia**

In October 1407 Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho) returned to China, two years after setting forth on the first of seven maritime expeditions. Having sailed as far as Calicut in India, he brought with him envoys, tribute and a captive: the Chinese ‘pirate’ Chen Zu-yi. The returning Ming Dynasty fleet reported that Chen had feigned surrender at Old Port, today’s Palembang in Sumatra, while plotting an attack.<sup>32</sup>

Chen had made a deadly mistake. Zheng He’s fleet boasted over 317 vessels. It included water tankers, 62 treasure ships and more than 27,000 men, including 10,000 ‘crack troops’. At its peak Ming China’s navy included 400 ships of the fleet, over 2000 coastal vessels and 250 huge treasure ships, each a gigantic, multi-masted junk with as many as 500 men on board. The biggest ships bristled with hand-guns, muzzle-cannon, fire lances and rockets.<sup>33</sup> This was the culmination of three centuries of development in

maritime strength, from the Sung dynasty in the twelfth century, through the Mongol Yuan dynasty and its attacks on Japan (1281), Champa and Tonkin (1283–8) and even Java (1293), to the Ming Dynasty that replaced the Yuan in 1368.<sup>34</sup>

Zheng He, who was later to attack Sri Lankan rulers as well, spent two months hunting down Chen's forces. Ten vessels were sunk, seven captured, and over 5000 people left for dead. The alleged 'pirate' chief—so-named largely because he had his own forces controlling the Straits—was hauled back to Nanjing, presented to the Emperor and decapitated. As for Old Port-Palembang, many Chinese ex-military and civilians from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian already called it home. Old Port was recognised as a 'pacification superintendency' under Chinese Superintendent Shi Jin-qing. China soon established two *guanchang* (depots or staging posts) athwart the Melaka Straits, which divides Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula. Depots were established at the ports of Samudera and Melaka (the latter spelt Malacca for the British colonial period and Melaka for other times).<sup>35</sup>

There is a striking parallel between the resulting Ming maritime interlude of 1405–33, and the period between 1786 and the 1840s. In the latter period, increasing trade in the area preceded the British establishment of 'factories' in the Malacca Straits: at Penang, Malacca and Singapore, with the permission of local rulers whom they overshadowed. The British, like the Chinese, used select but overwhelming demonstrations of naval force to overawe, so that afterwards persuasion sufficed, before proceeding to attack piracy with new technology. British steamships took the place of China's fifteenth-century supersized and gunpowder-armed war junks. The contrast between British persistence for well over a century and a half, and progression from establishing its own '*guanchang*' to territorial rule, and the short-lived nature of China's greatest fleets, is even more striking than the parallels between their outbursts of maritime dominance.

But Wade's story can be taken further than the short-lived 'proto-imperialism' of Zheng He's fleets: maritime proto-imperialism, Wade suggests, because it shared the mid-nineteenth-century British preference for intervention and influence short of territorial rule. Zheng He himself, the leader of the 1405–7 expedition, was arguably one of the most successful ever 'colonial soldiers'. Originally named Ma He, he hailed from what is now the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan, an area then hosting a number of small, independent kingdoms in its west, as well as Mongol remnants from the Yuan dynasty.<sup>36</sup> Wade's chapter argues that the conquest and absorption of western Yunnan was itself an example of Ming landborne imperialism, featuring colonisation by military settlers and the recruitment of local auxiliary forces.

Wade thus suggests that Ming Chinese 'imperial' activity was characterised by three distinct types of expansion, namely: the 'proto-imperialism' of the maritime fleets; colonisation in Yunnan; and conquest, albeit short-lived, in Vietnam, which briefly became the Chinese province of Jiao-zhi (1407–28).<sup>37</sup>

Zheng He's life could be seen as encompassing two, if not three, of these types of 'imperialism'. In the first place, Zheng He was an imperial victim. His capture and castration resulted from China's colonising movement to its west, further into Yunnan, initially to subdue remnants from the Mongol Yuan dynasty, which the Ming Emperors had ousted. Ultimately Yunnan would be incorporated into China, and the history of its Tai and hill peoples separated from that of other hill groups, who still range across much of northern and upland Southeast Asia.<sup>38</sup>

This absorption of Yunnan was part of a process whereby China's border and tributary states were gradually domesticated. Even today, when Yunnan's inhabitants have been absorbed and national minorities comprise just 8 per cent of China's total population, minorities occupy as much as 60 per cent of China's territory. These outer, less densely populated regions look, on a map, like a hand cupped over China proper. They include Nei Mongol (Inner Mongolia) to the north where the fingers would stretch out, Xinjiang to the northwest at the crook of the hand and Xizang (Tibet) to the mountainous midwest. The last named was the last acquired, or re-integrated, depending on one's perspective, in 1950.<sup>39</sup>

Just like other great land empires, then, such as Rome, or Russia with its drive to its south and east from the eighteenth century, China expanded and incorporated border areas inhabited by other peoples, with 'colonisation' by Chinese occurring both before and after, either peacefully or as a result of Chinese military successes and political domination.<sup>40</sup> As with Russia and the Soviet Union, China has also grappled with the problem of whether to downgrade or suppress minority languages and cultures, or to allow them space, and the dilemma that while suppression and homogenisation may breed resistance, greater autonomy can generate demands for more of the same, and ultimately for independence. It is noticeable, for instance, that Kazakhstan, one of the most successful Muslim successor states to the Soviet Union, borders the Autonomous Province of Xinjiang (absorbed into China in 1768), where disturbances and a distinct identity have continued to pose problems long after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.<sup>41</sup>

China was an empire or imperial system itself, which reached its peak under the Manchu Qianlong emperor (1736–95). Thus conceived, as an imperial wheel with concentric circles, its core was central China, surrounded by a circle of colonies (Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, Manchuria and Taiwan), and this in turn by another circle of tributaries (Korea, Vietnam or Annam, Burma and for a time Melaka) towards the rim. Hence in 1428 Vietnam did not leave the Chinese system, but crossed from the first and second circles (as a 'province' in name and a colony in effect) into the third (as a tributary). Even the core, where non-Han emperors reigned for long periods, could be seen as an empire or imperial system, in the sense that it unified people of different languages and dialects, and regions and customs, by means of a unitary bureaucracy, while ruling these peoples without their consent. The Manchu Qing dynasty's army, with its elite banner cavalry divided into Manchu, Mongol and Han components, could be seen as balancing different groups in order to preserve imperial rule. The deimperialisation of the Chinese core might then be seen as a function both of gradual triumph of common cultural traits and lingua franca over particularism, and ultimately of the rise of modern Chinese nationalism. This culminated in the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911.<sup>42</sup>

The description of China's historical relations with its periphery, and with some minorities and areas within its borders, as 'imperial' does not presuppose any further expansion is likely. Nor does it imply that devolution or decolonisation is inevitable, at least in the next generation or two. Roman imperialism lasted hundreds of years, absorbing non-Romans as Roman by citizenship, language and culture. China is on an upward curve of economic, and probably cultural, influence. Nor is this to deny that security, rather than a desire for conquest, may have driven a great deal of China's relations with its neighbours. But such debate is not merely semantic. Quite the opposite,

the incorporation of neighbouring peoples into a Chinese imperial system, whether as notional tributaries offering little more than occasional exchanges of gifts (as Vietnam did into the nineteenth century), or as parts of China itself, has played a significant part in shaping not only China, but Southeast Asia.

Back in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, western Yunnan remained to be fully absorbed by the expanding Ming dynasty. Yunnan abutted powerful Tai kingdoms and these were subject to further Ming expeditions, following which traditional rulers or members of their family were recognised by the Ming court as Military and Civilian Pacification Commissioners. The latter's continuing rule had, as a *quid pro quo*, the meeting of regular Ming demands in terms of silver, gold, troops and labour. Classic imperial techniques also included disaggregating larger into smaller polities, over which local rulers were recognised as 'Native Officials', with freedom to rule their own peoples according to customary law. This was a form of Ming 'indirect rule', one used as late as the nineteenth century for people such as the Miao in Guizhou.<sup>43</sup> It opened these native officials to Chinese interference in their internal affairs, punishment and gradual incorporation into the Ming system of administration, every bit as much as it did for 'native states' in British India and Southeast Asia, and in the Netherlands Indies.<sup>44</sup>

It was as a part of this search for security on the western marches of the kingdom (and how many empires have expanded in the never-ending search for security on a 'turbulent frontier'?) that the future Zheng He was captured.<sup>45</sup> Castration destined the young Ma He to training as an imperial eunuch at the Nanjing Taixue (Imperial College), where he became a trusted servant of the third Ming Emperor Zhu Di (c. 1403–24), known under his reign name as Yongle.

In turn, perhaps determined to act on a Chinese worldview that depicted itself as the 'Central Kingdom', receiving due homage and dispensing peace to peripheral areas and barbarians (referred to as *yi*), Zhu Di aimed to take this expansion further. He may also have been following a pre-existing Ming dynasty trend towards recapturing control of maritime trade for the state—and turning it into tribute—and of expanding sea power. The Ming had attempted to ban private overseas trade as early as the 1370s, while expanding state maritime tribute missions. At the least, this might halt the tendency towards autonomous Chinese centres of power, wealth and possibly piracy growing up outside of imperial control. Without a doubt, the emperor planned to extend his reach to the west and south.<sup>46</sup>

Zheng He thus focuses attention on some of the manifold aspects of China's tribute and 'imperial system', and on China's overlap with the areas we now call Southeast Asia, but that China then conceptualised as its 'west': west by land and west by sea.<sup>47</sup> Wade's chapter thus implies that Admiral Zheng He, despite his stellar career, was in essence an imperial administrator-soldier, a eunuchadmiral plucked from the western borderlands, trained and sent to extend the Ming system of tribute relations to the western seas.

On a more prosaic level, Zheng He's status as a colonial and colonised servant of the Chinese emperor helped to fit him for the great expeditions he was to lead, at the head both of expert mariners and craftsmen, and of prisoners and prisoners' sons who had been sentenced to exile. His origin meant he was neither a Confucian traditionalist focused overwhelmingly on the harmony of the Central Kingdom itself nor a high bureaucrat needing to remain close to the central court. His grandfather was of Central Asian origin.



The young man had almost certainly been brought up on stories of India and Arabia, and his last voyage, of 1431–3, was to be his own pilgrimage to Islam's most holy cities.

Wade argues that Zheng He's expeditions formed part of a wider Chinese policy of pacifying and exploiting the crucial trade routes through the Melaka Straits and associated routes between China and the Indian Ocean: dominating a kind of maritime silk route.<sup>48</sup> The aim may have been to assert Chinese dominance, as well as to establish tribute relationships, to encourage trade after the closure of the overland Silk Road or even to seek out a recently deposed and now vanished ex-emperor, but the result was a kind of a maritime Pax Ming, or Pax Sinica, from 1405 to the 1430s.<sup>49</sup> As with the Pax Britannica, and American interventions worldwide after '9/11',<sup>50</sup> this meant attacking 'failed' or rogue states—and perhaps overly independent rulers too, such as those of Old Port-Palembang and Sri Lanka—setting up bases and making clear a willingness to intervene.

Ming Chinese, as much as British and Americans afterwards, aimed to 'shock and awe' with the foremost weapons of their times. They labelled opposition 'pirates', terrorists or rebels at their discretion, and on this basis had them killed or carried overseas for extrajudicial detention, exile or execution. All three powers tried to mould the world in their own image by carrot, stick and threat. In China's case this included establishing a theatre of global domination, with foreign envoys encouraged to travel to the capital at Nanjing, and later at Beijing, with its newly completed imperial complex: the Forbidden City.

In short, this might be seen as an attempt at giving reality to claims to a 'world system' of power, centred on China as the central or Middle Kingdom. As with the Pax Britannica, large-scale trade by independent merchants had preceded hard, state-backed imperialism by many years, with Zheng He finding Chinese at Melaka and at Palembang. As with American and British systems, the degree of intervention used—trade agreements, persuasion or brute force—was the minimum necessary to integrate areas into a global system of exchange, or to ensure that they did not threaten the hegemonic power's economic and military security. And finally, as with British and American imperialism, the degree to which empire or a system of world power supported, and how far it sapped, the home economy was, and is, open to lively debate.<sup>51</sup> The costs of Chinese imperial gifts—silver, gold and bolts of silk—and of treasure fleets may or may not have exceeded the tribute collected.

Wade's picture of a Ming China expanding westward by land and sea, and with some colonisation in Yunnan, raises interesting questions. Should China be considered a 'Southeast Asian' regional player or a foreign power? Should Southeast Asia be seen as a distinct, unitary area at all for much of this period? Should Chinese expansion into Yunnan, now part of the People's Republic of China, and into Vietnam be regarded as analogous to later Western imperialism? Some historians of China may balk at the language, since 'imperialism' long ago took its place in Chinese history as a pejorative term, mainly reserved for Western intrusion into Asia. Indeed, some Chinese historians, and also some contemporary Southeast Asians, may wish to see Zheng He more as 'friendship envoy' for China than a shock-troop of proto-imperialism.<sup>52</sup> That is a far more comforting image in what could yet turn out to be the Chinese century.<sup>53</sup>

It is certainly true that the eunuch-admiral and his fleets are not our normal idea of colonial forces. This term is normally understood to refer to non-Western forces

employed in the pay of Western imperialism: the Sikh policeman or the Dutch-raised *Marechaussee* with his modern rifle and traditional *klewang* (short sword) for fighting in jungle and scrub. Indeed, it could be suggested that what Ming China conspicuously failed to attempt was the raising of truly colonial forces on the model of later maritime empires; that is, forces raised in and paid by overseas territories, and encouraged to view themselves as the loyal military caste of an advanced power.

Ming China can in this way be seen as an example of imperial power that failed to raise the overseas forces and taxation regimes necessary to maintain a cost-effective and durable maritime empire. This despite employing colonial forces in its landbound empire, in Yunnan, in the shape of the forces of the native offices.

It could be argued that Wade's chapter also suggests an important legacy of Chinese imperialism: it helped to delineate the region itself. It did this in several ways: by 'colonising' and incorporating some ethnic 'Tai' and hill-tribe areas into what is now Chinese Yunnan, so defining the eastern and northern limits of Southeast Asia; by intervening in the Melaka Straits in a way that facilitated the rise of Melaka, and protected it from depredations from Thailand (Siam) and from Java's state of Majapahit; and by its failure to consolidate itself in Vietnam, which then developed its own expansionary impetus, crushed Champa to its south and attempted to build its own empire.<sup>54</sup>

Each of these developments marked Southeast Asia in major ways. Melaka, with its Malay dynasty claiming descent from the preceding, Sumatran-based Empire of Srivijaya, stamped its mould on successor Malay States across Sumatra, the Malayan peninsula and Brunei. These areas still bear that civilisational imprint. Yet in Zheng He's day, Melaka had only been a few years in the making, having been founded around the turn of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries by a ruler fleeing Singapore in the face of Thai and Javanese hostility.<sup>55</sup> Melaka repeatedly sent envoys to the China. China in turn claimed the power to deter other tributary states, such as Thailand, from interfering with Melaka, and also claimed to have raised the 'chief of Melaka to the status of king in 1405, and Melaka to a protected polity in 1410.<sup>56</sup> Melaka as a Muslim Sultanate consolidated itself and thrived precisely in an era of Chinese-led 'globalisation', which was gathering pace by the late fourteenth century, and peaked at this time. Melaka's later fall to the Portuguese in 1511 came at a point when China's interest and its capacity to project its power had waned.<sup>57</sup>

In this way a brief Chinese period of 'globalisation' was implicated in South-east Asia's delineation. Arguably, it was China's turning away from this imperial moment, as from the 1430s it faced greater threats from the Asian plains to its north, that ensured Southeast Asia would be left as a sort of Asian Balkans, a fracture and splinter zone, beholden neither to India nor to China alone, but a crossroads where Indian, Chinese, Arab, and Christian religions, and later a European veneer of bureaucratic norms, could produce kaleidoscopic variations. Ming China's 1407–28 conquest of Vietnam was also to be its last sustained period of rule there, and Vietnam's peculiar blend of Sinicisation (in script, Confucianism and more) but anti-Chinese nationalism was to leave it and its northern, mountainous zone of Tonkin a major barrier to any further Chinese march southward.<sup>58</sup>

In other words, the Ming's decision to limit its land and maritime reach may have been as important as its earlier decisions to extend it. On 9 May 1421, just after Zheng He

set off on his last great trip—his 1431–3 pilgrimage to Mecca—the Forbidden City, another grand project of Emperor Zhu Di, went up in flames.<sup>59</sup> Some might have seen this as highlighting the strain, if not futility, of the emperor's mega-projects: canal extensions, colonialism, maritime fleets and the development of Beijing as the new capital with its Forbidden City. Even before the Yongle Emperor's death in 1424, and his son's backing for a more inward-looking, low-tax, conservative approach, the father's massive maritime fleets were falling out of favour among the mandarins.

Following this, there was a century-long continuation of the ban on private trading to the west, in addition to the absence of any further tribute fleets to maritime Southeast Asia. After the ban was lifted in 1567 with the official licensing of trading ships, the western seas were left to private Chinese traders.<sup>60</sup> Where the Chinese state retreated,<sup>61</sup> state-backed Portuguese interlopers were able to intercede from the late fifteenth century, and Dutch and English jointstock companies from the seventeenth, leasing and seizing their own *guanchang* or 'factories'.<sup>62</sup>

Three further major imperial systems of power recommend themselves for study in the same way, as complexes that shaped Southeast Asia. These are the Dutch, the British and the Japanese. The Dutch United East Indies Company from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries managed to siphon off much of the profits of international trade through the region, batter Bugis power in Celebes (Sulawesi) and prevent the emergence of any dominant Malay polity in the area. Both the Johor-Riau Sultanate and the Acehnese, though still going concerns, had to settle for maintaining separate identity under difficult conditions. The British, meanwhile, joined the Dutch in bifurcating a 'Malay' cultural zone that had ranged across the Straits of Melaka (Malacca), notably by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 17 March 1824. This recognised Dutch supremacy south of the Straits, and British north. The British also ended centuries of Burmese—Thai tension as British India expanded, gobbling Burma up in three stages between 1824 and 1885. They then played a key role in opening Siam (Thailand) up to low-tariff trade from the 1850s, and to western advisers and capital (especially British capital) under the late nineteenth-century reforming King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, reigning 1868–1910).

The dramatic impact of the Japanese from 1941 to 1945, meanwhile, has yet to be considered in systemic terms. Chapter 2 makes a genuflection in this direction. Specifically, it enumerates the Japanese colonial territories in 1940, and suggests a three circle model of the Japanese empire, with core colonies destined for a high level of integration and Nipponisation (Taiwan and Korea), a second tier or circle in Manchuria and China and a third outer rim in the *Nanyo* or South Seas. Each played different roles within the Japanese system, and what from 1940 emerged as a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere'.

Hence first circle colonies featured the direct recruitment of more than 200,000 directly into the Japanese Imperial Army in wartime, and half as many women as 'comfort women', some by trickery, others by force. The different nationalities in the Imperial Army were not, in contrast to the British and French approach, formed into completely separate units.<sup>63</sup>

In the second, more informal or indirect, sphere, Manchuria was notable for the dominance of the *Mantetsu* (the South Manchuria Railway concession), the assertive Kwantung Army, the puppet state Manchukuo, with its own army after March 1932, and the presence of many Japanese (233,749 by 1930).<sup>64</sup> This second circle featured the use

of indirect imperialism, with the notionally independent Manchukuo and the Chinese administration of Wang Jingwei being notable examples. The latter's 'National Government' of March 1940 to 1945 dominated the core China area around Nanjing and the River Yangtze, of over a hundred million people, and enthusiastically joined 'rural pacification' campaigns as a matter of anti-communism, and because it needed to extend its own sway in rural areas.<sup>65</sup>

By contrast, Southeast Asia was in the third circle, and despite its oil and raw materials, this meant it was difficult to justify giving it high levels of material. The Japanese Army spared only 10,000 troops for Java, for instance. Even this must have seemed a luxury once American island hopping across the Pacific started to head towards Japan in 1944. By that time declarations of 'independence' for Burma and the Philippines had confirmed, in 1943, that Japan would be willing to tolerate a high level of autonomy here, in return for collaboration.

Vichy-aligned French Indochina and Thailand had, after all, retained their independence. In 1944, Japan's increasing weakness persuaded it to increase the use of nationalists, and the raising of militias and youth groups and their mass inculcation with Japanese *seishin*, even in Indonesia, whose resources had at first been expected to remain under Japanese control indefinitely. The result was the training of tens of thousands of *pemuda* (youth) in the militias and auxiliary groups so well documented by Abu Talib's Chapter 9.<sup>66</sup>

Southeast Asia's systemic position as a third tier of colonies thus combined with the turning of the tide in the war to dictate a vast expansion of 'colonial' forces there: militias, *pemuda* youth groups, voluntary forces such as the *giyutai* and *giyugun*, *romusha* (forced labourers) and auxiliaries (*heiho*). It also encouraged and made possible a vast increase in activity by anti-Japanese forces. Both of these types of force consequently had major impacts on shaping postwar Southeast Asian history. Together these developments not only frustrated French and Dutch attempts to recover fully their prewar power, but also ensured postwar insurgency in the Philippines, Malaya, Burma, Indonesia and Vietnam, providing the framework for Cold War and decolonisation alike.<sup>67</sup>

In short, the systemic view matters. It allows us to explain better both why colonial armies in the region took the form they did and how those forces impacted on the region.

## **Case study II: Men of the Malay Regiment and martial races discourse**

Now we need to swoop down to ground level, switching from the bird's eye or even satellite view of empire to a human scale. For Admiral Zheng He and his great fleets are not the normal image of colonial forces. The stereotype is of a non-Western man—always a man—commanded by a Western-controlled security machine.<sup>68</sup> Volumes on imperial forces look at such men, at their recruitment, management, loyalty, disloyalty and effectiveness in battle, and at the modernising, social and decolonising impacts on them of service in nineteenth-and twentieth-century colonial forces.<sup>69</sup>

For our next example, we turn from the macro to the micro, and from the Ming dynasty to two twentieth-century Malay soldiers, who between them served in the

British-raised 'Malay Regiment' as well as in Japanese wartime forces. The two men are Adnan Saidi and Ismail Babu, both soldiers of the Malay Regiment.

What was the Malay Regiment? Until 1932 the Malay States and Straits Settlements Colony (Singapore, Penang and Melaka, or Malacca as then known)—together referred to as 'British Malaya'—were sparsely defended. In addition to part-time volunteers, only one British and one Indian battalion garrisoned them. After the Singapore Mutiny of 1915 the latter was replaced by a battalion from Burma. Then in 1933 the British, partly under pressure from the Malay Sultans and also in the light of increasing nationalism in India and Burma, set up an experimental Malay company to test the 'martial qualities' of the Malays. The British, having disarmed Malays since 1874, expressed doubt that the Malays were a 'martial race'.

Malay recruits were given modern training, but the Regiment's invented tradition and symbolism dripped with pseudo-historic 'Malayness'. There was Malay-style ceremonial dress, a jawi-scripted badge, which lifted the motto 'loyal and true' from the story of the Malay fifteenth-century warrior Hang Tuah, and visits from the Sultans. Young recruits were told that they were a test for their race's valour. They were also an elite, since limited recruitment meant only the very best were selected from a flood of applicants. With British preservation of Malay Sultans as sovereign in their States—albeit with British-advised administrations—the Malay Regiment could remain loyal both to British officers and to Malay culture and Sultans.<sup>70</sup>

Shortly after Japanese landings in north Malaya, in December 1941, the Malay Regiment was expanded from one battalion to two. Its ultimate test was to come on 13–14 February 1942, when it was holding one of the last lines of defence before Singapore City, on the west coast of the island, at Pasir Panjang ridge. Blackburn's Chapter 12 discusses how the events of those two days have been enshrined in film, literature, school texts and books, and at heritage sites, as a part of the stories of Singaporean and Malaysian nation-building. This is where our two Malay Regiment men step into the picture.

The better known of the two is Lieutenant Adnan Saidi (1915–42), of Platoon number 7, 'C' company. His unit grimly held on to Opium Hill overlooking Singapore's West Coast before being overrun on 14 February, with an extremely high casualty rate on both sides. The infuriated Japanese reportedly shot, bayoneted and then hung him upside down from a tree. This was at a time when some British and Australian units were beginning to splinter, ahead of the British surrender on the following day. He is, in a sense, an ideal martyr both for Malays and for the British as a representative of a 'martial class' at last proven. It is his story that most underlines subsequent commemoration.

But Lieutenant Adnan was just one of several Malays decorated for their bravery in Singapore's final defence. Some others were later captured, and killed upon their refusal to switch allegiance. One, Regimental Sergeant Major Ismail bin Babu, was to have a more chequered career. For him, the military was a family tradition and the only obvious route to a more comfortable life. Ismail Babu was of mixed Malay and Pathan (Indian) parentage.<sup>71</sup> His Pathan father had served in the Indian Army, and died fighting alongside British forces on the Somme. Ismail Babu himself became a King's Scout, and was later awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for gallantry in 1947, for his part on 14 February 1942.

So far so good, but he did not die a martyr. After jobs as a railway labourer and charcoal factory clerk, he sought to improve his growing family's lot by joining the Japanese *giyutai* (volunteer militia corps) of Malaya. This deployed him against mainly Chinese anti-Japanese forces. Near the war's end he left this and joined Britain's Force 136, an organisation infiltrating to work alongside anti-Japanese fighters. Finally, after the war he rejoined the Malay Regiment, retiring in 1967 as a major. Abu Talib recounts this fascinating career in his Chapter 9, so giving a glimpse into a world where military honour and calling blended with calculation to shape decisions taken under stress.

In some ways the very success of the British approach, of nurturing groups such as these Malays as 'martial races' or castes, had within it the seeds of ambivalence. In the case of many Indian Army soldiers captured in Malaya by the Japanese, this facilitated their recruitment into the Japanese-sponsored 'Indian National Army' (INA). That same army eventually fought the British in Burma under the nationalist slogan 'On to Delhi'. The very success of the British model could thus produce loyalty, efficiency and a sense of calling. But the loyalty was not to King and officers alone, but more powerfully to ideals of military service, honour and a cultural identity that could take on its own impetus. In the absence of British control and officers, those same attributes could result in loyalty even to the death, or in dramatic realignments.

In the careers of both men, then, we see evidence that the British proved masters in the art of sculpting 'martial races'. They used regional tradition, caste and historical memory to nurture a sense of military calling and honour, especially in India. As Womack hints in Chapter 4, the French sometimes viewed this with keen interest, if not envy.

Nor can the British creation of 'imagined' military traditions be seen as entirely arbitrary. When recruiting Sikhs in India, for instance, the British insisted on outward signs of the Khalsa Brotherhood, the wearing of the *kirpan* or dagger, keeping uncut hair in a turban and carrying the Guru Granth Sahib or holy book at the head of the unit on march. In other words, the British insisted on the elements that most sharply distinguished Sikhs from the Hinduism that originated their movement—or any chosen military group from its neighbours.<sup>72</sup> In addition to such manipulation of identity markers, and creation of regimental tradition, people from preferred recruiting grounds could be given precedence in civil suits, reliable pay or plots in retirement. The heart and the wallet were made to work together.

It is no surprise, therefore, that Omissi can argue that 'The idea that some Indians were more martial than others was not a pure figment of the colonial imagination'.<sup>73</sup> It had roots in the customs and self-image of groups such as the Rajputs, castes such as the Kshatriya and notions of masculinity, which the British fostered and built upon.

Works such as Echenberg's *Colonial Conscripts*, dealing with French colonial troops in Africa, echo these themes. Such soldiers became imbued with what Philip Mason calls *A Matter of Honour*, the title of his book on the Raj.<sup>74</sup> Omissi refers to this as 'izzat': a sense of honour and standing for the soldier, caste, family and regiment. One might, perhaps, add a sense of prestige and superiority from being attached to a modern organisation and given extra education and skills. These may in turn have helped soldiers to distance themselves from the crowd, especially when called on to do dirty 'policing' work.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, the 'martial caste' approach could encourage essentialist and ossifying classificatory fantasies, and intensify divisions. Robert Taylor's Chapter 8 is

revealing in showing the lengths the British went to in classifying Burma's so-called ethnic groups and subgroups. Such communally-based conjuring of categories was self-fulfilling in encouraging some groups, and discouraging others, from enlisting. It also, as we have already noted, tended to produce plural armies, which might reinforce divisions in society, with dire consequences for postcolonial states such as Burma (Myanmar).

Was it something akin to *izzat*, the Indian concept of honour, or a sense of being part of a 'modernising' and civilising empire, even a globalising force on a higher plane, that drove on Zheng He in 1407–33? How far did these same forces motivate the Gurkha rifleman or the 'Ambonese' in Dutch employ? Alternatively, how far were men driven by the need to use skills and traditions to ensure family survival in hard times, while escaping mundane lives for adventure, as with Timorese levies, or with Ismail Babu as he signed up as a *giyutai*? Are these factors the most central to colonial soldiers' behaviour, or should they be seen, for the most part, just as ordinary soldiers, motivated in battle by a more general sense of brotherhood under fire?<sup>76</sup>

It is not easy to answer such questions. But we do know that colonial forces remained, for the most part, loyal up to and even into the process of decolonisation. Even colonial troops from majority populations, often discriminated against in thought if not in conditions, usually underpromoted and sometimes underarmed, remained for the most part loyal and effective, at least up to the Japanese Occupation. Perhaps that sense of brotherhood in arms, plus the basic attractions of secure pay, promotion and pension, while serving in an institution modern relative to the rest of society, was enough for most men, in most circumstances.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

This introduction provides three broad themes that link together what follows, and together constitute a clarion call for more comparative work on imperial power, together with greater terminological and conceptual rigour.

The first theme is that 'colonial armies' need to be located within bigger frameworks. These need to encompass both the broader security matrix in each individual territory—including naval, military, police and auxiliary labour power—and the overall imperial context. In thus locating colonial armies, studies need to be terminologically exact in how they describe types of imperial action, and in developing typologies for colonial forces.

The second theme is that of discourses of loyalty and disloyalty, especially as manifested in attempts to create martial races or castes, and to control supposedly unreliable groups. Study of this area needs to feed through into wider themes of identity formation within colonial contexts, and of nationalism. The category of military castes must be taken seriously as a distinct type of imagined community: imagined from above by imperial authorities, from below by subjects and from beyond the grave of empires and by postcolonial subjects.

This type of approach has to be careful to distinguish varying types of reason for loyalty—indigenous and martial traditions, the natural bonds of a martial 'band of brothers', disciplinary measures and more—and for revolt, especially as between 'loyal' and 'disloyal' revolt. The mutinies in French Indochina, which challenged the very *raison d'être* of the colonial state, are a good example of the latter; that in the Philippines in

1924, which sought better conditions, of the former. Finally, studies need to be self-conscious about just how far aspects of force behaviour are specifically 'colonial', how far they are manifestations of more pervasive characteristics of military units and their men.

The third broad theme is that we need to extend the range of circumstances in which we apply the imperial or colonial military paradigm. Pre-European and post-European periods can sometimes benefit from such analysis. Asian-sponsored armies, be they Ming Chinese, Japanese or contemporary, may sometimes be amenable to categorisation as imperial. At the same time, even when a situation becomes 'postcolonial', the issue of the memory of colonial forces, and the use of that memory politically, may remain salient. This can be seen for both the ex-colony, as in Malaysia and Singapore, and the metropolis, as in the case of 'Moluccan' and 'Ambonese' soldiers demilitarised in the Netherlands after 1949. However we look at it, to restrict the category of imperial almost entirely to examples of Western deployment of non-Western forces is in itself a sort of racism.

Last but not least, this chapter hints at the way studying not just 'colonial armies' but also 'systems of imperial power' can open up broader, and important, areas of analysis. First, it allows us to see how Ming China, nineteenth-century Britain, twentieth-century Japan and twenty-first-century America all wrestled, and in the last case still wrestle, with a similar problem: how to manage the very biggest systems of power without overstretch and underperformance. Policing the frontier, how to train local forces without losing control of them, who to choose as allies when one's friend's enemy will become your enemy too and how to turn 'imperial' areas into security producers in partnership, rather than truculent security consumers: these are perennial themes.

Another such broader theme is the impact of the very greatest imperial systems of power on Southeast Asia itself. Ming China clearly helped to protect the Melaka seedling from the Thai and Javanese attacks that destroyed its predecessor on Singapore, so setting the scene for six hundred years of Malay history. It also broke up a Tai cultural zone that had joined western Yunnan with what are now Thailand, Laos and upland Myanmar. Its manner of failure in Vietnam, meanwhile, could be seen as helping to form Vietnam into a bulwark against further Chinese expansion southwards. Ironically, its failed intervention there may even have helped to strengthen Vietnamese military organisation, and so set Vietnam off on its own expansion, including the conquest of Champa in what is now central and southern Vietnam. The Dutch clearly siphoned off the profits of much of the international trade passing through maritime Southeast Asia, and through naval supremacy probably prevented the rise of any new hegemonic, indigenous power in insular Southeast Asia, such as Srivijaya or Majapahit. Dutch and British control of international trade, and actions against local states, seem also to have dispersed indigenous forces as 'pirates', so justifying further Western 'policing' of the seas and coastlines in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

The British also joined the Dutch in splitting a Malay cultural world, in which the Straits of Malacca had bridged rather than separated Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula. In 1824 everything south of the Straits (until 1871, excepting Aceh) was recognised as in a Dutch sphere, everything north as in a British sphere of influence.

All the major European powers, meanwhile, brought with them or later introduced traditions of imperial force, which included 'divide and rule' techniques. This meant



creating plural colonial armies: armies where men were either put into different units according to 'race' or treated differently according to race, and where men of different origins met on the parade ground but remained socially separate castes. These plural armies could have negative impacts on postcolonial states, notably so for Myanmar. Beyond these, the Japanese imperial system helped to propel the peoples of Southeast Asia from a colonial to a postcolonial trajectory. Again, that it did this was due not just to Japanese aims, but to the particular position of Southeast Asia within the imperial system the Japanese were constructing. That is, it was for Japan the third of three circles, one where the Japanese resorted to lower metropolitan troop numbers and a greater use of Japanese-sponsored armies and militias, as the core homeland and first two tiers came under greater threat.

These are but crude hints of what more analytical, comparative and systemic approaches could achieve. Even then, this chapter does not go far enough in setting the scene for the individual dramas that the following chapters bring us. For colonial armies, and even imperial systems and patterns of power, are insufficient frames of reference in themselves. As the next chapter, 'Demography and domination in Southeast Asia', shows, the extraneous also has to be contextualised against the indigenous, the imperial against local populations and terrains.

### Notes

- 1 See, for instance, Jaap A. de Moor and H.L. Wesseling (eds), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989); and David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c.1700–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). For police and crime see also Greg Bankoff, *Crime, Society and the State in the 19th Century Philippines* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1998); Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah, 1900–1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 2 Karl Hack, 'Theories and Approaches to British Decolonization in Southeast Asia', in Marc Frey, Ronald W. Preussen and Tan Tai Yong (eds), *The Transformation of Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Armonck, 2003), pp. 105–27, is one of the few works to tackle the terminology for imperialism and decolonisation with specific regard to Southeast Asia. See also Chapter 1, 'Definitions', in Nicholas Tarling, *Imperialism and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 3–20.
- 3 Sources informing the definitions that follow include: Marc Ferro, *Colonization* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–23; Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Alexander J. Motyl, 'Thinking about Empire', in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (eds), *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 19–29.
- 4 David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, 1st edn 1966 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982, 2nd edn), pp. 11–13. Ideally we would add to this a sixth category, the 'internal colony', technically part of a core state, but in fact possessing a sense of separate cultural identity and/or treated differently, perhaps even with a 'cultural division of labour'. Indonesia's West Papua, if not Aceh, would be possible candidates. See Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1533–1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

- 5 Native Americans also served in the mainstream army in surprisingly large numbers, relative to their proportion of the US population, in the two world wars. See John P. Langellier, *American Indians in the US Armed Forces, 1866–1945* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000); and Bruce White, 'The American Army and the Indian', in Nandor F. Dreisziger (ed.), *Ethnic Armies: Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Habsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), pp. 69–88.
- 6 A colony could be contiguous, or spatially separated, but is usually 'peripheral' at least in being on the outer reaches of control, as well as having clear claims to distinctness of territory and culture. One could argue that administrative separateness can be constituted by local revolt forcing the state to employ differentiated policing, or resulting in the loss of legitimacy by state forces, even within a unitary state.
- 7 Lack of consent does not necessarily imply lack of legitimacy. That is a separate matter. But the lack of wider consent to an initial agreement is often followed by indigenous violence in response.
- 8 Settler colonies complicate this issue. Clearly settlers begin as culturally similar to the core, being part of the 'colonial' subjugation of an indigenous population. But they are also subject to distant rule, and potentially develop their own, pseudo-indigenous, identity at variance with the core power.
- 9 The Japanese military saw this as a way of assuaging an overbrutalised and underrested and entertained (and we might add, conquering) army, and of minimising rape of local women and resulting anti-colonial sentiment. Koreans (formally colonial subjects since 1910) were accessible, and favoured due to Japanese-language proficiency. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War Two* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); George Hicks, *The Comfort Women* (London: W.W.Norton, 1994). The use of Koreans as 'colonial' forces was on a vast scale in the Second World War. On top of an estimated 200,000 female military sex slaves, 700,000 men and women were sent to Japan as forced labour, four million were mobilised as labour in Korea and 365,000 were conscripted for military use.
- 10 For Indonesia, see Geoffrey Robinson's Chapter 11 in this volume. See also Benedict R.O'G.Anderson (ed.), *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Studies on Southeast Asia No. 30, Cornell University, 2001); Freek Colombijn and J.Thomas Lindblad (eds), *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective* (Leiden: KITLV, 2002). For the Philippines' politics as distorted by provincial families and their private armies and strongarm tactics see, for instance, Alfred McCoy (ed.), *An Anarchy of Families: State and Society in the Philippines* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).
- 11 See Robinson's Chapter 11 in this volume. See also Robin Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. V, *Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially Wm Roger Louis, 'Introduction', pp. 1–42 (pp. 21–3 for indirect rule) and Peter Sluglett, 'Formal and Informal Empire in the Middle East', pp. 416–36, for informal imperialism.
- 12 Dutch primacy in the East Indies, outside of a few coastal enclaves and small islands, also constituted informal imperialism enforced by naval power for most of the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries.
- 13 For the United States, see Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); and Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
- 14 Arguing that America had learned that tyranny abroad bred threats to the USA, Bush stated that 'All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.' This was soon followed by an assurance that this did not imply any change in China policy. Demonstrative uses primarily refer to Afghanistan and Iraq.

- 15 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), argues that colonisation is a process of territorial acquisition, a colony a type of sociopolitical organisation, colonialism a system of domination and imperialism the creation of transcolonial empires as part of great power politics. For Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London: John Murray, 2000), pp. xi–xii, empire is ‘a very great power that has left its mark on the international relations of an era...that rules over wide territories and many peoples...not a democracy’. Also consider John Darwin’s conception of British Empire as supporting world power in his *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (London: Macmillan, 1988).
- 16 Susan Strange, pioneer of international political economy, conceived of four different power structures that a twentieth-century power would have to dominate to be a truly global power: security, production, finance and knowledge. See her *States and Markets* (London: Pinter, 1994 edn).
- 17 See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana, 1989), and Ferguson, *Colossus*, for the economic element.
- 18 Max Boot, ‘Uncle Same Wants Tu’, *Los Angeles Times*, 24 Feb. 2005, and on the website of his host organisation, the Council of Foreign Relations.
- 19 For more on Dutch policies, and the ‘Ambonese’, see Chapter 2 in this volume.
- 20 The colonial era spelling of Malacca has given way to Melaka, but the Straits are still called the ‘Malacca Straits’ in almost all sources. We use modern Malaysian spelling, except when talking of Malacca during the period of British imperialism in the region, roughly from 1786 to 1965.
- 21 John Sydenham Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands East Indies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 1–8, passim. For Furnivall this implied culturally distinct groups who met in the market place but did not mix, and who often had differentiated economic roles as well.
- 22 See Robert H. Taylor, ‘Burma’, in Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Harold Crouch (eds), *Military-Civilian Relations in South-East Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 13–49; Martin T. Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, rev. and updated edn, 1999); Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
- 23 A substantially rewritten version of Rettig’s article in *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (2002), pp. 309–32, had to be left out of this volume to save space.
- 24 In both cases the Macabebe fought Filipino nationalists who sought independence. They came from southern Pampanga Province, and in effect simply transferred allegiance from Spain to America in 1899.
- 25 See Hack’s and Blackburn’s Chapters 10 and 12 for the way the British justified intervention in the Malay states because of ‘piracy’ and endemic conflict there, disarmed Malays and then by the 1930s argued that the Malays might not have ‘martial’ qualities, due to a supposedly distant history of mere piracy and raiding.
- 26 The multinational nature of these forces with ten official languages is often cited as a cause of inefficiency. Solomon Wank reasserts this against revisionist scholars in his ‘The Nationalities Question in the Habsburg Monarchy: Reflections on the Historical Record’, University of Minnesota, Center for Austrian Studies, Working Paper 93–3 (April 1993), [www.cas.umn.edu/N\\_33\\_](http://www.cas.umn.edu/N_33_). A recent revisionist attempt argues that inadequate leadership and operational shortcomings rather than ethnic-based disloyalty was to blame for defeat: John R. Schindler, ‘Steamrolled in Galicia: The AustroHungarian Army and the Brusilov Offensive, 1916’, *War in History* 10, 1 (January 2003), pp. 27–59 (33), and ‘Disaster on the Drina: The Austro-Hungarian Army in Serbia, 1914’, *War in History* 9, 2 (April 2002), pp. 159–95.
- 27 Tarling, *Southeast Asia*, p. 303.

- 28 Rettig, 'French Military policies in the aftermath of the Yên Bái mutiny, 1930' (see n.23 above). Provoked by rigid taxes, poor harvests, grievances against landowners, corruption and communist agitation, Nghe-Tinh's peasants established 'soviets', redistributing land and food, and burning symbols of power such as village *dinh* (temples). From 1200 to several thousands of peasants died when *Garde indigène*, Colonial Infantry, Foreign Legionnaires and aircraft opened fire. Some 10,000 were imprisoned, identity cards were issued and the freshly formed Indochinese Communist Party was devastated. Vietnamese militia guards dealt with demonstrators until early September 1930, Vietnamese soldiers were sent in greater numbers only in early 1931. NgheTinh is the compound for the north-central provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh.
- 29 Henk Smeets, 'The Consequences of a Failed Demilitarisation: Moluccan Soldiers in the Netherlands, 1951–2001', in Marie-Eve Blanc, Gilles de Gantès and Tobias Rettig (eds), *Armies and Societies in Southeast Asia, c.1750–2000* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, forthcoming).
- 30 The totals are over 207,000 Taiwanese (80,000 servicemen and 126,000 civilian military employees) and over 230,000 Koreans (110,000 servicemen including 90,000 conscripts from 1944 to 1945, and 130,000 civilian military employees). On top of this were many more voluntary and conscripted war labourers; for instance, over 200,000 Korean Women's Service Corps, including about 80,000 diverted to be 'comfort women'. See Chen Yingzhen, 'Imperial Army Betrayed', and Utsumi Aiko, 'Korean "Imperial Soldiers": Remembering Colonialism and Crimes against Allied POWs' in Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama (eds), *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 181–98, 199–217.
- 31 See Hack's Chapter 10 in this volume.
- 32 See Geoff Wade's Chapter 3 in this volume, and 'The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment' (Singapore: Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 31, 2004): [www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps04\\_031.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps04_031.pdf). The Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) replaced the Mongol Yuan after a series of rebellions throughout China. Chen Zu-yi is Ch'en Tsu-I using the Wade-Giles system of transliteration.
- 33 Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores' [1433]* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1970), pp. 2, 10–11. Sun Laichen, 'Military Technology Transfers from Ming China and the Emergence of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia (c. 1390–1527)', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, 3 (October 2003), pp. 498–9, has 1390s orders for large ships to each carry 16 handguns, four muzzle cannon, 20 fire lances, 20 rockets and other firearms. Ten per cent of Ming troops soon carried firearms, and a third of an army of 1.2–1.8 million by 1466.
- 34 Jung-Pang Lo, 'The Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the late Sung and Early Yuan Periods', *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, 4 (1955), pp. 489–503 emphasises the Sung move to coastal Hangzhou and consequent need to develop sea defences, followed by Mongol responses, as a dynamic behind this, as well as militaristic states shutting off China's northward, land trade routes. According to Jung-Pang Lo, by 1403 the mere appearance of nine Chinese war junks could stop a Vietnamese invasion of its southern rival Champa.
- 35 Wade, 'The Zheng He Voyages', pp. 13–14.
- 36 The Mongols had taken much of Yunnan in the thirteenth century, and historically Yunnan-based states such as Nanchao and Tali had fought China. See Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1993, originally published 1972), pp. 39–78.
- 37 Wade's proto-imperialism appears to overlap with what historians have variously called gunboat, free trade and informal imperialism. See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, 6 (1953), pp. 1–15.

- 38 Despite the incorporation of lowland Yunnan, minority sense of identity apparently increased after the 1970s, with the Pai regarding their language and culture as separate. Colin Mackerras, 'Preface', in Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, pp. ix–x.
- 39 Suzanne Ogden (ed.), *China* (Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill, 2004), p. 25.
- 40 For instance, the Miao rebellion of 1795–1806 in Guizhou (one of several) followed increasing Han migration, and increasing absorption of tribal chiefs into the Qing bureaucracy. In effect migration and a move away from indirect rule prompted a backlash. Military action then included further military-agricultural colonists, much as in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Yunnan, and attempts to extend Chinese culture and education, as in the fifteenth-century occupation of Vietnam. Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795–1989* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 7–8.
- 41 Ogden, *China*, pp. 25–7. Xinjiang, Uighur/Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang, meaning 'New Frontier', first used 1768). Non-Chinese émigrés refer to this area of 1.6 million square km, originally settled by Turkic tribes from Mongolia, as Eastern Turkestan/Sharji Turkistan. There have been revolts, and periods when parts have been outside Chinese control. It was created Xinjiang/Uighur Autonomous Region in 1950; there have also been periods when Islam and local identity have been undermined. For Russia, see Lieven, *Empire*, pp. 201–341.
- 42 Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, pp. x–7.
- 43 See the n.40 above on the Miao Revolt of 1795–1806.
- 44 Christian Daniels, 'Consolidation and Restructure: Tai Politics in northern Continental Southeast Asia during the 15th Century', paper presented at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 'Workshop on Southeast Asia in the 15th Century and the Ming Factor', 18–19 July 2004.
- 45 For the 'turbulent frontier'—not just military insecurity but also moral and other disorder that empire finds intolerable—driving British expansion in the 1870s, see William David MacIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865–1875* (London: Macmillan, 1967). More generally, see Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1990).
- 46 A naval defeat, with the loss of up to 300 junks, played a part, and by 1430 the Emperor was complaining of raids by Chinese pirates. Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores'*, p. 3.
- 47 Later, of course, China would change its view of the maritime west, or today's Southeast Asia, and know it as the South Seas, or *Nanyang*.
- 48 These views aroused controversy in Singapore, with some scholars preferring to see the Ming 'tributary-trade' system more as a benevolent form of exchange. It is possible that the hope of shaping China's future relations plays as big a part in this as any analysis of the past. *Straits Times*, 11 November 2004, p. 14.
- 49 Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores'*, pp. 1–2.
- 50 The 11 September 2001 attacks on the New York World Trade Center's twin towers.
- 51 John Miksic, 'Archaeology, Ceramics and Coins: A Review of A.Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, Vol. II, Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale, 1993)', in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, 3 (1996), pp. 287–97. Miksic argues that Chinese ceramics are prominent in Southeast Asian archaeological sites in the fourteenth century, decline in Ming years and pick up in the sixteenth century.
- 52 Kong Yuanzhi, 'Investigation on Temples of Zheng He in Southeast Asia', paper presented at Asia Research Institute, NUS, 'Workshop on Southeast Asia in the 15th Century and the Ming Factor', 18–19 July 2004, pp. 1, 6–7. This shows Southeast Asian officials exhorting Zheng He as a pointer to China's future peaceful relations. See *Straits Times*, 11 November 2004, p. 14, for the debate Wade's ideas spurred in Singapore.
- 53 Commemorative events for Zheng He's 1405 arrival in Malaya began in Melaka in 2004, with June 2005 plans for a Singapore Exhibition, Festival, Zheng He films and a statue at

Labrador Park, where it is assumed Zheng He sailed past long-diminished rocks facing each other on Singapore and Sentosa Island just offshore, which it is assumed are 'the Dragon's Teeth' described in Chinese sources.

- 54 A more positive spin might be that the threat, and perhaps example, of China helped to force the pace of state-building in its mainland Southeast Asian neighbours. Geoff Wade, 'Melaka in Ming Dynasty Texts', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 70, 1 (1997), pp. 31–69. For instance, the Ming annals (*Ming shi-lu*) first mention the ruler Parameswara and Chinese envoys visiting Melaka in 1403. In 1419 an order was supposedly sent to stop Ayudhya (an empire in the area that is now Thailand) attacking Iskandar Shah at Melaka, noting that both parties had sent tribute, so grievances should be submitted to the imperial court, p. 34.
- 55 Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores'*, p. 110, n.1. This assumes that the title Megat Iskandar Shah, recorded in Chinese sources for 1413, marked the conversion.
- 56 Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Maritime Southeast Asia to 1500* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1996), pp. 102–3. In one text the first ruler was 'Parameswara', in another, Sri Tri Buana. For recognition of Melaka as a country (1405), and as a protected polity (1410), see Ma Huan, *ibid*, p. 109, n.1.
- 57 Geoff Wade, 'Melaka in Ming Dynasty Texts', *passim*, for Melaka delegations (1405, 1411, 1414, 1415, 1419, 1420, 1421, 1423 etc. to the early sixteenth century) and the relations of Melaka's first rulers, Parameswara (who had fled Singapore) and his son (probably the first to convert), Sultan Iskander Shah. Post-1511 the 'Melaka' Sultanate relocated, continuing to be an important player as the Johor-Riau' Sultanate.
- 58 The issues of Vietnam, and of Southeast Asia's uniqueness, partly in continued openness to many outside influences and blends, are explored in Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1999), p. 5.
- 59 Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (London: Bantam, 2002) surveys the Ming background with clarity, but shows even more brilliant imagination in having, for instance, stones with no Chinese script at all become evidence of Chinese fleets arriving in West Africa, and inventing an entire world transoceanic voyage that Ma Huan, the major chronicler of the voyages, neglected to mention. See also P.J.Rivers, '1421' *Voyages: Fact and Fantasy* (Ipoh: Perak Academy Monograph No. 1, 2004).
- 60 Bans are never wholly effective, but archaeologists note a mid-fifteenth-century slump in Chinese ceramics, followed by resurgence once legal trade resumed in the late sixteenth century. See n.51 above and John Miksic, 'Before and after Zheng He: Comparing some Archaeological Sites of the 14th and 15th Centuries', paper delivered at Asia Research Institute, NUS, 'Workshop on Southeast Asia in the 15th Century', 18–19 July 2004, pp. 16–18. Miksic generally downplays the long-term effects of Zheng He, noting the acculturation of Chinese at Palembang.
- 61 The Manchus also defeated the one family that did build wide trade networks and challenge the Europeans in the seventeenth century, the Zheng family (not related to Zheng He). This was because the family's southern power base was a threat to the Manchus. Chuimei Ho, 'The Ceramic Trade in Asia, 1602–82', in Anthony John Heaton Latham and Heita Kawakatsu (eds), *Japanese Industrialization and the Asian Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 35–70.
- 62 The *haijin* (imperial ban on trade to the south), lasted from the fifteenth century to 1567, but Chinese junks continued to be important in Southeast Asia until overshadowed by European vessels in the nineteenth century.
- 63 Lewis Henry Gann, 'Reflections on the German and Japanese Empires', in Peter Duus, Ramon H.Meyers and Mark Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 348.

- 64 Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Louise Young, 'Imagined Empire: The Cultural Construction of Manchukuo', in Duus *et al.*, *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, pp. 71–96; and Y. Tak Matsusaka, 'Managing Occupied Manchuria, 1932–1945', in *ibid.*, pp. 97–135.
- 65 David P. Barrett and Lawrence N. Shyu (eds), *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932–1945: The Limits of Accommodation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). Wang's government recognised Manchukuo, stationed troops in the north, gave economic concessions and accepted responsibility for minimising anti-Japanese activity.
- 66 See, for instance, Ken'ichi Goto, 'Cooperation, Submission, and Resistance of Indigenous Elites of Southeast Asia in the Wartime Empire', in Duus *et al.*, *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, pp. 274–304.
- 67 See Abu Talib's Chapter 9 in this volume, and also Hack and Rettig's Chapter 2 for more on Japan.
- 68 For the earlier original, Senegalese *Tirailleurs*, see Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (London: James Currey, 1991).
- 69 Classics include Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; David Omissi's *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860–1940* (London: Macmillan, 1994); and Philip Mason's *A Matter of Honor* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).
- 70 See Kevin Blackburn's Chapter 12 in this volume. This emphasis on Malay tradition made it easier for the Malay Regiment to be revered in postcolonial as well as colonial times, as Blackburn shows.
- 71 The Pathans (also known as Pashtuns and other names) are a Muslim warrior and raiding tribe on the British Raj's northwestern frontier (today's Afghanistan and Pakistan). Charles Lindholm, 'Images of the Pathan: The Usefulness of Colonial Ethnography', in *European Journal of Sociology* 21 (1980), pp. 350–61 provides an extremely useful explanation for seemingly contradictory perceptions of the Pathans as both loyal and disloyal; the article can be viewed at [www.bu.edu/anthrop/faculty/lindholm/Pathan1A.html](http://www.bu.edu/anthrop/faculty/lindholm/Pathan1A.html).
- 72 Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 94–7.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 Douglas Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820–50', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 23, 2 (1995), pp. 211–47; Mason, *A Matter of Honor*, *passim*, e.g. p. 349; and Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, *passim*, e.g. p. 24.
- 75 Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp. 235–6. Omissi, drawing on *sepoys'* letters home, emphasises this rather than the bond between officer and man; though of course a skilful officer would manage this *izzat* adroitly, the officer lacking knowledge and linguistic effort could appear hapless, and offend.
- 76 Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); Alfred W. McCoy, *Closer than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); David A. Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little Brown, 1995).
- 77 Take the Dutch approach. Why the Dutch never felt they could develop loyalty more in Javanese troops is puzzling. Religion is hardly an excuse (think of Indian Army Sikhs and Pathans). This puts the spotlight on conditions, handling of troops and cultural issues. Jaap de Moor describes the Dutch inventing a tradition of Ambonese loyalty and martial qualities, then making it real with extra pay, pensions, praise and food from the 1830s, and recruitment from the 1870s. Better pay persisted even after ethnically distinct companies (battalions

ideally having one European, one Christian Ambonese and one Javanese company) changed to mixed companies. The change began with the *Korps Marechaussee* in the 1890s, which found mixed companies effective, and accelerated in the 1910s and 1920s. Jaap de Moor, 'The Recruitment of Indonesian Soldiers for the Dutch Colonial Army', in Killingray and Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire*, pp. 62–4.

- 78 Classics that locate 'piracy' into broader contexts of politics and state-building include James F. Warren's *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).



## 2

# Demography and domination in Southeast Asia

*Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig*

All figures are relative: none more so than those concerning imperial forces. It is useless knowing about this battle, or that colonial army, unless we know not only the numbers of Europeans and their allies on one side, but also the number and quality of their adversaries. It is equally futile playing with figures for armies, if we are not told about the populations they policed and protected. This presents a formidable challenge, one exacerbated for places and periods where numbers change at dizzying speed, such as modern Southeast Asia. How many readers know the population for Indonesia—the former Netherlands East Indies—for 1800, 1900 and 1941? How many know the population for the Philippines on these same dates?

This chapter tackles this demographic and comparative deficit by giving a broad background to Southeast Asian populations, and to colonial and imperial forces in Southeast Asia, with a focus on the period 1800–2000. No doubt the level of sophistication would scandalise a statistician. But the broad brush picture will be sound, and that is the one that interests us.

How can we go about the Herculean task of sketching in a framework for the demography of domination? One way is to take slices of history. In 1900, for instance—roughly the middle of our core date range—the population of Southeast Asia was between 80 and 85 million, with almost 30 million or one-third of that on Java. At that time, Europe's population—even taking all Europe bar Russia into account, rather than just the western portion most prone to overseas imperialism—was around 300 million. In the words of Charles Hirschman, 'Although there were a number of very large cities in the region and densely settled rice-growing areas in Java, the Red River Delta [of North Vietnam], and a few other areas, most of mainland and insular Southeast Asia remained a sparsely settled frontier region in 1900.'<sup>1</sup> In 1910 the large cities Hirschman alludes to—all but two of which were also coastal trading ports—included eleven over 100,000, namely: Mandalay and Rangoon in Burma; the Siamese capital of Bangkok; Hanoi and Saigon in Vietnam; Georgetown (Penang) and Singapore in the Straits Settlements, Batavia (Jakarta), Surakarta and Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies; and Manila in the Philippines.<sup>2</sup>

The most densely populated regions outside of these cities included the rich, volcanic soils of Java and the rice-producing plains of Luzon in the Philippines, as well as the equally intense rice-cultivating river deltas of Lower Burma, and of the Mekong and Red River deltas in Vietnam. Most of maritime Southeast Asia was, by contrast, sparsely settled. It was characterised by myriad islands, creeks and mangroves, with forests, mountains and valleys making land communication laborious. Movement by sea and

river was a good deal more practical than by land throughout the Malayan peninsula, Indonesia and the Philippines at least until 1900, and in many places for decades after.

For imperial powers this combination of topography and demography had a number of implications. It meant that it was relatively easy for a power with technical superiority at sea to overawe and seize key ports and cities, so establishing trading ports and nominal sovereignty over the fertile areas immediately adjacent to these. This is what the Portuguese and then Spanish and Dutch did from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The use of firearms by local rulers was always less pervasive in maritime Southeast Asia than to the north, and in this earlier period a combination of European capital, effectiveness in using their own firepower and ability in fortbuilding stood them in good stead. The European innovation of fixing rows of guns, later cannon, on the decks of their ships from the fifteenth century allowed them to bombard enemy ships and ports from a distance. This gave them the advantage over Mediterranean and Indian Ocean opponents who operated by ramming, boarding or with no or few guns.<sup>3</sup> They were thus able to retreat behind sea walls—the typical seventeenth-century Dutch ship outgunned its local rival by 28 cannon to two—and town walls such as those at Melaka. These towns' sturdily built walls featured bastions, which allowed their massed firepower to be brought to bear along the perimeter.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1825–30, the building of a network of small fortified posts was to prove crucial to suppressing Prince Diponegoro's revolt against the Dutch—the last great revolt in Java.<sup>5</sup> Local rulers may sometimes have hoped that they lost little if they retreated with their men, treasure, ships and trade contacts intact, leaving Europeans the form rather than the substance of an entrepôt. The decades were to prove this a fateful miscalculation.

Fuelled by increasing international trade, these bastions—Batavia in particular grew in numbers from 8000 in 1642 to 130,000 in 1670—galloped from strength to strength. From them Europeans could use the monopoly profits from spice and other international trade to buy alliances, deploy small numbers of their own troops and auxiliaries alongside allies and play politics. For instance, when the Dutch VOC (the United East Indies Company, or *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) joined Mataram's Sultan Pakubuwono I against another Javanese potentate in 1706, the Sultan supplied 10,000 men. By contrast, the VOC supplied 930 Europeans and 2500 'Indonesians'.<sup>6</sup> Despite the Dutch gradually gaining the upper hand in their relationships with such Javanese rulers, these limited numbers, both of men and of shipping relative to the Indies' vast coastline, restricted the extent of their inland dominion well into the nineteenth century.

Up to the early nineteenth century, for most Europeans, Southeast Asia thus remained a place viewed mainly from the prows of ships and the walls of fortress-ports. Even their maritime power had to be concentrated against key targets. This allowed Southeast Asians to continue to contest localities and rivers, and to move freely across borders that existed more on maps than in reality, as in central Borneo.<sup>7</sup>

In this respect we should note that industrialisation and the advent of the steamship transformed the degree of European naval supremacy in the nineteenth century, making direct rule outside of deltas and the immediate environs of port cities more practical. This can be seen when we compare the tonnage of three of the main imperial powers with that of the most developed Asian nation: Japan (Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1* Warship tonnage of select powers, 1880–1914

	1880	1900	1914
Britain	650,000	1,065,000	2,714,000
France	271,000	499,000	900,000
USA	169,000	333,000	985,000
Japan	15,000	187,000	700,000

*Source:* Adapted from Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 261.

China lagged further behind, with armoured wooden junks in 1840, when Europe was introducing the first all-metal steamships. Put another way, it has been estimated that in the nineteenth century China's share of world manufacturing output slumped from nearly 33 per cent in 1800 to 6.2 per cent in 1900, while the United Kingdom's soared from 4.3 to over 20 per cent in its peak years in the early 1880s. Furthermore, the sheer pace of development meant that non-European countries were constantly playing 'catch-up' in military technology when they did pursue modernisation. Even Table 2.2 does not give a full picture. Three factors combined to intensify the effect of this European lead.

*Table 2.2* Relative shares of world manufacturing output, 1750–1900

	1750	1800	1860	1900
Europe	23.2	28.1	53.2	62.0
UK	1.9	4.3	19.9	18.5
France	4.0	4.2	7.9	6.8
Russia	5.0	5.6	7.0	8.8
USA	0.1	0.8	7.2	23.6
Japan	3.8	3.5	2.6	2.4
China	32.8	33.3	19.7	6.2
India	24.5	19.7	8.6	1.7

*Source:* Adapted from Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 190.

First, European countries' manufacturing was even more impressive on a per capita basis, and so in terms of spare capital for investment and innovation, given much smaller populations than the likes of India and China. Per capita industrialisation of the 'Third World' may have been about equal to the West in 1750, but only about one-eighteenth by 1900, and one-fiftieth of the level of the United Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

Second, this fed into accelerating technical improvements. By 1870 France's share of manufacturing output was still modest, but its ships and repeating rifles were among the best. Germany, whose share of world manufacturing output was still smaller in 1860 at 4.9 per cent, already possessed excellent breech-loading rather than muzzle-loading field artillery, and one of the best drilled and technically most competent armies. In the 1890s the Europeans added the Maxim gun. Together with efficiently used artillery and the best rifles and bullets, this helped to turn the 1898 battle of Omdurman, in the Sudan, into a massacre. Thousands of Sudanese tribesmen were mown down for a total of fewer than fifty British and Egyptian deaths. Just as China struggled to chase early nineteenth-century improvements in muzzle-loading guns (trigger-firing rather than the unreliable wick-fired flintlocks still used in the Opium War of 1839–42), Europe was moving from the 1870s to 1900 to another level of mobile, breech-loading field artillery and Maxim guns.<sup>9</sup>

Third, technical superiority was compounded, from the eighteenth century onwards, by organisational superiority. The early corruption in overseas companies gradually gave way to bureaucratic and fiscal discipline and standardised procedures. This in turn underpinned the raising of larger forces of well and uniformly equipped, intensely drilled, standing armies, including larger 'colonial forces', whose local troops increasingly served not under their own leaders, but directly under European officers. None of this made Europeans invulnerable, but the cumulative progress did make resistance increasingly costly, and Europeans increasingly willing to intervene. The British expansion in India from the mid-eighteenth century to the 'Mutiny' of 1857–8, an expansion that included the conquest of all of Burma's coastline, was witness to this changing calculus.<sup>10</sup>

Another way of viewing this is in terms of the economic sinews of imperial power, especially the export products that were to underpin the expansion of colonial states, police forces and armies. Between the sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries this was reliant mainly on the spice trade, especially as concentrated on a few islands in the Moluccas (in modern eastern Indonesia, now known as Maluku) and a few ports spread around the region, as well as on taxes on a few key items. The latter notably featured the opium farm that provided upwards of 40 per cent of the revenue of the British-controlled Straits Settlements throughout the nineteenth century, and a not inconsiderable fraction of revenue in British India, Java, French Indochina and elsewhere.

The Spanish in the Philippines added sugar production to these economic underpinnings, and the Dutch coffee as well as sugar when they moved into inland Java. The latter expansion was achieved while keeping the native aristocracy as a ruling layer just below a very few Dutch for most of the interior, while using this relationship to extract tribute or deliveries of Javanese sugar and coffee. But while control of international trade easily funded maritime supremacy, it still did not fund large land forces. Even the development of Java, combined with a relatively cheap style of indirect rule, was insufficient to finance itself. The Dutch United East Indies Company or VOC was bankrupted, and handed its territories over to the Dutch government in 1799.

A further illustration of the uneven nature of European dominance in the eighteenth century can be found in Dutch-VOC relations with Malay States of Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula. The Dutch seized Melaka (Malacca) from the Portuguese in 1641, and easily held this fort, as they did those around the Dutch Indies.

Melaka served as a watch-post in the Strait of Melaka as well as a collecting centre for tin, a highly valuable commodity for trade in Europe. The VOC tried to monopolise the supply of tin, to the chagrin of Malay rulers. This tension reached a climax in the 1780s, when other Europeans, notably the English country traders, tried to undermine the Dutch monopoly with the tacit understanding of some Malay rulers. Renowned Bugis warrior Raja Haji of Riau tried to form a common front against the Dutch and very nearly succeeded in 1784. His efforts were thwarted by the arrival of a naval fleet led by Admiral Peter van Braam, representing the deployment not simply of company strength, as before, but of the military might of the Netherlands fleet itself. Admiral Braam lifted Raja Haji's blockade of Melaka, expelled the Bugis from Riau and Selangor, and imposed a degree of control over both states, thus marking the beginning of the process of imperial control over the Malay Peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

Events in Selangor in 1784 show that the intervention of the metropolitan fleet, while sufficient to boost maritime supremacy, still did not guarantee durability on land.<sup>12</sup> Working with the Siak Sultanate from Sumatra (typically, local leaders viewed the Dutch as a valuable ally in their own disputes), van Braam's fleet of six Dutch Navy warships outgunned the Selangor forces in 1784, seizing coastal Kuala Selangor. They duly installed a Siak prince there, backed by a small Dutch garrison.

But what naval power and local alliance quickly secured, minimal land power soon lost. The Dutch just did not have large enough colonial forces to garrison significant numbers of outposts strongly and consistently. Selangor's Sultan Ibrahim (reigned 1782–1826) drove out the small garrison in June 1785. The Dutch then resorted to the more subtle device of a naval blockade, which secured a July 1786 treaty. Selangor admitted vassal status and promised to sell its tin to the Dutch, but under its original sultan. For most purposes he was left independent. Indeed, he had almost as much to worry about from Thai claims to overlordship in the Malayan peninsula as from Dutch.<sup>13</sup>

This awkward balance of naval and logistical supremacy, but more tenuous dominance on terra firma, persisted until at least the mid-nineteenth century. As late as May 1848, a Dutch expedition could easily use naval power to land on Bali, complete with an army of 2400 (one-third of these being European). Again, naval supremacy was followed by initial defeat on land, at the hands of a local army of 16,000 (1500 with firearms). The ratio of dead favoured the Dutch forces ten to one (200 to 2000), but to no avail. As with Selangor, though, Dutch supremacy in ships and overall resources allowed them to force a final treaty, with the Balinese recognising Dutch overlordship in external affairs, but retaining internal autonomy. Contrast this to the events of 1904, sixty years and several expeditions later: expeditions that had, as yet, failed to finalise Dutch supremacy over all of the island's disunited kingdoms.

On 20 September 1906 a Dutch force advanced on Bali's Denpasar to extract compensation for the pillage of a shipwreck. The Raja led his followers out. Soldiers, officials, wives and children, dressed in ritual white, with flowers in their hair, lined up in full view of the Dutch forces. A priest thrust his dagger into the Raja's chest, whereupon his followers turned their knives on each other. Spurred on by shots, the Dutch further raked the crowd with rifle and artillery fire, leaving a mountain of corpses. This was Balinese *puputan* (ending). Around 1100 Balinese chose death this way in 1906–8 alone. By the latter date, Dutch control was complete. Whatever mix of magic, honour and despair drove these acts—which against indigenous rivals may have constituted last

efforts to wrest victory—they were powerful recognitions of a changed reality: traditional polities could no longer compete.<sup>14</sup>

Again, nineteenth-century European industrialisation was vital in effecting this change. It provided the pull of potential markets, and the push of extra European ships and traders, which were crucial to the development of a new, more pervasive imperialism. Before 1850, areas such as Sumatra, the Malay states and Indochina contributed relatively little to world trade, though much to regional. Then plantations and mines spread rapidly, with vast population movements such as that of the Chinese and Indians into Malaya underpinning this. In the Netherlands Indies alone the transformation was startling. There was a transition, from the 1860s to early 1900s, away from a 'Cultivation System' (*Kultuurstelsel*), based on the forced delivery of export commodities by peasants, to a liberal system of freer trade and production. This was accompanied by a vast expansion in infrastructure.

By 1900 revenue bases were enlarged and more varied, and mass production and export of high compass goods—tin, rubber, rice, as well as the older staples such as coffee and sugar in the Indies—were the rule. In Java, there were 35 kilometres of railway in 1869. By the 1890s most sizeable towns were connected. In the 1890s the newly formed KPM (Royal Dutch Steamship Company) massively expanded inter-island operations. The merchant fleet registered with the Netherlands East Indies multiplied sevenfold between 1870 and 1930, from 880 to 6253 vessels, while exports grew fifteenfold.<sup>15</sup> Advances in technology, including in the field of tropical medicine, robust organisation and the financial muscle necessary to maintain and deploy larger colonial armies, including a majority of locally raised but European equipped, drilled and led forces, were to be vital to 'new imperialism'.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1850 and 1914, when the European powers expanded inland, Southeast Asia underwent a transformation. By 1914 it dominated relatively new

*Table 2.3 Southeast Asian primary production, 1937–1940, in metric tonnes*

	<i>British Malaya and Borneo</i>	<i>British Burma</i>	<i>French Ind ochina</i>	<i>Nethe rlands East Indies</i>	<i>Ame rican Phil ippines</i>	<i>Thailand (indepe ndent)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Perc entage of world prod uction or exports</i>
Abaca	1.2	—	—	—	183	—	184.2	95.6
Cinchona	—	—	—	10.4	—	—	10.4	80
Coffee	—	—	1.5	62.4	3	—	66.9	7
Maize	—	—	565	2,037	427	7	3,036	80
Coconut products	116	—	10	506	54	—	686	73
Palm oil	46	—	—	238	—	—	238	47.6
Pepper	—	—	—	20	—	—	20	70

Petroleum	1,000	–	–	7,400	–	–	9,400	4.5
Rice	324	4,940	3,945	4,007	2,179	1,771	17,165	98
Rubber	501	8	61	432	–	8	1,040	85.2
Sugar	–	39	43	547	1,076	19	1,724	21
Teak(m <sup>3</sup> )	–	475	–	400	–	189	1,064	95
Tin	77	2	1.6	40	–	13.4	134	65

*Source:* Adapted from Chris Dixon, *South East Asia in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 110.

world markets, such as those for rubber, as well as old ones it had previously had a more restricted regional impact on, such as tin.

Perhaps the best symbol of this dual acceleration in European economic penetration and related technical innovation, and the way these began to transform colonial security regimes, is the steamship. Sailing ships continued to dominate trade until the latter years of the nineteenth century, but steam power was increasingly important from its appearance in Southeast Asian waters. The spread of steamships was to play a vital role in stemming piracy from the late 1830s to the 1870s, especially with English and Spanish destruction of communities supporting piracy in the Sulu archipelago and surrounding islands between the Philippines and Borneo.

The expansion of international trade in the late eighteenth century, especially opium going to China and tea from it, had created increased opportunities for piracy. The simultaneous European undermining of strong local regimes, which formerly controlled or co-opted sea-going communities, further increased the danger. Many Bugis, following defeat by the Dutch on Sulawesi, turned to piracy. The Sulu (Jolo) Islands, which lie between the Philippines and Borneo, also found a growing China market for their jungle and maritime produce—notably sea slugs and birds' nests—and took to raiding for slaves to collect it. With the Sulu area falling on the fracture line between British, Spanish and Dutch empires, European action was limited. The 'Iranun' or Lanun pirate fleets grew. People as far apart as the Visayas in the central Philippines and Singapore feared the winds that brought annual raiding fleets.

As with the Dutch in Selangor, Europeans initially found that their naval supremacy had limitations. European navies were foiled by the local fleets' ability to row against the wind and up shallow creeks, and by the relatively small number of European ships available. But between the late 1820s and 1840s steamers began to pursue 'pirate' *perahu*—long, low-lying craft with sails, oarsmen and shallow drafts—against the wind or up shallow creeks, before blowing them out of the water with superior guns. Gradually the era of large raiding fleets of up to a hundred or more *perahu* gave way to one of smaller raiding parties. Technology and overwhelming destructive intent allowed colonial navies, and the English adventurer James Brooke in Borneo from the 1840s, to destroy boats and villages alike. For instance, Tempasuk and Maradu were devastated in 1845, and the Spanish descended upon Balangingi, in the southern Philippine Islands, the same year.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1845 was in some respects pivotal. Three Spanish war steamers or *kapal api* ('fire boats', recently purchased from the British), a coterie of smaller vessels, *Marina Sutil*,<sup>18</sup> and locally raised Zamboangas auxiliaries, assisted by artillery, stormed the *kota* or walled fortification of Balangingi in the southwestern Sulu archipelago. Some 450 Balangingi were killed, forts were raised, seven villages and 150 vessels were destroyed, coconut trees were felled and more men were exiled over the following years. More steamers followed. Eighteen arrived in crates in 1860 alone. The imperial problem was increasingly one of British ships based at Labuan, Borneo, Dutch ships based on the East Coast of Borneo and Spanish ships from Luzon and the Visayas countering smaller pirate attacks around Borneo's myriad creeks. By the 1870s Spanish tactics of sinking anything even vaguely classifiable as a potential pirate made even legitimate indigenous trade difficult in the seas around Sulu.

Nowhere is the impact of technology better symbolised than in the efficacy of the steamships *Diana* and *Nemesis*. The *Diana* was one of three East India Company steamships sent to Burma in the 1824–6 war. Burma's King Bagyidaw, overconfident following his kingdom's wave of expansion, had sought to solve border problems with British India's Assam by war. The Company despatched 40,000 troops to Rangoon, where 'General Disease' soon took the greater part of 15,000 casualties. It took the sending of three steamships to transform the situation. According to Headrick one of these, the *Diana*,

towed sailing ships into position, transported troops, and bombarded Burmese fortifications with her swivel guns and Congreve rockets. The most important function of the *Diana* was to capture Burmese praus, or warboats... By February 1826 the *Diana*, which the Burmese called the 'fire devil', had pushed with the British fleet up to Amarapura, over 400 miles upriver. The King of Burma, seeing his capital [at Ava] threatened, sued for peace.<sup>19</sup>

The King must have been very impressed indeed, since the subsequent Treaty of Yandibaw ceded Manipur, Arakan and Tenasserim, shearing off most of Burma's coastline.

While the *Diana* helped to intimidate Burma in the 1820s, the British steamship *Nemesis* made China's nineteenth-century junks look like relics when it faced them in the Opium War of 1839–42.<sup>20</sup> Built in 1839, this 700 ton, 184 foot long, 29 foot wide vessel featured all-metal design and compartments, and being flat-bottomed drew as little as four and a half feet of water. Going upriver to Guangzhou (Canton) in March 1841 'she practically slithered along the muddy river bed'. Yet despite the shallow draught, which enabled it to project oceanic power up-river, it was still twice the size of a Chinese junk. Here was a vessel that could power ahead regardless of wind, in both rough ocean and shallow river. Furthermore, the European adoption of rifled guns in the eighteenth century, with their greater accuracy and range, meant its two 32-pound guns and five 6-pounders, firing shell and grapeshot, made mincemeat of wooden Chinese forts and junks, which still featured small cannons. Worse still, the junks' guns had limited scope for aiming, short of moving the entire vessel.



Even the ordinary infantryman gained during the campaign, as flintlock muskets were replaced with percussion fired weapons, secure against the damp, while they also benefited from the support of field artillery. Though most European vessels were still sailing warships, the *Nemesis* symbolised a widening technological gap, and foreshadowed the European and American gunboats that were to support Western privileges in China's Treaty Ports up to the Second World War.<sup>21</sup>

More prosaically, from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the relief of troops between Europe and Southeast Asia might have taken two years or longer for a return journey. The advent of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and new modes of communication (notably sea-laid cable from the 1870s) changed this. Now reinforcements might be asked for and sent in months, and in increasing numbers. In the past, the Spanish or the Dutch could send but a few dozen armed men on each ship, paling to insignificance in comparison with Ming Chinese battleships of the early 1400s. By contrast the French could assemble more than 40,000 troops after news reached Paris that Captain Rivière's men in Hanoi were about to be overrun in 1882–3 by a combination of Vietnamese soldiers and Black Flag mercenary Chinese forces. Reinforcements arrived too late to save Rivière's head, which was taken by the dreaded Black Flags during an imprudent sortie, but were able to relieve the citadel and use it as a launchpad for the conquest of northern Vietnam.

Nor were increased firepower, manoeuvrability, upriver penetration and speed of reinforcement the only gains from steampower. Reduced shipping times in larger vessels ensured troops would arrive in a better state of health.<sup>22</sup> Colonial forces still had to operate in what were, to them, alien territories, battling climate and disease as well as unconventional styles of warfare and unforgiving terrain. But they stood an ever increasing chance of arriving in good shape, of adequate supply, of reinforcement and, in extremis, of evacuation.

Many Southeast Asian rulers grasped that the increasing numbers and armament of colonial forces had changed the parameters of power. Some took an interest in new technologies. Vietnam possessed at least four steamers by the 1830s and Vietnam's last independent Emperor, Tu Due, acquired four more between 1865 and 1872.<sup>23</sup> However, the Vietnamese, like the Siamese, Burmese and Chinese, were not able to produce up-to-date steamships in large numbers on their own. A first Vietnamese attempt in 1838 to build a steamship based upon a purchased Western model failed when the engine exploded. A second attempt in 1840 was successful. Even then, imitation implied constantly lagging behind. No Southeast Asian court could compete with Europe's rate and scale of industrialisation, and depth of knowledge on the operation of the very latest technologies. Hence none could expect parity on the battlefield. It was to take the development of a Maoist style of guerrilla warfare, combined with modern weapons left over from the Pacific War, and afterwards supplied by the Soviet Union and China, to rebalance the scales from the 1940s.

That is getting ahead of our story, which is currently situated in the nineteenth century. At that point the advent of the steamship, new types of rifle and other armaments and improvements gave Europeans the initiative. The availability of quinine also reduced the deadliness of malaria, and the accumulation of knowledge about tropical conditions made troops more efficient. But big problems remained.

First, the sheer number of islands in maritime Southeast Asia—about 7100 for the Philippines and more than 13,000 (3000 inhabited) for Indonesia—made the development of further maritime sinews, beyond the handful of ships sufficient for dominating key ports and islands before 1850, vital if domination was to become pervasive.<sup>24</sup> This more numerous presence had to await the late nineteenth century, following additional industrialisation in Europe, and the time required for its ripple effect to roll several thousand miles across the globe, and penetrate even to the recesses and rivers of Southeast Asia.

Second, once an imperial power moved inland it often faced the fracturing of territories into river valleys, forests and mountains. This meant there was always the potential for Southeast Asians to resort to guerrilla tactics. This remained as true in post-Second World War Vietnam as it was in the forty-year long Aceh Wars (1873–1913) and in Filipino opposition to American suppression of their independence (1898 to 1901). It was especially true in less developed regions such as the Burmese highlands and the cordillera in northern Luzon. Here imperialists sometimes resorted to separating highland from lowland rule (the Burmese highlands being a classic case, as well as the northern Luzon cordillera), and working through local rulers in the former.<sup>25</sup> Even the United States initially resorted to enlisting the help of local Muslim chiefs or *datus* in the Muslim-dominated island of Mindanao, in the southern Philippines, before gradually taking more direct control.

Postcolonial states have tended to experience problems policing these same areas, in part due to differing topographies and identities there, in part due to the legacy of their separate administration under imperial regimes, and in some cases (notably Burma) due to an additional imperial preference for recruiting these minorities as colonial forces.

Population densities hence mattered and, to return to our opening theme of demographics, Europe faced in Southeast Asia an area that was not only technically less advanced, but also relatively sparsely populated. By contrast to South-east Asia's 80–85 million people, Europe in 1900, with its 300 million for an area not dissimilar in size, boasted three to four times the population. Britain, France and Germany all had populations of over 40 million. Ironically, however, the Netherlands—the European power overseeing Java's 1900 population of 29 million people (one of the densest in Southeast Asia)—had a population of just five million. All this is without reckoning on the United States, which in December 1898 purchased from Spain the title to the Philippines, with its 7000 plus islands supporting a meagre seven million people.

What was true of 1800 or even 1900 was, however, becoming far less true by 1941. The populations of Europe and Southeast Asia grew at very different rates. When Hirschman wrote in 1994, he could say that:

From a demographic base less than one-third that of European in 1900, Southeast Asia will have a population larger than Europe's in the year 2000. Europe's population will have expanded by about 60 per cent over the century while Southeast Asia's population has grown more than sixfold. In the year 2000, the largest European country of Germany will have about 83 million people compared to the largest Southeast Asian country of Indonesia which will have a population of almost 218 million. Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines will each be considerably more

populous than the major European countries of France, the United Kingdom, and Italy.<sup>26</sup>

Putting all this together, we can tabulate the rough populations of Southeast Asian countries for 1900, the 1940s high-water mark of European imperialism, the 1980s and today, thus giving both snapshots of the region, and a sense of the breathless rate of change. For the sake of comparison, we provide two tables, the first (Table 2.4) covering Asia, the second (Table 2.5) covering those imperial powers that had a major role in Southeast Asia. For Europe as a whole, figures corresponding to the 15 countries that made up the 1995–2003 European Union seem more relevant, if not figures for the main few colonising powers of Britain, France, the Netherlands and Portugal. Either way, these involve narrower definitions of Europe than that used by Hirschman and hence smaller figures for Europe's population.

Nevertheless, the two tables confirm the relative underpopulation of prenineteenth and nineteenth-century Southeast Asia. Added to that, Reid has concluded that prior to 1800 Southeast Asian population growth rates were low.<sup>27</sup> These figures also confirm that Europe leaped ahead in terms of population in the nineteenth century. Most of the rest of the world enjoyed a similar phenomenon later, in the twentieth century, just as Europe's growth slowed. The result was that the challenge for Europeans ruling Southeast Asians, and Asians in general, became greater in demographic terms as the twentieth century wore on. This challenge was further compounded by the growth of a new European-educated generation of anti-colonialists after 1914, who could voice their grievances in the language of the colonising power, and adapt modern methods of political organisation to ferment strikes, riots and coup attempts.

Another way of looking at the figures is to focus on the greatest imperial systems of power that have impacted on the region. Perhaps the greatest in overall scope and power were the Chinese (here meaning the Ming dynasty in its fifteenth-century ventures) and the modern British and Japanese. We will look at these first, and then the smaller scale French and Dutch afterwards for comparison. Portugal and Spain, among the greatest imperial powers in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, merit comparatively little mention, since by the late nineteenth century they were minor players: Portugal being reduced to the tiny possession of East Timor; Spain being replaced by the United States in the Philippines in 1898. First, it is as well to get a sense of the overall changes in the world's population so that, again, figures such as '10,000 crack troops' (the number of soldiers on a Ming Chinese fleet sailing Southeast Asian waters in 1407) make more sense (Table 2.6).

It goes without saying that China outstrips Southeast Asia in demographic terms, and that this was even more the case before 1900. In 1400, when the Ming Chinese empire was on the cusp of expanding further into Yunnan, and for a while into present-day Vietnam, the world population was between 400 and 500 million. Of these about 60 million were in Europe, and 75 million in

*Table 2.4 Southeast Asia and comparative population figures for 1800–2000<sup>a</sup>*

	<i>c.1800<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>c.1900</i>	<i>c.1940</i>	<i>c.1980</i>	<i>2000</i>
<i>Southeast Asia</i>	33 m	80–85 m	146 m	350 m	524 m
Brunei Darussalam	–	18,000–20,000	40,657 (1947)	192,832	339,000
Burma (Myanmar)	4.6 m	10.5 m	16.12 m (1939)	29 m (1973)	48.78m
Cambodia	<1 m (1860s)	1.7 m (early 1900s)	See Vietnam	5.8 m (1963)	12.23 m
Indonesia	5–10 m (Java figures for 1800 and 1845) <sup>c</sup>	40 m (c.29 m Java, 11 m Outer Islands)	69.43 m (1939)	146.93 m (1980)	212 m
Laos	1.2 m (1800 incl. northeast Thailand)	0.6–0.8 m (early 1900s estimate for just Laos)	See Vietnam	3 m (1985)	5.4 m
Malaya (1800–1963), Malaysia (1963–2004)	0.5 m (1800) to 0.75 m mid-century, Pattani included	2.4 m (1911) <sup>d</sup>	4.74 m (1941)	13.43 m (1980, now including Borneo States)	23.17 m
Philippines	2 m (1800) of whom 0.23 m Mindanao and Sulu	7.6 m (1903)	16.36 m (1940)	48 m (1980)	75.96 m
Singapore	<i>c.</i> 1000 (1819)	226,842 (1901)	769,216 (1941)	2.41 m (1980)	4.01 m <sup>e</sup> (3.26 m resident)
Thailand	2.8 m	8.3 m (1911)	14.46 m (1937)	45 m (1980)	62.32 m
	<i>c.1800<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>c.1900</i>	<i>c.1940</i>	<i>c.1980</i>	<i>2000</i>
East Timor/Timor Leste <sup>f</sup>	–	–	461,000	555,350 (1980)	924,642(2004)
Vietnam	7 m (north and centre only)	13 m (estimate for all Indochina in 1906)	23.5 m (1938, all Indochina)	53 m (1979)	79.83 m
<i>India</i>	73 m	238.4 m (1901)	318.6 m (1941)	675 m (1981)	1002 m
<i>China</i>	100 m (Minσ). 360	368 m (1911)	582.6 m (1953)	1008 m (1981)	1275 m

m (1812)

<sup>a</sup> Million indicated by 'm'. There were considerably more Southeast Asian polities in 1800 than this list of those that survived into the twenty-first century. Most 1900 figures from Charles Hirschman, 'Population and Society in Twentieth-century Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, 2 (1994), pp. 381–406. Figures for Southeast Asia 2000 from UN ESCAP, *Population and Development Indicators*:

www.enescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/data\_sheet/2000/index.asp (2000). Southeast Asia 1940 figures from Peter Duus, 'Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues', in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Meyers and Mark Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. xiii. China and India pre-1981 from census reports as compiled in <http://www.geohive.com/>, China and India in 2000 from Office of National Statistics (UK), *Population Trends*, 115 (Spring 2004), p. 37, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>

<sup>b</sup> For pre-1800 Southeast Asia, mostly see Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, Vol. I (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Compare Reid (see note b) to Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (London: Curzon, 2000), pp. 69–70. Reid's figures make Java's population smaller than the outer islands (3.5 million for Sumatra alone) in 1800.

<sup>d</sup> The Malay States, sovereign though accepting British advice, totalled nearly 1.96 million in 1911, the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca as then spelt and Singapore) adding 714,069. Penang and Malacca only joined a Malayan Union in 1946. For the sake of comparison, 'Malaya' figures include Penang and Malacca and exclude Singapore.

<sup>e</sup> The last Singapore figure includes 0.75 million non-residents (foreign workers and expatriates). Singapore figures are from Constance Mary Turnbull, *A History of Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 5; Saw Swee-Hock, 'Population Growth and Control', in Ernest Chew and Edwin Lee (eds), *A History of Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 219–41; Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 296; and government statistics for 2000.

<sup>f</sup> Portuguese conquest was sixteenth century, Dutch seizure of West Timor 1613. Indonesia occupied East Timor from 1975 to a 1999 independence vote. Timor-Leste became independent on 20 May 2002.

*Table 2.5 Population figures for imperial powers in Southeast Asia, 1800–2000<sup>a</sup>*

Country	c.1800	c.1900	c. 1940–50	c.1980	2000
Europe (excluding Russia, USSR and successor states) <sup>b</sup>	119 m <sup>c</sup> (1800)	300 m, Hirschman, all Europe except Russia	—	356 m (1981)	375 m
UK, France, Netherlands and Portugal	48.3 m (Spain would add 10.5 m)	90.5 m	111 m (1950)	134.58 m	143.55 m
UK <sup>d</sup>	15.89 m (1801)	41.45m	48.23 m (1940) 50.61 m (1950)	56.35 m (1981)	58.8m
France	27.4 m	38.5m	42.5 m (1950)	54.18 m (1981)	58.89m
Netherlands	2.1 m	5.1 m	9.6 m (1950)	14.25 m	15.86 m

				(1981)	
Portugal	2.9 m	5.4 m	8.4 m (1950)	9.8 m (1981)	10 m
Germany	23 m	56.4m	69.1 m (1950)	78.4 m (1981)	82 m
Japan	24.89 m (1792) <sup>c</sup>	43.8 m (1898)	71 m	117.9 m (1981)	126.87 m
USA	5.3 m	76.2 m	132.16m	228 m (1981)	275.3 m

<sup>a</sup> Million indicated by 'm'. For sources, see also Table 2.4. Most figures for 1900 column from Charles Hirschman, 'Population and Society in Twentieth-century Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, 2 (1994), pp. 381–406. World and Europe estimates (defined as the 1995–2003 EU 15, excluding Eastern Europe) from 1980 from Office of National Statistics (UK), *Population Trends*, 115 (Spring 2004), p. 37, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/> Japan and USA pre-1981 from census reports as compiled in <http://www.geohive.com/>.

<sup>b</sup> For post-1980 Europe figures (defined as the 1995–2003 EU 15) see Office of National Statistics (UK), *Population Trends*, 115 (Spring 2004), p. 37. For pre-1980 Netherlands figures excluding Belgium, see Chris Cook and John Stevenson, *Modern European History, 1763–1985* (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 216–17.

<sup>c</sup> Brian Graham, *Modern Europe* (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 67, for Europe excluding the centre (Poland, Slavic states), Balkans and Russia.

<sup>d</sup> Pre-1980 UK figures from Chris Cook and Brendan Keith, *British Historical Facts, 1830–1900* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 232–3.

<sup>e</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), p. 53, for 'the common people'.

*Table 2.6* Growth of world population

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
5000 BCE	5–20 million
0	200 million
1300 CE	400 million
1650	500 million
1700	600 million
1750	700 million
1800	900 million
1850	1.2 billion
1900	1.6 billion
1950	2.4 billion
1975	4 billion
1999	6 billion <sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [www.un.org/esa/population/publications/sixbillion/sixbillion.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/sixbillion/sixbillion.htm)

Source: Ralph Tomlinson, *Population Dynamics and Consequences of World Demographic Change* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 18.

China. By comparison, Reid estimates 23 million for Southeast Asia as late as 1600, and 33 million for 1800.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, both Europe and China were about to enjoy population growth spurts, with relatively few years of overwhelming famine, pestilence or military devastation. China's population went from about 75 to 100 million, and Europe from about 60 to 80 million, in a fifteenth century that saw about 100 million added to the world's population. At a time when many areas of Southeast Asia were very scantily populated, Ming China could field well over a million troops, albeit most scattered around China's interior, or needed to secure its borders.<sup>29</sup> This is also significant with regard to Europe. Celebrated battles such as that of Agincourt in 1415, during which 6000 English defeated 30,000 French, clearly suggest a much smaller scale of forces.

An opposite point about demographics is that, even when Europe was at its peak as a percentage of world population and its relative technological lead—in the nineteenth century—many of the European imperial powers were still tiny compared to their empires. Even the largest, such as France and Britain, possessed empires far larger than the metropolitan territories, in terms both of area and population. Britain alone, at its peak, controlled as much as a quarter of the world's surface area.

Hence several perennial dilemmas continued to haunt the management of imperial forces. There were never enough Europeans available to garrison imperial possessions. They were more susceptible to die of what were to them exotic diseases than in battle, and the maintenance of supply routes remained a significant problem. Those willing to serve were not always of the character desired either, as Meixsel's Chapter 7 notes for the United States in the Philippines. This is all the more surprising given the small numbers needed there. In the 1920s there were about 12,000 troops in the Philippines (around 7000 Philippine Scouts and 4500 Americans). The latter figure was the United States' contribution to the entire Philippine garrison. Even then, most of these troops were concentrated on the fortress-islands strung like teeth across the entrance to Manila Bay, and two inland military camps near Manila (Fort McKinley and Camp Stotsenburg).<sup>30</sup>

The British in particular mastered the art of the possible, of controlling millions with a core of only thousands of white soldiers and administrators, when conquering British India. That is, they mastered the art of ruling outlying areas lightly, with District Officers able to call mainly on a handful of native police under European officers. They also refined the techniques involved in raising and managing 'native' troops commanded by small numbers of European officers and NCOs.<sup>31</sup> Even after the First World War, the British ran India, with its 300 million plus people and rising nationalism, with an army of 206,000, about a third being British (and even fewer English). More shockingly, they ran Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) backed up by just one battalion of African troops (800 men commanded by 30 British officers and NCOs). In 1914 British Malaya (roughly the size of England) and the Straits Settlements, with the combined population of the two overtaking three million around the war, were secured by just two battalions of troops

(one British, one Indian), supplemented by the paramilitary Malay States Guides and volunteer forces.<sup>32</sup>

To get a better idea of just how tight the situation could be, consider the forces available in the Dutch or Netherlands East Indies: present-day Indonesia. The Netherlands in the seventeenth century had a population of about 1.5 million, reaching 6 million in 1830, before Belgian secession in 1830 scaled it back to 2.5 million. Yet five thousand ships sailed from Holland between 1605 and 1795 carrying a million people. Of these a mere one in three returned. Consequently, other European towns and states supplied most of the soldiers on VOC ships.<sup>33</sup> It should be no surprise, then, that before 1799 the VOC relied heavily on alliances with local leaders to bulk out its own forces. This was sufficient to secure an essentially commercial project by a government-backed company that was largely limited to the control of trading posts, rather than the administration of an entire country. Even after the Netherlands government took over the Indies, in 1799, and after the Napoleonic Wars were out of the way, VOC forces comprised just 5500 Europeans and 5000 Indonesians in 1815.

The Java War of 1825–30 subsequently forced the Dutch to expand their meagre forces. The Netherlands Indies population was by then already larger than that of the Netherlands, and would reach 40 million by 1900. This population was secured by a colonial army (KNIL: Royal Netherlands Indies Army or *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*), which increased from about 29,000 in 1861 (including around 14,500 Javanese) to a peak of about 40,000 men (including 18,000 Europeans) in the mid-1890s.<sup>34</sup> By the latter date the colonial government was in the final stages of vastly increasing its territories. Forces then simmered down to about 38,000 (including 15,000 Europeans) in 1901.<sup>35</sup> The 1901 figure included around 23,000 ‘Indonesians’, among whom 3800 were Ambonese.

By then the Aceh War had had a major impact, at first negative and later positive, on Dutch confidence. In 1871 an Anglo-Dutch treaty had removed previous British insistence that Aceh—the northernmost state on the island of Sumatra—remain independent. Notwithstanding British preference for preserving trade links there, it was better for weak Dutch imperialism to move in, rather than risk increasingly assertive Americans or others doing so. A force of 8500 troops, half as many servants and coolies again, and 1500 reserves duly took the Acehnese capital (on a second attempt) in 1874. Then it became bogged down in guerrilla-style warfare against fighters led by local chiefs, and *ulama* or religious leaders. This was a potent brew of ‘nationalism’—Aceh had a proud history—and of jihad. The Dutch lost up to 150 men a month to cholera alone, disease maintaining its just reputation as the most fearsome enemy of colonial armies, and the Dutch appetite for expansion was dampened.<sup>36</sup>

Then in the 1890s KNIL officer Van Heutsz (Governor of Aceh 1898–1904, Governor-General of the Indies 1904–9) mastered the art of using small forces of *Marechaussee*. These local troops were organised in groups of fifteen to eighteen, with European carbines and short native *klewang* (sword), under a European officer and two NCOs: one European and one ‘Native’. *Marechaussee* units, sometimes abandoning strict drill and even shoes for a counter-insurgent style, combined disciplined firepower and flexibility and close-quarters effectiveness amidst *alang-alang* (elephant grass). Van Heutsz combined their deployment with the assuagement of local leaders or *uleebelang*. His tactics, of European-led but mainly locally raised forces, in flexible columns and



backed by light artillery, was made more potent by the discovery that treating Islam favourably also undermined opposition.

The Aceh conflict simmered down, though it never died out. The Dutch went on to subdue most of the rest of the outer islands within a decade. Van Heutsz even penned a standard 'Short Declaration' (1898) for rulers to sign, replacing their former obligation merely to recognise Dutch sovereignty in general with a requirement to follow all such general orders as the colonial government should issue.<sup>37</sup> In addition, by the turn of the century improvements in army conditions—better clothing, knowledge of medicine, terrain and even how to keep water fresh longer—were having a cumulative effect.

The *Marechaussee* also paved the way for mixing Javanese and other ethnic groups in other KNIL units from 1910.<sup>38</sup> But despite their success, the Dutch continued to favour 'martial races' from minority populations. They especially favoured Christian converts such as the Timorese, Menadonese (from northern Sulawesi) and Ambonese. The latter came from islands forming part of the Moluccas in the east of the Indonesian archipelago, and in particular from the small spice island of Ambon, which had been subjugated by the East India Company in the seventeenth century. 'Ambonese' recruits in fact came not just from the island of Ambon, but from surrounding islands as well.<sup>39</sup> 'Ambonese' numbers continued to expand, from 733 in 1871 to more than 5000 in 1911, and slightly more than 10,000 in 1918. As a percentage, 'Ambonese' were about 7 per cent of the local, non-European component of forces in 1861, 16 per cent in 1901 and nearly 30 per cent by 1918.<sup>40</sup> Debates raged in the 1910s and 1920s on the martial qualities of different groups, and the best way to combine them. In theory the resulting decision was to equalise pay, though in practice Ambonese maintained higher pay as 'first class' rather than 'second class' soldiers, and most officers expressed a preference for them as late as 1935.<sup>41</sup>

It becomes clear, then, that recruitment of ethnic minority soldiers intensified with the Dutch expansion of direct territorial rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Bali, Lombok, northern Sumatra and other areas were brought under increased Dutch control. Yet despite the wide casting of the net in favour of 'Ambonese', and of non-Javanese in general, and despite ambivalence about majority Javanese, the demands of expanding direct rule meant that the biggest manpower pool, the Javanese, could not be ignored. By 1905 Ricklefs has Javanese' comprising 68 per cent of the Indonesian troops. The 'Ambonese', whose Moluccan islands provided a tiny recruiting pool, had now risen to 21 per cent of the total.<sup>42</sup> They continued to provide a vital source of reliable NCOs, but could never be the mainstay for colonial forces.<sup>43</sup> A more sophisticated breakdown of numbers reveals that the Dutch KNIL used several groups, in addition to Europeans and Ambonese, to continue to counterbalance the Javanese majority. By 1937 the 'Indonesian' component of the KNIL included 12,700 Javanese, 5100 Menadonese, 4000 Ambonese, 1800 Sundanese, 1100 Timorese and 400 assorted others.<sup>44</sup>

The Dutch thus remained ambivalent towards soldiers from the nominally Muslim Javanese population. In this respect imperial preference struggled against demographic reality. Twice, in the First World War and in the 1930s, the Dutch rejected local nationalist calls for the raising of a 'native' militia force.

By the late 1930s the colonial army had expanded again, by about a third, to 60,000 and counting, but the population of the Netherlands Indies had expanded by a similar proportion. In addition, the 1920s had seen the growth of Indonesian nationalism, and an abortive communist-influenced revolt in parts of Java and Sumatra, in 1926–7. By 1939

Indonesia's total population was nearly 70 million. Put another way, even with rising nationalism, the Dutch were ruling their colony with a ratio of less than one soldier for every 1000 people. By comparison, in 1930 the United Kingdom's armed forces represented one member of the armed forces for every 100 in the population.<sup>45</sup>

In short, a small metropolitan Dutch population was long reliant on non-Dutch Europeans—notably Germans and Belgians—to help make up the 'European' component' of its forces. As it switched from indirect imperial force (alliances with local chiefs and their men together with small numbers of company troops) to direct methods, it tried to use minorities as ballast against majority Javanese. But, despite improving Ambonese service conditions from the mid-nineteenth century—with better pay, prestige and pensions—and despite increasing recruitment efforts in the outer islands, the Dutch still found they had to rely on the majority for the largest number of recruits. The limited recruiting pool for minorities (at one point it was observed that too much recruitment endangered the Ambonese economy) and the problems of moving minority soldiers across an archipelago stretching more than 3600 kilometres from Aceh in Sumatra to the Moluccas in the east saw to that.

The Dutch did briefly experiment with using West Ashante troops from Africa in the 1840s (around 2100 being used in the period 1837–42), but ended this after mutinies, and after British complaints that the Ashante king had been selling his slaves for enlistment. There simply was not either a large metropolitan pool or any other reservoir for imperial troops that might play a similar role to British India.<sup>46</sup>

What is notable here then is the small number of troops to population (40,000 in 1900 for 40 million colonial subjects, 60,000 in the 1930s for nearly 70 million), the relatively high ratio of Europeans to Indonesians at a third to almost a half, the gap between fact and fantasy as regards preferences for 'martial' races, and the way ambivalence towards majority populations prevented their more effective use.

The reliance on locally recruited ethnic minorities was even less practical for the French in the early stages of their conquest of Indochina. In contrast to the Dutch situation in 1800—when conquests from the seventeenth century had secured outposts in areas such as the Moluccas and Celebes/Sulawesi—the French had not previously controlled any part of Vietnam, despite French missionaries having converted entire villages from the seventeenth century. Perhaps more crucially, ethnic Vietnamese (or *kinh*) made up the large majority of those lowlands populations that first came under French control. The people in the periphery, in particular the mountains, would only come under direct French rule at a later stage.

The French, initially together with a Spanish force from Manila that included Filipino soldiers, occupied the main southern port of Saigon in 1859. This followed attacks on missionaries and Catholics, and was accompanied by dreams of securing a staging post for trade with China. The Vietnamese Emperor, with his capital at Hue in the country's centre, ceded the six southern provinces around Saigon in two phases, in 1862 and 1867. These then constituted the Colony of Cochinchina, which contained fewer than three million people.<sup>47</sup> France also made sparsely populated Cambodia a protectorate in 1863, against a background of Siamese and Vietnamese pressure on that territory. Central Vietnam (Annam) and the more heavily populated north (Tonkin) were made into protectorates in 1883–5, though not fully pacified until 1897.<sup>48</sup> Together the four territories of Cochinchina, Cambodia, Annam and Tonkin were formed into the Union of

Indochina in 1887 under the leadership of a governor-general. Laos was added as a new protectorate in 1893.

To help to police these territories, a 1700 strong Vietnamese regiment of *tirailleurs* (riflemen) was raised in 1879 in Cochinchina. Substantive expansion came with the conquest of Tonkin and Annam in the 1880s, a brief war with China in 1884–5 and the repression of a royalist guerrilla movement into the 1890s. Initially there was a complex pattern, with ‘natives’ being raised under four headings: civil guard or militiamen paid for by the protectorate; *Tirailleurs Tonkinois* infantrymen of the first three regiments paid for by the Navy (traditionally responsible for overseas expansion); a fourth regiment of infantry paid by the Ministry of War; and the *Chasseurs Annamites* paid out of the Vietnamese royal treasury. This is excluding irregulars, such as coolies, partisans and village militia temporarily constituted in disturbed areas.

This hodgepodge of forces was much simplified between 1886 and 1891, ultimately into two main categories: colonial infantrymen and civil guards. By the 1930s the Indochinese army component could boast some 31 battalions, around 20 of them indigenous, and right up to 1939 there were just 30,000 troops (17,500 Indochinese and 12,500 Europeans), of whom nearly two-thirds were in Tonkin and nearly one-third in Cochinchina. With just 23 million people in French Indochina by 1939, this represents a higher ratio of troops to soldiers than in the Netherlands Indies, at approximately one for every 750. The proportion of European soldiers was broadly similar.

The high proportion of Europeans is partly explained by the lengthy pacification of Tonkin up to 1897. Even thereafter, the hard-won Gallic peace was occasionally disrupted by anti-French movements and agitation, including patriotic attempts to suborn garrisons, and the threat of unrest in volatile China spilling over into Tonkin. From an early plan to poison the Hanoi garrison in 1908 and several attempts during the First World War when French troop presence was at a minimum, violent Vietnamese anti-colonialism erupted again in the Yen Bay mutiny of February 1930. The latter was an unsuccessful attempt to spark a military rebellion on the model of China’s 1911 revolution. If Chinese nationalists had helped to spark a revolt among the Chinese Army and end over 250 years of Manchu rule, the French had every reason to fear that Vietnamese nationalists might eventually master the same trick. The Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD, Vietnamese Nationalist Party), modelled on the Chinese Kuomintang, certainly tried at Yen Bay and several other garrisons. The army and the militia forces ultimately stood firm, both then and in a subsequent, harshly repressed communist-influenced peasant uprising of 1930–1 in central Vietnam. The French subsequently drove the VNQDD and communists underground, but the fears these events inspired continued to haunt the management of colonial troops.<sup>49</sup>

It is scarcely surprising, in these circumstances, that the French concentrated their troop deployment around potentially rebellious population centres, as well as along frontiers. Around 1930, nearly two-thirds of a total of 30,000 troops were stationed in Tonkin, along its border and around its main urban centres with their larger European populations. Most of the remaining one-third were in Cochinchina, mainly concentrated around Saigon.

The French also tried to increase recruitment from non-Vietnamese groups, notably from the Highlands. But given their relatively small numbers the main emphasis was on improving surveillance and control of Vietnamese troops. The declaration of war in

Europe, in 1939, then reversed French caution. A tripling of forces by 1940—a period that saw French defeat in Europe and the establishment there of the Vichy Republic in 1940—saw the European component creep up to 14,500, while the Indochinese soared to 75,500.<sup>50</sup>

Even worse, the French were forced to tolerate Japanese military bases in the country from 1940 to 1941, and were finally ousted by the Japanese *coup de force* of 9 March 1945. This set the scene for the rise, in the mountainous north of Tonkin, of the communist-led, anti-Japanese *Viet Minh* front. With a war-induced famine killing up to two million of Tonkin's eight million people in 1945, the French were soon faced with the prospect of having to mount a second colonial invasion of the country, against armed resistance, and in the face of a population that had witnessed humiliation of the French at the hands of the Japanese.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, Indochina's army had been supplemented by a Civil Guard (variously called the *Garde civile* (in Cochinchina) or *Garde indigène* (in the protectorate territories). The latter originated from the *Police indigène* and 'native' guards. The *Police indigène* had been formed in 1863, under civil control, and tasked with maintaining order after the army had pacified areas. It was fixed at about 300–400 per province, as a kind of National Guard or armed police, whose members were liable mainly for local service. Their duties included manning prisons, guarding public buildings and supporting the civil power. It was rebranded subsequent to a Cambodian revolt of 1885–6 (and the conquest of Tonkin), which necessitated finding extra forces. The resulting *Garde civile* or *Garde indigène* (one each for Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, Cambodia and Laos) reached 4150 for Tonkin alone by 1886, and 8800 in 1891.

Thus expanded, the Civil Guard saw its duties increased to include action against banditry and regional revolts. Conscription was introduced along the lines of the pre-existing Vietnamese model, in the form of directing village heads to provide a number of men for three-year periods of service. As with the Dutch, however, the French struggled to secure the desired level of European officers, which in the 1890s was six per battalion of 345, and also faced the problem of the low pay and prestige of the *Garde* compared to its European officers.

The French also suffered from tensions over who should control military and quasi-military operations. At worst this could disintegrate into standoffs in the 1880s, as neither Civil Guard nor army were sure whose responsibility an action was. Was one dealing with mere bandits (the Civil Guard) or organised rebels (the army)? Squabbles were alleviated in Tonkin by distinguishing between border areas requiring external defence and the Red River Delta from 1886 requiring mainly civil guard. Then in 1891 *Territoires Militaires* were created in the northern highland regions bordering China, giving the military unfettered authority there. This meant the military could use its own intelligence forces, raise auxiliaries in the form of partisans and dabble in politics in these areas as required. In civilian-controlled areas, the civilians could use their Civil Guard to try their hand at war. In effect fiefs were created to be dominated by either the military or civil power. Both army and Civil Guard, meanwhile, could call upon the support of local police, and the *Linh Co*, the latter being guards charged with assisting local Mandarins and officials.<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately the biggest source of military-civilian tensions, the question of authority, was resolved in 1891 by making the highest-ranking general in French Indochina

subordinate to the Governor-General. The decree that appointed Jean-Louis de Lanessan as Governor-General also made him the Superior Commander of the troops. Lanessan was made the sole correspondent with France. French Indochina's generals henceforth had to direct all correspondence with the metropole through the office of the Governor-General. Ironically, during the 1939–45 period, a general and then an admiral were chosen by Paris and then Vichy respectively to direct French Indochina through the Second World War.

Indochina in turn must be seen as part of a wider French system of imperial power. In 1900, Tonkinese *tirailleurs* were deployed in the punitive expedition against the Boxers. Large-scale use abroad of Vietnamese soldiers, and labourers, started midway through the First World War, when Paris was in dire need of support. From late 1915, more than 80,000 Vietnamese were shipped to France, about half as soldiers, the others as war labourers. Some served on the Western Front, others in the Mediterranean theatre of war. After drastic postwar reductions, Vietnamese soldiers were again sent to Europe from 1922, though the number overseas appears not to have exceeded 10,000 at any one time. This was further decreased from the late 1920s, and especially in the 1930s after the Yen Bay Mutiny.

Reasons for this reverse included their misuse as 'lackeys' of the French army rather than proper training as infantry, and fear they were bringing metropolitan ideals of liberty and racial equality back to Indochina. French Indochina nevertheless remained a manpower pool. During the Second World War about 7000 Indochinese soldiers, mainly Vietnamese, served in France, despite France's rapid defeat. Vietnamese were also used in French concessions in China from about 1925. Even after French defeat at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which ushered in the end of French involvement in Indochina, units made up from men initially recruited there were deployed in Algeria until 1960.

The French, with fear of demographic eclipse by Germany, thus attempted to utilise Indochina as a manpower reservoir for the metropolis, as well as for its overseas interests in the Mediterranean and Asia. Again, 'Southeast Asia' has to be seen as just one component of a bigger imperial system. The use of Indochinese troops was, however, on a smaller scale than that for Africans, whose forces, such as the distinctive *Zouaves* infantry from Algeria, had been used in the conquest of Tonkin. In French West Africa, where there was a tradition of *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, the conscription of a *Force Noire* began in 1912. In total, some 215,000 French colonial troops, mainly from North and West Africa, served in France in the First World War. After 1918, French African soldiers served in the occupation of the Rhineland, and as far away as the Levant (less so in Indochina, as it was found that the Vietnamese disliked black African soldiers).<sup>53</sup> In 1940, when France sought an armistice from Germany, there were 80,000 African troops in the French front line, and De Gaulle's 'Free French' forces also built upon an African base.<sup>54</sup>

The British were in a still stronger position. They possessed the unique advantage of having British India pay for a combination of upwards of 60,000 British and 150,000 Indian troops during the late nineteenth century. This Indian Army had its roots in the switch of the English East India Company, from the mid-eighteenth century, from subcontracting recruitment to local Indian recruiters who provided *sepoys* (soldiers) virtually on a contract basis under their own commanders, to gradually formalising an Indian *sepooy* army directly under British officers. The latter increasingly organised Indian

troops along European lines, with regular pay and training allowing better drill, loyalty and discipline. Its utility as a reserve did not derive from hugely inflated numbers; the ratio of Indian Army troops to population was not notably high. It came from its early professionalism, its mobility when combined with British maritime power and its sheer scale making the finding of forces of a few hundred or even a few thousand for individual Southeast Asian interventions manageable.

This was helped by the limited scale of Britain's Southeast Asian territories, in comparison to India with its population of 318 million in 1941. Even at their pre-1941 peak Southeast Asian territories under British protection had a combined population of fewer than 23 million. These territories included Burma and its 16 million people, the Straits Settlements Colony (Penang from 1786, Singapore from 1819 and Malacca from 1824), British Borneo territories (the Brooke dynasty in Sarawak from the 1840s, the British North Borneo Company in the 1880s and British protection over the Brunei Sultanate as well from that time) and the Malay States.

British Indian forces did not need to be stationed in Southeast Asia in very large numbers, by Indian standards, to do the job required. Admittedly, Burma was gradually conquered (in three wars from 1824 to 1885) as a border territory of India, and administered as an Indian province until 1937, with mainly Indian soldiers in its army and frontier force until after that date. But elsewhere only the tiniest garrisons of Indian and British troops were required, secure in the knowledge, not least the 'native' knowledge, that more could be rushed to the spot in a crisis. The Malay aristocracy in Perak had the unpleasant experience of confirming this in 1874–5. In 1874 some of them, by the 'Pangkor Engagement', promised to accept a British Resident to advise the Sultan, and 'accept' that advice on all matters except custom and religion. When it turned out that British 'advice' extended to issues such as freeing 'slaves', revolt raged, a Resident was murdered and Indian *sepoys* were rapidly brought to the Malay state to make British advice persuasive. Subsequent British Residents to Malay States—the last of nine states to hold out accepted an adviser in 1914—could assume that the need to heed their advice was understood, even if the reality was that London was loath to spend money and blood without compelling reason.

It is difficult to gauge the effect, but the prestige of an imperial system of power such as the British, with its large manpower reserves, and the degree to which it could make itself seem part of the furniture of an age were arguably important weapons in themselves. While Malay Sultans and later Filipino nationalists might quickly learn that resistance, at least large-scale violent resistance by regular forces, was largely futile, Acehnese Muslim leaders learned the opposite: that Dutch numbers were limited and Acehnese mountains and forests neverending. Besides, if Aceh had once been Mecca's verandah in the east (as an early Southeast Asian convert to Islam), it may have drawn spiritual strength from a feeling of being part of its own bigger system, an international *ummah* or Islamic community.

At the same time, the bigger imperial systems were particularly vulnerable to signs that their prestige, and overall strength, might be declining. Hence in February 1915, when British troops were reduced almost to nothing in Singapore as part of a wartime concentration on Europe—and the German cruiser *Emden* ranged the nearby seas sinking British vessels and shelling Penang—it seemed Britain's power was not so omnipotent. This was the moment the Indian Fifth Light Infantry regiment, fearing it might be sent to

fight fellow Muslims in Turkey, chose to mutiny. The mutiny was put down by a mishmash of army technical arms, volunteers and even Japanese sailors. But the reverberations of Japan's rise—with its defeat first of China in 1894–5 and then of Russia in 1904–5—were to be felt much more profoundly, symbolised by the remorseless rise of Japanese exports in the years between the world wars. Most of all, as we shall see in Chapter 9 by Abu Talib, it was the explosion of Japan's imperial system of power into Southeast Asia that was radically to reshape the contours of the region and its military forces.

This brings us to another imperial system, and another time, namely the early 1940s. As with the Ming Chinese and British expansions, Japan's forward movement into Southeast Asia came after decades of economic penetration, culminating in a wave of cheap textiles, bicycles, toys and chinaware in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as investment in mining, plantations and fishing. Some poor Malays welcomed the Japanese in 1941 and 1942, in expectation not so much of racial liberation as of a further wave of cheap goods.<sup>55</sup> If Japanese traders could sell undergarments at 15 cents versus competitors' 25 cents, what could Japanese imperialism do?

It is worth pausing here, in order to tabulate the dimensions of the Japanese empire at its peak, if only to remind ourselves that Japan was also very much like Britain and Ming China in another way, in that Southeast Asia was a spillover from these great imperial powers' core concerns in South and East Asia. Indeed, even use of the term 'Southeast Asia' is, to a degree, anachronistic for a region that was called other names by imperial powers for most of the time, namely: 'East of Suez' or the 'Far East' (Britain); the West or *Nanyang*, meaning 'South Seas' (China); the *Nanyo* (South Seas) component of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Order (Japan); or simply Indo-China for the lesser imperial power, France.

The paradox of the Japanese imperial system's impact upon Southeast Asia was that it was both overwhelming and underwhelming. Its initial campaign smashed Western imperialism between December 1941 and early 1942, showing up the weaknesses of the Western system of imperial defence. Although usually numerically inferior, the Japanese had a higher proportion of battle-proven troops from earlier campaigns in China. The Western colonial troops, ethnically plural, often badly commanded and ill-prepared and ill-equipped for modern warfare as opposed to colonial policing, were no match. The metropolitan countries, moreover, were too preoccupied with their own survival—France and the Netherlands were already occupied by the Germans—to be able to support far-away dependencies adequately.

The Japanese overran all of Southeast Asia, with the exception of Thailand and French Indochina, which both obtained status as subordinate allies, in a matter of months. But then they had to wrestle with the question of how to rationalise and administer this new imperial layer. Here was a region that had, in essence, been taken for reasons of economic security, to seize critical war resources that Western embargoes were denying Japan from mid-1941, and as a matter of opportunism, as a response to Hitler's invasion of the Netherlands and France.

*Table 2.7 Southeast Asia and Japan's wartime empire*

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Territory (km<sup>2</sup>)</i>
Japan	71,114,308 (1940)	
<i>Original colonies</i>		
Korea	22,899,000 (1940)	220,769
Taiwan	5,212,000 (1940)	35,961
Karafuto	332,000 (1940)	36,090
Kwantung territories	1,134,000 (1940)	3,461
Nanyō (Pacific Islands)	113,000 (1940)	2,149
Total	29,690,000	
<i>Second tier territories</i>		
Manchukuo	43,234,000 (1940)	1,303,143
Occupied China	200,000,000–250,000,000 (estimate)	?
Total	243,234,000–293,234,000	
<i>Southeast Asia</i>		
Borneo	783,000 (1939)	32,258
Dutch East Indies	69,435,000 (1939)	1,904,346
Burma	16,119,000(1939)	605,000
Philippines	16,356,000 (1940)	296,295
French Indochina Timor	23,500,000 (1938) 461,000	740,400 7,330
Thailand	14,464,000 (1937)	513,447
Malaya (including the Straits Settlements of Penang, Melaka and Singapore)	5,333,000	132,027
Total	146,451,000	

*Source:* Adapted from Peter Duus, 'Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues', in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. xiii.

The previous East Asian components of Japan's empire had been relatively easy to encompass within a pan-Asian logic, of Japan helping similar Asian societies as an older brother. Japan had announced a 'New Order in East Asia' in November 1938, based on 'mutual cooperation' between 'independent' East Asian states, which shared a writing system, physical characteristics and similarities in philosophical and religious traditions.



Southeast Asia embraced greater cultural variety, and so presented a greater challenge. Fortunately, Japan was already developing an ideological basis for broader dominion.

In August 1940 Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke had expounded his vision of a new 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Now pan-Asian themes of cultural commonality were downgraded, in favour of an image of Asian security and especially economic cooperation under Japanese leadership. Japan's new Foreign Minister Shigemitsu further told the Diet in October 1943 that the war was 'a war of racial awakening—a war for the renaissance of East Asia...a war of national liberation'. The turning tide of the war from 1943, of course, sent Japanese merchant ships to the ocean floor, and turned their aspirations for an economic bloc into a hungry, poorly clad, inflation and black market-ridden shambles.<sup>56</sup> For many, rice substitution meant that the co-prosperity sphere soon turned into a tapioca empire.

Having swept the Western powers away in a matter of weeks, Japan thus tried to retain the area's raw materials, especially Sumatra and Burma's petroleum, with minimal garrisons. This was because Southeast Asia remained (notwithstanding its resources) essentially peripheral to Japan's metropolitan core, to its first ring of colonies in Taiwan and Korea (which together provided 200,000 troops integrated into Japanese units) and also to its second ring of expansion in Manchuria and China. Indeed, one area this book shows up as in need of serious attention is the overall Japanese approach to imperial security, with the different approaches between these three rings. There was direct Nipponisation and recruitment in the first ring, a combination of full-scale military aggression and more indirect and informal methods of imperialism and alignments with local and 'puppet' regimes in the second, and maritime empire and influence in the third.<sup>57</sup>

As Japan's military overstretch led to a sinking maritime fleet from 1943, and an advancing American enemy into 1944, this meant two things for its third, Southeast Asian, circle of empire. First, it meant increased space for left-wing led anti-Japanese guerrilla forces to thrive, notably in Malaya and the Philippines, thus leaving a legacy of armed, pro-communist groups in the postwar era. Second, it meant Japan trained increasing numbers of Southeast Asians as auxiliary labour, irregular troops and even regular forces such as the *giyugun*.

Abu Talib's Chapter 9 in this volume how these Japanese-sponsored forces came to play a vital part in accelerating and shaping postwar independence, notably in Burma and Indonesia. In Burma this involved the Burma Defence Army (its name and form changed several times). This peaked at tens of thousands, changed sides to support the British by March 1945 and then underpinned the postwar pressure that accelerated independence to January 1948, as opposed to British visions of a period of empire-bound reconstruction. In Indonesia it involved training up to a million in youth groups, and smaller numbers in paramilitary organisations such as the Army of the Defenders of the Homeland (Peta, 37,000 in Java and Bali alone, distributed in battalions around these territories), *Hizbullah* (an Islamic paramilitary) and the more regular *giyutai* (volunteer militia) and *giyugun* (volunteer army).

*Table 2.8 Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere structure*

<i>Region</i>	<i>Political and security structure</i>	<i>Economic structure</i>	<i>Ideology</i>
<i>First circle</i>			
Taiwan, Korea	Direct colonial administration, direct recruitment into Japanese forces.	Economic development (foodstuffs, semi-manufactured and manufactured goods).	Assimilation
<i>Second circle</i>			
(Manchukuo, Nationalist Government in China)	Nominally independent, actually a mix of 'indirect' and informal imperialism, with Japanese advisers at various levels. Nominally independent security forces, as well as Japanese Army presence.	Economic development (resource extraction, semi-manufactured and manufactured goods).	Independence
<i>Third circle</i>			
Burma, Indonesian Outer Islands, Philippines	Military administration ( <i>Gunseikambu</i> ) followed by independence. Mix of small numbers of recruits to Japanese-controlled armies, and large numbers to armies, militia and auxiliary labour organisations sponsored by the Japanese.	Resource extraction	Liberation
Java, Malaya	Military government, no independence. As above for military recruitment.	Resource extraction	
Singapore	Military government, integral to Japanese system.		
<i>Ally</i>			
Thailand, French Indochina (until the March 1945 takeover) <sup>a</sup>	Independent, informal imperialism in the form of high Japanese discretion in use for military purposes.	Trade, resource extraction	Declaratory parity
<i>General</i>	All categories except allies featured organisation down to <i>tonori gumi</i> (neighbourhood associations), whose <i>cho</i> (heads) were responsible for local behaviour.		

<sup>a</sup> French Indochina was, until 9 March 1945, also an ally due to the Vichy-Berlin-Tokyo axis.

Source: Adapted from Peter Duus, Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues', in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. xxvi–xxxii.

Where these Japanese-sponsored youth groups and forces were larger, as in Indonesia and Burma, the results in terms of accelerating decolonisation seem to have been more dramatic. Where the Japanese-sponsored armies and militias were smaller in number, and nationalists given less leeway for propaganda, as in Malaya, or there was greater continuity with prewar organisations as in the case of the Philippine Constabulary, the postwar results of Japanese-sponsored forces tended to be less dramatic and durable. In these areas the anti-Japanese armies, mostly left-wing organisations relying on rural support, seem to have made a more lasting impact. This included laying the groundwork for later insurgencies in the Philippines (1946–51) and Malaya (1948–60).

Vietnam forms a separate category, in that the Japanese did not remove the French administration until March 1945, by which point Japanese fortunes were already in serious decline. Here it was as much French weakness as Japanese intervention that enabled the *Viet Minh* to consolidate in the north, and so lay the groundwork for postwar insurgency and war (1946–54 and 1959–75).

The Japanese period thus created a great variety of Japanese-sponsored and anti-Japanese forces that could not be ignored. With Japanese surrender in August 1945, the region headed towards a period of Western ‘decolonisation’. Some might argue, as Geoffrey Robinson appears to imply in Chapter 11 with regard to Indonesia and East Timor, that European decolonisation nevertheless did not mean the end of imperial situations and of ‘colonial armies’. It could be argued that imperial situations persist, and one might plot, for instance, the changing demographic balance between Java and Indonesia’s outer islands. Given the outer islands’ population growth in the twentieth century, and continuing friction between the central government and areas such as East Timor until 1999, and Aceh afterwards, a case can be made for this. But that is another chapter, for another book.<sup>58</sup>

Much more could be said about the demographics of dominance, and about the overlap between colonial forces and low intensity warfare. It could also be argued that the colonial campaigns of the past provide a rich training manual for the small conflicts of the present and the future. This can be seen, for instance, in works on British frontier policing and on America’s small wars.<sup>59</sup>

The outline presented here will have to suffice for now, as a sort of rough mapping of the demographic terrain with which ‘imperial systems’, from Ming China to the present day, have had to work when fashioning their military presence in the region we now call Southeast Asia. Above all, this chapter sets the scene for the rest of the book, by giving a satellite’s eye view of the geographical demography of Southeast Asia on the one hand, and the imperial systems of power that sought to dominate Southeast Asians on the other. In so doing, it makes the case for seeing not just individual pieces of the puzzle but the puzzle as a whole, not just conquerors but the dominated, not just armies but navies and marines, and not just regulars but militias, and even the whole complex of colonial and anti-colonial forces and discourses. In short, it makes the case for contextualising the parts against wider imperial systems of power and imagination.

## Notes

- 1 Charles Hirschman, 'Population and Society in Twentieth-century Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, 2 (1994), pp. 381–406. Hirschman gives the figure of 80 million, but see Table 2.4, where country totals suggest almost 85 million. Even then we must remember censuses were often crude, with evasion, inefficiency or, in some parts, no census at all by this period.
- 2 *Ibid.* The exceptions were Mandalay, which lay on the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy River, and Surakarta.
- 3 Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns, Sails and Empires: Technological Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion, 1400–1700* (New York: Pantheon, 1966), pp. 137–40.
- 4 Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), p. 10. Reid suggests that the Early Modern period was marked by 'new European ideas of defence behind low but thick walls surmounted by batteries of guns, with bastions projecting to provide a field of fire', thus making the Portuguese 'impregnable' in Melaka and the Dutch in Batavia (Jakarta) and Maluku, as opposed to the wooden palisades of many native *kota*.
- 5 Merle C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 112, for the *benteng-stelsel* system of strategic fortified posts, which allowed small mobile columns to operate independently to dominate areas and police populations during the Java War (1825–30).
- 6 Verenegde is rendered Vereenigde in older works. Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 181–5; the VOC troops included Asian auxiliaries from Batavia, and mercenary squads of Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, Timorese and Ambonese. The Europeans, equipped with standard sword, smoke bombs, grenades and muskets, held the centre, firing by line.
- 7 Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Tropical Spaces, Frozen Frontiers: The Evolution of Border Enforcement in Nineteenth-century Insular Southeast Asia', in Paul Kratoska, Remco Raben and Henk Schulte Nordholt (eds), *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Space* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), pp. 149–74.
- 8 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 191.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 190–262.
- 10 For India and Southeast Asia see Hack's Chapter 10 in this volume. See also Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence, 1858–1947* (London: Viking, 1990).
- 11 For further information on these developments, see Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Yuzon Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 99–106; and Dianne Lewis, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995), pp. 109–10, 115. This information is courtesy of Radin Fernando.
- 12 Selangor was ruled by princes of Malay-Bugis descent, the Bugis coming from Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Dutch Indies. Menado is the Christian-influenced area in the northern part of Sulawesi.
- 13 Lee Kam Hing, 'The Indomitable Sultan Ibrahim', in *Heritage Asia* 2, 2 (December 2004–February 2005), pp. 34–7. The 1826 Anglo-Thai 'Burney' Treaty recognised Thai claims in northern Malaya (Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan), but in effect ended Thai claims to the south, including Selangor. With a previous 1824 Anglo-Dutch treaty dividing the Malay world into British and Dutch spheres, the British now had effective influence north of the Malacca Straits up to Perak and Selangor, the Dutch to the south in modern day Indonesia, with the notable exception of Aceh in northern Sumatra, which both parties promised to leave.
- 14 Robert Pringle, *A Short History of Bali: Indonesia's Hindu Realm* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2004), pp. 98–9, 104–8. The 1848 force included some of the Ashante Africans the Dutch raised in the 1840s. The Malay tradition of running amok likewise had a role as

- battle heroism, as well as for someone with no other avenue to avenge a wrong. See also Geoffrey Robinson's contribution to this volume (Chapter 11) on pro-Indonesian militias on East Timor who used amok-like behaviour as a technique to terrorise.
- 15 See Teitler's Chapter 6 in this volume.
  - 16 Quinine (from cinchona bark) was arguably one of the most crucial medical breakthroughs, its regular use from the 1870s turning tropical service, in particular in Africa, from a sort of Russian roulette with a good lifestyle as the winning prize to a more rational career choice. See Daniel R. Headrick's *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
  - 17 Lennox Algonern Mills, *British Malaya, 1824–67* (Selangor: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS), Reprint No. 22, 2003), pp. 253–310 for piracy off Singapore, and James Brooke in Borneo from 1839. James Francis Warren emphasises not just piracy, but wealth-and slave-raiding as a state formation tactic: see his *The Sulu Zone, 1786–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery and Ethnicity in the Formation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), and his more recent 'A Tale of Two Centuries: The Globalisation of Maritime Raiding and Piracy in Southeast Asia at the end of the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (Singapore: Asia Research Institute Electronic Working Paper No. 2, 2003): [www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03\\_002.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03_002.pdf).
  - 18 The *Marina Sutil*, or light navy, were an anti-pirate force. Some 50–60 *Marina Sutil per* vessel operated from half-decked, flat boats, propelled by both sails and oars. They carried a long brass cannon and smaller swivel guns. Copper bottoms protected them from coral reefs. Flotillas of the *Marina Sutil* patrolled the seas of Sulu for about a decade, before being succeeded by steam vessels from 1848.
  - 19 Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, p. 21, as cited in David B. Abernethy, *Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 82. In the 1750s, the British ability to move large numbers of men along the coast by sailing ship had helped to win ascendancy in Bengal, but sailing ships were reliant on winds, monsoons and deep water.
  - 20 The Opium War being fought over a combination of opium, free trade and the Manchu dynasty's desire to exert control over expanding trade in its south.
  - 21 Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795–1989* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 25–6, argues it was during this war that British armament pulled ahead significantly. He takes the quotation from Gerald S. Graham, *The China Station* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 154–5. The classic work on technology is Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*.
  - 22 For a similar argument for the importance of railways in the Italian Wars of 1859, see Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 188.
  - 23 Nguyen The Anh, 'Traditional Vietnam's Incorporation of External Cultural and Technological Contributions: Ambivalence and Ambiguity', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, 4 (March 2003), pp. 444–58 (454). For China's failure to create an effective steamship fleet, see the books reviewed in Bruce Elleman, 'China's New "Imperial" Navy', Review Essay, in *Naval War College Review* 55, 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 143–54.
  - 24 The official 1963 tally of Indonesian islands was 13,667, the 1994 tally 17,508, with about 3000 inhabited and about 6000 officially named. Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (London: Curzon, 2000), p. 10.
  - 25 The French military territories on the border with China (see Henri Eckert's Chapter 5 in this volume) are a further variant of administering highlands, in this case strategically important ones, differently from the lowlands or less important mountain territories.
  - 26 Hirschman, 'Population and Society in Twentieth-century Southeast Asia', p. 382.
  - 27 Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, Vol. I, *The Lands Below the Winds* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1988 edition), pp. 11–25.

- 28 Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, Vol. I, pp. 13–18. Reid makes Vietnam (4.7 million in 1600 and 7 in 1800), Java (4 and 5 million) and Burma (3.1 and 4.6 million) among the most populous areas and Malaya (500,000 for both dates, Patani included) among the least. The spice islands of Maluku, the earliest Western target, are estimated at 275,000 and 700,000 for these two dates.
- 29 Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 92–3.
- 30 See Richard Meixsel's Chapter 7 in this volume. The Scouts originated in 1901, with several thousand by 1902. Meixsel shows them as not so exceptional in some ways. Recruiting started with the town of Macabebes, which had already provided soldiers to the Spanish, and continued with a tradition of avoiding the Tagalog majority where possible, and ensuring officers were mainly seconded from the US army for two-year periods. The Filipinos were paid about half of US army levels. But preference for recruiting units by 'tribe' went out of the window as higher educational qualifications increased in importance.
- 31 For policing, David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing the Empire: Government, Control and Authority, 1830–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) and *Policing and Decolonisation: Nationalism, Politics and the Police, 1917–1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).
- 32 Lewis Henry Gann, 'Reflections on the German and Japanese Empires', in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Meyers and Mark Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 344.
- 33 Quotation and figures from Taylor, *Indonesia*, p. 150. The Dutch contrast with France in not using Indonesians for Europe in the First World War, when they resisted 'Indonesian' calls to raise a militia, instead granting a *Volksraad* or People's Council with limited, indirect elections and powers.
- 34 Up from fewer than 8000 before the 1830s.
- 35 Approximate numbers, taken from Gerke Teitler's table in Chapter 6.
- 36 For a comparative example of such problems, see Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 37 Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, pp. 136–7. Holland itself industrialised and became more bureaucratic during the nineteenth century. See Taylor, *Indonesia*, p. 251; and Jan Aarte Scholte, 'The International Construction of Indonesian Nationhood', in Hans Antlöv and Stein Tønnesson (eds), *Imperial Policy and South East Asian Nationalism* (Richmond: Curzon, 1995), pp. 191–226.
- 38 Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Tropical Spaces, Frozen Frontiers: The Evolution of Border-enforcement in Nineteenth-century Insular Southeast Asia', p. 157.
- 39 Ambonese were recruited in larger numbers from about 1864.
- 40 See Table 6.1 below.
- 41 Why the Dutch never conclusively decided to trust the loyalty and capacity of Javanese troops more is puzzling. Religion is hardly an excuse (think of Indian Army Sikhs and Pathans). This puts the spotlight on conditions, handling and cultural issues. Jaap de Moor's superb summary describes the Dutch inventing a misleading tradition of Ambonese loyalty and martial qualities, then making it real with extra pay, pensions, praise and food from the 1830s, and recruitment from the 1870s. Better pay persisted even after ethnically distinct companies (battalions ideally having one European, one Christian Ambonese and one Javanese company) changed to mixed companies. The change began with the *Korps Marechaussee* in the 1890s, which found mixed companies effective, and was introduced as 'mixed companies' in 1910. Jaap de Moor, 'The Recruitment of Indonesian Soldiers for the Dutch Colonial Army', in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c.1700–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 62–4.

- 42 Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, pp. 138–9. Martin Bossenbroek, 'The Living Tools of Empire: The Recruitment of European Soldiers for the Dutch Colonial Army, 1814–1909', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History (JICH)* 23, 1 (1995), pp. 26–53, p. 30, *passim*.
- 43 Clive Christie, *A Modern History of South East Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separation* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1996), pp. 112–15, which draws on I.O.Nanulaita, *Timbulnja Militerisme Ambon: Sebagai Suatu Persoalan Politik Sosial-Ekonomis* (Djakarta: Bhratara, 1966), pp. 112–14.
- 44 Nicholas Tarling, *Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 292, citing H.L.Zwitzer and C.A.Heshusius, *Het Koninklyk Nederlands-Indisch Leger, 1830–1950* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1977), p. 10.
- 45 British figures from David Butler and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts, 1900–1985* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986 edition), pp. 323, 473.
- 46 Jaap de Moor, 'The Recruitment of Indonesian Soldiers', p. 58.
- 47 Cochinchina's population was just under three million in 1901, and there are no reliable figures before then.
- 48 The French used the term 'Annam' ('Pacified South' in Chinese) not only for central Vietnam but also for Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina together, avoiding the patriotic term 'Vietnam'. An 'Annamite' or 'Annamese' could therefore be either someone from the centre or more generically a Vietnamese.
- 49 China's 1911 revolution started out as a garrison revolt by a section of the modernising Chinese army, closely aligned to nationalist reforming movements. For post-Yên Bay French policies, see Tobias Rettig, 'French Military Policies in the aftermath of Yên Bay', *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (2002), pp. 309–32, *passim*.
- 50 Among 42,345 'Frenchmen' in Indochina in 1937, about one quarter were military personnel, and a further quarter were of mixed parentage, Indians, or foreigners. See Wolfgang Schmahl, *Indochina: Ein Kapitel französischer Kolonialherrschaft* (Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, No. 7, 1961). By comparison, Dutch and Eurasians were a far larger category in the Netherlands Indies.
- 51 Nicholas Tarling, *Imperialism in Southeast Asia: 'A Fleeting Passing Phase'* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 198. Typically, wartime expansion meant the European component was diluted: 14,500 to 75,500 Indochinese, or from 46 to 16 per cent, at the height of mobilisation in 1940.
- 52 See Sarah Womack's Chapter 4 and Henri Eckert's Chapter 5 in this volume. Though differing on details, both agree on the *Garde civile* emerging from the mid-1880s, with about six officers to a unit.
- 53 Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941–1968* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), p. 228.
- 54 David Killingray, 'Guardians of Empire', in Killingray and Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire*, pp. 10–11.
- 55 Abu Talib bin Ahmad, *The Malay-Muslims, Islam and the Rising Sun, 1941–45* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Monograph No. 34, 2003), pp. 23–36, *passim*. Those politically motivated were no doubt disappointed by the strict Japanese limits on nationalist propaganda and activity in 1942, such as the dissolving of Malaya's Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malays Association) in June that year.
- 56 In 1945 hunger became starvation in some areas, notably with a massive famine in Tonkin, and even in less badly affected areas such as Malaya, pot-bellied, malnourished children began to appear in some rural areas.
- 57 Duus, Meyers and Peattie's *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*, and their *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989) have numerous articles on parts of the system, but other than the introductions to these books, there is little in terms of systemic and comparative analysis for the Japanese Empire.

58 Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* does a good job of mapping the terrain for Indonesia across time to present, though less so for demography than political and administrative structures.

59 See, for instance, Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), for this message; and Tim R. Moreman, 'The British and Indian Armies and North-West Frontier Warfare, 1894–1914', *JICH* 20, 1 (1992), pp. 35–64.



### 3

## Ming Chinese colonial armies in Southeast Asia

*Geoff Wade*

### Introduction

Only a limited number of chapters in this volume address the issue of whether the environments in which their military forces operated were ‘colonial’ or ‘imperial’. This is understandable in that the Asian polities controlled by European powers in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries are generally accepted as falling under this rubric, which by extension means that the armies that operated at the behest of the occupying powers were by definition ‘colonial armies’.

The military forces of Ming China (1368–1644), which operated in Southeast Asia during the fifteenth century, are not as conveniently pigeonholed. There is little theoretical discussion of China as a colonial power in any period. Likewise, while Chinese ‘empires’ and ‘Imperial China’ are often discussed, Chinese ‘imperialism’ is rarely investigated. There seem to be invisible barriers to investigating the possibility of the successive Chinese polities having been colonial or imperial in nature, barriers that need to be investigated.

As a small contribution to this endeavour, this chapter investigates the Ming military excursions in maritime Southeast Asia and **Đại Việt** in the first thirty years of the fifteenth century, and in upland Southeast Asian Tai polities over a period that extends from the end of the fourteenth century until the middle of the fifteenth century. It examines the use of military forces in implementing a range of foreign policies of the Ming rulers, and then explores whether or not those forces can be considered to have constituted colonial armies. As an initial part of this investigation, it behoves us first to examine the overall imperatives of Ming foreign policy and military administration.

### The Ming and its foreign policy

The struggles between rival warlords for self-protection and control marked much of the first half of the fourteenth century in China. The decay of Yuan (1279–1368) administrative and military control also meant that there was great incentive for the more powerful of these warlords to contend for greater power.

The inchoate polity that was eventually to secure control over China was one based at today’s Nanjing, led by a one-time Red Turban rebel leader known as Zhu Yuan-zhang,<sup>1</sup> who had taken on the dynastic name Great Ming. The battles that were waged in this period involved huge numbers of troops, with one battle of the Ming forces against the

Yuan loyalist Kōkō Temür in 1370 seeing 85,000 of the latter's troops and 15,000 of his cavalry horses being captured. By that time, the Ming forces had already taken the Yuan capital of Dadu (at modern Beijing), and Zhu Yuan-zhang had established a political force that was to rule China from 1368 until 1644.<sup>2</sup>

To the north, Ming concerns with the Mongols, whom they had driven from China, were greatly to influence both domestic and foreign policies over the following centuries. Because of the defensive posture that had to be adopted in the north, the main opportunities for active interactions abroad were to the south. It was thus that there was much greater activity on the southern borders of the empire during the early Ming.

The Ming rulers saw themselves, or at least depicted themselves, as being divinely sanctioned by Heaven to rule China and those beyond, extending to 'all under Heaven'. This nominal 'world order' and rhetorical system had been used and added to by Chinese dynasties since the Zhou, over 2000 years before, and this system provided a useful inheritance for any new dynasty trying to position itself as the pre-eminent polity of the known world. It was also a basis on which to pursue any colonialism. This system required that the Ming 'enfeoff' rulers of surrounding polities, who were then expected, as vassals, to submit regular 'tribute' to the Great Ming. It was this model that was to provide the rhetorical and ritual bases of much of the dynasty's relations with polities beyond its immediate administrative control.<sup>3</sup> The nominal 'tribute missions' sent to China by foreign polities and the sending of Chinese envoys to Southeast Asian polities by the Ming, both of which were validated by this model, were as much trading missions as diplomacy, a charade in which none would participate if there was no benefit to be gained. However, even if one considers that the 'enfeoffments' of which the Ming texts wrote were no more than rhetorical flourishes or exchanges of diplomatic niceties between polities, we can say, with much certainty, that the Ming was heavily involved in Southeast Asia throughout the fifteenth century.

### **The Ming and its military administration**

All colonial armies had at least some of their roots in the military systems that existed in the homeland of the colonising power. It is thus appropriate that a brief overview of the military systems of the Ming be presented before we examine how these military forces were engaged in the colonial enterprise.

The Ming dynasty rarely saw a significant period when the military forces of the realm were not employed on some major or minor military expedition. Coordinating most of these military activities was the Ministry of War, the central government department that was at least nominally in charge of personnel management, troop dispositions, strategic planning, installations, weapons and supplies for the whole military establishment. It represented the principle of civil control over the military and was staffed by civilians rather than by career military men. The Ministry of War was frequently involved in deliberations at the capital on frontier and foreign policies. One of the ministry's tasks was to ensure that border polities remained too weak to pose a threat to the Ming. On occasions, officials of this ministry directly advocated military actions against other polities. In 1415, for example, while Ming forces were occupying **Đại Việt**, the Minister of War Chen Qia urged the despatch of imperial troops to punish the ruler of Champa (a

polity situated in present-day Central Vietnam) for having assisted the Vietnamese during the Chinese invasion of their polity.<sup>4</sup> Again in 1482, the Minister of War advocated the use of troops against Nang Han-nong, the major female leader of Mengmi (Mongmit), a Tai polity in Yunnan.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the fifteenth century, the Minister of War again urged that the southern provinces be engaged in military preparations for war against **Annam/Đại Việt**.<sup>6</sup>

When military expeditions did take place, the ministry played a pivotal role. When Chinese forces were sent against **Annam/Đại Việt** in the early fifteenth century, the Minister of War was not only personally engaged in the attack and occupation of the polity, but also responsible for the subsequent appointment of civil officials in the aftermath, for the newly created province of Jiao-zhi (roughly corresponding to the north of present-day Vietnam).<sup>7</sup> The despatch of troop reinforcements was the responsibility of the Ministry,<sup>8</sup> as was the selection of generals to lead expeditions.<sup>9</sup>

Controlling the forces from the capital were the Five Chief Military Commissions. These five commissions, comprising the Front, Rear, Left, Right and Central Military Commissions, oversaw the professional military training of all military forces of the empire and were responsible for leading them on major campaigns. The heads of these commissions were the senior military officers of the realm. While policy-making decisions lay with the civil officials in the Ministry of War, the leaders of the military commissions were responsible for the concrete planning of expeditions, including logistics. For example, when the Ming were planning a military expedition against the Bai-yi (Tai Mao) of Yunnan in 1387, an assistant commissioner-in-chief in the Right Chief Military Commission was sent to Sichuan to buy ploughing cattle. These cattle were to be used on farms established to feed the probably long-term expedition.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the Chief Military Commissions were intimately involved in the expedition to conquer **Annam/Đại Việt** in 1406, of which more below. Again in the 1430s and 1440s, the Chief Military Commissions were the major organs involved in the expeditions against Luchuan in Yunnan.

Under the Chief Military Commissions came the Regional Military Commissions, one in each province, headed by a military commissioner, who was assisted by vice commissioners and assistant commissioners. These Regional Military Commissions administered all military garrisons in the province, and each was directly responsible to one of the Five Chief Military Commissions in the capital.

Below the Regional Military Commissions came a large number of guard units, nominally comprising 5600 soldiers each, and commanded by a guard commander. Subordinate to each guard were usually five battalions, each nominally of about 1120 men, and commanded by a battalion commander. Each battalion was constituted by ten companies. Independent battalions were those directly administered by the Regional Military Commission. These included the Embroidered-Uniform Guard, or Imperial Bodyguard, which was engaged in most of the major military campaigns of the fifteenth century. Its troops also accompanied Zheng He's (Cheng Ho's) forces in their various maritime military forays, including the attack on Sri Lanka in 1411.<sup>11</sup> There were between 400 and 500 guard units throughout China at various periods during the Ming.<sup>12</sup>

Together, these various units constituted the basic level military force of each province and, as they were comprised of men from families for whom military service was a hereditary duty, these also constituted the residential units for the military families. The

latter characteristic is perhaps one of the most relevant aspects of the Ming military system when we examine its role in the colonial enterprise. These military-residential units, when shifted to new areas of military operation, created the so-called 'military colonies' (軍屯). That is to say, when a unit was posted to a new area subsequent to its subjugation, all the personnel of the unit were shifted with their family members, and were there required to build fortified stockades or walled cities as well as establish their own farms to feed themselves and provide surpluses to other areas. This, naturally enough, greatly affected the environments and the societies of the areas so colonised. The military colony system was certainly not something that began during the Ming dynasty. The Han dynasty, which extended from the first two centuries BCE to the first two centuries CE, was a great employer of the system. The ways in which Chinese military colonies were used in the expansion of the Chinese states over time and their similarity (or difference) with the Roman *colonia*, which were so integral in the expansion of that empire, are long overdue for study.

We digress. The above overview of the military systems is provided simply to guide us into the substance of this chapter, which is an examination of the various specific aspects of Ming colonialism and the role the military forces played in this process.

### Ming colonialism

The fifteenth century saw some of the most aggressive attempts in Chinese history to expand the Chinese state. Many of these efforts were made on or beyond the southern borders of the Ming state, and constitute, I would argue, a Chinese colonialism. Below I provide examples of various types of Chinese colonialism, namely: the proto-colonialism constituted by the maritime voyages in the first third of the century; the unsuccessful colonialism constituted by the invasion, occupation and attempted incorporation of the Vietnamese state of **Đại Việt**, also over the first approximately thirty years of the fifteenth century; and the successful colonialism involving military invasion and eventual incorporation of the major polities of Yunnan from the last decade of the fourteenth century until the 1440s.

#### *The maritime voyages: Ming proto-colonialism*

In 1399, Zhu Di, a son of the Ming founder, bearing the title Prince of Yan, launched a civil war against his nephew Zhu Yun-wen, who had been enthroned in Nanjing as the emperor a year earlier.<sup>13</sup> Following a war of three years during which his forces fought south from what is today Beijing to take the capital at Nanjing, Zhu Di assumed the throne in July 1402, with the reign title Yongle. Following his assumption of the throne, the Yongle emperor's aspirations were somewhat assuaged, but he continued to push outwards.<sup>14</sup> To the south, the expansion was through three avenues, namely the invasion of Yunnan, the invasion of **Đại Việt**, and Chinese maritime expeditions.

By 1403, the Ming had created new military guards in Yunnan, and established new offices throughout the Tai regions. The years 1405–8 were very important in this process. Following the invasion of **Đại Việt** in 1406, subsequent occupation there lasted until

1427. Meanwhile, the sending of maritime forces throughout the known world, from 1405 until the end of the Yongle reign, involved unprecedented naval efforts.

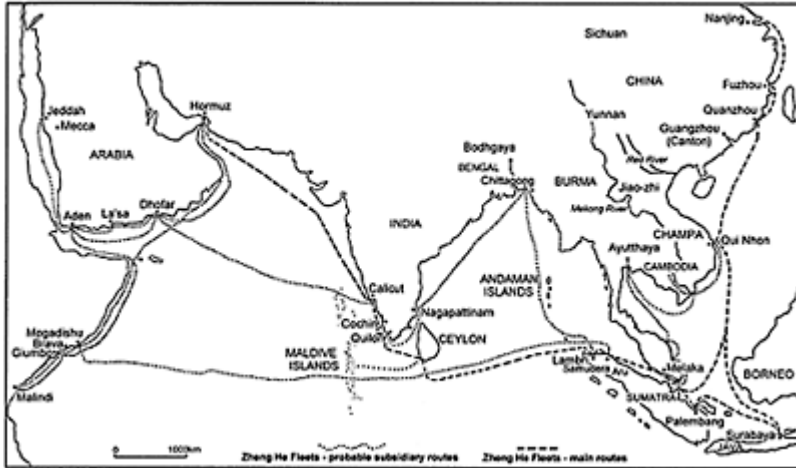
The despatch of the various maritime missions to the 'Western Ocean' (maritime Southeast Asia west of Borneo, and the Indian Ocean), as well as other lesser-known missions to the Eastern Ocean (today's Philippines, Borneo and Eastern Indonesia) was thus the third of the three prongs of southern expansion pursued by the Yongle Emperor.<sup>15</sup> The armadas were commanded by eunuchs, the most famous of whom was Zheng He. It is obvious that these fleets were crewed by a wide range of peoples. Many of the eunuch commanders were Muslims, the navigators were often non-Chinese and it is possible that descendants of Fujian Arabs were also included. The mariners would have been from the coastal provinces, and the troops would have been conscripted from a wide range of military guards, and probably included descendants of Yuan military forces from Central or Western Asia. These missions were, like Yongle's expansion into Yunnan and his occupation of **Dại Việt**, intended to create legitimacy for the usurping emperor, display the might of the Ming, bring the known polities to demonstrated submission to the Ming and thereby achieve a *Pax Ming*, and collect treasures for the Court.<sup>16</sup>

To achieve these aims, the maritime forces despatched needed to be both huge and powerful. Shipbuilding began almost as soon as the Yongle emperor assumed power. In 1403, the Fujian Regional Military Commission was ordered to build 137 ocean-going ships.<sup>17</sup> In the same year, various military units were ordered to build almost 400 more ships. In 1405, just after Zheng He departed on his first expedition, Zhejiang and other regional military commissions were ordered to build 1180 ocean-going ships.<sup>18</sup> By 1408, the task was assigned to a central ministry and the Ministry of Works was required to

build 48 'treasureships' ('bao-chuan' 寶船).<sup>19</sup> The various missions comprised between 50 and 250 ships, making them huge armadas by any scale, which stayed away from China for several years. The sources differ on the number of personnel who accompanied these missions, but figures between 27,000 and 30,000 are cited for the largest. One mission included almost 100 envoys of various grades, 93 military captains, 104 lieutenants, 103 sub-lieutenants and associated medical and astrological staff members, as well as tens of thousands of troops. In another case cited, 26,800 out of 27,400 on board were the rank and file, the bannermen, the irregular troops, the crack troops, as well as the sailors and clerks.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that many of the missions carried in excess of 20,000 military men. And, like the forces sent to Yunnan and **Dại Việt**, these forces would have been equipped with the best and most advanced firearms available in the world at that time. They were military missions with strategic aims.

To enable these great fleets to maintain the *Pax Ming* in the immediate region and sail through the Indian Ocean to Africa, it was necessary to create staging posts in what is today Southeast Asia. These depots ('guan-chang' 官廠), which comprised military garrisons-cum-treasuries, were established at Melaka, and at the northern end of the Melaka Strait near the polity of Samudera on Sumatra.<sup>21</sup> The depots can be seen on the *Wu-bei-zhi* maps, which appear to have been the charts used by or drawn from these voyages in the first half of the fifteenth century. The Melaka Strait was probably more vital in the fifteenth century, when international linkages were entirely dependent on shipping, than it is today, and controlling this waterway was an essential first step in

controlling the region. It was for this reason that the Ming assisted the growth of the new polity of Melaka (Malacca),<sup>22</sup> around the Ming maritime base at that place. The links between Melaka and the Ming thereby remained intimate for much of the fifteenth century. The degree to which the development of the port city of Melaka and the northern port polity of Sumatra was a product of Ming policies in Southeast Asia in the early fifteenth century needs to be further investigated.



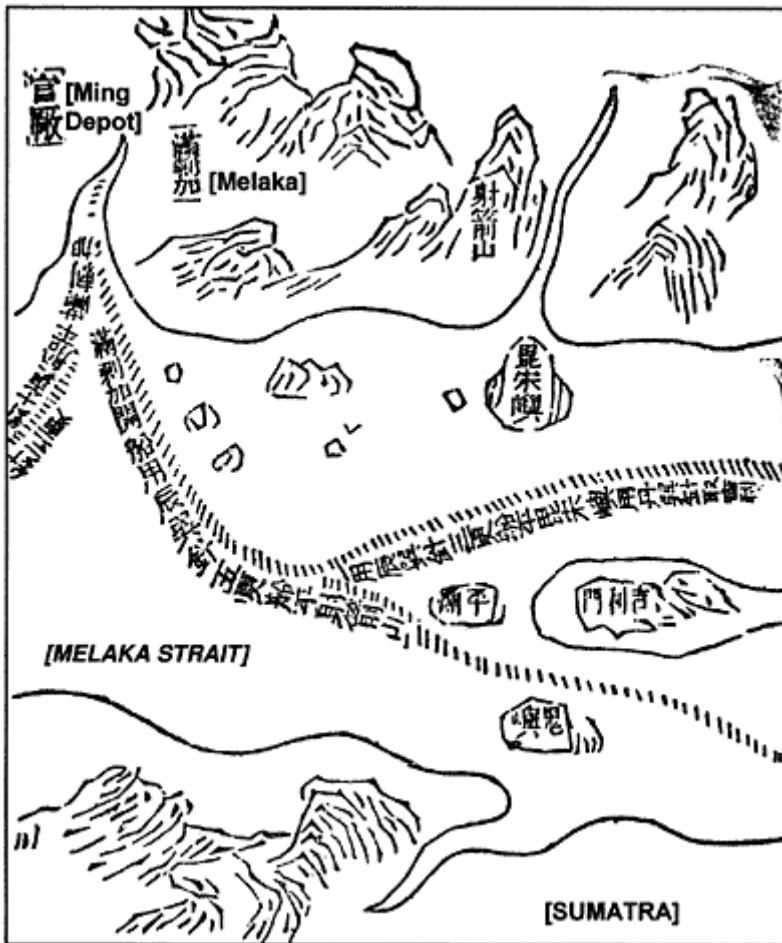
*Map 3.1* Admiral Zheng He's maritime expeditions, 1405–1433.

*Source:* Karl Hack and Geoffrey Wade.

It is obvious that such a force would have played a major threatening role, 'to shock and awe', useful in encouraging foreign rulers to come to the Ming court. However, there were other times when more than a military presence was required. The history of the Zheng He voyages is replete with violence as the eunuch commanders tried to implement the Ming emperor's demands. Below, five major military actions are sketched out for the reader.

The first example is of an attack on the polity of 'Old Port' (Palembang) in Sumatra in 1407. In that year, Zheng He returned from his first major mission abroad, bringing with him a 'pirate' Chen Zu-yi captured at Old Port, for reportedly having 'feigned surrender but secretly plotted to attack the Imperial army'.<sup>23</sup> The Ming fleet reported 5000 persons killed, with ten ships burnt and seven captured in the fracas at Old Port. Later in the same year, the Ming recognised the polity of Old Port, and appointed a Chinese person, Shi Jin-qing, as ruler.<sup>24</sup> He was probably appointed by Zheng He to represent the Ming state, and this polity was in effect a Ming Chinese client state in Southeast Asia. Textual references to this polity end in the 1430s, when the Ming maritime presence in Southeast Asia ended, further suggesting that the rulers of Old Port were agents of the Ming state.

The second military action is that of Zheng He in Java in 1407. When Zheng He's troops went ashore in Java, the location of Majapahit, which was the Ming's major competitor for regional hegemony in maritime Southeast Asia, some 170



Map 3.2 Chinese maritime map of the southern Malayan and Sumatran coasts, showing Melaka, its nearby Ming depot and sailing instructions. The map is taken from the seventeenth-century *Wu-bei-zhi*, but is presumed to have been compiled in the fifteenth century, based on knowledge gained during Zheng He's voyages.

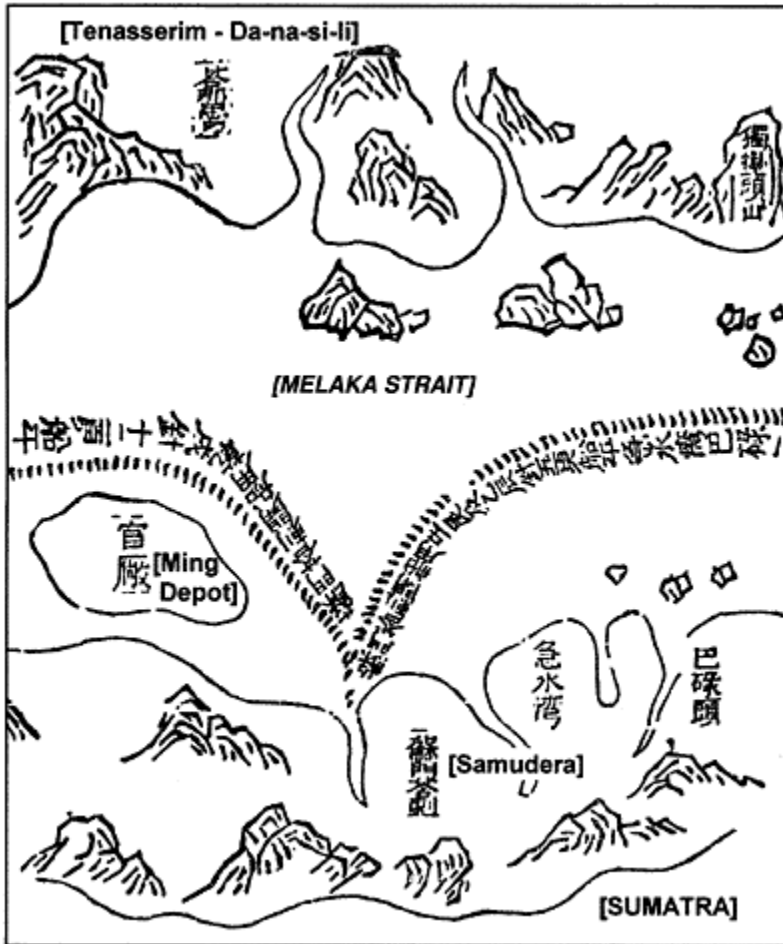
*Source:* From *Wu-bei-zhi*, as adapted by Hack and Wade.

of the Ming forces were killed. The Chinese records suggests that the Chinese troops 'went ashore to trade...where the Eastern king had ruled', which suggests Ming involvement in a Javanese civil war. In response, the Ming demanded of the Western king of Java that he 'Immediately pay 60,000 liang of gold in compensation for their lives and to atone for your crime... Fail to comply and there will be no option but to despatch an army to punish your crime. What happened in Annam can serve as an example.'<sup>25</sup> The final reference was to the Ming invasion of **Đại Việt** in 1406 noted above. The methods of the later European colonial armies in Asia, demanding compensation from the indigenes following their own military adventures, might be seen as useful comparative examples of such imperial opportunism, which often also constituted grounds for further action. The third major military action to be mentioned is the Chinese military threats to Burma of 1409. In the early years of his reign, while vying with Burma for influence in Yunnan, the Ming emperor Yongle noted of Na-luo-ta,<sup>26</sup> the ruler of Burma: 'Na-luo-ta, with his petty piece of land, is double-hearted and is acting wrongly... If he does not reform, I will then order the generals to despatch the army. The troops will attack from the ocean route and you can arrange to have your native cavalry attack overland. The despicable fellow will not be equal to that.'<sup>27</sup> This reference to a maritime army was to the armada of the eunuch commander, Zheng He, who together with Wang Jing-hong and Hou Xian, had been commanded to proceed on another mission to the Western Ocean.<sup>28</sup>

A fourth attack was on Sri Lanka in 1411. This was perhaps the event most revealing about the nature of the eunuch-led maritime voyages. It involved a military invasion, the capture of Alagakkonara, the ruler of the Rayigama kingdom, and the carrying back of him and his family members to the Ming court in 1411.<sup>29</sup> As was the case in similar scenarios in Yunnan, the Ming appointed a puppet ruler to replace the king, presumably to act in ways beneficial to the Ming.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese troops who returned from the expedition to Sri Lanka were rewarded in the same manner and at similar levels to the forces that invaded **Đại Việt** in 1406, suggesting similar aims of the forces.<sup>31</sup>

Fifth, there was the attack and capture of Su-gan-la of Samudera. In 1415 Su-gan-la, the reported 'leader of the Samudera bandits', was captured and taken to China from Sumatra by Zheng He. While full details of the events that occurred in 1414 and 1415 remain obscure, it is likely that Zheng He and his forces inserted themselves in a civil war in northern Sumatra, supported the side that was not hostile to the Ming and engaged in warfare against the other.<sup>32</sup> Again, we see an instance of the maritime expedition acting mainly as a military force in an attempt to impose a *Pax Ming* on what we now know as Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.





*Map 3.3 Chinese maritime map of the northern Malayan peninsula and the Sumatran coast, showing the Ming depot on an island just off Samudera, a major fifteenth-century Sumatran polity, which commanded the northern entrance to the Melaka Strait.*

*Source:* From *Wu-bei-zhi*, as adapted by Hack and Wade.

The examples above suggest that the maritime forces sent abroad in the first third of the fifteenth century were intended to achieve the recognition of Ming pre-eminence

among all the polities of the known maritime world. To achieve this they used force, or the threat thereof. The number of Southeast Asian rulers travelling to China with the Zheng He missions suggests that coercion must have been an important element. It was almost unheard of for Southeast Asian rulers to travel to other polities, for both ritual and security reasons. That such a large number of rulers did travel to the Ming court in this period suggests coercion of some form. 'Gunboat diplomacy' is not a term that is usually applied to the voyages of Zheng He. However, given that these missions were nominally involved in diplomacy and as it appears that the ships were indeed gunboats, with perhaps 26,000 out of 28,000 members of some missions being military men, this seems an eminently suitable term to apply to the duties of these armadas.

As such, they were missions intended to coerce and obtain control of ports and shipping lanes. It was not control of territory, which came with later imperialism, but was political and economic control across space—control of economic lifelines, nodal points and networks. By controlling ports and trade routes, one controlled trade, an essential element for the missions' treasure-collecting tasks. The colonial armies that manned these ships were the tools necessary to ensure that the control was maintained. In their methods, the Ming, through these maritime missions, was engaged in what might be called proto-colonialism. That is, they were engaged in that early form of colonialism by which a dominant maritime power took control (through either force or the threat thereof) of the main port polities along the major East-West maritime trade network, as well as the seas between, thereby gaining economic and political benefits.

The proto-colonialism of the Ming, as suggested in respect of the Zheng He voyages above, had its equivalent in the later proto-colonialism of the fifteenth-and sixteenth-century Portuguese voyages. Michael Pearson describes the Portuguese empire as, in some ways, a continuation of the Italian city states.<sup>33</sup> He notes that, at the official level, there was a very tight connection between the Crown and trade. This was undoubtedly also true in the Ming case. Further, on the basis of Rothermund's *Asian Trade and European Expansion* and Steensgard's *Asian Trade Revolution*, Pearson notes that

this was an empire that used military coercion to try and achieve a strictly noneconomic advantage. Basically a tribute was demanded from Asian trade; the Portuguese created *de novo* a threat of violence for Asian shipping and then sold protection from this threat, as seen in the requirement to take passes and pay customs duties. No service was provided in return; in modern terms this was precisely a protection racket. As we know the effort failed anyway.<sup>34</sup>

By replacing the word 'Portuguese' with 'Chinese' we would have an excellent description of the Ming activities in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean in the first third of the fifteenth century. The military who constituted the force on which the Ming armadas depended can thus be called 'proto-colonial armies' and their role was the maintenance of the *Pax Ming*, which provided the Ming with political and, at least in some ways, economic advantage.

The ending of the Ming voyages was one of the reasons why China's proto-colonialism never developed into the more formal maritime colonialism pursued by the Europeans. The factors contributing to the ending of the voyages were numerous. The

death of the Yongle emperor in 1424 was a factor, as was the huge expense of the missions. Senior civil ministers had been arguing against the missions for decades, as they were seen as wasteful and an essentially eunuchdriven adventure. After the death of the voyages' patron, it was not long before the missions were finally wound down.

### *The invasion of **Đại Việt**: unsuccessful Ming colonialism*

In 1406, in an effort to increase Ming influence and power in **Đại Việt**, the polity that was known to the Ming as An-nan, rendered 'Annam' in most later works,<sup>35</sup> the Yongle emperor attempted to send a puppet ruler named Chen Tian-ping (**Trần Thiên Bình**) into that polity.<sup>36</sup> **Trần Thiên Bình** was killed as he proceeded into the country. This killing by the Vietnamese became the immediate pretext for Yongle to launch a huge invasion, a move obviously planned well before the event. He appointed senior generals, sea-crossing commanders, firearms commanders, rapid attack commanders and cavalry commanders.

On a day equivalent to 30 July 1406, the boatborne forces set sail from Nanjing. They landed in southern China and joined with other forces in the border province of Guangxi, comprising 95,000 troops from the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi and Huguang, a further 10,000 cavalry and infantry troops from various other guards and 30,000 'native troops' from Guangxi.<sup>37</sup> An additional 75,000 cavalry and troops were deployed from Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan. Guangxi and Yunnan provinces had also each been ordered to supply 200,000 *shi* of grain to feed the expeditionary army, and Yunnan was to arrange for 10,000 troops as reinforcements.<sup>38</sup> In all, the official account tells us that some 800,000 troops were mobilised by the Ming for this expedition.<sup>39</sup> Firearms were an essential element for this expedition and there is an estimate that about 10 per cent of the troops were thus armed.<sup>40</sup> The Ming forces also built boats in Vietnam to continue their assault, and in January 1407 achieved one of the most significant victories of the campaign when they took Đa-bang City.<sup>41</sup> Evocative descriptions of the attack have been left to us, detailing how the Chinese forces disguised their horses with images of lions in order to frighten the elephants that led the Vietnamese forces, and advanced with firearms that shot fire-arrows.<sup>42</sup>

In subsequent weeks, the Vietnamese Eastern capital collapsed and the Western capital was abandoned to the Chinese. In the middle of 1407 the Vietnamese ruler **Hồ** and his son were captured, and the short-lived **Hồ** dynasty of **Đại Ngu/Đại Việt** came to an end.<sup>43</sup> The Chinese forces declared victory, amid claims of seven million of the Vietnamese killed in this initial campaign to take the polity.<sup>44</sup> In late 1407, the area was organised as the province of Jiao-zhi: Ming China's fourteenth province.<sup>45</sup> Jiao-zhi survived until 1428, by when the Ming forces had been driven out and the provincial status formally withdrawn.

The colonisation of the country began in earnest and immediately in 1407, with the invading forces beginning to employ local forces to assist them. The Ming regional commander Zhang Fu memorialised to the court that, 'Due to the circumstances, the expeditionary forces from Yunnan, Guangdong and Guangxi now have depleted ranks. They wish to select men from the Annam native forces to make up their deficiencies.'<sup>46</sup>

The request was approved and the conscription of the local arm of the colonial army commenced.

New administrative boundaries were drawn, new tax offices, salt offices, Confucian schools, Buddhist registries and other offices were established, while 7600 tradesmen and artisans (including gun founders) captured in *Dại Việt* were sent to the Ming capital at today's Nanjing.<sup>47</sup> By 1408, the Chinese had established 472 military and civilian offices in Jiao-zhi,<sup>48</sup> all being administered in a Chinese mode, but with many staffed by Vietnamese. Within two years, three maritime trade supervisorates had been created in this new province, the same number as existed in the rest of China. This was a clear indication of the desire of the Ming to control maritime trade to the south and exploit the economic advantage of such control.<sup>49</sup> Other economic exploitation involved grain taxes, annual levies of lacquer, sapan wood, kingfisher feathers, fans and aromatics, and the imposition of monopolies on gold, silver, salt, iron and fish.<sup>50</sup> In addition, eunuchs were sent to Jiao-zhi with the task of treasure collecting for the Emperor, with an equal amount of treasure collection appearing to have been done for themselves.

In an attempt to ensure that the colonial administration could carry out its functions, the colonial military forces (both Chinese and non-Chinese) were deployed against the remnant Vietnamese forces. Continuing defiance of the Ming by Vietnamese forces was pursued through guerrilla tactics, and in 1408 a further 40,000 troops had to be marched in from China as reinforcements, while another 20,000 naval troops were readied.<sup>51</sup> Yet troubles remained. The Jiao-zhi Regional Military Commission advised in 1408 that 'the guards and battalions have insufficient soldiers left to fulfil defence duties. The Guangdong regional commissioner Sun Quan, who led 10,000 troops to transport grain supplies, has now arrived here and the troops are equipped with ships and weapons. Permission is requested to temporarily retain them to provide defence.'<sup>52</sup> The proposal was agreed to.

New military guards were established in Jiao-zhi. There were the Jiao-zhou Left, Right and Central Guards within the capital, and the Jiao-zhou Forward Guard to the north of the Fu-liang River, and appointments of Vietnamese persons who had allied themselves to the Chinese were made. These were especially valuable in places where the Chinese troops could not be employed. For example, in a memorial to the court in 1408, we read: 'The Jiao-zhi Provincial Administration Commission has memorialised that the three areas of Po-lei, Qiu-wen and Ai-liu are narrow passes into Jiao-zhi and are affected by miasmatic vapours. The official troops find it difficult to dwell in these places. It is proposed raising native forces and establishing guards in nearby Si Prefecture, Tai-ping Prefecture and Tian Subprefecture.'<sup>53</sup> The proposal was accepted and implemented. Where there were insufficient troops available for a military guard, police offices were established.<sup>54</sup> Senior Chinese military figures would also command roving forces of up to 2000 Vietnamese troops to be sent wherever there was military service to perform.

This did not prevent a large force from the Chinese occupation army, led by the Yunnan commander Mu Sheng, being defeated in a major engagement in January 1409.<sup>55</sup> In the following month, 47,000 more Chinese troops were despatched to the south and the senior Chinese commander was ordered to return to the new province.<sup>56</sup> The occupation forces were obviously poorly supplied, and the southern provinces were ordered to produce 50,000 items of clothing and shoes for them. For the following six years, the Ming colonial forces fought against Vietnamese guerrillas loyal to the new Vietnamese

emperor **Trần Quý-khoảng**, often in pitched naval battles in the seas and rivers, and it was only in April 1414, after he was captured in Laos, that the occupying forces felt some firmer control, at least temporarily. New military guards were then established on the borders that the province shared with Champa, Laos and 'the Siamese barbarians', while many of the Chinese troops returned to China.<sup>57</sup>

In order to feed the forces, the troops were also permitted to levy grain taxes on the civilian population.<sup>58</sup> Some of the Vietnamese conscripts were employed on 'state farms' solely to grow grain for the military. The system in place in each guard is described in a memorial from 1410:

The various guards in Jiao-zhi should follow the pattern in Yunnan, whereby three in ten of the troops remain guarding the city walls, while seven in ten should be engaged in farming military fields. Each guard should set up a fort and when there is an alert they should enter the fort and wait to be deployed. Doing things in this way will ensure that there is no interference with local agriculture and also that the soldiers are not unemployed.<sup>59</sup>

While at least 8000 'native troops' from nine guards in Jiao-zhi were being employed on military farms, it was still insufficient to feed the forces, and on numerous occasions it was necessary to arrange transport of grain from Guangdong and Guangxi into Jiao-zhi.<sup>60</sup>

The employment of the *kai-zhong* (開中) system in the new colony and in adjacent provinces provided further means of feeding the army and expanding the range of Chinese administration. This system involved selling state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain, which the merchants were required to transport to and provide in the new colonies for the use of the military forces. The system was instituted in Yunnan during the Hongwu reign (1368–98), in order to feed the Chinese forces sent to occupy the region (of which more below). With the Chinese invasion and occupation of **Đại Việt**, this system was established there from 1410.<sup>61</sup> As years went by, better rates were provided in the new province and thus merchants preferred to sell their grain to the forces in Jiao-zhi rather than continue to supply Yunnan.<sup>62</sup>

In order to try to inculcate some allegiance to China, senior Vietnamese military commanders who gave their allegiance to the Chinese were sent to the Chinese capital at Nanjing for an audience with the emperor and to receive rewards, and then sent back to serve their masters in Jiao-zhi as members of the colonial army.<sup>63</sup> The appointment of such people to senior posts was also used as a propaganda weapon by the colonial authorities.<sup>64</sup>

Following the capture and execution of the Vietnamese emperor **Trần Quý-khoảng** in 1414, the Ming Emperor recalled the commander Zhang Fu and sent Li Bin to command the local forces. Yet by 1417, he was facing rebellion by some of the Vietnamese who had been appointed as military and civil officials.<sup>65</sup> These included someone by the name of **Lê Lợi**, the 'native-official police officer of E-le County in Qing-hua Prefecture', who was eventually to become the major figure in driving the Ming out of **Đại Việt**.<sup>66</sup> The following year saw more evidence of problems with the

colonial army, as it was noted that most of the major guards lacked officers, and that uprisings by Vietnamese officials who had been incorporated in the military and civil colonial administration were increasing.<sup>67</sup> While reinforcements were despatched from China, the frequency and intensity of the uprisings grew, grain supplies continued to be scarce and, in 1422, the Chinese supreme military commander Li Bin died. The death of the Yongle emperor two years after that also reduced Chinese enthusiasm for maintaining the troublesome colony.

The growing power and momentum of Lê Lợi's opposition in 1425 presaged the end of the colonial administration. The inefficiency of the Ming military at this time appears to have derived from the fact that most military units they deployed were Vietnamese, albeit sometimes under Chinese commanders.<sup>68</sup> A late attempt at reinforcing the colonial forces in Jiao-zhi was made in 1426, when a further 20,000 troops were despatched there from various provinces.<sup>69</sup>

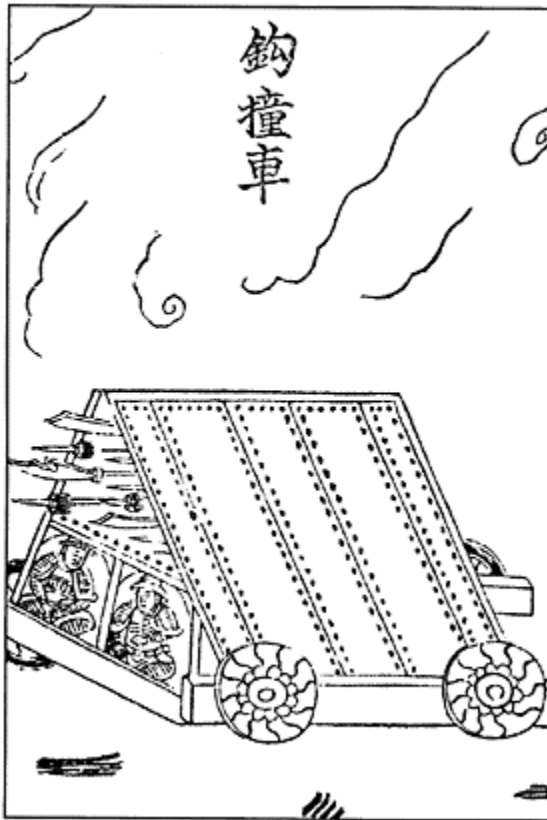
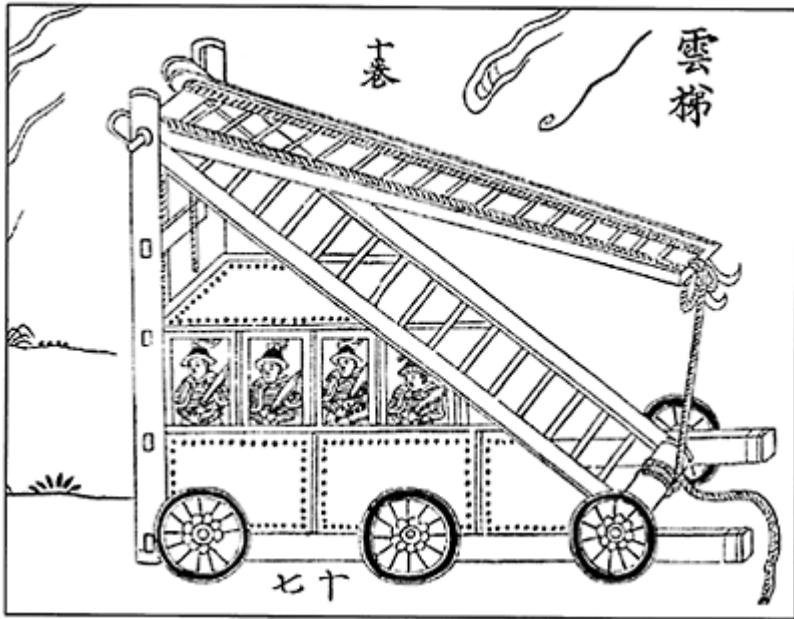


Figure 3.1 A Ming 'hook and strike' siege vehicle.

Source: The late Ming *Wu-jing song-yao*.



*Figure 3.2 'Cloud-ladder', a Ming siege vehicle for wall scaling.*

*Source:* The late Ming *Wu-jing song-yao*.

In addition, a further 1000 tally-slips<sup>70</sup> were sent to Jiao-zhi for appointing Vietnamese to military and civil posts. New commanders were despatched with orders to recruit 30,000 more Vietnamese for the military. New firearms were sent, and the senior Chinese military commanders already in Vietnam were stripped of their ranks and titles and required to 'realise achievements' in recompense for their failures.<sup>71</sup> In that same year, the commanders in Jiao-zhi had to take military men away from their grain farms in order to participate in expeditions and defence, which deepened the grain crisis.<sup>72</sup>

January 1427 saw planning in Beijing for another major expedition, involving 70,000 men, to proceed to Jiao-zhi along two routes, but imperial deliberations were already far advanced in terms of an eventual withdrawal. By May of that year, the major Chinese citadels in Jiao-zhi were under attack, and the arriving Chinese reinforcements had been put to flight. By the end of 1427, **Lê Lợi** had sent envoys to the Chinese court seeking the Chinese withdrawal, and the Ming had recognised that they could not sustain the military and civil presence necessary both to run a province and to suppress an increasingly powerful rebellion.<sup>73</sup>

A process of decolonisation was thus set in train, involving of course the colonial forces. The imperial orders, after requiring that the Vietnamese find themselves a ruler, read:

The Cheng-shan Marquis and Regional Commander Wang Tong and so on are immediately to lead the government troops back to their original guards and battalions. All the civil and military officials and clerks, commanders and troops of the Jiao-zhi Regional Military Commission, Provincial Administration Commission and provincial Surveillance Commission as well as all guards, battalions, prefectures, subprefectures and counties, are to return home together with their family members. Also, all the grand defenders, eunuchs and palace officials who have been sent on official duties are to return to the capital.<sup>74</sup>

The flood of people and materials northwards out of the former colony must have made the first few months of 1428 a hugely dislocated period for both **Đại Việt** and southern China. At the speed at which this occurred it was more a flight than an organised withdrawal. After some pretence that a descendant of the **Trần** dynasty would be installed as ruler of the polity, **Lê Lợi** formally assumed the position in 1428, sending a proxy human figure in gold to the Chinese court.<sup>75</sup>

The unsuccessful attempt by Ming China to colonise **Đại Việt** thus extended over a period of 21 years from 1406 to 1428. During this period, a colonial administration was established in **Đại Việt** and economic exploitation of the region was pursued with vigour. The role of the colonial army, comprising both Chinese and locally recruited persons, was to ensure the security of the colonial administrative apparatus. The use of a large number of Vietnamese soldiers in the colonial army was eventually to prove a major flaw in the system, as it was they who eventually rebelled and drove out the Ming colonialists.

### *The invasion and occupation of the Yunnan Tai polities: successful Ming colonialism*

In 1369, only a year after Zhu Yuan-zhang had formally founded the Ming dynasty, he sent proclamations for the instruction of 'the countries of Yunnan and Japan'.<sup>76</sup> This early recognition of Yunnan as a 'country' that lay beyond the Ming was to change. By 1380, Yunnan was considered to have been 'China's territory since the Han dynasty', providing a moral basis for the invasion of the region.<sup>77</sup>

About 250,000 troops were then deployed in an attack on the polities of the region, taking Da-li, Li-jiang and Jin-chi in 1382, and settling Chinese military families throughout the area. Thereby, the Ming founder took control of the major urban centres of the northwestern part of what is today Yunnan, including several Tai areas.<sup>78</sup> These were the first areas to be absorbed into Ming 'Yunnan'. For much of the Ming, in addition to being a provincial designation, the term 'Yunnan' was a generic term for areas to the southwest, extending as far as knowledge extended. In this respect, Yun-nan was somewhat like the term 'the West' in the European movement across the Northern American continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Ming 'Yunnan' was essentially the Tai regions to the southwest of China proper.

By 1387, the Ming founder had set his sights on the absorption of increasing areas of Yunnan. In preparation for an attack on the Bai-yi polity (in Tai, Mông Mao), to the



south of his earlier conquests, a military officer was sent to Sichuan to buy 10,000 ploughing cattle. These were to be used to plough the fields necessary to feed the troops on a long-term expedition. When the invasion did occur, under the commander Mu Ying, the Ming forces attacked Bai-yi with firearms, and claimed to have taken 30,000 heads.<sup>79</sup> The Tai Mao ruler Si Lunfa was subsequently charged for all the costs of the military expedition against him, as a *quid pro quo* for recognising him as ruler of the Bai-yi.<sup>80</sup> When a minister rebelled against Si Lun-fa in 1397, the Chinese state gave sanctuary to the fleeing Si Lun-fa, sent troops against the rebel and restored Si Lun-fa to his position, extracting vast tracts of land from him for this assistance.<sup>81</sup> The Ming state also broke down his former territory into smaller units.<sup>82</sup> This was the beginning of a policy that was to be pursued throughout the Ming, and that had profound effects on the upland Tai polities. The Ming military guards established in the region are detailed in the work by Liew Foon Ming.<sup>83</sup>

In the process by which they were gradually absorbed by the Ming, these polities were subjected to a wide range of tribute demands, labour levies and other levies, including troop provision. One example is the case of the Tai Mao polity of Lu-chuan, mentioned above as carved out of the former, larger, Bai-yi/ Mōng Mao. In 1389 the Ming court demanded 15,000 horses, 500 elephants and 30,000 cattle from Lu-chuan and its ruler, Si Lun-fa.<sup>84</sup> These were real rather than symbolic figures. Subsequently, large silver demands (silver in lieu of labour) were levied on this polity. The annual amount of 6900 *liang* of silver was initially set and then it was almost tripled to 18,000 *liang*. When it was realised that this was impossible to meet, the levy was reduced to the original amount.<sup>85</sup> Diverse other levies were applied to the other polities and enforced through the use or threat of military force. Again, we see the role of the Chinese colonial armies as providing the military muscle necessary to ensure that the economic expropriation could be carried out effectively.

The reign of the Yongle emperor (1403–24) was to see a major advance in the Ming colonisation of Yunnan. Prior to Yongle's invasion of the Vietnamese polity in 1406, he engaged himself in further expansion into Yunnan. The Ming colonisation of the Tai areas of Yunnan during the fifteenth century was attained and maintained by the actual use, or the threat, of military force. As such, the Ming established guards throughout the region to maintain security and political dominance. Independent battalions, directly under the Regional Military Commission, were established in Teng-chong<sup>86</sup> and Yong-chang<sup>87</sup> in Yunnan in 1403,<sup>88</sup> and these were to be the major control centres for Chinese colonisation of the Tai polities over the following century.

In 1403, several new Chiefs' Offices were established in the area corresponding to the southwest of the modern province of Yunnan,<sup>89</sup> and in 1406 a further four Chiefs' Offices were established in what is today Sip Song Chau Tai in Vietnam.<sup>90</sup> Mu-bang (Hsenwi) and Meng-yang were made Military and Civilian Pacification Superintendencies in 1404.<sup>91</sup>

The recognition of these polities by the Ming court came at a cost to their independence, and when they did not accord with what the new Ming emperor required, military actions were launched against them. In 1405, for example, the senior Chinese representative in Yunnan, Mu Sheng, launched an attack on Ba-bai (Lan Na).<sup>92</sup> The attempts at domination extended even to what is today Assam in India, with envoys

carrying threats being despatched to Dagu-la, the polity of Uttara-kula that lay on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River.<sup>93</sup>

After some sort of recognition or acceptance of the superior position of the Ming court, through military action or threat, Chinese clerks or registry managers were appointed to the 'native offices' to 'assist' the traditional ruler, and ensure that Ming interests were served. Chinese clerks were appointed to carry out Chinese language duties in the native offices of Yunnan in 1404,<sup>94</sup> while similar circulating-official clerk positions (to be filled by Chinese) were established in seven Chiefs' Offices in Yunnan in 1406.<sup>95</sup> Gradually, formal members of the Chinese bureaucracy were appointed to assist these rulers.<sup>96</sup> Here, then, we see the beginnings of the process by which formerly Southeast Asian polities were gradually absorbed into the Chinese empire.

The 'native office' polities were then subject to demands in terms of gold and silver in lieu of labour, administered by the Ministry of Revenue,<sup>97</sup> and also required to provide troops to assist in further Ming campaigns. Mu-bang, for example, was required to send its troops against Ba-bai (Lan Na) in the 1406 expedition mentioned above.<sup>98</sup> This employment of 'native troops' by the Ming colonisers reflected what was being done in **Đại Việt**, and what was to be done by later colonial armies in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

During the reign of the Xuande emperor (1426–35), Chinese administrative control in Yunnan was extended, with police offices being established at the major passes in the Gaoligong Mountains, at Teng-chong and Wei-yuan.<sup>99</sup> A former military administration—the Yong-chang battalion—was changed into Lu-jiang Subprefecture, a civil office under the Yunnan Provincial Administration Commission, as Chinese control was consolidated. In the same year, the Ming established the Dong-tang Chief's Office, within Burmese territory, as an attempt to split the territory and power of the Ava-Burma polity.<sup>100</sup> Other native offices were also set up (that is, recognised and supported by the Ming and its military), including the Niu-wu Chief's Office in Ha-ni/Akha territory.<sup>101</sup> Likewise, postal relay stations were established to aid in communications with military and civilian administrations in the area.<sup>102</sup>

It was in the 1430s and 1440s that major Ming military invasions of the Tai polities of Yunnan took place. The three major attacks against the Tai Mao polity known to the Chinese as Lu-chuan, extending from 1438 to 1445, have been largely neglected in studies of Southeast Asian history, and thus so has this aspect of Ming colonialism.<sup>103</sup> However, they were some of the most important events in the history of fifteenth-century Southeast Asia, resulting in the fragmentation and colonisation of one of its largest polities.

This is because the Tai Mao leader Si Ren-fa had, during the 1430s, been making attempts to recover territory formerly subject to his father (the abovementioned Si Lun-fa), but atomised by earlier Ming policies.<sup>104</sup> The Chinese administration, responding to what it saw as the rise of a new Nan-zhao (Nanchao), made great efforts to expand its own influence in the area as a means of bolstering defence capacities.<sup>105</sup> Thus 'chiefs' were appointed as 'pacification commissioners' and local commanders were given titles as police officers either in anticipation of or as rewards for achievements against Si Ren-fa and his forces.<sup>106</sup> The court in Beijing ordered the local Yunnan commander Mu Sheng to send troops again in 1438, but the Chinese forces were severely defeated.<sup>107</sup>

Thus 50,000 troops from all over southern China were mobilised in 1439 for the first major Lu-chuan expedition.<sup>108</sup> To feed the forces, the grain price of the salt obtained from salt wells at Da-li was reduced in order to attract grain merchants to transport grain there.<sup>109</sup> By 1440, it was being claimed that 120,000 troops would be needed if victory was to be achieved against Si Ren-fa.<sup>110</sup> In 1441, the Ming court ordered another expedition, led by the generals Jiang Gui and Wang Ji.<sup>111</sup> Wang Ji was to claim the taking of 50,000 heads at Shang Jiang on the Salween River within the first year, and claimed that his forces had taken and destroyed Lu-chuan in 1442, but that Si Ren-fa had escaped.<sup>112</sup> In August 1442, a further expedition was launched against Lu-chuan,<sup>113</sup> and both Wang Ji and Jiang Gui were recalled to lead it. Further details of these military expeditions are provided by Liew.<sup>114</sup>

The year 1444 saw the capture and destruction of Lu-chuan, the Möng Mao power base, the killing of Si Ren-fa, and the establishment by the Ming of Long-chuan Pacification Commission (apparently the first use of the term pacification commission ('xuan-fu-si' 宣撫司) in Chinese history) partially to replace Lu-chuan.<sup>115</sup> A former Lu-chuan chieftain, Gong Xiang, who had gone over to the Ming, was then appointed as pacification commissioner.<sup>116</sup> The Ming decided that this pacification commission would have, in addition to a pacification commissioner, an associate administrator, as well as deputy and assistant administrators and local company commanders. These local company commanders were apparently linked with the Yunnan military system. Subsequently, a Chinese battalion commander was 'invited' to 'assist' Gong Xiang in his administration.<sup>117</sup> Here we see all the characteristics of later colonialism in Southeast Asia. Superior military force is employed to destroy a polity and remove its ruler, a new pliant ruler is instituted to rule in ways beneficial to the colonial power, he is provided with advisers from the colonial power and his military forces are made both subject to and agents of the colonial military forces.

A further major Ming military expedition that was greatly to affect the upland Southeast Asian polities was that launched in 1448 to capture Si Ji-fa, a son of Si Ren-fa. In a month equivalent to April to May 1448, imperial instructions were issued to Wang Ji requiring him to capture Si Ji-fa and the chieftains of Mengyang.<sup>118</sup> The surrounding polities of Ava-Burma, Mu-bang (Hseinwi/Theinni), Nan Dian (Maingti), Gan-yai (Meung-la) and Long-chuan were also required to provide troops for deployment against Si Ji-fa.<sup>119</sup> The imperial orders sent to the Ming forces suggest the disruption that such an expedition would have wrought in the region. The orders warned that 'He [Si Ji-fa] may flee into Ava-Burma's territory and be concealed by the people there. If so, capture persons as the situation demands, so that the yi<sup>120</sup> people will know fear and the Great Army will not have been sent in vain.'<sup>121</sup> While Wang Ji reported success in his attack on Si Ji-fa's stockade,<sup>122</sup> later accounts tell of how Wang Ji had sought personal advantages from the 'native officials', and how in fact Wang Ji had been defeated by Si Ji-fa.<sup>123</sup> Again in 1454, Chinese forces were despatched, this time against Si Ken-fa and others in Meng-yang (Mo-hnyin/Mogaung), who had established their own regime in competition with the Ming appointee.<sup>124</sup>

As in the other examples cited above, Ming colonialism in Yunnan involved the military forces in providing the fear factor necessary to impose effective economic demands on the colonised areas. This had significant effects on the societies controlled by the persons recognised by the Ming. In 1447, even the Yunnan administrative

commissioner Li Guan was concerned about the effects of the exploitative policies, which the Ming imposed either directly or indirectly, noting that:

native officials have been appointed without adequate investigation and they have been pressed for payment of gold and silver in lieu of labour. The *yi* people have been stirred up and this has resulted in them cherishing anger and feuding with and killing with each other.... It is requested that all previously agreed payments of gold and silver be cancelled and that they only be required to bring local products to the court at fixed intervals.<sup>125</sup>

Further evidence of the effects of the colonial military forces based in Yunnan is seen in an account from 1449, which noted that the Ming military personnel based at Jin-chi in Yunnan were lending money to non-Chinese persons, drawing them into the money economy and then taking field produce and children in payment for the debts.<sup>126</sup> Further direct exploitation of the people of the region is seen in a reference of 1458, which noted that land surrounding Teng-chong, the major Chinese military outpost in the region, was forcibly appropriated by Chinese officials, and the people were divided into farming families subject to tax levies. This resulted in many people fleeing from the region.<sup>127</sup>

Achieving a balance between economically exploiting the newly conquered areas in Yunnan and trying to maintain social stability (and thereby control) in those areas was something the Ming and its agents constantly debated over. Despite claims that social stability was at risk in Yunnan in the 1440s due to the levies, the Ministry of Revenue refused to reduce any of the gold and silver payments required, claiming that 'they are an old system dating from the Hongwu reign, and it is difficult to abolish them'.<sup>128</sup> The gold, silver and horse demands that the Ming state imposed on the Tai polities of Yunnan and beyond not only depleted the polities, but also left them open to imposition of other demands by the Ming. In the 1440s, for example, Mu-bang (Hsenwi/Theinni) deployed its forces to assist the Chinese forces arrayed against Si Ren-fa in exchange for the cancelling of an outstanding debt to the Chinese state (which had been unilaterally imposed by the Ming) of 14,000 *liang* of silver. In 1448, the gold, silver, rice, paper money, cowries and horses owed in lieu of labour by eight prefectures in Yunnan, and a range of mainly Tai polities stretching right across Indochina, were all cancelled as a reward for their military assistance in destroying the power of the Möng Mao polity of Lu-chuan.<sup>129</sup>

The pattern was continued in Yunnan throughout the fifteenth century and beyond. Military occupation was the initial step in establishing a colonial administration. Following the military defeat of the forces of Shi-ba Zhai in Yunnan in 1522, for example, the Shi-ba Zhai Independent Battalion was established, with a military contingent of three battalion commanders, three battalion vice commanders, two judges and 12 company commanders, who were complemented by a civil administration of one clerk and two police officers.<sup>130</sup>

Many of the Ming military units in these areas were manned by criminals who had been unable to redeem their sentences through rice payments and were therefore exiled to these areas to assist the colonising process. As occurred in Jiao-zhi, 'military farms' were established to feed these military personnel, and it was often the troops themselves who

had to farm to produce their own grain. These farms were part of the colonising process because they induced sedentary occupation, allowed the inflow of Chinese people and fed the military, which allowed colonisation to proceed. The process of expansion was a continuous one. At the end of the sixteenth century, grand plans were in place to expand China's territory southwards from Yunnan, with it being noted that 'when the six *zhao* [pacification superintendencies] are completely brought to peace, Ba-xiong Pass will be built beyond Meng-mao and thousands of *li* of land will be opened up with 10,000 *mu* of state farms'.<sup>131</sup>

The employment of the *kai-zhong* system in the newly occupied areas also played a major role in expanding the range of Chinese colonial administration and the areas settled by Chinese persons. The system involved selling the aforementioned state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain, which the merchants were required to transport to and provide in border regions, generally for the use of expeditionary or defence forces. The system was instituted in Yunnan during the Hong-wu reign (1368–98), in order to feed the Chinese forces sent to occupy the region. In the 1430s, the system was powerfully revived again in Da-li and Jin-chi in Yunnan to supply the forces to be used against Si Ren-fa of Luchuan, and was still being employed in 1445 to feed the persons building the walled city at Teng-chong, the new Chinese military outpost in Yunnan.

One of the essential policies of the Ming state in pursuing its colonial aims in the Tai regions of Yunnan, and in all its colonial endeavours, was constituted by efforts to keep colonised polities as divided from each other as possible. This had the dual roles of first reducing the threat any single polity could pose to China, and second facilitating the manipulation of these polities. In this manner, Ming China pursued an active policy of divide-and-rule colonialism, and in this the military forces in Yunnan played an important role.

The aims of this policy were realised in a number of ways. A major method was to break down polities into smaller units, making them less of a threat to Chinese interests. As has been noted above, during the Hongwu reign (1368–98), Si Lun-fa of Luchuan/Ping-mian sought assistance to regain his territory from chieftains who had rebelled against him. The Chinese state took advantage of restoring him (and his death in 1399 or 1400) to break up his territory into Luchuan and several other polities, all under separate rulers.<sup>132</sup> A further attempt by the Ming to divide the power of major Yunnan Tai entities was seen in 1404 with efforts to divide Ba-bai/Da-dian (Lan Na) into two.<sup>133</sup> This was eventually unsuccessful, despite a Chinese-sponsored military attack on Lan Na.<sup>134</sup> There was a similar attempt by the Ming state to split the polity of Che-li (Chiang Hung)<sup>135</sup> in two in 1421, so as to reduce its power and allow the appointment of a Chinese registrar and military commissioner in one of the newly created territories.<sup>136</sup>

One hundred and fifty years later, in 1560, when the power of Ava-Burma was expanding, the Ministry of War also urged in respect of Yunnan that 'special instructions should be sent to the various *yí* noting that they are not permitted to have communication or form links with each other'.<sup>137</sup> At the end of the sixteenth century, the Ministry of Rites urged that Ava-Burma only be given recognition by the court on condition that it 'not seek alliances with other tribes'.<sup>138</sup> And, all along, it was the power of the Ming colonial forces in this area and the local forces of other polities that were controlled by the Ming that provided the threat or actual power that allowed them to pursue these

policies: policies of divide and rule, which have marked many later colonial regimes in Southeast Asia.

A corollary of this divide and rule policy was that of 'using *yi* to attack *yi*'. That is, the Ming were constantly seeking opportunities to deploy the troops of the 'native offices' rather than their own troops against those of other 'native offices'. This was a notable characteristic of Chinese military policies from well before the Ming dynasty. The use of similar policies has characterised many colonial empires, either because their own troops were few in number and they wanted to reduce their own human losses and financial expenditure, or because their own troops were not familiar with local terrains or resistant to the climates and diseases. During the Ming, it was far more convenient to employ the troops of Yunnan polities against other Yunnan polities than to mobilise and move forces from Chinese areas.

There are many example of this policy being pursued in the Tai areas of Yunnan during the fifteenth century. In 1389, Si Lun-fa of the Bai-*yi* (Tai Mao) was ordered to pursue and capture 'rebels' in Yunnan,<sup>139</sup> while two years later the Hongwu Emperor wished to employ the troops of Ba-bai (Lan Na) to attack the Bai-*yi*.<sup>140</sup> In 1405, the Chinese commander Mu Sheng of Yunnan employed Chinese and native troops, this time in an attack on Ba-bai (Lan Na). When the Ming state intended to attack Ava-Burma in 1409, Mu-bang (Hsenwi) was ordered to prepare its troops for an overland attack, while the Chinese forces were to attack from the sea.<sup>141</sup> The generals who were proceeding on expedition against Si Ren-fa in the 1430s were told: 'Using *yi* to attack *yi* was a fine method used by the ancients. You are to employ it.' Thus, in 1438, the court accepted the 'offers' by Mu-bang and Da-hou to deploy 100,000 *yi* troops against Lu-chuan.<sup>142</sup>

Following the defeat of the Lu-chuan forces and Si Ren-fa's flight to Ava, it was noted by the Zheng-tong Emperor, in respect of the planned attack on Ava-Burma: 'Using *yi* to attack *yi* was a good tactic used by the ancients. Moreover, Ava-Burma is far in the distance. The Imperial army will not be easily able to penetrate deeply and an attack will be impossible without *yi* troops.'<sup>143</sup> After Si Ren-fa's capture in 1444 and the sending of his head to the Chinese capital, the growth of Si Ji-fa's power in Meng-yang began to attract Chinese attention and it was thus in 1447 that Ava-Burma and Mu-bang were ordered to provide troops for an attack on Meng-yang.<sup>144</sup> Subsequent reports note that 100,000 Mu-bang and Ava-Burma troops were employed in razing Si Ji-fa's stockades on Mount Gui-ku to the west of the Irrawaddy. Then the ruler of Ava-Burma was assigned the task of hunting down Si Ji-fa.<sup>145</sup> It is thus clear that, like other colonial powers that operated later in Southeast Asia, the Ming depended heavily on native military forces to achieve their military goals.

### **'Colonialism' and the Ming**

Having examined three spheres of fifteenth-century Ming military activity in Southeast Asia, and attached to each a variant of the 'colonial' tag, it is beholden upon the author to provide some justification for the labels.

Is 'colonialism' an appropriate term to apply to these acts by the Ming state? Herold Wiens suggests a positive response. In his 1954 work *China's March toward the Tropics*, he wrote of the 'national autonomous regions' instituted by the People's Republic of

China post-1949 as being used to 'disguise an old colonialism'.<sup>146</sup> His work was researched and published during some of the most intense years of the Cold War and his book was seen, in some ways, to have been a response to the political dichotomy that existed at that time. Were his views overstated? Or does the history of China's expansion in the early Ming truly suggest colonialism?

The term colonialism itself has a variegated history, being used to refer to the settlement of Romans in areas conquered by that empire, to the eastward expansion of the Russian Empire, to the expansion of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and to the overseas activities of the European powers subsequent to the fifteenth century. The debate over colonialism has, however, now been so tightly linked with the expansion of the European overseas empires that its application to China as an agent rather than victim of colonialism appears to some to be precluded almost by definition.

Others choose to distinguish European 'imperialism', funded by the resources of the industrial revolution, and resulting in deindustrialization and non-food agricultural production in the colonies, from the earlier European colonial expansion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But can we employ the term 'imperialism' to refer to Ming expansion? Does this Chinese expansion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries accord with Joseph Schumpeter's definition of imperialism as being when 'a state evinces a purposeless propensity to expansion by force beyond all definable limits', so that its conquering activities occur 'without being actually the means to some end other than what is implicit in the very exercise'?<sup>147</sup> That is to say, were the expansionist actions of the Ming state precipitated only by a 'will to dominate' or by something more calculated that can be classed as 'colonialism'?

Was the early Ming expansion and occupation of other polities a product of economic demand? Could the words of John Hobson, used in reference to British imperialism, have been as applicable to the Ming? Hobson noted: 'From this standpoint, our increased military and naval expenditure during recent years may be regarded primarily as insurance premiums for protection of existing colonial markets and current outlay on new markets.'<sup>148</sup>

Or was the stimulation to expansion during the Hongwu (1368–98) and Yongle (1403–24) reigns predicated on the exigencies that caused the Russian Prince Chancellor Gorchakov, in 1864, to describe Russia's eastwards push as follows:

The situation of Russia, is that of all the civilised states which come into contact with nomads who have no well established state organisation... To provide against their raids and their looting, we must subdue them and bring them under strict control. But there are others further away... consequently we too must proceed further still... We march forward by necessity as much as by ambition.<sup>149</sup>

A number of definitions have been proposed for 'colonialism', the diversity of which suggests that it is a rather elusive concept. In his *Modern Colonialism: Institutions and Policies*, Thomas Adam defines colonialism as 'the political control of an underdeveloped people whose social and economic life is directed by the dominant power'.<sup>150</sup> Hans Kohn suggests that 'colonialism is foreign rule imposed upon a people'.<sup>151</sup> Michael Doyle considers that 'Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in

which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society... Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.<sup>152</sup> Ronald Horvath maintains that the important difference between colonialism and imperialism is that the former involves the presence of a significant number of settlers from the colonising power in the colonised state.<sup>153</sup> Ferro also agrees on this point, saying that colonisation is 'associated with the occupation of a foreign land, with it being brought under cultivation, with the settlement of colonists'.<sup>154</sup>

The 'salt water doctrine', which conditions much writing on colonialism and decolonisation and which holds that the term colonialism exclusively applies to the relationship between European colonial powers and their 'overseas territories', appears to be an arbitrary division, based on the 'widespread though unwarranted assumption, which had its origin in the fifteenth-century age of discoveries, that colonial empires are established by sea-powers, whereas expansion into contiguous land masses does not produce...colonialism'.<sup>155</sup> For this doctrine, territories need to be separated from the metropolitan state by sea in order to qualify as colonies. The doctrine relies on what has been referred to by some writers as the 'principle of distance' as an indispensable element of colonialism. Does this distance produce a qualitative difference in the phenomenon?

The arguments of David Armitage seem to provide a more encompassing and convincing idea of colonialism. He recognises a narrative of English colonialism that runs in a straight line from England, through Ireland to the Caribbean and thence to the eastern seaboard of America.<sup>156</sup> Distance and separation by sea are not the determining characteristics. It is the ideologies, policies and practices of the colonising power that determine the nature of the phenomenon. He also sees Scotland, like England, as 'colonialist' in that it used settlement, acculturation and economic dependency as a means to 'civilise' its territorial margins and their inhabitants.<sup>157</sup>

The general definitions provided by Osterhammel and Emerson perhaps come closest to the way in which I am utilising the term colonialism in this chapter. Osterhammel speaks of it as 'a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonised people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers'.<sup>158</sup> Emerson defines 'colonialism' as the 'establishment and maintenance, for an extended period of time, of rule over an alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power'.<sup>159</sup>

Returning now to the three sets of Ming policies and practices detailed above, and in the light of the ideas and definitions of Armitage, Osterhammel and Emerson, it appears that there is some basis for classifying them as the actions of a colonial state.

First, the eunuch-led voyages at the beginning of the fifteenth century constituted a proto-colonialism, as there was no real rule over a people or territory. There was, instead, control over nodes and networks. The military who constituted the force on which the Ming armadas depended can thus be called 'protocolonial armies' and their role was the maintenance of the *Pax Ming*, which provided the Ming state with a capacity to influence polities and, at least in some ways, to achieve some economic advantage.

Second, the Ming invasion of **Đại Việt** is perhaps the most obvious example of a colonial adventure. There was invasion, occupation, the imposition of a military and civil administration, economic exploitation and domination from a court in the capital of the dominating power. The colonial armies, both Chinese and 'native', were involved in the



original invasion, the provision of protection to the civil administrators, the suppression of armed rebellion, the expansion of the borders of the province and the growing of food to feed the forces. The obvious decolonisation that occurred following the failure of this enterprise underlines its colonial nature. That is not to say that these armies were always pliant and loyal tools of domination. Instead, they were frequently conscript forces and often as willing as any social group to pursue their own self-interests.

Third, the Ming invasion and occupation of Yunnan Tai polities and the 'southwest' during the fifteenth century was the most successful of the colonial ventures examined, as many of the areas colonised during the Ming still form a part of the People's Republic of China today. There can be little doubt that these actions by the Ming rulers were colonial in nature. They involved the use of huge military force to invade peoples who were ethnically different from the Chinese, to occupy their territory, to break that territory into smaller administrative units, to appoint pliant rulers and 'advisers' and to exploit economically the regions so occupied. The colonial armies employed in the enterprise comprised both Chinese and indigenous people, and in many ways the latter fulfilled the military needs of the Ming. These colonial armies provided the actual or threatened violence necessary to maintain the Ming colonial administration in the Tai areas of Yunnan.

Examination of the colonial experience in Southeast Asia has long remained limited to the period subsequent to the arrival of European forces in the region. The discussion above, even if not sufficient to sway all readers to all its argument, should at least open an avenue for recognising that in investigating colonialism in Southeast Asia, we need to extend the existing temporal limits and include within our considerations the actions of the successive polities we know under the rubric 'China'.

### Notes

- 1 Chinese terms are in *hanyu pinyin*, with hyphens inserted between morphemes in personal names and sometimes in lesser-known polity names, to facilitate possible identification and comparison with other sources.
- 2 For more detailed accounts of the demise of the Yuan dynasty and the founding of the Ming, see Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 517–83; and also his 'The Rise of the Ming Dynasty 1330–1367', in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 7, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, Part I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 11–15.
- 3 For broad-ranging studies of imperial China's foreign relations, see the contributions in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Morris Rossabi (ed.), *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); and Mark Mancall (ed.), *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1984).
- 4 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 170.3b–4a. The *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu* is part of a collective text named *Ming shi-lu*, or Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty. These comprise successive annals of individual Ming dynasty reigns. References below are also to later reigns from the same work.
- 5 *Ming Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 229.1a–2b.

- 6 *Ming Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 219.5a-b. The term **Annam/Đại Việt** is used to refer to the polity centred on the Red River Delta which called itself **Đại Việt**, but was known to the Ming as Annam.
- 7 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 69.6b. After their invasion and occupation of **Annam/Đại Việt**, the Ming renamed it Jiao-zhi Province and administered it as a province of Ming China. In the late 1420s the Vietnamese drove the Ming military and civil administration out of the region.
- 8 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 87.4b.
- 9 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 43.8b.
- 10 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 184.3a.
- 11 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 180.1b. For a detailed account of this guard, see Henry Serruys, 'Foreigners in the Metropolitan Police During the 15th Century', *Oriens Extremus* 8, 1 (1961), pp. 59–83.
- 12 These are fully recorded in the dynastic history *Ming Shi*. An English-language translation of the accounts of these Guards has recently been published in two volumes by Dr Liew Foon Ming, *The Treatises on Military Affairs of the Ming Dynastic History, 1368–1644: An Annotated Translation of the Treatises on Military Affairs*, Vol. 1; *Locations and Years of Establishment of the Weisuo-Garrisons and Aboriginal Commissions in the Ming Empire Proper and in Border Regions*, Vol. 2 (Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens [MOAG, Vol. 129], 1998).
- 13 Zhu Yun-wen had adopted the reign title 'Jianwen'.
- 14 Respected modern historian of the Ming, Chan Hok-lam describes the process thus: 'The Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor wanted to claim a place in history as a great ruler, and he was attracted to military conquest as one means to this end. He struck out in every direction: to the border regions in the north, northwest and northeast; deep into Inner Asia; and through maritime Asia to the lands beyond the Persian Gulf. Everywhere he sought to extend his empire's political, cultural and economic influence.' In Frederick W. Mote (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 7, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, Part I, 'The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-hsi and Hsüan-te reigns, 1399–1435', pp. 221–22.
- 15 Expansion northwards and westwards was precluded by the power of the Mongols and others.
- 16 The eunuchs sent to Jiao-zhi (the occupied **Đại Việt** and Burma by the Ming emperors were also engaged in the collection of precious stones, gold and pearls. A later reference from 1459 suggests that the obtaining of gold was a major task of the eunuch-led voyages. See *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 307.3b.
- 17 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 19.
- 18 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 43.3b.
- 19 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 279.1a.
- 20 J.V.G. Mills, *Ma Huan: Ying-yai Sheng-lan, 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores' [1433]* (Cambridge: Published for Hakluyt Society by Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 31–2.
- 21 Samudera was a major entrepôt polity located near the modern port city of Lhokseumawe in Aceh.
- 22 The rise of the entrepôt polity of Melaka began in the early fifteenth century. The chronological collocation between its rise and the Ming voyages was no coincidence. Military support by Ming forces allowed Melaka to disregard threats posed to new polities by Majapahit in Java and Ayudhya in what is today Thailand.
- 23 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.1 a.
- 24 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.5a.

- 25 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.6a–b. The *liang* is a Chinese unit of weight, often referred to as a ‘Chinese ounce’. During the Ming, it averaged 37 grams.
- 26 The phonetics suggest Nawrahta, but this name does not accord with existing lists of Burman rulers.
- 27 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.5b.
- 28 A generic reference to the western seas of Southeast Asia and all of the seas to the west of there.
- 29 *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 116.2a–b.
- 30 *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 130.1 b–2a.
- 31 *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 118.4a.
- 32 For a probably romanticised account of the origins of Su-gan-la, see the account of Samudera in *Ying-yai sheng-lan*. This has been translated in Mills’ *Ma Huan: Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, pp. 116–17.
- 33 Michael N. Pearson, ‘Merchants and States’, in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 77.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 79. For a periodised study of Portuguese maritime expansion, see Sanjay Subramanyam and Luís Filipe F.R. Thomaz, ‘Evolution of Empire: The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the Sixteenth Century’, in Tracy (ed.), *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, pp. 298–331. They detail three models of imperial organisation (a network of coastal fortresses in an endemic state of war in north Africa; agrarian and territorial colonisation and settlement in the Atlantic Islands; and a coastal network with less violence on the coast of Guinea and more commerce), and suggest that the initial phase of their ‘Asian venture’ involved variants of all three. The Ming seem to have followed something closest to the Guinea model.
- 35 This is more usually rendered Annam, a Chinese term meaning ‘Pacified South’ and hence insulting for patriotic-minded Vietnamese. **Đại Việt** (the Great Viet) in the early fifteenth century was nowhere near as large as modern Vietnam. It centred on the Red River Valley and controlled some territory to its north and to the south. Not far to its south lay the large Austronesian polity of Champa and to its west lay the Tai polities.
- 36 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 52.6a–7a. Chen Tian-ping (**Trần Thiên Bình**) was a Vietnamese defector who claimed descent from the former **Trần** rulers.
- 37 These were non-Chinese troops under the ‘native offices’ of Guangxi: probably today’s Zhuang and Yao.
- 38 A *shi* is approximately equivalent to a hectolitre.
- 39 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 60.1a–4a. This figure of 800,000 cited in the *Ming shi-lu* may be an exaggeration. Whitmore claims 215,000 was more likely. See John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam: Hồ Quý Ly and the Ming, 1371–1421* (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1985), p. 89.
- 40 For the use of firearms by the Ming armies in their invasion of Vietnam, see Sun Laichen, ‘Chinese Military Technology and Dai Viet, 1390–1497’, Asia Research Institute Electronic Working Paper No. 11, September 2003, pp. 6–11 ([www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03\\_011.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03_011.pdf)).
- 41 Situated to the west of modern-day Hanoi.
- 42 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 62.3a–b. See also Whitmore, *Vietnam: Hồ Quý Ly and the Ming*, pp. 91–2.
- 43 Through most of Vietnamese history after independence from China, the polity was known as **Đại Việt**. A few years prior to the renewed Chinese invasion, in the late fourteenth century, the usurper **Hồ Quý Ly** changed the dynastic name to Đại Ngu. Thus, strictly

- speaking, the Ming ended the **Dại Ngu** polity, though the generic term **Dại Việt** is instead often used by scholars for Vietnam.
- 44 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 68.3b–7a.
- 45 The new name of the occupied **Dại Việt**.
- 46 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 67.3b–4a, dated to the equivalent of 26 June 1407.
- 47 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.6a.
- 48 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 80.3b–4a.
- 49 The importance of Vietnamese maritime trade in this period is underlined in Momoki Shiro, 'Dại Việt and the South China Sea Trade: From the 10th to the 15th Century', in *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, 1 (1998), pp. 1–34.
- 50 The salt monopoly was an early precursor of the opium, alcohol and salt monopolies imposed by the French in Vietnam nearly five hundred years later.
- 51 *Ming Tai-zong Shi-lu*, juan 82.5a–b.
- 52 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 81.7b.
- 53 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 77.3b.
- 54 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 84.4b–5a.
- 55 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 86.6b–7a.
- 56 For a biography of Zhang Fu, see the entry compiled by Wang Gungwu, in Luther Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (eds), *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 64–7.
- 57 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 152.2b.
- 58 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 68.8b–9a.
- 59 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.2b.
- 60 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 250.6b and *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 24.8a.
- 61 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 103.1b–2b.
- 62 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 7.9a–b.
- 63 For example, see *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 73.5a.
- 64 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 145.2b and juan 163.1b.
- 65 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 190.1a–2a.
- 66 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 196.1b.
- 67 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 204. 1b.
- 68 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.1b–2a.
- 69 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.8a–b.
- 70 These were the verification papers issued to each official to allow their identity to be ascertained through matching their half of the document with the half kept by the issuer.
- 71 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 16.1 a–b.
- 72 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 17.11b–12a.
- 73 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 32.9b–10a. For a useful biography of **Lê Lợi**, see that by Emile Gaspardone, in Goodrich and Fang (eds), *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, Vol. 1, pp. 793–7.
- 74 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 33.1 a–b.
- 75 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 51.3b–4a.
- 76 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 39.1b. Another reference to Yunnan as a country can be found at *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 53.9a–b.
- 77 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 138.5a–b.
- 78 The Tai/Dai are an ethnic group defined by the use of languages of the Tai family. Their origins are debated, but it seems their earliest settlements straddled today's Guangxi/Vietnamese regions, and the Zhuang who live in today's Guangxi are a Tai people. Much of present-day southern China seems to have been originally inhabited by Tai peoples, with Cantonese sharing many Tai language lexical features. Their earliest

- polities/settlements (muang/meung/mǒng) centred on wet rice cultivation in river valleys. During the fifteenth century, most of the southern half of today's Yunnan comprised Tai polities, which also extended from today's northwest Vietnam to Assam in India. Major contemporary Tai/Thai polities are Thailand and Laos, but there are Tai people in Vietnam, China, Burma and India. Varieties of Tai are distinguished by modifiers: thus Tai Mao or Mao Tai, whose polity Mǒng Mao extended over much of modern north Burma and west Yunnan.
- 79 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 189.14b–16a. Cutting off heads and piling them in mounds was a common means of intimidation. When evidence of enemy casualties was required, often only the ears were taken to the superior.
- 80 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 198.2a–b. This practice of claiming reparations from the polity one attacks became an integral part of many later colonialisms.
- 81 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 255.2a–b and 255.8a–b.
- 82 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.2a and 16.3a. The other polities that Bai-yi was dissolved into, included Meng-yang, Mu-bang, Meng-ding, Lu-jiang, Gan-yai, Da-hou and Wan Dian all under separate rulers.
- 83 Liew Foon Ming, *The Treatises on Military Affairs of the Ming Dynastic History*, Vol. 2, pp. 89–99.
- 84 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 190.3b.
- 85 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 17.6a.
- 86 Located in Teng-yue Subprefecture, west of Baoshan in what is today Teng-chong. Approximately 160 km north of Bhamo and 150 km southeast of Myitkying. See Liew Foon Ming, *The Treatises on Military Affairs of the Ming Dynastic History*, Vol. 2, pp. 94–5.
- 87 Previously known as the Jin-chi (Golden Teeth) Guard. Located in what is today Bao-shan. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–2.
- 88 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 23.4b.
- 89 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 16.3a. The precise locations were Lê Dian, Da-hou, Ganyai, Zhe-Wan Dian and Lu-jiang.
- 90 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 53.2b. These were under the Ning-yuan Guard.
- 91 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 32.1a. The Military and Civilian Pacification Superintendency was a more formal Chinese administrative organ than a Chief's Office. It was tasked with both military and civil functions, suggesting that the area was still in the long-term process of 'pacification'.
- 92 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 49.1a–b. Lan Na extended over today's northern Thailand.
- 93 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 82.1a–b.
- 94 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 35.2b.
- 95 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 55. 1b.
- 96 Much like the advisers appointed by the British to assist the rulers of the Malay States post-1874.
- 97 See, for example, *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, 17.6a.
- 98 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 57.2a–b.
- 99 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.2a–b, 106.5a and 106.7b.
- 100 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.7a–b.
- 101 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106. 7b.
- 102 *Ming Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.8a.
- 103 Located in what is today western Yunnan and northern Burma.
- 104 He had gained control over Gan-yai, Nan Dian, Teng-chong, Lu-jiang and Jin-chi by 1438.
- 105 Nanzhao (Nan-chao) was a powerful polity centred on Dali in the west of today's Yunnan. It was highly influenced by Buddhism and sinicized to some degree. Nanzhao contended with both the Tibetan polity and Tang China. Its armies sacked the Sichuan capital of Chengdu in the early ninth century and invaded Annam repeatedly in the mid-ninth century.

For further details, see Charles Backus, *The Nan-Chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

- 106 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 57.5b.
- 107 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 44.7b. Mu Sheng was an exceptionally long-lived and very powerful person, having led the aforementioned campaigns against Ba-bai (Lan Na) in 1405 and Jiao-zhi (**Đại Việt**) in 1409.
- 108 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 51.7a–b.
- 109 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 52.5b.
- 110 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 73.1 1b–12a.
- 111 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 75.6a.
- 112 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 86.6a–7b and 88.8a–9b.
- 113 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.7b.
- 114 Liew Foon Ming, 'The Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1436–1449) in the Light of Official Chinese Historiography', in *Orient Extremus* 39, 2 (1996), pp. 162–203.
- 115 The use of the new administrative term 'pacification commission' suggests the need for a term that implied a polity created by the Ming, but still ruled by persons who were not Chinese.
- 116 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 127.1b.
- 117 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 138.8a.
- 118 The polity known in Shan as Möng Yang or Möng Kawng, and in Burmese as Mohnyin or Mogaung.
- 119 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 164.5a–6a.
- 120 *Yi* is a generic term used to refer to non-Chinese persons, and is often translated as 'barbarian'. Occasionally, the Chinese names of entire ethnic groups and polities would directly refer to their non-Chinese status: the Tai Mao are hence the Bai-yi.
- 121 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 164.5a–6a.
- 122 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 175.8b.
- 123 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 179.7b–8a.
- 124 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 241.4b–5a.
- 125 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 156.1a.
- 126 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 150.3a.
- 127 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 298.5a.
- 128 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 156.1a.
- 129 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 189.3b.
- 130 *Ming Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 9.13a.
- 131 *Ming Shen-zong shi-lu*, juan 338.4b–5b. The areas referred to are today's Shan States of Burma. A *li* is a Chinese unit of distance equivalent to approximately one-third of a mile, or roughly 500 metres. A *mu* is a Chinese unit of land area, equivalent to approximately one-sixth of an acre.
- 132 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.2a and 16.3a; and *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 24.2b–3a. The other subdivisions were Meng-yang, Mu-bang, Meng-ding, Lu-jiang, Gan-yai, Da-hou and Wan Dian.
- 133 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 31.5a–b. The subdivisions were Ba-bai/Da-dian and Babai/Zhen-nai (Chiang Rai).
- 134 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 49.1a–b.
- 135 Today known as Sipsong Panna, or Xishuang Banna. The subdivisions were Che-li and Che-li/Jing-an.
- 136 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 233.4b and 235.1b–2a.
- 137 *Ming Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 482.8b–9a.
- 138 *Ming Shen-zong shi-lu*, juan 261.4b.
- 139 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 198.2a–b.

- 140 *Ming Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 210.3a.
- 141 *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.5a–b.
- 142 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 46.9b. *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 76.4b. Subsequently, in 1440, the polities of Mu-bang, Ava-Burma, Che-li, Ba-bai/Da-dian, Wei-yuan and Shi Dian were ordered to combine their forces and lead them against Si Ren-fa of Lu-chuan.
- 143 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 103.2a.
- 144 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 152.2b–3a.
- 145 *Ming Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 175.6b–7a.
- 146 Herold J. Wiens, *China's March toward the Tropics* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1954).
- 147 Quoted in Marc Ferro, *Colonization: A Global History* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 13.
- 148 John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988, original edn 1902), p. 64.
- 149 Quoted in Ferro, *Colonization*, p. 14.
- 150 Thomas Ritchie Adam, *Modern Colonialism: Institutions and Policies* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 3.
- 151 Robert Strausz-Hupé and Harry Hazard (eds), *The Idea of Colonialism* (New York: Praeger, 1958), p. 11.
- 152 Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 45.
- 153 Ronald J. Horvath, 'A Definition of Colonialism', *Current Anthropology* 13, 1 (February 1972), pp. 45–57.
- 154 Ferro, *Colonization*, p. 1.
- 155 Lee C. Buchheit, *Secession: The Legitimacy of Self-determination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 18.
- 156 David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 45.
- 157 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 158 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, translated by Shelly L. Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1997), pp. 16–17.
- 159 Rupert Emerson, 'Colonialism: Political Aspects', in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), pp. 1–6.

All cited references to the *Ming shi-lu* are now available online in English translation at: <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/>

## **Part 2**

# **Experimenting with tools of conquest and domination**



## 4

### **Ethnicity and Martial Races**

#### **The *Garde indigène* of Cambodia in the 1880s and 1890s**

*Sarah Womack*

In the language of the tactics of colonialism, few phrases are as widely used as ‘divide and conquer’ or ‘divide and rule’. While it is certainly true that a policy of creating or manipulating tensions within a society in order to prevent unity was a crucial strategy of many colonial situations, the strategy itself has remained curiously uncomplicated in much of colonial history. It is as if ‘divide and conquer’ were simply a modular technology, one already floating in space, and complete in theory and practice. Because so many aspects of colonial relationships, from the identities of both ruler and ruled to the forms of administration and exploitation, were forged in tandem by the colonisers and the colonised within a unique setting, I would argue that those discourses of power, founded as they were on concepts and practices involving issues of race and ethnicity that were constructed in specific environments, had to be reimagined and reinvented from one colony to another.

In other words, while different colonial regimes may have had similar general goals and similar ideas of rule, and even in some instances consciously attempted to borrow those ideas from one another, the decision to borrow, the resulting practice and the outcome of practice can only be understood within the dual context of the colonial relationships.

This chapter explores one such ‘modular’ practice of division and conquest. In it, I examine both what informs the birth of a new practice and the conflicts that arise between practices as they develop in dialogue with each other. This particular evolution of images and practices of colonial control is specific to French attempts, at the outbreak of the Cambodian insurrection of 1885–6, to form a colonial military based on a similar concept of ‘martial races’ to that used by the British Indian Army. It serves to explain, through a discussion of the early evolution of the *Garde indigène* of Indochina, that this experiment was itself built on a discourse that discounted the martial qualities of Indochinese in general and various ethnic groups in particular, and that this same discourse helped to ensure that the experiment remained only marginally successful.

### Ideal practice

It may be useful, at this point, to make some distinction between the different armed forces operating in colonial Indochina. Because the various regular troops are discussed in Henri Eckert's chapter, I list here only those

armed corps, otherwise totally distinct from one another, which, in contrast to proper troops, are placed, at least in normal circumstances, under the exclusive orders of the civil authorities, and whose essential function consists of assuring the maintenance of order and internal security in the regions in which they are raised... These corps, which could be subsumed under the general title of militias or police forces, are: the *Garde indigène de l'Indochine*, without any possible discussion by far the most important, as it is the only one that possesses its own French contingent and also the only one represented in all countries of the [Indochinese] Union, except Cochinchine; the *garde civile de Cochinchine*, exclusive to that colony; the *lính cộ*, *lính lệ* and *lính giang* of Annam and Tonkin; the *auxiliaries indigènes de la Gendarmerie*. To this list one could add: on one hand, the *garde urbaine de l'Indochine*, a local militia created during the war [of 1914–18] that no longer exists much more than in theory; and on the other hand, certain secondary armed corps, such as the *partisans du Tonkin*, the *police rurale du Laos* and the *police des kong-kock de Kouang-Tcheou-Wan*.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter deals exclusively with the first of these corps, the *Garde indigène*. As at once the most important and the most controversial of the 'police forces', the *Garde's* early history is a vital element in the larger history of French conquest and control in Indochina. When Vietnamese militia forces of the *Garde indigène* were called in from Annam to suppress the Cambodian insurrection of 1885–6, the southern part of Indochina had been officially under French control for nearly twenty years, since 1867.

Cambodia's King Norodom had accepted protectorate status just a year after the three eastern provinces of Cochinchina had become colonies in 1862. But he had enjoyed, and hoped to preserve, some measure of autonomy. By the mid-1880s, however, circumstances both in Cambodia and throughout the region had changed dramatically. Cochinchina was entirely under French control; in the uncertain period surrounding the Vietnamese emperor Tu Duc's death in 1883, Annam had also become a protectorate. The difficult and expensive military campaign for the conquest of Tonkin was draining men, money and will from the colonial cause, and, in Cambodia itself, relations between Norodom and the French had become tense as the protectorate regime sought to increase its control.<sup>2</sup>

### Options in Cambodia, 1885–6

The Cambodian insurrection of 1885–6 was led by Sivutha, the half-brother of King Norodom. As part of a protracted struggle to gain the throne, Norodom had two years

earlier (1884) signed a convention that gave France increased internal rights as protectorate power in Cambodia, extending far beyond the terms of the 1863 protectorate treaty. The early part of his rule was marked by uprisings, and vacillations between France and Siam.<sup>3</sup> While earlier revolts led by royal pretenders had been targeted primarily at the king himself, this one, arising throughout the country and enjoying considerable popular support, held as its goal the expulsion of the French from Cambodia and the restoration of an independent Cambodian monarchy.<sup>4</sup> Benefiting from at least the tacit support of the king, who felt his pride wounded and his power compromised by the new French Residents, Pierre Badens and George-Jules Piquet, the revolt seriously threatened the French protectorate for over a year.

One of the more basic reasons for the early success of the poorly armed insurrection was the reluctance on the part of the French to acknowledge the real nature and goals of the rebellion. The new Resident of Cambodia, Badens (and later Piquet) refused to believe reports that the recent extension of French control and subsequent rise in taxes were genuinely unpopular enough to provoke violence, and looked instead for signs of Vietnamese or Siamese intervention.<sup>5</sup>

When it became unmistakably clear that military action on a significant scale was necessary to save the Protectorate, time was running out and options were limited. Despite the urgency of raising a force, French authorities chose not to recruit a mainly Cambodian army, and even refused offers of soldiers from the king, suspecting that at best they would not pursue the insurgents with appropriate zeal, and at worst that they might be sent by Norodom to sabotage the suppression.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the French hoped to ensure the loyalty of their forces by recruiting an army by culture and nature completely unsympathetic to the Khmer. Because rates of death from disease among French soldiers and legionnaires confined these Western troops to the area around the royal capital, Phnom Penh, the reinforcements would have to be of a constitution acclimatised to tropical jungles and lowland swamps. The troops that were finally assembled were from the *Garde indigène* of Annam.

### **The ideal colonial army**

It was from an earlier local militia called the *police indigène* that the *Garde indigène* evolved in the 1880s. Formed in 1863, the *police indigène* was created to maintain civil order after the regular troops of the French *Armée de Terre* and Navy withdrew from newly conquered 'pacified' areas. This police force was entirely under the administration and control of the civil authorities. Its members, though trained as a sort of national guard in addition to their normal duties and commanded principally by European veterans of the wars of conquest, were not to be considered soldiers by either the colonial administration or the military command.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the police and *Garde indigène* were assigned to such tasks as staffing the increasing number of colonial prisons, performing coolie work for the French regular military and serving as guards on the railways that began to spread across Indochina towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Although the *police indigène* had already been charged with the duty of preserving local stability, their strength, fixed by decree at between 300 and 400 men per province, was deemed insufficient to guarantee the interior security of the protectorates.<sup>8</sup> These

forces had the further limitation of being expressly forbidden to operate outside of their own regions. The *Garde*, therefore, took over most of the duties of the *police indigène*, but the recruitment practices, hierarchy and duties remained essentially unchanged. At the time of its formation, the only real differences between the *Garde* and *police indigène* were the increased troop strength and resulting reliance on conscription, broader geographical scope and slightly expanded duties. In addition to guarding municipal buildings, jails, railways and communications networks, the *Garde indigène* was now to assume the expeditionary army's roles of reducing banditry and putting down occasional revolts.<sup>9</sup>

### Necessities of military control

Although the eventual necessity of a military authority separate from the *Armée de Terre* had been realised by colonial administrators since the beginnings of the colonies, it was the Cambodian insurrection of 1885–6 that galvanised the transformation of the *police indigène*, whose duties had been confined to those of a local civil police, into a force whose primary function was to be the control of internal unrest within the regions of Indochina. The *Garde indigène*, as a later colonial administrator put it,

from the earliest times of the French occupation has rendered the greatest services, and one could say that, if the conquest proper was the work of the regular army, it is to the *Garde indigène* that the credit is due for the internal pacification of the region and the definitive collapse of the armed bands that, for almost twenty years after the peace treaties were signed, still ravaged numerous regions.<sup>10</sup>

With the regular French troops occupied with the conquest of Tonkin, an alternative force capable of suppressing a highly mobile enemy of around 40,000 with varying degrees of local support had to be assembled, outfitted, trained and transported throughout Cambodia within two months.

Although the first manifestation of the colonial military was thus rather ad hoc in character, its ideal form and deployment had been the topic of debate among both civil and military policy-makers since the late 1860s.<sup>11</sup> Within a developing state that to a considerable extent defined itself in contrast to and in competition with British colonies, the *Garde indigène* was an important exception.<sup>12</sup> The Indian Army was greatly admired by French colonisers, who regarded it as an ideal when forming the *Garde indigène*. The chief virtue of the Indian Army from the point of view of the architects of the French colonial military was its exploitation of the 'martial races' among its subjects for the control of a less warlike majority. Given the geographical and demographic limits of the Indochinese possessions, the founding strategy of the *Garde indigène* was thus to use recruits from the main ethnic groups of each region to control those of the others. Historical enmities, such as that between central Vietnamese and Khmers or between northern Vietnamese and Lao, were to be exploited both to maximise control and to prevent unity.<sup>13</sup> The divisions necessary for conquest already existed—they remained only to be widened and solidified to ensure the stability of rule.

### Image and practice

Before its military involvement, French knowledge of Indochina in general, and Cambodia in particular, was remarkable for both its paucity and its impressionistic quality. It was informed in its earliest stages by the accounts of missionaries, which were chiefly concerned with describing the spiritual corruption of the natives and the pressing urgency of Christianisation and the civilising influence of Europe.

Despite the exoticism of their subject and the great commercial interests elsewhere in Southeast Asia, these reports seem to have enjoyed only a limited readership and a questionable influence, contributing only a vague sense of Oriental decadence and sensuality on the part of the Cambodians and a calculating and mercenary shrewdness on the part of educated Vietnamese.<sup>14</sup> With the growing interest in establishing a colony in Vietnam in the 1850s, French writers increasingly turned to the comparatively great amount of literature available on China, with whom the Vietnamese, particularly on the level of the mandarinates, were closely equated.

Cambodia, largely ignored in favour of its richer and more easily accessible neighbours, was considered merely an impoverished vassal of Siam until interest in it was dramatically awakened by the diaries of the explorer and naturalist Henri Mouhot, published in serial form in the magazine *Tour du Monde*. Mouhot's descriptions of the peoples, ruins and natural wealth of Cambodia and Laos galvanised the imaginations of adventurers and colonisers in Vietnam and established a prototype for impressions of Cambodia's Khmer that remained essentially unchanged into the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

### *Image and the martial races*

Like many colonised groups, the peoples of Indochina were viewed as polar opposites of the French, but, perhaps unlike some Africans or South Asians, Khmer and Vietnamese were perceived as differing most from the French in precisely those respects that made the colonisers 'manly' or 'warlike'. The Khmer that Mouhot portrayed in his diaries were a lazy and sensuous 'race', one of little intellect, drive or creativity.

Besides possessing those faults 'common to all Asiatics, namely, cunning, an extraordinary power of dissimulation and idleness', the Khmer were further alleged to suffer from a 'stupid pride' that prevented them from benefiting from European or even Chinese philosophy and technology.<sup>16</sup> Unimpressed by the court and his own coolies, who seem to have been the primary source of his opinions, Mouhot viewed the Khmer as the most derelict of Indochinese 'races', one in dire need of the civilising influence of both Christianity and colonisation.<sup>17</sup> The importance of women in agriculture and commerce completed the image of Khmer men as less independent and self-sufficient even than their wives and daughters, a situation that boded ill for their success as warriors for the French.

The Vietnamese, on the other hand, were viewed as culturally and spiritually impoverished parrots of a decaying China. Not able to invent a culture of their own, and 'not having for civilisation but that which they have borrowed from the Chinese, the totality of their ideas, their beliefs and their institutions are Chinese'.<sup>18</sup> 'Imprisoned as in a chain gang, Annamese literati were incapable of succeeding at anything other than sterile study.'<sup>19</sup> As a result, as well as the 'refined cruelty and corruption' natural to their

'race', Vietnamese, like the Chinese, were 'emasculated by Confucianism', Chinese characters and 'absolute' monarchy.<sup>20</sup> Even the long robes of the upper classes were viewed as telling clues in the scheming 'womanliness' of the Vietnamese character, which was only exasperated by years of study and memorisation of dead classics. Although some French officials and scholars remained impressed with the academic and intellectual achievements of the mandarinates, for many more:

the amazing thing is that this world of old people has never been young, as far back as we can trace them. It speaks, thinks and feels today as it did three thousand years ago. The language, the system of writing, the laws and the rites, uniting to destroy all human spontaneity, have paralysed in its cradle this fossil race, which is senile without ever having been anything else... Christianity, which aspires to develop human individuality, strives vainly in this country against a creed which has succeeded in crushing it; it is life trying to galvanise death.<sup>21</sup>

This depiction of the Vietnamese as unchanged since their origins, like the refusal of early colonial scholars to attribute the construction of Angkor Wat to the Khmer, while completely speculative and, of course, incorrect, marks a daunting hurdle in the creation of 'martial races' in Indochina.<sup>22</sup> A central myth of many of India's 'martial races' was their European heritage, which allowed them to assume qualities of intelligence, leadership and individuality otherwise reserved for whites. The colour and culture of groups like the Gurkhas could thus be explained in one version of this myth as:

the effect of prolonged years of various religions on their adherents, of early marriage, of premature brides, and juvenile eroticism, of a thousand years of malaria and hook-worm, and other ills of neglected sanitation in a hot climate, and the deteriorating effect of aeons of tropical sun on races that were once white and lived in uplands and on cool steppes.<sup>23</sup>

Origins common with the colonisers were not an option for Khmers or Vietnamese, who were thought to have evolved from the mixing of Chinese, Indian and local aboriginal groups.<sup>24</sup> Instead of fallen cousins to the French, the Indochinese were alien races, defining in contrast to their stupidity and lassitude the creative power and energy of Europe, and could not be imagined to assume the qualities of virility that constructed crucial aspects of the superiority of the French.

### *Image, contrast and context*

Though colonial populations in general were viewed as extreme 'Others' that, through their deficiencies, helped to define the virtues of the colonisers, the French were perfectly capable of making fine distinctions among the 'characters' of a vast range of cultures and ethnicities. Particularly striking for the study of colonial militaries is the difference in characterisation between Indochinese and West African colonial recruits. One finds it difficult to imagine the following endorsement of an expanded use of the *Tirailleurs sénégalais* being applied to Cambodian or Vietnamese troops:

The organisation of the black troops is the renaissance of African civilisation, the crowning glory of our efforts. When a nation has begun to write such a chapter in the history of humanity, she has a duty to complete it; she has the right to call to her defence all of her children, even her adopted ones, without distinction of race. She listens to the accusations of barbarism and smiles, without even a shrug.<sup>25</sup>

This *impôt du sang*, or 'blood duty', was conceived as the beginning of a policy of universal male conscription in French West Africa that was permanently to transform both the French armed forces and the political, military and economic history of the colony. The goal of the policy, as stated by its architect and chief advocate, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Mangin, was to create a *vast force noire* of 200,000 West Africans that would supplement and eventually replace French overseas forces, and that could form the front line in the defence of France against a European enemy.

Although the idea of a *force noire*, as articulated in Mangin's 1910 bestselling book of the same name, caused sensation and scandal among government circles in France, the idea of an all-African army led by French officers was hardly a new one. There had been Africans in French forces since the sixteenth century, and since 1857 the *Tirailleurs sénégalais* created by General Louis Faidherbe had been the primary army of conquest and occupation in West Africa.<sup>26</sup> Beginning with the tenure of Colonel (later General) Louis Archinard as commander of French forces in the region in 1888, West African troops were used almost exclusively for all military purposes, their officers virtually the only French military presence.<sup>27</sup> In 1908, *Tirailleurs sénégalais* were sent out of the colony for the first time to aid in the conquest of Morocco and proved an effective expeditionary force.<sup>28</sup>

In sharp contrast to military attitudes towards local recruits in Indochina, French officers in West Africa, Mangin chief among them, viewed colonial conscription as a privilege and a reward for Africans. Although the ultimate goal of recruitment was to sacrifice black lives for white ones, the officers considered it a great opportunity for the soldiers they led to die defending France. Indeed, a significant part of Mangin's book *La force noire* records the history of black armies from Roman times to the modern era, reiterating with every page the argument for the suitability of African soldiers for European battles, in an attempt to establish West Africans as the ultimate martial race. Continuing in this vein, a later chapter consists primarily of testimonials by well known military figures who had served in Africa concerning the merits of their indigenous troops: 'in Europe', contributed General Joseph Gallieni, 'the conduct of these brave fellows in the face of such superior forces would have covered them with glory'.<sup>29</sup>

Mangin and the other colonial officers advocating the creation of the *force noire*, certainly not enlightened in matters of race, affirmed and celebrated the conventional military wisdom that the salient characteristics of West Africans were 'an underdeveloped intelligence; remarkable feelings of family, friendship, and devotion; and, on the other hand, the faults of an infantile character'.<sup>30</sup> Rather than dwelling upon those 'faults', Mangin chose to focus on those parts of the stereotype that best served his needs:

The attachment of the Senegalese to France is absolute...it never happens that one of our soldiers is even suspected of desertion or treason; there has never been in the ranks the slightest hesitation. The Senegalese are as proud of their leaders as their leaders are of them, and those who have seen foreigners say, 'Senegalese first of blacks, French first of whites'.<sup>31</sup>

Obedience and loyalty were, for Mangin, the natural expressions of affection, and as long as his troops followed him, he could believe that they did it out of devotion to France. He responded with total faith in the loyalty of African soldiers. Indeed, one of the most extraordinary aspects of the commands of several famous generals in West Africa was that they largely discounted the potential danger of placing weapons and ammunition in the hands of men against whom France had only recently fought.

This, I believe, was unique to the French military experience in western and central Africa. French commanders in Indochina (and it should be remembered that these men—Gallieni, Lyautey, even, briefly, Mangin himself—were exactly the same men who led West African troops) were haunted by the possibility of indigenous soldiers turning against them. As a result, indigenous troops in other colonies were consistently armed with obsolete weaponry, which in turn helped to prevent them from becoming effective fighting forces.<sup>32</sup> Not only were Indochinese soldiers in the French colonial army still forced to use muskets at the turn of the century, but volunteers were viewed with deep suspicion, on the rationale that anyone joining the army of his own free will must have sabotage in mind. In contrast, West African troops were armed with nearly the same weaponry as their metropolitan counterparts, and, until the demands of raising the *impôt du sang* made it impossible, many 'pro-Senegalese' commanders like Mangin refused to accept conscripts, preferring to recruit exclusively volunteer troops.<sup>33</sup>

Like many before and after him, Mangin neglected to consider the fact that, after killing leaders and burning all crops and villages for miles around, the colonial army was often the only available source of food, shelter and protection for local populations. Instead, he indulged his vanity that the men and their families came because they loved and admired France and its officers, and seems to have genuinely believed that 'we make war without hatred; delivered populations joyously welcome their liberators, but even in our enemies we have always seen the soldiers of tomorrow'.<sup>34</sup>

That French officers in Indochina did not tend to see 'the soldiers of tomorrow' among the Khmer and Vietnamese was not entirely due to physical characteristics and lack of warlike temperament. Indeed, while much of the difference between colonisers and colonised was expressed in terms of origins, those elements that 'proved' the impotence of the Khmer and Vietnamese were tightly linked to the very current state of politics.

The early encounters between France and the Indochinese states were an important buttress of the French construction of the Cambodian and Vietnamese characters. While it would be wrong to attribute to power politics the origins and culmination of the 'non-martial races', the relative ease of the French conquest did not leave the colonisers impressed with the state of the 'manly art' of war in Indochina. In particular, the fact of Cambodia's dependency and weakness on the Indochinese peninsula was viewed as a fundamental proof of its inability to produce men with the skill or temperament of warriors, with one later historian writing that



Cambodia does not have, properly speaking, a military history. It had no origin, nor conquest, nor even military occupation: the necessity of protecting it against the two gluttonous neighbours who gnawed it each from its own side and who would have finished by devouring it completely, forced this land to place itself under our Protectorate.<sup>35</sup>

Cambodia as the French found it was a country at the mercy of its neighbours. By turns over the past century a tributary state of Siam and Vietnam, at the French conquest of Cochinchina parts of Cambodia were occupied by both.<sup>36</sup> This was not perceived as merely a coincidence of geopolitics. If the strength and expansiveness of a state was regarded as the outward sign of its people's greatness, a connection assumed by many of the advocates and architects of colonial Indochina, victimisation had implications for both state status and national character.<sup>37</sup>

While Vietnam had at least offered a struggle, forcing France to stretch its coercive power in conquest, Cambodia alone out of the countries of Indochina, however reluctantly or under whatever illusions as to French intentions, had willingly become a protectorate. Its prostrate position between a state that France was in the process of conquering and one that was believed to be the puppet of Great Britain awarded Cambodia the status in French eyes of the last among inferiors.

### **The formation of the *Garde indigène***

In the absence in 1885–6 of a clear 'martial race' to use in the suppression of the Cambodian insurrection, the French employed a different strategy to 'divide and conquer'. In addition to finding and exploiting 'warlike' peoples in South Asia, the British had maximised the effectiveness of their control by manipulating tensions between different ethnic and religious groups. This prevented troops to a considerable degree from identifying with the people they were meant to suppress, and in cases of active hostility between the groups that formed the troops and those that made up the populace, led to a degree of brutality that both served colonial interests of control and shifted hostility from the British to other South Asian peoples.<sup>38</sup>

This is exactly the kind of ethnic manipulation the French hoped to achieve in Cambodia. Forced by time constraints to choose their soldiers from among men already in service in one of the *polices indigènes*, Cochinchina's Governor Filippini and Residents of Cambodia Pierre Badens and George Jules Piquet recruited almost all of their new force from the recently conquered region of Annam (central Vietnam). Not trusting the martial qualities of their new 'watchdogs of empire', the French had chosen their soldiers from the group judged to be the most hostile towards non-Vietnamese ethnic groups.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the *Garde indigène* of Annam, though not the largest of the *gardes*, was at once the most controversial and the most widely used, as perhaps the most 'ideal' example of the divide and conquer ethnic policies of the French colonial army in Indochina.

Initially created partially in response to Sivatha's insurrection in 1885, the *Garde indigène d'Annam* served as both the prototype for and a valuable lesson in the use and misuse of ethnic tension in securing control. Immediately upon their arrival in Cambodia,

the Vietnamese troops were encouraged to show no restraint in their suppression of insurgents, and the suggestion was even made that this was an opportunity to express violently and with impunity whatever enmity had been brewing against the Khmer.<sup>40</sup> Evidence suggests that the soldiers took this to heart, for the *Garde indigène* went on a rampage in the first half of 1885. At first given only sixty bullets each in an effort to prevent excessive force or effective mutiny, many troops turned to burning villages as they passed through them. Thousands of Khmer civilians were slaughtered, while many thousands more, according to desperate Residents in Kratié and Kampot, were being driven into the arms of the insurrection.<sup>41</sup>

Suddenly realising that their new techniques of recruitment and deployment were much too successful, the French command decided to introduce a pacifying influence into the army by recruiting Khmer, who, despite the success of the rebellion, were still deemed to be unfit for military service. Initially employed only as elephant drivers and coolies, many of these new recruits resented their subordinate positions and deserted, allowing the Vietnamese to carry on as before. It was not until they began to recruit Khmer as soldiers that the French gained the pacifying element they required.<sup>42</sup> The Annamese, on the other hand, though relatively placid at home, were now believed to be strongly prejudiced

*Table 4.1 Soldiers and militias in Cambodia, 1886*

Infantry	1145
Artillery	41
Legionnaires	483
Annamese Tirailleurs	1120
Annamese Militia	344
Cambodian Militia	939
Total	4072

*Source:* Dossier 1043, Archives Centrales de l'Indochine, Amiraux de la Cochinchine, AOM.

against Khmer in particular, and foreigners in general, and thus continued to be deemed particularly useful in controlling non-Vietnamese areas because of their aggressive approach towards the populaces.

Although Table 4.1 shows the deployment of over 1600 non-Indochinese soldiers during Sivotha's rebellion, it should be remembered that Europeans, because of the high rate of death from disease, only served in and around the major cities. For most practical purposes, this was an occupation army primarily made up of Indochinese: 1120 Annamese soldiers, 344 Annamese militia troops and 939 Cambodian militia troops.

Both in their initial use in Cambodia in 1886 and afterwards, a great deal of thought went into finding the ideal mixture of Annamese and local troops. While a wholly Annamese force was viewed as counterproductive due to the hostility between the troops and Cambodian or Lao civilians, a purely Khmer or Lao *Garde* was judged to be too mild and likely to revolt against the state.<sup>43</sup> As a result, although their numbers had to be limited in some areas for fear of inciting open rebellion, Annamese were nearly always

present in the *Gardes* of Cambodia and Laos in proportions of around half to two-thirds of the total force.

### *Practices in conflict*

While the colonial military imagined by civil authorities was already destabilised in concept because of the 'character' of the majority of the recruits, an army of 'martial races' also conflicted with the cornerstones of French colonialism. This conflict, while arising from the same discourse that produced the *Garde indigène*, was at cross-purposes with assembling a truly effective colonial army. Although the founding images of Vietnamese and Khmer discussed above played a crucial role in shaping the recruitment and deployment of the *Garde indigène*, they might have been overcome if the success of these groups under arms had been such as to render them retroactively 'martial'. Acceptable ideas and practices concerning race and recruitment, however, as well as financial concerns and administrative debates between proponents of military and civilian control and of sectionalization and centralization, all conspired to render the *Garde indigène* an only barely effective force.

### *Race, hierarchy and security*

Although the primary focus of this study is on the failure of the 'martial races' in the *Garde indigène* of Indochina rather than the racialised practices at the foundation of the colonial system itself, the development of the *Garde indigène* cannot be understood without addressing the Manichaean concepts of race that were largely responsible for both its form and its functioning. While the *Garde indigène* at different times had differing proportions of Europeans within its ranks, its officer corps were consistently almost entirely European, and for many the central military question was not which ethnic groups could be most safely relied upon, but to what extent any colonial subject could be trusted with the arms and training of a professional military. Even after the decision to use indigenous troops had been made, the illusion of racial and cultural superiority of the colonisers presented new problems of hierarchy. While colonial recruits had to be given some opportunity for advancement to maintain their loyalty, they could not be given authority over European personnel for fear of upsetting the larger structure of domination on which the entire colonial system depended.

More fundamental than the policies of ethnic manipulation, an essential provision in the creation of the police that carried over (as did the vast majority of its hierarchy, duties and administration) to the *Gardes* was the placement of Europeans in all positions of authority. The major objection raised to the formation of the police and *Garde* had been that to do so would place dangerous skills and weaponry in the hands of a people whose loyalty to the metropole was tenuous at best. In order to prevent an embarrassing and potentially fatal successful mutiny by the indigenous gendarmes and troops, all Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian personnel were safely legislated into positions subordinate to

*Table 4.2 Recruitment levels and racial composition, Annam 1893–1894*

	<i>31 January 1893</i>		<i>31 July 1893</i>		<i>31 February 1894</i>	
	<i>European</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>European</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>European</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>
Thanh Hoa	8	446	6	404	8	550
Nghe An/Ha Tinh	21	1014	17	909	14	921
Quang Binh/Quang Tri	6	250	2	136	2	160
Hue	2	50	2	50	2	60
Quang Na/Quang Ngai	3	195	3	104	2	79
Binh Dinh/Phu Yen	4	295	3	215	2	120
Khanh Hoa/Binh Thuan	4	200	2	109	3	415
Laos	4	200	12	726	12	526
Total	48	2450	47	2650	45	2531

*Source:* Report by Brière, Resident Supérieur of Annam, to Governor-General, 26 April 1894. Dossier 21588, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux, AOM.

French troops. All but the highest-ranking *indigènes* were placed below even the lowest-ranking European.<sup>44</sup> French officers were aggressively recruited whenever and wherever possible, but even at comparatively astronomical salaries, the colonial administration could seldom find enough willing recruits, and was periodically forced to adjust the numbers of indigenous troops accordingly. As a result, the authorities faced the dilemma of lacking sufficient forces to perform the required functions, and the job of European officer in the police or *Gardes* became even more unappealing with the increased danger and responsibility. For each battalion of police or *Garde* of 325 *indigènes*, there was to be a minimum of six European officers.<sup>45</sup> In the early years of both organisations, this rule was taken quite seriously, and often resulted in the rather chaotic sort of personnel manipulation that occurred in Annam in 1893–4.

The desired number of troops for both years had actually been approximately 2500 for Annam proper and 1000 for Laos, but due to the alarmingly low numbers of Europeans to supervise a potentially dangerous element, territorial security was neglected in favour of personnel control. Due to increasing numbers of serious uprisings and banditry in Laos, however, the accepted ratio of Europeans to Indochinese was relaxed slightly to provide for emergency troop transfer to the cities and mountain towns of Laos.<sup>46</sup>

This setting of 'absolute' standards, their exposure as completely impractical in the light of the realities of service for both European and native recruits and their subsequent loosening was characteristic of the early years of the police and *Garde*, and (since each revision in troop levels had to be mandated by law) was accompanied by reams of paper from the Governor-General's office. Consequently, the administration and command of both forces was in a state of almost constant confusion, which was only exacerbated by the recruitment practices for Indochinese personnel.

Faced with the issue of arming its indigenous peacekeepers, the colonial administration found itself in a particularly awkward position. Due to the limited responsibilities of the *Armée de Terre*, and due to domestic French public opinion, it was necessary to maximise all resources (including, and perhaps especially, human resources) of the Protectorate. Yet the approval of the *Garde's* very existence, by some very influential civil and military figures, was contingent upon its lack of threat to French interests. This situation created a very difficult and delicate job for the authorities in charge of procuring the *Garde's* weaponry, who had to decide between effectiveness and security.

In the end, they chose neither, opting instead to arm the indigenous troops with muskets produced early in the nineteenth century with an average of only thirty bullets a person per campaign, bayonets and only four carbine rifles per battalion, a powerful but incredibly inaccurate style of armament that required a strategy necessarily wasteful in human life. This compromise enabled troops to do significant damage to either unarmed civilians or unsuspecting members of their own battalions, but simultaneously rendered them almost completely useless in confrontations with any seriously armed or trained resistance force.<sup>47</sup> The Indochinese troops were well aware of their position, and, having in all probability sacrificed their families' welfares in the course of their three-year term of conscription, were often unwilling to risk their lives as well. Desertion from high-risk posts was common, thus producing the greatest ineffectiveness in precisely those places where an intimidating military presence was most desirable.<sup>48</sup>

### *Military versus civil control*

The *Gardes indigènes* of Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin were formed by decree of the Governor-General of Indochina in the 1880s amid a storm of controversy about who was to control them: a controversy that was to continue until the end of French rule in 1954. Despite the objections of military leaders, many of whom preferred the newly conquered population to have as little access to arms and military training as possible, the colonial administration was firmly behind the creation of a civil guard. Insisting both that its troops be recruited principally from among the native population and that its civilian command employ it under all but the most unusual circumstances for local peacekeeping and policing, the administration regarded the *Gardes* as essentially co-opting the newly colonised population for its own continued pacification. Accused of endangering greater French interests in the region by squandering resources to create a well armed, highly militarised force independent of the established military command, the Governor-General encouraged the French government to see the *Gardes* along much the same lines as the already functioning indigenous police.

To view the *Garde indigène*, he argued, 'as constituting in effect a small army in the hands of the civil authorities is to lose sight of its character, its goal and its organisation, which are those of a provincial police force, and of which it would not be divested except by right of exceptional and temporary demand by the military authority in the case of troop shortages.'<sup>49</sup> The five autonomous *Gardes indigènes*, used only for the maintenance of internal security (as opposed to the French regular troops, deployed to guard national borders), were placed under the administrative authority of the Governor-General and, below him, of the Governor of Cochinchina and the four *Residents Supérieurs*: of Annam, Tonkin, Cambodia and later Laos. Troop levels of the various regions were to be fixed by decree of the Governor-General and funded from local budgets.<sup>50</sup>

The recruitment of both the agents of the police and the troops of the *Gardes* was, before the First World War, rather haphazardly conducted by province and at each sub-provincial level in a vaguely pyramidal manner. Following the 'traditional' practice of Vietnamese military recruitment, each community was responsible, each year, for producing a certain number of able-bodied male recruits to serve for three years at a time. The complicated network of directives from the Residents-Superior, however, which fixed the numbers for the village, prefecture and provincial levels, were decided upon through an assessment of the number of militia troops needed rather than of the number a particular community could realistically provide. The burden on Vietnamese villages was particularly great because Vietnam alone of the countries of Indochina had a tightly structured enough system of local government to be able to enforce this kind of conscription. As a result, conscription in Cambodia and later in Laos was performed mainly through press gang and cash offers for volunteers. As the responsibilities and numbers of the *Garde indigène* increased, therefore, so did the difficulty associated with procuring an ever-greater number of men. These men had to fulfil the following conditions:

- (1) have reached the age of 24 at least and 32 at most; (2) be of sane and robust constitution and of a minimum height that will be fixed in each province by order of the Resident-General on the advice of the Resident-Inspector or the Resident-Adjunct; (3) have no convictions of serious offence before either the indigenous courts or the French courts of the Protectorate; (4) be a registered subject or the son of a registered subject.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of these stipulations, many Vietnamese communities were forced to choose between meeting the requirements of the state and protecting their own livelihood. Because of the reluctance of villages to contribute their fittest young workers and leaders to the cause of French rule, officers and administrators of the *Garde* complained continuously of insufficient recruits or the appearance, come the provincial deadline, of contingents of elderly men suffering from rheumatism, anaemia and other afflictions.<sup>52</sup> Nor were the personnel problems of the authorities over when the quotas were filled: the poor armament and grossly inequitable salaries of the Indochinese militia forces caused considerable dissension in the ranks, which further threatened both the recruitment and the usefulness of the *Garde indigène*.

If the armament of the *Garde indigène* made service unappealing for many Indochinese recruits, the huge salary gap between them and their European counterparts

rendered it insulting as well. Not only were *officiers indigènes* denied authority over any European personnel (European personnel in the *Garde indigènes* were all ‘officers’—*Garde principal*, *Garde inspecteur* etc.), but the highest-paid

*Table 4.3 Annual salaries (in livres) of Police indigène, 1882*

<i>European personnel</i>		<i>Indigenous personnel</i>	
Captain	10,000		
Lieutenant	8,000	Lieutenant	1,500
Sous-lieutenant	7,000	Sous-lieutenant	1,200
Adjudant	3,600		
Petty Officer	3,600		
Sergeant	2,000	Sergeant	600
		Corporal	380
		Enlisted, 1st Class	280
		Enlisted, 2nd Class	180

*Source: Title III, Creation and Organisation of the Police Indigène, 1863–82. Carton 263, Ancien Fonds, AOM.*

Indochinese officers (whose advancement demanded a much longer time in service and a much higher degree of personal excellence than did that of French officers) received only three-quarters the pay of the lowest-ranked European officer. Indochinese officers made roughly one-fifth the money of French officers of equal rank, while the salary of enlisted men, at around one-tenth to one-twentieth that of their European superior officers, was barely sufficient to keep their families at home alive.

The glaring inequity in pay between native and European personnel was a great source of tension within the police and *Garde*. Tensions created by resentment of the colonial state and its racist and exploitative policies were aggravated by conscription and inferior arms, salaries and provisions. Especially in Cambodia and Laos, where colonial rule was less well established, this periodically gave rise to mutinies of the Indochinese militia troops against their European superiors. Desertion and immobilisation due to sickness was also common in the *Garde*. With rations of only 0.8 kilograms of boiled rice, 24 grams of salt, 5 grams of tea and 20 grams of fish sauce a day, disease caused by malnutrition regularly led late nineteenth-century recruits in Laos to face French reprisals for desertion rather than to starve slowly in service of the colonial regime.<sup>53</sup>

### **The defeat of the ‘martial races’**

Not only was the imagining of the ‘martial races’ informed by myths of culture and character and necessities of control and coercion, but the experience of the *Garde*

*indigène* was tempered by practices of deployment and hierarchy bound up in sentiments of fear and insecurity. While the fragmentary and highly gendered images of Vietnamese and Khmer formed difficult obstacles for the construction of warlike characters, these impressions alone cannot account for the failure of the concept.

The attempt to create 'martial races' in Indochina was ultimately defeated by other practices arising from the same discourse that made an effective indigenous military, and thus a 'militant' *indigène*, impossible. The refusal of the French to arm adequately, to advance equitably or to pay sufficiently, though each in itself also intended to increase security and efficiency, created a situation in which the peoples of Indochina could only become non-martial races. While the strategy of manipulating ethnic tension in Cambodia (and, later, elsewhere in Indochina) was one consciously adopted and believed successful, it was not one that could simply be lifted from one context to another without regard for context.

Even the methods of 'divide and conquer', which had been used so often in so many places, were not a modular technology available to be used, with little modification, by any colonial administration in any situation, but were as subject to the specificities of local landscapes as other forms of exploitation. Colonial rule, like colonial culture, was recreated and reimagined in each of its manifestations, not simply transferred, and as such can only be understood as a product of those specific relationships.

This failure of the colonial authorities to fit a 'modular' practice of conquest and rule neatly to a situation tailor-made for it should contribute to the defeat of the notion of modular practices of colonial rule in general, and, I hope, serve to destabilise the image of unitary and conscious power so often attributed to colonial states. Imperial racism was not as simple as it was pernicious, and its complexity and omnipresence made it, like many other aspects of rule, sometimes self-contradictory and often difficult to manipulate. The inventors of the peculiar racism of warlike peoples could not wield it adroitly for their ends, and, ultimately, the myth of the martial races proved at best an uncertain weapon.

### Notes

- 1 J.de Galembert, *Les administrations et les services publics indochinois* (Hanoi: Imprimerie Mac-Dinh-Tu, 1924), p. 716.
- 2 Milton Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859–1905)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 183–205.
- 3 In the Thomson-Norodom Convention of 17 June 1884, the King accepted all administrative, judicial etc. reforms that France deemed necessary in its role as a protectorate power.
- 4 The two most significant early revolts were those of A-Xoa in 1864–6 and Pucoumbo in 1866, both of whom were bought off and subsequently executed by the French in Saigon. Albert Septans, *Les Commencements de l'Indo-chine française, d'après les archives du Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, les mémoires ou relations du temps* (Paris: Challamel Ainé, 1887), pp. 191–200.
- 5 Alfred Schreiner, *Abrégé de l'histoire d'Annam* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coudurier et Montegout, 1906), p. 408.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 409–12.
- 7 Creation and organisation of the *police indigène*, 1863–82. Carton 263, Ancien Fonds, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer (AOM).
- 8 *Ibid.*



- 9 Etat-Major du Commandant des Troupes du Groupe de l'Indochine, *Histoire Militaire de l'Indochine des débuts à nos jours (juillet 1930)* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1930), p. vi.
- 10 de Galembert, *Les administrations et les services publics indochinois*, p. 717.
- 11 use the term 'both civil and military' here with misgivings. It is important to remember that the distinction was complicated. Until the mid-1880s in Annam, Cochinchina and Cambodia, the men who formed the civil administrative corps were by and large the same who had supervised the invasions and occupations.
- 12 This crucial and very interesting aspect of colonial evolution has been almost completely ignored. For comparisons, criticisms and conspiracy theories concerning the British in Asia, see Septans, *Les Commencements de l'Indo-chine française*; Schreiner, *Abrégé de l'histoire d'Annam*; Paul Doumer, *Situation de l'Indochine (1897–1901)* (Hanoi: F.H.Schneider, 1902) and *L'Indochine française (Souvenirs)* (Paris: Vuibert et Nony, 1905); Louis de Carné, *Travels on the Mekong—Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan: The Political and Trade Report of the Mekong Exploration Commission (June 1866–June 1868)* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1995); and Henri Mouhot, *Henri Mouhot's Diary: Travels in the Central Parts of Siam, Cambodia, and Laos During the Years 1858–61* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- 13 Indochine: Section d'Administration générale et des Services de la Défense, *Notice sur la garde indigène du Tonkin* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1931), pp. 5–10.
- 14 E.Mathieu, 'L'Evolution intellectuelle des Annamites sous l'influence française', *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises* 1931, pp. 169–70.
- 15 Mouhot, *Diary*, pp. i–xix.
- 16 Mouhot, *Diary*, p. 72.
- 17 'What might not be accomplished if these were colonies belonging to a country such, for example, as England, and were governed as are the dependencies of that great and generous nation?' Mouhot, *Diary*, p. 114.
- 18 Report on indigenous education by Philastre, Inspector of Indigenous Affairs, to Governor-General Dupré, 22 December 1872; in Georges Taboulet (ed.), *La Geste française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1956), vol. 2, pp. 594–6.
- 19 Mathieu, 'L'Evolution des Annamites', p. 169.
- 20 M.Pierre Nicolas, *Notices sur l'Indochine: Cochinchine, Cambodge, Annam, Tonkin, Laos, Kouang-Tcheou-Ouan, Publiées à l'occasion de l'Exposition Universelle de 1900* (Paris: n.p., 1900), pp. 43–4.
- 21 de Carné, *Travels*, pp. xxi–xxii.
- 22 Mouhot and many early scholars of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient refused to believe that this people could have produced the wonders of Angkor Wat, attributing them instead to an Indian kingdom since bastardised or disappeared. Mouhot, *Diary*, pp. 82–93.
- 23 Sir George MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India* (Quetta, Pakistan: Gosha-e-Adab, 1934), p. 2.
- 24 Nicolas, *Notices sur l'Indochine*, pp. 42–6.
- 25 Charles Mangin, *La force noire* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1910).
- 26 Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991), Chapter 2.
- 27 France, Armée Etat-Major, *Les Armées françaises d'Outre-Mer*. Volume 6: *Histoire militaire de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931–2), pp. 240–8.
- 28 Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, p. 25.
- 29 Quoted in Mangin, *La force noire*, p. 242. Gallieni commanded French forces in the conquest of Indochina, Madagascar and Morocco.

- 30 *Histoire Militaire de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, p. 25. This is followed by descriptions of ethnic groups: Wolof, 'intelligent, quick to adapt to European civilisation, relatively audacious and entrepreneurial, but otherwise vain and somewhat critical'; Tukolor, 'vigorous, hardy, muscular and tall', audacious, 'conceited, arrogant, domineering and brave', and 'serious adversaries' of the French before they were conquered and became 'good soldiers and the best non-commissioned officers in our battalions'; Mandé, 'hardworking, tenacious, thrifty' and 'generally good soldiers'; Senufo, 'simple, coarse, gentle and patient'; and Hausa, 'in their habits quite close to white'. Tuareg ('fiercely independent, proud, warlike') and Fulani ('of Semitic descent and profoundly different from the blacks—intelligent, cultivated and educated') were not considered to be truly African. 'Martial qualities' are proportional to the number of volunteers each group furnished.
- 31 Mangin, *La force noire*, p. 234.
- 32 This, at least for Lyautey, was sometimes a difficult compromise. While acknowledging the danger of arming Vietnamese troops against Chinese 'bandits', he often complained of how poorly outfitted they were in comparison to their opponents. France, Armée Etat-Major, *Les Armées françaises d'Outre-Mer*, Volume 5: *Histoire militaire de l'Indochine* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931–2), p. 21; see also Lyautey's *Lettres du Tonkin* (Paris: Les Editions Nationales, 1928).
- 33 The *Histoire militaire de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* and the *Histoire Militaire de l'Indochine des débuts à nos jours (juillet 1930)* show clearly in both form and content the striking differences between the two colonial armies.
- 34 Mangin, *La force noire*, p. vi.
- 35 Lt Batz, 'Historique de l'occupation militaire du Cambodge par les troupes franchises de 1855 à 1910', *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises* 1931, p. 175.
- 36 The western provinces of Battambang and Siam Reap were annexed by Siam, while Vietnam occupied the southeastern corner near the Mekong delta known as Khmer Krom.
- 37 de Carné, *Travels*, pp. 1–2.
- 38 See MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India*, and sections on the Indian Army in Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). See also Victor Kiernan, in his *Colonial Empires and Armies, 1815–1960*, rev. edn (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).
- 39 Kiernan, *Colonial Armies and Empires*, p. 161.
- 40 Dossier 12649, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux de l'Indochine, AOM.
- 41 Report by M. Renauld, assistant to the Resident at Kratié, 20 June 1885. Dossier 12652, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux, AOM.
- 42 Dossier 6112, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux de l'Indochine, AOM.
- 43 Dossier 6112, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux de l'Indochine, AOM.
- 44 Recruitment, reorganisation of the *Garde indigène*, 1896–1914. Carton 10, dossier 47, Nouveau Fonds, AOM.
- 45 Creation and organisation of the *police indigène*, 1863–82. Carton 263, Ancien Fonds, AOM.
- 46 *Ibid.* Recruiting enough troops for service in Laos continued to be a problem for the French administration and military command for their entire occupation of that country, largely because the Lao were considered particularly unreliable in repressing their own people.
- 47 Report by M. Renauld, assistant to the Resident at Kratié, 20 June 1885. Dossier 12652, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux, AOM.
- 48 Report by the Resident-Superior of Laos to the Governor-General, 11 October 1915. Dossier 44375, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux, AOM.
- 49 Letter to Minister of Colonies from Governor-General of Indochina, 5 July 1896, in response to criticism by General Duchenin of the Expeditionary Forces. Carton 10, dossier 47, Nouveau Fonds, AOM.
- 50 Decree of the Governor-General of Indochina, 1888; confirmed by decree of the President of the Republic of France, 1914. Carton 10, dossier 47, Nouveau Fonds, AOM.

- 51 Troop levels, reorganisation of the *Garde indigène*, 1896–1914. Carton 10, dossier 47, Nouveau Fonds, AOM.
- 52 Request for 300 new recruits to Governor-General from the Inspector of the Civil Service, Laos, 14 April 1903. Dossier 16180, Fonds Gouverneur Général/Amiraux de l'Indochine, AOM.
- 53 Request for 300 new recruits. Decree fixing rations for indigenous troops from Minister of Colonies to the Governor-General of Indochina, 2 September 1904. Dossier 16811, Fonds Gouverneur-Général/Amiraux, AOM.

## 5

# Double-edged swords of conquest in Indochina

## *Tirailleurs Tonkinois, Chasseurs Annamites and militias, 1883–1895*

*Henri Eckert*

A colonial war is always a civil war. Colonised people are both fighting the coloniser and being recruited by him. But this very recruiting can sometimes also be set in conjunction with the colonisers' internal struggles. The hesitations, the absence of a firm objective unanimously approved, the prevarications and jolts of French colonial expansion have often been emphasised. But it can also be shown that the constitution of native troops in Indochina—which was a decisive factor in the military conquest of Tonkin and Annam from 1883—was an important issue in internal French rivalries.<sup>1</sup> Not only were native troops contributing to the seizing of their country, they also served to expose quarrels among the French.

This chapter is concerned with these severe conflicts within the French administration in Indochina in the mid-1880s, notably between the military and the civil administration, over the recruitment of indigenous soldiers into the colonial armed forces. To a considerable degree, those conflicts reflected deep divisions in metropolitan France, which had their origins in the French Revolution. The conflicts had serious implications for the colonial project in Indochina, as this was a period in which the French were engaged in pacifying Annam and Tonkin.

For several years, the conflicts produced an absurd system of native recruitment. Between 1886 and 1890, France recruited armed natives for a single, identical purpose in Annam and Tonkin, but under four different names or statutes. There were militiamen, paid for by the French protectorate; *Tonkinois* infantrymen in the first three regiments, paid by the Navy; infantrymen of the fourth regiment, paid by the Ministry of War; and finally the shortlived *Chasseurs Annamites*, paid out of the Vietnamese royal treasury. After the appointment of Jean-Louis de Lanessan as Governor General in June 1891, the number of categories was reduced to two, each with its own clearly separate field of operations, and the armed native at the service of France was no longer a source of conflict among Frenchmen.

### A house divided

Without taking on the vigour of a civil war, the French-French rivalries were particularly deep-seated in the 1880s. The main fracture arose from the French Revolution, already one hundred years old, but whose complicated legacy produced the agitated political

history of France. In France, there were two main categories of royalists (the *legitimises* and the *orléanistes*),<sup>2</sup> two categories of *bonapartistes* (more or less seduced by the uncle or the nephew, by authoritarian or liberal empire)<sup>3</sup> and republicans split between uncountable currents.

Many Frenchmen and politicians navigated between these diverse tendencies contesting the ascendancy. Defeat against Prussia in the 1870–1 war provoked the proclamation of a new republic, the third in French history. But republicans lost the following elections. Despite this, the victorious but disunited royalists did not succeed in securing a new restoration. It was only in 1879 that the republicans achieved a majority in the Chamber of Representatives and in the Senate, which allowed them finally to control the country and start ‘republicanising’ it.

These political divisions had repercussions on the army. They were, however, limited by the fact that servicemen did not possess the right to vote, or freedom of expression. If their status condemned them to be only observers, it did not prevent their personal convictions from developing. These last appear not in the official documents, but in private papers or recollections published later. The troops fighting in Indochina were no exception. For example, a lieutenant in Hanoi forbade his native servant to put out flags on 14 July, the newly introduced national day, which commemorated the great revolutionary event of 1789. Another young officer, sailing to Tonkin, wondered whether collective prayer still existed on warships, despite the republic. When units of the metropolitan army were sent to strengthen the colonial troops, they were called, sometimes a little disparagingly, ‘battalions of the voters’. The conscripted soldiers preserved their civic rights, unlike the professional soldiers and officers, who sometimes felt pride in not being full citizens of a hated republic.

In addition, some parts of the armed services had political reputations. The Navy, which owed its nickname, ‘La Royale’, not only to the fact that the department was in Rue Royale in Paris, or the cavalry, where the heirs of the old aristocracy gathered, were held to be royalist. In contrast, the ‘learned corps’, such as the engineers or the artillery, would be republican, with the argument that scientific diplomas were more appreciated than titles of nobility. Officially absent from the army, the political question nevertheless affected the military, and remained ready to appear at the slightest sign of dissatisfaction. In addition, there was the traditional rivalry between the different branches of the military, as between *marsouins* and *lignards*, which degenerated several times into pitched battles in Hanoi.<sup>4</sup>

The first occurrence of political dissatisfaction within the military in Tonkin arose in late 1883, when Admiral Courbet, very popular among the expeditionary force, was replaced by General Millot, a much less charismatic person. In the officers’ *popotes*,<sup>5</sup> political favouritism was whispered, Millot being an ostentatious republican and Courbet a discreet legitimist.

This line of fracture running through the army should not be overemphasised. A common ideal of true patriotism also existed among the officers. Moreover, they were all ready to close ranks against their common foe: the civilians. As we shall see, the major fracture within French forces was to be found between civilians and the military or, more exactly, between civil power and military authority. The divorce goes back, once again, to the French Revolution, which created a break between the regime and the professional, formerly royal, army, suspected of being aristocratic and royalist. The short-lived First

Republic developed the mystique of a 'nation in arms'. Two famous decrees, *La Patrie en danger* (1792) and *La Levée en masse* (1793), led the way to total war and conscription.<sup>6</sup> These decrees were not only a desperate attempt to muster badly needed troops, they were also an exact application of the ideas the republicans would develop through the nineteenth century. Their model was the farmer of Athens or Rome taking up weapons to defend the homeland when threatened, but remaining primarily an ordinary citizen. The new army had to be essentially a citizen army, dare one say a 'civilian army'.

The mystique of homeland, nation, republic, freedom and citizenship was held to be more important than tactical and technical competence. A people's army was ideologically thought to be unbeatable. A few years before the seizure of Tonkin, the republicans could put this doctrine to the test during the Franco-Prussian war. Declared by Napoleon III in 1870, this war led the republicans to power when Paris learnt that the emperor had been taken prisoner by the Prussians. The new government, out of national pride, prolonged the war and tried to reorganise the professional army inherited from the Second Empire. But the ragtag, ill-disciplined volunteers proved no match for the Prussian veterans. Even worse, Paris mutinied against the new government, and in 1871 the republicans lost both the war and the elections. They had to revise their military theory by adopting a more realistic view of the conditions of modern fighting and the role of a well trained standing force. Out of necessity, the army had to be a little more military than they would have liked.

After several years of uncertainty, the republicans were back in power in 1879. They started to create the organisation that would eventually enable France to muster millions of soldiers in 1914. Every civilian had to become a part-time soldier: military training was dispensed at school, and conscription gradually restored. But defiance towards the regular army persisted. This was particularly true in the colonies. At this time, the colonial possessions of France, mainly North Africa and Cochinchina, were ruled by the army or navy.

The colonial administration had to be changed. Excepting Algeria, colonies were in the charge of the Navy Department, and so the republican leader, Gambetta, created a sub-secretariat for the colonies as a means of detaching them from the military. It was later attached to the Commerce Ministry. In Algeria, the *Bureaux des Affaires Arabes* (Arab Affairs Offices), army-run administrative units, were replaced by civilians; and the first civilian governor was appointed in Cochinchina in 1879, after twenty years of admirals' rule. This went smoothly, as those lands were quiet and pacified, the hard work of pacification having been done in the 1860s and 1870s. Tonkin, the next French acquisition, in northern Indochina, would prove harder to chew.

### Civilians go to war

On 26 May 1883, the Chamber of Representatives in Paris received news that the French commander in Tonkin, *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Rivière, had been killed. Unanimously, the representatives voted for an increase in public expenditure and sent an expeditionary force to conquer the land. The legislation stated that the military leaders, General Bouët for the ground forces and Admiral Courbet for the Navy, were to be placed under the

supervision of a (civilian) *commissaire général de la république*: a general superintendent.

The inspiration for this measure was to be found in the period of the French Revolution, when *représentants en mission* were sent to control the activities of the generals in the field. The post of superintendent went to Jules Harmand. This indicated the determination of the government to strengthen its influence in Tonkin, because Harmand, consul in Bangkok since 1881, was a former companion of Francis Garnier, whose adventure in Tonkin he had supported ten years earlier.<sup>7</sup> The instructions sent to him jointly by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Navy stated that he 'is in charge of preventing any military action from going astray and extending beyond the circle drawn by present instructions'.<sup>8</sup> But disagreements soon appeared between Harmand and General Bouët. The latter was eventually 'sent on mission in France', in effect dismissed, on 18 September 1883. But this victory for civil power was only temporary because the political and military situation in Tonkin deteriorated.

Most of the local mandarins refused to apply the 'Harmand Agreement', which the Nguyễn King Hiệp Hoà had been compelled to accept during his brief reign, and which his ministers signed on 25 August 1883.<sup>9</sup> Their troops attacked the French garrisons in cooperation with irregular Chinese troops, the dreaded Black Flags.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, Admiral Courbet, now commander-in-chief of the ground and naval forces, came to the fore. In November, after a rebel attack on Hai Duong, a state of siege was proclaimed, conferring on him complete civil and military powers. It was now Harmand who had to return to France, in December 1883. The attempt to subordinate the army to civil power had been brief.

It seems that Harmand's harshness and ruthlessness towards the king and the court at Huế had brought the army back into the foreground.<sup>11</sup> But Admiral Courbet was not content with making war by seizing the town of Son Tay where the Black Flags were entrenched. He also asked Cochinchina to supply the necessary administrative personnel to enforce French domination. Thus the army became involved in administration matters. This could be one of the reasons why Courbet was pushed aside on 16 December 1883, the very day Son Tay was taken, in circumstances that look like a political plot. But the successor to the admiral, General Millot, who arrived in Tonkin in February 1884, also took charge of the administration: 'He already made decisions as if he were a governor of an annexed territory', writes Philippe Devillers.<sup>12</sup> Thus he drove Tonkin towards direct administration, whereas in Huế the diplomats were negotiating a new text—the Patenôtre Treaty signed on 6 June 1884—which appeared to respect the administrative autonomy of Annam.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, conflict had to grow between Millot and the (civilian) General Resident in Huế, Lemaire. His achievements in the field of diplomacy allowed Lemaire to recover the civil powers given up by General Millot when sailing back to France in September 1884. But the successor to Millot, General Brière de l'Isle, did not want to share authority, and demanded total civil and military powers, which he subsequently obtained in December.

At peace in Annam, France was now at war with China as a result of border tensions and problems, and reinforcements were sent to Tonkin.<sup>14</sup> In January 1885, Tonkin thus passed under the responsibility of the War Ministry, in place of the Navy or the Colonies. This was because colonial troops (at this time from the Navy) were insufficient for the

war against China. Reinforcements were also found in the country, and the recruitment of native soldiers began to widen.

Until this point, there was no debate over the use of native soldiers, because they had not been an issue in the comings and goings between civilians and the military. These troops existed nevertheless. They constituted a considerable proportion of the forces brought to Tonkin by *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Rivière, because the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Annamites*, raised in Cochinchina since 1879, was one of the few available units. But, as in the time of Francis Garnier, native auxiliaries were soon raised in Tonkin. These volunteers, often seduced by the prospect of plunder, were badly equipped and armed, and ill-disciplined and led. They participated, nevertheless, in the operations against China, and took part in all the fighting where French units were involved.

The end of the war against China came on 4 April 1885 with the signing of a protocol, leading to a peace treaty two months later, and the beginning of pacification in Tonkin. These events brought the locally raised Vietnamese forces a new and more significant role in the field, but also made them the object of political disputes. The question of the recruitment of these troops was first of all the occasion for confrontation within the administration. The arrival, in 1886, of the first civilian governor, Paul Bert, further increased conflict between servicemen and civilians.

### **Maintaining a national army in Annam?**

Clause 24 of the previously mentioned Harmand agreement of August 1883 had modestly stated that 'France also undertakes to supply to His Majesty the King of Annam all the instructors, the engineers, the scholars, the officers, etc. whom he will need'. The text implied that Annam would preserve its own army, which would be, if needed, trained and supervised by France. But both the Harmand Agreement and the Patenôtre Treaty stated in very similar terms that France would undertake to guarantee henceforth the integrity of the States of His Majesty the King of Annam, to defend this sovereign against attacks from outside, and against rebellions inside.

Thus from 1883 France could occupy all parts of the territory that it considered useful, though no explicit mention was made regarding the fate of the royal army or the recruitment of more natives by France. In November 1884, Lemaire, plenipotentiary minister and general resident in Annam and Tonkin, pointed out that the decree of 12 May of that year, taken in response to the demand of the commander-in-chief, General Millot, to create the first and second *Régiments de Tirailleurs Tonkinois* and organise their recruitment on regional lines, spoke about Tonkin in terms of 'ownership and colony'. Treating the susceptibilities of the court at Huê with caution, Lemaire did not communicate the whole text.

Nevertheless, the court raised objections. It did not oppose the recruitment of volunteers for the benefit of the French, but distinguished the case of conscripts, whom, it argued, should be raised exclusively for the service of the king; that is, for the royal army that still existed. Thus the court rejected the French seizure of a traditional institution: conscription. This brought into the open the problem of direct administration. Passing on the views of the court, Lemaire also explained his personal position. On the one hand he pointed to the 'difficulties which General Millot met in the recruitment of the Tonkinois



infantrymen' to demonstrate his opposition to voluntary service alone, which, according to him, supplied only tramps and produced desertions, and possessed besides 'the inconvenience of an irregular and exceptional process in a country where the regime of conscription is perfectly established, and to bear, as a consequence, as regards our situation in Tonkin, a character little corresponding to the state of affairs which we want to create.'<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand he suggested by-passing the problem of conscription and gradually replacing the existing Annamite army, whose tasks would be reduced to those of the police because France would now protect the realm, by means of a unique army supervised by France and including both Frenchmen and Annamites. It would be a local force, with French staff, and placed under the fictitious direction of the king, who would authorise the calling up. If Lemaire only later foresaw the disarmament of the traditional Annamite army, he also asserted that 'the forming of the body of the Tonkinois infantrymen [*Régiments de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*] should be the first attempt at the creation of this new army', and pointed out that there would be, during the period of the coexistence of both armies, no increase in the military pressure on the population, because the royal army was to be recruited especially from the region of Annam, while the infantrymen would be in the north.

In fact, Lemaire rejected a swift passage to direct administration: he felt it necessary to protect the susceptibilities of the court and not to use the system of conscription immediately for the benefit of an army serving exclusively French interests. Even so, his proposals would see the gradual abolition of the Annamite army, leaving it with only menial police duties, and in so doing, increasing French control of the institutions of the realm.



*Figure 5.1* French Indochina, Tirailleur of the early twentieth century.

*Source:* Pre-1910 postcard in the collection of Karl Hack.

Despite the legalist considerations of the court, the organisation of the two new regiments continued, and Lemaire could declare their recruitment almost completed by November 1884. As they mainly consisted of the volunteers recruited from 1883 onwards under the name of *Auxiliaries Tonkinois*, it was not necessary to resort to conscription. But the military authorities, in a demand from General Brière de l'Isle in January 1885, wanted to hasten its introduction. The civil authorities were more cautious: in February, Felix

Faure, then Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, asked the General Resident in Huê to postpone cantonal recruitment, but to persuade the king to decrease the size of his own army, which 'comes the day, should not be any more than a guard of honour'.<sup>16</sup> According to Thomazi, Brière de l'Isle later repeated his wish 'to remove the Annamite army, replace it by bodies of native infantrymen which villages would recruit under their own responsibility'.<sup>17</sup> Thus it was well before the 'ambush of Huê' on the night of 4 and 5 July 1885 that the removal, or the complete reorganisation, of the Annamite army was envisaged, and the French administration sought to annex the local system of recruitment solely for its own ends.

### A well planned ambush

After the peace with China was signed in June 1885, events at Huê launched several years of disorder in Tonkin. On the night of 4 and 5 July, French troops in the citadel of Huê were attacked by royal forces and, after a night of bloody fighting, King Ham Nghi (reigned 1884–5) and Regent Thuyêt fled. It was the beginning of a general uprising in Annam, which continued for several years in Tonkin. Historians still dispute the causes of the event: French provocation or Vietnamese patriotism? If, in the past, the French spoke only about the 'ambush' of Huê, and exaggerated Annamite unreliability, it is now clear that the intentions shown by the new commander, General Roussel de Courcy, intensified the subsequent subjugation.

Examining the military question shows what his intentions were. General de Courcy announced to the minister his ambitions for the native forces in Annam and Tonkin on 4 July 1885; that is, on the very day leading up to the so-called 'ambush'. Having evoked the creation of the auxiliary units and the two *Régiments de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, the general described the Annamite army, which he felt had a strength of about 70,000 men, 12,000 of whom had been recruited in the neighbourhood of Huê.<sup>18</sup>

According to de Courcy, however, it was necessary to add 'numerous militias [that] are formed in the most important cities, as also in most of the villages'. These troops, which the general characterised as 'ragged, badly armed, without cohesion', were hardly a drain on the royal treasure. De Courcy then announced his intention to arrest or to discharge 'the Minister of War Tuyet [*sic*]', and then to modify the last treaty in order to reorganise the army and reconstitute it on the same lines as in Tonkin—that is, on the model of the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*—by giving it a structure of French officers, three-quarters French non-commissioned officers and 100 per cent native corporals and soldiers. It would indeed be the army of the King of Annam, paid by him, but steered and administered by a French minister of war: '25,000 to 30,000 men will be enough'. In the same report, the general asserted that if this project received the approval of the ministry, there would be no need for a third division in Indochina, and the pacification there would soon be completed.<sup>19</sup>

But at the very moment that the general was writing his paper, on 4 July 1885, the person he wanted to arrest, the Regent Thuyêt, was putting the finishing touches to preparations for the uprising that was to plunge Annam into revolt. The dismissal of the Annamite army, which is sometimes presented as a consequence of the 'ambush' of Huê, was partially decided before this event. More than Lemaire, and with less tact, General de

Courcy wanted to constitute a new native army, strictly supervised by France, and placed merely under the formal authority of the King of Annam. After the 'ambush', de Courcy received confidential instructions from the Minister of War on 25 July: 'pursue the dissolution of the regular army of Annam, that is royal ground troops and the Navy, the provincial troops and the artillerymen, keeping only a guard of honour for the king in Huê' with some French officers; but also 'maintain the provincial units forming the particular escorts of the prefects and the sub-prefects, as well as the bodies of urban police'.<sup>20</sup>

These directives envisaged the dismissal of the most annoying parts of the former army, which were garrisoned in the provinces in revolt, and thus tempted to join in the anti-French struggle. They also removed those units of inadequate technical standard (the Artillery and Navy, for example), while leaving, in theory, the police forces untouched. The movement towards direct administration was less firm than the general might have wished. By estimating the required strength of the native army at 25,000 or 30,000 men on 4 July, it is clear that he included the forces necessary for the police, which he did not want to leave with the mandarins. But instructions from the minister forced him to revise the army's strength downwards. In the agreement he now prepared, which imposed particularly severe restrictions on the new king, Đông Khanh (reigned 1885–9), articles 4 and 5 envisaged a reorganised army of 8000–10,000 men, commanded by a French officer, and supervised by a French military mission at the expense of the Annam treasury. In addition, Tonkinois regiments then in the service of France would remain distinct from the reorganised national army. Some of the unresolved military problems would thus be settled. Conscription into Tonkinois regiments would be confirmed, the possible threat from an autonomous Annamite army would disappear (because this army would be under French control) and, finally, supplementary troops would be available for the pacification.

This solution, endorsed by an additional agreement to the Patenôtre treaty signed on 30 July 1885, which recognised two different native armies, that of Tonkin and that of Annam, was obviously lame. It confirmed the separation of those regions. It indicated that the tension between direct administration and respect for autonomy had not been completely surmounted. On the one hand, the logic of the military authorities on the spot inclined towards a total takeover of the military instrument; on the other hand, the government was reluctant to pay the price of this control, and was satisfied to leave local police forces, a regular army and even a mission of French instructors in Annam, which its treasury could support.

These last, the French military instructors, were to carry the cost of this lame compromise when the agreement was implemented. Recruited by phenomenal promises (Annam would pay), their status remained precarious. Envied yet bullied by their colleagues in the French army, they had to form units without weapons and without uniforms, the strength of which melted at first sight—the short-lived *Bataillons de chasseurs annamites*.

Numbering 52 active officers and 248 NCOs, the mission left France for Annam at the end of October 1885. About three months after beginning its work, on 5 February 1886, the Minister of War, Boulanger, cabled General Warnet, who had just replaced de Courcy: 'Send back to Hanoi military mission in Annam and dismiss existing rudiments of army.' The order, however imperative, was inconsistent. In seven months, the French

had imposed on a country in revolt first the dismissal of several thousand men from the royal army, then the levying of some 2000 or 3000 others and finally their dismissal. The incongruity of the demands is a measure of the mistrust towards the new army. The reply from General Warnet shows more calm, or a stronger sense of reality in the face of the rebellion: 'How to motivate Court Huê dismissal mission and troops in training? Moment does not seem convenient; preferable to wait for...arrival announced Resident Général. I stop new recruiting.'<sup>21</sup> With regard to the national army, this was the last time anyone sought the opinion of Huê. Differences of opinion over direct administration gave way to incoherence, but did not deflect from the total takeover of the military instruments of the realm. Should this takeover extend to the police? This issue set civilians and military yet more firmly against each other from 1886.

The telegram quoted above mentioned the arrival of a new general resident: Paul Bert. He was a scientist who had gone into politics at the end of the Second Empire. He was known, and this worried certain circles in Indochina, for his anti-clericalism. In fact, he would quickly reassure the missionaries: anti-clericalism was not an export article. On the other hand, the appointment of a civilian to hold both civilian and military power in Tonkin boosted antagonism from the servicemen. This time, the native troops were at the heart of the argument. The government instructions sent to Paul Bert ordered him to set up a true protectorate. The formula was fashionable in Paris: it was said to be inspired by the English example, and thus thought to be effective and cheap. Far from being a new potentate, Paul Bert should establish his residence in Huê, near to the king, whose actions he should inspire.

However, nothing in the convictions of the new general resident predisposed him to this role. Convinced colonialist because idealistic democrat and artless republican, Paul Bert dreamt of establishing in Indochina 'freedom, equality and brotherhood' in the sometimes narrow sense that the Freemasons from the 'Republic of the Jules' gave to these words.<sup>22</sup> Before his arrival, Paul Bert showed little favour to the local traditions. In the Chamber of Representatives, he answered, in December 1885, the criticisms of the wildest republicans: 'kings are convenient for a lower civilisation'.<sup>23</sup> Even on his way to Indochina—because Paul Bert was already set to work on the ship, which provoked ironic comments from some of his travelling companions, including the future consul, Auguste Francois, of whom we shall speak again—he sent from Suez, on 21 February 1886, a letter to the Minister of War in which he expressed his doubts: 'the conception of an organised Annamite army is perhaps the most dangerous of all those which, in this country of *déséquilibre* [*sic*] haunted the spirits'.<sup>24</sup> The Minister of War replied that he wholeheartedly shared this opinion.

A short time after his arrival, Paul Bert had to surrender to double evidence: 'Here absence troops threaten complete ruin country', he cabled on 9 May 1886. Moreover, he indicated in a report of 23 April how little French security was compromised by the training of the new Annamite army and the activity of the mission of instructors, because the troops had no weapons or uniforms, and did not exceed 3000 men. This report envisaged two solutions to remedy the ineffectiveness of the new army: either make it a real foreign army, supervised by officers on secondment, with ranks superior to those they held in the French army; or reorganise it on the model of the *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, with a staff of regular officers but paid for by the royal treasury.

On 9 May at 11.00 in the morning, Paul Bert cabled from Huê to the President of the Council, Foreign Secretary: 'After agreement with military authority, ask you insistently to ask Minister of War to constitute by decree four battalions of *Chasseurs Annamites*; they would have organisation, armament, privileges of the *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*. Officers from the mission would take place in their ranks.' The same day, at 15.40, Paul Bert sent a second telegram bringing one useful refinement: 'Of course the *Bataillons Annamites*, although part of the French forces in the same way as the *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, would be paid from the Annamite treasury.' Five days later, the President of the Republic signed the decree authorising the creation of the four battalions of *Chasseurs Annamites*, under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the Troops, 'in the same way as the Tonkinois regiments'.

In a certain sense, these battalions were the indirect heirs of the attempt by General de Courcy to reorganise the Annamite army. This first project dated from before the 'ambush' of Huê. It already bore the marks of French dominion, because the new army was intended to be steered by a French officer. But it also made room for local resources: by the number of recruits, first 25,000–30,000 men; but also by the training of native NCOs and officers. The strength of the mission, stated in an instruction, corresponded to one Frenchman for every one hundred men. The revolt in Annam, the decline in royal power that resulted from it and the waltz of leaders (there had been three commanders-in-chief or superior commanders in one year, besides the new general resident) removed any trace of indigenous character from the force as finally constituted. In fact, at no time was there real political reflection, or any intention to retain a key element of sovereign indigenous power. The only real successors to the former royal armies were the military house of the emperor, preserved in Huê in a purely honorary role, and, in the provinces, escorts of the mandarins, variously reorganised according to the regions of Tonkin and Annam, or transformed into militias. So the question of a national army, or the 'forces of the protectorate', exposed the hesitations in French policy. The points of discord between civil and military, between local and central power, were rather easily surmounted because at heart their aims were identical—to find more troops to fight the rebellion.

### **Armed civilians against military policemen**

Much deeper discord appeared when Paul Bert considered the organisation of the new protectorate. A major element in this reorganisation was the role of the natives armed by France. Despite the agreement with the military authorities, Paul Bert was little satisfied with the solution given to the problem of the former royal army. The transformation of units into battalions of *Chasseurs Annamites* on the model of the *Tirailleurs Tonkinois* confined them to the army. By that time, in addition to the first two regiments of Tonkinois organised in May 1884, the army had just raised the third regiment in July 1885 and the fourth in February 1886. The native strength represented half of the 30,000 soldiers present in Tonkin, and Paul Bert undertook gradually to repatriate a part of the European units.

Could Paul Bert be satisfied with what Charles Fourniau, by analogy with the conflicts of another century, calls the 'Vietnamisation' of the war? The answer is negative, and for several reasons. First, Paul Bert gradually changed his view of Indochina. Meetings with

the king and court of Huê, contacts with local emissaries and the missionaries, brought him to envisage a separation of Tonkin, to be administered directly by France, from the central region of Viet Nam, Annam. Annam would stay under the direction of the king. It would be defended from outside threats by the French protectorate, but would have charge of its internal order. In September 1886, having noticed that the status of the new battalions of *Chasseurs Annamites* was satisfactory, he did not hesitate to share with his minister more political questions: 'shall we continue to occupy Annam in the conditions where we do today?' Paul Bert noticed that the occupation of 38 military posts by about 7500 men, half of them European, 'feeds the excitement of the rebels who accuse current king of delivering his country to the Frenchmen'. But removing them would lead to the immediate seizing of citadels, 'very insufficiently defended by miserable mandarin troops'. According to him, this seizure would bring about the destruction of royal power. Now the companies of *Chasseurs Annamites* could help to constitute a local force sufficient to establish the power of King Đông Khanh: 'divided, scattered between the different provinces, they could form in administrative centres a core similar to the elite company of Tonkinese militias, and all around they would organise and train besides them sufficient troops to fight against the rebels.'<sup>25</sup>

For that purpose, this provincial elite company had to be 'the least French possible'. Paul Bert intended to return to the decree of 14 May 1884, thinking that it would be more advisable 'to consider these troops as pure Annamites'. This was the exact reverse of his opinion in February of that year, before he came to Indochina, when he did not want any native troops at all. Furthermore, and although his authorised biographer exonerates him, Paul Bert felt a certain distrust towards the army. Chailley, his son-in-law, asserts that 'Paul Bert liked the army, by temperament and by patriotism'.<sup>26</sup> But this was in reply to the judgement of a lieutenant of *Tirailleurs*, Roger Lambelin, writing under the name 'Raoul Loky' in the royalist *Gazette de France*: 'Being profoundly unaware of things pertaining to the army and the navy, he landed in Hanoi with the prejudice that French officers were only capable of waving swords and that they were not even capable of raising native soldiers and of maintaining relations with the Annamites authorities.'<sup>27</sup> Actually, in his reorganisation of the *Chasseurs Annamites*, Paul Bert wished to find officers ready to obey orders from the mandarins. He felt that he could find them exclusively among dismissed officers who comprised the previously noted mission, and not among the regular officers. But, he tells his minister, as for the whole of his project, 'my opinion is still not sufficiently settled, so that I cannot present it to you in a firm way'. In fact, it was already too late.

Without informing him, General Jamont, the new superior commander of the troops, ordered the replacement of all the former officers by officers on active duty by July 1886, because their employment in the regular units that the battalions of *Chasseurs* had become was no longer legally possible.<sup>28</sup> Paul Bert, when he learnt of the sending of these replacement officers from France, tried to prevent their departure by cabling the Foreign Secretary, Freycinet, on 5 October. But it was too late. Until their dissolution in 1890, the battalions of *Chasseurs Annamites* remained regular units of the army. The indecision, the hesitations and the confrontation between civil power and servicemen now shifted northwards to Tonkin and to the military.

### Enemy brothers in arms

The bone of contention between civilians and servicemen—the militia—was created by a serviceman, and possibly the one most appreciated by his peers in Tonkin, Admiral Courbet. In a decision taken by the admiral on 5 January 1884, a body of native militiamen was established in Tonkin. In this, Courbet acted at the instigation of his Director of Civil Affairs (*Directeur des Affaires Civiles*) and in line with his function as General Superintendent (*Commissaire Général de la République*), inherited from Harmand, who had been called back to France on 24 December 1883. Appointed on 7 June 1883, Harmand had installed the first French *Residents* in Haiphong on 28 July, in Nam Dinh on 4 August, in Hanoi on 11 August and in Ninh Binh on 15 October. Quite logically, and in accordance with what had been done in Cochinchina to provide the Inspectors of Indigenous Affairs (*Inspecteurs des Affaires Indigènes*) with an armed force, Courbet resolved to provide these civilian Residents (often former officers) with the means to make their new authority respected. Thus the body of native militiamen was in charge 'of ensuring the guarding of places of residence, of contributing to the police of towns, of escorting civil servants into the interior of provinces and, if necessary, of supplying couriers for the *tram* service'.<sup>29</sup>

However, this militia had only a short-lived existence and did not long survive the admiral's disgrace. On 22 May 1884, his successor, General Millot, had the militiamen transferred to the recently established Tonkinois regiments. At that time, the authorities looked above all for men trained in the handling of weapons in order to increase the number of regular troops, and worried little about naming residents or about obtaining an escort for them. Besides, certain functions allotted to the militia, like the *tram* service or the local police, fell to the native mandarins and their own guards, the *Linh Co*.

It was nevertheless a serviceman, General Warnet, the acting *Resident Général* while awaiting Paul Bert's arrival, who organised, with an order of 11 February 1886, the placing of the civil guards under the authority of the French provincial leaders and the native authorities. The numbers forecast varied between 700 men for a small province and 1100 men for a large one, but the number of rifles reached only 80 and 170 respectively. In fact, the order involved the officialisation of the *Linh Co*, or mandarin guard, which had been dissolved or transferred into the infantry as a precaution. It seems that this order did little more than give the *Linh Co* a legal existence.

A second body was established by the same order: the Civil Guard of the Residencies (*Gardes Civiles des Résidences*). The latter, recruited among former infantrymen and according to the same rules that they had followed, kept the same uniform, with the exception of the distinctive colour of the snares, belts, facings and chin straps: red for the infantrymen and blue for the Civil Guard. The strength of this body was 700 men for all of Tonkin.<sup>30</sup> Thus it is not entirely accurate to attribute its creation to Paul Bert, even if his arrival prompted the orders of 31 May and 6 August 1886, which gave them the name of 'militia'. These militias comprised: on the one hand, elite companies of 125 men, one per residency, commanded by an officer and placed under the direct orders of the resident; and on the other, sections of 50 men distributed in the *phu*,<sup>31</sup> and possibly sections of 25 men in the important or troublesome *huyên*.<sup>32</sup> The militia ensured the guard of residencies, of the *tong-doc*,<sup>33</sup> *phu*, *huyên*, prisons and public buildings, the service of official mail, intelligence, customs posts, land and water escorts and other



missions allowed by the customs of the Annamite administration and the pursuit of criminals.<sup>34</sup>

The European staff was reduced. If the elite company placed its 125 men under the authority of an officer, lieutenant or second lieutenant, and five noncommissioned officers, the sections of 50 men came under the authority of a non-commissioned French officer, which in practice gave them a certain autonomy, supervised by the local mandarins. On 3 August 1887, the total strength of the militia in Tonkin was 4150 men, and there were 20 elite companies for Tonkin and Annam.

The provisions adopted by Paul Bert reflected the contradictions in the thoughts and acts of the General Resident. By assigning the missions allowed by the customs of the Annamite administration to the militias, he wanted to respect local institutions. But by placing Frenchmen in the main commands, he pushed the lower native ranks into inactivity and provided the Residents with the only effective units, those with firearms. The Residents named by Paul Bert were increasingly dashing off to head their companies, in accordance with the provisions of the order of 31 May 1886, which granted them control, notably, of the internal police. It was natural for them to compete with the army in its mission of pacification, and Paul Bert could not ignore this. One could even say that he wanted it. Paul Bert had welcomed the end of the war with China with comments reproduced in a local newspaper, *L'Avenir du Tonkin* (*The Future of Tonkin*):

Now the war is over, officially at least. But is it not to be feared that if bellicose men remain at the head of the Tonkinese administration, it will be reborn and become eternal? The excuses which are easily transformed into reasons in the eyes of the military, all in good faith, will not be lacking: Chinese deserters in the mountainous zones, pirates in the delta, there will be that with which to outwardly justify the preservation of the military leader. And we shall risk having a second edition of Algeria in Tonkin.<sup>35</sup>

What does he find to blame in Algeria? The answer is found in one of his other works, *Lettres de Kabylie* (*Letters from Kabylia*), published two years earlier, in which he wrote: 'We are no longer in the good times of the Arab Offices [*Bureaux Arabes*] where uprising was the most lucrative of speculations.' These Arab Offices corresponded to the military administration abolished by the republicans, who accused the officers of maintaining the troubles in order to gain promotions and decorations. In December 1885, in the Chamber of Deputies, he had had this formula: 'the warrior calls the war'. So for Paul Bert, to entrust pacification to the army was to maintain trouble rather than to reduce it. The strange thing is that he sincerely thought that civilians, whose ambition was encouraged by the comfortable treatment that the General Resident assured them, would behave differently.

When competed against, the army was equally limited in its means of action. In fact, it was the residents who, henceforth, were in charge of providing intelligence for the military authority, because they alone were supposed to be in direct contact with the native authorities. In principle, it was also the resident who asked for the assistance of the military in cases of attack, and he could even demand it. Naturally, these provisions

deeply affected the officers, who felt subjected to the power of the civilians, whose competence in war operations they disputed. But was it indeed a war?

In fact, Paul Bert's thesis did not always allow the civil power to accept the reality of a Vietnamese national uprising, which would have as its main cause the French occupation, since, according to the thesis, the reason for the uprising would lie in the unduly arduous, brutal and badly led subjugation attributable to the military. There could not be a real war; at the very most there were police operations. Minister Jules Ferry, Ferry le Tonkinois, as he was nicknamed, made this point and Paul Bert subscribed to it:

What allows me to say that the piracy in Tonkin is in a sense only an accident, and that it will have only a relatively short duration, is that it is not inspired by any idea of patriotism or independence. Annamites have almost no national feeling. There are no pirates over there fighting for a cause, but simply bands of looters driven by hunger.<sup>36</sup>

On the contrary, the military closer to the field sometimes made distinctions between those who qualified as 'patriots' and the organised groups of bandits. But it is also true that the latter did not hesitate to award themselves supposed diplomas of 'resistance' to ennoble their plunders.

In the field, the cohabitation between military and civil authorities became difficult. From July to August 1886, Paul Bert began to arrange for King Đông Khanh (installed just months earlier, in September 1885, after Ham Nghi's flight) to go on tour around the country, so as to reaffirm his power. This 'royal column' failed in its political purpose, although it provided a theatre of ceaseless skirmishes between the civilian, Pène-Siefert, a former anti-military journalist and collaborator with Paul Bert, and the military leader of the escort, Captain Billet.

In the provinces, the atmosphere was no better. Auguste Francois, future consul in China, was an invaluable witness to the problems that the differences of opinion between civilians and the military posed for the tranquillity of a province. He arrived in Tonkin on the same boat as Paul Bert, who had asked him to join his cabinet. But Francois appreciated his leader's methodology very little. He then obtained the post of Resident of France in Son Tay, where he arrived on 12 April 1886. He left a cutting account of the period:

It is in this favourable state of affairs that Paul Bert's genius had subordinated the military authority to the civil power and created a completely admirable duality of attributions. It is true that, in order to help in pacification, he had imagined this: the regular army was designated to act against any enemy that could be considered organised, against any force that could be considered rebel, like certain big bands of pirates. The civil power, consequently mine, had only the right to intervene against simple piracy and the small local bands that gathered to plunder; and scattered immediately.

Of course, this clear distribution of power had irritated General Jamais and his officers:

I should not delay in feeling the manifestation of their bad mood. They had meant, indeed, to apply the Paul Bert system in all its ridiculous beauty. One beautiful night in May, at the time of the crimes, I was woken abruptly by the noise of four rifle butts falling back to the ground, making the bayonets ring. In the light cast by a lantern carried by a Zouave [an Algerian colonial infantry] sergeant, I noticed four other Zouaves leaning on their weapons and a lieutenant planted at the mosquito net under which I was dressed in pyjamas...

The officer, seeing me awake, moved his right hand to the peak of his kepi, put his heels together in the statutory position and, without any other introduction, uttered to me the following speech, clearly pronouncing the sentences in the tone of military service reports. 'The Commandant of Arms sends me to warn the Residence that shots are being fired in the suburb. The non-commissioned officer on guard in the watchtower reports that they are possibly pirates. The Commandant of Arms judges consequently that it is up to the Residence to intervene.'

Having thus spoken, the lieutenant returned his right hand to the seam of his trousers, as the regulations required. I instantly see what happens. 'Very well', I answered. 'Thank you, lieutenant. Please inform the Commandant of Arms that I am going to put myself at the head of the warriors here.' I indicate the six wretched militiamen, spread out on the tiled floor, that this jumble had not even awakened. 'And I am going to carry out a mission. But please, ask the Commandant of Arms to have his troops ready, because, if by chance I don't win, we would be dealing with an organised force and it would be his turn to fight.'

In giving this response, I had remained serious. The lieutenant and his Zouaves repressed an intense desire to burst out laughing. Nothing could be funnier than the sight of armed soldiers coming to invite a sleepy man dressed in pyjamas to strike against an enemy that should have been repelled without procrastination.

Five minutes later, an orderly of the Commandant of Arms returned, without a lantern and without an escort of Zouaves this time, to inform me that the pirates had disappeared and it seemed useless that I be bothered.

The brigands had indeed disappeared, but they had very well had the liberty to kill an inhabitant of the suburb and to harm two other natives who would have done well without Paul Bert's decrees and his way of understanding the separation of powers.<sup>37</sup>

With his sense of humour, François managed to ease relations with the servicemen, and establish effective collaboration. But henceforth pacification depended largely on local agreement. This was not facilitated by the resumption of conflict between servicemen and civilians at the highest levels following the death of Paul Bert in November 1886. Paul Bert had never created unanimity, but had maintained dissension within acceptable limits, by avoiding giving too much attention to complaints that his circle of acquaintances brought to him. His immediate successor and close collaborator, Paulin Vial, was the recipient of all the hostility provoked by Paul Bert and incurred, moreover, the hostility

of the Gambettists.<sup>38</sup> The servicemen thought favourably of him because he did not hesitate to employ the pacification methods in Tonkin that had been tested in Cochinchina: the sending of a column of 'partisans', supervised by a high mandarin and with a militia escort, to criss-cross the region and obtain the submission of villages. As the Cochinchinese mandarin Tran Ba Loc brought calm to Binh Thuan province in September 1886, his northern equivalent, Hoang Cao Khai, crossed Bai Say from December 1886 to January 1887.<sup>39</sup>

If the results obtained seemed satisfactory, the servicemen could denounce the methods used to obtain information or submission. If, as was said, they did not offend local custom, they were repugnant to Western standards: and the army was pleased not to play the role of brute that was traditionally attributed to it by civilian opinion. At the same time, in January 1887, the army managed to seize the main camp of the insurrectionary movement, the fortress of Ba Dinh, after three assaults. The siege mobilised 3000 troops, artillerymen, engineers and numerous coolies. For the army, it was proof that a light company, a militia, without support weapons and led by civilian residents with sometimes questionable military competence, was unsuitable for pacification considering the severity of the situation.

The main defect of the army, however, was that it was expensive. In France, the Chamber of Deputies needed coaxing when it was a question of paying out millions for Tonkin. It was thus not possible for the military to proclaim clearly that the situation was almost catastrophic. The spectre of abandonment always hovered in France, and alarmist rumours, coupled with demands for military credits, could give it currency. In contrast, the civilian authorities were bound to present matters in the most optimistic light, especially since they were under pressure from the mother country to decrease expenditures. The decision to favour the creation of militia forces was thus not only a reaction of the civil power to the army; neither was it a question of efficiency in the field; it was financial realism. The militiamen were much less expensive than the infantrymen, by avoiding the expenses of barracks and different furnishings, but especially by the reduction in European personnel, whose salaries constituted the main expenditure in an infantry regiment.<sup>40</sup>

It remained to be shown that the less expensive militiamen could be as effective. The Resident of Hai Duong, Neyret, provided the proof, and much publicity was made of the bands he scattered and the weapons he seized.<sup>41</sup> The 400 militiamen that he commanded in 1887 became 800 the next year, armed with 600 carbines and 200 rifles. Neyret went well beyond the prescriptions formerly set by Paul Bert, by providing all his men with modern rifles. But above all, he took advantage of the provisions that gave the militia an active role in gathering intelligence. In one report he explained that the servicemen in his province did not obtain enough information from the native civil servants because the latter were afraid for their safety and did not feel sufficiently protected by the regular garrisons. However, these civil servants always knew the bandits, and would gladly turn them in if their protection and trust were better insured. For Charles Fourniau, this meant the militia 'protecting the collaborator Mandarin' by allowing him to inform the French authorities. The militia could then intervene immediately, because it was not subject to a hierarchical chain of command, as were the small infantry posts.

Neyret thus became the symbol of the militia's success. The reaction of the army can be guessed. The army asserted that the Resident had kept back the intelligence he had

collected and had hidden it from the military authorities. The arguments increased. Neyret notably accused the Fourth *Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois* (4th RTT), recruited in Hai Duong, of selling their weapons to the rebels. Badly offended, General Begin, the Superior Commander of the troops in 1888, asked for an inquiry. Neyret handed over 35 weapons taken from the pirates for inspection. Only two were recognised as coming from the 4th RTT, one lost in 1886, the year of the regiment's formation, and the other taken from an infantryman killed in combat. Begin took advantage of this to ask for the transfer of the Resident, who according to him was the author of 'obnoxious charges' against the 4th RTT.

It seems an inquiry was quickly undertaken, envisaging the abolition of the regiment. In the Overseas Archives, file R 031 is entitled 'Inquiry into acts of misappropriation of public funds and violence blamed on the 4th RTT in 1888'.<sup>42</sup> But it contains arguments blaming the *Chasseurs Annamites*. It is possible that these details constituted a vast settling of scores, aimed more generally at the regular native troops. It is true that the prospect of abolishing an infantry regiment of 4000 men was tempting when there was a need to cut the budget. Constans, the first Governor General of the Union of Indochina, refuted by telegram the expression used by Begin.<sup>43</sup> Neyret, he argued, had not produced obnoxious charges but had carried out his duty by indicating possible embezzlements. Constans even suggested moving the regiment rather than the Resident. These exchanges between the Governor and the Superior Commander did not improve relations between Resident Neyret and Colonel Pyot, Commandant of the 4th RTT. The affair took such a turn that the General Secretary to the Governor telegraphed on 14 April 1888 to Pyot, on a trip to Saigon, that: 'the relations existing at present between civil and military authorities in Hai Duong province make the attempt at pacification in this province problematic. In the presence of the tension in the relations between the two authorities, I believe success difficult.'

Governor General Constans's recall to France a few days later and his interim replacement by Richaud, *Resident général* in Annam-Tonkin and hence second-highest civilian in the Indochinese Union, partially defused the affair. Constans was a supporter of the protectorate; Richaud was not. This stand brought him closer to the military than his predecessor. 'Any protectorate that does not lead to conquest is a deception', he asserted.<sup>44</sup> But he could not completely repudiate the militias either, whose low cost was their best defence. The criticisms they faced forced Richaud to reform them in July 1888. Henceforth designated the Native Civil Guard (*Garde civile indigène*), they saw their role reaffirmed as 'completely different from that of the army', according to the interim Resident General Parreau, who, on 19 July, submitted the text of an order for the signature of Governor General Richaud.

To the army falls, if need be, the high mission to rush back the attacks from the outside and to suppress rebellions on the inside. Next to and outside of the army, the militia...should be more specifically in charge of ensuring the daily tranquillity of the country with a system of policing that is both preventive and repressive. This police will be preventive in the sense that it will try hard to supply the political authority with all the information that can enlighten it on the state of the country's spirit, and repressive because it should look for and pursue criminals. If the

repression of rebellion is within the competence of the army, the repression of robbery should belong to the Native Civil Guard.<sup>45</sup>

The multiple precautions taken by Parreau to balance the two enemy brothers are clear. But the attempted distinction between robbery and rebellion recalls the attempt by Paul Bert to distinguish the activities of organised bands from those of common criminals. With the common sense of a man in the field and his native irony, Auguste François would have been able to offer the same remark in 1888 that he had made two years earlier: 'For the application of this subtle distinction, there was not much else than a practical method. It was to go first of all to interview the adversary and ask him to enlighten us on his nature.' But this distinction follows the logic in which the civil power rejected the insur-rectionary character of the troubles, seeing only piracy. Acknowledgement of an uprising, by Parreau's admission, would require the intervention of the army to the detriment of the militias. However, there is a point at which the Resident General is not fooled by his own dialectic. One of the first goals he assigns to the militia is to collect intelligence on the state of the country. This would be of little interest if the new Civil Guard was chasing only rustlers.

Moreover, in order to deal with such thieves, an order of 19 July 1888 again established the legal existence of the *Linh Co*. It should be remembered that these mandarin guards, arousing the distrust of the French, had preserved only a theoretical existence. Badly armed and without military training, they were of little value and of doubtful reliability in the war of conquest then taking place under the name of pacification. In fact, it was not this order that re-established them, because despite apparently returning some prestige to the mandarins in the form of their guards, the reform effectively strengthened French control over every native who carried a weapon.

The text by Resident General Parreau also quoted details of the new organisation of the Civil Guard. The grouping into companies and sections foreseen in 1886 was abandoned in favour of posts of varying importance but 'always under the authority of a European'. The institution of the militia, created in the past to establish tighter bonds with native civil servants, passed completely under direct French administration as a result of the abolition of the former sections devoid of European officers as imagined by Paul Bert. The European structure was reformed too. The French hierarchy freed itself from military titles, such as second lieutenant or lieutenant. It now combined numerous ranks, several classes of Main Guards (*Gardes Principaux*) and Inspectors. Finally, this new, total subjugation of the native force to the conqueror was marked by a provision that, in the event of war or rebellion, all or part of the Civil Guard would take orders from the military authorities. Naturally, at that moment, rebellion did not exist in Tonkin, just a little piracy.

Richaud's reform pursued several objectives: bringing to an end the criticisms of the militia without depriving the civil administration of its means of action; not annoying the military; and making pacification more effective without increasing the cost. In fact, thanks to an improvement in relations with the military, and under the pretence that it was only dealing with robbery and providing protection to native civil servants, the Civil Guard became—the more so since the reform of 1888—a real troop that worked for pacification in the same way as the infantry, by occupying posts and criss-crossing the country. It owed its existence to its minimal cost. On 13 December 1889, it already

numbered 6450 men in Tonkin.<sup>46</sup> In July 1890, the 4th RTT was dissolved. This unit, an exception among the four infantry regiments, was not part of the Navy's troops but depended on the Ministry of War, which could no longer sustain it due to lack of funds. Some of its men passed to the Civil Guard with weapons, equipment and ammunition. One year later, in September 1891, the Civil Guard reached about 8800 men.

The transfer of men to the Civil Guard confirms that the soldiers in these two organisations were being used for the same mission. Other transfers, including transfers in the opposite direction, would follow throughout the colonial period. As has been seen, the changing of uniforms was reduced to a minimum. The *salacco* ribbon and linen belt, red for the infantrymen, became blue for the Guards.<sup>47</sup> The two principal occupations, the post and the column, were identical. Certainly the conditions of operation differed between the infantrymen and the militiamen. In the case of the first, integration into the military system was strong and the autonomy of detachment leaders was weak: they acted in cooperation with other, sometimes European, troops, and the hierarchy, promotion, tactics, instructions, daily timetable, provisioning and administration were strictly codified. In the second, the autonomy of the resident or the inspector in determining the operations of the detachment was greater, European supervision was much reduced and the constraints of the regulations were less finicky. But the variety of tasks for the militiamen—which could include those of the lowly police—sometimes reduced the effectiveness of the militiamen as combatants.

The bitterness of the conflict between supporters and opponents of the militia had part of its origin in the traditional rivalry between civilians and the military: but it also arose from the fact that militiamen and infantrymen performed essentially the same job in different conditions, which required both to justify their practices. Thus Albert de Pouvourville, a former officer and legionnaire turned militia Inspector, constantly reminded his readers of his magnificent adventure in commanding a troop created out of nothing, as a European isolated in the middle of a hundred militiamen. Here is the portrait he draws of the Inspector of the Civil Guard:

It is to him alone that the blame for failure or the praise for success should be attributed. It is he alone who, with the strange maps drawn up by the Annamites, calculates his path and its stages. It is he, alone, who is going to agree with the Mandarins on the help with which they can supply him and on the guides they can give him. It is he, alone, who takes care of the composition, the assembly, the payment and the food of the detachment that he leads. It is he, alone, who leads it outside, who finds the favourable path, who places outposts, who smells and thwarts danger. But what pride does he not feel, when on horseback and without a minute of rest, taking care of everything, he goes forth at a trot, followed by a devoted and sometimes enthusiastic troop.<sup>48</sup>

Still, it is important to note that Pouvourville, fine connoisseur and admirer of Vietnam, whose language he spoke fluently, possessed the ability to take advantage of the flexibility of the militia's structures. Yet the army emphasised that the European Civil Guard personnel were few in number, which would make it more fragile under fire. If its only leader was killed, a militia detachment frequently scattered. The lack of army

training for the Guards and their officers was also a serious weakness, as it prevented them from being used to full capacity in combined operations, such as in combination with artillery. Finally, the pretentiousness of certain residents who wanted 'to play war', often with disastrous results, was also deplored by the servicemen.

Alongside these criticisms, but sometimes laced with jealousy, developed debates that would last several years, gladly amplified by the French press in the colony. According to the civilians, the indigenous infantryman might lose all value because he was subjugated to the military. Discipline and drill would make him lose his native qualities, which only the more flexible framework of the militia would allow to be exploited. For the military, the militiaman was poorly supervised, poorly trained and afraid of serious fighting, and misled his leaders in order not to risk battle. But, said the civilians, the infantryman lacked respect for the native authorities. On the contrary, it was retorted, it was the militiaman who slyly abused his privileged position as intermediary between his fellow countrymen and French authority. Finally, charges of drunkenness and brutality were levelled at both sides.

The strange thing was that the militiamen, like their officers, were almost all former servicemen. Pouvoirville, an active participant in this verbal jousting, recognised, none the less, that the Civil Guard, of which he was the herald, owed its value to an order of 1890 that offered officers and non-commissioned officers in the army attractive conditions of service in the militias, foreseeing the recruitment of Guards and officers among former infantrymen. Not only did Guards and infantrymen carry out the same missions, but it was often the same men serving successively with both bodies, a fact that did not prevent Civil Guards and infantrymen from strongly provoking each other when they met, far from their leaders, whose causes and prejudices they had adopted.

Did pacification gain in efficiency due to this reform that confirmed the militia in its role as regular troops? Nothing indicates that this was the case. Richaud, while hostile to the principle of the protectorate, was resolved to use again the services of the Mandarin, Hoang Cao Khai. In February and March 1889, a column of 400 partisans and 500 Civil Guards returned to pacification, employing the same methods as in Bai Say province during the time of Paul Bert. Innovation lay in the fact that action more political than military was beginning to be considered. Of course, the fighting, the destruction and the executions continued. But the objective was to obtain the submission of the gang leaders, sometimes achieved with a certain ostentation. In July 1889, Hoang Cao Khai led a new column with even greater numbers into the province of Hai Duong. But Superior Resident Brière had made it clear that it was important to avoid giving the impression this was a military operation, although there were no fewer than 800 militiamen. Actually, the rebel leader, Doc Tich, submitted without a fight after being surrounded in his last refuge. Real progress in pacification was achieved by a mandarin, combining the operations of the armed forces and the implementation of an effective policy. It was up to a new Governor General to develop the political initiatives, and to remedy, at least partially, the sterile confrontation between servicemen and civilians.

When Jean-Louis de Lanessan became Governor General in June 1891, the situation was entering a critical stage. During the dry season of 1890–1, the rebellion reached its peak. The Tonkin Delta was again in turmoil, some leaders had returned to the jungle and Hoang Cao Khai had returned again to Bai Say to restore order. The new Governor General thought for a long time about the problems he was charged with resolving. He



had more extensive powers than his predecessors. The decree that appointed him on 21 April 1891 stated that he would be superior commander of the troops under his direct orders, and that he alone had the right to correspond with the metropolitan government. All military reports would go through him. It was not that he felt that the solution must be essentially a military one. On the contrary, Lanessan decided to lean above all on the monarchy and on its scholars, breaking with the practice dominant since the beginning of the conquest. The priority was thus for political action, and in July 1891 Lanessan obtained a solemn proclamation from King Thanh Thai (reigned 1889–1907), which proved to be effective in changing the state of mind of the population and of the mandarins. But a state of mind is volatile if not supported by real security, which is why Lanessan began to reform the Tonkinese military apparatus.

In accordance with his convictions, which were to make the mandarins the key to success, Lanessan examined the forces that they possessed, the *Linh Co*. These escorts for local mandarins, it will be remembered, had not completely disappeared. They numbered around 3000 in Tonkin at this time, 'but their existence was temporary and precarious', remarks Charles Fourniau.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the focus of every suspicion as long as the French prejudice against the 'caste of the Mandarins' remained intact, they had never had a well defined role, either in the strategies for pacification or in the various conflicts of interest. Obviously not very military, they barely interested the army. In principle independent of French authority, they did not interest the residents. Faced with gangs armed with rapid-firing rifles, this handful of villagers did not much matter. Lanessan chose, nevertheless, on 11 September 1891 to re-establish them rather than abolish them. The simplest reason is given by Hoang Cao Khai's circular to all his subordinates: 'Now, there are *Linh Co* everywhere which are at your disposal. You can no longer say that there is no armed force or that it arrives too late. You will have no more excuses.'<sup>50</sup> As this warning was accompanied by threats of penalties should violent incidents reoccur, and as the reputation of the *kinh luoc* since his expeditions was sky-high, the mandarins could no longer play a waiting game.<sup>51</sup> They had to participate actively on the French side. Henceforth, pacification was no longer confined to the immediate vicinity of a post or a residence: it came right into the village. What, then, would be the role of the enemy brothers, the Civil Guards and the infantrymen?

Lanessan could not fail to notice the fracture between the civil and military authorities. Rather than try to reduce it with a new, shaky compromise, he chose to institutionalise it by giving it a geographical dimension. Already in 1886, Paul Bert had established a distinction between border regions and the delta of the Red River. But by creating 'military territories' (*Territories Militaries*) in the High Region in August 1891, Lanessan went much further. He distributed fiefdoms to the military and the civilians. The 'military territories', over which the military had full authority, civil and military, allowed officers to keep their troops in the political domain, thanks to a police force, the *Linh Co*, and an auxiliary force of intelligence, the partisans (armed villagers). In civilian territory, the residents could also count on the collaboration of the native authorities and their *Linh Co*, as well as on the self-defence militias sometimes established in the most threatened or most devoted villages. But especially in the delta, the Civil Guard was freed of its competitor in uniform, the infantryman, while the army found no more militia in its military territories.

The armed participation of the natives in pacification was identical in both cases: at the base were civilians, villagers and partisans who had more of an intelligence role than a combat one, even if they could be armed to defend their village or pursue isolated rebels; at a higher level were the *Linh Co*, agents of the mandarins who ensured the covering of the country and were the common police; finally, at the top were the fighters, the militiamen or infantrymen, who acted under the direct authority of the French civil residents in the delta and military leaders in the mountainous regions, and who constituted a mobile reserve. Geographical separation prevented conflicts of power, but it boiled down to allowing servicemen to dash into politics and civilians to fight wars. Lanessan did not say this as clearly. But he could not define the mission of the militia either as police action, because he had already given that mission to the *Linh Co*, or as an act of war, for that would be constitutionally insecure and would reignite the military's ire. That is why Lanessan invented the formula '*Gendarmerie de grosse police*'.<sup>52</sup>

His wise judgement—allocating parts of Tonkin to each of the enemy brothers, the militia and the army—gave satisfaction to many. It provided yet more confirmation of the very similar roles occupied by infantrymen and militiamen: 4032 of the latter were immediately sent to infantry regiments. They were mainly personnel already stationed in the four newly created military territories, and they represented almost half of the strength of the Civil Guard, since 4761 men remained in the delta. Certainly, recriminations continued. Pouvourville denounced the bullying of which some of these former militiamen were victims. Even the existence of the military territories remained for a long time a knife in the back for many civilians. Certain rebel bands would take advantage of the differences in policy to try to establish themselves along the borders between civilian and military territory. But overall the results of Lanessan's reform were rather convincing. Insurrection declined quite quickly in the delta, where the dense network of loyal villages allowed for effective coverage. The large areas, the difficulties of communication in the military territories and the variable permeability of the Chinese border made matters more delicate in the High Region. But it was a challenge that officers such as Pennequin, Gallieni and Lyautey, who became famous in the 1890s, were able to meet. Pacification was declared over in 1897 by the new Governor General, Paul Doumer.

### Conclusion

Independent of its contribution to the pacification of Indochina—which lies beyond the scope of this chapter—Lanessan's actions served above all to bring to an end an absurd system of native recruitment that had been current for several years. In the procrastination over the 'Annamite National Army', between 1886 and 1890, France recruited armed natives for a single, identical purpose in Annam and Tonkin, but under four different names or statutes. There were militiamen, paid for by the protectorate; Tonkinois infantrymen of the first three regiments, financed by the Navy, while infantrymen of the fourth regiment were paid by the Ministry of War; and the *Chasseurs Annamites*, paid for out of Annam's royal treasury. After Lanessan, there were just two categories, whose fields of action were clearly separated. Finally, the armed native at the service of France was no longer a source of conflict among Frenchmen.

These basic structures would stay in place, including the Governor General's supremacy over the highest military leader in French Indochina, and despite small modifications, until the Japanese *coup de force* of March 1945.<sup>53</sup>

### Notes

An earlier version of this chapter first appeared under the same title in *South East Asia Research* (2002) 10, 3, pp. 277–308.

- 1 *Tirailleurs* and *Chasseurs* were two categories of light infantry. At the end of the nineteenth century these two terms were commonly used for French native troops. *Tonkinois* were exclusively recruited in the northern part of Vietnam. As the French used the name Annam both for the whole kingdom and separately for its central part, the term Annamite could refer to all Vietnamese, or only to the inhabitants of the Huê region. *Chasseurs Annamites* were recruited in this central region, as opposed to the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Annamites*, the first standing Indochinese unit, which was recruited in Cochinchina only. Saigon, the first part of what would become French Indochina, was taken by French troops in 1859. Two subsequent treaties in 1862 and 1867 granted the surrounding provinces to the French. This southern part of Vietnam was called *Cochinchine* by the French and became a colony under direct rule. In 1863, the kingdom of Cambodia became a French protectorate. A first attempt to seize the northern part of Vietnam, called Tonkin by the French, was repelled in 1873–4. The second attempt succeeded ten years later. Tonkin and the remaining central part of Vietnam (called Annam by the French) became protectorates. In 1893, the kingdom of Luang Prabang and other principalities became a French protectorate, as 'Laos'. It would become the fifth constituent part of the Indochinese Union, which had been set up in 1887.
- 2 This distinction originates in the 1830 revolution, when the legitimate King Charles X was overthrown and replaced by Louis-Philippe d'Orléans.
- 3 The uncle is Napoléon. The nephew, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, was President of the Second Republic from 1848 to 1852, and Emperor from 1852 to 1870. His regime advocated liberalism.
- 4 Soldiers of the colonial infantry (*Infanterie de Marine*) are nicknamed *marsouins*, i.e. 'porpoises'. *Lignards* are from the metropolitan (line) infantry, *Infanterie de Ligne*.
- 5 Officers of the same unit sharing the same table.
- 6 'Motherland at bay' and 'Mass calling' (i.e. mass conscription).
- 7 In 1873, when only Cochinchina and Cambodia were under French rule, Francis Garnier, a young navy officer, was sent to Tonkin with a limited force of 173 men to act as a mediator between the local authorities and a French merchant. Garnier eventually seized Hanoi's citadel, and conquered the Red River Delta in six weeks. Lacking back-up, he was killed in December 1873, and the French withdrew. For an English-language account see Ella S. Laffey, 'French Adventurers and Chinese Bandits in Tonkin: The Garnier Affair in Its Local Context', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6, 1 (1975), pp. 38–51.
- 8 Instructions of 8 June 1883, *Documents diplomatiques français* (1871–1914), 1st series, vol. 5, 1933, p. 53.
- 9 Signed under his reign by Tran Dinh Tuc (*kinh luoc* of Tonkin) and Nguyen Trong Hiep (Foreign Minister), this 'Agreement' was a *diktat*. It handed foreign affairs to France. Administration of central Vietnam (Annam) was left to the Court, but in fact Annam was dismembered, its southern part given to Cochinchina, its northern part (Tonkin) put under direct French administration.
- 10 Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam* (New York: Macmillan, 1968). The Black Flags were remnants of the Chinese Taiping rebels who settled in Tonkin in the 1860s. Unable to chase them away, the Vietnamese hired them for use against the French. Under Luu Vinh

- Phuoc's command, they were the best fighting force in North Vietnam, killing two French commanders: Francis Garnier in December 1873 and Henri Rivière in May 1883. They also served as a pretext for the imperial court in Huê to invoke China's help against the French.
- 11 Court intricacies were byzantine and exploited by the French. Two days before his death, King Tu Due (reigned 1847–83) chose one of his adoptive sons, who became king in July 1883 as Due Due. Three days later he was dismissed by Regent Thuyêt and replaced with another adoptive son, Hiep Hoa. But King Hiep Hoa, afraid of Thuyêt's bellicose attitude towards the French, moved him to the Ministry of the Interior. Thuyêt then overthrew Hiep Hoa, who was compelled to commit suicide in November 1883. A 15-year-old prince was crowned on 2 December as Kien Phuc. At first, France would not recognise him, but its desire to have the Harmand Agreement endorsed led minister plenipotentiary Patenôtre, en route to China, to compromise. See Philippe Devillers, *Français et Annamites* (Paris: Denoël, 1998), pp. 257–73. Kien Phuc died mysteriously in August 1884, leaving Thuyêt and the 13-year-old new king, Ham Nghi, in charge. Thuyêt and Ham Nghi in turn fled from Huê in July 1885, following implication in a rising against French attempts to tighten control (see below) despite the Patenôtre Treaty of 1884 having strengthened Annamite rights, on paper at least.
  - 12 Philippe Devillers, *Français et Annamites*, p. 276.
  - 13 This treaty was an amended version of the 'Harmand Agreement'. Annam regained four provinces given to French administration. French administrators, called *residents*, were given less power in the provinces. Contrary to the Harmand Agreement, this treaty was ratified by Paris, and remained the reference text for Franco-Vietnamese relations until 1945.
  - 14 Chinese troops had occupied the northern, mountainous part of Tonkin, officially to chase the Black Flag 'pirates', in fact pursuing their own goals and fighting with them and the Vietnamese against the French. In May 1884 an agreement was signed with France in Tien Tsin, stipulating evacuation. But French precipitation in occupying border regions led to an armed clash at Bac Lê in June 1884. War broke out, this time officially.
  - 15 Letter of 18 November 1884, Archives du Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT) in Vincennes, carton 10H4, dossier 3.
  - 16 Military Archives, SHAT, 10H4 d3.
  - 17 A. Thomazi, *La Conquête de l'Indochine* (Paris: Payot, 1934), p. 251.
  - 18 Six months earlier Lemaire estimated a total of 30,000. Considering the numerous units and categories of troops and servants in the army, it is likely that these estimates cover different realities. According to a French officer in Huê, the army comprised 'cooks, gardeners, royal craftsmen, palace actors, fishermen, bird hunters, swallow nests finders, palanquin bearers, fan bearers, parasol bearers, throne bearers... musicians, mahouts...' Capitaine Masson, *Souvenirs de l'Annam et du Tonkin* (Paris: Lavauzelle, n.d.), p. 148.
  - 19 Due to the war against China, the expeditionary force in Tonkin had been raised to a full army corps (*corps d'armée*) comprising two divisions of two brigades each in July 1885. Troops were metropolitan, naval, Foreign Legion, North African and Indochinese. The commander in chief disputed the raising of a third division to be engaged in Annam, or the creation of a different organisation based essentially on native troops.
  - 20 Military Archives, SHAT, 10H8 d3.
  - 21 Military Archives, SHAT, 10H8 d2.
  - 22 *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* was adopted by the republic as an official formula. *République des Jules* was the nickname given to the Third Republic in its early years, when a significant part of the political personnel had the same first name: Jules Ferry, prime minister in 1885, or the president, Jules Grévy. Most of the republicans were Freemasons.
  - 23 Devillers, *Français et Annamites*, p. 332.
  - 24 Military Archives, SHAT, 10H8 d2.
  - 25 Devillers, *Français et Annamites*, p. 252.
  - 26 Joseph Chailley, *Paul Bert au Tonkin* (Paris: Charpentier, 1887), p. 21.

- 27 See Tony Catta, *Un royaliste, Roger Lambelin* (Paris: Bossard, 1930), p. 42. Lambelin's opinion of Paul Bert's actions in Tonkin is in fact more balanced than this single quotation suggests.
- 28 As the new Annamite army was not intended to be part of the French Army, recruitment of the military mission was open not only to actual servicemen, but to former officers too.
- 29 Etienne Daufès, *La Garde Indigène de l'Indochine, de sa creation a nos jours*, vol. 1 (Avignon: D.Seguin, 1933), p. ii. The *tram* is the royal messenger service.
- 30 This was clearly an elite troop, being directly commanded by French *Residents* and not provincial mandarins, and given a modern weapon, the *carabine de Gendarmerie* model of 1879.
- 31 A *phu* is an administrative subdivision of a province.
- 32 A *huyèn* is an administrative subdivision of a *phu*.
- 33 A *tong-doc* is the governor of a province.
- 34 Daufès, *La Garde Indigène de l'Indochine*, p. vii.
- 35 Paul Bert in *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, quoted in Charles Meyer, *La vie quotidienne des Français en Indochine* (Paris: Hachette, 1985), p. 173.
- 36 Jules Ferry, *Le Tonkin et la mère patrie* (Paris: Victor Havard, 1890 edn), p. 275.
- 37 Auguste Francois, *Le mandarin blanc: Souvenirs d'un Consul en Extrême-Orient, 1886–1904* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1990), pp. 48–9.
- 38 Paul Bert recruited and promoted many civil servants in Tonkin. They were mostly (not exclusively) chosen from people sharing his political convictions, inspired by the republican leader Léon Gambetta.
- 39 The 'partisans' were poorly armed civilians recruited on a temporary basis by the mandarins. Only effective in hundreds or thousands, they were not expected to fight (hence the militia escort), but were a real threat to rebel villages where they could be garrisoned or unleashed to plunder. The prospect of plundering may have been their main motivation, together with obedience and ambition. Tran Ba Loc, most honoured mandarin in Cochinchina, started his career as a partisan. These part-time 'partisans' are not to be confused with those set up in the military territories in northern Tonkin from 1891—see further below—where villagers were armed to help to defend their villages against pirates and to deliver intelligence to the French.
- 40 Militia were locally based, living at home, not in barracks. The main cost, however, was the pay of the European personnel, and of these the militias had considerably fewer. They had one officer and three NGOs for 120 militiamen. The army had approximately three times more.
- 41 See Charles Fourniau, 'Les contacts franco-vietnamiens de 1885 a 1896 en Annam et au Tonkin' (These de doctorat d'état, Aix-en-Provence, 1983), in particular pp. 1730–3. See also Overseas Archives, AIX A50 (8) and RST CI 26312.
- 42 Aix, Indochine Ancien fonds, carton 271. All quotations are from this file.
- 43 The Union of Indochina was created in October 1887, mainly for budgetary considerations: a common budget was created for the common expenses (chiefly military) of the four territories (later five, with Laos joining in 1893). This was a way to make the richer colony of Cochinchina pay for the more expensive Tonkin, and so relieve France from a substantial part of its contribution.
- 44 Quoted by Nguyễn The Anh, *Monarchic et fait colonial au Viêt-Nam* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), p. 145.
- 45 Quoted by Daufès, *La Garde Indigène de l'Indochine*, p. xii.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
- 47 Typical head-dress of both militiamen and native soldiers, the *salacco* was a round, flat hat made of small strips of bamboo with a copper central piece, see Figure 5.1, page 132. It is not to be confused with the typical, conically shaped headgear of the Vietnamese peasants.
- 48 Albert de Pouvoirville, *Histoire populaire des colonies françaises* (Paris: Vélín d'or, 1932).

49 Fourniau, 'Les contacts franco-vietnamiens', p. 1890.

50 Lanessan report, 15 January 1893, SOM A20 (38).

51 The title *kinh luoc* is generally translated as 'viceroy'.

52 *Gendarmerie* in France means a military corps or civil guard, mainly for police duties in rural regions; *Police nationale*, a civilian organisation, mainly for urban areas. The gendarmes live in barracks. Using the word *Gendarmerie*, Lanessan intended to justify the military organisation of the militias, while the word *police* suggested they still had civilian duties. One interpretation of his use of the term *Gendamerie de grosse police* might thus be 'constabulary for heavy duty police action'.

53 Within this system, slight differences remained between territories: the use of the term *Garde civile* rather than *Garde indigène* in Cochinchina; an indigenous imperial army reduced to ceremonial functions in Annam, in the service of the emperor; military territories in Tonkin and Laos only; and the use of partisans, usually from ethnic minorities, restricted to Tonkin's high or hill regions.

## 6

# The Mixed Company

## Fighting power and ethnic relations in the Dutch Colonial Army, 1890–1920

*Gerke Teitler*

### Introduction

From the outset, the armed forces used by the Dutch in Southeast Asia, although always rather small, were never made up exclusively of Dutchmen. The United East India Company soon found it convenient for both military and financial reasons to strengthen its power with locally recruited soldiers and sailors.<sup>1</sup> Its European forces, moreover, counted a considerable number of foreigners among its members, mostly Germans, coming to the Netherlands from impoverished areas of the German Empire. After the fall of the United East India Company, its successor (first the Dutch Republic, later the Kingdom of the Netherlands) continued these arrangements. The Dutch Colonial Army became, in its European part, a veritable ‘Foreign Legion’. The majority of its indigenous soldiers were recruited from among the Javanese and, in the east and almost at the opposite end of the vast archipelago of the Indies, from the Ambonese of the Moluccas (the Spice Islands).

In the course of the nineteenth century this recruiting pattern was plagued by several problems. First, it became increasingly difficult to keep the Dutch core among the European soldiers at the desired strength. Second, the same problem arose regarding the desired ratio between the European and the politically and militarily less trusted and valued indigenous soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Several solutions were tried to solve these troubles, the majority focusing on how to attract more recruits from European countries. By the end of the nineteenth century the outcome of these efforts turned out to be rather disappointing.

Consequently, the attention of the Colonial Army was diverted towards doing things better with the manpower at hand. The *mixed company* was one of the results of this reorientation. In the end, the outcome of this experiment was another disappointment. Still, the arguments both for and against the company deserve to be taken note of. They shed light on an interesting episode in the development of the Dutch Colonial Army. They are, moreover, invaluable in helping to highlight the similarities and differences between the Dutch colonial forces and the military arrangements of other colonial powers, in both Africa and Asia.

*Table 6.1 Soldiers of the Dutch colonial army by origin*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Infantry</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Artillery</i>	<i>Engineers</i>	<i>Marechaussee</i>
<i>European soldiers of the Dutch colonial army (officers excluded)</i>					
1861	9,792	595	1,653	304	
1871	8,204	387	1,759	339	
1881	10,909	382	1,996	575	
1891	9,578	447	1,831	450	14
1901	9,394	422	1,714	515	75
1911	6,573	560	1,504	568	73
1918	4,401	549	1,544	463	101
<i>Ambonese soldiers</i>					
1861	1,137				
1871	733				
1881	1,260	3			
1891	2,132	3			67
1901	3,146				657
1911	4,819				587
1918	9,206		221		776
<i>Other Indonesian soldiers</i>					
1861	12,675	9	1,100	661	
1871	11,894	8	1,109	318	
1881	12,302	475	1,166	225	
1891	14,189	419	1,163	200	136
1901	16,880	415	1,230	292	587
1911	13,789	387	1,037	391	586
1918	17,942	492	1,898	476	756

In 1900 there were approximately 37 million people in the East Indies, of them 29 million on Java and Madura. At the same time, there were around 80,000 Europeans and 550,000 Chinese.

*Source:* *Koloniale Verslagen* (Colonial Reports), published yearly by the Dutch government.



### The general background

In the Dutch East Indies the army occupied a pariah-like position. At the end of the nineteenth century the colony had evolved into a commercially minded society, dominated by businessmen and civil servants. In the Netherlands the army was traditionally held in low esteem, but in the East Indies this was the case to an even greater extent. The squalid circumstances surrounding barrack life made volunteering for the Colonial Army a step taken only by very adventurous or desperate men. Not surprisingly, in the Dutch language the expression *colonial soldier* long held a negative connotation.<sup>3</sup> Even if the officers could escape this stereotype they still had social problems. The Colonial Army, constantly fighting somewhere in the archipelago, was always in a state of mild confusion and its officers seldom stayed in the populous towns for long. The Colonial Army was small and had no reserve. Consequently, any vacancy had to be filled by thinning the ranks elsewhere. Because of these factors, most of the officers found it hard to honour their status obligations.

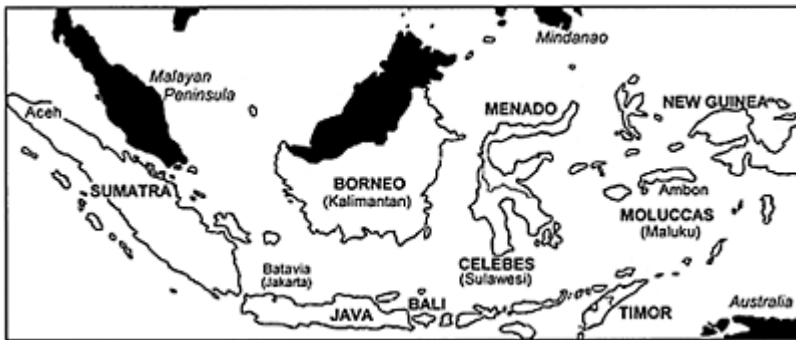
*Table 6.2 European soldiers of the Dutch colonial army by origin*

	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1918
<i>Officers</i>							
Dutchmen	998	1,087	1,201	1,025	872	805	848
Dutchmen born in East Indies and Eurasians	126	136	157	308	446	503	483
Belgians			2		2	2	2
Germans	90	50	2		3		
Frenchmen			1	1			
Swiss		5	2		3		
Luxembourgers		2			1	1	2
Other	5	2	34	13	10	13	15
<i>Non-commissioned officers and soldiers</i>							
Dutchmen	6,825	8,227	6,656	8,449	9,143	7,418	5,892
Dutchmen born in East Indies and Eurasians	686	977	1,154	1,582	1,755	1,866	1,864
Belgians	1,134	357	3,080	1,134	1,216	383	81
Germans	1,349	1,105	1,874	1,943	1,318	947	550
Frenchmen	?	79	1,484	119	2	3	1
Swiss	2,213	1,397	702	316	179	81	25
Luxembourgers	?	14	?	195	93	35	15
Other	378	111	449	117	56	45	20

*Source: Koloniale Verslagen (Colonial Reports), published yearly by the Dutch government.*

The Colonial Army accepted only long-term volunteers (for a minimum of six years). Of course, it tried to keep the Dutch element dominant. This aim clearly conflicted, however, with the desire not to let the ratio of European to Indonesian soldiers deteriorate. When problems arose in realising this goal the Colonial Army readily resorted to accepting recruits from other European countries. Preferably these had to come from Germany, the Flemish part of Belgium or Scandinavia. Remarkably, few complaints were heard about preferential treatment for the Dutch. The Colonial Army seemed in general to have been rather strict in letting only military abilities count in granting promotions and other rewards. It only insisted that every ex-officer and every ex-non-commissioned officer started his career in the East Indies as a private again. After that they were not hampered when trying to climb the Army ladder, quite often reaching the highest rungs.

The Indonesian soldiers were generally divided into two categories. The smaller of these comprised Ambonese, Menadonese and a few Alfurian and Timorese soldiers (together often termed *Ambonese*, even though Timor, Ambon and Menado—today's northern Sulawesi—were separated by hundreds of kilometres from each other). The members of these alleged *warrior races* occupied a privileged position in the Colonial Army, their loyalty to the Dutch being counted on as a matter of course. Many of the Ambonese were Christians with Calvinistic leanings who came to consider themselves an elite when the Dutch recruited among



*Map 6.1* The Netherlands East Indies (NEI). In 1824 the NEI comprised the core area of Java, the 'Spice Islands' (the Moluccas), a few other small islands and enclaves around main coastal ports on the outer islands. The NEI secured the remaining inland portions of the unshaded areas by treaty and conquest, mainly during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Campaigns continued in several  
areas—notably Aceh—into the first  
decade of the twentieth century.

*Source:* Karl Hack.

them increasingly heavily from the late nineteenth century. In fact, the Dutch imbued them with a sense of military prowess, which led to the formation of a special relationship between the Ambonese and their colonial masters, as evident in military service across several generations. The mass of the Indonesian soldiers, however, came from Java. Compared with the Ambonese, they were thought to make inferior soldiers. The Ambonese considered it an honour to become a soldier. For the Javanese, negative motives such as escape from extreme poverty often decided their entering the ranks of the Colonial Army.

During the first part of the nineteenth century the Colonial Army was not confronted with grave manpower problems. It was a small organisation, while in Europe and the colony itself there was as yet no shortage of men willing to serve. Whenever a military crisis arose, and extra soldiers were needed, it was usually met by sending from the Netherlands a so-called *Brigade*. This unit was manned by fresh recruits (attracted by extra money) and volunteers serving with the Dutch Army. With expedients like this the Colonial Army managed to cope, at least until the 1870s.

Thereafter, the situation changed dramatically, largely as a result of the following factors. The Aceh War, which started in 1873 against the staunchly Islamic and independent polity on the northern tip of Sumatra, led to a manpower crisis. Not able to crush the Acehnese opposition swiftly, the Government decided to blockade the coast and seal off the pacified regions from the areas still held by the enemy. This linear defence made the Colonial Army weak all along the frontier, demoralising the troops and clearly not reducing the number of casualties. Worse still, the war in Aceh did not stop the fighting elsewhere in the archipelago. In this way, the Colonial Army threatened to succumb under the weight of its burdens.

Matters were further aggravated by the growing difficulty of finding volunteers in Europe. Before 1870 Germans had already been held in high esteem. They were to rise even higher in Dutch opinion after the Franco-Prussian war, but this very event led to troubles for the Colonial Army. With France looking for revenge, the new German empire did not want to lose trained soldiers, destined for its *Landwehr*. Consequently it began to frown upon the Dutch practice of recruiting soldiers on German soil.

An additional aspect of this recruitment crisis was that even the enlisting of Ambonese met with difficulties now. So eager were the inhabitants of these parts of the archipelago to enlist that civil servants began to complain about a shortage of able-bodied young men and agricultural neglect. The Colonial Army was asking for more and more Ambonese soldiers, but the bottom of the barrel was evidently scraped to meet the requirements.

To make matters worse, in the Netherlands the volunteer market began to shrink. Public opinion was turning away from the volunteer principle and it was out of question to send conscripts to the East Indies. Officers of the Dutch Army were not hampered by this restriction. Many of them were willing to join the Colonial Army temporarily, certainly in times of crisis when this meant action and promotion. Colonial officers,

however, successfully fought the more radical plan to fuse the two officer corps. They feared that their careers would be hampered by this scheme, suspecting their Dutch colleagues of taking advantage of their ties to Dutch political circles and to the War College in The Hague. When this fusion came to nothing, voices were raised in favour of reviving the *brigade-system* of the early nineteenth century. These brigades were to be manned by officers and volunteers of the Dutch Army. Again Colonial officers rejected the plan. Desperately looking for reinforcements, they nevertheless feared that these brigades—to be garrisoned and trained in the Netherlands but paid for by the East Indies—were a cheap way of strengthening not the Colonial but the Dutch Army.

A further attempt to solve the manpower crisis, by creating an army reserve on Java, also met with little success. Plans for such a reserve dated from the beginning of the nineteenth century, but only after 1900 were steps taken to put these into effect. The results were disappointing. The reserve was only meant for Indonesian soldiers, but no more than a few hundred veterans promised to keep themselves at its disposal. A more ambitious project for a reserve of *peasant soldiers* also came to nothing. According to this plan, deserving veterans (Europeans as well as Indonesians) would be granted farmlands in border regions in return for police duties and for sending their sons to the Colonial Army. By bringing schools and hospitals, roads and bridges to these regions the veterans would also transform them into outposts of civilisation.

These plans were never given serious attention, but the Colonial Army did profit, albeit on a very small scale, from a *Pupil Corps*. This was an orphanage where soldiers' children (mostly Eurasians) would be cared for and taught a military or non-military craft. Frustrated by the net results of all these projects, attempts were finally made to improve the performance of the Javanese soldiers, who belonged to the dominant ethnic group in the East Indies and hence offered the greatest manpower pool. One of these projects aimed at sending young aristocrats to the Netherlands to attend the Royal Military Academy. It was hoped in this way to kill two birds with one stone: first, to bind the Javanese nobility more closely to the Dutch; second, to raise the prestige of the common soldier in Javanese society. Another attempt to improve military performance led to the 'mixed company'.

### Fighting power

The skewed relations among the Dutch, other Europeans, Ambonese and Javanese soldiers posed a political problem. The first three categories formed a minority, but were considered trustworthy. The Colonial Army simply could not accept their declining contribution to its overall strength. Yet the mixed company did not grow out of any political concern. What gave rise to its inception were mounting worries as to the fighting power of the Colonial Army.<sup>4</sup> This organisation was seeing action all over the archipelago. Hardly any reserve was left on Java to cope with surprises and setbacks.

Even more troublesome were the following two circumstances. First, the Colonial Army's campaigns, whether great or small, placed a disproportionate burden on the shoulders of the Dutch and other Europeans. They were always in the forefront of the fighting, the first to storm enemy strong points, the last to leave a battlefield if an enemy proved too strong, always to be counted on to force a decision. In all the formations sent

out from Java to pacify the outer islands, these two groups constituted a minority. Yet the number of killed and wounded among these two groups was much higher than among the Ambonese and Javanese soldiers. Their fighting power was indispensable, but dissipated wherever the Colonial Army went. Against the background of ever growing recruiting problems this situation was hardly acceptable.

This manpower crisis was further aggravated by another worrisome development, as increased recruitment was necessary not only for internal conquest and policing reasons, but also for imperial defence. During the nineteenth century few policy-makers in the Netherlands and the East Indies reckoned with an external enemy, bent on conquering any major part of the archipelago. The British, after returning the colony to the Dutch after the Napoleonic wars (in 1816), were considered to be rivals, not enemies. Moreover, the British were counted on to help the Dutch against other countries that might covet the East Indies. Better a small and inoffensive neighbour between Singapore and Australia than a strong, aggressive one. At least, it was along this line that the Dutch hoped that the British would reason strategically.<sup>5</sup>

Two developments were to shatter the confidence of the Dutch: first, the rise of Japan as a first rate military and naval power in the Pacific, notably with the resounding victory over Russia in 1905, the first time in modern warfare that an Asian power had prevailed over a Western great power; second, the rise of Germany as a country evidently bent on challenging the British empire at sea. One of Britain's reactions to this menace was the concentration of ever more capital ships in the North Sea. This move forced the British to denude some peripheral naval stations of part of their major forces. It was in this light that the Dutch viewed the British-Japanese alliance of 1902. Might not Britain, by giving priority to the threat emanating from Germany, hand over to the Japanese its overlordship in the Far East? If this assumption was correct, then the British—instead of protecting the East Indies from external aggression—might well open their doors to the Japanese, as an inevitable price to be paid for the assistance they gave to the British efforts to contain the Germans.

To the Dutch, the rise of Japan was in itself worrisome enough. The suspicion of a British-Japanese understanding at their expense heightened their concern. For the first time in almost a century they had to face the prospect of an external attack on their Southeast Asian possessions. The Colonial Army now had to solve at least three problems. First, its hands were tied by the wars of conquest and pacification against rebellious native peoples. Second, this took a heavy toll from among the very soldiers—the Europeans—the Dutch most needed against a Western-style enemy like the Japanese. Third, in case of a war with this northern empire it was most unlikely for the Dutch to be able to keep open their sea lines of communication with the mother country. This meant that high quality reinforcements for the Colonial Army would fail to arrive and that an ever-growing military burden would fall on the indigenous soldiers. Notwithstanding the loyalty and military virtues of the Ambonese, it was feared that this part of the Colonial Army would soon succumb under this weight. In the long run these three factors would cost the Army the war against Japan.

Across this darkening sky a small ray of hope was sent by the concept of the mixed company.<sup>6</sup> Until then the European and indigenous soldiers were concentrated in separate units. While the Dutch were distributed among the other Europeans, the Ambonese, in contrast, were kept apart from the Javanese soldiers, thus giving rise to a tripartite

structure. By mixing these three entities it was hoped to kill at least two birds with one stone. On the one hand, it was hoped in this way to spread during the wars the casualty rate more evenly over the different races. On the other hand, it was hoped to boost the fighting power of the Javanese—numerically dominant—by letting them profit from the examples set by their European and Ambonese colleagues. By raising in this way the overall quality of the Army it would be possible, moreover, to counter any future invasion of Japanese troops.<sup>7</sup>

Advocates of the mixed company pointed out that, as things stood, this unit would come about anyway. In a confrontation with an external enemy, the losses among the European soldiers would simply force the army to adopt the mixed company soon after the fighting had started. Such a reorganisation, however, in the middle of a war was a recipe for chaos. Much better was to face the inevitable and introduce the mixed company now that there was still time to let the Colonial Army familiarise itself with the concept. Besides, it was not a complete novelty. In the past, a few experiments had already taken place, their outcomes being not unpromising. Most recently, the fighting in Aceh had witnessed the introduction of mixed brigades (units of about fifteen men) and even companies of the *Marechaussee*, an elite counter-guerrilla formation. On the whole, these units had performed remarkably well. Perhaps the *Marechaussee* formula pointed the way to the introduction of the mixed company in the rest of the Colonial Army.

To appreciate the importance of this formula, it is necessary to see that it formed part of an intellectual reorientation of the Dutch and Colonial Armies that had already led to important practical reforms.<sup>8</sup> The starting point of this reorientation can be placed in the wars of German reunification (1864–70). It was, however, not before the end of the nineteenth century that it really gained momentum. Two wars were instrumental in bringing about this change.

First were the Boer wars of 1899–1902 in South Africa, in which the Dutch were emotionally involved and to which the military responded by sending several observers to the theatre of operation. The other war that quickened the pace of the discussions was fought by the Dutch themselves, in Aceh. The observers in South Africa noted that by the skilful use of modern rifles the defence could add enormously to its strength. With relatively few troops it could hope to hold an extremely broad front against an attacker. They concluded moreover that the morale of the soldiers had become more important than before. Comparing the Boer War with the Franco-Prussian War, they found that attacking troops lost fewer soldiers. Nevertheless, these troops were brought to a standstill quite easily. To account for this phenomenon the observers pointed to the *desert-like* features of the modern battlefield, where soldiers had learned to conceal themselves. This empty battlefield had a paralysing effect on soldiers trained along orthodox lines, confusing them to such a degree that, on the slightest pretext and with only a few casualties, they often stopped their advance.

In order to solve this problem, the observers proposed radically new training methods. Under the circumstances now reigning on the battlefield, officers and non-commissioned officers were likely to suffer heavy casualties and to lose control over their soldiers. In the opinion of the observers, the most obvious counter-measure entailed just this effect. Attacking troops could best defend themselves against the accurate shooting of their opponents by spreading out and loosening their ranks. They should learn to make use of

whatever shelter they could find and attack not in one long advance, but in many small rushes in which groups of



*Figure 6.1 Marechaussee, or lightly armed, mobile levees, as used to pacify guerrilla warfare in Aceh from the 1890s by van Heutsz. They were organised in 'brigades' of about 15–18 men, each with two sergeants (one 'native' and one European) and a European officer. Notice their short sabres (*klewangs*). This counter-guerrilla elite was vital for fighting in Aceh's *alang-alang* (long grass), where they advanced with *klewang* in the right hand, short rifle (carbine) in the left. They were thus different from the mainstream, heavily armed colonial army, whose units also had a more even mix of local and European troops. This group wear old-style 'police' helmets, later replaced with softer hats.*

Source: KITLV Photograph KB 552. Information from Jaap Anten.

soldiers could cover each other. This approach forced soldiers, even when their leaders stayed alive, to look after themselves. It was felt that only soldiers who had learned to do this in peacetime could be expected to fight effectively. Consequently, training methods should aim at producing soldiers capable of independent action. Everything else was superfluous or worse: it trained soldiers for the wrong kind of battle.

These views, at the time rather controversial, were endorsed enthusiastically by the officers serving with the *Marechaussee* in Aceh. This unit had been formed in 1890 both to perform civil-military tasks (guarding bridges and railroads, mapping the many unknown areas there, registering the native population, checking and protecting people visiting markets, disrupting the smuggling of weapons) and to bring the war to the enemy by conducting aggressive patrols far from Dutch-controlled territory. In this jungle fighting, the *Marechaussee* brigades learned to confront the enemy at close quarters, such as when springing ambushes. This in turn meant that firearms declined in importance and that the soldiers came to rely on the *klewang*, a short native sabre. Furthermore, the *Marechaussee* distinguished itself by its mobility and the independence of action practised by its soldiers.

### The facts and the interpretations

While the fighting conditions were different in Aceh from those in South Africa and while different tactics were called for, only soldiers who were capable of independent judgement and action were likely to be successful. Even more importantly, not only the Ambonese, as was to be expected, but also the Javanese performed rather well in these surroundings. As the *Marechaussee* only used mixed units, advocates of this concept were optimistic about its wider usefulness. Still, it was possible to draw radically different conclusions from these experiences, often based on opposite assumptions about the innate or acquired martial abilities of the Javanese. For some, the mixed companies as in the *Marechaussee* would catalyse the usually unmartial Javanese into heroic action; for others, in contrast, all that was required was a *Marechaussee*-like institution—but without mixing—in which the Javanese could indulge in Javanese- rather than European-style warfare.

Those who held on to the first view simply wanted to see the concept introduced now in the rest of the Colonial Army in order to spur the Javanese to greater martial achievement. In their opinion, mixing the Europeans (and Ambonese) with the Javanese soldiers was the only feasible means to end all the problems that troubled this organisation. First, it would lower the European casualty rate during the fighting and hence protect the politically and militarily most valuable part of the Army. Second, it would stimulate the performance of the Javanese soldiers, who were otherwise seen as hopelessly passive.<sup>9</sup> According to this view, the Javanese formed an ethnic community that was almost completely devoid of military qualities. It was only for want of better soldierly material in sufficient quantities that the Dutch had taken to recruiting them. The proponents of the mixed company were not pessimistic, however, about the prospect of



leavening this mass by the heroic examples given by the European (and Ambonese) soldiers.

Against this negative view of the military capacities of the Javanese, some *Marechaussee* experts voiced a different opinion. These officers maintained that the *Marechaussee* formula had proven that these capacities were very much present.<sup>10</sup> Outside of the *Marechaussee*, however, it had not been possible for the Javanese to prove themselves. Instead, they had been forced to wear a European-style uniform (including shoes), to carry a European-style pack, to carry heavy European weapons and to fight in a European way with emphasis on firepower. Serving in the *Marechaussee*, the Javanese soldier had been freed of these trammels. He was allowed here to wear clothes and sandals (or even go barefooted) suited to jungle warfare. He was allowed to place emphasis on jungle tactics, which suited his preference for ambushes and the avoidance of long drawn out firefights. He was allowed here to use native weapons, like the *klewang* and the *keris*, suited to close quarter fighting.

According to this view there was nothing wrong with the military qualities of the Javanese and no proof that they were inherently inferior in this respect to the Ambonese. The key difference was the greater aptitude and willingness of the latter to adapt to a European style of military organisation and fighting. This view placed the blame for the apparently wanting fighting power of the Javanese not with these soldiers themselves but squarely with the Dutch military leadership. The Javanese had simply been misused and forced to place themselves on a *Procrustes* bed. The *Marechaussee* had freed them from this inhibiting torture machine and had given free reign to their dormant military talents. The question now was how best to harness these to the Dutch cause.

According to these experts the answer to this question definitely was not the mixed company, despite the success of the mixed *Marechaussee* in Aceh; instead, the effectiveness of the *Marechaussee* was perceived to reside in the mobility of these anti-guerrilla units and their adoption of 'native' ways of fighting. The concept of the mobile company hence made the fatal mistake of once again forcing the Javanese to follow the lead of European soldiers and their way of fighting. This was a sure recipe for stifling their talents. The solution had to be sought in the opposite direction: keeping the Javanese soldiers as far as possible from their European colleagues. To the experts this meant in effect splitting the Colonial Army into two parts: the European soldiers and some of the Ambonese should be concentrated in one part, and the Javanese in the other. The organisation, uniforms, packs, weapons and way of fighting of these two parts would have to be different. Closely linked to these steps were the military scenarios in which these formations should play their part. The Europeans and Ambonese soldiers were to be organised in battalions and divisions, and to concentrate on the regular battles in which it was hoped to defeat an external enemy. The Javanese soldiers and part of the Ambonese, on the other hand, were to be organised strictly along *Marechaussee* lines and to concentrate on two tasks.

The first of these was to serve on expeditions within the East Indies against internal enemies. The second was to lead guerrilla-style war against any external foe. This latter implied two missions. One was to harass enemy units that had not yet been dealt with by the European part of the Colonial Army. In this case the Javanese soldiers would simply be assisting their European colleagues, who were still felt to have the most important role in the war. The other task was to wage a full-scale guerrilla war in case the European

soldiers had been defeated by the invader. In this scenario, the Javanese took the front stage, being the last hope of the Dutch to retain their colony. It was after all unlikely that reinforcements sent by sea from the Netherlands would ever safely arrive in the East Indies.

Not surprisingly, the advocates of the mixed company were quick to point out the grave political implications of these proposals. In one stroke these plans placed the Javanese soldiers in a central military and political position. From a Dutch point of view this meant playing with fire. The loyalty of the Ambonese soldiers was simply counted on. As to the Javanese, opinions differed, but few Dutchmen were inclined to give them even the benefit of the doubt.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the military merits of the idea to split the Colonial Army (and the scenarios for which it should prepare) in two, its political aspects were not sufficiently thought through. And in a colonial setting these aspects mattered most. To disregard them seemed to testify to naivety.

Stung by this criticism, the advocates of the mixed company pointed out that there was nothing wrong with their political views. They were not looking forward, just looking ahead to a future in which the Dutch inevitably would have to place more trust in the native population. The military realm could not be excluded from this change, provided it was introduced gradually. Still, the proposal was thereafter put forward with less radical implications and with slightly different arguments. Its starting point again was a more positive assessment of the military qualities of the Javanese. To tap these the suggestion was now to keep the European soldiers apart, but mix the Ambonese and Javanese.<sup>12</sup>

In this compromise solution no trust was placed in the force of heroic examples. What hampered the Javanese in fulfilling their military qualities was now purported to be the discrimination they encountered in the Colonial Army. Any Ambonese recruit, no matter his individual capacities, was welcomed as if all the supposed martial virtues of his people were concentrated in his person. No Javanese soldier could ever hope to receive the privileges his Ambonese colleagues were offered. Under these circumstances it was only natural that his responses to the Colonial Army were mainly of a negative kind. Remove the discriminating regulations—was the advice—and the Javanese soldier would respond in kind. Inducements such as privileges, promotions, decorations and extra pay should henceforward be distributed to the really deserving soldier, not only to the Ambonese. To the best soldiers the rewards, and an open competition to determine who belonged to this category.

Of course, it was feared that the Ambonese reaction to this would be as predictable as that of the Javanese. The advocates of the compromise pointed out, however, that the negative attitude of the Ambonese would probably not last long: the really good soldiers among them had nothing to fear from the change. Besides, any negative influence on the recruitment of the Ambonese would be amply compensated for by the greater numbers of Javanese that would flock to the Army. And as this latter group made up the bulk of the Colonial Army, and the overwhelming majority of the East Indies' manpower pool, it was more important to stimulate their military performance than to keep on pampering the Ambonese.

Another criticism was that mixing soldiers from these two peoples would inevitably lead to disturbances and brawls. Again, the *Marechaussee* experiences were used to point out that these fears were probably unfounded. In its units such incidents were happily seldom heard of. Moreover, by amply and visibly rewarding the deserving soldiers from

both peoples, a new *esprit de corps* would spring up among them, separating this elite from the common soldiers. Finally, it was pointed out that the principle of rewarding merit, not ethnic background, was in line with modern military views. That this principle did not apply to the European soldiers formed an inevitable exception, given the colonial situation in which they served. Still, this exception could be justified on other than political grounds. The Colonial Army, after all, had little to complain of about the military performances of its European soldiers—given of course their training, weapons and tactics.

### **The rise and fall of the mixed company**

The proposed compromise solution—treating all indigenous soldiers along meritocratic lines rather than giving preferential treatment to any particular ethnic group—clearly differed from the initial proposals for the mixed company. First, the European soldiers were left out of the proposal. Second, its views on the qualities of the Javanese as soldiers were much less negative.

Still, the Colonial Army chose to organise mixed companies that included the European soldiers. The alternative proposals were rejected on the paradoxical ground of being both too radical and not radical enough. It was considered too radical to delegate the pacification of the East Indies to native soldiers. The proposals were not radical enough as they did not consider the conscript option. The idea of broadening the recruitment base of the Colonial Army to all peoples in the East Indies was just then drawing attention for at least two reasons. First, it meant the ultimate solution to all manpower problems of the Colonial Army. Second, it was the ultimate proof of Dutch trust in their colonial subjects. An external enemy would probably not be able to make headway against the effects of these two factors. So, as long as the conscript debate raged, alternatives to the mixed company had no chance of implementation. The compromise proposal was rejected, moreover, as it did not address one of the main problems of the Colonial Army. It concentrated on the Javanese soldiers and had nothing to say about the ever-decreasing availability of Europeans.<sup>13</sup>

The mixed company addressed both problems simultaneously. With better use of the European soldiers—that is to say, by spreading them throughout the Colonial Army—better performances might be expected from their Javanese colleagues. This combination of advantages proved irresistible at a time when the Army Command had to admit that no improvement was to be expected in the recruitment of Europeans.<sup>14</sup> It decided to introduce the mixed company, but also borrowed a leaf from the compromise book. Just before the First World War the Colonial Army saw the abolition, at least in principle, of the differences in pay between the Ambonese and Javanese soldiers.<sup>15</sup> Problems of a practical kind, however, delayed the implementation of this decision and six years later not much had changed. To make matters worse, the mixed company had turned out to be not so much a failure as simply an irrelevancy. The main reason for its adoption had not changed. The recruitment of European soldiers still lagged far behind what was needed. On the other hand, with the end of the Aceh war in 1913 the pacification of the archipelago was finally completed. Rural and urban unrest still troubled the Dutch, but large-scale expeditions were now a thing of the past. The mixed company, designed to

make the best of the available European soldiers by lowering their casualty rate and by raising the fighting power of the Javanese soldiers, came too late to be of any practical use. In 1918 it was quietly decided to stop the experiment.

What remained was an attempt to reform the Colonial Army along the lines suggested by the compromise solution.<sup>16</sup> Reacting to signs of unrest and agitation among the native soldiers in the wake of the First World War, an Army commission proposed abolishing all pay differences between the Ambonese and Javanese soldiers.<sup>17</sup> In practice, this meant a considerable raise in pay for the members of the latter category. Still, the European soldiers even now kept their financial distance from their native colleagues. The reason for this difference (as stated by the commission) was that Europeans had to live up to different social standards. Even they, however, lost some of their privileges now. The most important of these was that all non-commissioned officer posts were thrown open to deserving native soldiers, provided they mastered the Dutch language. With too few Europeans available to fill these posts, this arrangement meant that, in a sense, the mixed company lived on. Ambonese and Javanese sergeants were allowed hence-forward to serve in European companies. The lack of Europeans—the problem it had all started with—had finally forced the Colonial Army to try a radical solution. It now not just mixed soldiers belonging to different ethnic and racial groups. It decided to let Europeans obey the commands of native sergeants—provided of course that the latter were able to make themselves heard in Dutch.

### Notes

An earlier version of this chapter first appeared under a different title in *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (2002), pp. 361–74.

1 D.de longh, *Het Krijgswezen onder de V.O.C.* (Den Haag, 1950).

2 Still of value for a general outline is Gerke Teitler, 'Manpower Problems and Manpower Policy of the Dutch Colonial Army', *Acta Politica* (1979) 1, pp. 71–94. See also S.Kalff, 'Uit de Geschiedenis der Werving O.I.Leger', *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* [henceforth *IMT*] 58, 1 (1927), pp. 106–15, 165–70.

3 Gerke Teitler, *The Dutch Colonial Army in Transition: The Militia Debate, 1900–1921* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 1980) and Martin Bossenbroek, *Volk voor Indië: De Werving van Europese Militairen voor de Nederlandse Koloniale Dienst, 1814–1909* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1992).

4 About the following issues an extremely large number of articles was published in several journals appearing in the East Indies. Only a few will be referred to here. S.H.Schutstal van Woudenberg, 'De Formatie onzer Veldartillerie', *IMT* 32, 2 (1901), pp. 685–94.

5 See Gerke Teitler, *Anatomie van de Indische Defensie: Scenario's, Plannen, Beleid, 1892–1920* (Leiden: Van Soeren, 1988).

6 See Schutstal van Woudenberg, 'De Formatie onzer Veldartillerie'.

7 The mixing, however, should not overshoot its mark. The European soldiers were to set a martial example. When being placed in one company together with the Javanese, it would be up to the latter to perform the fatigue duties. On the other hand, in a mixed company more than one-half of the non-commissioned officers would be of native origin. Besides, it would be reasonable now to demand of their European colleagues a working mastery of Malay, the *lingua franca* of the East Indies.

- 8 See for the following Gerke Teitler, 'A "New" and an "Old" Trend. Military Thinking in the Netherlands and the Dutch East around the Turn of the Century', in *The Low Countries History Yearbook* (Den Haag, 1982), pp. 59–77.
- 9 Schutstal van Woudenberg, 'De Formatie onzer Veldartillerie'; 'Gemengde Compagnieën', *IMT* 33, 1 (1902), pp. 87–90; and 'Nog eens de Gemengde Compagnie', *IMT* 33, 1 (1902), pp. 442–4.
- 10 The most active spokesman for this group was F.C.Hering. See his 'Vluchtige Beschouwingen over de Organisatie en Oefening onzer Infanterie', *IMT* 33, 1 (1902), pp. 340–9 and 'Eene Repliek', *IMT* 33, 2 (1902), pp. 7–10. H.Schmidt, 'De Waarde van den Javaan als Veldsoldaat', *IMT* 46, 1 (1915), pp. 534–7; and J.Gratama, 'Beschouwingen over de Middelen ter Verbetering van het Javaansche Element in het Nederlandsch-Indische Leger', *OVBK*(1908–9), pp. 386–479.
- 11 Teitler, *The Dutch Colonial Army in Transition*.
- 12 H.C.Kerkkamp, 'Naar Aanleiding der Debatten over de Gemengde Compagnie in de Indische Krijgskundige Vereeniging', *IMT* 35, 2 (1904), pp. 736–47 and 883–92.
- 13 Teitler, *The Dutch Colonial Army in Transition*.
- 14 A.Geertsema Beckering, 'Zal de Invoering van de Gemengde Compagnie ten Nadeele Komen van de Gevechtswaarde van het Ned.-Indische Leger?', *IMT* 44, 1 (1913), pp. 260–5; G.P.Chariex, 'De Gemengde Compagnie', *IMT* 47, 1 (1916), 426–33.
- 15 See *Het Verslag van de Commissie tot Herziening der Bezoldiging van het Militair Personeel van de Landmacht* (Weltevreden, 1919).
- 16 See the report of the commission mentioned in the previous note.
- 17 Schutstal van Woudenberg, now a major-general, used these disturbances to once more plead for the mixed company. See his note on *den Toestand in en den Geest van het Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger en Zulks in het Bijzonder in Verband met den Politieken Toestand in de Vorstenlanden*, 2 February 1922, Most Secret. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën, 22 June 1922–Z6.

**Part 3**  
**Loyalty and revolt in the era  
of nationalism and war**

## 7

# American exceptionalism in colonial forces?

## The Philippine Scout mutiny of 1924

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At nine o'clock on the evening of 27 June 1924, a soldier of the Philippine Scouts approached the home of the Fort William McKinley Provost Marshal and asked to speak privately with the army post's senior law enforcement officer.<sup>1</sup> 'Badly scared and excited...afraid that he would be killed if it were known that he had spoken to an American', the young enlisted man revealed that many Scouts were meeting in homes outside the post and in barracks on the fort. Paid less than half an American soldier's wage and denied other financial benefits granted to the rest of the army, Filipino troops were planning 'to step out for their rights' if they did not soon receive an acknowledgement of equal status with their American comrades.<sup>2</sup> 'A few tried and proven men' fanned out across the post and adjacent *barrios* (villages) to learn more.

On 6 July, the Provost Marshal broke up a meeting of enlisted men at the post hospital. The following day, a significant portion of two infantry battalions refused orders to drill. Resistance to proper authority remained non-violent but spread to a second regiment the next day. The 'strike', as the soldiers called it, was quickly contained, and the short institutional memory of the American army in the Philippines—a reflection of the officers' brief tours of duty and lack of association with Philippine-based regiments—ensured that the mutiny would soon be forgotten, at least by Americans. But in the four decades between the end of the Philippine-American War, in which the Philippine Scouts had been raised, and the onset of the Second World War, in which the Filipino regiments were destroyed, the 'Scout mutiny' of 1924 proved to be the sole challenge to the normally placid relationship of Filipino enlisted men to American officers. For that brief period only were feelings and attitudes that would otherwise have remained unvoiced and unwritten forced to surface, exposing clearly both American attitudes to the place of indigenous soldiers in the United States' only significant overseas possession and what it meant to Filipinos to serve in the military forces of a colonial regime.

America's 'colonial army' in Asia—the Philippine Scouts—had its origin in the Philippine-American War.<sup>3</sup> That war had begun in February 1899 with the American decision to occupy the Philippines following Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898. By the end of 1899, in what could be called the United States' last 'all-volunteer war', American soldiers had largely defeated the forces of the Philippine Republic. Already, however, the archipelago's difficult terrain, hot and humid weather and endemic

diseases had begun to take a heavy toll on the Americans. In total, disease was to claim about 75 per cent of the 4165 Americans who died in the war.<sup>4</sup>

In June 1899, Matthew Batson, an officer who had been impressed by the achievements of African-American soldiers with whom he had served the previous year in Cuba, recommended arming native collaborators to assist the army's advance through the challenging Candaba swamp region of central Luzon Island (the main northern island in the archipelago, site of the capital city of Manila and centre of the revolution). In September 1899 he received permission to do so, and Batson's small force of Filipino soldiers performed creditably in the subsequent campaign. The Philippine Republic's resort to guerrilla warfare there-after complicated the army's war effort, reduced American enthusiasm for the war and led to greater reliance on indigenous soldiery. By war's end in mid-1902, several thousand Filipino 'military auxiliaries' had been recruited and had performed a wide array of services in support of the US Army. The utility of the original recruits from the town of Macabebe and other collaborators had exceeded expectations, so much so that Major General Henry Lawton would refer to them as the army's 'main reliance and support' in the ever-harsher war against the *insurrectos*. Undoubtedly, their most remarkable achievement was the capture of the Philippine Republic's President Emilio Aguinaldo in a remote area of northern Luzon in early 1901.<sup>5</sup>

Both during and after the war, army officers drew attention to the many and obvious benefits of using Filipino soldiers. One enthusiast not only recommended replacing American troops in the islands entirely with Filipinos but argued that the Scouts should be prepared for overseas occupation duties (such as in Panama) or for expeditionary service to the Asian mainland, as well. If 'when inevitable war causes an expedition to foreign soil [the author meant China], and battle losses are announced', this officer wrote, 'such blood shed be that of Filipinos, the American public will view the enterprise with much less discontent than if each death vacated a place at an American fireside.'<sup>6</sup>

This degree of enthusiasm was unusual. Despite the generally widespread support for their association with America's military effort (at least in the army), their recruitment had always sat uneasily with some officers. The army commander in the Philippines in 1899–1900, Major General Elwell S. Otis, had only reluctantly agreed to Batson's request. Foreign observers had remarked on the army's seeming rejection of the European model of colonial conquest. One English officer publicly chided the Americans for 'bearing the heaviest burden of the fighting with no plans to raise local troops. "Americans do not seem to understand the game [he wrote], which is to use one set of natives against the other".'<sup>7</sup>

The army reorganisation act of 1901 allowed the recruitment of as many as 12,000 'natives' of the Philippines 'to be organised as scouts...for the Regular Army', but the Filipino soldiers' place within the army was never clearly articulated. 'The Scouts are part of the army', chief of staff Major General J. Franklin Bell would state in 1908, 'but they have not the same status as the remainder of the army. They have no definite status.'<sup>8</sup> Any number of examples could be presented to demonstrate the Scouts' muddled relationship to the rest of the army. The army Judge Advocate General once complicated the extension of the Enlisted Reserve Corps (ERC) to the Philippines in the 1920s by ruling that the Scouts were not a part of the regular army. The law stipulated that only persons 'eligible for enlistment in the regular army' could serve in the ERC. Filipinos



could only join the Scouts; the Scouts were not a component of the 'regular' army; thus Filipinos could not enter the ERC, the Judge Advocate reasoned.<sup>9</sup> In 1931, the first Filipino soldier to complete thirty years of active duty was denied a pension on the grounds that the Philippine Scouts were not a part of the regular army, and therefore its members were not eligible to retire and draw pensions.<sup>10</sup> The *Army Register*—the annually published list of active and retired officers of the regular army—noted service in the Philippine Scouts in italics, an indication that such was considered 'federal service other than in the permanent establishment.'<sup>11</sup>

The army's ambivalence towards the use of Filipino soldiers and towards a commitment to American empire in the Pacific was reflected in its refusal to create a distinct officer corps for service in the Philippines. Until after the First World War, it relied on an ad hoc arrangement whereby army enlisted men could apply for temporary commissions as lieutenants in the Philippine Scouts. Contingent on the needs of the army and good conduct, the men could extend their commissions at four-year intervals and could (from 1908) be promoted to the grade of captain, but no further. If they remained in the army long enough to retire, they reverted to a senior non-commissioned officer grade for pension purposes. To ensure proper order and discipline within the Scouts, companies were grouped administratively into battalions under the command of regular army captains. These captains (thirteen in all) were chosen from among those already serving with regular army units in the Philippines and were allowed to carry the local rank of major as long as they remained with the Scouts (usually no more than two to three years). But even with higher rank and emoluments, the army found it difficult to identify officers willing to serve with the Scouts. A commanding general of the Philippine garrison once complained to the War Department that he had run through a list of eligible captains without finding a single one who would volunteer for the duty.<sup>12</sup>

What motivated soldiers to seek Scout commissions? Regrettably, little is known about the original Scout officers. Not one appears to have authored a memoir (published or unpublished) or to have detailed his experiences in articles, letters or some other written record that has found its way into an archival collection. When their regiments' tours of Philippine duty expired, many American enlisted men re-enlisted into regiments arriving or remaining in the islands, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many did so in order to accommodate Filipina wives or girlfriends. A Scout commission could serve the same end. Cohabitation with a Filipina was very common; marriage to a Filipina was uncommon but not unheard of, although it invariably consigned the officer and his family beyond the social margins of the army community. Former Scout officer James Tierney remembered one officer who had a Filipino wife and two children. 'They never', Tierney wrote, 'appeared on post'. Since few women of 'respectable' Filipino families would consort with American soldiers, the soldier and his family had difficulty finding acceptance in Filipino society as well.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, a Philippine Scout commission became a consolation prize for failure to obtain a commission in the regular army. Applicants whose lack of educational attainment, or merely poor timing, prevented them from qualifying for a regular commission sought service with the Scouts. Or they sought service with the Philippine Constabulary, the insular government's national police force, established in July 1901, instead.

The second-class nature of such a commission was obvious to all and a constant source of aggravation. In one incident, a Scout officer insisted that a regular army

enlisted man be court-martialled for having spoken disrespectfully to him. The officer complained that everyone knew 'the white troops' looked down on officers who served with native troops. At least some American regular officers agreed. One wrote that he 'wouldn't want them [American Scout officers] in my outfit'. They had little formal education and were 'jealous' of the regulars 'since their service was limited to the islands'. American Governor-General Francis B. Harrison complained that the Scout officers were 'in a state of continual dissatisfaction' and always politicking to receive regular commissioned status. When the army did regularise their status in the early 1920s, most of the officers quickly sought assignments that would take them back to the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Enlisted men's motivations to serve in the Scouts are even less well documented, at least at the individual level. The original native soldiers recruited by Batson were from the town of Macabebe, in southern Pampanga Province. Macabebe had long provided soldiers to the Spanish and had raised a regiment to fight against Filipinos attempting to throw off Spanish rule in the 1896–8 revolution. Having already taken a stand against Philippine independence, these men simply transferred their allegiance to the United States in 1899.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the army identified disaffected communities in other parts of the archipelago from which to draw recruits. As in many colonial armies, peacetime service tended to attract volunteers 'who saw distinct material advantages' in army service.<sup>16</sup> Military service seems to have become something of a family tradition in the Scouts, as well. According to one officer, many 'applicants for enlistment were frequently disregarded, and, instead, brothers, cousins, and nephews—even sons—of the men already in the ranks appeared to take the examinations for enlistment'. Although the familial extent of recruitment can be exaggerated, Philippine Scout retirement announcements in the Philippine papers in the 1930s (the decade in which Scouts first became eligible for pensions) almost invariably mentioned that the departing soldier left behind a son or two in the regiment.<sup>17</sup>

The First World War brought important organisational changes to the Scouts. For the first decade and a half of its existence, the Scout organisation numbered about 5000 soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Battalions could be found listed in the tables of organisation, but for the most part companies continued to operate independently. Primarily to keep the insular government from getting its hands on the army's Filipino soldiers, the wartime commander of the Philippine garrison had brought the disparate companies and battalions of Scouts together in provisional units of regimental size. The army had not expected to maintain these units after the war, but economic and personnel trends soon led in that direction. The War Department informed the commanding general of the Philippine Department in October 1920 that 'Philippine Scout Combat Troops' would fill a division numbering nearly 10,000 soldiers. Essentially, this division would consist of the provisional Philippine Scout regiments. The American component of the garrison would still be substantial, with nearly 8000 men. Roughly one-half of the American soldiers, however, would be assigned to the coast artillery. The Philippine Scouts now formed the mobile army force in the islands.<sup>19</sup>

Further economic retrenchment in 1922 limited the extent of the Philippine Scout build-up but at the same time gave Filipino troops an even more dominant role in the garrison. Confronted by a congressional mandate to reduce the army's total manpower by nearly 10 per cent, in mid-year the War Department notified its Manila command that the

American contribution to the garrison would be just 4500 men, barely half the commitment projected only 19 months earlier. With slightly over 7000 soldiers, the Scout contingent would also be reduced, but it now comprised an even greater percentage of the total garrison. Before the First World War, the Scouts had composed one-quarter to one-third of total army troop strength in the Philippines; from the early 1920s, Filipino soldiers would make up about two-thirds of the Philippine garrison.

In the space of five years, Filipino soldiers underwent a complete conversion from 'scout' to 'soldier'. In 1917, most Scouts continued to serve in independent companies or battalions. By 1922, the Philippine garrison had come to include Filipino-manned regiments of all arms and most supporting branches, numerically integrated into the line of the regular army. The wartime 1st Philippine Infantry (Provisional) became the 45th Infantry (PS), the 1st Philippine Artillery (Provisional) became the 24th Field Artillery (PS) and so on.<sup>20</sup> When the 9th Cavalry ended its long sojourn at Camp Stotsenburg (a large post 55 miles north of Manila) in 1922, its place was taken by the newly organised Philippine Scout 26th Cavalry Regiment. The Philippine Department created a Scout signal company and an engineer regiment in 1921. An existing medical regiment was stripped of its American enlisted men and filled with Filipino soldiers in August 1922.

The greater use of Filipino manpower was not, however, indicative of army confidence in the capability of Filipino soldiers. Economic concerns drove the reliance on Filipino soldiers. The jobs assigned to them reflected the operational needs of the garrison but not the belief that Filipinos were really capable of performing the assignments. None the less, when prejudice conflicted with operational requirements, the latter usually won out. An American field artillery officer observed that 'up until 1917 the military utility of the Filipino was thought to be limited to that of a light infantryman', but when the dictates of the war required the return of the Philippine garrison's field artillery unit to the United States, the army had no choice but to 'try the Filipino in a new role—that of a pack artilleryman'.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Filipino abilities in operational communications or 'signals' failed to impress army officers. The Philippine Department communications officer found the Scouts' signal corps skills 'unsatisfactory and their ability to perform such duties as they are ultimately fitted for...arrived at only after a long period of service'. Again, the dearth of American soldiers gave Filipino soldiers ingress to this additional branch of military service.<sup>22</sup>

Necessity also forced the inclusion of Filipino troops in the garrison of the all-important Fortified Islands of Manila and Subic Bays. The army had lavished the bulk of military expenditures in the Philippines on the four island fortresses spanning the entrance to Manila Bay and a lone island located at the mouth of Subic Bay, 35 miles to the north. These forts were constructed at great expense from 1908 to 1919, and once completed their very existence shaped (or distorted, some officers would have argued) all subsequent defence planning long after the forts' weapons had become obsolete and their modernisation prevented by treaty restriction. As the centrepiece of the army's defence effort in the archipelago, the harbour fortresses were considered sacrosanct by many, a final redoubt from which both the enemy and Filipinos should be excluded at all costs.

With the reduction in the overall size of the military in 1922, the army acknowledged its inability to man even the harbour defences with Americans. Now, it allocated only 800 coast artillerymen to the Philippines and authorised the recruiting of 1600 Philippine Scouts to take the place of the 4000 American coast artillerymen called for in October

1920. When the 43rd Infantry (PS) was deactivated in September 1922, its members were transformed into coast artillery companies. They were soon joined by men transferred from other Scout units. In mid-1924, the army reorganised these companies into the 91st and 92nd Coast Artillery Regiments (PS). American coast artillerymen were reduced to manning only the 'key' batteries of Fort Mills.<sup>23</sup> Only in the chronically understrength air service squadrons that had returned to the islands in 1919 did need not overcome prejudice. 'National characteristics'—presumably too well known to require definition—prevented the qualification of Filipinos as either military pilots or aircraft mechanics.<sup>24</sup>

The use of Scouts in virtually all branches of the army partly explains the significant changes that came about in the Scout officer ranks after the First World War. Leadership in the Scout regiments now required the services of professionally qualified officers, not that of enlisted men given temporary officer status while serving with Filipino troops. After 1920, while there continued to be a few American officers permanently attached to the Philippine Scouts, most officers previously assigned to the Scouts transitioned into the regular army. Thereafter, most of the officers serving with Scout units would be regular army officers fulfilling their normal two-year foreign service obligation in the Philippine Islands.<sup>25</sup>

To these officers, Filipinos seemed to have little in common with their American counterparts. At a time when few American enlisted men were allowed to marry, for example, many Filipino soldiers had wives and children. The 'Scout *barrio*' became a staple of military posts in the Philippines. 'This neat little village of *nipa*-covered bamboo houses', one officer informed his comrades, provided even 'the lowest paid private' with the opportunity 'to marry and raise that large family of brown babies so dear to the heart of every Filipino'.<sup>26</sup> Correspondingly, the native soldiers' standard of discipline was also far higher than the army norm. Alcohol abuse and venereal disease, two clear indicators of a unit's disciplinary standards, seemed at times to define the American soldier's experience in the Philippine Islands. For example, at the creation (by taking soldiers from existing regular army regiments in the islands) of the 31st US Infantry Regiment in 1916, the enlisted men of one battalion of 'Manila's Own' were found to suffer a venereal infection rate of over 30 per cent. By contrast, in 1920, the VD infection rate for Filipino soldiers was one-ninth the rate for American soldiers in the Philippines. As the historian of the 57th Infantry (PS), then-Lieutenant John Olson, recalled, during his tour with the Scouts he never served on a court-martial board; his soldiers were too well behaved. His compatriots with the 31st Infantry had just the opposite experience.<sup>27</sup>

Filipino soldiers also excelled in the routines of peacetime soldiering. According to one Scout officer, the Scouts so outclassed American regulars at Philippine Department 'meets' (in which individual soldiers and units competed in sports and military proficiency events) that separate competitions were held.<sup>28</sup> Major General Francis Kernan, commanding general of the Philippine Department in 1919–22, had resisted the reorganisation of the Scouts into permanent regiments for this very reason. The placing of a Filipino field artillery regiment alongside the 9th Cavalry at Camp Stotsenburg, Kernan had pointed out to the War Department, would only lead the Filipino soldiers 'to think their work is of as good a quality as that of the negro soldiers, while their pay is less than half'.<sup>29</sup> A lasting impression of duty with the Philippine Scouts was the Filipino soldiers' 'apparent delight in polishing and cleaning'. 'Spit and polish' was the mainstay of army

life everywhere, not just in the Philippine Scout regiments. Captain Charles Ivins succinctly described this prosaic reality of day-to-day military duty in the 1920s and 1930s: 'If an outfit had on clean uniforms, starched and pressed, [and] if the rifles were clean...the outfit was ready for war.' In the Philippines, this standard was even more strongly stressed. The Philippine Scouts stood out even in an army that equated show with preparedness. Reporting the results of an inspection of the 24th Field Artillery (PS) at Camp Stotsenburg, the inspecting officer marvelled that the guns' 'steel looked like silver and brass parts shown [sic] like gold'.<sup>30</sup>

The outcome of all this, as the Philippine Department intelligence officer at the time of the mutiny, Major Walter Prosser, put it, was that American officers 'found that their organisations would run themselves and function with slight supervision'.<sup>31</sup> If some officers feared that shiny weapons and glistening leather had little to do with fighting ability, for most the Scouts' enthusiastic embrace of peacetime routine only enhanced a tour of duty in the Philippines. Prior to the First World War, Philippine duty had been so unpopular that the army had required the transfer to the islands of any officer who volunteered to go. It is no coincidence that the Philippines acquired its reputation as 'a two-year vacation with pay in a tropical playground' in the 1920s, when more officers found themselves assigned to Philippine Scout regiments. Most of the day-to-day management of the Scout units was left to experienced and reliable Filipino non-commissioned officers. When the workday came to end for Americans at noon, the Scouts continued their military duties under the direction of senior enlisted men. Ancillary tasks that might have provided American officers with greater knowledge of their troops, such as *barrio* officer (the officer assigned to conduct sanitary inspections of the Scout villages located on the edges of the army posts), for example, might be given over to an enlisted subordinate, if not to one of the few Filipino commissioned officers who served with the Scouts.<sup>32</sup>

Putting further distance between the officers and their men was the inability to speak each other's language. In the early years of the Philippine Scouts, officers were required to learn Spanish, but virtually no officer knew more than a few words or phrases of any native dialect. At various times, the army apparently encouraged officers to study Tagalog (the language spoken around Manila and increasingly touted as a 'national language' in the 1920s and 1930s), but one Scout officer recalled that actually knowing how to speak a native tongue could damage an officer's reputation. The enlisted men had less respect for the officer, as did Americans, who assumed the officer's proficiency reflected regular resort to a 'sleeping dictionary'.<sup>33</sup> The evidence concerning English-language knowledge among enlisted men is contradictory, but while drill commands were given and understood in English and potential recruits were supposed to be able to read, write and speak English 'at least to a fair degree', it seems that, in the 1920s, few enlisted scouts were capable of conversing in the language of their officers.<sup>34</sup>

The reliance on Filipino soldiers and open admiration for their competence in the daily routines of military life masked a concomitant belief in their unsteadiness in real soldiering. As seen, Filipino suitability for broader military service was shaped by the operational needs of the garrison and congressional constraints on the availability of white manpower, not by the officer corps' confidence in Filipino ability. Prosser, for example, thought that 'personnel' was one of the major defects of the Manila Bay defences, and he was not alone in believing that Filipino soldiers were 'too dependent

upon detailed supervision [and] have less natural capacity along artillery lines'. Furthermore, like proponents of air bombing of enemy population centres who foresaw the rapid collapse of civilian morale, Prosser suggested that it was 'not certain that [the Filipinos] posses[ed] the innate moral stamina to withstand continuous and protracted shell-fire'.<sup>35</sup> Lest any officer fail to discern the limitations of Filipino ability and make the mistake of concluding that the native soldier was no different from or even superior to the American enlisted man, Philippine Department Headquarters at Fort Santiago commissioned a psychological study of the Filipino soldier, the purpose of which was to remind officers of Scout inferiority. Authored by an anonymous but 'acknowledged authority on the subject', *Psychology of the Filipino* painted a demeaning portrait of the local soldiery. The 'Filipino character' had many 'grave defects', the reader learned. It was emotional, illogical, ignorant, unformed, easily influenced, swayed by preference and prejudice, submissive yet vain, slothful, inert, careless and lacking in forethought, competitiveness, pugnacity, creativity and perseverance. Only superficially and with difficulty could the Filipinos develop the innate fighting ability of the white soldier.<sup>36</sup>

Colonel Edward L. Munson of the army medical corps was the unnamed author of this unflattering analysis.<sup>37</sup> An 1892 graduate of Yale Medical School and an army surgeon since 1893, Munson was, by his own account, also a soldier of extensive Philippine experience. By the time he wrote his report in mid-1924, he had served three tours of duty in the islands, had been detailed to the insular health service three times over the past 22 years and had served as director of health or as sanitary adviser to the Philippine government. He also considered himself no amateur in the field of military science. He had been a member of a board of officers that had evaluated the harbour defences of Manila and Subic Bays in 1913 and had studied the 'general principle of military art' at military service schools. *Psychology of the Filipino* was an abridgement of Munson's classified report. In Munson's view—one obviously shared by senior officers of the Philippine Department—it was 'illusory' to place any faith in the ability of Filipino soldiers to defend the islands. Despite an appearance of soldierly skill, Munson insisted, 'the practical results of [military] training will never produce more than a low grade fighting efficiency in the Filipino soldiers'. Prosser told a correspondent in Washington that Munson's paper was 'the best thing [he had] seen on this subject'.<sup>38</sup>

The rapid changes the Philippines Scouts had undergone had led by the mid-1920s to conflicting but unacknowledged interpretations of the nature and significance of the Scouts. Arriving in Manila for short, two-year, tours of overseas duty, American officers embraced the prerogatives of tropical service but did not give much thought to the men they led, a fact that the mutiny trial would underline. Captain Charles Estes of the 57th Infantry would state that he had had two men interpret his English to the mutineers in his company. He acknowledged that he did not know what language they used; he assumed it was Tagalog. Nor did he know the ethnicities of the men in his company, although he had been told the names of some of the provinces from which the men came. Another officer of that regiment, 1st Lieutenant E.C. Lickman, could not name the men in his company even when they stood before him. 'I always get them mixed up', said Lieutenant Lickman, who had been with the company for two years. And there were other officers who could read the names of the enlisted men from rosters and know that the names belonged to soldiers in their companies but could not attach the names to specific soldiers seated in front of them in the courtroom.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the mutiny would only reinforce

dismissive and derogatory attitudes to Filipino soldiers. An officer who passed through Manila en route to China in 1926 heard all about the mutiny from fellow officers. 'One good white soldier is worth a dozen of the little brown fellows', he concluded, 'and the little brown fellows know it.'<sup>40</sup> For their part, how could Filipino soldiers not have recognised that they excelled at the established criteria of regular army achievement and that they had become the bulwark of American authority in the Philippines? In the intersection of these two conflicting views lay the origin of the Philippine Scout Mutiny of July 1924.

A number of factors coalesced within a very few years to heighten awareness of the discrepancy in the treatment of American and Filipino soldiers. The reorganisation of the Scout units into regiments and their later combination into a division had brought most of the troops physically together in two large brigade posts, Fort McKinley, near Manila, and Camp Stotsenburg, north of the capital. These were the largest army posts in the Philippines aside from the fortified islands; both had originally been garrisoned mostly by American troops. This opened the Scouts to the influence of political agitators and labour organisers at a particularly tempestuous time.

Former army general Leonard Wood had become the Republican-appointed governor-general in 1921. Wood's attempts to reassert executive authority after seven years of Democrat Francis Harrison's liberalism in granting greater authority to local political leaders reached a fever pitch in 1923–4. In recent months there had been other labour strikes, of Filipino workers in Hawaii, of civilian employees at the Cavite naval yard and even of students at the University of the Philippines.<sup>41</sup> Facilitating the Scouts' awareness of these developments was the presence of many young enlisted men, veterans of the First World War era Philippine National Guard, better educated and more politically aware than the older Scout soldiers.

Scout discontent focused on inequality in pay. In 1899, Filipino troops had received in Mexican dollars what American soldiers received in gold. (Two 'Mex' or silver dollars equalled one gold dollar; for every gold dollar an American received, a Filipino received a silver dollar.) There was no legal basis, at least at first, for this discrimination. It was, as Rear Admiral Thomas Washington once explained in justifying wages (he was trying to get them raised) for Filipino employees of the navy, simply 'customary that Asiatics should get one-half of what the white men get in the matter of pay'. When the army reorganisation bill formally authorising the recruitment of Filipino soldiers had been introduced in Congress in 1900, common practice was given legal sanction. It had stipulated that Filipino enlisted men would receive one-half the pay of American troops. Congressional opposition to the idea that some soldiers wearing American uniforms and fighting under the American flag 'should have only half the pay given to the other soldiers of the United States serving around them' had led to the provision's withdrawal, but an attempt to have equality of pay written into the bill failed. The matter was left to the discretion of the Secretary of War.<sup>42</sup>

At one time, Filipino soldiers had drawn slightly more than one-half the wage of American soldiers, but by the early 1920s Filipinos received much less. A regular army private earned \$21 a month in 1921; the Scout private a mere \$8. In the two decades since the Scouts' founding, the pay of a regular army private had risen by 61 per cent; a Scout private's by 2.5 per cent. In 1921, a Filipino private made 40 centavos (20 cents) more each month than in 1901.<sup>43</sup> The army was neither oblivious to nor unconcerned about the

growing discrepancy in pay. At least as far back as 1918, a war college division study had drawn attention to the fact that Scout pay had stagnated for years even though the cost of living had gone up in the Philippines and Filipinos had been encouraged to expect a higher standard of living under American rule.<sup>44</sup> At the time, the army faced more pressing concerns, but the return of peace brought little renewed interest in the plight of Filipino soldiers.



*Figure 7.1* Philippine Scout battalion at Regan Barracks, around 1910. The dramatic backdrop is provided by Mount Mayon.

*Source:* Samuel Rockenbach Papers, reproduced by courtesy of the Virginia Military Institute Archives.

In April 1921, a senior enlisted man of the Scouts took matters into his own hands. Master Sergeant Bruno V. Madrid, described by his superiors as ‘a Filipino of unusual intelligence’, emphasised the connection between the pay issue and the changed nature of Scout service in an article published in the *Army and Navy Journal*. Madrid pointed out that Filipino soldiers ‘now perform [ed] duties similar to those of the regular army soldier in the field and in the garrison’. Justice demanded that Congress provide the Scouts—a misleading title that he wanted removed—the same ‘consideration and privileges as the American soldier’.<sup>45</sup>

Conditions did not improve, and two years later, in April 1923, Madrid took another approach. Observing the success of other fraternal organisations (back in 1911 white Philippine Scout officers had founded a ‘Philippine Scouts Association’, and in the early 1920s the handful of native officers had formed the ‘Filipino Officers Society’), Madrid attempted to form a ‘Philippine Scouts Enlisted Personnel’s Association’ to petition for equal treatment. The Philippine Division commander held the opinion that the soldiers



already belonged to a worthy organisation that they could count upon to look out for their interests: the Philippine Scouts. He did not approve of the enlisted men's association.<sup>46</sup>

Madrid persisted. He was behind the incorporation of a 'Soldiers' Mutual Aid Association' in Manila in May 1924. The association's membership was not restricted to Philippine Scouts alone, and advancing the 'economic condition' of its members was only one of its stated goals. None the less, its *raison d'être* was to obtain benefits for Filipino soldiers similar to those given to American soldiers, and agents employed by the army's intelligence office reported that Madrid was coordinating some kind of demonstration to be made by enlisted men on 4 July to make officers aware of that. If so, Madrid came to think better of it. The day passed without such incident.

Paralleling Madrid's actions, and 'ostensibly' (to quote investigating officers) distinct from them, was an effort by Scout privates to organise a 'Soldiers' Secret Union'. Its 'constitution' was less sophisticated and more poorly written than the association's, but its objective was unambiguous: if Scouts had not received the same pay and allowances as the other soldiers of the regular army by the end of July 1924, members of the union would 'strike together' until their demands had been met.<sup>47</sup> The union apparently began organising on Fort McKinley in mid-June 1924 in an atmosphere soon characterised by intimidation and ominous threats to those who refused to sign the constitution. This is when the young soldier spoke to the post's provost marshal.

Strike or mutiny, the refusal to perform military duties involved a significant portion of the McKinley garrison. The authorities raided a secret meeting being held in the basement of the post hospital laundry on Sunday morning, 6 July 1924, and arrested 26 men (four of them agents of the intelligence office). The next morning, most of two battalions of the 57th Infantry Regiment refused to drill, although the men continued to perform routine fatigue duties around camp.<sup>48</sup> The men offered no violence to their officers, aside from the suggestion that one lieutenant be 'hogtied'. The division commander remained calm. He was of the opinion that 'the men were probably ignorant and did not realise the seriousness of their offence'. He ordered that the potentially dire consequences of their conduct be explained to each soldier individually and that each be given the opportunity 'to recant and return to duty with full privileges'.<sup>49</sup> Of 380 soldiers involved, 104 persisted in refusing to return to work. The next day, 8 July 1924, 202 soldiers of the 12th Medical Regiment at Fort McKinley failed to report for duty. These men displayed 'an uglier spirit' than that shown in the 57th, but 117 ended their participation in the strike after being addressed by their officers.

The army suspected collusion with Scouts at Camp Stotsenburg and Fort Mills (on Corregidor Island), but no soldiers at those posts stepped forward to make common cause with the Scouts at McKinley. No member of the other Scout infantry regiment at McKinley, the 45th, joined the mutiny either, although the regiment's officers had no reason for self-congratulation. That regiment's sergeant major had refused to tolerate any disobedience on the part of the 45th's soldiers. He had earlier been accused of misusing his immense influence over the men and had been told that any further trouble would result in his demotion. Military authorities were soon approached 'by many individuals' from the 45th proclaiming their loyalty to their officers and to the United States.<sup>50</sup>

In two mass trials held in Fort McKinley's YMCA building and lasting from 29 July to 21 August 1924, the army charged 225 soldiers with either inciting mutiny or refusing to obey orders, which were violations of the 66th and 96th Articles of War. The defence

had a difficult task. For all but the 15 'ringleaders', who were tried separately, the issue before the court was straightforward: had the accused soldiers refused to report for duty as ordered or had they not? The adequacy and fairness of army pay were irrelevant. The soldiers' appointed defence counsel, Major Vicente P. Lim of the 45th Infantry (PS), a ten-year veteran of the Scouts and the first Filipino graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, knew that most of the enlisted men could not comprehend anything beyond the simplest commands in English, and that, conversely, the officers could not speak the men's languages. In what the local press derisively labelled the 'Tower of Babel Defence', Lim argued that language difficulties had prevented the soldiers from understanding the nature and seriousness of their actions. Not only were there many more distinct dialects spoken by the soldiers than most officers seemed to be aware, but there were many words in army regulations that could not be easily translated. 'There are few interpreters in the whole Philippines who can off-hand translate into the native dialects questions asked in English', he pointed out to the court. The thought that poorly educated army enlisted men were up to the task was too ludicrous to contemplate.<sup>51</sup> But while it was easy enough to establish that there were serious communications problems within the Scout units, too many soldiers had obeyed their officers for the rest to claim that they had not understood what was being said to them.

The officer the men chose to be their collective 'individual counsel', popular Major John Considine of the 26th Cavalry (PS), focused on the role of the non-commissioned officers. How could such a widespread conspiracy develop, he asked, without the knowledge of the regiments' senior enlisted men? Several soldiers testified that NCOs had told them to obey their officers' commands while at the same time using prearranged hand signals to indicate that the men were to persist in refusing to drill. The officers had their suspicions, and they would have agreed with what Governor-General Wood wrote in his diary: the senior enlisted men 'must have known about it, and in failing to report it in advance certainly fell far short of performing their full duty'. But the army could not prove—or did not care to prove—that any NCO had participated in the union or had foreknowledge of the mutiny.<sup>52</sup>

A soldier of the 57th Infantry named Tomas Rivalal was identified as the moving spirit behind the mutiny. The 28-year-old Rivalal had joined the Scouts in 1919. He had an exemplary record until 1923, when he was demoted from corporal to private for improperly scoring targets on the firing range. In the army's preliminary investigation, Rivalal had claimed that he knew little about the proposed strike; later, he admitted that he had authored the 'constitution' of the secret union. Like the other ringleaders, Rivalal refused to testify under oath at the trial, but he did make a statement expressing regret for the hardships the mutiny would cause to the families of the Scout soldiers. He had been motivated, Rivalal said, by the plight of poorly paid soldiers who could not even afford to buy food for their children. He insisted that the Scouts were not, and could not be, disloyal to the government. 'We appear to the white[s] [to be] Filipinos in appearance', Rivalal read from a prepared statement, 'yet we are Americans in heart and in service.'<sup>53</sup>

Headed by Brigadier General Douglas MacArthur, the commanding general of the 23rd Infantry Brigade at McKinley, the eight men of the court-martial board contained Scout and regular officers, but no Filipinos. They were unmoved. Rivalal was sentenced to 20 years of hard labour. Three other 'ringleaders' received 10- to 15-year sentences. The majority of the accused received dishonourable discharges and sentences of five

years in prison with hard labour. Only six men were acquitted. The Judge Advocate General in Washington thought the sentences excessive and suggested the Philippine Department suspend the awarding of dishonourable discharges and sift through the prisoners to identify those soldiers 'worthy of being restored to the colours', but officers in the Philippines did not agree. 'Opinion is unanimous' over here, the Department commander responded, 'that for military, political and psychological reasons' all the soldiers should be discharged and given no chance to re-enter the army. To do otherwise would have a detrimental impact on army discipline and American prestige. He did, however, agree to a reduction of the five-year sentences to two and one-half years. The ringleaders went to Bilibid, and were still in prison as late as 1931. The others served two years or less with the penal battalion on Corregidor.<sup>54</sup>

The 'inner history' of the mutiny, so to speak, remained a closed book to the army at the time and remains so to this day. Only about 40 of the accused privates testified at the mass trial, and none of the ringleaders did so. They disappeared from history following their trial and imprisonment.<sup>55</sup> Why did those men, and not others, sign the constitution of the secret union? Why did these few persist in mutinous behaviour? Why did men in those two regiments and those specific companies participate in the strike, and not others? Why Fort McKinley, and nowhere else? Why did the NCOs of the 57th Infantry and 12th Medical Regiment have less authority over their men than did their compatriots in the other McKinley-based Filipino regiments, the 45th Infantry and 14th Engineers?

In its search for explanations for the soldiers' behaviour, first and foremost, the army blamed outside agitators and the 'seditious political knavery and discontent' of Filipino politicians for undermining the loyalty of the Philippine Scouts. 'With universal political contentment existing the mutiny would not have occurred', Major Prosser concluded. Governor-General Wood was equally adamant that 'the foundation for the Mutiny [had been] laid largely by the disloyal speeches of [Manuel] Roxas, [M.L.] Quezon, [Sergio] Osmeña, and others advocating non-cooperation...and impugning the good faith of our country'. These were the leading Filipino figures in government of the day. Prosser admitted, however, that an investigation could not prove the involvement of any 'outside influence', and Wood could present no evidence that tied 'disloyal speeches' to the mutiny, either.<sup>56</sup>

The army admitted to ill-considered decisions of its own. The breakdown in tribal-based recruiting was one. Army officers used the word 'tribe' to identify the Philippines' 'ethnogeographic' groups. The word tribe itself had become pejorative, and many Filipinos thought that its use unjustly exaggerated the islands' political disunity.<sup>57</sup> The army attached political significance to tribal designates. Those 'tribes' that had dominated the Philippine Revolution or participated in political activity were potentially disloyal and thus their members made undesirable recruits. Seen within this context, the army's categorisation of Filipino tribes was predictable. The army admitted that the Tagalogs of central Luzon and the Manila area stood at the top of Philippine society in 'mental ability', but this presumed mental superiority did not make the Tagalogs leading contenders for military service. The 'mountain tribes', for example, excelled in physical prowess, while lowlanders—like the Tagalogs—were generally undernourished and diseased, capable of working long hours but with limited efficiency. Preparing its first detailed plan of action in case of insurrection, in 1923, the Philippine Department staff concluded that the army needed to increase the number of Visayans, Bicolanos,

Macabebes, Ilocanos and non-Christian soldiers in the ranks and to distribute the Tagalog soldiers 'as widely as possible'. There were virtually no Tagalogs in the army, anyway, since the army forbade their enlistment other than in exceptional circumstances, and the staff's recommendation was dubious, given the events of the following year. In 1924, only 5 per cent of the Philippine Division was Tagalog, while nearly 40 per cent was Visayan and another 27 per cent Ilocano.<sup>58</sup>

Initially, Scout enlistment policy had been along tribal lines, a deliberate adoption of the old Roman principle 'divide and rule', calculated to take advantage of tribal enmities. According to Prosser, successive commanding generals had taken differing stands on the issue of tribal enlistment. Leonard Wood, who had been the senior army officer in the Philippines from 1906 to 1908, had been committed to the principle of tribal-based enlistments, but Major General J. Franklin Bell, who commanded the garrison from 1911 to 1914, had ordered 'the removal of tribal barriers to enlistment'. Thomas Barry followed Bell in command and 'practically revoked' Bell's policy. Nevertheless, the increasing administrative sophistication of the organisation undermined the insistence on tribal-based enlistments. Company officers grew less concerned with unit solidarity and reliability in combat and instead sought out better educated or educable men who could perform the routine administrative functions of a peacetime military garrison. Confronted by a different type of duty, the army concentrated on recruiting more intelligent men, regardless of their tribal origins. The army had never cared enough to articulate an inviolable 'martial races' ideology, the adherence to which might have outweighed practicality, and thus, in Prosser's view, 'the danger attending this new departure was forgotten or underestimated during the long period of peace following the last days of the insurrection'. By the 1920s, members of one tribal group did tend to dominate in any given company (probably because NCOs recruited from their own families), but they rarely formed a majority, and the battalions and regiments mixed members of many ethnicities, who could now make common cause against their superiors. In the wake of the mutiny, the army's proposed solution was to reintroduce battalion-level tribal-based recruiting.<sup>59</sup>

The army also admitted to faults in its personnel assignment system for American officers and enlisted men. Officer assignment policy was an immediate concern. Leonard Wood asserted that 'the loss of the old American Scout' officers had reduced American influence over the enlisted men and encouraged mutinous behaviour. Many officers agreed. The officers sent to the islands in the early 1920s and assigned to the newly formed Scout regiments had no 'particular affinity' for service with Filipino soldiers. The Philippine Department recommended increasing the length of service in the islands to three years, identifying officers who possessed the ability to command native troops and encouraging officers to learn the soldiers' language.<sup>60</sup>

American enlisted men did not serve in the Scout units; nor for the most part did they serve at the posts where Scouts were to be found. None the less, they were a prominent presence in Manila, and they did not always project a favourable image in either personal conduct or professional ability. This problem was especially acute in the early 1920s, when a large number of 'low type' soldiers had been sent to Manila from the Siberian expedition. 'They murdered, robbed, and debauched the reputation and good name of the American soldier for fair', one officer wrote, while another claimed that so many of the soldiers were such hardened criminals that the army had built a special compound on

Corregidor to hold them until they could be returned to the United States.<sup>61</sup> An army review board recommended that white soldiers sent to the islands in the future be 'the pick of the army'. The American regiments in the Philippines 'should be maintained in a high state of discipline with special attention to their soldierly appearance'. Ideally, the army should also return to the pre-1912 system of assigning entire units (rather than individual soldiers) to the Philippines, first 'weed[ing] out all undesirable men and replacing] them by exceptional soldiers'.<sup>62</sup>

The most telling aspect of the mutiny was the army's response to it. The army did nothing—not one thing—that its own investigatory boards recommended to ensure that there was no repeat of the mutiny. It did not change officer assignment policy, it did not return to the pre-1912 policy of rotating American regiments in and out of the garrison and it did not insist upon sending higher quality white soldiers to the islands. Nor did it reintroduce tribal-based recruiting for Filipino regiments at either battalion or company level (although it did persist in keeping many Tagalogs out of the ranks, even when the Scout organisations doubled in size in early 1941).<sup>63</sup> It did not raise the Scout wage, either. Only in 1928 was \$1 a month added to the Scout private's pay, raising it to \$9. That was still less than half the \$21 per month received by an American army private.<sup>64</sup>

Some officers simply thought the episode overblown and substantial change unnecessary. General Hagood, who was not there but had extensive Philippine experience (as well as a high regard for his own opinion), expressed the view that 'the trouble at Fort McKinley was [not] as serious as it has been made to appear'. But Major Prosser, who was there and whose office had prepared the press releases dealing with the mutiny, said that the Philippine Department had deliberately downplayed its extent. He claimed that the mutiny involved 'very close to one thousand men' and caused 'considerable anxiety' at division headquarters.<sup>65</sup> Accepting the existence of a deep malaise within the Philippine Scouts, however, would have required a thorough reappraisal of the army's commitment to Philippine service. Far better to label the Scouts 'mercenaries' (Prosser's word) who were, in fact, well paid and suitably cared for by the army, and who had no legitimate grounds for complaint. As Frank McIntyre, the army officer serving as Bureau of Insular Affairs chief at the time, put it: 'The Scout soldier has at all times been paid too highly', and the benefits Scouts enjoyed as soldiers in American service were, in fact, 'excessive in view of conditions in the community'. What the army really needed to do, in McIntyre's opinion, was to remind the Filipino soldiers of those facts.<sup>66</sup>

The Scouts seem to have agreed. Speculation that recruitment of Philippine Scouts would grow more difficult in the wake of the mutiny proved unfounded. On the surface, the Philippine Department's widely repeated assumption seemed reasonable enough, but it misread the psychology of the Filipino soldier and those who sought to be soldiers. Perhaps the disobedience of a few had made the rest fearful that access to military service with the prestigious and relatively well paid Scouts might be jeopardised. The re-enlistment rate shot up in the mid-1920s and remained at a uniform high to the outbreak of war in 1941. As the War Department's finance representative, Captain Lawrence Worrall, testified before a House of Representatives appropriations committee in 1935: 'Those men, enlisted once, never leave. They build little shacks outside of the posts, and they and their families live close to their organisation.'<sup>67</sup> Enlistment statistics bear him out. Previously around 80 per cent, the re-enlistment rate rose to 92 per cent in 1926 and 100 per cent in 1932. It averaged over 95 per cent annually throughout the 1930s.

Desertions among the ranks of the Filipino soldiers were 'of such infrequent occurrence' that in the mid-1930s the War Department stopped including them in its calculations of the army's desertion rate. Even the already low venereal infection rate dropped by a third the year following the mutiny, almost as if the remaining Scouts were determined to be on their best behaviour.<sup>68</sup> When later, in 1931, the government initially denied pension benefits to the first Scout to complete 30 years of active service with the army, the Philippine Department's intelligence agents reported that the Scouts were not contemplating another 'mutiny'. In fact, the older Scouts resented the continuing talk by civilians of political independence that they felt was turning the American government against them; the younger Scouts 'indulge [d] in war talk, their idea being that a war would prove their ability' and demonstrate their loyalty and usefulness to the Americans.<sup>69</sup>

The strikers' demands had been largely economic, just as Rivalal had claimed. The Scouts were not nascent nationalists. Unlike the mutinous *sepoys* of 1857, they did not look back to a golden era of the past which their valour and self-sacrifice could restore. Nor were they inspired by the *independencia* rhetoric of Filipino politicians. Despite Governor-General Wood's and the army's contrary assumption, the strikers found little sympathy from the political elite. Manuel Quezon's paper, the *Philippines Herald*, editorialised that 'the day would come when an independent Philippine government shall have to support an army'. It was important that 'the Scout soldiers should be dealt with rigorously' by the army, in order to establish the precedent 'in this country now' that 'a soldier under whatever circumstance has no right to go on a strike'. In fact, the intelligence office translated a Tagalog-language newspaper article that reported that 'the few scouts, sergeants, corporals or even privates and their families to whom [the paper's reporter had] talked' preferred continued service under the United States government, even if the Philippines received independence. An American informant passed along to the army the story of 'a Filipino sugar man in Negros' who reported that when several Filipino politicians had asked some enlisted Scouts about their attitude to independence, the men responded that they favoured independence only 'if they would receive the same treatment' they received under American rule. The politicians' rejoinder that an independent government could hardly offer the same benefits drew the disconcerting reminder from the Filipino soldiers that they 'had the guns'.<sup>70</sup> In a cruelly ironic fashion, then, the Japanese invasion of the Philippine Islands in December 1941 and the subsequent destruction in battle of the Philippine Division solved what otherwise might have been a troubling and potentially destabilising legacy of America's 40-year occupation of the Philippines.

In the idolising tradition of colonial military history writing, the Philippine Scouts emerge as exemplary soldiers, 'marble men', so to speak. The soldier-historian of the most recently published history of the Bataan campaign of 1941–2 dedicated his book to the Philippine Scouts. 'The finest soldiers in the Philippines', he called them.<sup>71</sup> That widely held, and fair, portrait of the Scouts, however, is one largely shaped by the shared sacrifices of American officers and Filipino enlisted men during the difficult early days of the Second World War. It is a portrait that would have been less familiar before the war and one into which the events of 1924 fit uneasily, if at all. In 1924, the Scout mutiny only reinforced dismissive attitudes towards the quality of Filipino soldiers. But by the 1920s, the Philippines had been pushed to the margins of army life. No more than 3–4 per

cent of the army could be found on duty there at any one time. Short tours of duty, generous leave policies, the closing of isolated provincial posts during the First World War and a lifestyle in which afternoons were reserved for sports, socialising and relaxation all reflected the price of making Philippine duty palatable to the many officers who had only reluctantly assumed the burden of American empire. The increasing use of self-reliant native soldiers over the decade had only served to reduce further the army's interest in the Philippines. Taking the Scout mutiny seriously would have brought to an end the undemanding and popular contours of tropical service that had emerged by the 1920s. There existed no constituency in the army for that course of action.

### Notes

An earlier version of this chapter appeared as 'The Philippine Scout Mutiny of 1924', in *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (November 2002), pp. 333–59.

- 1 The Scouts were the Filipino-manned regiments of United States Army forces in the Philippine Islands.
- 2 Major Walter E. Prosser, Assistant Chief of Staff [ACS] for Intelligence, Headquarters Philippine Department [HPD], 'Mutiny of July 7–8, 1924, in Philippine Division, Fort William McKinley, P.I. [Philippine Islands]', 1 October 1924, MID 10582–59/18, Record Group [RG] 165, US National Archives and Records, Administration, College Park, Maryland [henceforth NA]. Hereafter cited as Prosser, 'Mutiny'.
- 3 Historians have applied the term 'colonial army' to the locally recruited soldiers who became known as the Philippine Scouts, but the army itself used the phrase to refer to six cavalry and infantry regiments designated for permanent assignment to the Philippines in 1912. None of the latter remained for more than a few years.
- 4 Figure from Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, rev. edn (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 653.
- 5 Lawton, the senior American officer killed in the war, is quoted in *Report of Major-General E.S. Otis, U.S. Army, September 1, 1899, to May 5, 1900* (Washington, DC: War Department, 1900), pp. 265–6. For initial recruitment of Filipino soldiers, see Edward M. Coffman, 'The Philippine Scouts, 1899–1942', *ACTA*, 3 (1978), pp. 68–73; Clayton D. Laurie, 'The Philippine Scouts: America's Colonial Army, 1899–1913', *Philippine Studies*, 37 (1989), pp. 174–91; Brian Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), pp. 128–9; Stuart Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 81–2; and James Woolard, 'The Philippine Scouts: The Development of America's Colonial Army' (PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 1975), pp. 3–10.
- 6 Maj. W.H. Johnston, 'Employment of Philippine Scouts in War', *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 38, 140 (March/April 1906), pp. 296–7.
- 7 Quoted in Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, pp. 81–2. On the initial reluctance of Otis and his successor, Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur, to make use of Filipino soldiers, see Woolard, 'Philippine Scouts', pp. 3, 7–8.
- 8 *US Statutes at Large*, 31, p. 748 ('An act to increase the efficiency of the permanent military establishment of the United States', 2 February 1901); Bell statement, 14 January 1908, in US Congress, House Committee on Military Affairs, 'Hearings on army appropriation bill for fiscal year 1908–09', p. 39, microfiche edn, HMI 60B.
- 9 See memorandum for the chief of staff, 'Defense Plans for the Philippine Islands', 6 November 1928, WPD 3251, RG 165, NA; and HPD/Judge Advocate General [JAG] memorandum, 'Applicability to the Philippine Islands of Section 55, National Defense Act',

- 14 August 1928, enclosure to 'Report on the Defense of the Philippine Islands by Maj. Gen. William Lassiter, August 21, 1928', AG, Formerly Classified, Philippines, RG 407, NA.
- 10 In 1934 the US Supreme Court ordered the government to pay pensions to Scouts qualified for retirement under army regulations. On retirement, see Antonio Tabaniag, 'The Pre-War Philippine Scouts', *Journal of East Asiatic Studies* 9, 4 (1960), p. 17, and Bureau of Insular Affairs [BIA] 1877–162–64, RG 350, NA.
- 11 This policy began in 1921.
- 12 *US Statutes at Large*, 35, pt 1, p. 163 ('An act to create the office of captain in the Philippine Scouts', 16 May 1908). Prior to this, Scout company commanders had been chosen from regular army lieutenants in the islands who had been allowed to carry the rank of captain while serving with the Scouts. See also letter, Maj. Gen. William Duvall to the Adjutant General [TAG], 13 December 1909, copy in Samuel Rockenbach Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington, Virginia.
- 13 Tierney to Eugene Ganley, 8 March 1959, Eugene Ganley Papers, US Army Military History Institute [MHI], Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The late Eugene Ganley, an army officer from c.1959 to 1979, interviewed former Scout officers for a never-completed Philippine Scouts' history. The material is available at Carlisle. On problems confronting Americans who took Filipino wives, see also James J.Halsema, *E.J. Halsema: Colonial Engineer* (Quezon City: New Day, 1991), pp. 39–40, and Dorothy Dore Dowlen, *Enduring What Cannot Be Endured* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2001), pp. 20–1.
- 14 Frank Stoner to Ganley, 9 March 1959, Ganley Papers; Alan Jones questionnaire, 1 December 1958, Ganley Papers. Stoner was a failed West Point cadet who accepted a Scout commission in 1917 as a stepping stone to a regular commission, duly received in 1920. Jones was an army regular assigned to the Scouts in 1921–3. See also Lt Frank S.Ross, 45th Infantry (PS), testimony in trial of Private James Vandevender, 15th US Infantry, August 1924, CM 162930, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General, RG 153, NA; and F.B.Harrison, *The Corner-stone of Philippine Independence* (New York: The Century Co., 1922), pp. 150–1.
- 15 Woolard, 'Philippine Scouts', pp. 5–7, writes that a Macabebe regiment was raised by the Blanco family in 1896 to protect its properties. In part because of the forces it could contribute to successive colonisers, the Blancos, Philippine-born Spaniards, remained leading citizens after 1901. See also John A.Larkin, *The Pampangans: Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* (Quezon City: New Day, 1993 edn), pp. 182–3.
- 16 David Killingray, 'Guardians of Empire', in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 14.
- 17 James K.Eyre, Jr, quoting Col. Frederick A.Blesse, in 'The Philippine Scouts: United States Army Troops Extraordinary', *The Military Engineer* 35, 210 (April 1943), pp. 192–3. When, for example, 1st Sgt Eusebio Cumagun completed thirty years of duty in 1937, the 45th Infantry continued to carry the names of two of his sons on the regimental roster. See *Philippines Herald* (30 April 1937).
- 18 From 1902 to 1917, Scout strength (enlisted men only) ranged from a low of 4177 in October 1903 to a high of 5673 in December 1915. Strength charts are found under AG 1879789, RG 94, NA.
- 19 Appendix A to Philippine Department, 'Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1921', AGO Project Files, 1917–25, Philippine Department, RG 407, NA. The 8985 figure for American troops included about one thousand assigned to the army garrison in China, at that time considered a detachment of the Philippine Department.
- 20 As a result of the reduction of the army in the early 1920s, a number of regiments were deactivated, including some whose officers and regimental numbers had been assigned to the Philippines in 1920–1. These included the 43rd Infantry, the 62nd Infantry, the 25th Field



Artillery and others. The personnel who had been assigned to these units were transferred to other regiments in the Philippines.

- 21 C.A.Easterbrook, 'The Filipino as a Pack Artilleryman', *Field Artillery Journal* 16, 4 (1926), p. 375. Harry Watts, who served with the 24th Field Artillery (PS) at Camp Stotsenburg in 1924–6, wrote that one criticism made of Filipino soldiers as pack artillerymen was that they did not share the American 'love of animals' and thus tended to take less care of the mules that carried the guns. Watts also recalled that each mule had to be individually fitted with an *aparejo* (a leather and wood frame on which gun parts and accessories were mounted). Only an 'expert experienced pack master' could perform that task, but the pack master of the departing 2nd US Field Artillery that the Scout regiment replaced was 'a jealous individual' who refused to pass along his knowledge. Watts to Eugene Ganley, 30 March 1959, Ganley Papers.
- 22 Assistant Director, War Plans Division [WPD] to TAG, 29 January 1921; Memorandum for ACS/WPD, 'Inspection of Philippine Department made by Maj. J.J.Bain, General Staff', 25 August 1924, both in AG, Formerly Classified, Philippines, RG 407, NA.
- 23 TAG to Maj. Gen. William Wright, 17 and 18 July 1922, AGO Project Files, 1917–1925, Philippine Department, RG 407, NA. The 'key' quotation is in the letter of 17 July. The 'Official Program, Military Tournament, Philippine Department, 1924–1925' (copy in MHI) provides short histories of these regiments. The American coast artillery troops on Corregidor served in the 59th Coast Artillery Regiment. From 1922 to 1924, the 59th included two batteries of Philippine Scouts, but these were transferred to the 92nd. A fourth coast artillery regiment, the 60th, also consisted of Americans. These anti-aircraft troops arrived in the Philippines in 1923 and were stationed at Fort McKinley until relocated to Corregidor in June 1928.
- 24 Richard B.Meixsel, *Clark Field and the US Army Air Corps in the Philippines, 1919–1942* (Quezon City: New Day, 2002), pp. 35–7.
- 25 *US Statutes at Large*, 41, pt 1, p. 770 (public law 242, 4 June 1920).
- 26 Ralph Hirsch, 'Our Filipino Regiment: The Twenty-Fourth Field Artillery (Philippine Scouts)', *Field Artillery Journal* 14, 4 (1924), p. 357.
- 27 War Department, *Annual Report, 1917*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC, 1918), p. 519. For comparative statistics, see Joseph F.Siler, 'The Prevention and Control of Venereal Diseases in the Army of the United States of America', *The Army Medical Bulletin*, 67 (May 1943), pp. 16–17; John E.Olson, with Frank O.Anders, *Anywhere-Anytime: The History of the Fifty-Seventh Infantry (PS)* (By the author, 1991), p. 8.
- 28 Tierney to Ganley, 8 March 1959, Ganley Papers.
- 29 Philippine Department, 'Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1921', AGO Project Files, 1917–1925, Philippine Department, RG 407, NA.
- 30 Charles Ivins, 'The Monkeys Have No Tails in Zamboanga', pp. 49–50, Charles Ivins Papers, MHI; Maj. Gen. Eli A.Helmick, 'Report of Inspection of Troops in the Philippine Department', 22 October 1925, AGO Project Files, 1917–1925, Philippine Department, RG 407, NA.
- 31 Prosser, 'Mutiny', p. 10.
- 32 Per Ramee to Ganley, 11 May 1959, Ganley Papers. 'Vacation' quotation from Duane Schultz, *Hero of Bataan: The Story of General Jonathan M.Wainwright* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), p. 43.
- 33 Per Ramee questionnaire, n.d. [1959], Ganley Papers. One of Ganley's correspondents, Joseph C.Thomas (interviewed 1959, served with the Scouts 1910–20), claimed to speak Tagalog. Other correspondents recalled that early Scout officer Allen Fletcher could speak a Mindanao dialect. Maj. Edward Parfit, who commanded a battalion of the 57th Infantry (PS) in 1924, claimed to 'understand Visayan and Tagalog', but a *Philippines Herald* reporter wrote that he understood 'a little Visayan and less Tagalog'. The army regulars who filled most Scout officer billets from the early 1920s possessed less knowledge. Arthur Whitehead,

with the 26th Cavalry (PS) at Stotsenburg in 1940–1, claimed American officers ‘were required to attend classes on Tagalog’, but Thomas Jones, also of the 26th Cavalry, shared no such recollection. John Olson, at Fort McKinley with the 57th Infantry in 1940–1, recalled that officers were ‘encouraged’ to study Tagalog, but not seriously so. Letter, Whitehead to author, 29 September 1991; author’s interviews with Olson and Jones. By contrast, the Philippine Constabulary until 1916 paid American officers 100 pesos a year for learning a native language. Filipino officers were paid the same for learning English. Their qualifications were listed in the annual *Official Constabulary Register*. By 1933, of eight American officers ranking major or higher, one was qualified in Ifugao, one in Tagalog and one in Ilocano. The other five, including Brig. Gen. Clarence Bowers—chief of constabulary, 29 years’ service and married to a Filipina—were not qualified in any Filipino language.

- 34 Quotation found in ‘Opportunities Offered by the Army to Filipinos Who Want to Enlist’, *Philippines Herald* (1 April 1923). In Ganley’s interviews of former Scout officers, this question—did enlisted men know English?—drew the most varied responses. One officer, Benjamin S. Stocker (questionnaire dated 5 February 1959), who had several years’ experience with the Scouts before 1914, stated that he could remember only one enlisted man who could read and write English, while a handful could speak it with a limited vocabulary. Yet Filipino officer M.M. Santos (questionnaire 2 March 1959) claimed that all the men in his engineer regiment spoke English. John Olson recalled that enlisted soldiers’ English ability improved over time, and the younger recruits learned English in school. See Hirsch, ‘Our Filipino Regiment’, p. 356; A.K. Whitehead, *Odyssey of a Philippine Scout* (Tucson, AZ: By the author, 1990), p. 11; J. Playter, *Survivor* (Bolivar, MO: Southwest Baptist University, 2000), p. 30; Olson, *Anywhere-Anytime*, p. 8. Some enlisted men found it convenient to claim they did not understand English even when they did, a fact that came out in the mutiny trial.
- 35 Walter E. Prosser, ‘Advantages and disadvantages of the Manila Bay-Subic Bay area as a military and naval base’ [c. September 1924], WPD 532–24, RG 165, NA.
- 36 *Psychology of the Filipino [and] Conversation with Major-General Leonard Wood, Governor-General of the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Hq Philippine Department, August 1925), p. 29. The nine-page ‘conversation’ appended to the booklet was a *Chicago Daily News* interview with Gen. Wood conducted by Edward P. Bell.
- 37 The MHI library holds a copy of the publication; the original report, with Munson’s name attached, dated 21 August 1924, is filed as WPD 2903, RG 165, NA.
- 38 Letter, Prosser to Maj. J.J. Bain, 4 September 1924, MID 10582–59/12, RG 165, NA. The timing of the report was not linked to the mutiny, although its publication may have been. The idea for Munson’s report emerged out of concern that too much reliance was being placed on Filipino soldiers in the Philippine Department’s 1923 war plan for the defence of the islands against an attack by Japan.
- 39 See Estes testimony, trial transcript, pp. 76–7; Hamilton testimony, p. 96; and Lickman testimony, p. 186, CM 162921, RG 153, NA.
- 40 Wilson A. Heefner, *Twentieth-century Warrior: The Life and Service of General Edwin D. Patrick* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1995), p. 38.
- 41 Eugene Ganley, ‘Bloodless Mutiny’, p. 6, Ganley Papers.
- 42 ‘Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs of the House of Representatives on Sundry Legislation Affecting the Naval Establishment, 1921’, p. 469, microfiche edn, HN 67A. For opposition to provisions in the reorganisation act, see *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 1171–8. The policy of paying Filipinos half of what whites received apparently had a long history. John Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 3rd edn (1906; reprint, Manila: Cacho Hermanos, 1985), p. 231, mentioned that Spanish soldiers garrisoning a fort on Mindanao in the seventeenth century received two pesos a month; Filipino soldiers received one peso.

43 Prosser, 'Mutiny', appendix, pp. 26–8.

44 Memorandum for chief of staff, 'Increase of pay for enlisted men, Philippine Scouts', 15 August 1918, WCD 9136–53, RG 165, NA.

45 F.A. Ruggles, 'Causes Leading up to the Mutiny of the Philippine Scouts', 19 March 1925, p. 3, WPD 1799–7, RG 165, NA. Madrid's article is reprinted in Prosser, 'Mutiny', appendix, pp. 1–4.

46 Prosser, 'Mutiny', pp. 11–12; Ruggles, 'Causes', pp. 3–4. An unnamed senior NCO at Camp Stotsenburg approached the post commander there, Brig. Gen. Johnson Hagood, and requested permission to form an enlisted men's society as an outlet for grievances. Some documents suggest that this was an organisation separate from Madrid's; others that it was a part of Madrid's. Hagood suggested some changes in the society's proposed constitution and gave approval. The proposed constitution shown to General Hagood included an oath of allegiance to the USA 'couched in very fiery and patriotic language'. Hagood advised that it be removed, since the Scouts had already sworn allegiance to the government and other military associations did not require a second oath. A few days later, Hagood learned from Fort McKinley that an enlisted men's organisation was being formed, and division headquarters had concluded that the new organisation was probably 'directed against the United States' because its constitution was known to have included a patriotic oath, which had later been removed. Even within the narrow environs of the Philippine garrison, one hand of the army did not always know what the other was doing. 'Summary of Statement made by General Hagood in Reference to Disaffection Among Native Troops in the Philippine Islands', 13 August 1924, WPD 1799–2, RG 165, NA.

47 Prosser, 'Mutiny', appendix, pp. 11–17; Ruggles, 'Causes', p. 4.

48 Numbers of those involved vary from report to report. Those used here are from Ruggles, 'Causes', pp. 1–2. There is contradictory testimony that several officers managed by assertive action to keep their companies from joining the mutiny. According to Prosser ('Mutiny', p. 18), the CO of Company H, 57th Infantry, Capt. N.P. Williams, loaded his pistol in front of his men and threatened to shoot any who disobeyed him. They promptly marched off to drill. But the *Philippines Herald* (2 August 1924) credited the company's first sergeant, Victoriano Hopinaldo, with striking 'terror into the hearts' of mutineers. In the trial transcript, Williams stated that when a stable fatigue detail refused to work, he and the first sergeant went into the barracks and 'after a little bit of persuasion' got the men to go to the stables and to drill. Later the same day, Williams told the first sergeant that all men had to be present at a formation that evening. When the men refused, Williams and Hopinaldo returned to the barracks, Hopinaldo with a *bolo* (a long-bladed knife) in one hand and a club in the other. Most of the men agreed to have nothing further to do with the mutiny. Williams may have drawn his pistol on one or both occasions, but this was not mentioned at the trial. William Garraway, an officer who served with the 57th Infantry after the mutiny, wrote decades later that he had been told Lt Joseph Walecka of G Company charged into the barracks with a baseball bat in hand and 'such obvious determination' to use it that his men promptly fell in for drill. Prosser's account makes no mention of Walecka.

49 Prosser, 'Mutiny', pp. 18–19.

50 Carraway, 'Mutiny of the Philippine Scouts'; *Philippines Herald* (12 July 1924).

51 Trial testimony, pp. 818–21, CM 162932, RG 153, NA.

52 Wood diary, 12 July 1924, Wood Papers. All of the charged and convicted Scouts were privates and corporals, but two sergeants suspected of involvement were arrested, Aurelio Fajardo and a man named Peralta. Fajardo told a reporter for the *Philippines Herald* (26 August, 13 September 1924) that he had served in the regular army in California and along the Mexican border before returning to the Philippines and enlisting in the Scouts in 1920. He had been in the 57th Infantry before transferring to the 12th Medical Regiment.

53 Unsworn statement by Tomas Riveral, reprinted in 'Review by the Board of Review', p. 29, CM 162921, RG 153, NA. Though Riveral emphasised the difficulties for families of Scouts,

he was unmarried, reportedly kept a room in Manila, wore civilian clothes after hours and subscribed to several American magazines.

- 54 See Radios, TAG to HPD, 7 February 1925, and HPD to TAG, 14 February 1925, copies included in the court martial file, and Remission orders (Special Orders 34, 111, 114, 117, 121 and 125, HPD, series 1926). See also clipping, *Washington Star* (10 June 1926), in BIA 1877–132, RG 350, NA. One of the ringleaders sentenced to ten years in prison, Gregorio Magalit, wrote a letter to the army in 1972 stating he was released from Bilibid in 1932. According to the local press, there may have been a plan to send those convicted to Guam, but it was too expensive. The mutineers left 600 wives, children and dependants in the McKinley Scout *barrio*. The chaplain of the 12th Medical Regiment and officers' wives set about raising funds and gathering foodstuffs for these 'disconsolate souls' until they were 'able to find employment and other means of livelihood'.
- 55 One, ringleader Magalit, re-emerged a half-century later to ask the army for a copy of the trial transcript for his memoirs. The cost of reproduction proved beyond his means. If Magalit did publish his book, no copy has found its way to a major library. Then Corporal Magalit had figured prominently in the trial. His officers had used him to interpret the articles of war to striking soldiers, unaware he was one of the strike instigators.
- 56 Prosser, 'Mutiny', pp. 24–5; Wood Diary, 12 July 1924; letter, Wood to Secretary of War, 22 July 1924, Wood Papers.
- 57 Joseph R. Hayden, *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. 19.
- 58 'Basic Plan—Brown, Philippine Department, 1923', 15 January 1924, copy in Special Projects, Harbor Defense, Philippines, RG 407, NA. For 'tribal' makeup of Filipino units (except the coast artillery), see 'Tribal Classification of Units of the Philippine Division', in Prosser, 'Mutiny', p. 33.
- 59 Prosser, 'Mutiny', pp. 2–5; Ruggles, 'Causes', p. 18.
- 60 Wood diary, 12 July 1924, Wood Papers; Ruggles, 'Causes', p. 18.
- 61 George Treat to James Harbord, 2 October 1921, AG no. 320, Philippine Department, RG 407, NA; 'Charles W. Loucks Oral History, Senior Officers Oral History Program', 1984, pp. 125–6, Charles Loucks Papers, MHI. Treat commanded Camp Stotsenburg in 1920–1. Loucks was stationed at Fort Mills in 1919–21.
- 62 Ruggles, 'Causes', p. 19.
- 63 45th Regiment (PS) records for 1924–32 show soldiers of virtually every 'tribe' mixed at company level throughout the regiment. Exceptions were Companies A and B, from non-Christians in northern Luzon and stationed at Baguio, and Company C, recruited from non-Christians and stationed at Zamboanga. See 'History of the Forty-fifth Infantry (Philippine Scouts), USA', n.d. [c. 1924–5] with tribal composition chart, 20 November 1932, appended. Copy in Edward Almond Papers, MHI.
- 64 Comparative pay scales are in the *Army Register*. In 1926 Congress modified the 1901 reorganisation act terms to stipulate Scouts receive allowances (travel pay, commutation of quarters, heat and light) at rates to be set by the Secretary of War (i.e. not more than regular army rates). *US Statutes at Large*, 44, pt 2, p. 496 (public law 208, 10 May 1926). The 1901 act had allowed these payments but had not required them.
- 65 Hagood, 'Summary of statement'; Prosser to Maj. J.J. Bain, 4 Sept. 1924, MID 10582–59/12, RG 165, NA.
- 66 McIntyre to War Plans Division, 'Recent "strike"...', 28 July 1924, WPD 1799, RG 165, NA.
- 67 'Hearings before the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations in Charge of War Department Appropriation Bill, 1936', pp. 165–6, microfiche edn, H694.
- 68 Re-enlistment rates were calculated from the published *Annual Reports* of the War Department. Comment on the low number of desertions is found in *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1934* (Washington, DC, 1934), p. 180. For VD infection rates, see

Siler, 'Prevention and Control of Venereal Diseases', pp. 16–17. The 1924 infection rate was eleven per 1000 soldiers; the 1925 rate was seven per 1000.

69 R.T.Taylor, ACS for Military Intelligence, Philippine Department, 'Digest of confidential information furnished the department commander during the month of July, 1932', 1 August 1932, MID 10582–90/5; 'Digest of confidential information furnished the department commander during the month of December, 1932', 1 January 1933, MID 10582–90/6, RG 165, NA.

70 *Philippines Herald* (14 July 1924), quoted in Prosser, 'Mutiny', p. 21; translation from *Ang-Watawat* (19 May 1924), article reprinted in Prosser, 'Mutiny', appendix, p. 23; letter, Arthur Fischer (an army reserve officer living in the Philippines) to Col. Leroy Eltinge, 26 October 1924, WPD 1799–4, RG 165, NA.

71 John W. Whitman, *Bataan: Our Last Ditch* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990).

## 8

# Colonial forces in British Burma

## A national army postponed

*Robert H. Taylor*

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

After the conquest of the Konbaung kingdom of the Burmese Empire, British Burma was governed as an integral province of the British Indian Empire. Burma did not become a self-standing colony in its own right until 1 April 1937 when the Government of India and Government of Burma Acts of 1935 came into effect. Prior to that time, the British Indian army was responsible for the external and internal defence of the colony. Even after the separation of Burma from India, when defence became the responsibility of the Governor of Burma, in terms of imperial defence Burma was always seen as a satellite of India. It was the inability of the British to use the Indian army on the eve of Indian independence to put down a potential nationalist uprising in Burma following the Second World War that ensured that the colony received independence as early as January 1948.

The first British administrations of Burmese territory experimented with raising local troops but this experiment was abandoned after three decades. After the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824–6, the British raised two local corps, one of Maghs or Arakanese in Arakan and one of Mons in Tenasserim, but these were both disbanded in 1858 following the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny in India when policy on raising local corps was changed. One company of Burma Sappers and Miners was raised from the former forces of the king of Burma following the third Anglo-Burmese war in 1886, but no further recruitment of Burmese took place until the First World War. The exigencies of the war, however, encouraged imperial recruitment of all groups, as occurred twenty years later at the commencement of the Second World War in Europe.

Following the annexation of upper Burma in 1885 and the neutralisation of what became Thailand's Chao Phraya valley at the end of the nineteenth century, the primary task of the British Indian army in Burma became internal security. Indian troops were frequently used to control the country and its extensive border areas, especially during the ten years of armed resistance that followed the dethronement of the last Burmese king in 1886 and again during the Saya San peasants' revolt in the early 1930s.<sup>2</sup> At the height of the resistance to the British in 1887, more than 40,000 Indian and British troops were deployed in the province, more than twice as many as would be stationed there 30 years later. The Indian army thus served as a strategic reserve to the British in Burma.<sup>3</sup>

It was Indian strategic interests that helped to prompt the final annexation of Burma and the abolition of the Konbaung dynasty in the first place. One of the reasons advanced for the eventual abolition of the Burmese monarchy, after Britain seized lower Burma (Pegu) in 1852, was the potential threat to the security of British India that would be posed if France were to gain dominant influence in the upper Irrawaddy valley and the

Shan plateau. However, after the 1893 agreement between France and Britain to neutralise the Chao Phraya valley in neighbouring Siam, there was no longer an obvious external threat to India and Burma from the east until the early 1940s. With China weakened by internal disorder and external penetration, Laos and Vietnam under French control, Siam for all practical purposes within the British sphere of influence and India part of the same empire, few in Burma or elsewhere in the British Empire felt there was any threat to the external security of the colony even after the rise of Japanese militarism in the 1930s.

Burmese historians have summarised the feeble British efforts to recruit their countrymen in the twentieth century thus:

During the First World War, four battalions of the 70th Burma Rifles were raised, of which only one consisted of Bamars [Burmans]; a Burman Company was raised in the 85th Burma Rifles, a unit largely drawn from the Burma Military Police; and three additional companies of Burma Sappers and Miners were also created of which the first company was made up mostly of Bamar. In addition, seven Burmese Mechanical Transport Companies, and a Chin and Bamar Labour Corps were also raised. All these units served overseas and rendered good service, one Company of Burma Sappers and Miners distinguishing themselves in Mesopotamia at the crossing of the Tigris. However, after the War, the military shortcomings of Bamars were emphasised and it was decided to cease recruitment of Bamars and to recruit hill people. During 1923–1925, Bamars were gradually discharged from all the units except the Burma Sappers and Miners which was reduced to its original one company after the War. In 1929, the Burma Sappers and Miners too was disbanded despite protests in the Legislative Council.<sup>4</sup>

‘The primary role of the Army in Burma was “Internal Security”.’<sup>5</sup> After each of the three Anglo-Burmese wars, troops from the British Indian army were retained in Burma to garrison the towns and maintain control until civilian administrations could be established to take over their tasks. These administrations were often headed by officers seconded from the Indian army. When, after the 1852 annexation of Pegu, and more especially after the 1886 deposition of King Thibaw, there was widespread disorder and rebellion against the new rulers, more troops were brought in to impose order.<sup>6</sup> During the twentieth century both regular British and Indian troops were always stationed in the country. In 1938 there were a total of 4713 British soldiers plus 358 officers in the country as well as 5922 Indian army or Burma army troops, of which more than half were Indian. The total population of the entire country was probably about 16 million at that time. The core of the British Burma army was created on 1 April 1937 by transferring units of the Indian army to the command of the Governor of Burma. The Burma Company of Sappers and Miners, with British officers and NCOs and 380 other ranks drawn from the plains-dwelling or Burman population, and the Battalion of the Burma Rifles composed of British and indigenous officers and 715 indigenous other ranks, all of whom came from the minority populated hill areas, formed the indigenous units of the British Burma army.<sup>7</sup>

Additional paramilitary force was present in British Burma in the form of the armed Military Police, which had been created from units of the Indian army after the suppression of the disorders following the 1852 annexation, and expanded in the same manner after 1886. Subsequently, they became known as the 'punitive police' for their use in punishing whole villages for non-payment of taxes. After the separation of Burma from India, the Military Police were divided into two units, one primarily for use in central Burma and under the control of the elected Burmese Home Minister, and the other, renamed the Burma Frontier Force, for use in the excluded or border areas but available for deployment in Burma proper and under the control of the Governor.<sup>8</sup> The troops of the Military Police, numbering 4294 men in 1941, were almost entirely Indian and were under the command of British and Indian officers seconded from the Indian army. At that time, the 10,973 strong Frontier Force was composed of 7376 Indians, with the remainder coming primarily from the hill areas of Burma.<sup>9</sup>

Following the separation of Burma from India, the colony had a thriving economy and buoyant tax revenues up to the outbreak of the war. This made it easier for the colonial government to contemplate expanding the tiny army it had inherited from India, and as the threat of external attack on Burma appeared to grow, at least in the eyes of officials in Rangoon if not in London, the regular colonial army in Burma was increased in size from the 6000 or so men in the force in 1937. By April 1941, the Burma army had grown to 9879, of which 26 per cent were now of Indian origin. However, when the Frontier Force and all other armed forces in the country were included, totalling 27,981 men, 37 per cent of all troops were Indians and only 13 per cent were Burmans. Nineteen per cent of the regular Burma army were Burmans, as shown in Table 8.1.

### **Recruitment policies applied in developing armed forces in British Burma**

The principles of ethnic differentiation applied to recruitment of troops in colonial India were also applied in Burma. Indian officers prepared handbooks outlining the alleged military attributes of various 'tribes' and 'races', in reality linguistic and cultural communities. Details of the time of year for and methods of recruitment were also outlined. Some hill tribe groups, such as the Kachins and Karens, many of whom were Christian converts, were favoured. Majority group Burmans were not sought for military service. The low proportion of

*Table 8.1* Strength (other than officers) of the  
British Burma Army and the Frontier Force on 30  
April 1941 by class (i.e. ethnicity)

<i>Class</i>	<i>Regular army</i>	<i>Garrison companies</i>	<i>Burma auxiliary force</i>	<i>Burma territorial force</i>	<i>Burma frontier force</i>	<i>Total</i>
Burman	1,893	52	362	1,189	246	3,742
Karen	2,797	476	171	939	399	4,782



Kachin	852	377	5	36	855	2,125
Chin	1,258	362	2	7	978	2,607
Shan			1	940	139	1,680
Yunnanese	32	12				44
Lahu					49	49
Wa					29	29
Indian	2,578	112	73	120	7,376	10,259
Chinese	330	22	16			368
Other <sup>a</sup>	137		2,732	25	2	2,896
Total	9,876	1,391	3,368	3,272	10,073	27,981

<sup>a</sup> British, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Burmans, Sino-Burmans.

Source: Burma Office File 66/41.

Burmans recruited was the result of deliberate policy rather than an aversion to military service on the part of this section of the population.

From 1887 until near the end of the British period, except briefly during the First World War, it was general army policy not to recruit and train infantrymen from the plains and delta because, it was argued, they were too expensive to maintain in comparison with Indian troops and less prepared to accept the methods of discipline and training of the Indian army. Moreover, as a matter of political policy, it was thought imprudent to train and arm a large number of Burmans because they had only been conquered in the previous century and, as in the terminology of the British Indian army, a 'martial race' would perhaps be more of a hindrance than an asset to the maintenance of British rule.<sup>10</sup> The unwillingness of the army to recruit men from Burma proper was interpreted by Burmese nationalists as part of the 'divide and rule' strategy of the imperialists. The British government undoubtedly viewed using Indian and hill area recruited troops as the safest method of maintaining internal security in central Burma.

Major C.M.Enriquez, an officer of the Burma Rifles (Kachins), compiled in the early 1920s a military ethnography, which has subsequently been reprinted as a simplified guide to the ethnic diversity of Myanmar.<sup>11</sup> Displaying the confusion that still makes any discussion of the 'races of Burma' so politically contentious, the volume divides the population of the country both ethnographically and geographically, implicitly acknowledging that geography, education and economic conditions were more important in motivating men to join the colonial army than notions of 'race'. Enriquez first divides the population into the 'big races', i.e. the Burman, Karen, Shan, Kachin and Chin, thus presenting the ethnic map of Myanmar set out in the 1947 constitution. He then presents the 40 'little races' of his account under three labels: Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burmans and Tai-Chinese. Under the Mon-Khmer, for example, he discusses categories of the Talaing or Mon, Wa, La and Tai Loi, Palaung, Miao, Yao and Padaung. But the Mon, he remarks, are usually recruited as Burmans. Among the 'Tai-Chinese' he categorised the Shan, Karen, Taungthu, Kokang Chinese, Shan Tayoks and Ho. The Chins and Kachins, and a

variety of subgroups, he includes among the Tibeto-Burmans. Consistency of classification was not a strong point of Major Enriquez's methodology.

The level of confusing detail in Enriquez's manual is intriguing. For example, consider his account of the 'Gauris', a subsection of the Kachin, who occupied 14 hill villages in Bhamo District. He thought they were themselves a 'subsection' of the 'Lahpai' or were perhaps 'Atsis' who once had a Lahpai chief. The Gauris were subdivided into seven sections, the Lazum, Lazing, Nangzing, Kawlu, Kumbau, Kareng and Changma. 'But in any case, though they hold themselves rather aloof, they are obviously allied to the Kachins.' They spoke a patois of Kachins and adopted Chinese babies found among them. Because of the growing population densities in their area, there was significant migration to the plains of Bhamo and many men were recruited into the army.<sup>12</sup>

Enriquez's account makes it clear that Burmans were not recruited into the colonial army, nor were Shans. While this was a political decision with regard to the Burmans, the Shans were believed unlikely to show any enthusiasm for military service, perhaps because of the relative ease of life on the Shan plateau. Were recruitment to be attempted again, according to Enriquez, the cooperation of the Sawbwars, the recognised rulers of the Shans, would be required. Among the Karens, recruitment among the hill Karen was less successful than among the plain Karen, though elders, missionaries and pastors were helpful in convincing young men to join the forces. Among Chins and Kachins, men who had served or were serving in the forces were good recruiting agents.<sup>13</sup>

While one result of British policy had been to maintain a large proportion of foreign (i.e. British and Indian) troops in Burma, politically more important for the eventual government of the country was the disproportionate (in terms of share of the total population) underrecruitment of the major Burman population. While Burmans made up 75 per cent of the population, in 1931 they represented merely 12 per cent of the indigenous troops, while the Karen, Kachins and Chin minorities, who composed 13 per cent of the population, formed 83 per cent of the indigenous troops.<sup>14</sup> This anomalous situation would not be resolved until the Japanese assisted the Burmans to organise an anti-British nationalist force prior to the Japanese invasion of British Burma in the Second World War.

Even on the eve of the Japanese invasion of Burma and after the commencement of the war in Europe, as the British were attempting to raise troops for Imperial defence from all parts of the Empire, recruitment remained heavily skewed towards the minority communities. During 1940 it was decided to raise four additional battalions of the Burma Rifles. The new 5th Battalion was to be composed of Burman, Kachin and Chin troops in equal proportions.



Map 8.1 Administrative divisions of British Burma and Frontier Areas, 1930s.

Source: Adapted from Ganga Singha, *Burma Parliamentary Companion* (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1940), p. 11.

The 6th Battalion was to be half Karen and one-quarter each Chin and Burman. The 7th Battalion was to be raised from the existing Burma Police and Burma Military Police, being about 75 per cent Burman and Karen and 25 per cent Indians (Kumarori and Gurkha), and the 8th Battalion was to be raised from Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims already in the Frontier Force. In addition to raising replacement Indian troops for the Frontier Force from India, it was intended to raise three new Frontier Force companies, two of which would be Burman.<sup>15</sup> Of the new recruits into the Burma Army between the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939 and 15 January 1941, 28.5 per cent were Burman, 25.5 per cent were Karen, 9.4 per cent were Kachin, 10.2 per cent were Chin, 4 per cent were Shan, 2.7 per cent were Yunnanese speaking inhabitants of the Northern Shan States, 3.2 per cent were Indians, 0.2 per cent were Chinese and 16.6 per cent were others including Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Burmans and Sino-Burmans.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Burman political response to colonial recruitment policy**

The explicitly discriminatory policy of the British in developing colonial armed forces in Myanmar led to a number of differing responses. Among the Karen, Chin and Kachin communities, from whom the British positively encouraged recruitment, a degree of loyalty to Britain and pride in colonial military service developed. This was demonstrated by the loyalty of many of these troops during the Second World War when they remained loyal to Britain in defeat and provided vital support for operations to reconquer the country from the Japanese. The loyalty of the minority communities was enhanced because many of them became Christian. Military service and missionary activities became routes to modernity and social advancement for young men from what had been previously extremely poor and politically unsophisticated communities.

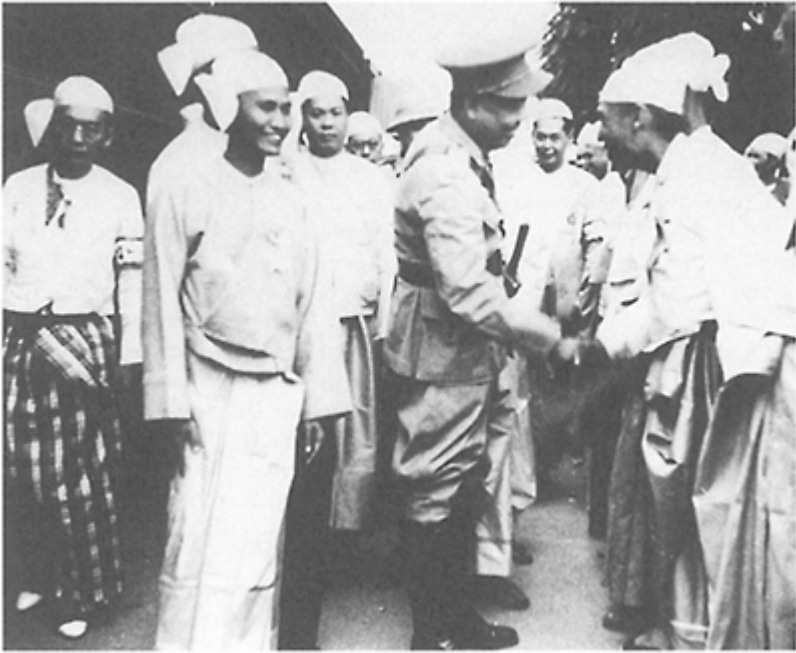
Among the Burman majority of the population, however, the discriminatory policies of the British served to fuel further the nationalism that had developed during the twentieth century. During the 1920s, the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), the first major Burmese nationalist organisation, repeatedly called on the British to recruit their fellow countrymen into the army. By the early 1930s, their thwarted demand for the creation of a national army led to a new form of expression for Burmese nationalism through the formation of so-called volunteer corps by nationalist political parties. The first of these, the *Ye Tat* or Green Army, was founded in 1930.<sup>17</sup> The *Ye Tat* founder was U Maung Gyi, a conservative politician much trusted by the British. Under Maung Gyi's leadership, the army was permitted to drill using staves and have weapons training but was unarmed. Inspiring a memory of the military prowess of armies of the Burmese kings, the army, under its flag called the *Thayegyi-aunglan* (the victory flag of the brave) with a red background and a green peacock in the centre, marched out on annual National Day occasions and other patriotic events.<sup>18</sup>

Just two weeks after the *Ye Tat* held its first parade at the front of the Myoma National School in Rangoon on 1 June 1930, the *Dobama Asiayon* (We Burmans or Our Burma Association), also known as the *Thakin* movement,<sup>19</sup> formed its own volunteer corps. Known as the *Bama Letyon Tat* (Burman Forearm Army<sup>20</sup>), it held its first parade at the Botataung sports field in a much less salubrious section of the capital. In keeping with the more strongly nationalist, non-cooperative approach to the British of the *Dobama*

*Asiayon* in contrast to the politics of U Maung Gyi, the *Bama Letyon Tat* sported red shirted uniforms, signalling clearly their revolutionary intent.<sup>21</sup>

The volunteer corps movement became more widespread after the 1936 students' strike, which brought a new generation of youthful nationalists such as Thakin Aung San and Thakin Nu into national prominence.<sup>22</sup> This came simultaneously with the rise of fascism in Europe, a phenomenon that was closely followed by the politically alert in Myanmar. The volunteer corps were not armed, but they did have uniforms, usually khaki shorts and shirts of distinguishing colours. Their most important function, according to a former British civil servant in Burma, was usually the extortion of money from wealthy individuals through the threat of beatings or the destruction of property.<sup>23</sup> There were occasional clashes between the different 'armies' but they were never a serious threat to domestic peace.<sup>24</sup> The volunteer corps often marched through towns to demonstrate their support for the cause of their party and doubtless to indicate the military or perhaps revolutionary capacity of the Burmans, then being denied by the British. For example, in February, 1938, there were 105 parades conducted by the volunteer corps. In May of the same year, there were 201 parades conducted by the *Ye Tat*, the *Dahma Tat* (Hewing Knife Army), the *Bama Letyon* and the *Thanmni Tat* (Steel Army).<sup>25</sup> The last of these was formed by the All Burma Students Union, while the *Dahma Tat* was an affiliate of Dr Ba Maw's *Hsinyeitha Wunthanu* or Poor Man's Nationalist Party.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, the private armies became more active. The *Ye Tat*, officially known in English as the All-Burma Volunteers, offered its services to the government for the defence of Burma, as did sections of other volunteer corps. In a resolution to the Secretary of State for Burma offering its services and requesting official recognition as part of the defence forces of Burma, the Burma National Volunteer Council noted that the aims of the *Ye Tat* were '(1) to promote physical development; (2) to inculcate good morals; (3) to instil discipline; and (4) to defend the country'. The resolution went on to note that the organisation was 'non-political and non-sectarian'. Though normally considered to be an organisation that owed its allegiance to U Maung Gyi, the President of the Senate and the first Burman Defence Councillor in the Governor's cabinet, its Council was composed of politicians from various of the older political parties that cooperated with the British. Among them were: U Ba Win, Member of the House of Representatives and Mayor of Rangoon; Captain Aye, later a minister in U Saw's government; Dr Ba Han, Dr Ba Maw's brother; U Thwin, a wealthy Senator; and U Aye Maung, H.C.Khoo and M.M.Ohn Ghine, all members of the House of Representatives and representing different cooperating nationalist parties. Other members of the Council included two lawyers, one inspector of national schools, one school superintendent, one businessman, one editor and the Secretary of the House of Representatives.



*Figure 8.1* U Saw in his Galon Tat general's uniform, greeting supporters at Shwebo railway station, 1941.

*Source:* Courtesy of Captain U Aye.

Despite the belief held by British officials in London that the *Ye Tat* was neither non-sectarian nor non-political, it had received tacit official recognition by the Governor of Burma. The Council of the Green Army noted in its resolution to the Secretary of State:

Detachments of the National Volunteers have often been called upon to maintain order at public functions, such as meetings, exhibitions, processions, etc. At the Annual Burma Arts and Crafts Exhibition, conducted under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor, the general policing work has always been entrusted to the National Volunteers of Rangoon. His Excellency the present Governor of Burma has twice inspected the guard of honour provided by the National Volunteers of Rangoon at Jubilee Hall.

The Council further noted in its request that the corps underwent regular training, especially in drill, and that none of the contingents of the *Ye Tat* had been involved in communal (i.e. anti-Indian and anti-Chinese) riots that occurred in the country in the mid-1930s.<sup>26</sup>

As this request for recognition suggests, the organisers of the *Ye Tat*, and of similar volunteer corps as well, saw in them something more than just groups of young men

enlisted in support of a political party. They were seen as a means of developing the capacity of self-defence for Burma at a time when the British felt that the Burmans were not fit for military service, and of instilling discipline and patriotism in the young men of the country.

By October 1939, there were organised, in addition to the *Ye Tat*, various units of town guards or *Ka Kwy-yay Aphwe*, *Bama Letyon Tat*, *Thamani Tat*, *Dahma Tat* and *Galon Tat* of the rising politician U Saw and his *Myochit* (Patriots) Party.<sup>27</sup> With the growing doubts about Burma's military security following the outbreak of the war in Europe and with the increase in ethnic antagonisms in the country-side following major communal riots in 1938 and 1939, other groups were formed. Among these was the All Burma *Aryan Veer Dal*, formed by prominent Hindus in Rangoon to coordinate the activities of the Hindu Volunteer Corps.<sup>28</sup> Its activities may have been directed as much towards the Muslim community as towards the defence of Hindu interests against Burman groups. In Mandalay, a *Thathama Alingyaung* (Light of Religion) volunteer corps was organised in June 1940 by followers of the then Premier, U Pu.<sup>29</sup>

Table 8.2 summarises the rise and decline of various volunteer corps in late 1940 and the first half of 1941. The June 1941 Monthly Intelligence Summary, from which these figures are drawn, noted that not all the new corps survived very long. Some never got beyond the paper stage. In the next six months an additional 72 corps were formed, of which 59 were village defence corps organised at the instigation of the police. Of the 125 *Bama Letyon Tat* units in existence in December 1941, few were reported to be active and those that were tended to be located in larger towns and cities such as Rangoon, Magwe, Myingyan and Tharrawaddy.<sup>30</sup>

*Table 8.2 Gains, losses and total number of  
Burmese volunteer corps for the eight and a half  
months ending 15 June 1941*

	<i>Increases</i>	<i>Decreases</i>	<i>Total live units</i>
<i>Bama Letyon Tat</i>	50	30	123
<i>Galon Tat</i>	29	8	91
<i>Dahma Tat</i>	24	3	31
<i>Ye Tat</i>	19	1	10
<i>Thamani Tat</i>	3	6	37
Town guards	46	11	56
Village defence forces	56	43	250
Fire brigades	12	16	25
Miscellaneous corps	31	16	75
Total	274	118	743

*Source:* Burma Monthly Intelligence Summary, Volume IV, No. 6 for June 1941, 1 July 1941. Burma File I 37, Part IV.

Of all the volunteer corps, U Saw's was probably the best trained and equipped. From the time he announced its formation in April 1938, at the Shwe-Sethaw Pagoda at Minbu, it grew rapidly and relied heavily on the assistance of former Burman members of the Indian Army.<sup>31</sup> By 1941, as noted above, it was the second largest and fastest growing of the volunteer corps even though it was the last to be organised.

To organise the *Galon Tat*, U Saw wrote to followers in the districts and received replies from 24 towns. From that number he expected to recruit 5000 volunteers and ultimately to have a following of 50,000.<sup>32</sup> The *Galon Tat* were to have their own Cadet Officers' Training Institution for which Saw attempted to buy an aeroplane and a seaplane for instructional purposes. He wrote to the manager of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in June 1938, making enquiries about purchasing these.<sup>33</sup> In December 1938 Saw made further enquiries about purchasing an aeroplane, this time from a London firm. He was able in the meantime to acquire a second-hand motorboat<sup>34</sup> and later purchased a plane for his private use.<sup>35</sup> The constitution of the *Galon Tat* as drafted by U Saw stated that their object was 'to train Burmans to be useful and healthy citizens'. Saw was the first Commander-in-Chief and was assisted by an Army Council of three members. The *Tat* was divided into Districts, Subdivisions and Townships to correspond with the Civil Districts, Subdivisions and Townships.<sup>36</sup>

The *Galon Tat* was apparently designed initially by Saw for two purposes. Like the volunteer corps organised by younger nationalists in the Students Union and the *Dobama Asiayon*, the revolutionary potential of the group was obvious. Should the opportunity arise for a rebellion the *Tat* would have served as a nucleus of Saw's own force; but also, and more likely, it was to serve as the nucleus of his campaign in any future elections. When, in 1941, it was agreed between the Governor and then Premier U Saw to postpone the next scheduled election because of the war, that purpose was put on hold. But by then Saw may have had greater ambitions for the *Galon Tat* as the nucleus of a Burmese national army under Japanese tutelage.<sup>37</sup> That distinction, however, fell to his one time political ally and subsequent opponent, Thakin Aung San, and the *Dobama Asiayon*.

### War and nationalism

The saga of Thakin, later General, Aung San and the Thirty Comrades, which has entered into Burmese political folklore as a tale of youthful heroism and nationalist bravery, reveals the latent desire to bear arms in defence of the nation that had been building up in the plains during the years of British denial of Burman military prowess.<sup>38</sup> During the two years that the British were doubling the size of the army of Burma while maintaining a small proportion of Burman troops, the Thirty Comrades were being trained abroad in preparation for the creation of a Burmese nationalist force to enter Burma in alliance with their Japanese mentors.

During December 1941 and January 1942 the first troops were raised in Bangkok and the southern peninsula of Burma and this small core grew rapidly during the subsequent months. By May, the Burma Independence Army (BIA) had grown to 23,000 ill-trained and ill-equipped troops. Because of the areas through which they marched and collected their new recruits, the BIA was predominantly a Burman force.<sup>39</sup> As the BIA and the



Japanese never effectively penetrated the hill areas during the war, the prospect of recruiting from the same communities that the British had recruited from never arose.<sup>40</sup>

The nationalist determination and enthusiasm of the youth Burmese army could not be gainsaid, and they posed many problems for the Japanese as they attempted to create order in the country. Soon the BIA was regrouped and renamed as the smaller Burma Defence Army. This was the force, renamed again the Burma National Army (BNA), that turned against the Japanese in February and March 1945 and eventually reached a tenuous *modus vivendi* with the returning British army under Lord Louis Mountbatten.

A great worry for Burmese nationalists at the end of the war was that the British, as was declared policy at the time, would attempt to roll back the political clock to the situation that existed before the war. British plans were that only after a period of reconstruction lasting perhaps as long as seven years would Burma once more begin evolving to the position of a self-governing entity in the empire/ commonwealth. Such a rolling back of the clock implied the dissolution of the Burma National Army, renamed the Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF), built up during the war.

Thus at the first meeting of nationalist leaders held at the end of the war to form the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), the first resolution passed was for the preservation of the nationalist army. The meeting, known as the Naythuein Mass Meeting, held on 19 August 1945 and chaired by General Aung San, was attended by representatives of all the political parties and groups then extant in the country. Following a lengthy speech by Aung San and the reading of a manifesto on the current world political situation by Aung San's brother-in-law and the leader of the Burma Communist Party, Thakin Than Tun, the meeting passed a number of resolutions, the first of which stated:

- 1(a) That the proposal to absorb the PBF into the British Army in Burma which exists in name only, be cancelled and that instead, the British Army be absorbed into the PBF, with officers from indigenous races only.
- (b) That a Committee composed of British and PBF representatives be formed to deal with the reorganisation of this new Burma Army.<sup>41</sup>

At least in terms of the agenda of the AFPFL in the heady first days after the war, the protection of the Burma army took priority over the other two resolutions passed at the meeting calling for the formation of a temporary National Government and the unity of the people of the country. At the Kandy Conference held on 7 September 1945, Aung San and Mountbatten agreed to the absorption of up to 5200 PBF troops into the regular British Burma army. Thus commenced the final stage of the development of the colonial army.<sup>42</sup> Aung San resigned his commission to lead the AFPFL, leaving few of his former nationalist colleagues to remain in the army. The senior of these was Colonel Ne Win, who became commander of the armed forces in 1949 and ruled the country from 1962 until 1988. An army postponed does not necessarily result in an army denied and the Burma army that governs the country today is the direct descendent of the Burmese nationalist force that the British forestalled. Many of their armed opponents, particularly in the Karen National Union, have their mythical origins in the distant past of the first British Burma army.

## Notes

- 1 As this chapter deals primarily with the colonial period in Myanmar or Burma, colonial terminology is used rather than the system of transliteration currently prevailing. Thus, the country is referred to as Burma, rather than Myanmar. Ethnic groups are similarly designated, Burmans for the majority Bamar and Karen for Kayin. Other transliterations are the same in colonial and contemporary usage. In this chapter, Burmese is used to designate all of the indigenous population of the country. I have also followed colonial usage for place names, as with Rangoon for Yangon, Pegu for Bago and Tenasserim for Tanintharyi.
- 2 On the Saya San revolt, see Patricia Herbert, *The Hsaya San Rebellion (1930–1932) Reappraised* (Melbourne: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper No. 27, 1982).
- 3 As the line of command continued through to the upper reaches of the Indian army, however, military careers were made not in Burma but in the larger Indian context.
- 4 Kyaw Win, Mya Han and Thein Hlaing, *The 1947 Constitution and the Nationalities* (Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre and Innwa Publishing House, 1999), Volume 1, pp. 28–9. It was often said after the war that the Burmese were too undisciplined for modern military service. This was justified by retelling the story of a unit of Burma Sappers and Miners on parade in the Middle East, being inspected by a high ranking officer from London. The Burmese troops were allegedly standing at ease when their British officers gave them the order ‘right turn’ without giving the prior command of ‘attention’. The men dutifully followed orders but the result was that the men in front were gouged by bayonets while troops behind were hit in the shins with rifle butts. The Burmese instantly saw the resulting melee as humorous and gleeful disorder ensued. Unfortunately, the visiting London dignity did not appreciate the ridiculousness of the situation.
- 5 Notes on the Land Forces of Burma, app. III (n.d., [1938]), typescript, India Office File L/WS/1/276.
- 6 See Ni Ni Myint, *Burma’s Struggle against British Imperialism, 1885–1895* (Rangoon: The Universities Press, 1983), p. 156.
- 7 Notes on the Land Forces of Burma, p. 2.
- 8 After April 1937, an elected cabinet, responsible to the wholly elected Burma House of Representatives, had responsibility for all government in ‘Burma proper’ other than foreign affairs, defence and finance. The Home Minister was responsible for law and order and the administration of justice. The border or frontier areas were excluded from the electoral process and, being governed ‘indirectly’, remained under the control of the Governor, who administered them through a separate civil service and locally appointed ‘traditional’ officials. The introduction of different principles of rule—direct and indirect—in British Burma has undermined efforts to establish a unified nation-state ever since.
- 9 Statement Showing by Class [i.e. ethnicity] the Strength (other than officers) of the Burmese Army and the Frontier Force on the 30th April 1941. Burma Office File 66/41. Burma Office Files are in the India Office Records now housed at the British Library.
- 10 John Sydenham Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands Indies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), pp. 178–83.
- 11 E.M. Enriquez, *Races of Burma* (Handbooks for the Indian Army, Delhi: Manager of Publications, 2nd edn, 1933; reprinted Bangkok: Ava Publishing House, 1997).
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–4.
- 14 Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 184. See also Mary Patricia Callahan, ‘The Origins of Military Rule in Burma’ (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1996), p. 110.
- 15 Telegrams, Governor of Burma to the Secretary of State for Burma, 20 September and 18 October 1940. Burma Office File 13507/40.
- 16 *Burma Legislative Proceedings*, Vol. IX, 19 February 1941 (Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery, 1941), p. 124.

- 17 *Ye Tat* translates as Brave or Red Army but it was referred to as the Green Army by the British because the uniforms were that colour. *Tat* is alternatively translated as army, volunteer corps or troops, none of which quite catches the essence of another possible but ambiguous definition, 'a band of people assembled for collective action'. Myanmar Language Commission, *Myanmar-English Dictionary* (Yangon, 1993), p. 188.
- 18 Maung Maung, *From Sangha to Laity: Nationalist Movements in Burma, 1920–1940* (Delhi: Manohar for the Australian National University Monographs on South Asia series, No. 4, 1980), pp. 76–7.
- 19 *Thakin* was the term by which Europeans were expected to be addressed by Burmese, rather as Sahib was used in India. Burmese nationalists, insisting they were the rightful masters of Burma, took the title to themselves as an act of defiance and an implicit claim to power within Burmese society. The Thakin movement studied a number of Western political movements, including Marxism and also Sinn Féin, which was perhaps the inspiration for the organisation's name, *Dobama Asiayon*. See Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma, 1930–1938* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Monograph, 1988).
- 20 *Letyon* in Burmese, while literally the arm below the elbow, contains within it the concept of dominion through force of character or ability, as opposed to nepotism or hereditary right.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 235.
- 22 Aung San and Nu were officers of the students union at Rangoon University in 1936 and their expulsion from the university for publishing an allegedly malicious article in the student newspaper prompted the second Burma-proper wide student strike in Burmese nationalist history. Both eventually became leading figures in the *Dobama Asiayon*, and then went on to work with the Japanese and subsequently the British. Aung San was assassinated in 1947 while serving as effectively the Prime Minister of soon-to-be independent Burma and Nu succeeded him as Burma's first independent head of government.
- 23 Interview with F.S.V. Donnison, Indian Civil Service (retired), 14 December 1971.
- 24 Intelligence reports in 1937, 1938 and 1939 noted clashes between rival corps, often involving the Red Shirts or *Bama Letyon Tat* of the *Dobama Asiayon* and the corps of parties then in government. See Burma File I 20 and Burma File I 358.
- 25 *Ibid.* See also Maung Maung, *From Sangha to Laity*, p. 77.
- 26 Letter, Secretary of the Burma National Volunteer Council to the Secretary of State for Burma, 28 October 1939, and a minute on that letter by E. Donaldson, 11 December 1939, noting that the Secretary of State would not answer the letter. The Burma National Volunteers again petitioned the Secretary of State as well as the Governor and Premier of Burma in April 1941 for official recognition and assistance so that it could assist in the defence of Burma. Letter, Chairman, Burma National Volunteers, to Governor's Secretary (Secretary of State for Burma and Premier), 28 April 1941. Burma File 79/41.
- 27 Burma Defence Bureau Intelligence Summary, No. 10, 28 October 1939. Burma File I 358.
- 28 *Ibid.*, No. 1, 27 January 1940.
- 29 *Ibid.*, No. 6, 27 June 1940.
- 30 *Ibid.*, No. 12, 31 December 1941.
- 31 *Ibid.*, No. 4, 26 April 1938.
- 32 *Ibid.*, No. 5, 25 May 1938.
- 33 *Ibid.*, No. 6, 25 June 1938.
- 34 *Ibid.*, No. 12, 24 December 1938.
- 35 Interview with Captain U Aye, Rangoon, January 1975.
- 36 Home Secretary's Fortnightly Report, 21 July 1938. Burma File P 39, Part I.
- 37 U Saw was arrested in Tiberias in Palestine in 1942 while flying back to Rangoon following a visit to London to see the Secretary of State for Burma, and then on to Washington, where he had talks with the United States government. Having been deterred from crossing the Pacific to return home by the outbreak of the Second World War, he stopped at Lisbon, where his conversations with the Japanese embassy were intercepted by American naval

intelligence and passed to the British. Saw allegedly offered to lead a pro-Japanese government when he returned to Burma. He spent the duration of the war in a British prison in Uganda before returning to Burma after the war, where he was eventually hung for his role in the assassination of General Aung San. See Robert H. Taylor, 'The Relationship between Burmese Social Classes and British-Indian Policy on the Behaviour of the Burmese Political Elite, 1937–1942' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1974), pp. 625–46. See also Robert H. Taylor, 'Politics in Late Colonial Burma: The Case of U Saw', *Modern Asian Studies* 10, 2 (April 1976), pp. 161–94.

38 For scholarly accounts of this saga, see among others Angelene Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, 2001), pp. 57–95; Maung Maung (Dr), *Burma and General Ne Win* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1969), Chapter 4; Maung Maung (U), *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940–1948* (Edinburgh: Kiscadale, 1989), Chapter 2; and Dorothy Hess Guyot, 'The Political Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Burma' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1966), pp. 22–128.

39 See Guyot, 'The Political Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Burma', pp. 118–26.

40 Indeed, in the more remote hill areas, the British continued to recruit throughout the war.

41 Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 94, HQ CAS(B) Intelligence, 25 August 1945, reprinted in Hugh Tinker (ed.), *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944–1948*, Vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1983), pp. 408–10.

42 Lord Louis Mountbatten to Bogyoke Aung San, 7 September 1945, reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 459–60.



# Part 4

## Decolonisation

## 9

# **The impact of the Japanese occupation on colonial and anti-colonial armies in Southeast Asia**

*Abu Talib Ahmad*

### **Introduction**

The formation of colonial armies during the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia—called independence and volunteer armies—achieved results well beyond the initial aims of their Japanese sponsors. Given different modes of training, and deployed for various purposes, including resisting the West and internal pacification, the impact of these armies was to be varied, but nevertheless of considerable importance in postwar developments. Some of these forces eventually revolted against the Japanese, and many took part in the subsequent struggle for independence, or were used as political leverage in postwar politics.

Some authors have also emphasised that many of the most prominent postwar military (and to a lesser extent political) figures were products of Japanese military training. In addition, the Japanese themselves, in particular former officers of the imperial army, were quick to claim that they had contributed to the birth of postwar anti-colonial armies, and through them to the winning of independence.<sup>1</sup> There are, by contrast, scholars who view such claims with caution, as the rise to power of these Japanese-trained officers after 1945 was sometimes achieved through military coups against democratically elected civilian governments.<sup>2</sup>

The existing literature covers these themes in some detail, but its emphasis on Japanese colonial armies tends to overshadow the anti-Japanese resistance. In many cases misconceptions remain concerning the latter, and one of the aims of this chapter is to place them back on to the main stage. These anti-Japanese levies could be categorised by their origins into those that involved communists, those involving non-communists and those formed by groups that were ideologically antagonistic to communism.

Anti-Japanese armies that were formed at the very onset of the invasion, such as those in Vietnam, Malaya, Burma and the Philippines, were generally influenced by the left. Separate anti-Japanese levies, formed by non-communists, soldiers and former officials of the previous colonial regime, were raised from early 1942 onwards.<sup>3</sup> The communists, meanwhile, proved willing to work with non-communists, including even the previous colonial masters, as part of the united front strategy that had come into vogue in the second half of the 1930s.

There is no denying the effectiveness of these anti-Japanese levies or their importance in postwar political developments in Southeast Asia, when their remnants launched armed insurrections that were part of their revolutionary anti-imperialist or socio-political aims. In French Indochina the *Viet Minh* never relented on their anti-colonial struggle, despite the Japanese *coup de force* of March 1945, by which the Japanese dispensed with the French colonial government in Indochina. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the *Viet Minh* turned their resistance into a war of independence, directed against their former wartime allies, the French, and later also the Americans.

In Malaya, heightened anti-Japanese resistance from late 1943 saw the Japanese enlisting Malay youths into their colonial occupation forces to help the fight against the Chinese-dominated Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). This wartime tension contributed to ugly racial clashes, which occurred during and especially immediately after the occupation, especially in August and September 1945. In retrospect the racial animosities had their roots in the 1920s and early 1930s, by which time the Malays were outnumbered by the combined Chinese and Indian immigrants, rendering them a 'minority' in colonial Malaya. Subsequent views of the MPAJA, and the rather peripheral position it has been given in the national narrative, are coloured by the involvement of its former members in postwar armed insurrection, namely the Malayan Emergency of 1948–60.

In Thailand and the Philippines, meanwhile, the anti-Japanese resistance was a reflection of prewar antagonism between competing elites; the occupation period was to provide a new setting for established leaders to pursue old rivalries.<sup>4</sup> Hence people chose their sides, with and against the Japanese, based on their understanding of this competition and the possible gains. They were also reacting to Japanese policies at the local level.

In Indonesia, by contrast, Japanese-sponsored forces were more important than the minimal anti-Japanese activity. One area of vital importance was the mobilisation of the youth, or *pemuda*. This was, as Benda has rightly asserted, one of the most significant aspects of the occupation.<sup>5</sup> Even where these youth were given little formal military training, they were subjected to intense anti-West propaganda, and imbued with *seishin*, usually rendered as Japanese for 'spirit'. *Seishin* connotes a wide range of meaning, including soldierly spirit (valour, loyalty and discipline) and spiritual strength that could enable a numerically and technologically inferior force to triumph. To those who underwent wartime Japanese education, it meant never giving up under adverse circumstances, but also showing respect for elders, teachers, Japanese soldiers and civilians and the Japanese emperor. In the process of such training *pemuda* became much more critical of the West, and of Japan too. The *pemuda* in Indonesia have been the subject of extensive research because of the role they played in the subsequent Indonesian revolution and war of independence.<sup>6</sup>

For the other countries, notably Malaya (Malaysia from 1963), the local *pemuda* remain largely unknown and unappreciated, although they too played no small role during the most exciting period of Malaysia's political history. Anti-Western rhetoric made them move closer to the left of the political spectrum and critical of the reimposition of British rule after August 1945. Consequently they became targets of mass arrests in 1948 when the Emergency was proclaimed, and were subjected to lengthy jail sentences. For most of them, the enforced captivity in various detention centres spelt the



end of their active political career.<sup>7</sup> Except for those who went on to join the politically favoured United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), these nationalists remained largely unrecognised in the national narrative. In recent years some have tried to make a case for their inclusion into this narrative.<sup>8</sup>

### The occupation and colonial armies

There is a substantial literature on the Japanese colonial armies written by local participants, the Japanese sponsors and scholars. In the 1960s and 1970s there was much interest in these armies, some scholars championing them as modernising elements. This is in sharp contrast to the more negative views that have prevailed since the 1990s about the role of the military in countries such as Myanmar and Indonesia.

In the case of the Burma Independence Army (BIA), works published in Burmese were translated into Japanese and serialised in influential local journals like the *Shiroku* (Historical Record) of Kagoshima University. In addition, an important work on the *Minami Kikan* was translated into English by a Burmese scholar. Yet there is still a lacuna in our understanding of other wartime levies, such as the *giyugun* (volunteer army) or *giyutai* (volunteer corps) of Malaya and what happened to their members after 1945.<sup>9</sup>

We begin the discussion with the BIA, and here it suffices to outline the main thread of its development and to highlight certain issues.<sup>10</sup> The BIA was formed in December 1941 in Bangkok, based around the Thirty *Yebaw* (Comrades) who were trained by the Japanese army in Tokyo, in a Navy camp on Hainan and in Taiwan. Initially it numbered about 200 and was made up of Burmese and Shans, as well as 74 Japanese personnel. Its formation was part of a propaganda campaign to weaken the British by encouraging Burmese nationalists to side with Japan as part of a common struggle against Western imperialism.<sup>11</sup> Their numbers continued to swell with the progress of the Japanese conquest of Burma, which commenced in earnest from January 1942. By May it had reached such uncontrollable numbers that it posed problems for the Japanese military bureaucracy. This fact, and its pursuit of independence, abetted in opposition to the official line by its Japanese head, Suzuki Keiji, necessitated its dissolution and reorganisation after July 1942.

The reorganised army, now called the Burma Defence Army (BDA), was composed of three battalions, with the original Thirty *Yebaw* forming its officer corps. Later, four more battalions were added, bringing the BDA's total number to about 4000; it further swelled to about 15,000 by April 1943. In August of the same year, the BDA was reorganised again, as the Burma National Army (*Bama Tatmadaw*), and in early 1945 simply as the Burma Army.

Despite these reorganisations, its structure changed little. Reorganisation also failed to diminish Japanese suspicions of their Burmese protégés. The new army was also provided with a military academy, which managed to train five classes of officer candidates, three classes of NCOs and one of air force pilots—with a combined total of fewer than 2500 personnel—before Japanese surrender.<sup>12</sup> As pointed out by Lebra, many of the officers who reached the higher ranks of the post-independence Burmese army by the 1970s were products of this Japanese training, and so were many Burmese diplomats.<sup>13</sup>

The formation of the BIA was preceded by the formation of the *Minami Kikan*, a secret military intelligence organisation, on 16 January 1941. This was effectively run by the aforementioned Suzuki Keiji, an intelligence officer who had been entrusted to cut the Burma route—the supply line from Burma to the Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai Shek) regime in China. The *Minami Kikan* was also charged with making contacts with Burmese nationalists, for the purpose of organising sabotage. This latter task coincided with the 1939 decision of young Burmese nationalists such as Thakin Aung San to seek armed foreign assistance to further the cause of Burmese independence.

The lack of a coherent Japanese policy on Burma, according to Lebra, enabled Suzuki and the *Minami Kikan*, which created the BIA, to develop a viability of its own. Yet the *Minami Kikan* was not free from endemic problems, including interservice rivalry, rivalry between civilians and military officers (especially those from the *Nakano Gakko* or army intelligence school) and its failure to fit in with the military bureaucracy in Burma, the region or Tokyo. Fortunately for us, we do have at least one source that allows us a glimpse of the rivalry between the *Nakano Gakko* graduates of the *Minami Kikan* and its important civilian figures, such as Higuchi Takeshi, Inao Mizutani and Sugi Mitsuru. Higuchi has left behind a memoir that provides us not only with interesting detail, but also with damning insights into Japanese perceptions of Burmese wartime nationalism.<sup>14</sup>

More problematical is the assessment of Suzuki Keiji. Suzuki is described as an eccentric who was sympathetic to Burmese independence. His followers associated their wartime boss with Lawrence of Arabia, but this is a tag that is difficult to accept in the light of Suzuki's previous activities on the Asian mainland. He also held extremely negative views on Korean self-determination, which were little different from those of other military officers of that time.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the rise to prominence of Japanese trained officers in the postwar period was to be facilitated by a number of factors. These included the involvement of British-trained military officers, including those of Karenni origin, in the ethnic-based rebellions that followed independence in 1948. These rebellions were motivated partly by dissatisfaction with the level of rights and influence Burma's minorities secured postwar. But given the British reliance on non-Burmese to form the core of the prewar Burmese security forces, this then necessitated a change of leadership in the military.<sup>16</sup> This paved the way for the coup of 1962, and the earlier one in 1958, which propelled the military into national power at the expense of the politicians, and established political dominance: a dominance that has extended, with little interruption, to the present day.<sup>17</sup>

It is true that the Burma National Army switched sides from March 1945, to assist the reconquest of Burma by British-led forces. But this rebellion was much more complex than described by Lebra. It was related to discussions in the army's politicised officer corps, and to the need to respond to the separate, wartime anti-Japanese resistance led by communist *Thakins*.<sup>18</sup> Arguably this Thakin-led resistance enjoyed more popularity than the Japanese-trained colonial army and its officer corps, and equally this wartime popularity helped to establish a political base for the communists, which ensured that their leaders, and left ideology, would play an important part in postwar and post-independence politics.<sup>19</sup>

The impact of the Japanese period was no less dramatic in Indonesia. The Dutch *rust en orde* (peace and order) dominated prewar. By 1941 most Indonesian radical nationalists, such as Sukarno, were languishing in Dutch goals. The 60,000–70,000

strong Dutch colonial forces, with a heavy emphasis on the recruitment of groups other than the majority Javanese, were securely in control. But the Japanese period was to transform this situation utterly.

The main colonial military force the Japanese raised in Indonesia was the *Tentera Pembela Tanah Air* (Peta), or Army for the Defence of the Homeland. Peta was formed in October 1943 through a combination of initiatives from Tokyo, the Southern Area Army, the 16th Army in Java, Japanese officers sympathetic to the Indonesian nationalist aspirations, like Lieutenant Yanagawa Munenari, and local nationalists such as Gatot Mangkupradja.<sup>20</sup> For Japan, the formation of Peta was intended to help to overcome deficiencies in the troops needed for the defence of Java and to ensure that Java remained a supply base for all Southeast Asia. It was also intended to overcome dissatisfaction among local nationalists as a result of the hesitant official policies towards Indonesian nationalism.

Military training differed between the various officer categories, such as battalion commanders, company commanders, platoons commanders and non-commissioned officers. Together these totalled some 2890.<sup>21</sup> These graduates were later sent to the various residencies to train other youths. The first Peta battalion was formed in December 1943, and by 1945 a total of 66 battalions had been trained in Java, plus another three in Bali, involving a total of around 37,000 men. Each residency, including Jakarta City, had between two and five battalions. Each of the battalions in turn had its own separate existence, and was tightly supervised by local Japanese units. In the residency of Kediri, for instance, there were the Kediri, Blitar and Talungagung battalions. Despite the controversies regarding its origins, Nugroho emphasised that the Peta was not created in a void. It was imbued with Javanese military traditions, dormant since the glorious Majapahit period, and local aspirations.<sup>22</sup>

Like their Burma counterpart, members of the Peta revolted against the Japanese as the tide in the war turned, this time in February 1944. Unlike its Burma counterpart, however, the revolt was limited, being confined to the Blitar battalion in East Java. Its causes were related to feelings of disillusionment with the general situation in Java, frustration at the lack of political progress with regard to independence, the plight of the *romusha* (forced labourers) and the humiliating treatment meted out by the Japanese, which fuelled rebelliousness among officers and men of this battalion. This was indicative of the general mood within Peta and Javanese society. According to Nugroho, who interviewed hundreds of former Peta officers, the disillusionment began to feed the minds of Peta members with intoxicating dreams of independence, and of this leading to freedom for their relatives and friends, and freedom of people in general from suffering. This included the dream of freeing *romusha* from the abject misery of being forced to labour for the Japanese with minimal sustenance.<sup>23</sup>

The Blitar revolt was quickly crushed by the Japanese using other Peta troops, who, according to Nugroho, were 'led to believe that enemy paratroopers had landed in the vicinity of Blitar', a claim made plausible by the lack of contacts between Peta units. Japanese military justice was quick to follow, with 55 members of the battalion tried in a court-martial in Jakarta. Six of them were later executed by firing squad, while the rest languished in jail until freed when Indonesia became independent.

Scholars have been emphatic about the importance of Peta, despite the fact that they were equipped mainly with antiquated Dutch weapons. Lebra wrote that:

the creation and training of Peta and several para-military groups gave Indonesian aspirations revolutionary capability. Peta in particular discovered that it had the military techniques to make revolution a reality. Japanese troops were the first to confront this revolutionary potential, which was later directed at the returning Dutch.<sup>24</sup>

Nugroho believed that the Japanese, by their example, had provided inspiration, self-confidence and pride at a crucial time in Indonesian history. The Japanese had inspired the Indonesians to renew their allegiance to Javanese values in the establishment of their own military traditions, in addition to Japanese *seishin*. In particular, they took comfort in the message that *seishin* could transform a people for greater exertion in the cause of independence.

Nor were the full-time Peta troops the end of the story: they were just the best trained and armed of a myriad of groups. In Malaya and Sumatra, which were governed as one administrative unit by the Japanese Army, the Japanese established the *giyugun* (volunteer army) at about the same time as the formation of Peta. *Giyugun* units were also established in the Vietnamese parts of French Indochina after the Japanese *coup de force* of March 1945. The *giyugun* were intended to supplement troop deficiency in anticipation of Allied attacks.<sup>25</sup> In Sumatra (with a population of 12 million in 1930) the *giyugun* totalled between 5000 and 6000 by April 1945, with about half of these in Aceh. Many of them took part in the Indonesian social revolution of 1945–6, which saw the end of the ruling class in Sumatra, and later still in the war of independence. Their motto was *merdeka atau mati* (independence or death).<sup>26</sup>

Except for Aceh in northern Sumatra, *giyugun* units' local leaders were drawn from officers of the previous Dutch colonial army. In Aceh, the officer corps was recruited from local organisations, most notably the *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* (All Aceh Ulama Association).<sup>27</sup> According to Lebra, the Japanese made no effort to utilise *jihād* (holy war) ideas among the *giyugun*. In reality this is not entirely correct as the Japanese had also utilised local ulamas. Japan had also exploited the concept of *jihād* during the April 1943 Islamic conference in Singapore, which was attended by 93 leading society and religious leaders from the Sumatra-Malaya region.<sup>28</sup> On their return to their respective areas these elites were asked to impart to fellow Muslims that the existing war was *jihād* and required the unwavering support of all Muslims.

In addition to the more densely populated Indonesian islands of Java (40.9 million in 1930) and Sumatra (12 million), Japanese recruitment extended to the northern stretches of the sparsely populated, jungle-covered island of Borneo. In the former British protectorates of Sarawak and North Borneo (today's Sabah) about 2000 local youth had, by mid-1945, been trained as *giyugun*. This was also known as the *kyodo-hei* (local militia).<sup>29</sup> These militia were made up of Malays and other indigenous youth, such as the Bidayuh, and especially of Ibans from the Second and Third Divisions of Sarawak and North Borneo. Initially militia service had considerable appeal among the Iban youth, since it offered material benefits in the form of clothing, meals, cigarettes and money, besides a way out of the monotony of the longhouse. Later on enthusiasm fizzled out because of various factors, including language problems, harsh discipline during training, the general dislocations caused by Allied air raids and the use of the *kyodo-hei* as labourers. As a result, morale deteriorated.

The *kyodo-hei* was organised into five companies each consisting of 90–120 men, including 16 Japanese. The basic training consisted of military drill and physical exercise, as well as instruction in elementary Japanese language. They were later stationed in Kuching and other towns like Miri, Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu) and Sandakan. Their duties were varied and included guarding strategic points such as bridges, crossroads, rice godowns (warehouses), air fields and arms dumps. Some were required to track downed American pilots in the Borneo jungles or were used for road building, or even as guards at brothels to prevent the entry of Korean or Taiwanese soldiers. In Indochina, by contrast, recruitment for a militia could take place only after the French were removed in March 1945, and was confined to Annam, Tonkin and Cochinchina. Recruitment for these militias did not start until June to July 1945, and so did not have much impact compared to the much more established *Viet Minh*.

In the Philippines (with a population of 16.5 million in 1930), most notably on the main island of Luzon, the Japanese military also sought to create an armed force, which was to be deployed against resistance forces. This included tapping into the Philippine Constabulary, which was the main policing force for the preceding American colonial period, though its actual strength never reached the intended level of 20,000. In contrast to this use of the previous regime's institutions, the Japanese created new forms, including the Patriotic League of the Philippines (*Makapili*) in 1944. Its membership hovered between 3000 and 5000. Intended to match the anti-Japanese *Hukbalahap* guerrilla forces, the *Makapili* was never popular. By the end of 1944 its members merely functioned as *heiho* (army auxiliaries) to dig trenches, act as jungle guides and collect intelligence. In the end, both the *Makapili* and the Philippine Constabulary only managed to sow further the seeds of discontent, especially the peasantry. The peasant-based *Hukbalahap*'s contribution to the anti-Japanese struggle peaked at an estimated 10,000–12,000 armed persons. After 1945 the deepening peasant discontent—exacerbated by the lack of respect shown to former *Hukbalahap* by the Philippine elite—led to the *Huk* rebellion of 1946–51.



*Figure 9.1* Indonesian ‘Pathfinder’ youth, pictured en masse on the front cover of *Pandji Poestaka*, no. 8, 20 February 1943.

*Source:* Netherlands Institute of War Documentation: Indische fotocollectie no. 10394.

In Malaya (with a population of 3.8 million in 1938), two types of volunteer levies were formed, namely the *giyugun* (volunteer army) and the *giyutai* (volunteer corp). The *giyugun* was used for coastal defence and the preservation of peace and order—a euphemism for military operations against the Chinese dominated MPAJA—while the *giyutai* was responsible for the preservation of peace and order. The *giyutai* was therefore not for battle formation, but functioned more like a supra-police unit.



*Figure 9.2* Peta officer giving orders near Jakarta, from *Djawa Baroe*, no. 10, 15 May 1945. Some of the other photographs in the same article showed youths drilling in shorts, with rather less impressive wooden spears.

*Source:* Netherlands Institute of War Documentation.

The *giyutai* was the first of these volunteer levies to be raised, and was organised all over Malaya, in towns and districts. There was no central training, which was instead provided on a sporadic basis by roving Japanese army teams. By early 1944 their numbers were roughly 5000. It is often assumed that the *giyutai* (volunteer corp) was entirely made up

of Malays, as Lebra's classic text asserts that there were no Chinese in it. This is not entirely correct. The Taiping *giyutai*, for instance, was officered by five Malays and between three and seven Chinese. The presence of these Chinese was crucial to the effectiveness of the unit's anti-MPAJA campaigns, the MPAJA being not only communist-led but mainly Chinese in membership. The Malay youth who had joined the *giyutai* included former members of the Malay Regiment such as Ismail Babu, and a few Federated Malay States (FMS) volunteers who had fought gallantly against the Japanese in Singapore in 1942. They did so probably because of economic needs, military calling and possibly indirect coercion by Japanese and Malay officials.<sup>30</sup> Ahmad Boestaman, a leading figure of the Malay left after 1945, presents a different motivation. He joined the *giyutai* in order to gain access to Japanese military training. He was trained in Ipoh and attained the rank of second lieutenant. Some former *giyutai* from Perak later assumed important positions in the radical, postwar organisation called *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API), formed by Boestaman in late 1945. These included a former lieutenant in the Taiping *giyutai* who became the Perak API secretary.

The *giyugun* (volunteer army) was established in early 1944, according to Lebra, to assist in the defence of Malaya. It was initially based in Johor Bahru and by April its number was approximately 2000, distributed into three battalions. Lebra attributed the small number, despite the enthusiastic campaigns by the wartime media, to competition from other labour-recruiting organisations. But key participants in this army—such as Mustapha Hussein, the deputy president of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM, the Young Malays Association)—believed that politically aware Malay youth no longer trusted the Japanese military by that time.<sup>31</sup> Hence their lukewarm response to any Japanese overtures after the KMM was unceremoniously disbanded in June 1942.

If the *giyugun* gave the Malay left a new lease of life after June 1942, it also alienated Ibrahim Yaacob, one of the founders of the KMM, from the radical Malay youth who had supported him before but were left on their own during the occupation. This was despite Ibrahim being kept informed of their frustrations under Japanese rule by the ever loyal Abdul Samad Ismail.<sup>32</sup>

Members of the *giyugun* officer corps were picked by the Malayan Military Administration (MMA) in consultation with the KMM's Ibrahim Yaacob, who harboured the idea that it would be used to further the cause of Malay nationalism. Yet not all KMM members took part in the newly formed army, despite the vigorous campaign in the media, notably in *Fajar Asia*.<sup>33</sup> For some who did join, such as Mustapha Hussain, it proved an ambivalent experience. Together with other officers, Major Mustapha underwent rigorous military training in Singapore. But he was dismissed soon afterwards for allegedly writing the '14 Points', which insisted that the Malay *giyugun* be given control over all Malay auxiliary forces, that the Japanese should pay more respect to local customs and that *giyugun* officers should not be required to salute Japanese soldiers of lower rank.<sup>34</sup> Enthusiasm towards recruitment for Japanese-sponsored forces also varied between different Malay states. Kelantan and Terengganu, both states with a Malay majority, provided the least number of recruits for the officer corps.

Given Japanese suspicions, the *giyugun* was never kept for long in one place. Initially stationed opposite Singapore at Johor Bahru, the *giyugun* was moved to Ipoh in the North, and finally brought to Singapore and housed at the Tanglin barracks. Prior to the move to Singapore, its numerical strength was reduced by 50 per cent, and the *giyugun*



was left with only two companies of 200 men and a cadre of staff officers. It was still under Ibrahim Yaacob, but with Japan facing military defeat the *giyugun* was now transformed into an artillery unit.<sup>35</sup> Towards the end of the occupation, this Japanese-sponsored military organisation, in which youthful and idealistic Malays predominated, was used mainly against the MPAJA. This contributed in no small measure to the poor ethnic relations during the immediate postwar period.

Following Japanese surrender in August 1945, the *giyugun*'s top Malayan leadership fled to Indonesia in August 1945 so as to escape possible British detention. This left the mass of the radical Malay youth, in particular former members of the *giyugun* and the *giyutai*, facing an uncertain postwar future. They responded to these new challenges in a great variety of ways. Several radical Malay youth went to Indonesia to fight the Dutch in the war of independence there (1945–9), some dying as heroes. These included men such as Major Manaf who was killed in action in Tanjung Batu in the Karimun islands. A few became involved in the anti-Chinese clashes in Malaya in August to September 1945, notably in Batu Pahat, in the name of protecting Malay interests. A few even joined the 10th Regiment of the Malayan Communist Party's guerrilla army in 1948, then based in the jungles of central Pahang.<sup>36</sup> A significant number drifted into the Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM), and with its demise joined UMNO and so, finally, entered the political mainstream. One such man was Mustapha Hussain, who challenged Tunku Abdul Rahman for the UMNO presidency in 1951, and later campaigned actively among the Malay left to encourage it to support UMNO. A few of the *giyutai* and the *giyugun* even joined the British imperial army after 1945, although the résumés of an overwhelming majority of senior Malayan (or Malaysian) military officers in the Who's Who of the late 1950s only highlighted the anti-Japanese part of their career.<sup>37</sup>

### Other forms of youth mobilisation

Further to the creation of auxiliary military forces—the *giyugun* and *giyutai* units—the Japanese also mobilised hundreds of thousands of youth into paramilitary organisations all over Southeast Asia. These youth were given limited military skills, and imbued with *seishin* and a deep hatred of the West. The more prominent cases were found in Indonesia where thousands of the *pemuda* took part in the Indonesian revolution and the war of independence against the Dutch immediately after the Japanese surrender. These are the focus of Benedict Anderson's classic study in his *Java in a Time of Revolution*.<sup>38</sup>

In Java the number of these youth was more than 1.66 million.<sup>39</sup> The largest and earliest formations comprised the *Seinendan* (Youth Corps) and the *Keibodan* (Police Auxiliary Corps). Both were formed in April 1943 but with different functions. By the end of the occupation their members had reached half a million and one million respectively. The *Seinendan* or Youth Corps was meant to prepare its members to assist the Japanese war effort by increasing production and safeguarding the home front. Its membership was confined to ethnic Indonesians between the ages of 14 and 25. *Seinendan* leaders were provided with leadership training by the military administration in one of the following: general training, agriculture, business enterprises and fishery and maritime activities. To qualify for leadership, they were required to have a regular job, possess the minimum elementary education, good health and leadership qualities and be

between the ages of 17 and 25. The *Keibodan* was a civilian body that assisted the police in the preservation of law and order at the local level. It was put under the jurisdiction of the local police, and membership also included Chinese youth.

Other youth groups appeared in 1944, such as *Barisan Pelopor* (Vanguard Corps), *Barisan Berani Mati* (Suicide Corps), *Hizbullah* (God's Army) and the Student Corps. *Barisan Pelopor*, formed in November 1944, was imbued with the nationalist ideology of Sukarno. Members totalled 60,000 and consisted of mature young men aged 20 and above. Their role in the early part of the Indonesian revolution of 1945–9 was to be crucial. *Barisan Berani Mati* was inspired by the Japanese *kamikaze* pilots. Its membership totalled 50,000, and also played an important role in the revolution. Equally important was *Hizbullah*, which was put under the leadership of *Masjumi* (the organisation the Japanese persuaded local Muslim groups to merge into), but trained by the Japanese. Its membership was close to 50,000. The Student Corps, confined to secondary school students, was the least military, as training was limited to weekend stints. These youth were also involved in the domestic competition for power between the communists and non-communists.

Often overlooked are the thousands of students of the wartime school system who were not given military training but had become more critical of Western imperialism and, unlike their parents, were less inclined to be accommodative towards the Western imperial powers after 1945. These students who were below 16 at the end of the occupation had anti-Western impressions deeply entrenched through the tightly controlled school system. In the regimented school life, discipline was of paramount importance. Respect was also stressed: respect for teachers, for elders and for the Japanese. Students of the Japanese school system in Malaya recall that every action and word was aimed to instil *seishin*, with students constantly lectured on it and what it meant in class and outside school. Former students remember the main elements of *seishin* as sticking to proper procedure, unflinching loyalty and perseverance in the face of great odds: attributes that later became useful in their postwar careers. They were reminded to do things in the proper manner so that it became mechanical. In class they had to stand upright when answering a question, when asking permission to leave the room, when informing the teacher of their return to class or when going for gardening and physical exercise.<sup>40</sup>

Songs were an important part of the wartime educational landscape. Through these songs children, and adults too, were taught mindlessly to copy Japan and the Japanese, and to despise the West. Some songs sought to glorify Japan, to justify the presence of her soldiers and to denounce British colonialism. One such song went:

<i>Awaslah Inggeris—Amerika</i>	(Beware of Britain—America)
<i>Musuh di seluruh dunia</i>	(Enemy of the whole world)
<i>Dia mahu membodohkan kita</i>	(They want to fool us)
<i>Dengan bersukaan hatinya</i>	(According to their whims and fancies)
<i>Hancurkan, hancurkan, musuh kita</i>	(Destroy, destroy, our enemies)
<i>Itulah Inggeris dan Amerika.</i>	(That is Britain and America).

Towards the end of the occupation Japanese propaganda shifted its focus and sought to arouse the feeling of love for one's country, notably among the Malay-Muslims, and so a more indirect hatred of the West.

### Anti-Japanese armies

The anti-Japanese armies formed during the war and occupation were also to play a vital role in shaping postwar political developments, whether against the West or in competition with non-communist opponents. Only in Vietnam, however, did the anti-colonial army manage to assume political power after 1945. The rest remained in opposition or in open rebellion, and as a result have been relegated to the periphery of the national narrative of their own country.

In occupied Malaya, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) was the biggest of the anti-Japanese armies.<sup>41</sup> Raised and directed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the MPAJA nevertheless included non-communist elements. The Guomindang also had its own resistance levy, notably in the upper Perak area. According to Cheah Boon Kheng, it was the MPAJA that enabled the MCP to emerge as the strongest social and political movement at the end of the war and belatedly to challenge their wartime allies, the British, in 1948. The MPAJA was formed after December 1941 when the MCP agreed to raise volunteers to be trained by the British army in a ten-day course on sabotage and guerrilla warfare. They were to be left behind enemy lines to form resistance groups.

The short training period before the capitulation of Singapore on 15 February 1942 managed to produce seven classes, totalling 165 young Chinese communists. These men were later sent to the various Malay states, and became the nuclei for MPAJA regiments raised in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and north and south Johor. Later four more MPAJA regiments were added in Perak, Pahang and Kedah. The Japanese historian Akashi Yoji has studied the MPAJA's Fifth Independent Regiment, which was based in the Bidor area of Perak, and which managed to wage hit-and-run warfare against considerable odds. Although not a major threat to the Japanese, it was still a thorn in the flesh, sending Japanese forces on wild goose chases.<sup>42</sup>

The total strength of the MPAJA was between 3000 and 4000 in 1945. In addition there were secret units that, according to Cheah, were to be used in a separate struggle against the British, as after June 1948. Members of these secret units were long tested members and important MCP leaders. The fortunes of the MPAJA varied throughout the occupation. In the first phase, which coincided with the first one and half years of its existence, the MPAJA did badly. It was lacking in food, capable leadership, training and experience in guerrilla warfare. From mid-1943 to mid-1944 its fortunes improved in terms of organisation, food supplies, communications and military training. According to Cheah, membership increased fourfold during this period. It was during the third phase, after the British had provided military assistance and funds through Force 136, that the MPAJA enjoyed remarkable growth and managed to consolidate its position. British assistance meant that the MPAJA was placed under British direction, except the secret units mentioned earlier. Cheah's study also shows a reluctance to accept Malays into the MPAJA, in fact a distrust of the Malays.

The MCP accepted British direction, weapons, money and training by the Blanton Agreement of December 1943. This meant that the MCP had to backpedal on its political aspirations of forming a Malayan Republic. It also meant that it rejected any idea of cooperating with other groups, such as Ibrahim Yaacob and his *giyugun*, in order to resist British reoccupation in 1945. As Cheah has written, the MPAJA believed it was capable

of going alone, as it had done during the occupation. This was a grave miscalculation, and one that cost the MCP crucial Malay support. Equally important is the way it antagonised Malays towards the end of the occupation and during its rule of terror, when it emerged from the jungle in August to September 1945, in the period after Japanese surrender but before British reoccupation. This even alienated some former MPAJA supporters such as those in Bekor in the Kuala Kangsar area.<sup>43</sup> The memory of these clashes took time to heal, although the euphoria of national independence in the 1950s reduced its impact on both sides of the racial divide.

Meanwhile, in 1948 remnants of the MPAJA rose in rebellion, after the MCP's strategy of winning power through strikes and the ballot box was frustrated by British counter-action, and by the slow pace of decolonisation. This ushered in the Emergency period, which officially lasted until 1960, although lower-level communist insurgency continued until final peace agreements were signed in December 1989.<sup>44</sup>

Other anti-Japanese levies were formed in the later part of the occupation, involving non-communist Malays in Perak, Pahang and Kedah.<sup>45</sup> Their total strength was less than 500. These levies were formed by Force 136 officers who were parachuted into Malaya at the end of 1944 with trained Malay personnel. These levies also managed to attract some Malays who were serving the Japanese colonial army. One of them, Ismail Babu, the former Taiping *giyutai* officer who joined Force 136 towards the close of the occupation, was involved in the training of personnel who included local and Patani Malays. The slogan 'defence of the motherland' was used by these levies as their rallying cry to attract membership, although Britain was still undecided on Malaya's political future. There is much confusion regarding the concept of loyalty because the motherland actually referred to Britain and a defence of Malaya was, by extension, a defence of the British Empire. After the war many from these levies joined (or rejoined) the reconstituted British forces, rising to high positions in the successor Malaysian armed forces. One of them, Lieutenant Tunku Osman Tunku Mohd Jewa, retired in 1969 as chief of the armed forces.

The role of these levies might be limited but at the time of the surrender they were instrumental in protecting Malay interests, under threat from the predominantly Chinese MPAJA, which was then in British favour. Aware of the dominant position of the Chinese in the MPAJA, loyal Malays within Force 136 acted in August 1945 to prevent jubilant MPAJA members from taking over towns like Kuala Nerang in Kedah, Gerik in upper Perak and Jerantut in central Pahang. It must be mentioned that one cannot overlook the 1920s as contributory to the seed of racial antagonism, since it was then that the continuing flood of immigrants terrified Malay intellectuals. These intellectuals then began to question British policy and the position of the Malays in the emerging plural society. Similarly, the economic depression made educated Malays begin to question British policy in the employment of non-Malays vis-à-vis the Malays, and this further fuelled the seed of racial antagonism.<sup>46</sup>

For Burma, the anti-Japanese resistance amounts to more than the March 1945 uprising of the Japanese-trained army.<sup>47</sup> This must be seen in the longer context of this army, with its origins stretching back to the late 1930s, when young *Thakin* leaders, such as Soe, Nu, Thein Pe and Kyaw Nyein, debated the kind of foreign assistance required for their anti-British struggles.<sup>48</sup> According to Taylor, these debates became the basis of the subsequent ideological and strategic conflicts within the *Thakins*. One group inclined

towards seeking Japanese assistance, some of them helping to form the BIA; another inclined towards anti-Japanese resistance once war broke out.

The subsequent anti-Japanese resistance crystallised at the time of the Japanese invasion around leftist *Thakins*, notably Thakin Soe, the future leader of the Communist Party of Burma or CP(B). During the occupation period, they were joined by others, including demobilised BIA members, other rebel groups and Karen and minority leaders. In May 1942, Soe, Nu, Thein Pe and Kyaw Nyein met near Mandalay and agreed on the allocation of tasks among them: Thein Pe and Soe were to get foreign assistance first from China and later the British in India, although Soe later concentrated on propaganda works in the delta area. Nu and Kyaw Nyein would stay put in Burma, where they later took part in the wartime administration under the Japanese, led by Dr Ba Maw, first with the Burma Central Executive Administration of August 1942 to August 1943, and later in the 'independent' Burma Government of August 1943 to May 1945.

Two developments were of paramount importance to the fledgling resistance army. One was contact with the Allies, which meant the supply of arms and much needed publicity. The other was the creation of a united resistance group in August 1944. Contacts with the Allies were made before 1943 through Thein Pe and Thein Shwe. Through this channel, 72 resistance members were brought to India in 1944 and 1945 for guerrilla training and communist indoctrination. The formation of the united resistance group or Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO) took place in early August 1944. This included Aung San, representing the army and the non-communist Thakins of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), which later coalesced into the Socialist Party. It also included the communists Soe, Than Tun and Ba Hein, the latter being the formal representative of the CP(B).

Mutual suspicion among these various components threatened the fragile unity of the AFO. According to Taylor, the inclusion of the Japanese-trained army into the AFO was based on several factors, notably the serious ideological split that had already taken place in the army and the low rating the army enjoyed among the populace vis-à-vis the resistance. On the other hand, the communists were willing to accommodate the army because the latter had access to Japanese arms. The communists also believed they were following the correct party line as enunciated by their Indian communist brethren, who continued to support the united front strategy of cooperating with the British. These developments enabled the resistance to widen its composition and to align more closely with the Thakins in the wartime government.

According to Taylor, the year 1945 was the climax in the development of the resistance. In early March its leaders decided on an armed uprising. They also agreed to request Allied arms as well as to cooperate with Allied forces wherever possible, but refused to accept orders from Force 136, or to restrict the uprising to certain areas. It was also agreed to change the AFO into the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which included the army, the PRP and the CP(B). Aung San was appointed military affairs leader, Soe political affairs leader and Than Tun foreign relations leader. Burma was then divided into seven resistance zones, with control in each zone evenly divided between the PRP and CP(B).

Taylor is emphatic about the importance of the resistance and the March rebellion, not in direct military terms, but in creating confusion within the Japanese lines of communication. This helped to demoralise a Japanese army that had been on the

defensive since mid-1944. In addition, intelligence was gathered for the Allied forces. More importantly, the AFPFL was used as a bargaining tool to secure British recognition for a provisional independent government, for the creation of an independent Burma army and to get firm promises of independence at the end of the war. At the war's end, Britain agreed to integrate some of the guerrillas into the British Burma army, while the remainder opted into the People's Volunteer Organisation (PVO), a veterans' body loyal to Aung San but with ties to other former officers of the wartime army. The PVO was anti-British and was later used in political bargaining involving the AFPFL in 1948.

The end of the war, however, spelled the end of the fragile unity within the AFPFL, and once independence was assured in late 1947 to 1948, the leaders reverted to internal bickering. This saw the expulsion of the communists in 1946 despite their command of greater popular support. In 1948 the communists launched their belated social revolution and remnants of its army, or its successors, have been in rebellion against the present Burmese government ever since.

In Indochina, the League for the Independence of Vietnam or *Viet Minh* (short for Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi) was established in May 1941 by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). It was a communist-dominated front group open to all patriotic organisations. Composed of communists, non-communists and minority groups, it was to become the most important of the anti-Japanese forces in Vietnam and the most successful despite the existence of other groups supported by the Guomindang. Led by the enigmatic Ho Chi Minh, the *Viet Minh* emphasised that the national revolution must come first, only later to be followed by a communist social and political revolution.<sup>49</sup> The *Viet Minh* operated at two levels, namely political and military. In the former the focus was on reform programmes for liberated areas that included land redistribution, rent reductions, tax reforms, labour protection and literary campaigns. In the military sphere, the *Viet Minh* created an army of guerrillas led by Vo Nguyen Giap, a former history teacher. From an initial 34 members, the guerrilla force increased to 5000, with concentrations in the northern areas bordering China of Cao Bang, Langson and Bac Kan. Its transformation was rapid. By the time of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the *Viet Minh* army consisted of six well trained divisions.

Initial efforts to obtain recognition and assistance from China failed to materialise. Instead Ho was arrested by the Guomindang, which went on to organise anti-communist resistance among the Vietnamese émigrés in South China. This failed. It was the contact with the Allies in early 1945 that enabled the *Viet Minh* to consolidate its position. In return for providing reliable intelligence on Japanese troop formations and movements, and for locating United States pilots who were shot down by the Japanese, the Organisation of Strategic Services (OSS, the precursor of the CIA) provided the *Viet Minh* with arms, ammunition, communication equipment and medicine. By May, OSS officers had parachuted into Vietnam to work closely with the *Viet Minh*. These contacts also enabled Ho Chi Minh to gauge correctly the rapidly changing international situation and to adapt *Viet Minh* policies accordingly. The *Viet Minh* became more important to the Allies after March 1945, when the Japanese *coup de force* effectively ended eighty years of French rule in Vietnam by a well coordinated attack on all military garrisons and centres of power, thereby also wiping out the entire Free French network in Indochina. It also drove home to the Vietnamese masses that the French position was no longer tenable.<sup>50</sup>

After the *coup de force*, the *Viet Minh* consolidated its position in the mountainous northern provinces. It also gained crucial support from the local population during the ensuing famine in northern Vietnam that wiped out almost two million of Tonkin's estimated population of eight million, and succeeded in establishing guerrilla bases in three more provinces. By August 1945, the *Viet Minh* was the strongest and most organised of the anti-colonial forces, putting itself in a better position than its disunited non-communist rivals to seize power at the time of the Japanese surrender. The enormous popular support enabled Ho to declare an independent nation called the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi in early September 1945. The DRV failed to gain international recognition but prepared itself for the a military struggle with the French. This finally began in late 1946.<sup>51</sup> However, to ascribe the success of the *Viet Minh* entirely to the Second World War, or to the fact that the Japanese presence had prevented the unification of the non-communists, would be inaccurate. This line of argument tends to underestimate the importance of the prewar period, especially the 1930s, in Vietnamese history. As David Marr has rightly asserted, the wartime political history was merely an extension of what had taken place before the war.<sup>52</sup>

In the Philippines, there was a plethora of anti-Japanese levies ranging from remnants of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE), through the Hukbalahap, to Chinese guerrillas who were scattered all over the archipelago, notably in Luzon and the Visayas. These armies roused strong emotions, and the politics of collaboration among Filipino elites led to recriminations across the political spectrum. Then there were those who sought to portray themselves as heroes in resisting the enemy in the anti-Japanese armies, and those competing elites who used the Japanese to eliminate their political rivals as in the Visayas.<sup>53</sup>

We begin with the Hukbalahap (People's Anti-Japanese Army), the major anti-Japanese force throughout the Philippines, which was formed in early 1942 in Central Luzon by members of a peasant society.<sup>54</sup> It also involved prominent communists and prewar peasant leaders of the 1930s such as Luis Taruc and Casto Alejandrino. Yet it did profess its loyalty to the United States and the Philippine Commonwealth government, committed to the defence of democracy and to the territorial rights of both the Philippines and the United States.<sup>55</sup>

Strong support among the peasantry enabled the Hukbalahap to expand from the initial 300 in April 1942 to between 10,000 and 12,000 in late 1944. The main preoccupation of the Huks was to police the countryside and harass the Japanese. It also carried out sabotage and assassination of officials it perceived as traitors. By the end of the war the Hukbalahaps had killed more than 20,000 Japanese soldiers, spies and members of the Philippine Constabulary. This had weakened the Japanese grip on central and southern Luzon, which enabled the relatively easy passage of the reconquest by American soldiers in late 1944.

In the absence of a legally constituted government, the Hukbalahap helped the people to establish local councils and supported these. Its members also coordinated efforts with local labour groups to increase rice production, and to prevent rice harvests from falling to the Japanese. Rigid price control was also instituted throughout central Luzon, reducing profiteering to a minimum.<sup>56</sup> Huk government leaders and guerrillas officiated at funerals, and issued marriage licences and baptismal certificates, while its information committee organised shows consisting of songs and short dramas to counter Japanese

propaganda and bolster morale. It also issued publications of one to two pages that praised Huk military success, lambasted fascism, the Japanese regime and Filipino collaborators and hailed the approaching American forces.<sup>57</sup>

Kerkvliet was impressed with the Hukbalahap when he wrote that 'The important point is that the resistance had drawn the central Luzon peasantry closer together than it had been before, thousands of villages participated actively in the Huk, and many more sympathised with it.' However, the occupation also pushed peasants and the local elites further apart, while the animosity between Huk supporters and local officials, including the pliable Philippine Constabulary, widened further after 1945. Subsequent government and military repression finally led to open rebellion in 1946.<sup>58</sup>

The Chinese had their own anti-colonial levies, although these were divided along ideological lines. These levies conducted sabotage, gathered military intelligence and carried out propaganda work. They helped in the escape of prisoners and engaged in military combat. Some of the notable ones included the Chinese Overseas Wartime Hsuehken Militia (COWHM), the Chinese Volunteers in the Philippines and the Philippine Chinese anti-Japanese Force, or Wah Chi.<sup>59</sup> COWHM was basically a Guomintang outfit, as its officer corps was based on those formerly trained in China at the time of the Sino-Japanese war. Its total strength in 1945 was 1159 officers and men distributed into 13 companies. Its activities included the publication of a weekly paper to disseminate 'actual information', liquidation of collaborating Chinese and participation in military actions with American forces towards the close of the occupation. The Chinese Volunteers in the Philippines was composed of small-time merchants, junk dealers, salesmen, clerks and others. Its total strength was 2800 men, who mainly carried out intelligence and sabotage missions in central Luzon. The major communist group, the Wah Chi, was made of five companies of 150–200 men each. Its recruits were mainly confined to the Luzon Chinese. Besides providing useful assistance to the American forces, this guerrilla levy also cooperated with the Huks in central Luzon.

The Thai resistance, which called itself the Free Thai movement, does not really fit into the mould of either the colonial or anti-colonial force, as there was no formal army as such. In addition, Thailand remained nominally independent at a time when all Western colonial powers in the region had been defeated. Instead there were organisations formed in London, Washington and Bangkok by individuals who were opposed to the pro-Japan policy of Thailand's Phibun government. With British and American assistance, the Free Thai movement later permeated into a wide spectrum of Thai society. As head of the movement in Bangkok, Pridi Phanomyong attempted to contact the Allies from 1942 to form a government in exile. Due to British opposition this never materialised. Meanwhile, the Thai legation in Washington became the centre of the Free Thai movement. Its activities included developing nationwide American sympathy for the Thais, enlisting Thai students into a special unit trained by the US army in espionage, parachute operations and radio operation, assisting the OSS in making strategic maps of Thailand, organising Thai language courses for OSS officers and conducting Thai language broadcast from the United States during 1943–5. The Thais were later parachuted with OSS officers into Thailand to set up bases in the country, including in Bangkok.<sup>60</sup>

In London, 36 Free Thai members joined the Siam Section of Force 136 and later were given training in India and Ceylon. After mid-1944, the Allies through the Southeast Asia



Command's Force 136 and the American OSS were able to infiltrate into Thailand and to channel intelligence collected from Thai government officials directly to enable the Allies to plan offensive operations.

By early 1945, the Thai guerrillas had spread to all parts of the country, with units located in every province. The country had also been divided into American and British theatres of operations, with the British taking 14 provinces in the north, northeast and south, including Bangkok, and the Americans taking 12 located along the coast and in the central part of the country. By April 1945, 30 transmitting stations were operating in Thailand compared to two in the previous year, while supplies from the Allies were brought in through makeshift landing strips all over the country. An anti-Japanese uprising was planned for November, but this was rendered unnecessary by the Japanese surrender in August. Yet the resistance was not without its significance in Thailand's postwar political history. It also exacerbated the military-civilian rivalry that had begun before the war and continued unabated after 1945. The ascendancy of the military after 1947 was followed by the liquidation of opposition politicians, notably those from the northeast (Issan region), who had been active in the Free Thai movement.

### **The Japanese occupation and the response of the West**

In the end it was the Western response to collaboration and loyalty that determined much of the political development in Southeast Asia immediately after the surrender. To the West, involvement in the Japanese colonial army (collaboration) or in anti-colonial forces (resistance) was inherently tied to the question of loyalty or the lack of it. Hence postwar colonial policy was meant to provide punishments and rewards accordingly, regardless of whether the intended recipients of these rewards, as in Burma, were third rate politicians who failed to command respectable local support.<sup>61</sup> Yet for most Southeast Asians the division between traitorous actions and loyal behaviour was wafer thin. Thus one might wish to question the aptness of applying labels like quisling and collaborator to the Southeast Asian context when nationalism was a major determinant in whether local leaders collaborated with the Japanese or not.<sup>62</sup> Significantly, collaboration with the Japanese in many cases neither tarnished the popular appeal of local leaders nor blotted their political career. Instead it was the colonial response that made or unmade postwar national leaders in accordance with metropolitan interests, especially in the context of an emerging Cold War. In Malaya, for instance, collaborators from the left became targets for mass arrests in 1948, quite often abetted by those from the right who had also collaborated with the Japanese but were more accommodative of the British presence.

Both collaboration and resistance involved choices for the individuals, possible gains and questions of loyalty and nationalism, even if the type of nationalism remained hazy for many of those involved. For some individuals this meant having constantly to shift position, as illustrated by the mercurial career of Ismail Babu, a former officer of the Malaysian armed forces. Unlike his more illustrious contemporary Lt Adnan Saidi, Ismail Babu remained unappreciated in Malaysian history or even in local military history.<sup>63</sup> Of Pathan-Malay origin, Ismail was born in Batu Gajah, Perak, in 1916 and died in 2001. His father was a captain in the Punjabi Regiment who died gallantly, fighting for the British imperial cause at the Somme, France, in 1917. An average student academically,

Ismail excelled in sport and became a King's Scout, that visible symbol of loyalty in prewar Malayan society. In 1933 he was accepted into the first experimental Malay battalion.

Ismail once served in the same company as Adnan. From September 1940, his company, which was part of the first of the Regiment's two battalions, was posted to Kota Bharu on the east coast for eight months to dig trenches at the Pengkalan Chepa air base. After this he was sent to Port Dickson near Melaka on the west coast, and then to Singapore in 1941. In his memoirs, Warrant Officer Ismail describes the Japanese attacks on Singapore and the valour of the defenders. He also saw many of his comrades in arms perish in fierce fighting in the three days prior to the British surrender of 15 February 1942. For his gallantry Ismail was awarded the British MBE in 1947. Ismail also mentions eight Malay officers who, out of loyalty to their profession and to King George V, refused to take off their uniforms and were consequently put to death by the Japanese on 18 February 1942. It is therefore understandable that Ismail and fellow members of the Malay battalion, and the volunteers who fought with them, harboured strong resentment against collaborators such as Ibrahim Yaacob and other KMM members, although in fairness there were among the KMM those who had tried to save the lives of these officers, or to make their last days in captivity as bearable as possible.<sup>64</sup>

In a manner befitting a soldier loyal to Britain, Ismail initially refused to collaborate with the Japanese. But pressing economic needs, namely to support a young and expanding family, made him join a railway labour gang in Taiping.<sup>65</sup> He then ventured into small-time farming. But this failed, and so, on the recommendation of the district officer Raja Ahmad, he joined a Japanese charcoal factory as a clerk. Despite enjoying the trust of Mr Kushiwa, the factory owner, and living a reasonably good life, Ismail soon lost interest in this job. In 1943 he then joined the *giyutai*.

His memoirs describe how he came to be a *giyutai* member. He writes that former members of the Malay battalion and Federated Malay States volunteers were called to the district office, as the Japanese wanted to select six volunteers from Taiping. Ismail and his group (which included three former regular soldiers and one former volunteer officer) were sent to Kuala Lumpur for training. This involved mainly marching, exercise, Japanese language and light firearms, although the last aspect, he opined, was inferior to the one given by British instructors before the war. After this stint Ismail was sent back to Taiping to organise similar forces among the local population. He managed to recruit 150 into this unit, which was officered by five Malays and seven Chinese.

In 1944 Ismail was transferred to Kuala Kangsar where he joined the regular army, which unfortunately he does not provide a name for. His unit was ordered to subdue the MPAJA in the Kuala Kangsar-Gerik area. The strength of his squad was five officers and 600 men, including 12 Chinese. Ismail was given full charge of the squad and the rank of captain, although his independence was somewhat limited by the presence of a Japanese officer. It was during this time that Ismail decided to join Force 136, which he did towards the end of the occupation with three other friends at Kuala Nerang in Kedah so as to avoid the MPAJA.

His memoirs do not reveal why he joined Force 136, but they do not hide his abhorrence for the MPAJA with which Force 136 was allied. As a Force 136 member Ismail was involved mainly in the training of personnel, which he claimed to number around 50, and which included both local and Pattani Malays. After the Japanese

surrender the group took over Kuala Nerang and Alor Setar area so as to avert their fall into MPAJA hands. Later, with the British return, Ismail rejoined his old unit, the Malay Regiment, and in 1946 he received a commission. He retired from the Malaysian armed forces as a major in 1967.

### Conclusion

To summarise, the Japanese occupation led to the creation of both colonial and anti-colonial armies whose members included remnants of the previous Western colonial forces. After 1945 many from these levies moved back without much difficulty into the Western colonial armies, although others became opponents of the national states that evolved in the postwar era. At a later date, some from among the latter, for various reasons, took part in armed insurrections against the colonial government, or against the emerging nation states. Among those who had joined the reorganised Western colonial army or the new national army, many later rose to important positions, notably in Burma, Malaya, Vietnam and Indonesia.

Neither resistance against nor collaboration with Japan was a blot to the postwar career of elites within the region except perhaps in the Philippines. However, it was the Western response to the wartime period that made or unmade national leaders in conformity with metropolitan interests before and during the Cold War. Meanwhile the Cold War witnessed a sudden rise in insurgency led by the left, including those who had at one time fought against the Japanese. As a result, the anti-Japanese armies such as the MPAJA continued to remain in the periphery of the national narrative.

### Notes

- 1 Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies in Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Heineman Educational Books (Asia), 1977); Nugroho Notokusanto, *The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1979); Izumiya Tatsuro translated by U Tun Aung Chain, *The Minami Organ* (Rangoon: Higher Education Department, 1981); and Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army* (Singapore: Donald More for Asia Pacific Press, 1971).
- 2 Louis Allen, 'Fujiwara and Suzuki: Patterns of Asian Liberation', in William H. Newell (ed.), *Japan in Asia* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), pp. 83–103. Two examples of such coups were Burma in 1962 and Indonesia in 1966.
- 3 See Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941–45* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983); Robert H. Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma, 1942–45: Thein Pe Myint's Wartime Traveler* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984); and Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977).
- 4 See, for instance, Alfred McCoy, '“Politics by Other Means”: World War II in the Western Visayas, Philippines', and Benjamin Batson, 'Siam and Japan: The Perils of Independence', both in Alfred McCoy (ed.), *Southeast Asia Under Japanese Occupation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series No. 22, 1985); and Jan Becka, *The National Liberation Movement in Burma during the Japanese Occupation Period, 1941–45* (Prague: Oriental Institute, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1983).

- 5 John Bastin and Harry Benda, *A History of Modern Southeast Asia: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Decolonisation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 135.
- 6 Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–46* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).
- 7 Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak [Carving the Path to the Summit]* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Kejora, 1972); and Ahmad Boestamam, *Tujuh Tahun Malam Memanjang [Seven Years of Long Nights]* (Kuala Lumpur: Mahakarya, 1976).
- 8 For examples of those joining UMNO, see Mohd Salleh Daud, *Memoir Bukan Seorang Konformis [The Memoirs of a Non-conformist]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1998). For an example of those who did not, see Jaafar Hussin, *Kebenaran [The Truth]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1989).
- 9 The main functions of the *giyugun*, with a total strength of 2000 or three battalions, were the defence of Malaya's coastline and the preservation of peace. The *giytai* also maintained order, but according to Lebra it was more like a supra-police unit than a battle force. Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, pp. 116–19.
- 10 See also Chapter 8 in this volume; R.H. Taylor, 'Colonial Forces in British Burma: A National Army Postponed'; Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies in Southeast Asia*; Izumiya Tatsuhiro, *The Minami Organ*; and Won Z. Yoon, *Japan's Scheme for the Liberation of Burma: The Role of the Minami Kikan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).
- 11 Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia*, p. 78.
- 12 The number of officer cadets for the first three classes were 300 each per class, although the number might have diminished for the later classes. Abu Talib Ahmad, 'Collaboration, 1941–45: An Aspect of the Japanese Occupation of Burma' (unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 1984), pp. 138–9.
- 13 Three examples were General Ne Win, Brigadier Aung Gyi and Colonel Maung Maung. All three were trained by the Japanese assuming important positions in the wartime army, the resistance against Japan and the postwar army and politics. Ne Win became army chief in 1949 during the civil war (1948–52). Aung Gyi headed the most reliable units within the army. Maung Maung was appointed director of military training in 1953. In 1962, Ne Win revolted against the democratically elected Nu government, with Aung Gyi playing a prominent role, although he lost favour with Ne Win in the late 1960s. Maung Maung was appointed Ambassador to Israel in 1961 and subsequently ambassador to Yugoslavia, Indonesia and Australia. Maung Maung is well known for his book on Burmese nationalism, *From Sangha to Laity: Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920–1940* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1980). I am most grateful to Professor U Tun Aung Chain, Director of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for History and Tradition (SEAMEO CHAT), Yangon, for information on Maung Maung.
- 14 Higuchi Takeshi, *Higuchi Kaishoroku [Memoirs of Higuchi]* (Tokyo, n.d.). Higuchi regretted Japan's failure to grant independence to Burma in 1942 as a lost opportunity to fulfil the promise of building a new Asia under Japanese leadership. He was equally critical of his Burmese friends in the Minami Kikan and BIA, whom he believed had failed to understand the idealism being championed by Japan.
- 15 These activities included killing civilians during the Japanese incursions in Siberia at the time of the First World War and conducting campaigns to subvert the legitimate Chinese government in the 1930s. Abu Talib Ahmad, 'Imperialisme Jepun dan Kemerdekaan Burma: Satu Penilaian Semula' [*Japanese Imperialism and Burmese Independence: A Reassessment*] in *Kolonialisme di Malaysia dan Negara-Negara Lain [Colonialism in Malaysia and Other Countries]* (Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 1990), pp. 296–7.
- 16 Smith Dun, *Memoirs of the Four-foot Colonel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper No. 113, 1980). For Britain's prewar reliance on non-Burmese to form the core of the security forces, see Taylor's Chapter 8 in this volume.

- 17 On the military in Burma from 1945, see Robert Taylor, *The State in Burma* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1989), Chapters 4 and 5; Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); Dr Maung Maung, *The 1988 Uprising in Burma* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Program Monograph No. 49, 1999); and Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
- 18 The term Thakin or 'Master', used to address Europeans, was appropriated by student leaders.
- 19 Robert Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma*. The communist revolt of 1948–52 was aided by some 15,000–20,000 armed troops, mostly veterans of the anti-Japanese resistance; and some 9000 former BNA troops who had joined the People's Volunteer Organisation. The latter was led by Aung San until his untimely death in 1947. Taylor, *The State in Burma*, p. 242.
- 20 Nugroho Notokusanto's *The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia* is the best study to date, while Lebra's *Japanese-trained Armies* covers the same topic through extensive consultation of Japanese materials, including oral sources.
- 21 Lebra provides the break up of these as follows: 70 battalion commanders, 200 company commanders, 620 smaller company commanders and 2000 NCOs. Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies*, p. 105.
- 22 The emphasis was on loyalty, gallantry, wisdom, courage and to die with honour on the battlefield as exemplified in popular Javanese *wayang* (puppet plays). Nugroho Notokusanto, *The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia*, pp. 142–5.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–4.
- 24 Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 112.
- 25 Unless indicated otherwise this section is based on Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies*, Chapter 5.
- 26 Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 64–6. On the social revolution, see Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution, 1945–1950* (Melbourne: Longman, 1974).
- 27 *Ulama* refers to religious leaders who are well versed in the Quran, the traditions of the prophet and various aspects of Islam.
- 28 Abu Talib Ahmad, *Malay-Muslims, Islam and the Rising Sun, 1941–45* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 2003), Chapter 5.
- 29 Bob Reece, *Masa Jepun: Sarawak under the Japanese, 1941–45* (Kuching, Sarawak: Literary Society, 1998), pp. 81–7.
- 30 Ismail Babu, *Kisah Seorang Perajurit [The Story of a Soldier]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1990), pp. 112–14.
- 31 Insun Sony Mustapha, *Memoir Mustapha Hussain: Kebangkitan Nasionalisme Melayu sebelum UMNO [The Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain: The Rise of Malay Nationalism before UMNO]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1999), pp. 343–8. The KMM was formed in 1938 by Ibrahim Yaacob and a small group of Malay intellectuals based in Kuala Lumpur. Membership later spread to other parts of the peninsula, especially among Malay schoolteachers. This first Malaya wide 'political party' was both anti-feudal and anti-British.
- 32 Abdul Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail di Singapura [Memoirs of A. Samad Ismail in Singapore]* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Publishers, 1993), Chapter 23.
- 33 This was run by former KMM members Ishak Haji Muhammad and Abdul Samad Ismail.
- 34 Insun Sony Mustapha, *Memoir Mustapha Hussain*, p. 347.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 348 n.5. The figure of 200 was based on the testimony of Lt Osman Daim, who was Ibrahim's ADC during the war. Elsewhere we get a figure of 280. See Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, p. 122.
- 36 They caused havoc for the security forces in Temerloh District.
- 37 Abu Talib Ahmad, *Malay-Muslims, Islam and the Rising Sun*, Chapter 2.

- 38 Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*.
- 39 Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Peta Army during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia*, pp. 62–8.
- 40 Abu Talib Ahmad, *Malay-Muslims, Islam and the Rising Sun*, Chapter 2.
- 41 Unless otherwise indicated, this section is based on Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, Chapter 3.
- 42 Akashi Yoji, 'The Anti-Japanese Movement in Perak during the Japanese Occupation, 1941–45', in Paul Kratoska (ed.), *Malaya and Singapore during the Japanese Occupation* (Singapore: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Special Publication No. 3, 1995), pp. 83–118. For the MCP views of this period, see Chin Peng, Ian Ward and Norma Miraflores, *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of the Story* (Singapore: Media Master, 2003); and C.C.Chin and Karl Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).
- 43 Hamdan Md Ali, 'Sejarah Hubungan Etnik di Bekor, 1941–46: Satu Kajian kes Perselisihan Kaum pada 6 Mac 1946' [History of Ethnic Relations in Bekor, 1941–46: A Study of Racial Conflict that Erupted on 6 March 1946] (Academic Exercise, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1995).
- 44 Anthony Short, *In Pursuit of Mountain Rats: The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (Singapore: Cultured Lotus, 2000).
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- 47 The uprising involved the 'disappearance' of Burmese army units, the killing of several Japanese officers, and disrupting Japanese communications. This helped the advancing British forces, which were able to reoccupy Burma before the end of May 1945.
- 48 Unless otherwise cited discussion in this section is based on Robert Taylor, 'Burma in the Anti-Fascist War', in Alfred McCoy (ed.) *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation*, pp. 132–57; and Robert Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma*, pp. 7–68.
- 49 William J Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2000), Chapters 8–10.
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57 Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, pp. 93–5.

58 *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

59 Antonio S. Tan, *The Chinese in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation, 1942–45* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1981), pp. 81–93.

60 Songsri Foran, *The British-American Relations during World War Two and the Immediate Postwar Period, 1940–46* (Research Paper No. 10, Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1981), pp. 61–105.

61 Abu Talib Ahmad, 'Collaboration: An Aspect of the Japanese Occupation of Burma, 1942–45'.

62 Mohd Salleh Daud, *Memoir Bukan Seorang Konformis [Memoirs of a Non-conformist]*, pp. 26–9. Mohd Salleh who worked with the *Perak Times* during the occupation had joined the radical Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM), and after its disbandment UMNO.

63 The Malay Regiment's Lt Adnan Saidi died fighting for Singapore on 14 February 1942, and has been hailed in both Malaysia and Singapore as a hero. See Kevin Blackburn's Chapter 12 in this volume.

64 Insun Sony Mustapha, *Memoir Mustapha Hussain*, pp. 300–16.

65 Ismail Babu, *Kisah Seorang Perajurit*, Chapter 18.

# 10

## Imperialism and decolonisation in Southeast Asia

### Colonial forces and British world power

*Karl Hack*

Many histories of colonial armies look inward, seeing the colonial army and its actions as a microcosm of colonialism. These mercenary forces raise issues of domination, identity and the management of collaborative relationships.

Colonial armies in Malaya and Singapore, and colonial military contributions by them, provide fascinating examples of this genre, some confirming the historiography of colonial armies; others challenging it or suggesting a need to broaden its scope. Consider some of the obvious questions on Malaya and Singapore, and on British-dominated areas of maritime Southeast Asia in general. Why did Malay agriculturalists join the British-run Malay Regiment (formed in 1933 and expanded to a regiment in stages culminating in 1938)?<sup>1</sup> How did Malay soldiers feel about being used to oppose Chinese miners, as at the Batu Arang coalfield strike of 1937? Why did many sacrifice their lives in the heroic defence of Pasir Panjang Ridge in Singapore on 13 and 14 February 1942, or in some cases invite death by refusing to switch to the Japanese after the British surrender on 15 February? Why did both the Malay Regiment and 'Dalforce' (a force of over 1000 Chinese volunteers raised from December 1941) perform so well, despite seeing some white troops throwing away their arms?<sup>2</sup>

Here were 'colonial' forces that performed noticeably better than many of Malaya's Western co-defenders. It is of course not difficult to see why a rational peasant might join the Malay Regiment, with recruits typically growing taller as well as heavier within months of joining.<sup>3</sup> But the final willingness to lay down their lives, even as white troops and imperial structures disintegrated around them, requires additional explanation.

The inward-looking approach may, therefore, provide important micro-historical detail on the nature of imperialism, and on how individual areas were governed. Certainly India, and perhaps large tracts of Africa too, could not have been conquered and dominated without the likes of the Indian Army or the King's African Rifles. The former alone had 311,000 Indians in 1857, though the Mutiny saw this limited by the newly imposed ratio of one British unit for every three Indian. It is also obvious that in many cases, such as in India, Burma and the Netherlands East Indies, colonial armies came to reflect divide and rule strategies, with battalions broken up into companies from different areas and communities, or troops recruited from one area used to police another: Gurkhas in Burma; Burmese battalions in Malaya; and Christian Ambonese and others in Java.<sup>4</sup>

There is an alternative, or at least supplementary, macro-historical approach. This strategy looks outward from the colonial armies, to classify different types of colonial force and anti-colonial forces, and to identify their relationship to larger regional, global



and imperial systems. This involves locating colonial forces in a sphere that is overlapped by several historiographies: that of the metropolitan power and its world system of power; that of colonial armies per se; and that of the locality and region in which forces operated. In this case, the former means recognising that 'Southeast Asia'—a term only popularised in and after the Second World War—actually fitted into wider British imperial visions of 'East of Suez' or of a southern imperial belt stretching from Cape Town through Bombay and Trincomalee, onward to Hong Kong and Sydney. The latter means joining the historiography of colonial armies with that of British imperialism, and particularly with a conception of the British Empire as a world system of power, and that of Southeast Asia.<sup>5</sup>

In this spirit, this chapter experiments with the macro-as well as the micro-historical approach, by starting with British colonial armies in just one area: maritime Southeast Asia. Even then the focus is mainly on the region encompassed by the modern Republic of Singapore, Malaysia and the Kingdom of Brunei. The rest of the chapter divides into three parts: historiographies; periodisation; and conclusions. The first part, historiographies, outlines how Southeast Asia might be seen as fitting into the larger historiography of British colonial armies and Indian Empire; and of imperialism as a British system of world power.

### **Colonial, imperial and Southeast Asian historiographies**

#### ***British colonial armies: Just another part of the Indian system of empire?***

Colonial armies in the widest sense were central to the colonial domination of Southeast Asia, and in some cases played a vital part in conquest too. In the widest sense, many colonial forces were raised outside Southeast Asia. The French used Africans at various times, the British when pushed in war and emergencies used a cacophony of Indians, Burmese, Australians, Rhodesians, East Africans, Fijians and others.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, British Southeast Asia was from the beginning reliant on Indian resources. It was conquered as a strategic and economic adjunct to the Indian Empire. Indian troops and police were used in Penang, and beyond Singapore in the invasion of Java in 1811, in Hong Kong and generally throughout the region when Britain needed extra men.

As for the development of British interests in Malaya and Singapore, the first long-lasting acquisition was the Malacca Straits (Strait of Melaka) port of Penang in 1786.<sup>7</sup> This was supposed to give the East India Company a naval base on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal, one usable when the northeast monsoon made sailing from India itself difficult. Singapore, acquired in 1819, was supposed to tap Southeast Asian trade for India, feeding its tin and forest and maritime products—birds' nest, rattan and sea cucumbers resembling great translucent slugs—into the China market. Malacca was finally transferred from the Dutch in 1824. The three were combined as the Straits Settlements in 1826, an outpost of the East India Company until the Indian mutiny saw country replace company in the shape of the British government. The Straits Settlements finally passed from Britain's India Office to the Colonial Office, becoming a Crown Colony in the process, in 1867.

Given this background, it is not surprising that the defence of the Straits Settlements Colony continued to be provided by the *Pax Britannica*: by British technology and Indian manpower. The Royal Navy continued to provide the maritime cover that made only small garrisons, combined with coastal guns such as those at Fort Canning on Singapore, sufficient for protection. Those few police and soldiers who were needed featured white officers and specialists (engineers, ordnance and signals), backed by small quantities of Indian manpower. Outside the Straits ports, influence in their hinterland in the Malayan peninsula involved cajoling local sultans. The nine states later to fall under British protection were: Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan (early on consisting of Sungei Ujong and several smaller states), Johor (then written Johore), Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu. Influence there came, by the 1860s to early 1870s, to mean facilitating some of the rulers' ability to raise money or troops via the Straits Settlements, and sending the very occasional gunboat against 'piracy'. Local forces were harnessed for security needs, but except for police this was restricted in the Straits Settlements to occasions of particular need. Their use was in fact more characteristic of the Brooke dynasty in Sarawak on Borneo.

This use of local military forces in the nineteenth century was episodic, but also illustrative of the thinness of the British-Indian security veneer provided for the Straits Settlements. Indeed, it was symptomatic of the fragile basis for state-building, which meant revenues from opium farms continued to be a main source of revenue in the Straits Settlements until the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> In 1831, Indian sepoys were used to attack the tiny Malay territory of Naning, right next to Malacca, to enforce disputed British rights to tribute and tax. But the 150 *sepoys* used were constantly harassed in the jungle, ultimately spiking their two guns and giving up. Victory only came in 1832, when a new commanding officer drove a 600 foot wide road most of the 22 miles from Malacca to Naning's capital, assisted now by Malay forces from a nearby ruler.<sup>9</sup> As late as 1871, when Singapore faced one of the many nineteenth-century Chinese riots fomented by secret society rivalries and tensions in its crowded precincts (the 'Coolie riot' of 1871), the Temenggong of Johor was asked to send Malays. They were all too effective, with suggestions they carried their enthusiasm for pacifying Chinese a little too far.

Likewise, in ruling Sarawak from mid-century the Brooke regime initially used coastal tribes to provide the necessary manpower. In 1857, local Chinese even sacked Kuching and threatened to wipe out the regime, before the *orang laut* ('sea people', in this case Sea Dayaks) arrived to reinforce the Brooke dynasty's efforts.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Britain tried to turn poacher into gamekeeper. In late nineteenth-century Singapore, the garrison was left in barracks during some riots, leaving security to the police. Instead of white or Indian soldiers being called in immediately, secret society leaders were sworn in as special constables and made to patrol the streets. The hope was that these slightly portly seniors might then be motivated to bring about peace themselves.<sup>11</sup> As late as the 1920s, in the disturbed border areas of the Unfederated Malay State of Perak, Britain employed former *panglima* (Malay robber bandit captains) as *penghulu* (village or local heads) to help bring peace to areas of cattle rustling and robbery. Despite later claims that the Malays lacked martial qualities, it was only in the 1920s that British colonialism started to get the upper hand in terms of crime in some of the *ulu* (up-river) areas of the Malay states.<sup>12</sup>

These exotica should not detain us long. The core of the pattern of 'old imperialism' and colonial armies in British-influenced maritime Southeast Asia of 1786–1874 was the use of small garrisons based around British officers, specialists and naval guns, backed by Indian manpower. As an adjunct to India, this maritime area was defended and to some extent policed by Indians. But we should note that this was a case of using Indian-manned colonial armies, rather than of replicating South Asian models in maritime Southeast Asia. The Indian model was to raise forces in one local area to police another. But Southeast Asians were not raised in any significant numbers to help to police Burma or India or to be sent to battlefields abroad. In short, we need to be clear that some parts of imperial systems were producers of security (in the limited sense of manpower and military hardware), others were consumers.

We should also note that when we talk of 'Southeast Asia', ever a problematical term, Burma was a special case. It was treated as an Indian state under direct British control until 1937, when it was separated and given a measure of self-government. As such, it followed the Indian model; for instance, raising its own Burma Frontier Force from Indians and Gurkhas and ethnic minorities, while sending some of its own troops to Malaya from the 1920s. As far as Southeast Asia is concerned, Burma remained an enigma, clearly integrated into South Asian systems and history, but equally clearly still part of Southeast Asia. Its nationalism and road to self-government, for instance, were clearly tied to Indian developments.<sup>13</sup>

Hence we are interested mainly in maritime Southeast Asia, where the pattern was one of domination by Indian colonial forces, rather than the raising of local forces on an Indian model. This pattern was confirmed rather than challenged in 1874–1914; that is, in the era of 'new imperialism', when Britain extended the model used in relations with Indian princely states to govern relations with nine sultanates on the Malayan peninsula.

Briefly, the Straits Settlements flourished between 1826 and 1874, helping to mediate the export of tin out of the Malay States and the influx of thousands of East Asian men into the sparsely populated, forested states, along with European and Asian capital. By 1874 this had helped to make the west coast of Malaya less stable, as Chinese fought each other and joined in Malay power disputes. A reluctant London accepted that it had better allow the local Straits Settlements Governor (the Settlements passed to the Colonial Office, and so became a colony, in 1867) to introduce British Residents into selected Malay States. These Residents were intended to give advice to the rulers, and so prevent other European states taking an interest.

In 1874 three states on the richest, tin-producing west coast—Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong (the last later integrated into Negeri Sembilan)—accepted British Residents, whose advice 'must be asked and acted upon'. A fourth state, the poor and vast east coast state of Pahang, was added in the 1880s. These were joined as the loosely coordinated Federated Malay States (FMS), effective from 1896.

The FMS were all protected states with still-sovereign sultans rather than colonies, but Britain did enjoy substantial influence in them, with Europeans coming to dominate as District Officers and in the Malayan Civil Service. The latter was an elite service of about 200–250 mainly European males, leavened with a very few Malays of royal blood. By contrast, five other states received British Advisers, with slightly less powers than the Residents, between then and 1914. Here interference was less. The last, Johor, even retained its own small military arm, the Johore Military Forces (JMF), of about half a

battalion.<sup>14</sup> None of the last five would join the FMS, despite British attempts to woo them in the 1920s and 1930s. They stubbornly remained separate, earning the British epithet of the Unfederated Malay States (UMS).

The crucial point is that, though the British Residents had extensive power in the FMS, its constituent states were still distinctly Malay. The idea that Residents merely gave advice to the sultans remained half-fiction, but also half-fact. Meanwhile, while the states were inundated with vast numbers of Chinese immigrants, and to a lesser extent Indians, these remained non-citizens. This was despite many of the latter becoming increasingly settled by the 1930s. There was thus a sharp constitutional contrast between the Malay States, where Britain was only the protecting power, and the Straits Settlements Colony (Penang, Singapore and Malacca).

In military terms, however, there was continuity rather than change around 1874, and across the Straits Settlements, the FMS and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). Take Perak, the Malay state that signed the first agreement for a British Resident to be installed. There Indian forces were deployed even before the Pangkor Engagement of January 1874 formalised the British position.

This happened in the key subdistrict of Larut, a rich tin-producing area close to the Straits Settlements port of Penang. Here 40,000 Chinese (where there had been scarcely any twenty years previously) fought to control tin production, their fights occasionally spilling on to nearby Penang's streets. Penang in turn allowed its former Superintendent of Police, Captain Speedy, to enter the employ of the Mantri of Larut (its local Malay ruler). In 1873, he brought from India over 100 Sikhs, Hindus and Pathans. This force evolved first into the 'Perak Armed Police', then the '1st Perak Sikhs', and finally after the formation of the FMS in 1896 into 'The Malay States Guides'. As with Indian Army units, British officers held the highest posts. High Commissioner-commissioned native officers were given junior ranks, mimicking the Indian Army's structure of *Jemadar*, *Subedar* and *Subedar-Major*.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the imposition of British Residents could scarcely have survived, and could not have been translated into British administrative dominance in the FMS, without the constant knowledge that behind the Straits Settlements Governor stood the full might of the Raj. Crucial to this was the Perak War of 1874–5. Perak's first Resident, J.W.W. Birch, a non-Malay speaker, alienated the local aristocracy by trying to take executive control in crucial areas of administration, and attempting to end debt-bondage.<sup>16</sup> On 2 November 1875 he met his nemesis. He was speared through the wall of his hut while bathing, his body falling into a river.<sup>17</sup> This ensured that sufficient British and Indian troops would be sent—well over 1000 British, Indians and Gurkhas—to crush Malay resistance, replace Perak's Sultan Abdullah with a more agreeable ruler and banish other Malay participants in this proto-nationalist revolt. Thereafter the Malay sultans might chafe and attempt to limit British interference, but advice was generally taken and direct use of force was never an option for the elite.

Not that the Perak wars resulted in a move to large garrisons in Malaya; far from it. First, Malays were gradually disarmed or at least encouraged to look to police and District Officers for redress. Next, initial Malay prejudices against the police (even the Malays in it were seen as 'foreign' if from other states or districts) dissipated. By the early twentieth century, Malaya's police force of fewer than 10,000 was mainly Malay,

and the profession increasingly seen as honourable and prestigious, against a background of rural poverty and subsistence fishing and farming.

The model for garrisons, meanwhile, continued to be one of very limited Indian forces, led by British officers and supplemented by a few British NCOs. This remained the case up to the First World War. By 1914 there were just two regular battalions of troops in Malaya and Singapore (excepting the Malay States Guides): one British, one Indian. Indeed, after war broke out in 1914 the British battalion was transferred out, as the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 meant Anglo-Japanese-Russian naval dominance rendered Singapore all but untouchable, bar the odd raider.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to this minimal regular garrison, there were also the coastal guns at Penang and especially those guarding Singapore Town and its harbour at Keppel. Then there were the Malay States Guides, by now a sort of paramilitary force, and volunteer forces in the Straits Settlements, FMS and UMS. The latter forces were strengthened after 1902, after the Boer War resulted in the British battalion being temporarily withdrawn. Not for the first time, the Boer War showed how easily a dispute elsewhere could soak up imperial manpower, leaving Malaya and the Straits Settlements vulnerable. The Straits Settlements had first raised a Volunteer Rifles Corps in 1854, and now resuscitated its 1885 Volunteer corps.<sup>19</sup>

*Table 10.1* Strength of the army in Malaya and Singapore, 7 December 1941

<i>Regulars</i>	
British	19,391
Australian	15,279
Indian	37,191
Asiatic <sup>a</sup>	4,482
Total	76,343
<i>Irregulars</i>	
British	2,430
Indian	727
Asiatic	7,395
Total	10,552
Grand total	86,895

<sup>a</sup> The Malay Regiment. This was expanded to two battalions plus support from December 1941.

Source: Adapted from Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, 'Operations in the Far East from 17th October to 27th December 1941', *London Gazette* 20 January 1948 (supplement of 22 January), Appendix M, pp. 569–75.

The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force and its sister forces on the peninsula provided a sort of territorial army of a few battalions at maximum, with part-time training.<sup>20</sup> In normal times, this meant little more than five days of camp a year.<sup>21</sup> It had British

commanding officers, though at company level there seem to have been some local officers. There were Malay and Chinese and Eurasian companies in the Straits Settlements (for instance, about 300 Chinese), but these received lower pay rates, and the Europeans kept control of the artillery.<sup>22</sup> In total, these provided several thousand men, with two battalions of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force and a light battery, and one battalion of the FMS Volunteer Force in addition to personnel for an artillery battery and support.<sup>23</sup>

After the First World War, the Indian battalion would be replaced by a Burmese one, and an experimental force of Malays was set up in 1933–4 (later to be expanded into the Malay Regiment). But the pattern was not fundamentally changed. When Britain had to defend Malaya in the Second World War, its initial instinct was again to call on naval power and, when losses in the Atlantic and Mediterranean meant that failed to materialise, on India. When war came to Malaya on 8 December 1941, local Asiatics formed a minuscule percentage of over 86,000 British imperial troops initially stationed in Malaya. The overwhelming majority consisted of Indians (about half), Australians and British (about a quarter each). Yet again the emphasis was on Indian forces, and if Britain failed to provide more than 181 frontline aircraft, many obsolete, or a fleet worthy of the name, this was merely continuing a tradition of sending only the bare minimum of defence hardware to the region.<sup>24</sup>

In this sense, Singapore's fall on 15 February 1942 reflected not so much British failure as the obsolescence of the old imperial model of defence. Once Singapore had fallen, the lack of access to local manpower confirmed this pattern. From 1943 Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), eventually based in Ceylon, was overwhelmingly Indian. It was this force of over 250,000 that reoccupied Southeast Asia after the American atomic bombs brought Japan to its knees.

Britain refused to let go of this old system even when events in 1946 first put an Indian interim government into power, and then saw Indian independence on 15 August 1947. Though Britain realised it had to be increasingly careful about the circumstances in which it used Indian troops, meaning a limit to the use of coercion in Burma or to support the Dutch in Indonesia, it also sought to carve from the Indian Army a new 'oriental barrack in the eastern seas': the Gurkhas.

In 1947 Britain got agreement that it might keep up to eight battalions of Gurkhas (up to 15,000 men) for its own use. Admittedly India got the lion's share of this 'martial race', up to 20 battalions, but a Britain facing labour shortages at home and worldwide commitments was none the less relieved. Indeed, in 1946–7 it had desperately cast around for other forces to fill the Indian void, considering Africans and (briefly) three brigades in north Burma, each comprising one British, one Gurkha and one Burmese hill tribe battalion.<sup>25</sup>

Burmese events soon overtook the last of these imperial fantasies, with independence coming in January 1948. But the Gurkha idea survived. By mid-1948 seven of the Gurkha battalions had been formed in Malaya, where they were expected to join British forces in a British-Gurkha Division, and serve as a mobile eastern reserve. The Raj was dead. Long live its army: or at least a British-bankrolled fraction thereof.

Significantly, the Gurkhas continued in this role until Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, and beyond with a British-Gurkha battalion still stationed, at the Sultan's expense, in Brunei. Along with Singapore, the Sultan also retains Gurkhas of his own, both in an

infantry battalion and in a paramilitary force.<sup>26</sup> The notion that outside mercenaries on the lines of the old 'colonial armies' might be more reliable, and in the case of racial tensions a last emotionally safe force, is still not entirely dead.

### *A British system of world power*

It might be tempting, given this pervasive reliance on Indian manpower, and the longevity of the link between Southeast Asia and Gurkha mercenaries, to see 'colonial armies' in British maritime Southeast Asia as little more than a footnote to the Indian Empire. What is there here that differs from David Omissi's *The Sepoy and the Raj* or from any work covering India?<sup>27</sup> From the predominant Indian perspective, maritime Southeast Asia continues to be seen as just one regional subcomponent, one small set of outposts in a system that stretched from Hong Kong to Aden. It seems modified only in so far as Singapore, perhaps not unlike Aden, Hong Kong, Malta and Cyprus, was a consumer rather than a producer of security.

These Southeast Asian territories took in British and Indian forces, but sent little out. But this apparent lack of contribution from Southeast Asia should give us a first hint that something must be wrong with the traditional picture. Do imperial powers, including parsimonious Britain, really allow some colonies to lie useless, contributing nothing to overall imperial security?

The apparent lack of a defence contribution compels us to look for different ways in which a colony might service imperial needs. In this way it suggests the need in the literature on colonial armies to place constituent parts in the context of the complex whole. Should we, for instance, differentiate metropolitan core, settler colony, hinterland conquest and strategic posts (defined by economic as well as military value)? In other words, did each category tend to play differentiated roles within an overall imperial system of defence? If so, are the Straits Settlements and Malaya better analysed not just as Indian outposts, but as belonging to the category of imperial strongpoints and entrepôts, which provided economic facilities (ports, services, coal and then oil fuelling stations, and dollar-earning exports such as rubber) and consumed security in the traditional sense of the word in their turn?

Did the British maritime realm of Southeast Asia have a particular systemic role within what might be described as a 'world system of power'? The British 'official mind' did not make a neat divide between 'foreign policy', 'defence' and 'colonies', or even between these and economic power. All these, as well as prestige and credibility, were constituents of a system of power.<sup>28</sup> Colonial armies per se were just one component of the whole. Within this system, Singapore and Malaya consumed security in the sense of their share of Indian and British troops and the Royal Navy. But they also produced security and power in a broader sense and different ways, playing differentiated roles within an overall system. This production can be thought of in terms of a number of images.

The first is the tin dredge and rubber plantation, the latter with its rows of trees, each of which would not look out of place in a European deciduous forest. By the interwar period these resources were already in the frontline of Britain's and the Empire's balance of payments. As India's role in this declined, Malaya's surplus of dollar-earning exports over dollar-costing imports became increasingly important. For this reason, London was

very reluctant to let the training, or expansion, of volunteer or new forces get in the way of rubber production in the 1930s.

There was nevertheless a tradition of raising volunteers from Europeans, and from local residents judged to be reliable. These volunteers saw some, albeit very limited, development from the mid-1930s. At this point, enrolment of 18–40-year-olds in the volunteers was for four years at a time.<sup>29</sup> The Singapore-based Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was constituted in 1934, and by 1937 trained in one sloop, three patrol boats and a trawler for wartime minesweeping and inshore patrol. The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force's roots went back decades, and by this time it had four battalions: two in Singapore, one in Malacca and one for Penang and Province Wellesley. These were divided into companies along race lines (European, Eurasian, Chinese and Malay), with a measure of supporting services in addition. The FMS, meanwhile, had four battalions. But for the five UMS there were little more than embryonic staff and training organisations in three only (the solely European Johor Volunteer Engineers, the Kedah Volunteer Force founded in 1933 and the Kelantan Volunteer Rifles, reconstituted in 1934 after a dormant period). There were in addition the Sultan of Johor's small Johor Military Forces.<sup>30</sup>

Even into 1939–41, there was a reluctance to divert further men (especially Europeans in supervisory positions) away from the bureaucracy and commercial management and into the further expansion of the volunteers. This reluctance was not altogether surprising, given that in 1931 there were just 30,000 Europeans in Malaya, including perhaps 9000 British males. Even given London's position, about a quarter of the Malayan Civil Service's 224 men did sign up in the volunteers.<sup>31</sup>

So Malaya's role as a dollar arsenal ultimately clashed with its own interests in terms of militarising manpower, contributing to the loss of the area to Japan in February 1942. But that loss did nothing to diminish or change Malaya's economic role. Malaya played an even bigger part in Britain's economic power, such as that was, in the 1940s and 1950s. At its peak around 1950 Malaya earned about one-third of the dollars of the entire sterling block. It was a crucial economic underpinning at a time when Britain produced about a third of all armaments made in Europe.<sup>32</sup>

The second image is of Singapore's twin harbours: Keppel Harbour on its southern coast, just west of the city, and the Royal Navy base at Sembawang in the north, opposite the Johor coastline. Keppel Harbour was the commercial harbour, and until the 1920s most of Singapore's coastal guns were clustered around it, especially at the offshore island of Pulau Blakang Mati (Malay for 'at the back of death', now pragmatically renamed 'Sentosa' or isle of serenity, for tourism purposes). Together with radio relay stations and telegraph connections, the port made Singapore a vital imperial communications centre. Then there was the new naval base built in the north, at Sembawang: £63 million worth of naval installation, combined with the oil storage facilities there and on offshore islands. Together, these made Singapore host to a strategic and communications post on a par with Malta or Gibraltar and far more important than Aden, a position it retained beyond internal self-government in June 1959 or even independence on 9 August 1965. Even a notional British decision (in January 1968) to withdraw by 1971 failed to end Singapore's role in the production of global security. Britain withdrew in the mid-1970s, and to the present day manages naval berths at Sembawang on behalf of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (Australia, New Zealand,



the UK, Singapore and Malaysia), with the United States having similar facilities from the 1980s. Indeed, in 1999 new agreements were signed, giving the United States access to the republic's new naval base at Changi, which could accommodate any naval craft, up to and including the largest carriers. The systemic role outlasted the empire, if only because Singapore recognised the value of ensuring an attacker would endanger bigger powers' interests.<sup>33</sup>

The third image is of one of Singapore's two batteries of biggest Second World War era coastal guns, the 15-inch guns of Johor Battery. Facing out to sea to protect Singapore's eastern approaches, in January 1942 these were swivelled round to shell Johor Bahru behind, on the Malayan mainland. Each of its three guns had 16.5 metres of barrel mounted on land on naval style turrets, capable of hurling shells the weight of a small car over 20 miles to sea to penetrate battleship armour. These were part of a system of 29 modern coastal guns installed in the 1930s, equivalent in total to the armament of a major capital ship or two.<sup>34</sup> The bigger guns were operated by British Artillery Regiments, the smaller by the Indian-raised Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery. But Singapore and Malaya were not just playing host. This can be seen from the name. Johor Battery was in fact in eastern Singapore, in the Changi area. It was so called after a May 1935 donation of half a million pounds by the Sultan of Johor, most of which went to the guns.<sup>35</sup> This was one of several local donations towards imperial defence, which in 1919–39 came to £15 million: two-thirds of the amount given by the whole colonial empire (excluding India) in the period, and equivalent to a quarter of the cost of a naval base that serviced common imperial defence. Other countries, such as New Zealand, also made contributions to the latter, and earlier still Malayan donations had funded the battleship *HMS Malaya*.<sup>36</sup>

All this was on top of local payment for the normal peacetime garrison. When the Colonial Office agreed to assume responsibility for the Straits Settlements from India, one condition was that they pay their normal peacetime garrison costs. In Singapore, the Straits Settlements contribution was fixed in 1899 at 20 per cent of revenues, and in many years the island actually paid more than its garrison cost. From around 1928 to 1930 there was a major debate, as Straits Settlements representatives insisted the full 20 per cent not be used against the costs of the new fortress guns and naval base, which were, they said, for 'imperial' rather than for mere 'local' defence.<sup>37</sup>

Until the 1930s, in other words, Singapore and Malaya were self-financing. They did not as much consume imperial security as help to underpin its finances, and act as a synapse for imperial goods and communications. Simultaneously, they raised their own volunteer forces, paid for their garrison for local defence and made several discrete grants in times of need or for particular projects.

From the 1920s, however, changes in the global balance of power increasingly caught up with this model. In a sense, it was not that Britain ever declined, just that its world empire had been based on the lack of serious naval challengers, so small local garrisons, part-Indian and underprovided for in terms of equipment compared to modern armies, would suffice. Once Japan became a threat in East Asia after 1915, and Germany recovered in the 1930s, neither having been a factor before the 1880s, the old model became vulnerable.

The costs of the imperial component of defence—of military technology in the forms of ships, modern weapons and aircraft—now spiralled, while local colonies were unable

or unwilling to accept an increased share of this burden. This was precisely because the division of labour within the system specifically left this to the metropolitan power. Indeed, members of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council made it abundantly clear after 1928 that they should pay only for local defence, with the British government picking up most of the tab for imperial costs, such as the naval base decided upon in 1921 (and finished in 1938) and its coastal guns. One paper in 1930 warned about counting any unspent portion of Singapore's 20 per cent contribution towards base or gun costs: 'The situation is very similar to the dispute with the American Colonies which led to their separation.'<sup>38</sup> When Britain failed to provide the hardware needed for Singapore in 1941–2, it was in effect failing at something never before necessary in the region, and that existing structures were unable to provide: large amounts of the most sophisticated military hardware.<sup>39</sup>

This chapter has now delineated Southeast Asia as an area that, for defence, was treated as an adjunct of the Indian Empire, but one that played a differentiated role within the Indian system, and within what could be loosely described as Britain's system of world power and influence. But so far it seems as if the fact of this happening in Southeast Asia is irrelevant. We might as well be looking at Kenya or the Gold Coast as at Taiping and Singapore. What is Southeast Asian about all this? Does the historiography of colonial armies and imperial defence have anything to say to Southeast Asian historiography?

### **Southeast Asian historiography**

It is difficult entirely to escape European-driven periodisations when talking about 'colonial armies'. But it is possible to ask how a history of locally raised colonial forces fits into the wider historiography for the area. For instance, how did the nature of colonial armies change in response to the changing pulse of European dominance and local resistance? Four periods might be suggested as heuristic devices.

#### ***The era of traders and local rulers, from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries***

This was the period when European trading companies such as the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) and the English East India Company concentrated as much on islands and trading factories as on dominion. What were the unique characteristics of 'colonial' armies, or the use of alliances between Europeans and local potentates with their own forces, in this period? This subject is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the next period is not.<sup>40</sup>

#### ***The period of European consolidation and expansion into hinterlands, c.1870–1914***

This was the period of so-called 'new imperialism', which for Malaya overlapped with what might be called a period of *Pax Britannica* from 1786 to 1919. In this period, how far was European expansion facilitated by changing technology (use of quinine, the

steamboat) or by new techniques for raising and handling colonial armies? For instance, how important was the development of new techniques of mobile columns led by a few Europeans in the Aceh war to subsequent Dutch expansion into the outer reaches of the Netherlands Indies? How far, by comparison, did this period simply see an extension and deepening of previous methods? How different were the various colonial armies, such as Britain using Malaya and Singapore for a differentiated role within its system of world power, whereas the Dutch, for whom the East Indies were the prime component of world power, raised local troops on a far greater scale? Can we discern groupings of imperial powers according to their different colonial defence policies?

*From the growth of Asian demands for access to modernity to the rise of nationalism) c.1910–1941*

The new imperialism and the investment that both fuelled it and fed on it led to a new rationalism, with more coherent and modernised systems of education, bureaucracy and communications. This in turn connected different peoples and regions within each European area of jurisdiction, creating the human and physical infrastructure for a new nationalism.

This new nationalism was at first tentative and in many instances confined to small, modern elites, and expressed in the first instance as cultural or religious revival, combined with a desire to secure increased access to 'modernity': modernity in the form of Western curricula, civil service jobs and posts of influence. This was expressed through organisations like Java's *Budi Utomo* or the Young Men's Buddhist Association of Burma; in Malaya by Malay journalists, newspapers and a new assertiveness by the Malay Sultans. So the period 1906–41 saw increasing local assertiveness, organisation and dynamism.

We already know that this affected colonial politics, calling forth a variety of tactics from increased if limited association (the Netherlands Indies' *Volksraad*), through accommodation (British decentralisation policy for the FMS) to outright repression (Dutch persecution of nationalist parties, and banning of the Indonesian flag and of discussions of independence).

How do British territories fit into this picture? For maritime Southeast Asia, we might tentatively label this an era of testing new collaborators within a plural society (1919–41). For instance, Britain wanted to tempt the five UMS into its FMS system. From the British perspective, this involved limited devolution of some areas from central coordination to individual states, in the hope the UMS would then find federation more tempting. From the Malay perspective, the period involved attempts to gain more Malay access to modern education, and pressure for more Malay control. For instance, Sultan Iskandar of Perak visited London in 1924, heavily criticising overcentralisation in Malaya, while Malay newspapers projected an Islamic-based Malay identity and a desire to defend this against the threat of Chinese immigrants and their apparently superior economic skills.<sup>41</sup>

How does the history of colonial armies (for instance, the Dutch refusal to contemplate a Netherlands Indies militia in the First World War, or to enlist local help in the second) reflect or inform this wider pattern? How and why did Britain come to reaffirm its 'divide and rule' instincts for Burmese forces, keeping recruitment of

Burmans in the late 1930s to the minimum consistent with the rapid increase in overall forces there, just as it experimented with recruiting more Malays?

In particular, how far can the difference between the responses of Britain and the United States on the one hand, with their willingness to experiment with raising more 'national' local forces, and France and the Netherlands on the other, help us to understand these powers' subsequent policies, and the very different responses of local populations to war and to postwar conditions?

### *Wars and decolonisation, December 1941 to April 1975*

Finally, there is the traumatic period of war and decolonisation, which Abu Talib Ahmad's Chapter 9 outlines. Traditionally the Second World War has been seen as a watershed period for many Southeast Asian states. In particular, it unleashed anti-colonial armies that undermined old policies in two ways. First, these armies recruited from core populations, Burmans in Burma, not ethnic minorities or Indians, and Javanese and Sumatrans in the Netherlands East Indies rather than Christians from the outer islands. This hit at the legitimacy and the adequacy of old-style colonial armies, relatively small in number and overreliant on outsiders to police core areas. By late 1948 the Dutch, for instance, had around 140,000 men operating in the East Indies, most now being conscripts, where prewar the colonial army had been a mere fraction of the size. Yet this enlarged army was still far from equal to the new circumstances.

This was partly because the Japanese, from 1943, had sought to mobilise ever greater numbers of 'Indonesians' against the day when they might be needed to help to fight Anglo-American forces. *Peta* (the Army of the Defenders of the Homeland) alone had over 37,000, organised as battalions, one per locality, so forming the kernel for a nationwide guerrilla force. Then there were youth corps, Islamic militia and more. After the nationalists declared their Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1947, this formed the basis for two types of army: around 175,000 in the regular Republican army, and the same again in autonomous armed groups and militant *pemuda* (youth) groups.<sup>42</sup> The latter were so dispersed, and autonomous, that no amount of Dutch technical superiority could root them out, and even the Republican leaders had limited control.

The story was the same elsewhere. The Indochina Communist Party, prewar surviving on a cell structure, emerged under the umbrella of the *Viet Minh* front, able to command guerrillas across the north. In Burma Aung San had done his U-turn from Japanese collaborator to head of the Burma National Army, cooperating with Mountbatten. Its veterans and the realisation of organisation and power were the essential background to Burma's accelerated independence by January 1948.

Two celebrations make this point. First, on 3 May 1945 a victory parade was held in Rangoon. Watching from the dais with Mountbatten was Aung San: dressed in the uniform of a Japanese Major-General, with an armband sporting a red star, and capped off with a pith helmet. Second, in September 1945 Mountbatten was at Singapore's *padang* (open green) for Malaya's victory celebrations. This time the honoured included one Chin Peng, then an implausibly young, emergent leader in the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, later a scourge of the British as head of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The Japanese period everywhere produced new 'colonial' armies,

consisting of members of the core areas and communities, and with local leaders trained and ready to emerge to command them.

Even where the idea that war radically transformed Southeast Asia has had to be modified, because the same local elites continued to dominate before and after the war, as in Malaya and the Philippines, the unleashing of these anti-colonial armies had an important bearing on events. In the Philippines the *Hukbalahap*, an anti-Japanese guerrilla force emerging out of peasant communities and communist leadership, was defeated by concerted American assistance in the 1950s.

In Malaya, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army only temporarily disbanded in 1946–8. Its leaders soon found that seeking power by the ballot box was futile when the colonial power could, and would, use banishment to deport union leaders, trespass laws to keep them out of estates and union legislation to attack their power. By early 1948 they planned a gradual reversion to 'defensive' violence, which Britain pre-empted by its June 1948 declaration of Emergency.<sup>43</sup> The resulting struggle involved several thousand insurgents and perhaps a million supporters (out of a population of five or six million during the decade, about 40 per cent Malay). It totally skewed British postwar plans to return to a pseudo-Indian model of global defence: in other words, plans in 1946–8 to run down white troops to a minimum core, leaving local defence increasingly to an expanded Malay Regiment, while the Gurkhas would provide a regional reserve. Britain, which in the 1920s had kept but one British battalion in Malaya and Singapore, and another Burmese, found itself obliged in the 1950s to commit up to twenty battalions (40,000 men) a time from around the empire.<sup>44</sup>

It could thus be argued that the war and the resulting 'anti-colonial colonial armies' it spawned were essential in making obsolescent the old system of 'colonial armies' even in Britain's case. No overview of colonial armies would be complete without an account of how these 'anti-colonial' militias started to compete for allegiance, and win it. This still leaves us, however, with the wider question of how to relate this periodisation of Southeast Asian history to the historiography, and periodisation, of British policy towards colonial armies.

### **The periodisation of locally raised security forces and resources for British dominated areas of Southeast Asia**

For British colonial defence policy, four eras can now be suggested, which overlap those for Southeast Asia generally, and for the Indian Army in specific. These eras include those of: *Pax Britannica* (1786–1918); testing new collaborators in a plural society (1919–41); 'nation', 'state'-building and decolonisation (1942–63); and withdrawal.

The first era, of *Pax Britannica*, was inaugurated in maritime Southeast Asia by the securing of Penang as a base in 1786. It was based on Indian manpower and on the Royal Navy's nineteenth-century global dominance, and was extended on to the peninsula by the use of Indian forces to crush local resistance in the Penang War of 1874–5.

Thereafter, the Malay States continued as sovereign Malay entities, but with their sultans obliged to accept the advice of British Residents. Malay military power was gradually neutered and replaced with British protection. Malays served as police, but otherwise Britain sought to end what it saw as previous Malay chaos, disorder and

violence: retiring the *keris* (a local form of sword, with fighting display and status value), ending headhunting in Borneo and garrisoning the states with Burmese, Indians and a handful of whites. The result was almost a parody of British ideas of casting according to martial race stereotypes, one where outsiders created an iron framework for Malaya's plural society, in which Malays became a bare majority. Chinese and Indians came to form over 50 per cent of the population by 1931. So outside forces provided the iron framework for developmental states in the Straits Settlements and Malaya, where Indian and Chinese immigrants mingled, but did not mix, with the Malays.

At the same time, the Straits Settlements and Malaya were not just consumers of security in the form of a handful of British troops and guns, and rather more Indians. They raised volunteers in numbers from 1902, paid for their garrison of British and Indian forces and played a differentiated role within a British system of world power. They provided occasional contributions, acted as a synapse for communications, assisted Britain's balance of payments indirectly by earning dollars while spending sterling and made additional ad hoc financial contributions. As such, Malaya and the Straits Settlements together are better compared with strategic colonies or points such as Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden and Hong Kong than with inland conquests in Africa and India or white settler colonies in North America and Australia.

The second era for this region was one of testing new collaborators in a plural society (1919–41). It provides a deeply ironic comment on the first, and stemmed in part from the rise of Indian nationalism. On 15 February 1915 Indian troops in Singapore mutinied. The background was that the one British battalion had been withdrawn to serve elsewhere, leaving in Singapore the 5th Indian Light Infantry Regiment and the Malay States Guides. These were probably disturbed by earlier successes of the German raider *Emden* in bombarding Penang. When the *Emden* was captured, its crew was incarcerated in Singapore. They, along with a local coffee shop owner, managed to work the North Indian Muslims of the 5th Indian Light Infantry Regiment, and about 100 north Indians from the Malay States Guides, into a state of mutiny.

This was the realisation of British fears of the time that the Muslim components of India's 'martial races' would be infected by dissatisfaction at Britain fighting Turkey, as well as by the murmurings of Indian nationalism. As the Indian mutineers ran amok in the Keppel Harbour area, attacking Europeans, a combination of Sikh police, hastily sworn in Special Constables, Singapore volunteers and ships' crews, including some from Japan, Russia and France, restored order. It was to take the interwar period to make the Indian Army less useful as an imperial instrument (with rising Indian nationalism constraining its budget and use, and after the Second World War rapidly making it difficult to use it in policing roles). But in its results in Singapore, the Mutiny accelerated the process locally. In 1919 the Malay States Guides were disbanded, and though the Indian battalion usually located at Singapore was later replaced with a Burmese one, the local rulers' dislike of paying for foreign mercenaries was now supplemented by local Europeans' distrust of Indian forces.<sup>45</sup>

This helped to move British policy into a phase of experimenting with different configurations for local forces. With Malay sultans complaining at foreign garrisons, and Britain wanting to appease Malay sentiment in the hope of widening the FMS, in the 1920s and 1930s Britain moved to establish a 'Malay Regiment'. This would be added to the Sultan of Johor's personal micro-army.

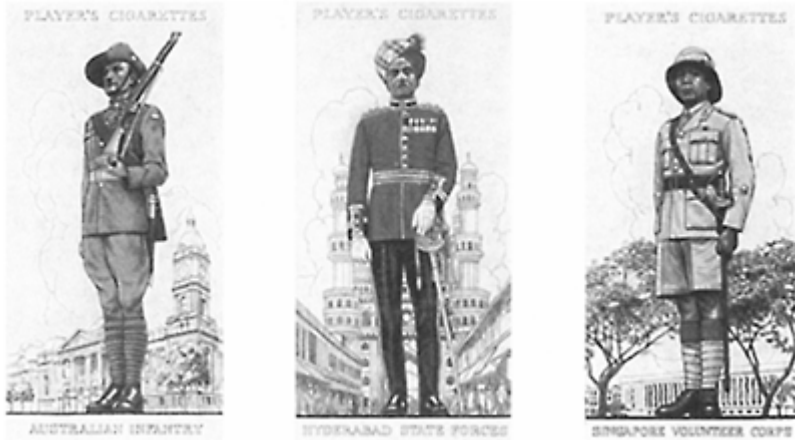
The idea of raising Malays had been discussed in British official circles on and off since 1902, the hope of extra security being balanced by the fear of arming 'natives'. In 1913, for instance, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Arthur Young, opposed raising Malay volunteers, doubting their capacity for discipline and favouring using them instead for a naval unit. Asian volunteers had been raised during the war, however, and in the early postwar period some Malay rulers, notably Sultan Iskandar of Perak, kept up pressure for a regular Malay body.<sup>46</sup>

Given the mutiny and the political need to bait FMS membership with an understanding British attitude, the impetus for raising Malay regulars was now there. But Britain remained unsure if the Malays were made of the right stuff. No matter that Malay gave to English the word *amok* (*amuk*), that a Malay proverb could say *Biar putih tulang jangan putih mata* (Better white bones than white eyes, meaning 'death before dishonour') and that to Swettenham's generation the central problem had been to quell Malay feuding and piracy.<sup>47</sup> Now Malay martial potential was called into question. Even the Regiment's wartime commanding officer, J.R.G. Andre, could write that 'The Malay had for centuries been content to take life as it came, to grow his rice and to catch his fish, although some of the more adventurous had at times indulged in a little piracy... The only fighting that had taken place had been small tribal squabbles.'<sup>48</sup> Hence an experimental squad for a Malay Regiment was formed in the early 1930s, to test the martial qualities of these cheaper troops at a time of imperial overstretch. After gradual expansion this became the full 'Malay Regiment' in 1938, expanded to two battalions from December 1941.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, the local volunteers still maintained different companies for different communal groupings, paid the volunteers different amounts according to race and kept the artillery in European hands.<sup>50</sup> Even the advent of war in China from 1937 and Europe somewhat later scarcely moved Britain. One Malay Regiment battalion became two, but Chinese—split between equally anti-Japanese Guomindang (Kuomintang) and communists—were not enlisted as volunteers and for 'stay-behind' party training until after 7 December 1941, and after the British Commander-in-Chief, Air Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, had called for the eastern races to assist with their characteristic 'serenity'.<sup>51</sup> The problem was partly that Britain's role as protector made full mobilisation anathema, partly that Malaya's differentiated role was to supply dollar exports not men and partly that the Chinese who were organised along Guomindang or communist lines were seen as alien, and potentially disruptive, forces. There was no 'Malayan' nation to call upon, so the burden of war fell mainly on old-style imperial forces, half of which were Indian.

The resulting and humiliating fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, in which the mostly South Asian defending forces of the empire fell, despite the heroic performance of Chinese and the Malay Regiment, was a fitting epitaph on the empire of old. It was European martial qualities that came under scrutiny. The resistance of Chinese volunteers, lightly armed and freshly raised, and the Malay Regiment's determined resistance at Pasir Panjang Ridge in Singapore on 13 and 14 February 1942, stood out in sharp contrast to the shaky morale and desertions suffered by some British, Indian and Australian units, with a few Indian troops joining a Japanese-organised 'Indian National Army' as early as January 1942, and more than half after the fall.<sup>52</sup> Lt Adnan achieved postwar status as a national hero for his resistance near Pasir Panjang, maintaining his

Lewis gun until he was shot down, bayoneted and hung upside down on a tree, reportedly while still alive.<sup>53</sup> After the fall, at least eight Malay officers



*Figure 10.1* Forces employed in Malaya were of every conceivable description, ranging from Burma Regiments in the 1920s to Gurkhas, Fijians and young British National Servicemen in the 1950s. From left to right here are: Australian infantry (in Malaya from the 1940s onwards); Hyderabad State Forces (1940s); the locally raised Singapore Volunteer Corps.

*Source:* John Player and Sons cigarette cards in the 'Military Uniforms of the British Empire' series, 1938.





*Figure 10.2* Malay Regiment in traditional clothing. Loyalty stemmed partly from playing on the ‘Malay’ identity of the Regiment as the guardian of the Malay States and rulers. No doubt this also played to traditional Malay stories of warrior values, such as the heroes Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat.

*Source:* Imperial War Museum, London, negative no. K123.

refusing to take off their uniforms were executed near the Pasir Panjang line, adding to the many Chinese volunteers and innocent Chinese killed.<sup>54</sup>

The Malay Regiment’s performance looks, comparatively speaking, quite extraordinary, matched by only a few ‘white’ units, such as the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Its performance may be partly explained by its ‘experimental’ nature. Unlike most other forces in Malaya, it had not been milked of its officers or recently formed. It had had up to 40 applicants for every place, and had been rigorously trained by seconded British officers. Those officers took their mission to ‘test’ Malay martial abilities very seriously, and impressed again and again on the recruits that their race’s honour and the Regiment’s future rested squarely on their soldiers. The Malays of the Regiment, who were periodically visited by royalty as well, had every right to consider their position a special one.<sup>55</sup>

Britain drew the easy conclusion from the results—that ‘mercenary’ armies were expensive and ineffective in the modern world—and set about constructing new, national, multiracial, multiterritory forces to match its vision for a new ‘Malayan nation’, and perhaps even a future ‘Dominion of Southeast Asia’. Hence in the third era (1942–1963) Britain tried to raise an expanded and now multicommunal ‘Malayan Army’, with mixed units of which the old Malay Regiment would be just one, and with specialisation according to region: infantry in Malaya, naval forces in Singapore. The initial aim was to help to build a ‘Malayan nation’ from fissiparous material by having six mixed-race units. But wartime organisation by mainly Chinese anti-Japanese guerrillas had led to clashes with Malay police and to postwar interracial fighting. When the British pressurised Malay sultans to cede sovereignty to a new Malayan Union, and proffered citizenship for almost all Chinese, the Malays rallied round the new United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), founded in March to May 1946. Rather than face deep Malay anger, Britain backtracked, replacing the Union with a Malayan Federation on 1 February 1948, limiting Chinese citizenship and dropping plans for mixed battalions. Instead, the Malay Regiment was resurrected, with supporting arms being mixed-race to ‘gauge the military quality of all races’.<sup>56</sup>

In fact it proved very difficult to get Chinese to join either the police or the Federation Army’s new mixed-race supporting units. They could often earn more than Malays outside, and anyway the presence of the Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party (MCP), and its heroic role in organising anti-Japanese resistance from 1937 to 1945, was a major block. Once the MCP had concluded that constitutional struggle alone had failed in 1947–8, Chinese supporting the British increasingly risked being labelled ‘running dogs’, a title that could result in having to dig one’s own grave, or having a grenade tossed into your shop.<sup>57</sup> The advent of the mainly Chinese-driven Malayan Emergency (1948–60), in response to spiralling violence, then led to contradictory impulses. Britain attempted to increase Chinese in the police, with some success in Special Branch by the early 1950s.<sup>58</sup> It also expanded locally raised infantry units quickly, meaning the all-Malay Malay Regiment. So the Malayan Army became overwhelmingly Malay.

At the same time, in the 1950s, it became necessary for Britain to call forth a vast part-time force to counterbalance Chinese agriculturalists’ support for the MCP and its anti-colonial insurgent force. By 1952 there were several regular Malay Regiment battalions, and over 250,000 Home Guards, in addition to about 70,000 full-time and part-time police, who were overwhelmingly Malay. Given the depth of Malay support for UMNO, and the way the Emergency turned in the security forces’ favour from 1952, this could hardly fail to boost Malays’ self-confidence. Where facing the Chinese without Britain was previously hardly conceivable, from the early 1950s pressure began to build for accelerated constitutional advance. Federal elections in 1955 returned an UMNO-led Alliance, and in January 1956 Britain agreed to give Malaysians immediate control of internal security, followed by independence and a defence agreement in 1957.<sup>59</sup>

One result of this relationship between colonial forces and decolonisation was that the ‘colonial’ Malay Regiment became identified as a key force in the struggle to survive against communism, and in the struggle for independence. As such it was made the focus for the postcolonial pride and propaganda that Kevin Blackburn discusses in Chapter 12.

Meanwhile, Britain ended up with a bizarre mix of policies, with half-enforced multiracialism and regionalism for local forces, heavy equipment and support given by

British and Gurkha forces and a strange cacophony of Dayak, Australian, African, Fijian, Rhodesian and other forces. Malaya became almost a metaphor for Britain's imperial aims, to produce 'national' postcolonial states, nevertheless functioning as part of a Commonwealth whole, and reliant on Britain for certain types of support. In other words, independence was not intended to be, in terms of colonial defence, a major cut-off point.

Instead a September 1957 Defence Agreement perpetuated Britain's right, and obligation, to defend Malaya and to station forces there after independence on 31 August that year. Indeed, it even gave Britain the right to use Malayan bases in the defence of other British territories in the Far East, including Hong Kong and Borneo. In Singapore, the danger that local governments from 1955 might succumb to communism or racial riot further encouraged Britain to retain a say in internal security. The 1957 agreement to give Singapore internal self-government (Singapore only started raising its first infantry battalion that year) gave ultimate control of internal security to an Internal Security Council (ISC). This was evenly balanced between Britain and Singapore, a Malayan having the casting vote. One of Britain's concerns was explicitly that, in case of trouble, it might need to get *white* troops on to the streets quickly, to prevent trouble before it got out of hand; as it did in October 1956 in response to riots that followed student sit-ins.<sup>60</sup>

Instead of seeing decolonisation as the dismantling of its colonial defence model for the area, Britain shifted the old model subtly, emphasising partnership with emerging countries' armed forces, Britain providing the bombers, ships and heavy support. Indeed, as late as 1955–6, one airforce officer could describe the idea of an independent Malayan airforce as 'plain balls'.<sup>61</sup>

The fourth and final era, of final withdrawal, thus only really commenced after independence for Malaya (1957) and full internal self-government for Singapore (1959). In important ways, this last phase was accelerated by Indonesia's President Sukarno in 1963–6, when he opposed the formation of Malaysia (1963). Malaysia itself had had a defence rationale, providing the large 'Dominion of Southeast Asia' always implicit in Britain's postwar reorganisation of the area, at least as an ultimate aim. It provided a territory big enough to support rather than sap Commonwealth defence strength, but one amenable to Singapore continuing its role as an imperial node of communication and defence.

Sukarno's *konfrontasi* upset this model, by showing that any continuing large-scale British presence might merely encourage further opposition. Even though Sukarno kept his 'confrontation' of Malaysia low-key, relying on border infiltration in Borneo, limited airdrops on peninsular Malaya and bombs in Singapore, the conflict tied down tens of thousands of troops and much of the British fleet. It called for troops that Britain, which increasingly favoured reliance on technology rather than numbers, did not want to have to provide in the future. Hence confrontation helped to accelerate British acceptance that the model of local forces, backed by British hardware and reinforcements where necessary, might be too burdensome. It helped to fuel and sustain the series of British decisions from 1965 to 1968, starting with an announcement that Britain would only become involved in local conflicts if there was substantive local support, and ending with the January 1968 declaration that Britain would withdraw from East of Suez in 1971.<sup>62</sup>

Typically, Britain's declared policy diverged somewhat from reality. Withdrawal actually dragged on until 1975–6, slowly inaugurating a new period, which has yet to be completed. This is a period when the accent is not on the provision of British hardware or

men in any numbers, but on defence diplomacy, with only a tiny residue left from older systems, such as British Army Gurkhas remaining in independent Brunei.

For Britain, this last period, however unwelcome, was not without its benefits. British aspirations to see larger regional blocks met partial fulfilment in Malaysia (formed September 1963), even if Singapore did leave and became independent on 9 August 1965. Above all, however, British bases and military services personnel remained deeply desired by communities from Nepal to Singapore, with Lee Kuan Yew fighting to keep British bases until the last gasp, in 1968. Indeed, for elite and subaltern alike, enlistment with British forces remained, and for Nepal remains, a direct way of tapping the higher wages, and sometimes organisational and technical skills, of a wealthier society in a hierarchical but partly paternalistic environment.

### Conclusions

This chapter has hinted at some of the bigger canvases on which the story of locally raised forces, and local contributions to imperial defence, are acted out. These have included the way Malaya and Singapore were part of an Indian system of defence, but emerged with a quite distinct role within Britain's world system of power. The latter, though never exactly theorised as such, undoubtedly worked at an inchoate level, informing the varying defence roles of different types of colonial possession.

Such a chapter inevitably begs more questions than it answers. It leaves a range of problems that go beyond notions of martial races, loyalty and nationalism. Do we, for instance, need to construct a typology of colonies, in which Malaya and the Straits Settlements belong with strategic centres such as Malta and Aden? Do such colony types need then to be located within wider systems or discourses about imperial defence, perhaps varying slightly from metropolitan power to metropolitan power? How far was the loss of faith in 'Indian' personnel from the Singapore mutiny of 1915 symptomatic of the early and continuing decline in utility of the Indian Army under the onslaught of Indian nationalism and sharpening Islamic assertion within the subcontinent? How far do we need to integrate the study of colonial armies with the study of anti-colonial armies?

Beyond such general questions, there are those specific to the decolonisation period. How far did the British approach to a decolonising and unstable world overlap with the American approach? Did both seek to turn colonialism into decolonisation, but only on the understanding that domination could be replaced with unequal partnership, based on technological superiority? In other words, independent states and armies could still be integrated into British and American world systems of power.

How far did this model fail for Britain because it relied on financial and technological superiority, and Britain's lead in these areas was rapidly shrinking? Britain soon proved incapable, for instance, of producing the quantity of arms all its would-be clients wanted in the post-1945 world. In some cases it also became reluctant to supply sophisticated equipment when, as in Burma, it disagreed with the new state's policies. The Burmese responded to these sorts of restriction by terminating the British Services Mission there in the mid-1950s.

These sorts of question cannot be worked out in a short chapter. But the general point stands, that the historiography of colonial armies needs to look outwards as well as

inwards, to the macro-imperial defence systems as well as local structures, and to overlapping historiographies and chronologies for each area. In these terms, Malaya and Singapore, with their exports and the island's huge naval base and airports built in the 1930s, were much more than mere consumers of Indian-produced security. They were producers as well, in their own particular way, and, like the Raj, can only be understood as component parts of a bigger system.

### Notes

An earlier version of this paper appeared as “‘*Biar mati anak: Jangan mati adat*” [Better your children die than your traditions]: locally-raised forces as a barometer for imperialism and decolonization in British South East Asia, 1874–2001’, *South East Asia Research* 10, 3 (2002), pp. 245–75. The saying is a Malay proverb.

- 1 Mervyn Cecil Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment* (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Publishers, 1947), p. 6: ‘the increase in weight of recruits at the end of six months’ training during the first years averaged over six pounds per man’. Average height increase for 86 class of 1937–8 recruits was 0.2 inches and average chest measurement increase 0.57 inches.
- 2 Peter Elphick, *Singapore, The Pregnable Fortress: A Study in Deception, Discord and Desertion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), p. 463. King’s College London, Liddell Hart Military Archives, Wort papers, *passim*.
- 3 See Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment*, *passim*.
- 4 The characterisation is of course too extreme, but some of the best examples of this concern with colonial policing per se, or as a microcosm of colonial rule, can be found in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c.1700–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). This includes an article by Jaap de Moor on Dutch colonial forces in the East Indies. The doctrine of the martial race and issues of how the colonial state manufactured loyalty are also prominent; see, for instance, Timothy H. Parsons, *The African Rank and File: Social Implications of Military Service in the Kings African Rifles, 1902–1964* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999).
- 5 John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. vii: ‘The British viewed their colonial possession as *components*, albeit special ones, of the wider structures of their world power, which were also based on naval and commercial primacy...and the effective domination of a number of technically independent states.’
- 6 This was especially so in the Malayan Emergency, where Iban trackers, turned Chinese communists, Malay police, young British recruits from London or Cardiff, hardened SAS and Fijians or Africans might all work on a single operation. See Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941–1968* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), pp. 113–30, 144–5.
- 7 We use Malacca for the period of British imperial influence, roughly 1786–1965, and the modern Malaysian spelling of Melaka for other periods.
- 8 Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); and Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade, 1750–1950* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- 9 Lennox Algernon Mills, *British Malaya, 1824–1867* (Singapore: Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1961), pp. 136–50.
- 10 Mills, *British Malaya*, p. 246.

- 11 *Ibid.* For a much more complicated attempt to pressurise the Sultan of Pahang to use his influence and men to help end rebellion by regional chiefs in 1891–5, see Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang 1880–1933: A Political History* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS) Monograph No. 18, 1991), pp. 133–70. On this occasion pressure had to be sustained, as the Sultan himself valued the rebels for the pressure they brought on Britain to limit its interference in the state.
- 12 Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah: Historical and Folk Perceptions* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- 13 Hugh Tinker, *South Asia: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990 edn, first published in 1966). In including Burma in ‘further India’ and ‘South Asia’, Tinker asked: ‘Where, then, does Southeast Asia begin?’ ASEAN’s answer is, of course, it begins in Myanmar. More generally it begins where China, India and Australia end, it is the splinter zone and meeting point of winds and cultures. It is the ‘Balkan’ zone between the big, or rich, powers surrounding it.
- 14 It had 271 officers and men by 1913, and about 1000 by 1941, serving in helping to quell the February 1915 Singapore mutiny and in the Second World War defence of Malaya. See Tunku Shahrman bin Tunku Sulaiman, ‘The Johore Military Forces: The Oldest Army of Malay Regulars in the Peninsula’, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 77, 2 (December 2004), pp. 95–106. The modern spelling is ‘Johor’, but pre-independence British documents and so most secondary sources written before the 1980s use ‘Johore’.
- 15 Nadzan Haron, ‘Colonial Defence and British Approach to the Problems in Malaya, 1874–1918’, *Modern Asian Studies* 24, 2 (1990), pp. 275–95.
- 16 For debt-bondage and its relationship to power and prestige in Malay states, see Patrick Sullivan, *Social Relations of Dependence in a Malaya State: Nineteenth Century Perak* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Monograph No. 10, 1982). He comments on Birch and the Perak War on pp. 14–16. Debt-slavery there was ended in 1883.
- 17 See, for instance, Frank Swettenham, *A Nocturne and Other Malayan Stories and Sketches* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993), James Wheeler Woodford Birch, pp. 74–87.
- 18 For more detail, see Malcolm Murfett, John Miksic, Brian Farrell and Chiang Ming Shun, *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 118–44.
- 19 Nadzan Haron, ‘Colonial Defence and British Approach to the Problems in Malaya, 1874–1918’.
- 20 T.M. Winsley, *A History of the Singapore Volunteer Corps* (Singapore, 1937).
- 21 WO 106/2441, L. Bond, GOC (Malaya) to War Office, 12 December 1940.
- 22 For an example of local defence of the volunteer’s performance, and criticism of prejudice, see *Malaya Tribune*, 5, 8 and 9 March 1948. There was a debate following the publication of General Percival’s account of the campaign, which seemed to suggest a Chinese reluctance in volunteering. The reply was that the size of the volunteers was actually limited by the budget allocated, and by ‘a certain amount of discrimination against Chinese volunteers’, while the government ‘constantly set its face against the formation of a Chinese Regiment’, *Malaya Tribune*, 8 March 1948, editorial. Captain Yap Pheng Gheck (SSFV, Straits Settlements Volunteer Forces, Singapore) was particularly vocal in defence.
- 23 WO32/4568, figures for around 1930.
- 24 Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall? Churchill and the Impregnable Fortress* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 196–7 for figures varying from 158 to 181, and an overview of the debates on Singapore’s fall.
- 25 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 110–11.

- 26 The most recent review of British attempts to retain the Gurkhas is Raffi Gregorian, *The British Army, the Gurkhas and Cold War Strategy in the Far East, 1947–1954* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- 27 David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj* (London: Macmillan, 1994).
- 28 See Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. vii, *passim*. The idea of such a conception of a world system of power comprising also economic and other constituents in British policy-makers' eyes is also developed in Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 290, 298 n. 111.
- 29 'Efficient' volunteers earned privileges, notably half-cost treatment at government hospitals, preferential treatment in securing bungalows at health or hill resorts and indulgence passages for their family to Hong Kong and Shanghai on government vessels. R.L. German, *Handbook to British Malaya* (Malayan Information Agency, 1937), p. 80.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 76–80.
- 31 Raymond Callahan, *The Worst Disaster: The Fall of Singapore* (Singapore: Cultured Lotus, 2001), p. 116; Elphick, *The Pregnable Fortress*, pp. 50–3, 57.
- 32 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 22–4.
- 33 There are many good works on this, including: C. Northcote Parkinson, 'The Pre-1942 Singapore Naval Base', *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 82, 9 (September 1956), pp. 939–53; James Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Far Eastern Empire, 1919–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); and William David MacIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base, 1919–1942* (London: Macmillan, 1979). For post-independence, see Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 287–8.
- 34 See Hack and Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall?* for latest research on the guns and commemoration.
- 35 Cab21/402.
- 36 Raymond Callahan, *The Worst Disaster*, p. 117.
- 37 WO32/4568, *passim*.
- 38 WO32/4568, GOC (Malaya) to War Office, 22 October 1930. The Straits Settlements was then contributing just \$3.5 million a year for its garrison, and it was suggested it might rise to \$5 million.
- 39 WO32/4568, *passim*.
- 40 In fact periodisation is never so simple. As late as the late nineteenth century, Britain found it convenient to get local forces to make the running. In Selangor in the 1870s Britain worked to encourage the local ruler to regain control of the Klang Valley and Kuala Lumpur, leaving the state still independent and the fighting mainly to Chinese and Malays 'usually dressed in coarse cotton cloths, with their feet in straw sandals. They generally carried capes of dried palm leaves...in case of heavy rain... with long swords...others with primitive gun...a dagger tucked into the waist belt... Their heads were frequently protected with split coconut.' Cited in Stanley Musgrave Middlebrook and John Michael Gullick, *Yap Ah Loy, 1837–1885* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Reprint No. 9, 1989), p. 59. Even after the appointment of a Resident in Pahang, Britain went to great lengths to get the Sultan (whose attitude was ambivalent) and his men to help put down the Pahang rebellion of 1891–5. See Gopinath, *Pahang: A Political History, 1880–1933*.
- 41 For the literature, and criticism of the 'Colonial Records' view of much of it, see Anthony Crothers Milner, 'Colonial Records History: British Malaya', *MAS* 21, 4 (1986), pp. 773–92. For Malay nationalism, see William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).
- 42 Petra Groen, 'Militant Response: The Dutch Use of Military Force and Decolonization of the Dutch East Indies, 1945–50', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21, 2 (September 1993), pp. 30–44. A good source for basic details is Nicholas Tarling, *A Sudden Rampage: The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, 1941–1945* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001).

- 43 For MCP views of the Japanese period as one of heroic anti-Japanese resistance, and their line that they were forced into postwar revolt, see Chin Peng, Ian Ward and Norma Miraflores, *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of the Story* (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003); and the slightly more critical C.C.Chin and Karl Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).
- 44 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 113–30. For the British use of yet another group in this conflict, the *orang asli* tribesmen of the interior, see John Leary, *Violence and the Dream People: The Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995).
- 45 Nicholas Tarling, 'The Singapore Mutiny of 1915', *JMBRAS* 55, 2 (1982).
- 46 Haron, 'Colonial Defence and British Approach to the Problems of Malaya, 1874–1918', *passim*.
- 47 See, for instance, John Michael Gullick, *Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Chapter 10, 'The Maintenance of Law and Order', pp. 238–57. He talks of 'the traditional admiration of the fighting man'.
- 48 Lt-Colonel J.R.G.Andre, 'The Malay Soldier in Peace and War', *Straits Times* 30 December 1947. It seems likely that even after leading Malay troops, the British officers failed to understand fully the Malay court and popular tradition concerning warrior values. See Nadzan Haron, 'The Malay Regiment 1933–1955: A Political and Social Study of a Colonial Military Establishment in Malaya' (unpublished D Phil thesis, University of Essex, 1987) for the way the Regiment built on Malay traditions.
- 49 Haron, 'The Malay Regiment 1933–1955'; Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 108–13.
- 50 Chan Heng Chee, *A Sensation of Independence: A Political Biography of David Marshall* (Singapore: Times, 1985), p. 38. Just before the war there were A and B Companies (European), C (Scottish), D (Eurasians), E (Chinese) and F (Malay), Europeans receiving a daily rate of \$1.04 to Asians' 50 cents.
- 51 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, p. 44.
- 52 Allan Warren, 'The Indian Army and the Fall of Singapore', in Brian Farrell and Sandy Hunter (eds), *Sixty Years On: The Fall of Singapore Revisited* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), pp. 285ff.
- 53 Dol Ramli, 'History of the Malay Regiment, 1933–1942', *JMBRAS* 38, 1 (1965); Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment*, p. 18. The Indian Army multiplied 12 times over during the war, so it is hardly surprising that new officers, unfamiliar with languages and customs, and served by a corps of experienced NCOs much too thinly spread, sometimes failed to cement loyalty or effectiveness. Inevitably, while some Indian units fought well in Malaya, a good number performed poorly. Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honor* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1974), pp. 479ff.
- 54 Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment*, pp. 22–3.
- 55 This point is well illustrated in Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment*, *passim*. For the present-day commemoration of the Malay Regiment at the heritage centre 'Reflections at Bukit Chandu' in Singapore, see Blackburn's Chapter 12 in this volume. Further see Hack and Blackburn, *Did Singapore Have to Fall?*, Chapter 6, 'After the Battle'. This deals with the memory of other local forces too, such as the Chinese of Dalforce, as well as commemoration of Singapore's fall in general.
- 56 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, p. 112.
- 57 The best short introduction to MCP views of the war and running dogs is Karl Hack and C.C.Chin, 'The Malayan Emergency', in Chin and Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng*, pp. 3–37.
- 58 For the police and for intelligence, see Karl Hack, 'British Intelligence and Counter-insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya', *Intelligence and National Security* 14, 2 (1999), pp. 124–55; and Karl Hack, 'Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents: British and Communist Narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the



Dynamics of Intelligence Transformation', in Richard Aldrich and Gary and Ming-Yeh Rawnsley (eds), *The Clandestine War in Asia, 1945–65* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 211–41.

59 Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation*, pp. 131–49.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 234–43.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 261, citing Air Marshal Sir Francis Fressanges when Commander-in-Chief, Far East Air Force, in 1956.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 271–88.



**Part 5**  
**Postcolonial analyses and  
residues**

## 11

# Colonial militias in East Timor from the Portuguese period to independence

*Geoffrey Robinson*

At about 5 p.m. on 30 August 1999, João Lopes was stabbed in the back and killed while loading ballot boxes on to a United Nations vehicle in the village of Atsabe. Mr Lopes was a local staff member of the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), the body that oversaw the referendum in which the population voted overwhelmingly for independence after 24 years of contested Indonesian rule.<sup>1</sup> His assailants were local men, sporting red and white bandanas, and armed with swords, home-made guns, and knives. At the time of the attack they were accompanied by armed Indonesian soldiers, including the subdistrict military commander.

João Lopes was one of at least 1200 killed before and immediately after the 30 August ballot, and his assailants belonged to one of the many 'militia' groups, whose violence reached a terrible climax in September. Indigenous auxiliaries had existed in East Timor throughout the Indonesian occupation and during the long period of Portuguese colonial rule that preceded it. Militias also have a long history in Indonesia itself. Indeed, the militias of East Timor bore remarkable similarities to paramilitary groups that emerged in the final decade of President Suharto's New Order, especially in areas like Aceh and West Papua.

Much of what has been written about East Timor's militias has focused on their relationship with the Indonesian armed forces, and on the latter's legal responsibility for the 1999 violence. This understandable preoccupation with culpability has obscured the deeper origins of the violence and the militias, and diverted attention from similarities between East Timor's militias and those in Indonesia. Indeed, it has meant that basic questions about the origins of the militias, and the political conditions of their existence, have scarcely been asked. Where did the militias come from? Why did they act in the ways that they did? And what explains the similarities between the militia groups in East Timor and those in Indonesia?

Existing explanations of East Timor's militias, and of the violence of 1999, generally fall into two categories, both of which ignore or elide these crucial questions. The first, commonly expressed by Indonesian officials, is that the militias formed spontaneously in response to pro-independence provocation in late 1998, and that their acts of violence were an expression of 'traditional' patterns such as 'running amok'. The second view, common among Western



*Map 11.1 East Timor (known as Timor Leste from 1999).*

*Source:* Regions of Timor-Leste, no. 4117 Rev. 4, UN Cartographic Section.

journalists and scholars, is that the militias were formed—at a stroke—by the Indonesian army in late 1998, with the violence carefully orchestrated by military commanders.

My own view is that both characterisations are in some respects misleading. This chapter provides a more satisfactory explanation. The focus is less on the immediate process through which militia groups were mobilised in 1999, and more on the historical and political context that facilitated their emergence and shaped their behaviour.<sup>2</sup> It is a political history of East Timor's militias told against the background of similar groups in Indonesia. By constructing a rough genealogy of militias that links East Timor's experience with Indonesia's, it will be possible to discern significant historical continuities, and to identify the most influential origins of the contemporary form. The evidence from East Timor and Indonesia might suggest some more general propositions about the historical and political conditions under which militias are likely to emerge, and to take the forms that they do.

Before we turn to these questions, however, it may be helpful to provide some historical context, and a brief account of the militias as they appeared in 1999. The outline that follows pays special attention to certain defining characteristics of the modern militias—their relationship with state authorities, their weapons and 'repertoires of violence', the composition of their membership and certain variations in their

behaviour—because I believe these provide a useful basis for tracing their historical origins.

### Setting the scene

Long a colony of Portugal, East Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975, and subsequently annexed. For the next 24 years, the territory's political status remained in dispute, both in East Timor and internationally. Though some states recognised Indonesian sovereignty, the United Nations never did so. Inside East Timor, armed and peaceful resistance continued through the period of Indonesian rule (1975–99). The occupation was marked by serious rights violations by the Indonesian armed forces and by pro-Indonesian militias and paramilitary groups serving as their proxies. Notwithstanding growing international criticism, little concrete action was taken to address the question of East Timor's political status.

That situation changed dramatically with the resignation in May 1998 of Indonesia's long-time President, General Suharto. The new government sought to break the impasse by proposing East Timor be granted 'special autonomy' under Indonesian rule. Negotiations began under United Nations auspices. Then, in January 1999, the government announced its readiness to rescind its annexation of East Timor if the people there rejected the 'special autonomy' proposal. That surprising initiative paved the way for a set of accords between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN, known as the May 5th Agreements. These spelled out the modalities through which the people of the territory would vote and security be maintained, and stipulated that the ballot would be organised by the UN. The UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) began its work later in May, and the ballot was conducted on 30 August 1999.

These events had a profound impact in East Timor. In mid-1998, thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate in favour of independence, and against the 'special autonomy' proposal. In October 1998, as details of that proposal were being finalised, reports began to trickle out about the mobilisation of militia groups dedicated to maintaining ties with Indonesia. When President Habibie announced, in January 1999, that the East Timorese would be given a chance to vote for or against 'special autonomy', the trickle became a flood. By April 1999, more than two dozen militia groups had formed—including *Aitarak* (Thorn), *Besi Merah Putih* (Red and White Iron) and *Mahidi* (Live or Die for Integration).<sup>3</sup>

It was soon evident that these groups were involved in a major campaign of intimidation against supporters of independence. In February and March 1999, dozens were reported killed, some in a gruesome way, and tens of thousands were forced to flee, after which their homes were burned to the ground. Many of those who fled sought refuge in nearby churches or with prominent citizens. It was against these people, and in these places of refuge, that some of the most egregious acts of militia violence were committed in April 1999.<sup>4</sup> Although the violence slowed with the arrival of UNAMET and other observers in May, it did continue, and surged again in the aftermath of the 30 August ballot.

The worst of the violence followed the announcement of the vote on 4 September. Over the next few weeks, Indonesian soldiers and police joined armed pro-Indonesian

militiamen in a campaign of violence so sustained and brutal that it shocked even those who had predicted a backlash. Before a UN-sanctioned military force arrived to restore order in late September, hundreds of people had been killed, and an estimated 400,000 people, more than half the population, had been forced to flee their homes.

Indonesian authorities claimed, and still claim, that the militias formed spontaneously in response to provocation by pro-independence activists, that the conflict was among East Timorese and that Indonesian security forces were doing their utmost to contain it.<sup>5</sup> They also argued that the violence was the regrettable result of timeless cultural patterns. In early 2000, for example, the former security adviser to the Indonesian Task Force in East Timor,<sup>6</sup> Major General Zacky Anwar Makarim, told journalists that the violence had been part of an Indonesian cultural pattern of 'running amok'.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, most outside observers concluded that the militias were created and controlled by the Indonesian army, and that their violence was orchestrated. This latter characterisation is much closer to the truth.<sup>8</sup> Virtually all of the evidence demonstrates that the militias were mobilised, trained, supplied and backed by Indonesian authorities—not just military, but also police and civilian—and that the militia violence was coordinated, or at least condoned, at a high level. The militias, it seems likely, received support because they provided a cover for official efforts to disrupt, or affect the outcome of, the vote, while perpetuating the illusion that the fighting was among East Timorese. In the context of the international scrutiny that characterised the referendum process, these were invaluable political advantages.

At the same time, the claim that the militias were 'army backed' obscures the deeper historical roots of the militia, and the causes of the violence. While the link with the military helps to explain the timing of the militia mobilisation, it does not tell us anything about the historically contingent availability of militia groups, or about the form that they assumed. Especially noteworthy were the militias' weaponry, their 'repertoires of violence', their memberships and certain geographical variations. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

There were certain similarities in the technology used by all militias. A few militiamen had access to advanced weapons of the sort used by the TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, Indonesian National Armed Forces) and the police. But on the whole they carried machetes, knives, spears, swords, rocks and 'home-made' firearms (*senjata rakitan*).<sup>9</sup> The last, fashioned from two or more tubes of steel attached to a wooden grip, were fired by holding a match or cigarette lighter to a fuse on top of the weapon at the base of the tubes. The resulting explosion sent a ball or cluster of metal shot more or less in the direction of the target. To the untrained eye, they resembled seventeenth- or eighteenth-century flintlock firearms, and they were just as unreliable. Nevertheless, they could inflict serious wounds and had a terrifying effect, as did other 'traditional' weapons used by the militia groups.

Like their weaponry, the militias' repertoire of action was virtually the same throughout the territory. When not on patrol, most engaged in military-style drilling with real or mock weapons. A small handful wore Indonesian military uniforms, or parts of one, but most wore 'civilian' clothing: red and white bandanas around their neck or head, and often a T-shirt bearing their unit name and a pro-integration slogan. The most common elements of their repertoire included house-burning, rock-throwing, public beatings and death threats, the brandishing and firing of weapons and, towards women,

the threat and reality of rape.<sup>10</sup> Targeted killing and corpse display were also part of the repertoire. The bodies of victims were often mutilated—decapitated or disembowelled—and left in public view. When militias staged an attack they appeared to be in a state of frenzy, shouting and slashing the air with their weapons, behaving as one imagines a man ‘running amok’.

These patterns raise intriguing questions. Were the use of ‘traditional’ weapons and the distinctive repertoire of violence parts of an Indonesian army plan to prove the militias had formed spontaneously, and were rooted in Timorese custom? Or were there deeper historical processes at work?

Similar questions arise in relation to the men who joined the militias. Although they tended to be treated in the media as little more than Indonesian puppets, or victims of Indonesian coercion, members were varied. Many who refused to join reported that their homes were burned and their families threatened. Others were not East Timorese at all, but Indonesian army soldiers dressed up as local militias. But in addition a number of Timorese joined a militia group willingly. They included men who had fought on the Indonesian side at some stage since 1975, who had relatives who had been killed by the pro-independence party, Fretilin, or who had done well under Indonesian rule. They also included young men from neighbourhoods in which power brokers were pro-Indonesian. Others were induced to join by promises of food and money, or by the possibility of wielding a gun and exercising raw power. Finally, militia members seem to have been recruited from gangs involved in gambling rings and protection rackets. Militias were not mere puppets, but people choosing their own course on the basis of historical experience, political context and personal desire.

Finally, there were variations in the distribution of militia violence, at least before the ballot. The worst areas were the western districts, along the border with Indonesian West Timor.<sup>11</sup> The central districts around Dili occasionally reached similar levels of insecurity.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the easternmost districts and the enclave of Oecusse were relatively calm.<sup>13</sup> The reasons for this pattern were a source of speculation, but most analyses concluded that ‘historical factors’ had resulted in stronger support for Indonesia in the western districts.

This, then, is how the militias look on the basis of the contemporary evidence. There are strong indications of official support for them, and the political logic of that support seems clear. At the same time, there are aspects of the militias’ repertoire and membership, and in the geographical patterns of their violence, that are not fully explained by the contemporary logic, and that beg questions about deeper origins.

It seems possible that these features of the militias were not simply the product of a TNI plan but also the result of historical learning, and rekindled memory, through which a range of techniques of violence spread, albeit with official encouragement.<sup>14</sup> In this view, a certain script or historical memory, encompassing a shared repertoire of violence, might already have been in the minds of many East Timorese, ready to be enacted when the occasion arose, or when the signal was given by authorities. As East Timor’s supreme militia commander, João Tavares, insisted in late 1999, the militias hardly needed training in violence. After 24 years of war and counter-insurgency, he noted, virtually everyone already knew how to handle a gun.<sup>15</sup> Yet if the militias were the product of a shared historical memory, we still need to ask to what that memory was, how was it rekindled and with what effect.



### Historical antecedents and cultural models in East Timor

Credit for creating East Timor's militias is commonly given to General Prabowo Subianto, the high-flying Indonesian army officer and presidential son-in-law who served several tours of duty in East Timor, starting in the late 1970s.<sup>16</sup> While it is true that Prabowo encouraged the growth of paramilitary forces in East Timor, the idea that they were the brainchild of a single officer oversimplifies the story. It distracts attention from the deeper historical logic behind the mobilisation of auxiliary forces. Indeed, a plausible case can be made that the origins of the modern militias lie, at least in part, in East Timor's colonial and even precolonial past.

Modern militias in East Timor are reminiscent of the troops raised by local rulers throughout Southeast Asia before and during the colonial period. Recruited through a relationship of personal obligation, these troops were not full-time professionals but, like the modern militias, ordinary citizens called up temporarily, for a specific purpose.<sup>17</sup> In Timor, such forces were typically formed on the basis of loyalty to a local ruler, or *liurai*.<sup>18</sup> Large forces could be formed through the alliance of a number of *liurai* and their followers.<sup>19</sup> In the early eighteenth century, it was estimated that the *liurai* of the eastern half of Timor alone could muster 40,000 troops.<sup>20</sup> The practice continued at least until the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The weapons used by Timorese warriors, and their methods in battle, also foreshadow those used by the modern militia. In battle, Timorese men typically carried swords (*catana*), spears (*assegai*), rocks and flintlock guns, almost exactly the same array of weapons used in 1999.<sup>22</sup> The modern militia's use of 'home-made guns' that looked like flintlock weapons is noteworthy. It is also notable that by the late nineteenth century, old guns had been integrated into the ritual life of Timor.<sup>23</sup> In their choice of weaponry, were modern Timorese militias continuing a centuries-old tradition?

The same question may be asked with respect to head-taking and display, a feature of battle and of customary law as early as the nineteenth century that reappeared as a modern militia tactic. A Dutch account of 1749 describes how the Timorese allies of the Dutch 'carried off in triumph approximately a thousand heads and at least as many again in the course of the next two days'.<sup>24</sup> Head-taking was also a common feature of warfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1896 Timorese rebels reportedly cut off the heads of several Portuguese government soldiers, and placed them in a tree in the centre of the rebel village.<sup>25</sup> In 1912, a government report on a campaign in Maubisse noted that, after battle 'the warriors were all adorned with captured heads'.<sup>26</sup> Severed heads were also displayed on stakes as a warning to criminals. Forbes wrote in 1884 that 'if the theft consisted of a living animal the head of the animal was struck off and affixed near that of the robber's, on a stake'.<sup>27</sup> Stories of decapitation circulated in East Timor through to the 1970s, with photographic evidence of decapitation from the early years of the Indonesian occupation.<sup>28</sup>

Historically, Timorese also used other tactics that the militias were to employ in 1999, such as bombarding enemies with a hail of rocks and burning down their houses.<sup>29</sup> Seventeenth-to late nineteenth-century accounts also indicate that Timorese preferred the frenzied, 'amok' style of attack employed by militias in 1999 (and used in the attack on Mr Lopes described at the start of this chapter). The commander of a Dutch contingent defeated by a Timorese (Topass) force in 1653 provided the following account:

After sending down a shower of *assegais* [spears] on us [the enemy] assaulted us like lightning, stabbing some of us in the back... The enemy, seeing that some of our men were incapable of properly handling a rifle, were goaded into unheard audacity, furiously flinging themselves at them with no more fear than if the rifles had been mere hemp-poles.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, reporting on a battle in 1896, a Portuguese army captain described how Timorese forces under his command 'pillaged, burned and killed all they encountered'. And in a passage that might have been a description of the events of September 1999, he wrote: 'it was a vision of hell with cries of anguish mixed with the shouts of the victors against the backdrop of burning bamboo... In the morning the central square was strewn with more than one hundred bodies, stripped, decapitated and horribly mutilated.'<sup>31</sup>

A quick look at the historical evidence, then, suggests historical antecedents, even models, for the organisation, weaponry and repertoire of East Timor's modern militias. Such antecedents, or the rekindled memory of them, may have influenced the behaviour of the militias of 1999. At the same time, a closer look does not show a simple continuation of an immutable Timorese 'tradition'. Even in the historical period, it is clear that the very existence of the local auxiliaries, as well as their weaponry and behaviour, were shaped by the presence, and sponsorship, of Portuguese, Dutch and other outside powers.

The indigenous auxiliaries of Timor, known in Portuguese as *moradores* and *arraias*, were mobilised by Portuguese authorities to provide security for the colonial community, and to suppress opposition.<sup>32</sup> In 1912, the Portuguese crushed the most serious rebellion of the colonial period, led by the *liurai* of Manufahi, by enlisting the forces of several *liurai* who had sworn vassalage to the government.<sup>33</sup> This was only the best known instance of a more general pattern in which *liurai* were induced or compelled to support the Portuguese, or on occasion the Dutch, and were then employed to raise troops to fight against others less loyal.<sup>34</sup> The Portuguese authorities were still employing that strategy at the outbreak of the Second World War. Australian soldiers who were there in 1942 gave the following description of the Portuguese response to an uprising: 'Their army was collected; it consisted of two companies... The troops were Timorese, and the non-commissioned officers and officers were Portuguese... At the same time the natives in the surrounding areas were ordered to arm themselves and prepare for war'.<sup>35</sup> The end of the war did not bring an end to the Portuguese practice of mobilising local auxiliaries. Despite important changes in colonial policy in the 1950s and 1960s, the authorities maintained native forces under the command of loyal *liurai*. Dunn claims that the people of Uatolari were mobilised to quell an uprising in the eastern part of the territory as late as 1959.<sup>36</sup> In addition to such ad hoc mobilisation, until the final years of Portuguese rule all Timorese men were required to do 30 days of military service. As late as 1975, some *liurai* still had control of 'private armies'.<sup>37</sup>

The political and military logic behind the Portuguese use of indigenous troops is worth spelling out. First, the norms that shaped colonial policy in Timor were those of military officers that prevailed throughout Portugal's colonial domains. These called, as in most European colonies, for the use of native forces.<sup>38</sup> Second, like most non-settler colonial powers, Portugal did not have the financial or human resources to field a full army of European (or African) troops.<sup>39</sup> In the late nineteenth century the government

could seldom afford to deploy more than 200 regular soldiers in Timor, and even these were often of poor quality. In 1910, as Portugal conducted 'pacification' campaigns, there were only 13,000 soldiers in the entire colonial army, and of these fewer than 4000 were Europeans.<sup>40</sup> Third, local troops knew the terrain, and tolerated the climate, food and diseases better.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the policy of mobilising some Timorese against others served a useful, if not always intended, political purpose of minimising the likelihood of concerted anti-Portuguese action.

The many advantages of the local troops were summarised in a report by the Governor of Macau and Timor in 1870:

In war they have always been our most powerful auxiliaries...in peace they do garrison service without any payment...because most of the European soldiers are always in hospital... They have been helping us in all branches of the service and save for the State hundreds of men and a good sum of florins, and believe me Your Excellency, if it were not for this corps, we could not manage without at least five hundred regular soldiers in Dili.<sup>42</sup>

For similar reasons, resource considerations and the need for local knowledge, the Japanese forces that occupied the territory from 1942 to 1945 also relied on local auxiliaries, using the followers of 'loyal' *liurai* against those of disloyal ones. So too did the Australian commandos who fought the Japanese there, although historians and war veterans have tended to portray the practice as heroic comradeship rather than the use of indigenous auxiliaries.<sup>43</sup>

To sum up, there would appear to be some basis for the claim that the militias that emerged in East Timor in 1999 reflected, or drew upon, Timorese traditions. At the same time, the evidence that Timor's militias were cultivated and used by a succession of state powers, especially the Portuguese but also the Japanese and the Australian, suggests that the parallels constituted more than a simple transmission of unchanging 'tradition'. Without the encouragement of a succession of state authorities—in turn rooted in a common political logic of scarce resources, a need for local knowledge and the dominance of military norms—it seems doubtful that the militias would have existed, or would have maintained the traditions that they did.

Some of the regional variations in militia activity observed in 1999, especially the concentration of violence in the western districts, may also have had deeper historical roots. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, for example, the Portuguese regarded the kingdoms in the border region as lawless, and made them the focus of repeated pacification campaigns.<sup>44</sup> In popular memory, the western regions have been populated by criminals and marginal characters, including migrants and martial arts adepts. In a memoir that recalls the final decades of the colonial period, Cardoso writes of the frontier region as 'that land of cattle rustlers who would take refuge on either side of the border, depending on the monsoons'.<sup>45</sup> The people of Bobonaro, one of the main centres of militia violence in 1999, had an especially poor reputation. Cardoso notes that its residents were known as 'horse eaters', reflecting the area's reputation as a haven for horse thieves. It seems possible that the frontier-like quality of life in these regions, or the memory of it, had a lasting influence.

If outside powers helped to forge the tradition on which East Timor's modern militias were, in part, founded—and if that experience also helps to explain regional political variations—it stands to reason that the Indonesian occupation after 1975 also played a part. In order to understand the role that the occupation played, however, we need first to know something about the historical roots of militias in Indonesia itself.

### Indonesian militia models to 1965

The militia phenomenon in Indonesia, as in East Timor, appears to echo practices dating back to colonial times, and earlier. The political logic of the mobilisation of local auxiliaries, and their relationships with state authorities, also seem to be similar in both places.

One probable source of the modern Indonesian militia is the *jago*, the 'notorious rural criminal' of late colonial Java.<sup>46</sup> Possessing, or claiming, extraordinary physical and spiritual prowess, the *jago* exuded political, spiritual and sexual potency.<sup>47</sup> Modern-day militia members do not always attain such heights, but the aspiration is generally there. An equally important similarity lies in the relationship of the *jago* to those in authority. The late nineteenth-century *jago* of Java occupied a marginal space in the shadow of a modernising colonial bureaucracy. Neither a Robin Hood nor simply a tool of the state, the *jago* was both a criminal and an essential bulwark to the colonial system of law and order.<sup>48</sup> It was perhaps not a coincidence that, like the criminals and marginal figures in East Timor's border regions, *jago* were known for cattle rustling.

Also ancestors of the modern Indonesian militia are the *lasykar*, the home-grown bands of freedom fighters that emerged at the time of Indonesia's struggle for independence from the Dutch (1945–9). Like the *jago*, the *lasykar* drew upon traditions of invulnerability and spiritual prowess, and evoked a sense of sexual potency. Just as importantly, *lasykar* thrived in the environment of political uncertainty that characterised the Indonesian National Revolution, and occupied a position at the margins of political power and criminality.<sup>49</sup> *Lasykar* could as easily be criminal gangsters as righteous revolutionaries: a hybrid that Cribb has called 'gangster revolutionaries'.<sup>50</sup> The *lasykar* shared with the *jago* a *modus operandi* of terror that seems to foreshadow East Timor's modern militias. As Cribb writes:

The pirates and bandit princes of pre-colonial times, the rural brigands [*jago*] of the colonial era, and the politicized gangsters of the revolutionary-era *lasykar* all sought to inspire a paralyzing terror among their enemies. Terror, rather than cold, calculated murder, was the prime *modus operandi* of Indonesia's men of violence.<sup>51</sup>

Poised somewhere between the *jago* and the *lasykar*, and like them a source of modern militia style, are the *preman*.<sup>52</sup> In colonial times, *preman* served as local enforcers, making them potentially both upholders of law and perpetrators of criminal activity. Likewise, in the postcolonial period the term *preman* came to be used to describe gangs of youth recruited by political, and especially military, authorities and economic elites to serve criminal and political purposes.<sup>53</sup> Despite, or perhaps because of, their involvement

in criminal activities—including gambling, protection rackets and prostitution—in the late New Order these gangs became an important political resource. As Ryter has shown for the *preman* organisation *Pemuda Pancasila*, such groups were deployed by military and political authorities to harass opponents, to provoke chaos in political demonstrations and on occasion to commit murder.

The parallels between these antecedents and Indonesia's modern militias are intriguing. The idea that the *jago*, *lasykar* and *preman* have been marginal figures, with one foot in the criminal world and another in the world of law and order, is particularly suggestive. So too is the evidence that these forms, like mafias elsewhere, have tended to emerge where state power is contested.<sup>54</sup> These parallels lend weight to the idea that militia groups emerge where the state is weak. But they also highlight the extent to which the *jago*, the *lasykar*, the *preman* and arguably modern militias are a product of, and inseparable from, state power.

It is worth recalling that in Indonesia, as in East Timor, successive states have sought to harness the power of such local formations, and may be said to have helped to create them. Dutch authorities, like most colonial powers, relied heavily on indigenous troops, mobilised with the assistance of local power-holders. Even the supposedly marginal and criminal figures, such as the *jago*, were to some extent products of Dutch state power. Some nineteenth-century colonial administrators, as well as district and village heads, recognising the dangers of supplanting the *jago*, acquiesced to them, so solidifying their position.<sup>55</sup> Under colonial rule 'there was ample space for brokers in violence, even if their room for manoeuvre was redefined'.<sup>56</sup>

A similar pattern is evident in the period of Japanese rule (1942–5) and in the revolutionary years (1945–9). In just over three years, the Japanese mobilised tens of thousands of young men and women into paramilitary organisations. By some accounts, these efforts left important organisational and ideological legacies, including the rudiments of Indonesia's future internal intelligence apparatus, and associated methods of political repression, including torture.<sup>57</sup> In August 1945, returning Dutch colonial authorities followed the Japanese example, encouraging the mobilisation of local auxiliary forces to fight against the Indonesian Republic.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the authorities of the fledgling Republic sought to harness the power of local militia groups, the *lasykar*.<sup>59</sup> With the possible exception of the Japanese, however, during the colonial and revolutionary eras none of these state authorities was able fully to control the militia groups.

The same was true in the first decade and a half after independence, as Indonesian authorities tried in vain to control the vast array of irregular forces that had sprung up during the war. Unable to get rid of these forces, the armed forces began to co-opt them and deploy them against perceived enemies.<sup>60</sup> Guided by General Abdul Haris Nasution, who was in turn inspired by Mao's idea of 'People's War', local militia units were mobilised to crush the *Darul Islam* rebellion that challenged the new republic from 1948 to the early 1960s.<sup>61</sup> However, army control of local militias was always incomplete, and many became involved in criminal rackets, including extortion, smuggling and black marketeering. As the first national elections approached in 1955, moreover, they proliferated under different political party banners, engaging in campaigns of intimidation against political opponents.<sup>62</sup>

Throughout this period, a variety of youth and militia groups existed and competed but, notwithstanding some military successes when deploying them to fight rebels, the state was unable to establish anything like a monopoly of control over them. That changed in 1965, when army forces under Major General Suharto seized power and set about annihilating his political enemies. Within days of what has been dubbed the 'abortive coup' of 1 October 1965, Suharto's forces mobilised a network of militia groups and political organisations, and over the next several months encouraged them to kill an estimated one million people, most of them members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The killing reached its greatest intensity in Central and East Java, Bali and North Sumatra. In these places, the army provided essential political backing and logistical support to youth organisations such as the Nahdhatul Ulama-affiliated *Ansor* in East Java, and the *Tameng Marhaenis* of the Indonesian National Party (PNI) in Bali.<sup>63</sup>

The manner in which Suharto, the army and their paramilitary allies destroyed the PKI shaped and prefigured a new style of governance characterised by military dominance, and an evolving institutional culture of violence. The coup and massacre also signalled a significant new departure in the character of militia groups, especially in their relationship with state authorities, and in their repertoires of action.

Before 1965, state authorities had had only limited success in harnessing the power of the militias. After the coup virtually all militia groups were drawn tightly under the army's authority. Once they had done what was required in 1965–6, most were disbanded, while the rest were integrated into the state apparatus, ready to be deployed under strict army control.<sup>64</sup> Drawing on the model of 1965, the deliberate mobilisation of 'civilians' into armed militia groups became a central component of the government's strategy for managing elections, and for dealing with real or imagined enemies, particularly in 'troubled' areas such as West Papua, Aceh and East Timor.

In the post-coup period, moreover, both the military and the militias adopted more brutal repertoires of action. Many of these were modelled on actions taken during the pogrom of 1965–6, though these were themselves sometimes adaptations of methods learned under Japanese rule, or developed during the counter-insurgency against *Darul Islam*. One of the clearest examples of this historical borrowing was the so-called 'fence of legs' (*pagar betis*) tactic, in which civilians were made to form a protective boundary behind which army troops could safely move into rebel territory. First used against *Darul Islam* in the early 1950s, it was used to more terrible effect in 1965, in East Timor after 1975 and later in Aceh.<sup>65</sup> Under army guidance, after 1965 militias and paramilitary forces were also increasingly deployed to carry out a range of 'dirty tricks' and covert operations, including assassination, torture, public execution, decapitation and rape, as mechanisms of political control.<sup>66</sup>

I am suggesting, therefore, that the coup and massacres of 1965 marked a critical historical turning point after which, at least for a time, militias no longer operated at the margin of state power but were directly mobilised and controlled by the state, and to which end they developed and used a common repertoire of unusual brutality modelled, in large part, on the anti-communist purges of 1965–6. This arrangement did not wipe out all memory of past forms, indeed it drew upon them, nor would it last forever. As we shall see, the relationship between state authorities and militia groups would continue to change, especially during the final years of the New Order, as would militia organisation

and repertoires. Nevertheless, as Indonesian forces prepared to invade East Timor in 1975, the legacy of 1965 was still strong and, alongside East Timor's own surviving 'traditions' and models of violence, it profoundly affected the role and character of the militias that were formed there.

### **The legacy of 1965: East Timor's early militias**

Even before the December 1975 invasion, Indonesian strategy entailed the mobilisation of East Timorese into rudimentary militia forces. Beginning in late 1974, several hundred young men were taken to sites near the town of Atambua on the west side of the border, where they received military training and supplies, before being infiltrated back into East Timor to fight against soldiers of the pro-independence party, Fretilin.<sup>67</sup> Recently declassified Australian government documents provide a glimpse of these operations. One report on a visit by an embassy official to the border area in April 1975 describes what the Indonesians claimed was a refugee camp in which Timorese were ostensibly receiving training in agriculture and carpentry. Having noted that all those at the camp were men aged 18–30, and that there was little indication of any agricultural activity, the author observed: 'It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this camp is involved in other activities besides agriculture and carpentry in spite of adamant statements by the Indonesian officials...that Indonesia is not involved in any way...in the military training of Portuguese Timorese.'<sup>68</sup> In September 1975, a US State Department report noted more bluntly that 'Indonesian intelligence ...has trained, organized and covertly committed 650 Timorese irregular troops into Portuguese Timor to stem the advance of Fretilin forces.'<sup>69</sup>

As in Portuguese times, the mobilisation of these indigenous forces was facilitated in 1974–5 by sympathetic *liurai*, who continued to exercise considerable authority within their localities. Especially helpful was the *liurai* of Atsabe, Guilherme Maria Gonçalves, and his son Tomás.<sup>70</sup> Both men became active in the small pro-Indonesian political party, Apodeti; and the son served as a commander of the Apodeti forces that took part in the October 1975 attack on Balibo in which five foreign journalists were killed.<sup>71</sup>

While Indonesian authorities relied on local power holders, as the Portuguese had done, there were important differences, stemming from distinctive features of Indonesian military doctrine and political strategy. Most importantly, the purpose of the militias at this stage was not so much military as political. The creation of local militias in 1974–5 was part of a covert *Operasi Komodo*, designed to prepare the ground for Indonesian takeover of East Timor. Within this, the militias' primary role was to provide political cover for a military intervention.<sup>72</sup> While some of the militias were pro-integration Timorese from Apodeti and UDT (*União Democrática Timorense*, Timorese Democratic Union), most were Indonesian soldiers dressed as Timorese, described as 'volunteers' and carrying letters to that effect.<sup>73</sup> The Timorese militia force was, in reality, nothing more than a deception.

The main purpose of the deception was to allow the Indonesian government to undertake military intervention in Portuguese Timor while maintaining the fiction that it was pursuing a diplomatic solution.<sup>74</sup> The Timorese militias and 'volunteers' would provide plausible deniability for aggression.<sup>75</sup> As an Australian embassy report explained

in September 1975, 'At this level Indonesia is seeking to keep the President "clean" and to ensure that Indonesia's international standing is threatened as little as possible.'<sup>76</sup>

The operation, set in motion in October 1974, was led by General Ali Murtopo, then deputy head of the intelligence agency, *Bakin*,<sup>77</sup> but best known as a master of covert operations and dirty tricks under the auspices of the 'Special Operations' outfit known as *Opsus*.<sup>78</sup> By September 1975 the head of military intelligence, Benjamin Murdani, was also closely involved in the East Timor operation, but it was clear that this was still an *Opsus* plan.<sup>79</sup> It was probably no coincidence that the operation bore striking similarities to one Murtopo had orchestrated in 1968 to wrest West Irian from Dutch control. Known as the 'Act of Free Choice', that operation had involved the deployment of 'volunteers' to create the illusion that the local population was demanding integration with Indonesia. Summarising what Indonesian contacts described in June 1975 as their 'elegant' plan to get Portuguese Timor to join Indonesia, Australian Ambassador Woolcott wrote:

Indonesia's covert activities in Portuguese Timor will be stepped up, as will the training of APODETI leaders. 'Refugees' are being prepared at Atambua to return to Portuguese Timor to play their part in persuading people to support integration. In short, Indonesia hopes to repeat the success achieved in the West Irian act of free choice.<sup>80</sup>

The similarities between the *Opsus* operation in Portuguese Timor and the earlier operation in West Irian highlight the role of the armed forces as an institutional channel along which military strategies, including the use of militias, travelled from one theatre of operations to another. It also draws attention to the role of particular officers as agents of such transfers.

Even after the massive invasion of December 1975, Indonesian officials maintained the pretence that the forces involved were simply 'volunteers' and local 'anti-Fretilin' fighters. The acknowledgement that there were in fact thousands of regular Indonesian troops in the territory came only after East Timor had been formally declared an Indonesian province in July 1976. Once their essentially political purpose had been served, the militias began to be regrouped and organised to perform more conventional militia functions, as guards, auxiliaries and so on. An Australian embassy official, who visited East Timor in mid-1976, reported some of the first evidence of this militia mobilisation:

Indonesian 'volunteers' in charge of these groups drilled them in military fashion. (A platoon of men in traditional costume in Viqueque drilled with some precision using wooden rifles capped with Indonesian flags.) Light blue uniformed 'partisans'—ex-Apodeti and UDT soldiers—acted as guards and controlled crowds. They formed a Timorese militia force.<sup>81</sup>

With the start of a major new military campaign in September 1977, the Indonesian army began even more energetically to recruit local people to fight on its side. Following the model of 1965, thousands of Timorese were now conscripted to join military operations against the pro-independence group Fretilin, which, again evoking 1965, the Indonesian authorities portrayed as 'communists'.<sup>82</sup>



Eyewitness accounts from this period describe villagers being forced at gunpoint to beat, or to kill, other members of their community.<sup>83</sup> In a letter sent in November 1977, a priest wrote that the Timorese 'are being recruited to fight their brothers in the jungle. It is they who march in front of the [Indonesian] battalions to intimidate their targets.'<sup>84</sup> He may well have been referring to the so-called 'fence of legs' tactic, in which hundreds of civilians were forced to form a line and march for days through forests and up mountains ahead of Indonesian soldiers, in order to flush out guerrilla fighters.<sup>85</sup> Others who witnessed such an operation described it as the 'mass mobilization of citizens to make war on each other'.<sup>86</sup>

As noted above, the tactic had been used in the army's campaign against *Darul Islam* rebels in the 1950s, but it was used more widely and with more devastating effect in the anti-communist purges of 1965. After its successful use in 1965 and in East Timor, moreover, the 'fence of legs' tactic was made an essential component of virtually every other counter-insurgency campaign in Indonesia, notably those in Aceh and West Irian (now West Papua). Here again we see the legacy of the past, particularly of 1965, and also the geographical mobility of the militia model through the agency of the military.

So began the shift away from what may be called the 'traditional' pattern in East Timor—in which auxiliary forces were mobilised primarily through *liurai*, and maintained a degree of local autonomy—in the direction of a more bureaucratised arrangement, shaped by modern Indonesian counter-insurgency doctrine and by the experience of 1965. Semi-permanent militia forces were now to be spread throughout the entire territory, a certain number in every village and town, tightly controlled not by *liurai* but by Indonesian military officers and other government officials, with nominal support from village and district heads.<sup>87</sup>

Secret army documents from 1982 provide important details on the nature of these militia units and their role in the army's counter-insurgency strategy.<sup>88</sup> As the auxiliary formations continued to exist and to function for most of the next two decades, and were one of the models on which the 1999 militias were formed, it is important to look in detail at how they were organised, and what they were expected to do.

The 1982 documents make clear that an essential starting point for Indonesian military strategy in East Timor was the doctrine of 'total people's defence', which called for the close cooperation of regular military forces and the civilian population.<sup>89</sup> They also show that, in practice, this meant that East Timorese could expect to be called upon to fight 'the enemy' at a moment's notice.<sup>90</sup> In addition to formally constituted auxiliaries, discussed below, most operational military plans indicated that, when necessary, ordinary people armed with knives, swords and spears would also be called up. A document outlining security arrangements for the district of Baucau noted that 'in the event of danger, ordinary citizens armed with spears and swords will be gathered at a designated place in their respective villages'.<sup>91</sup>

While they were important in theory, the military paid less attention to these informal popular forces than to formal auxiliary forces. Most local conscripts and 'volunteers' were grouped into two distinct, but related, official bodies—*Hansip* and *Ratih*—and the role of each was carefully spelt out. Both were village-based auxiliary units, designed to assist the armed forces in detecting and combating the enemy. Both were organised along military lines, divided into companies, platoons and teams, and were 'guided' by an assortment of military figures, including the Sub-District Military Commander

(*Danramil*), soldiers from the East Timor-based Battalion 745 and representatives of the powerful intelligence outfit SGI (*Satuan Tugas Intelijen*, Intelligence Task Force).<sup>92</sup> Members of both were to be stationed at military command posts, so that they would be ready for deployment at short notice.<sup>93</sup>

The most basic organised units were the *Ratih* (*Rakyat Terlatih*, Trained Populace). *Ratih* recruits received rudimentary military training, with an emphasis on discipline and ideology, and although the village head was usually their formal commander, they were in reality controlled by military officers.<sup>94</sup> Their role was 'to conduct patrols and reconnaissance outside the town, and to be ready to be deployed for combat on short notice'.<sup>95</sup> *Ratih* members did not receive compensation except when they went on patrol, and when they did, it was seldom more than some poor quality corn.<sup>96</sup> Numbers varied, depending on the size of a village and on the army's assessment of the security situation, but army documents indicate that in 1982 most villages had one or two *Ratih* platoons. In the district of Baucau alone there were 2392 *Ratih* members.<sup>97</sup> Multiplying by 13, the number of districts in East Timor, we can estimate that, in 1982, there were some 31,000 *Ratih* in the territory.<sup>98</sup>

One step up in the militia hierarchy were the *Hansip* (*Pertahanan Sipil*, Civil Defence).<sup>99</sup> Recruited from the more promising *Ratih* members, they received more intensive military training, typically carried firearms and performed a variety of combat-related functions, including reconnaissance. Unlike the *Ratih*, the *Hansip* received regular compensation, in cash and kind. In 1982, the standard compensation for a *Hansip* member was 33 kilos of rice and Rupiah 11,500 per month, paid by the armed forces.<sup>100</sup> By 1982, *Hansip* units had reportedly been established in every village, but there tended to be fewer of them than of the *Ratih*. In the district of Baucau, for example, the total number of *Hansip* in 1982 was 520.<sup>101</sup> Thus, for the territory as a whole, a reasonable estimate would be roughly 6700.

In addition to these basic forces, the army established highly trained paramilitary units, drawn from the most promising local recruits. These elite units performed important reconnaissance, intelligence and combat roles, but they also took part in special operations, including assassinations. Formally coordinated at the level of the District Military Command, they had close ties with, and often operated alongside, the elite counter-insurgency force *Kopassus* (*Komando Pasukan Khusus*, Special Forces Command), and in particular its Intelligence Task Force (SGI) and operational units known as *Nanggala*.<sup>102</sup> Also sharing close ties with *Kopassus* and other army units were individual East Timorese, some of them boys as young as 12 years, who were brought along on combat missions at the request of a military unit. Officially dubbed *TBO* (*Tenaga Bantuan Operasi*, Operations Auxiliaries), these young men provided the same sort of invaluable service as the boy 'guides' or *criados* who operated alongside Australian forces during the Second World War.<sup>103</sup>

As in earlier periods, the use of local people to assist in pacification had obvious military and political advantages. Unlike most Indonesian soldiers, they generally knew the terrain and the language, important qualities in a counter-insurgency war. Moreover, they cost little to maintain while alive, and did not require much in the way of compensation when killed or wounded.<sup>104</sup> Besides, they allowed the Indonesian army to pretend that it was not, in fact, an invading or occupying army. But the strategy also had serious drawbacks. Most pressing was the problem of disloyalty, a subject to which the

1982 army documents repeatedly return.<sup>105</sup> One document states plainly that there was always a danger that the local auxiliaries might use their guns against Indonesians, and suggests strategies for minimising that danger.<sup>106</sup> Another speaks directly about the problem of desertion, and spells out plans for the reform of the militia forces in order to overcome it.<sup>107</sup>

Notwithstanding these problems, the network of militia organisations formed in the early 1980s—village-based auxiliaries, elite paramilitaries and TBOs—came to form an essential bulwark in the Indonesian occupation and counter-insurgency campaign. The *Hansip* and *Ratih* infrastructure continued to function throughout this period, and provided the model for the basic repertoire of training, marching and patrolling that were common throughout the territory in 1999. Moreover, many of the militia units that seemed to appear out of nowhere in 1999—including *Makikit*, *Halilintar*, *Saka*, *Sera*, *Partisan*, *59/75 Junior* and *Team Alfa*—were remnants of much older paramilitary outfits that had been set up from the late 1970s, and had continued to function thereafter. Likewise, at least some militia members and leaders in 1999 were former TBOs with close attachments to Indonesian army officers and units.

The history of the Indonesian invasion and occupation also provides clues to the uneven pattern of militia activity and violence in 1999 noted earlier. One explanation for the concentration of militia violence in the western districts is that, as a result of the strategy adopted in 1974–5, those districts already had a reliable network of pro-Indonesian power brokers, who could be relied upon to mobilise forces at short notice. A case in point was João Tavares, the man designated in 1999 as the overall commander of the Pro-Integration Struggle Forces (*Pasukan Pejuang Integrasi* or PPI). Tavares had earned his stripes fighting alongside Indonesian troops as early as 1975: he had commanded UDT troops in the attack on Balibo in mid-October 1975. He was rewarded by being appointed for two terms as District Head of Bobonaro.<sup>108</sup> He was also able to amass substantial land-holdings. By 1999, Tavares had long been a very powerful local operator, and he was only one of several in the western districts who could be relied upon to organise pro-integration militias and activities.

Thus, just as the Portuguese period left a legacy of practices and norms that reappeared in 1999, so the Indonesian occupation introduced models that influenced the style and organisation of later militia formations. Most of those models appear to have been introduced by Indonesian military officers, particularly those with experience in crushing the PKI in 1965, and in conducting dirty-tricks campaigns in other parts of the country. As in Portuguese times, there was a discernible political logic to the Indonesian deployment of militias. They were cheap, they were useful, they provided plausible deniability for acts of violence committed by soldiers and they helped to establish bonds of loyalty with the occupying forces. Nevertheless, these were not the only models for the militias that emerged in 1999, nor would the political logic of these early years remain unchanged.

### East Timor's militias in the late New Order

In the early 1990s, a rather different type of group, more like death squads than citizens' auxiliaries, began to make its presence felt in East Timor. These groups and their

successors would come to constitute important models and recruiting grounds for the militias of 1999. In their organisation, their rhetoric and their repertoires, they bore remarkable similarities to militias and paramilitary groups emerging in Indonesia itself at this time, most notably in Aceh where government troops were conducting a bloody counter-insurgency campaign.<sup>109</sup> They also resembled the death squads and *agents provocateurs* that appeared in parts of Java in the mid-1980s and again in 1998–9.<sup>110</sup> Their history therefore helps to elucidate further the historical origins of East Timor's modern militias, and perhaps also the conditions for the growth of militias more generally.

The best known manifestations of the new type in East Timor were the so-called *Ninja* gangs, first reported abroad in 1991, but very likely to have been in existence a year or two before that.<sup>111</sup> Also known locally as *Buffo* (the Portuguese word for 'clown'), these gangs roamed the streets at night, dressed in black, their heads covered with dark balaclavas, harassing, kidnapping and sometimes killing supporters of independence, leaving their dead bodies in public places. For Indonesians, and probably for East Timorese, the *Ninja* evoked memories of the terrifying state-sponsored killing of at least 5000 alleged petty criminals in the mid-1980s in Indonesia, known by the acronym *Petrus* (*penembakan misterius*, or 'mysterious killings').<sup>112</sup> Those executions were often carried out by men in plain clothes and balaclavas, and the victims' bodies usually left in public view. At the time, officials denied government responsibility. Yet in 1989 President Suharto boasted in his memoirs that the killings had been deliberate policy, a form of 'shock therapy' to bring crime under control.

A document from the East Timorese resistance, dated October 1991, strongly suggests that the similarities between the *Ninja* squads and *Petrus* were no coincidence. It refers to the existence of three separate vigilante groups, all of them made up of East Timorese but organised by Indonesian military intelligence. These were the *Regu Gelap* (Black Squad), the *Regu Railakan* (Flash Squad) and the *Regu Ninja/Petrus* (*Ninja/Petrus* Squad).<sup>113</sup>

According to this document, which described Indonesian intelligence plans for the aborted Portuguese parliamentary visit of late October 1991, each group had a slightly different composition and function. The Black Squad was composed of surrendered and captured ex-guerrillas. Its objective was 'to capture or execute Xanana Gusmão', the leader of the armed resistance. Members of the Flash Squad were 'usually illiterate young people...trained to threaten and terrify people as well as provoke riots'. Finally, the *Ninja/Petrus* Squad was described as a group of masked East Timorese whose job was to 'threaten, terrify and torture people without being recognised...[and to] carry out mysterious executions'. The *Ninja/Petrus* Squad was said to be well supplied 'with automatic pistols, broadcast and receiver equipment, night binoculars, hidden tape-recorders and cameras with automatic lenses...as well as knives, axes and other sharp and cutting instruments which they use to break into East Timorese houses during the night'.

Despite official claims that the *Ninja* and *Buffo* were nothing more than disgruntled local youths engaged in random acts of criminality, this evidence, together with the clear similarities with the *Petrus* squads of the mid-1980s, indicates that something more systematic was at work. Likewise, the appearance of death squads, also called *Ninja*, in parts of Java in 1998–9 seems more than coincidental.<sup>114</sup> At the very least, the emergence of these death squad formations at different times and in different locales, and the

remarkable similarities among them, attest to the mobility of certain models of militia violence.

The appearance of *Ninja* in East Timor in the early 1990s also seems to have been part of a strategic response, evidently developed by *Kopassus*, to two important political developments in East Timor in the late 1980s. The first was the emergence of a well organised, pro-independence clandestine front, comprised mostly of students and operating mainly in the towns, but with close ties to both the armed resistance and the outside world.<sup>115</sup> The second was Suharto's decision in 1988 to 'open' East Timor to foreign visitors for the first time since 1975, apparently in order to prove that there was no problem there. The first of these developments suggested the need for a covert strategy designed to penetrate and disrupt the clandestine front, while the second dictated an approach that avoided open, or unprovoked, displays of force by regular troops.

A related explanation, offered by the editors of the journal *Indonesia* in 1992, is that the *Ninja* and *Buffo* were the brainchild of a 'local mafia' of military and civilian officials with criminal connections, similar to those reported in Aceh.<sup>116</sup> According to this interpretation, the East Timor mafia created these vigilante groups on the basis of existing criminal networks. Among other things, the mafia was said to have infiltrated its vigilantes into a November 1991 procession to the Santa Cruz cemetery, in order to provoke an incident that could be used to justify a 'firm' military response.<sup>117</sup> In this regard, the previously cited description of Indonesian intelligence plans is revealing. It refers to two groups who were supposed to 'cause disorder, riots as well as threaten and terrify locals'. 'During a disorder or a riot', the document continues, 'it will be easy to identify and execute those who are against integration.'<sup>118</sup>

Whether it was the work of provocateurs or not, the Santa Cruz massacre of 11 November 1991 did deal a terrible, if temporary, blow to the pro-independence movement. Apart from the estimated 270 killed, many young underground resistance leaders were jailed while others were compelled, sometimes under torture, to provide information. The massacre also led to some unusual disciplinary actions against military officers and soldiers.<sup>119</sup> Once the dust had cleared, however, this shake-up looked like a victory for the 'local mafia' that was believed to be behind the *Ninja* and the *Buffo*.<sup>120</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that after a brief lull there was a resumption in the activities of the vigilante groups and militias, though often under different names. In the countryside, the military set about recasting its militia forces. In October 1993, an army spokesman announced that 3844 young East Timorese men had recently been sworn in as auxiliaries. Rather than calling them *Ratih* and *Hansip*, however, the spokesman referred to them as 'Traditional Forces' (*Pasukan Adat*).<sup>121</sup> The decision to mobilise these auxiliaries, and the odd choice of name, may have been related to the unusual international pressure on Indonesia at this time, to reduce its troop presence in East Timor and to show progress on the human rights front. No doubt some military strategist, or public relations expert, believed that the invocation of 'tradition' would cause less trouble in those circumstances.<sup>122</sup>

The real action was in the towns, and especially in Dili, where the underground resistance was regrouping. In early 1995, there were reports that *Ninja* gangs were operating again. Amnesty International reported in February that groups 'referred to as "Ninja" gangs...have been roaming the streets at night, stoning and burning houses and attacking residents of Dili. Their primary objective seems to be to target pro-

independence activists and to create an intensified atmosphere of fear for those opposed to Indonesian rule.<sup>123</sup>

Later the same year, a new pro-Indonesian group had emerged with many of the hallmarks of the earlier *Ninja*, but now mixed with characteristics of the *preman* of Java and Sumatra. The new group was called *Garda Paksi* (*Garda Pemuda Penegak Integrasi*) or Youth Guard for Upholding Integration. Like the *Ninja*, *Garda Paksi* members appeared to be drawn largely from unemployed East Timorese youth. Indeed, the pretext for their formation was that they would be given job training and assistance in finding employment, not only in East Timor but also in Java.<sup>124</sup> Like the *Ninja*, and like the militias of Aceh and the *preman* of Java, *Garda Paksi* members also appear to have had links to criminal networks and to *Kopassus*.<sup>125</sup>

Judging from its activities, *Garda Paksi*'s assigned roles appear to have been to infiltrate the underground resistance and to provoke disturbances among East Timorese. Dressed in black and armed with knives, its members terrorised Dili, throwing rocks, burning houses, setting up road blocks, abducting and occasionally killing independence activists.<sup>126</sup> *Garda Paksi* was in essence a gang of toughs similar to the *preman* of major towns and cities of Java and Sumatra. And, like the *preman*, its purposes were not strictly criminal. As East Timor's Bishop, Carlos Ximenes Belo, remarked in 1996: 'The Governor has said [*Garda Paksi*] is for training purposes...but they are the ones who are always causing disturbances.'<sup>127</sup> In this sense, *Garda Paksi* was simply one manifestation of a model that was characteristic of the final years of the New Order. Whether in Jakarta, Medan or Dili, the presence of easily mobilised thugs had become an integral element of political life.

In fact, and perhaps not coincidentally, *Garda Paksi* was also the father of one of the most violent militia groups of 1999, *Aitarak*. Almost overnight, in early 1999, *Garda Paksi* disappeared and *Aitarak* emerged in its place. The link between the two was personified by the career path of one of the most prominent of East Timor's militia leaders, Eurico Guterres. Leader of *Garda Paksi* from 1995, he was rewarded in early 1999 by being made commander of *Aitarak*, and deputy commander of the Pro-Integration Struggle Forces (PPI). Guterres was without question one of the most obnoxious and volatile militia leaders around, and his style seems to have reflected his *preman* roots.

But if the *Buffo*, *Ninja* and *Garda Paksi* were the closest ancestors of the new militias, they were hardly the only ones. As we have seen, the powerful military-civilian mafia of East Timor was able to draw on a long tradition of indigenous auxiliary and paramilitary organisations, in order to organise an extensive mobilisation at short notice. In some areas, the militias were formed on the basis of older auxiliary units, such as the *Hansip*, the *Ratih* and the *Pasukan Adat*. In others paramilitary outfits, such as *Makikit*, *Halilintar*, *Saka*, *Sera* and others, were ready-made for the purpose. Individuals who had served as TBOs with the Indonesian army were also a ready source of potential militia leaders and members. The result was a militia movement that represented a mixture of 'traditional' armed forces, peoples' *lasykar*, vigilantes and *preman*, an amalgam of influences dating in their origins from colonial times to the desperate, thug-filled final days of the New Order.

### Final thoughts

The militias that seemed to sprout like mushrooms in 1999 were neither spontaneous expressions of a timeless traditional pattern, as Indonesian officials have claimed, nor simply a modern-day fabrication of the Indonesian army, as critics have suggested. While it is true that the militias received support from Indonesian authorities in 1999, their repertoires, technologies and modes of organisation borrowed heavily from models and antecedents deeply rooted in East Timorese and Indonesian history. They were shaped, moreover, by the political calculations, doctrines and institutional make-up of a variety of states, and by evolving legal and normative systems.

Even a quick look at the historical record makes it clear that the militias of 1999 in East Timor drew upon antecedents dating from colonial, and even precolonial, times. Such borrowing was evident in their choice of weapons, such as swords, spears and machetes; in their repertoires of violence, including house-burning, rock-throwing and rape; and in elements of their organisation, especially the reliance on relatively small units grouped around local power-holders. That did not mean, however, that East Timor's modern militias were simply re-enacting an immutable tradition. On the contrary, the 'traditional' model on which they seemed to draw was, in important respects, a product of long interaction with Portuguese and Dutch colonial authorities. That was especially true of the custom of using local power-holders (*liurai*) to mobilise followers against other Timorese. It was also evident in the fetish for the flintlock gun, introduced by Europeans in the seventeenth century, and in the revitalised 'tradition' of head-taking, a practice that seems to have surged in frequency, and brutality, during the Portuguese pacification campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The militias of 1999 were also influenced by cultural models and historical antecedents imported from Indonesia, including: ideas of sexual potency commonly associated with the *jago*, the local enforcers of ancient and colonial Java; notions of patriotism associated with the *lasykar*, the freedom fighters of Indonesia's National Revolution; and the boorish arrogance of the *preman*, the politically connected thugs whose influence became so pronounced in the late New Order. Probably more important, and not unrelated, were models rooted in modern Indonesian military doctrine and practice. The doctrine of 'total people's defence', for example, laid the foundation upon which militia groups became part of the army's standard counter-insurgency strategy, and were mobilized to make war on their fellow citizens. Likewise, the habits and norms of extreme brutality that spread and became institutionalised after the massacres of 1965–6 shaped military and militia behaviour everywhere. Finally, the militias in East Timor seem to have been modelled on the behaviour of criminal gangs, and the military-dominated mafias with which they were often linked. In the dissemination of all these elements, the Indonesian armed forces—and especially *Opsus* and *Kopassus*—served as crucial vectors.

Thus the militias in East Timor were an amalgam of various influences and models forged over the course of at least three centuries, but especially during the 24 years of Indonesian rule. The richness and depth of that history—and the importance of Indonesian military doctrine and practice in shaping it—helps to explain some of the more notable and puzzling features of the modern militias in East Timor, as well as their similarities with militias in Aceh and other parts of Indonesia. It helps to explain, for

example, how the militias were able to organise and mobilise so swiftly in 1999. Although they appeared to come from nowhere—and are often described as having been created at a stroke by the army—few of these groups were actually new at all. Most had been around for years, though often under a different name. Had this not been the case, it is very unlikely that the militias would have formed as quickly and widely as they did.

The depth and complexity of these historical roots also helps to explain why militia groups in different parts of the territory seemed to know precisely what to do, and why they did more or less the same things wherever they were. As I have argued elsewhere, notwithstanding the strong evidence of high-level official support, the similarities in militia technology and repertoire across the territory cannot be attributed solely to tightly coordinated military planning.<sup>128</sup> They were, at least in part, also the result of shared historical memory. Most militia members hardly needed to be given detailed instructions; they had been doing this sort of thing for years and knew very well what was required when called upon. The same dynamic, a combination of shared historical memory and military coordination, may also help to explain the remarkable similarities in the behaviour of militias in places as distant, and culturally distinct, as East Timor and Aceh.

Finally, the long and complex history of militias in East Timor and Indonesia may explain some of the variations in style and repertoire among the different militias. For example, East Timor's most powerful and violent militias were in the western districts, an area that had been the focus of Portuguese pacification campaigns, and had a much longer association with Indonesian military power brokers. It also appears that the most violent and bellicose of the militias were not those associated with the civil defence groups of the 1970s (*Hansip* and *Ratih*), nor even with the paramilitary units of the 1980s (*Saka*, *Sera* and others), but rather with *preman*-type thugs of the 1990s.

As this evidence clearly suggests, the militias of East Timor and Indonesia have been encouraged by a succession of states, notably the Portuguese and the Indonesian, and more especially by their armed forces. Apart from the fact that local people knew the terrain and the language, there have been a number of obvious advantages to state authorities in mobilising them. First, like all semi-official forces, locally recruited auxiliaries afforded Portuguese, Dutch and Indonesian authorities a measure of deniability for acts of extreme violence that violated legal and moral norms. This is unlikely to have been a major preoccupation of the Portuguese and Dutch during colonial times. But for the Dutch in 1945–9, and for Indonesia in 1974–5 and in the 1990s when international attention focused increasingly on Indonesia's poor human rights record, plausible deniability was vital. Second, compared to regular troops, local auxiliaries were relatively inexpensive and, as far as Portuguese, Dutch and Indonesian military commanders were concerned, more expendable. Third, indigenous auxiliaries offered an important political advantage. They helped to create the illusion, and to an extent the reality, that local people were fighting each other. Against that backdrop, Portuguese, Dutch or Indonesian states could more easily be portrayed as neutral arbiters, required to maintain peace in a fractious and troubled territory.

While these points may be generally true, they conceal some important historical variations in the relationship between states and militias in Indonesia and East Timor. We have seen, for example, that in the late colonial and early post-independence period in Indonesia, and under Portuguese rule in East Timor, militias arose in contexts of weak or contested political power, and remained beyond the capacity of the state fully to control.



That is to say, state authorities relied upon, and acquiesced in, the authority of local power brokers in mobilising armed militia forces. By contrast, we have seen that, after 1965, militias were drawn very tightly under Indonesian state control, and became an essential component of the projection of state power in East Timor, Aceh and elsewhere.

In other words, at least on the evidence from East Timor and Indonesia, there is no simple correlation between the strength of a state and the emergence of militias. It is not even true to say that militias tend to arise where political power is dispersed or contested, because that does not account for the phenomenal growth and spread of militias under the New Order. What the evidence from East Timor and Indonesia does suggest is that different configurations of state power may facilitate the emergence of different kinds of militia formation. Where state power was centralised, as in the early New Order, the militias spread broadly across the area of state control. Moreover, they were durable, and employed common names, rhetoric and repertoires. By contrast, militias that emerged in contexts of diffuse political power, as during the Indonesian National Revolution, tended to be more localised, were less durable and employed a more diverse range of repertoires and styles.

The evidence from East Timor and Indonesia also suggests a number of more general conclusions about the historical conditions under which militias emerge, and take the forms that they do. First, while militias are likely to reflect, and even embrace, elements of the tradition and culture of a given society, explanations for the rise of militia groups are unlikely to be found in such traditions or cultural traits. Most cultures arguably contain elements that might facilitate the emergence of militias—historical traditions of warfare, a fetish for particular sorts of weapons, associations between weapons and sexual potency and so on—but the reality is that militias emerge only in certain places and at certain times. Clearly something else is at work. And if the historical evidence from East Timor and Indonesia is any indication, that other thing is the relationship with the state, or elements of it.

Second, notwithstanding the evidence from the colonial period, it would seem *not* to be the case that militias arise only where state power is weak or contested. They certainly do emerge in such conditions, as they did in Indonesia during the National Revolution and in the Philippines under President Aquino, but they also emerge where state actors or agencies decide that they are militarily or politically useful. Militias flourish, that is, not simply where state authorities have ‘lost control’, but where state agencies or elites consciously seek to ‘subcontract’ violence that they are unable or unwilling to entrust to normal security forces—either because of normative and legal constraints, or because of resource limitations.<sup>129</sup> Militias are also encouraged by state agencies and elites because they allow them to distance themselves from such violence, creating a veneer of ‘plausible deniability’. Finally, state agencies and elites often encourage the activities of violent militia groups because there is a clear political advantage in creating the illusion of internecine conflict, or even of anarchy, into which the armed forces or some other agent may step to restore order.

Third, beyond the political calculations of states or state agents, the norms and institutions in a given society also appear to have a significant effect on the formation and behaviour of militia groups. Where a regime is dominated by the military and its norms, one tends to find militias assisting with internal security. That is especially likely to be the case where, as in Indonesia, the military has a doctrine that explicitly justifies and

encourages the mobilisation of civilians for such purposes. In addition, those militias are arguably more likely to resort to extreme forms of violence where, over a period of time, little or no action is taken to punish state agents or militia members who commit such acts, leading to a cycle of impunity. A state's failure to take violence seriously can help to fix in place new norms and moral standards, which make worse violence, including militia violence, even more likely.

Fourth, militias do not simply emerge independently and naturally in each context. Instead, the idea of the militia—including aspects of their repertoire, rhetoric and organisation—is modular, in the sense that it can be learned or borrowed and transported across time and locale. The evidence from East Timor and Indonesia suggests, for example, that militias may be modelled on: 'traditional' armies and self-defence units; the pacification techniques of colonial armies; the counter-insurgency strategies of the Cold War period; and the repertoires of criminal organisations. If it is true that militias are modular in nature, then the conditions under which they may flourish expand dramatically, perhaps exponentially, with the passage of time and the improvement of communications. That is to say, we can expect to find militias emerging in an increasingly wide range of sociological, political and military contexts, limited only by the availability of the idea, and by the technology and opportunity for its dissemination.

Finally, there is the matter of human agency. Though it has not been dealt with adequately in this chapter, the reality is that militia members and leaders do not simply act because they exist within a web of historical conditions, norms and models. They do so because of what they have experienced, who they are, what they think is to their advantage and what they believe. So, in seeking to explain the militia phenomenon anywhere, it is necessary to step beyond purely structural and political conditions, and think about the men and women who live and act within that world.

## Notes

An earlier version of this chapter was published as 'People's War: Militias in East Timor and Indonesia', *South East Asia Research* 9, 3 (November 2001), pp. 271–318.

- 1 From 15 June to 14 September 1999, I was a Political Affairs Officer at UNAMET headquarters in Dili. I returned in November 1999 to assist UNTAET (UN Transitional Administration in East Timor) in briefing international and domestic human rights investigations. This chapter is based in part on information gathered in the course of that work.
- 2 On militia mobilisation in 1999, see: Peter Bartu, 'The Militia, the Military, and the People of Bobonaro', and Helene van Klinken, 'Taking the Risk, Paying the Price: East Timorese Vote in Ermera', in Richard Tanter, Mark Selden and Stephen Shalom (eds), *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 73–90 and 91–108; and Max Mason, 'Heroes of Integration' (MA dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2001).
- 3 See Amnesty International, 'Paramilitary Attacks Jeopardise East Timor's Future' (London: Amnesty International, Index ASA 21/26/99, April 1999); and East Timor International Support Centre (ETISC), 'Indonesia's Death Squads' (Darwin: ETISC Occasional Paper No. 2, May 1999).

- 4 These included killings at the church in Liquica and at Manuel Carrascalão's Dili home in April. Amnesty International, 'East Timor: Seize the Moment' (London: Amnesty International, Index ASA 21/49/99, 1999).
- 5 Brig.-Gen. Tono Suratman (military commander for East Timor until mid-August 1999), *Merah Putih: Pengabdian & Tanggung Jawab di Timor Timur* (Jakarta: Lembaga Pengkajian Kebudayaan Nusantara, 2000).
- 6 The full name was: 'Task Force for the Implementation of the Popular Consultation in East Timor'.
- 7 Gen. Zacky told journalists: 'What happened there was part of the culture of people who ran amok, so that was an emotional outburst.' *The Jakarta Post*, 5 January 2000. He was also quoted as saying: 'There were murders and arson by militias and soldiers as individuals. It's part of the amok culture of Indonesian society. But it was not something done systematically.' *South China Morning Post*, 5 January 2000.
- 8 Geoffrey Robinson, 'The Fruitless Search for a Smoking Gun: Tracing the Origins of Violence in East Timor', in Freek Colombijn and Thomas Lindblad (eds), *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp. 243–76.
- 9 Less common were M-16s, SKSs, S-1s, hand grenades and Portuguese-era Mauser and G-3 rifles.
- 10 TNI soldiers were also implicated in rape and sexual slavery; see United Nations, *Situation of Human Rights in East Timor* (New York: UN Doc. A/54/660, December 1999), pp. 9–11.
- 11 Bobonaro, Liquica and Covalima.
- 12 Including Ermera and Ainaro.
- 13 Manatuto, Baucau, Lospalos, Viqueque and Manufahi.
- 14 Robinson, 'The Fruitless Search'. Freek Colombijn offers a similar explanation for the lynching of criminals in Indonesia: 'Lynching is spontaneous and not organised, but once it has started, people know what to do, even if they have never participated in mob justice before.' Personal communication, 11 January 2001.
- 15 'Seluruh orang TimTim itu tahu memegang senjata kok...', *Kompas*, 29 December 1999.
- 16 A *Tapol* editorial claims Prabowo 'created his own infrastructure of Timorese, mostly former Apodeti members, for the purpose of using Timorese to fight Timorese', *Tapol*, 134 (1996), p. 11.
- 17 There are also differences. Robert Cribb has noted how modern militias 'tend to maintain a violent existence even when not actually being employed by the state'. Personal communication, 4 February 2002.
- 18 In the late nineteenth century there were 49 such *liurai* in Portuguese Timor. Service as a warrior formed part of a subject's tribute to a *liurai*. Davidson writes: 'Apart from paying tribute the duties of subjects also included providing labour for the *liurai*'s fields and plantations, providing guards for his person, and warriors to fight wars.' Katharine Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor: The Final Stage, 1850–1912' (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1994), p. 123.
- 19 When forming such alliances, *liurai* usually took part in a blood-drinking ceremony. One such blood oath was sworn in 1719 by several *liurai* who resolved to fight the Portuguese. Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 35. For a description of a late nineteenth-century oath, see H.O. Forbes, 'On Some Tribes of the Island of Timor', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 13 (1884), p. 426.
- 20 Charles A. Boxer, cited in Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 29.
- 21 In 1884 Forbes wrote: 'On the eve of war...messengers are sent to every corner of the kingdom...to summon...every man who owes allegiance to their rajah.' Forbes, 'On Some Tribes', p. 413.

- 22 Timorese warriors are reported carrying muskets as early as 1656, by a Dutch military expedition. Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 35. A Timorese man had 'always a knife or short sword of some description, and is rarely without a gun, flintlock or percussion'. Forbes, 'On Some Tribes', p. 409.
- 23 Forbes wrote: 'A spot is always railed off for the *lulik* spear and gun, before which the head of the house makes a propitiary offering to speed his particular undertakings'. *Ibid.*, p. 410.
- 24 Cited in Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 30.
- 25 Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', p. 197.
- 26 Cited in Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', p. 255. In 1912 the *Melbourne Argus* claimed that Timorese stuck Portuguese officers' and soldiers' heads on poles. Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 38.
- 27 Forbes, 'On Some Tribes', p. 422.
- 28 Photographs of severed heads and testimonies of head-taking have been reproduced in a number of publications, including: Michele Turner, *Telling East Timor: Personal Testimonies, 1942–1992* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1992).
- 29 Forbes wrote: 'They often carry besides a buffalo-hide shield to ward off stones, which are employed as missiles against each other.' Forbes, 'On Some Tribes', p. 409. For late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century house-burning see Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', pp. 171, 195, 196, 201 and 267.
- 30 Arnold de Vlaming van Oudshoorn, cited in Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 27. Forbes' late nineteenth-century description leaves a similar impression: 'It is carried on mostly by the offensive army pillaging and ravaging all they can lay their hands on, robbing every undefended dwelling, ruthlessly decapitating helpless men, women, and children, and even infants.' Forbes, 'On Some Tribes', p. 423.
- 31 Cited in Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', p. 196.
- 32 The more permanent *moradores*, though designated 'second line', formed 'the strongest first line of defence for the colonial community and its outlying *postos*'. Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', p. 136.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 20. For details on the 1911–12 rebellion, see Davidson, Chapter 8.
- 34 Davidson recounts dozens of instances up to the early twentieth century. See *ibid.*, pp. 60, 143, 145, 147, 155–6, 165, 171, 182, 184–5, 195, 200, 205, 256, 259. Dutch accounts of an eighteenth-century battle refer to 'our Timorese'. See, Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 30.
- 35 Cited in Jolliffe, *East Timor*, p. 45.
- 36 James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996), p. 29.
- 37 Jolliffe, *East Timor*, pp. 41, 135. The final decades of Portuguese rule were also marked by the presence of the quasi-military 'Portuguese Youth Movement', not altogether different from the youth groups of the Indonesian period. Cardoso also mentions a colonial-era 'rural Catholic militia' in Atsabe village, a major centre of militia activity in 1999, and the site of the murder mentioned at the start of this chapter. See Luis Cardoso, *The Crossing: A Story of East Timor*, trans. M.J. Costa (London: Granta Books), pp. 71 and 59.
- 38 Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', pp. 22, 31–2, 51.
- 39 For the economic motive see a 1870 government directive: 'It would, therefore, be better to supply the loyal kings [*liurai*] with powder and shot and let them pursue the war freely... Organisation of expeditions from Portugal or other colonies would involve expenses the Public Treasury cannot afford.' Cited in *ibid.*, p. 150.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 207.
- 41 Local troops' merits were summarised by the Governor of Timor in 1897, at the end of a three-year pacification: 'Here war is different, we don't form squares...we advance on foot, under fire in single file along trails impossible to describe...we climb mountain escarpments, sometimes crawling, sometimes dragging ourselves up by shrub and bushes under enemy fire... Yet with irregular forces armed only with breech loaders we have conquered the land.' Report of Governor Celestino da Silva, 21 October 1897, cited in *ibid.*, p. 208.

- 42 Report by Captain Antonio Joaquim Garcia, Governor of Macao and Timor Province, 1870. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 43 East Timorese were mobilised by both sides, as shown in a photograph of a young Timorese *criado* (guide) of December 1945, published in Dunn's *Timor*, p. 128. The boy is dressed in Australian kit, with a rifle. The caption notes that the boy 'had earlier been speared by pro-Japanese Timorese'.
- 44 See Davidson, 'The Portuguese Colonisation of Timor', pp. 74, 101, 170 and 181.
- 45 Cardoso, *The Crossing*, p. 8.
- 46 Henk Schulte Nordholt and Margaret van Till, 'Colonial Criminals in Java, 1870—1910', in Vicente Rafael (ed.), *Figures in Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1999), p. 49.
- 47 Schulte Nordholt and van Till have argued that power in ancient Java should be understood in such terms, and that this idea is also useful for understanding the *jago*. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 48 'Although officially the *jago* was perceived as playing only a marginal role in colonial society, in actual practice he was vital to the perpetuation of colonial rule in rural Java...and once criminality emerged the colonial state could not, and often did not want to, control its own creation.' *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 49 Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945–1949* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).
- 50 Robert Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja: Death Squads in Indonesia', in Bruce B. Campbell and Arthur D. Brenner (eds), *Death Squads in Global Perspective* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), p. 185.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- 52 Loren Rytter, 'Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalists of Suharto's New Order?'; and Joshua Barker, 'State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal Contagion in Suharto's New Order', in *Indonesia*, 66 (October 1998), pp. 7–42, 45–74.
- 53 Despite its historical roots, in modern times the term *preman* entered common usage only in the 1990s. In the 1980s, the more common term was *gali*. Rytter, 'Pemuda Pancasila', p. 49.
- 54 Drawing on Anton Blok, Schulte Nordholt and van Till argue that 'a process of "unfinished" or stagnating state formation enabled new groups of violent entrepreneurs to dominate the local order in alliance with, or under the patronage of, rural elites'. Schulte Nordholt and van Till, 'Colonial Criminals in Java', p. 68.
- 55 On the position of district and village heads, see *ibid.*, pp. 52–5.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 57 On the impact of Japanese mobilisation and ideas on Indonesian, especially Javanese, youth, see Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972). Not all scholars accept this view. Robert Cribb, for example, believes that the Japanese legacy in Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia has been overstated. Personal communication, 4 February 2002.
- 58 In Bali, several rajas became patrons of anti-Republican youth gangs. In Dutch eyes this undermined the civilian support base for Republican guerrillas. In the short term, the strategy worked. By dividing the local population, the Dutch weakened the social base of resistance and ensured most fighting was carried out by Balinese. In the longer term, this set the stage for post-independence conflict among Balinese, the Indonesian state employing similar methods. See Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
- 59 As Cribb writes on the revolutionary period: 'To control the *lasykar*, the military adopted a strategy of both repression and cooptation, but even by the time the Dutch conceded Indonesian independence in late 1949 not all *lasykar* groups had been tamed.' Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja', pp. 183–4.

- 60 The military, indeed different branches of the armed forces, also sponsored militia-type youth groups affiliated with one or another of the political parties. See Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise*, Chapter 9.
- 61 This was the origin of the militia formations known as *Hansip* (*Pertahanan Sipil* or Civil Defence), which eventually became an integral element in Indonesia's system of internal security, discussed below.
- 62 The best known cases occurred in *Darul Islam* influenced areas, but politically backed militia violence also occurred elsewhere, including on Bali. See Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise*, Chapters 8 and 9.
- 63 On the logic of the killings see Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings, 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21, 1990), and Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise*, particularly Chapter 12.
- 64 Cribb observes that the post-1966 demobilisation was 'a powerful indication of the control that the military kept over the vigilantes'. However, he understates the extent to which such militia mobilisation was revived and replicated in other parts of the country in later years. Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja', p. 184.
- 65 I am grateful to Ruth McVey for drawing my attention to the importance of the fight against *Darul Islam* in the development of this and other aspects of Indonesian military doctrine and practice.
- 66 Richard Tanter, 'The Totalitarian Ambition: Intelligence Organisations and the Indonesian State', and Michael van Langenberg, 'The New Order State: Language, Ideology, Hegemony', in Arief Budiman (ed.), *State and Civil Society in Indonesia* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 22, 1990).
- 67 Roughly 300 young men and boys were deployed alongside Indonesian army regulars in an October 1975 cross-border attack. Dunn, *Timor*, pp. 128 and 164.
- 68 Cablegram to Canberra, 15 April 1975, Document 126, in Wendy Way (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974–1976* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2000), pp. 293–4.
- 69 US Department of State, cited in Dunn, *Timor*, p. 193.
- 70 Apart from the Conceives family, the key figures included Francisco Lopes da Cruz, a leader of the anti-communist UDT, who reappeared in the late 1990s as Indonesia's ambassador at large for East Timor.
- 71 Australian documents make clear how the *liurai* of Atsabe was being used by the Indonesian side. Reporting on a conversation with an Indonesian government contact (Harry Tjan) the embassy wrote: 'He said that up to 3800 Indonesian soldiers from Java would be put in Portuguese Timor gradually. Atsabe would be their base. The King [*liurai*] would be the figure-head for the anti-Fretilin side.' Cablegram to Canberra, 30 September 1975, Document 246, in Way (ed.), *Documents*, pp. 439–40.
- 72 Australian Embassy Cablegram to Canberra, 6 September 1975, Document 217, in *ibid.*, pp. 391–3.
- 73 Australian Ambassador Woolcott Cablegram, 15 October 1975, Document 265, in *ibid.*, pp. 472–6; and Document 262, in *ibid.*, pp. 468–70.
- 74 Cablegram to Canberra, 10 September 1975, Document 221, in *ibid.*, pp. 398–400.
- 75 Cablegram to Canberra, 15 October 1975, Document 262, in *ibid.*, pp. 468–70.
- 76 Cablegram to Canberra, 10 September 1975, Document 221, in *ibid.*, pp. 398–400.
- 77 Bakin (*Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Nasional*, National Intelligence Co-ordinating Body), a 'civilian' body set up in 1968, headed by Gen. Yoga Sugama in 1975. Tanter, 'The Totalitarian Ambition', p. 229.
- 78 *Opsus* was set up in 1963, gaining a reputation for dirty tricks—provocation, infiltration, assassination—during the New Order. Hamish McDonald, *Suharto's Indonesia* (Blackburn, Victoria: Fontana, 1980), Chapter 9. Cribb writes that General Murtopo 'managed' the

- national elections of 1977 and 1982, in part through the 'effective deployment of men of violence and agents provocateurs'. Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja', p. 189.
- 79 Cablegram to Canberra, 6 September 1975, Document 217, in Way (ed.), *Documents*, pp. 391–3. In 1983 Murdani replaced Murtopo as Suharto's most trusted political manager.
- 80 Dispatch to Willesee, 2 June 1975, Document 137, in *ibid.*, pp. 265–9.
- 81 Report by Taylor, 21 May 1976, Document 450, in *ibid.*, pp. 758–60.
- 82 George Aditjondro, one of the few Indonesian scholars to pay attention to East Timor before the 1990s, writes: 'Even back in the 1970s, Indonesian troops already relied on East Timorese scouts, some of whom belonged to the anticommunist pro-independence party UDT, or were former Portuguese soldiers, to track down the guerrillas in their hiding places in the mountains.' George J. Aditjondro, 'Ninjas, Nanggalas, Monuments and Mossad Manuals', in Jeffrey A. Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 165.
- 83 See the testimonies in Turner (ed.), *Telling East Timor*, especially part III.
- 84 Cited in Dunn, *Timor*, p. 276.
- 85 The 'fence of legs' strategy was used in East Timor as early as 1981. Given this 1977 description it seems likely it was used earlier. It is described, with diagrams, in one of the secret army documents discussed below. Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Prosedur Tetap Tentang Razia Daerah Pemukiman' (*Protap/01-A/VII/1982*), p. 3. For a description in English, see John Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991), pp. 117–18, 161.
- 86 Cited in Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War*, p. 117.
- 87 The key military authorities were, in rank order: the Sub-Regional Military Commander (*Danrem*), the District Military Commander (*Dandim*), the Sub-District Military Commander (*Danramil*) and the Village-Level NCO (*Babinsa*). In 'troubled' villages, the *Babinsa* was replaced by a military-dominated 'Village Guidance Team' (*Team Pembina Desa*). See Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Desa sebagai Titik Pusat Perhatian dan Cara Membinanya Secara Utuh' (*Juknis 01-A/IV/1982*).
- 88 The eight documents in question were prepared by the Intelligence Section of the Sub-Regional Military Command (*Korem*) for East Timor, and signed by the *Korem* commander, Colonel Rajagukguk, or by the Chief of Intelligence for East Timor, Major William da Costa.
- 89 For more on this doctrine, see Geoffrey Robinson, 'Indonesia: On a New Course?', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *The Declining Role of the Military in Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), and Abdul Haris Nasution, *Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1965).
- 90 One document provides a detailed profile of a village (Bualale), noting: 'Apart from the official auxiliary forces (*Hansip/Wanra* and *Ratih*) there are about 50 people who can be called up as needed'. See Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Desa' (*Juknis/01-A/IV/1982*).
- 91 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Sistem Keamanan Kota dan Daerah Pemukiman' (*Juknis/05/I/1982*), p. 5.
- 92 The presence of SGI and of Battalion 745 soldiers is mentioned in Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Desa' (*Juknis/01-A/IV/1982*), pp. 6–7.
- 93 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Sistem Keamanan Kota dan Daerah Pemukiman' (*Juknis/05/I/1982*), p. 4.
- 94 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Rencana Penyusunan Kembali Rakyat Terlatih', pp. 2 and 6.
- 95 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Sistem Keamanan Kota dan Daerah Pemukiman' (*Juknis/05/I/1982*), p. 5.
- 96 Some *Ratih* compensation came from the *Korem*, through the *Kodim*, but apparently not enough, additional payment depending on the capacity of each local military commander.

- See Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Rencana Penyusunan Kembali Rakyat Terlatih', p. 4, and Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Kegiatan Babinsa/Team Pembina Desa Dalam Rangka Penyembangan dan Penyusutan Kekuatan Perlawanan Rakyat Terlatih' (*Juknis/06/IV/1982*), pp. 1, 5.
- 97 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Rencana Penyusunan Kembali Rakyat Terlatih', p. 3.
- 98 Bualale Village had 'ten *Hansip/Wanra*, with seven guns, and one Platoon of *Ratih*, with ten guns'. Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Desa' (*Juknis/01-A/IV/1982*), p. 5.
- 99 *Hansip* was further divided into two sections, one of which (*Kamra*) served as a police auxiliary, while the other (*Wanra*) served with the army. In practice, *Wanra* were the most important, so that the terms *Wanra* and *Hansip* came to be used with interchangeably.
- 100 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Kegiatan Babinsa' (*Juknis/06/IV/1982*), p. 1.
- 101 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Rencana Penyusunan Kembali Rakyat Terlatih', p. 6.
- 102 The *Nanggala* were special *Kopassus* units set up in the late 1970s. *Nanggala* 28, commanded by a young Prabowo Subianto, was responsible for killing Fretilin commander Nicolau Lobato in December 1978.
- 103 Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Kegiatan Babinsa' (*Juknis/06/IV/1982*), p. 9.
- 104 The procedures in the event of the death of, or injury to, an auxiliary are spelt out in Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Kegiatan Babinsa' (*Juknis/06/IV/1982*).
- 105 The danger was surely compounded by the army's practice of recruiting former Fretilin guerrillas and political detainees to serve in these auxiliaries. See Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Cara Mengamankan Masyarakat Dari Pengaruh Propaganda GPK' (*Juknis/04-B/IV/1982*), pp. 3–4.
- 106 'In general [auxiliaries] carry arms and so constitute a real armed force. In order to ensure that this force is truly directed at the intended target...constant guidance is essential. Without such guidance, the weapons in question could well be misused...[and] could even boomerang.' Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Kegiatan Babinsa' (*Juknis/06/IV/1982*), pp. 7–8.
- 107 Among the strategies proposed were the designation of a network of informers (one for every 10–15 families); inspection posts at the entrance of every village; and the requirement that anyone entering or leaving a village be in possession of a 'travel document' (*surat jalan*). See Korem 164/Wira Dharma, Seksi Intel, 'Petunjuk Tehnis tentang Cara Mengamankan Masyarakat' (*Juknis/04-B/IV/1982*).
- 108 Dunn writes that, after the formal 'integration' of East Timor in 1976, 'trusted Timorese, such as João Tavares and Tomas Gonçalves were appointed bupatis'. Dunn, *Timor*, p. 266.
- 109 For Aceh, see Robinson, 'Rawan Is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh', *Indonesia*, 66 (October 1998), pp. 127–56; and Amnesty International, *Shock Therapy: Restoring Order in Aceh, 1989–1993* (London: Amnesty International, 1993).
- 110 On the death squads of the late 1990s, see Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja'.
- 111 Circumstantial evidence suggests that they emerged in the late 1980s, when Abílio Osório Soares, the Apodeti leader and future Governor with close links to Prabowo Subianto, was the Mayor of Dili.
- 112 On the *Petrus* killings, see David Bourchier, 'Crime, Law and Authority in Indonesia', in Budiman (ed.), *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, pp. 177–211. On the number of victims Cribb writes that 'it certainly seems safe to suggest that the figure lies between 5000 and 10,000'. Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja', p. 191.
- 113 The document is entitled 'Planos do IN [Intelligence] Para Contrabalangar ou Manobrar a Situação Política Durante a Vinda do Parlamento Português a Timor Leste'.



- 114 Cribb has noted strong similarities between the early 1980s *Petrus* killings and the *Ninja* killings of 1998–9 in East Java. Curiously, he fails to mention the parallels with the *Ninja* and other death squads in East Timor and Aceh. Cribb, 'From Petrus to Ninja', p. 193–4.
- 115 See Constancio Pinto and Matthew Jardine, *Inside the Timorese Resistance: East Timor's Unfinished Struggle* (Boston: South End Press, 1997). On the armed resistance, see Xanana Gusmão, *To Resist Is to Win! The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão* (Richmond, Victoria: Aurora Books, 2000).
- 116 The East Timor mafia included members of Apodeti, and its local military allies. East Timorese resistance members claimed that Fretilin military material had been bought from the Indonesian army; and that army field commanders worked out unofficial ceasefires to facilitate economic transactions. Confidential interview with former Fretilin guerrilla, Lisbon, June 1989. Geoffrey Robinson, 'Rawan Is as Rawan Does,' pp. 137, 151.
- 117 An East Timorese youth claimed to have been hired by the military to carry a grenade into the procession and provoke an incident. Confidential communication from East Timor clandestine movement, January 1993. Also see The Editors, 'Current Data on the Indonesian Military Elite', *Indonesia*, 53 (April 1992), p. 99.
- 118 'Planos do IN [Intelligence] Para Contrabalangar ou Manobrar a Situação Política Durante a Vinda do Parlamento Português a Timor Leste'.
- 119 Following the recommendations of a Military Honour Council, some high-ranking officers were removed from their posts, and ten low-ranking soldiers and police were tried for disciplinary offences. Amnesty International, *Indonesia/East Timor: The Suppression of Dissent* (London: Amnesty International, 1992).
- 120 Governor Mario Carrascalão, who was critical of the *Ninja*, was replaced in October 1992 by Afílio Osório Soares, who had been Mayor of Dili in the late 1980s when the *Ninja* first appeared. He was an Apodeti leader, and long time Indonesian military ally with links to Prabowo Subianto. Cardoso, *The Crossing*, pp. 102–3.
- 121 *Tapol*, 120 (December 1993), p. 20.
- 122 Associated Press later adopted the new line, calling the East Timorese victim of a Fretilin attack someone who had 'led a local spear platoon against pro-independence fighters', *Associated Press*, 24 January 1994.
- 123 Amnesty International, Urgent Action 33/95, 13 February 1995.
- 124 By 1992, dozens of unemployed East Timorese youth had been sent to Java for 'job training', some at the *Kopassus*-run training complex in Cijantung, West Java. Others fell under the influence of East Timorese underworld figure Hercules, and became *preman* in Jakarta. Ryter, 'Pemuda Pancasila', p. 69; and Asia Watch, 'Deception and Harassment of East Timorese Workers', 15 May 1992.
- 125 Many see *Garda Paksi* as Prabowo Subianto's child: 'Major-General Prabowo Subianto ... and his Red Berets [*Kopassus*] were seen as the protectors of these thugs, who operated openly in East Timor and Indonesia under the label of 'pro-integration' youth', Aditjondro, 'Ninjas, Nanggalas, Monuments and Mossad Manuals', p. 172. Other candidates include Kiki Syahnakri, who became East Timor Military Commander in late 1994, months before *Garda Paksi* appeared. After protests in Dili in November 1994, he reportedly said: 'We will not tolerate any more disturbances or demonstrations in East Timor... If it happens again, the armed forces will not hesitate to cut them down, because we have pleaded with them enough.' *Jawa Pos*, 1 December 1994. Syahnakri returned briefly in early September 1999, as martial law commander.
- 126 See *Tapol*, 128 (April 1995), p. 3.
- 127 Cited in *Tapol*, 136 (August 1996), p. 13. Later that year there were allegations that *Garda Paksi* had been involved in plots against the Bishop, including an apparent assassination attempt in December 1996, after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. See Amnesty International, Urgent Action 06/97, 8 January 1997.
- 128 See Robinson, 'The Fruitless Search'.

- 129 Campbell has argued that the proliferation of death squads in the twentieth century may best be understood as part of a tendency towards 'subcontracting' by modern states. See Bruce Campbell, 'Death Squads: Definition, Problems, and Historical Context', in Campbell and Brenner (eds), *Death Squads*, pp. 16–18.

## 12

### **Colonial forces as postcolonial memories**

#### **The commemoration and memory of the Malay Regiment in modern Malaysia and Singapore**

*Kevin Blackburn*

Postcolonial nations seldom use the memory of colonial armies as part of their nation-building efforts. Generally, newly independent countries seek to promote the recent memory of anti-colonial armies that fought for independence or relive the glories of precolonial forces. Indonesia, for example, glorifies not only its revolutionary forces that fought against the Dutch, but also the armies from its precolonial Majapahit kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The colonial armies established by the Dutch with local recruits are largely ignored. However, the memory of some colonial armies, far from being cast aside as relics of the colonial period, is invested with nationalism so that they are used by postcolonial governments to encourage their youth to follow in the footsteps of 'warriors' who exhibited discipline and martial prowess. The Malay Regiment is one such colonial army. It has been actively employed as a part of nation-building in the postcolonial nation-states of Malaysia and Singapore. This chapter investigates shifts in the memories that led to the Malay Regiment attaining a higher prominence in nation-building in Malaysia and Singapore than these countries' anti-colonial armies.

#### **The Malay Regiment as representing Malay martial tradition**

There is a nationalist mythology that surrounds the creation of the Malay Regiment in 1933. According to this mythology, the raising of this colonial army was not the result of the initiative taken by colonial authorities. The impetus behind the creation of the Malay Regiment came from the Malay traditional rulers.<sup>2</sup> The colonial authorities are cast as merely just implementing the 'dream' of the Malay rulers.<sup>3</sup> The 'fathers' of the Malay Regiment are recorded as: Alang Iskander Shah, who was the Sultan of Perak; Tuanku Muhammad ibni Shah Yamtuan Antah, who was the Yang di-Pertuan of Negri Sembilan; Raja Sir Chulan, the Raja di Hilir Perak; and Abdullah bin Dahan, the Undang Lauk Rembau. The 'official' regimental history in 1947, written by M.C. Sheppard



*Map 12.1* The first 25 Malay Regiment recruits, grouped by state origins, 1 March 1933 (using 1930s spelling: Johore is now spelt Johor, Malacca is Melaka, Negri is Negeri, and Trengganu is Terengganu).

*Source:* Kevin Blackburn.

(the future Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard, an Anglo-Irishman who had embraced Malay culture, converted to Islam and later popularised in the English language Malay history and culture in dedication to his adopted country), described 'their dream' coming to fruition on 1 March 1933 when the British set up an experimental company of 25 men at Port Dickson (today a popular beach resort in Negeri Sembilan state on the peninsula's west coast).<sup>4</sup> The title 'Malay Regiment' officially began to be used on 1 January 1935. Later, the first Malay officers were commissioned on 4 November 1936.

The Malay rulers did indeed strongly advise the British Governor of the Straits Settlements (who was also the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States) in the Federal Council Meetings of the Federated Malay States from 1913 to 1920 to establish a Malay Regiment. However, this is only part of the story. What Malay accounts of the origins of the Malay Regiment neglect to mention is that there were also British colonial officials and military officers, such as General Ian Hamilton and Walter Frederick Nutt, a Federated Malay States Legislative Council member, who too were recommending establishing a Malay Regiment.

Still, British colonial and military opinion, as Nadzan Haron has shown, was largely sceptical that the Malays were a 'martial race'. In the grip of nineteenth-century racial ideology, the British colonial authorities believed that there were 'martial races', such as the Sikhs, Gurkhas, Marathas and Pathans on the Indian subcontinent. Nadzan Haron has demonstrated that the British believed that the Malays had not put up the fierce resistance to colonialism that these Indian martial races had done. They were also, according to the colonial authorities, too 'easy going' to be martial. However, British reluctance to raise a Malay force gave way to concerns in the early 1930s that more troops might be needed to secure Malaya from an increasing Japanese threat to the Singapore naval base after 1932.<sup>5</sup>

As British fears of Japan increased, so too did the size of the Malay Regiment. The Malay Regiment obtained battalion strength by October 1938, with four rifle companies and a support company equipped with Vickers machine guns. On 1 December 1941, the Malay Regiment's 2nd Battalion was formed, so that at the outbreak of the war in the Pacific the regiment's strength was about 1400. The Malay Regiment was the only force of local regulars in the defence of Malaya. The others were composed of volunteer forces. For full-time army life in the Malay Regiment, there was never any shortage of recruits, as employment in the Malay Regiment offered a good standard of living and prestige to many Malays living in poor rural areas. Used to a hard life, and being conservative people who were firmly loyal to their local communities and their Sultans, rural Malays were not put off by the demands of discipline and loyalty of regimental life.

British colonial prejudice that the Malays were not considered a 'martial race' remained strong even after the Malay Regiment was formed and its men had performed well in the battle for Singapore in 1942. Lieutenant Colonel J.R.G. Andre, the Commanding Officer of the Malay Regiment (who was one of the pioneer English officers of the Malay Regiment in the early 1930s), gave a shockingly frank account of his prejudices against the very men he was commanding in a broadcast across the colony on Radio Malaya in 1947. Andre said that 'the Malay had very little military historical background behind him' because 'the Malay had for centuries been content to take life as it came; to grow his rice and to catch his fish, although some of the more adventurous had at times engaged in a little piracy in the narrow waters around the Malay peninsula'.

Andre believed that 'the only fighting which had taken place had been small squabbles and were entirely local'. Continuing his astonishingly condescending assessment of his own men, he asked himself: 'What is my opinion of the Malay soldier? I think Ian Morrison [Malayan correspondent for the London *Times*] sums it up best—"Not brave but capable of bravery". Well aren't we all?'<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, this patronising attitude of the British officers stoked the fires of Malay nationalism. Malay accounts of the Malay Regiment have firmly asserted that there existed a 'Malay martial' tradition. Dol Ramli, a Malay historian of the Malay Regiment and populariser of its achievements in the 1950s and 1960s, insisted that 'in pre-European days, the Malay could hold his own against anyone, man to man', but 'against the better-equipped, better-armed European soldier, however, from the Portuguese down to the Dutch and the English, the Malay, like other Asians of the day, found himself at a disadvantage'. Ramli addressed colonial criticism of the Malays as not being a 'martial race' by describing a martial tradition that had its roots in what he called a 'feudal arrangement' that had persisted until the twentieth century. He conceded that since the days of the Melaka Sultanate 'no native ruler or chief in Malaya appeared to have maintained a force of trained Malay regulars' (except the Sultan of Johor who raised his own small regular army, *Timbalan Setia Negeri* [the country's loyal deputies], in 1885, based on a system of European organisation). Traditionally, however, when war occurred, 'the Sultan gave orders through the Bendahara (Chief Minister) to the various Malay rajah and chiefs to rally and lead their men—feudal retainers—who assembled their own arms and equipment'. Ramli continued that 'what training there was in the military arts was purely an individual concern'. Warriors would be privately trained in *silat*, or martial arts, by private teachers or masters.<sup>7</sup>

The ethos of this Malay martial tradition was drawn from Malay folklore, which extolled the virtues of a certain type of Malay hero: Hang Tuah. The archetypal Malay military hero was represented by Hang Tuah in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (The Story of Hang Tuah). He was a warrior of the powerful fifteenth-century Malay Melaka Sultanate (spelt Malacca in the British colonial period), just before it fell to the Portuguese in 1511. In his study of how the story of Hang Tuah was created and its impact on Malay culture, T. Iskander has noted that the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was written after the fall of the Melaka Sultanate 'to boost the morale of the Malays to regain their greatness such as that during the Melaka period'.<sup>8</sup> Iskander's analysis of the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* suggests that his military exploits as Laksamana (which translates literally as Admiral), or leader of the Sultan of Melaka's armed forces, were a compilation of stories that happened to many other Malay warriors, which were attributed to Hang Tuah for greater impact in storytelling.

Hang Tuah as a military hero embodies the principles of loyalty, discipline and honour. This is exemplified by Hang Tuah's fight to the death with his closest friend, Hang Jebat. The latter had rebelled against the Sultan of Melaka when the Sultan sentenced, without a trial or investigation, Hang Tuah to be executed for a crime that he was set up for. Hang Tuah was so committed to his sovereign that he was prepared to fight to the death Hang Jebat, although Hang Jebat had only rebelled because of the Sultan's injustice to Hang Tuah. For Hang Jebat, the Sultan had demonstrated that he was not worthy of being obeyed. For Hang Tuah, he held fast to the discipline, honour and loyalty implicit in his service that he owed to his sovereign and country.

According to the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the Bendahara, or Chief Minister, had not executed Hang Tuah as instructed by the Sultan, but had hidden him; and when the Sultan learned of this, he pardoned Hang Tuah because he was the only warrior capable of defeating Hang Jebat. In their climatic struggle, Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat engage in a long duel, stabbing at the other with their *keris*, sacred daggers the size of long knives that Malay warriors traditionally used. In the story, Hang Tuah runs Hang Jebat through with his *keris*, leaving him to die a slow and agonising death.

There has been much debate among Malays about who was right in Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat's bloody duel. Simply, it falls along the lines of: is duty more important than what the individual's own conscience dictates is right?<sup>9</sup> Aside from the memorable fight with Hang Jebat, *The Story of Hang Tuah* contains many adventures that indicate Hang Tuah's bravery and moral uprightness as a military hero. Hang Tuah's complete adventures leave no doubt that he is the archetypal Malay military hero.

The story of Hang Tuah has had a persistent impact on Malay thinking about martial heroism. The *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was handed down from generation to generation through oral storytellers in Malay rural areas.<sup>10</sup> The first warship of the Republic of Indonesia was named after him and the Malaysian navy has also had a warship named in his honour. Hang Tuah has been revered as a military hero in Malaysia. On 1 October, Children's Day in Malaysian schools, the Hang Tuah medal has been given to students who have performed acts of bravery for the state and people.<sup>11</sup> The oral tradition of telling the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* gave way to the new mediums of popular culture and mass education of the twentieth century. M.C. ff Sheppard's 1949 illustrated English language version of the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, a school text meant to inspire and instruct children, was reprinted many times in the 1950s and 1960s. Sheppard's book was turned into a colour film in 1956, *Hang Tuah*, with the leading role portrayed by P. Ramlee, the biggest star of the golden age of the Malay language film industry in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>12</sup> In 1961, another film appeared, *Hang Jebat*, once again celebrating the martial heroism of a Malay warrior obliged to be loyal, this time telling the story of the rebellion and duel from Hang Jebat's perspective.<sup>13</sup>

The Malay Regiment incorporated Malay martial traditions as well as British regimental practice. Its regimental motto itself came straight from the usual description of Hang Tuah, *Taat dan Setia*—'loyal and true'. This was written along with the Malay name of the regiment, *Askar Melayu* (Malay Regiment), in the old religious script of the Malay language—Jawi—on the badge that every soldier in the regiment wore. On the badge were two Malay *keris* and two Malayan tigers, who supported 'an oriental' crown that could symbolise the Sultans or the British crown.<sup>14</sup>

The colours of the regiment were green, red and yellow. Green was the Malay religious colour for Islam. The Islamic *esprit de corps* of the Malay Regiment was also reinforced by a special regimental mosque for its men, and an important part of the routine of the regiment was strict observance of prayers. Red was the colour traditionally used to denote bravery and courage. It was the colour used to symbolise the heroism and loyalty of Hang Tuah.<sup>15</sup> This colour could also symbolise the British connection with the regiment. The colour yellow represented the Malay Sultans.

The Malay soldiers swore an allegiance not to the British monarch but only to the colonial government of the Malay States, partly because it was recognised, in the words of one colonial official, that the Malay soldiers would always 'regard their first loyalty to

their sultans' (who strictly speaking remained sovereign monarchs, under British protection).<sup>16</sup> Malays still tended to look to the Sultans and their states for their identity, called *kerajaan*, rather than seeing themselves first as members of the Malay race, *bangsa Melayu*.<sup>17</sup> The *kerajaan* Malay identity was somewhat reflected in occasional proposals to have future battalions of the Malay Regiment named after the different Malay States, with members of those states serving in these battalions. But these ideas failed in the 1930s and 1940s because of the small size of the regiment compared to the number of Malay States.<sup>18</sup> This was reinforced by the prescription that the Malay Regiment was intended only for the defence of the Malay States, and was not to be sent to other parts of the British Empire.

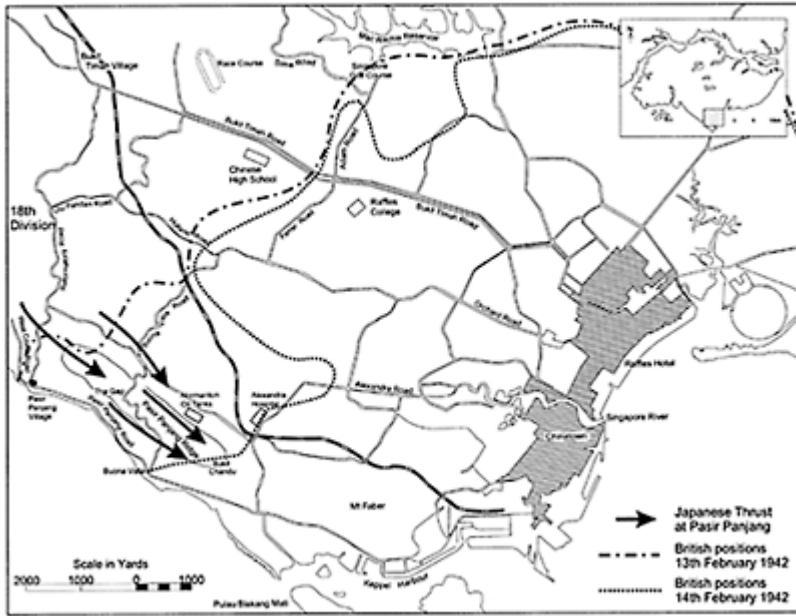
### **Fashioning a new Malay martial mythology after the Second World War**

The Malayan Campaign (1941–2) and the dramatic fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 provided the scene of the Malay Regiment's first major battle. In the postwar years the Regiment commemorated this event annually, as the first time at which its men demonstrated the martial qualities of the Malay race. The 1947 'official' regimental history describes the Malayan Campaign as 'the first blood' of the Malay Regiment.<sup>19</sup> On the Malayan peninsula, individual companies of the two battalions of the Malay Regiment together with other British forces had engaged the Japanese in a number of encounters during December 1941 and January 1942. However, it was not until the Battle for Singapore Island in February 1942 that the two battalions of the Malay Regiment were united together. They bore the full brunt of the Japanese 18th Division's thrust towards the Singapore town area through British lines in the Pasir Panjang sector on 13–14 February 1942. Despite overwhelming odds, the members of the Malay Regiment held their positions until they were killed or completely overrun.<sup>20</sup>

In the postwar years, as Malaya moved towards independence, the experience of the Malay Regiment in the Malayan Campaign would continue to assume greater significance to the Malayan and then Malaysian nation-state in a way that was similar to the commemoration of the first time Australians fought together at Gallipoli as soldiers of one Australian nation instead of representing different states. The men of the Malay Regiment were seen as displaying in battle distinctive Malay martial qualities that were intended to be emulated by the boys in the newly emerging nation-state.<sup>21</sup> They were not fighting just for their particular Malay State, as Malay warriors had done in the past, but were fighting for all of Malaya and the whole of the Malay race. The Malay Regiment's fight against the Japanese at the Battle of Pasir Panjang on Singapore Island on 13–14 February 1942 gave the Malay Regiment one of its key commemorative dates to celebrate the Malay martial tradition of its soldiers in a modern context rather than in the context of a distant and ancient folklore, as in the case of Hang Tuah. The date 14 February was designated as 'Malay Regiment Heroic Day'.<sup>22</sup>

On this anniversary, the Malay Regiment's commanders would often quote the words of the British General Officer Commanding in the Malayan Campaign, Lieutenant-General Arthur E. Percival, who in 1949 described the wartime bravery of the Malay Regiment:





*Map 12.2 Malay Regiment and the Battle for Pasir Panjang, Singapore, 13–14 February 1942.*

*Source:* Kevin Blackburn.

The attack was made by the Japanese 18th Division and was preceded by a two hour artillery, air and mortar bombardment. The attack fell chiefly on the Malay Regiment which fought magnificently. On this (13 February) and the following day the Regiment fully justified the confidence which had been placed in it and showed what *esprit de corps* and discipline can achieve.

Garrisons of posts held their ground and many of them were wiped out almost to a man. It was only when it was weakened by heavy losses that the regiment was forced to give ground. Those who have described the resistance on Singapore Island as half-hearted do scant justice to resistance such as this.<sup>23</sup>

In his foreword to the Malay Regiment's official history written in July 1946, Percival recounted that 'by their stubborn defence of the Pasir Panjang Ridge at the height of the Battle of Singapore, they set an example of steadfastness and endurance under the most difficult conditions which will become a great tradition in the Regiment and an inspiration for future generations'.<sup>24</sup> This eulogy given by Percival in the 1947 'official'

regimental history would also be regularly quoted when the heroics of the Malay Regiment were extolled as illustrating values of unity, loyalty and discipline that the Malay community should live by.<sup>25</sup>

The Malay Regiment went on to play a significant part in nation-building during decolonisation, largely because its military role was enhanced in the struggle against communist guerrillas in the jungle: the Malayan Emergency (1948–60). With the outbreak of a communist insurrection in Malaya in 1948, former members of the communist-led, largely Chinese, anti-Japanese, as well as strongly anti-colonial, guerrilla force, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), returned to the jungles and commenced an armed insurrection led by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) against the colonial government to fight for an independent communist republic. Even after independence, they continued to fight the postcolonial governments of Malaysia and Singapore.

Thus 1948 meant the end of the public commemoration of the MPAJA that the colonial government had allowed in Malaya and Singapore. In its stead, there was an increasingly strong focus on the soldiers of the Malay Regiment as the heroes to be remembered from the Second World War.<sup>26</sup> This focus publicly highlighted and celebrated not only the Malay Regiment's success during the Malayan Campaign (1941–2), but also its achievements in fighting the communist guerrillas on the anniversaries of the foundation of the regiment (1 March) and of its involvement in the Battle of Pasir Panjang (14 February).<sup>27</sup>

As the Malayan Emergency dragged on, the Malay Regiment increased in size. In the 1950s it became the nucleus of an emerging national army of a proposed 'united Malayan nation' that Lieutenant-General Sir Gerald Templer, the British High Commissioner in Malaya (1952–4), announced in 1952. The Malay Regiment had been revived with several hundred enthusiastic veterans rejoining with little more than the old 'uniforms they stood in' soon after the arrival of the British in Malaya.<sup>28</sup> By 1947 it had reached its prewar strength of two battalions. However, it was the Malayan Emergency that led to its rapid increase. On 1 July 1948, its 3rd Battalion was formed, and its 4th Battalion soon followed on 22 November 1949. Then, on 30 April 1951, the Malay Regiment's 5th Battalion was created, followed by its 6th Battalion on 1 May 1952, and then the 7th Battalion on 1 October 1953.

The Malay Regiment emerged as the dominant part of the growing army of the coming Malayan nation, especially after the multiracial Federation Regiment, set up by Lieutenant-General Sir Gerald Templer in 1952, struggled to gain recruits. The Federation Regiment was meant to complement the Malay Regiment, not rival it in size. The Malay Sultans wanted the armed forces of the new nation to be in Malay hands. The Chinese in Malaya were anyway reluctant to join the army because of a distrust of the predominantly Malay forces and a fear of being singled out by the many Chinese communist sympathisers as lackeys of the British colonial authorities, and then harassed.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1950s, the British were already using the Malay Regiment not just for military purposes against the communists, but as a way of inculcating an attachment to the notion of a 'Malayan nation' and devotion to the service of defending the country. As early as 1949, colonial officials noted that 'the High Commissioner [Sir Henry Gurney, 1948–51] attaches great importance to the training of young Malays in the Regiment as a form of

“national service” and as the surest way by which they can be inspired by the ideas of service to the community and the desire to undertake the defence of their own country’.<sup>30</sup> The colonial authorities trumpeted the Malay Regiment as representing the emerging ‘Malayan nation’. Their propaganda stressed that ‘throughout the Emergency the regiment has fought gallantly and while killing terrorists it has also killed one of the Communists’ big lies—that the Communists are fighting for the people of Malaya. The men of the regiment are the people of Malaya.’<sup>31</sup>

### Early postcolonial representation of the Malay Regiment

With the arrival of independence in 1957 (called *Merdeka* in Malay), the commemoration of the Malay Regiment as embodying Malay nationalism was expressed in a national film project: *Sergeant Hassan*. The making of the film started in December 1957 so that it could be released for the celebration of the first anniversary of independence on 31 August 1958. This Malay language film featured the biggest box office star in the Malay film industry, P.Ramlee. The screenplay was written by P.Ramlee, adapted from a story by Ralph Modder, an Englishman.<sup>32</sup>

*Sergeant Hassan* was made with the full cooperation of the Malay Regiment, and its movie posters carried the Malay Regiment’s endorsement.<sup>33</sup> Shaw Brothers’ Malay Film Productions obtained the permission of the Malay Regiment to make the film. Much of the filming of *Sergeant Hassan* was done at the Regiment’s Port Dickson camp. Hundreds of Malay Regiment soldiers appeared in the film as extras in the battle scenes.<sup>34</sup> Its men even appeared in the credits of the movie, including British officers of the regiment; Captains John Gray and David Downe were described as ‘co-stars’. Malay members of the regiment appearing in the film’s credits included Corporal Rashid and Sergeant Pon.<sup>35</sup>

The premiere of *Sergeant Hassan*, on 26 August 1958 in Kuala Lumpur before the film opened across Malaya and Singapore on 31 August (*Merdeka* Day), indicated how intertwined the Malay Regiment had become with nation-building in the new Malaya. It was attended by: the King and Queen of Malaya; the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Dato Abdul Razak bin Hussein; the Chief of Staff of the Army, Major-General F.H.Brooke; and Colonel Raja Lope, Assistant Chief of Staff, and one of the original Malay Regiment members of the 1933 experimental company. The 1500 tickets for the premiere had been on sale not only at the movie theatre, the Capitol, but at the headquarters of the armed forces. The Central Band of the Malay Regiment also played a selection of music before the movie.

A 13-minute documentary, called *The First Year*, preceded *Sergeant Hassan* in all the cinemas across Malaya and Singapore. This was made by the government’s film propaganda body, the Malayan Film Unit. *The First Year* began with ‘a rededication of the spirit of *Merdeka* as expressed in the handing over ceremony’ on 31 August 1957, then showed ‘Malaya’s steady progress’.<sup>36</sup>

At the premiere, Dato Abdul Razak bin Hussein, as Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, gave the main address. Razak remarked that ‘*Sergeant*



*Figure 12.1* Poster for 1958 production of *Sergeant Hassan*.

*Source:* Shaw Brothers.

*Hassan* is not just a film depicting the kind of events that might have taken place in the Second World War but symbolised the fighting spirit and gallantry of the men of the Royal Malay Regiment who fought and died for Malaya.' He added that 'it was now 13 years since the Second World War ended but for ten years the regiment had had no respite, for they had been continuously on active service engaged in the task of suppressing Communist terrorism'.<sup>37</sup> Razak affirmed that 'this film not only reminds us of our military history, but also brings to light the creditable conduct of the Malay Regiment now performing its duty of defending the country'.<sup>38</sup>

In *Sergeant Hassan*, P. Ramlee plays the starring role of Hassan, one of two stepbrothers who join the Malay Regiment. The movie begins on a June day in 1930 with a Malay boy standing next to the grave of his father, who was a rice *padi* planter who worked hard for a wealthy landowner, Pak Lebai (Pak meaning father, and Lebai is a religious leader). The rich landowner, who is portrayed as a kind man, adopts the boy called Hassan, whose mother died years ago. However, this harmonious image of traditional Malay village (*kampung*) life and the practice of *gotong royong* (members of a community helping each other) is disrupted by Pak Lebai's son Aziz. A vain, spoilt and jealous child, Aziz constantly taunts and belittles the gentlemanly and gracious Hassan because he is a rival for his father's affections. The schoolteacher's daughter, Salmah, is the only villager who takes Hassan's side.

The Malay Regiment is seen as an institution in which Hassan's attributes as a model Malay hero are acknowledged more than in *kampung* life. In the Regiment, and away from the village intrigues of Aziz, Hassan's virtues become evident. Hassan demonstrates that he is an excellent marksman with the rifle, used to a disciplined and a rugged life, as well as loyal and true to his regiment. Hassan is promoted to sergeant, while Aziz, who had joined just because of the romance of the uniform, remains a private. Hassan, in contrast, had joined after Aziz and his fellow villagers had taunted him with accusations that he was a coward because his father did not want him to go, but to stay and help him. The reverse proves true. Hassan's reluctance to leave his father is a sign of the loyalty that will make him a good soldier.

After the Japanese attack on Malaya in December 1941, the Malay Regiment goes into battle against the Japanese. Hassan saves Aziz's life from a Japanese sniper, but Aziz is not grateful. Their platoon is captured, and ends up in a prisoner of war camp, from which Hassan makes a bold escape. His graciousness and commitment to the idea of a united group are demonstrated in his gentlemanly attitude towards Aziz. Just before escaping, Hassan tells his commanding officer, 'please take care of Aziz for me'. In the jungles, Hassan makes contact with British officers leading anti-Japanese Malay guerrillas, who appear to be former members of the Malay Regiment. He takes part in attacks on Japanese military installations. Hassan persuades the British commander to use the guerrillas to try to rescue his friends in the prisoner of war camp, only to discover they have been moved to another camp. He convinces the officer to rescue Salmah's father, who is being sent to Malacca to be executed because the village traitor, Buang, has turned him over to the Japanese for listening to a secret radio set. Later they also rescue Hassan's own adoptive father Pak Lebai, Salmah and Hassan's fellow villagers who have been imprisoned by the Japanese due to Buang's treachery.

The character of Buang is the real villain of the story. In Malay, 'buang' means 'to discard' or 'to throw away'. Therefore, for the purpose of naming a villain who betrays

his fellow villagers in a fictional Malay story, the name Buang is apt. Buang represents an individual who has sold out the Malay community to the Japanese for his own selfish gain. His betrayal of the Malay community to the interests of the Japanese is much more serious than Aziz's petty intrigues against Hassan, which Buang had also participated in when he was a boy. Buang ingratiates himself with the Japanese and asks for a Japanese uniform and special armband to wear as an informant. He uses his close connections with the Japanese to intimidate his fellow villagers and to demand special treatment and sexual favours. After the Japanese surrender, Buang is cornered by his fellow villagers, and fights it out one-on-one with Hassan, who has returned to the village. In the resulting fist-fight, Buang pulls a concealed knife on Hassan. However, Hassan still defeats him when with the two wrestling on the ground Buang's body falls on his own knife. After the defeat of Buang, Hassan makes the only political speech of the movie. This address, no doubt written by P.Ramlee himself, urges Malays to be loyal to their race and to stay united rather than be guided by narrow self-interest into betraying their fellow Malays:

Let us hope that there will not be another Buang in our motherland. Because those like him will only serve to destroy our generation. Yes, it is true that our race is still young and weak. I do not care about all that. My only wish is that our race remains united.<sup>39</sup>

The emphasis on the spirit of Malay unity also pervades the reconciliation between Hassan and his stepbrother, Aziz. Chastened by his experiences as a prisoner of war on the 'Death Railway' in Thailand, Aziz returns to ask Hassan's forgiveness. Aziz tells Hassan that he too was an adopted son, and he wanted to inherit all Pak Lebai's wealth, and not share it with Hassan. Thus, says Aziz, he tried to turn the old man and the villagers against Hassan, hoping that Pak Lebai would disown him. Hassan forgives Aziz and the village applauds as the movie ends. The stress on the unity of the Malay race, or *bangsa Melayu*, is significant. The period from the late 1940s into the 1950s is one in which Malays, guided by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), started to look beyond their parochial loyalties to their sultans and states, and feel a much stronger loyalty to their race in the new Malayan nation-state.<sup>40</sup>

P.Ramlee, the star and scriptwriter of *Sergeant Hassan*, was himself a strong public supporter of UMNO and the organisation's emphasis on unity of the *bangsa Melayu*.<sup>41</sup> The Malay Regiment, as demonstrated in *Sergeant Hassan*, was itself a metaphor for the concept of *bangsa Melayu*. Its men came from different Malay States. Throughout the movie it is clear that Hassan and the members of the Malay Regiment are defending their own country, not fighting for the British Empire. The British officer leading the Malay guerrillas says to Hassan after the surrender, 'I will make sure your services to your country do not go unrecognised.' Hassan merely has to suggest to the British officer commanding the Malay anti-Japanese guerrillas a mission that will help his fellow villagers, and the British officer instantly agrees. The whole unit then goes and helps the Malay villagers in trouble. This is important because British officers were at the time of the film still in command of the Malay Regiment and the wider armed forces of Malaya.

The Malaysian Ministry of Defence published a commemorative book on the Malay Regiment, *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun*, to go with the fiftieth anniversary. The first chapter was entitled 'Tidak Melayu hilang di dunia' (the Malays will never disappear off the face

of the earth). These are the words that Hang Tuah is supposed to have uttered in his loyal service to the Malay Melaka Sultanate.<sup>42</sup> The phrase has become a political slogan urging Malays as a race to remain committed to a common effort so that they can survive challenges to their identity.<sup>43</sup> Since its creation in the 1940s, the UMNO party flag itself had used red as the colour to represent 'the purity of Hang Tuah's loyalty' and his words, which had come to symbolise the need for Malay unity.<sup>44</sup>

The first chapter of the 1983 history of the Malay Regiment also chronicled how the Malays as a race had flourished under the Melaka Sultanate until its political unity was undermined in 1511 by the Portuguese capture of Melaka. The chapter recalled how the Malay race had again united under UMNO during 1946 in response to the Malayan Union plan by the British to swamp the Malays by giving many newly arrived Chinese and Indian immigrants greater say in their country than the Malays. *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun* affirmed that the Malay Regiment, as the core of the Malaysian Armed Forces, was an instrument for unity of the Malay race that Hang Tuah had exhorted in his saying 'Tidak [or Takkan] Melayu hilang di dunia'. It represented the Malay race being united and ready to prevent the colonial powers, as well as the immigrant Chinese and Indian communities brought in by the British colonial authorities, from taking over its country and deciding the fate of the Malays.<sup>45</sup>

The 1958 celebrations of the Malay Regiment as a cornerstone in Malayan nation-building also laid the foundation of Malaya's, and later Malaysia's, *Hari Pahlawan*, 'Warriors or Heroes Day', which became intertwined with notions of Malay nationalism, Malay martial tradition and loyalty to the country. When the Malay Regiment was made the 'Royal Malay Regiment' by the King of Malaya on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee on 1 March 1958, it was suggested that there should be a 'Warriors Day' to celebrate the Malay martial tradition.<sup>46</sup> The first anniversary of independence in August 1958 was seen as the best occasion when the army could stage for *Hari Pahlawan* a military tattoo to start the celebrations of the achievements of the nation. One of the highlights of this military tattoo was 200 soldiers of the Malay Regiment in their dress uniforms arranged at the Merdeka Stadium in Kuala Lumpur to form the word *Merdeka* before 25,000 people, including the King of Malaya and the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, as well as Lim Yew Hock, the Chief Minister of Singapore.<sup>47</sup> '*Hari Pahlawan* is to commemorate the dead in the battle against Communist terrorists and also the Malays who have given their lives for the country in fighting for independence since 1511', said Inche Mohamed Yazid, general secretary of the Ex-Security Forces Association.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, and well into the 1980s, the achievements of the Malay Regiment continued to be celebrated on several days of commemoration. There was first the 'Malay Regiment Heroic Day', commemorating the Battle of Pasir Panjang on 14 February 1942. The second was the 'birthday' of the regiment, marking its founding on 1 March 1933. The third was *Hari Pahlawan*, at varying dates in August, which was intended to be Malaysia's own day to remember its soldiers who died fighting for the country. M.C. Sheppard was one of the key figures in popularising the achievements of the regiment in the press. On 13 February 1967, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the two-day Battle of Pasir Panjang, Sheppard wrote long feature articles for both the English and the Malay newspapers. The language he used was stirring, and was designed to instil pride in the heroic achievements of the Malay Regiment. In both the Malay and English articles, he concluded with the statement that 'the Battle of Pasir Panjang Ridge, which

culminated in the Battle of Opium Hill (Bukit Chandu), on Feb. 13, and 14, 1942 deserves to be held in honoured memory for all time, in the archives of the Malay Regiment and in the history of our nation'.<sup>49</sup>

In 1983, the date of the foundation of the Malay Regiment, 1 March, was turned into a national celebration of the fiftieth, or golden, anniversary of the Malaysian Armed Forces. The national celebration of what was designated as Army Day was carried out across Malaysia with military parades in many towns. In Kuala Lumpur, the military procession was reviewed by the King of Malaysia, the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, and the Chief of the Defence Forces, General Tan Sri Dato Ghazali Mohd Seth. At this ceremony, the Chief of the Army, General Tan Sri Zain Hashim, made the extravagant claim that the creation of the Malay Regiment by the British 'unofficially "gave birth" to independence as the move forced the colonial government at that time to withdraw the India Company army from the country'. Zain's claim underpinned how closely connected the Malay Regiment had been to Malay nationalism. He had also announced that 'the theme of the Army's anniversary celebrations would be *Sacrifice for the Nation*'.<sup>50</sup>

The Malay Regiment, by now called the Royal Malay Regiment Corps, and still the largest part of the Malaysian Army, on 'Malay Regiment Heroic Day' had a trooping of the colours of all its now 16 battalions at its headquarters, still at Port Dickson. This ceremony was attended by four of the original 25-man experimental company of 1933, namely: Ahmad bin Dono, aged 70; Ahmad bin Abdullah, 75; Abdul Manap bin Abdullah, 73; and Haji Ismail bin Ahmad, 80.<sup>51</sup> The veterans of the first company of the Malay Regiment attended the 1983 army parades as national heroes. Of the 25 original members of the Malay Regiment, 19 were still alive, including the soldier who was given the serial number 001. He was Abdul Samad bin Abdullah, 72, working as a bus driver, his job for the 30 years prior to 1983.<sup>52</sup> Abdul Samad's occupation suggests that the mythology surrounding the Malay Regiment was perhaps stronger than the realities of a lack of pensions and financial assistance from the government to the individual men who had served in the regiment.

### **The fashioning of a new Malay military hero in Malaysia: Lieutenant Adnan**

In the 1990s, the heroism of the Malay Regiment was focused on one individual in an effort to produce a new national military hero for the youth of Malaysia to emulate. Just as Hang Tuah's acts of bravery were a medley of the achievements of various warriors in Malay folklore, so too was there an emphasis in the 1990s on reducing the bravery of the members of the Malay Regiment during its first battle at Pasir Panjang in Singapore on 13–14 February 1942 to one man: Lieutenant Adnan bin Saidi.

Lieutenant Adnan had been commander of Platoon No. 7 of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, Malay Regiment. This company, despite heavy casualties, had held out as long as possible against the Japanese at Opium Hill (Bukit Chandu) on the Pasir Panjang Ridge. Lieutenant Adnan was shot, bayoneted and left hanging upside down from a tree by the Japanese.



However, Adnan was one of several Malay members of Company 'C' who demonstrated bravery in action at Pasir Panjang. Of these, it was Private Yacob bin Bidin who was awarded the Military Medal for bravery at Pasir Panjang Ridge. Lieutenant Adnan and the others were only mentioned in the despatches. Regimental Sergeant Major Ismail bin Babu won a MBE (Military Division) and Lieutenant Ibrahim bin Alla Ditta a Military Cross for their bravery in the fight against the Japanese.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps Lieutenant Adnan was singled out because he had died on the battlefield, a hero and a martyr, at the dramatic climax of the first battle of the Malay Regiment, rather than survived to go on and do other things in civilian life. His story may not have been as powerful if it ended with him being a bus driver for 30 years. In the 1990 revised history curriculum for Malaysian schools, when the Malay Regiment's fight against the Japanese at Pasir Panjang was mentioned, only Lieutenant Adnan's name appeared as representing the bravery of the Malay Regiment.<sup>54</sup>

Just as in 1958, when a major feature film was used as a key catalyst for inculcating the values represented by the Malay Regiment into nation-building, so was a movie used at the beginning of the twenty-first century for a similar purpose in Malaysia. A movie depicting the life of Lieutenant Adnan from his boyhood to death on the battlefield as a hero was commissioned as a national film project. It premiered in his home state of Selangor on *Hari Pahlawan*, 12 August 2000.<sup>55</sup> Then on 30 August 2000, the eve of *Merdeka* day, Malaysia's national day, *Leftenan Adnan* was released in Malaysian movies theatres, which were festooned with national flags.

The film had been made by the Malaysian Armed Forces in conjunction with the film production companies Paradigmfilm Sdn Bhd and Grand Brilliance Sdn Bhd for the unprecedented sum of 2.5 million Malaysian ringgit. The army supplied 2000 extras from its regular soldiers and contributed uniforms, weapons and artillery. In the promotional campaign that led up to the release of the film, Lieutenant-General Aziz Hassan, speaking as a representative of the Ministry of Defence, addressed the nation-building role of the film. He mentioned that the Ministry of Defence 'got involved to help young people realise that Malaysia also had its heroes'. Lieutenant-General Aziz raised the need to have modern national heroes who would inspire the youth of Malaysia to serve the country rather than rely on heroic characters from a mythical past that appeared distant and not very relevant to modern Malaysia: 'We do not have many military heroes. We have Hang Tuah. But most of what we have on this figure is folklore and difficult to be established by historical facts. But the story of Lt Adnan is still fresh in our minds as one of the Malay heroes killed during World War II.'<sup>56</sup> Lieutenant-General Aziz added that the involvement of the Ministry of Defence in making the movie about the Malay Regiment and Lieutenant Adnan had a definite purpose. 'It is the ministry's hope that Lt Adnan's bravery will inspire the younger generation to enlist', but also 'highlight the virtues of loyalty, discipline and courage', he said.<sup>57</sup>

The Malaysian government marshalled its resources to get school students to view the film. In Negeri Sembilan, Datuk Ishak Ismail, Lenggeng State Assemblyman and UMNO state chief, when organising thousands of school children to view the movie, said that it 'was aimed at inculcating greater national pride and historical sense in their minds'. Datuk Ishak Ismail said that 'movie director Aziz M.Osman has done an excellent job in bringing to the big screen the tale, depicting the heroics of the Royal Malay Regiment in their quest to defend the country against the Japanese army during World War II'. He

hoped that 'the movie will also serve to boost the country's multi-racial sentiment, exemplified in a scene where an Indian soldier who was shot in the leg is abandoned by a British officer, only to be carried to safety by a Malay soldier'. He noted that the State Education Department brought the children to the cinemas in their school uniforms to watch the film. Datuk Ishak Ismail added that by viewing the film, 'the younger generation had much to learn about the country's national heritage'.<sup>58</sup>

However, despite the rhetoric of *Leftenan Adnan* being a national film project, the movie mostly attracted a Malay audience. It did not attract many Chinese and Indians in its audiences. One cinema-goer wrote to the *New Straits Times* in Kuala Lumpur, remarking that 'the crowd was mainly Malay with a sprinkling of Indian Muslims but I couldn't see any Chinese or Indians present. Lt Adnan mainly attracted Malays'.<sup>59</sup> The reasons for the lack of appeal to a non-Malay audience were obvious in the dialogue of the script of the movie. *Leftenan Adnan* was a celebration of the idea of the Malay martial race that had originally animated many members of the Malay Regiment. The script of the movie was laden with references to Malay nationalism and the Malay martial tradition. In Adnan's boyhood, on the threshold of being initiated into manhood, Tok Sunat, the circumcision doctor, says to the young Adnan, 'Once you've grown up, may you become a national warrior, carry on the legacy of our forefathers, continue fighting to defend our religion, race and motherland. Do not take it lightly, this duty is laid down upon you'.<sup>60</sup>

Later, when discussing why he joined the Malay Regiment, celluloid Adnan tells his brother that he is fighting not for the British Empire, but for Malay nationalism, which he dates back to the independent Malay kingdoms before the arrival of the British imperialists: 'All this while, we have allowed outsiders to be custodians to our motherland. We allowed the whites to defend it without questioning their underlying motives for doing so. This is the land our forefathers bled and died for. I should be the one to preserve it, defend it. That is why I decided to join the army'.<sup>61</sup> Tied very closely to the Malay identity expressed in Malay nationalism was an affirmation of Islam as part of that identity. In the movie, Adnan addresses his comrades, telling them to defend the Malay race and its religion:

We used to believe that the whites [the British] will protect us, our race, our legacy and our motherland. We believed that none would be able to match them. However, today, many among them have left. Who can blame them? Why did they choose to leave? Why would they want to put their lives on the line defending someone else's homes? This is the time for us to prove that we can defend the integrity of our own religion.<sup>62</sup>

Later in the film, Adnan calls on his troops to emulate the Malay warriors of the mythical past:

Our history has shown that we once invaded the archipelago. We were capable of building huge empires, building big ships, bigger than those made by the Portuguese. That's before we were occupied. People had started to see our potential, our strength. That is why they were afraid when we demanded what is rightfully ours. With great difficulty did the

Sultan of Perak, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, Raja Chulan and the Undang Lauk Rembau struggle to establish the Malay Regiment because they knew that the Malay race was capable of shaking the world. Remember, the Malay race is free and sovereign. And the Malay race was also the one which invented the idiom *biar putih tulang, jangan putih mata* [translates directly as 'better white bones than white eyes' but means 'death before dishonour'].<sup>63</sup>

Although the words put into Adnan's mouth by the Malaysian Ministry of Defence funded scriptwriters were certainly provocative, *Leftenan Adnan* did not seem to inspire the youth of Malaysia with the spirit that the army intended. Despite being heavily promoted, the movie was not a box-office success. The run of the mill modern urban Malay comedies and romance movies, such as *Senario Lagi* and *Pasrah*, churned out every year with standard formats, had box-office takings over three times that of *Leftenan Adnan*. The film certainly engendered discussion among young Malays, but this was mixed, with some describing Lieutenant Adnan as 'the hollow man', espousing empty values that had little meaning in contemporary urban life.<sup>64</sup>

### Lieutenant Adnan as Singapore's hero too

In the 1990s, Lieutenant Adnan rose to fame as not only a government endorsed idol for the youth of Malaysia to follow, but also a hero whom the young of Singapore were encouraged to accept by their government as one of their own, who died defending their country. Until the 1990s, many Singaporeans had never heard of Lieutenant Adnan, as he did not feature at all in their school history textbooks. Nor did he figure prominently in public memory, except among the Singapore Malays, who made up 15 per cent of the population (the Chinese made up 76.4 per cent, the Indians 6.4 per cent, and the rest comprised very small minority groups, such as Eurasians).<sup>65</sup>

The Singapore government decided that it needed national heroes to inspire its youth. In May 1999, during a talk to the Nanyang Technological University students, Goh Chok Tong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, said that 'a country needs national heroes' because 'heroes can serve as unifying symbols to gel the country together'. He added that 'we have singled out Major-General Lim Bo Seng and Lieutenant Adnan Saidi for their bravery during the Second World War'.<sup>66</sup>

Lim Bo Seng had in 1944 also died a martyr's death, at the hands of the Japanese military police, the *kempeitai*, after being caught at Ipoh in Malaya trying to build up the Malayan Chinese section of the British intelligence and guerrilla unit Force 136. Before the Japanese invasion of Malaya, Lim had also been one of the most prominent Singapore Chinese businessmen and community leaders involved in anti-Japanese organisations of the Chinese in Southeast Asia that had raised funds to help China to fight the Japanese and arranged boycotts of Japanese business in Malaya. He had been publicly revered in Singapore since the end of the war, featuring in the grand memorials and in school textbooks for children.

However, predominantly Chinese heroes from the communist-led MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army) proved unacceptable because they had after the war

become the core of the communist insurgency. The Singapore government had even gone as far as to ban from sale books published in 1992 by MPAJA veterans about their recollections.<sup>67</sup>

There was a dearth of acceptable local heroes: wartime fighters who were not communists. In Singapore, as in Malaysia, this effectively left only the Malay Regiment as the source for heroes, not least because it was the only regular unit that the British had recruited locally. In the defence of Singapore in 1942, it was hence the Malay Regiment, not the insufficiently trained local volunteer forces, that figured prominently in the fighting. In the mid-1990s, material about Lieutenant Adnan was incorporated into school history texts alongside existing tales of Lim Bo Seng's wartime bravery.<sup>68</sup> By 2000, Lieutenant Adnan featured in new history school textbooks as a major Singapore hero who 'defended Singapore bravely', and 'although he was caught and tortured, noble he remained till the end'. Singapore primary school children in their workbooks were asked: 'Write a poem or a few sentences below to express your respect or admiration for Adnan bin Saidi.'<sup>69</sup>

During the 1990s, Lieutenant Adnan and Lim Bo Seng as 'heroes fighting for Singapore' became intertwined with the concept of total defence. This was because Singapore is a country in which all males when they reach the age of 18 must commence over two years of national service, and then continue to come back regularly for military training. To deter any potential enemy, Singapore claims it can bring one quarter of a million well trained men under arms within 24 hours. The social studies textbook for secondary schools explicitly makes a connection between the failure of the British in defending the people of Singapore in 1942 and the need for national service and military training in contemporary Singapore. The textbook says that 'from the British defeat we learn' that 'a country must always be well-prepared for any attacks from enemies' and that 'it must not depend on others to protect its people'. The textbook goes on to draw the lesson from life during the Japanese Occupation as being that 'the people must be trained to defend their own country'. Thus, 'in 1967, the government started National Service' in order 'to enable all young men to be trained to defend Singapore in case of war'.<sup>70</sup>

This preparedness is known as total defence. The anniversary of the fall of Singapore, 15 February, has since 1998 been known as Total Defence Day. A Ministry of Defence announcement for the first Total Defence Day proclaimed that 'Psychological Defence is probably the most important element of Total Defence. It is the heart of nation building'. The Ministry of Defence elaborated on the concept of 'psychological defence':

It's about being Singaporean, thinking Singaporean and acting Singaporean. It is about remembering our roots and the sacrifices made by our forefathers and having the resolve to continue their legacy and strengthen the Singaporean identity...

In past years, heroes from the war years like Lim Bo Seng and Lieutenant Adnan have been used as examples of Psychological Defence. But everyone can contribute to building that foundation, making it solid and secure.

We can all do so through the mindset and belief in nationhood which we all share.<sup>71</sup>

To provide a new focus for remembering the heroes used in total defence propaganda and to create a related place for school history fieldtrips, the Singapore government built a war museum. Called Reflections at Bukit Chandu, it has multimedia exhibits recreating the Battle of Pasir Panjang at Bukit Chandu (Opium Hill) dedicated to Lieutenant Adnan and the Malay Regiment's stand at Pasir Panjang Ridge. In 1995, as part of the Singapore government's commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in the Pacific, the location of the battlefield had been marked with a monument at what is now called Kent Ridge Park.<sup>72</sup> On 15 February 2002, the new war museum, Reflections at Bukit Chandu, was opened by Tony Tan, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. The museum had cost 4.8 million Singapore dollars to build, and was described as the 'brainchild' of George Yeo, Minister of Trade and Industry, who was also a non-serving brigadier general in the Singapore armed forces.<sup>73</sup> A quotation from George Yeo was dutifully engraved into a plaque next to bronze statues of the members of the Malay Regiment loading a mortar:

If we do not remember our heroes, we will produce no heroes. If we do not record their sacrifices, their sacrifices would have been in vain...

The greatest strength we have as a people is our common memories of the past and our common hopes for the future... For without those memories the next generation will not have the fighting spirit to carry on.

George Yeo's quotation showed that, just as the Malaysian government had used Lieutenant Adnan and the Malay Regiment for nation-building, so too was the Singapore government. One of the multimedia exhibits told the story of the Battle of Pasir Panjang through the eyes of a fictional character, an old Malay man who as a young child lived near the area. The last words of this character's scripted lines placed the efforts of the soldiers of the Malay Regiment at the Battle of Pasir Panjang in the context of the development of Singapore:

Ahh, that was sixty years ago.

My family has since moved out of Pasir Panjang, and I now live in a comfortable HDB [government housing estate] flat. I still hear the laughter of the children coming from the playground, but I find it hard to forget how the hill which was once my playground was turned into a battlefield; and I will never forget those brave Malay soldiers who fought and died for the peace that we now enjoy; and looking at these children, I cannot hope but think that we must never let history repeat itself.

However, just as many in Malaysia did not get the 'correct' message from the movie *Leftenan Adnan*, so too in Singapore's Reflections at Bukit Chandu. A glance at the visitors' book demonstrated that there were many who had not imbibed the message that Lieutenant Adnan was fighting for Singapore, and that its youth should emulate him in their preparation for total defence. Inscribed in the visitors' book for 23 November 2002 was a comment from 'Ramli', which simply read: 'Tidak Melayu hilang di dunia'. This was an indication that, for Ramli, the war museum was an affirmation of Hang Tuah's words, which meant that the Malay race, language, culture and tradition will never be lost

from the face of the earth as long as there are Malay warriors, such as those who served in the Malay Regiment. Other comments by Malay visitors to the war museum to the Malay Regiment's stand at Pasir Panjang also reflected on the meaning that it had for them as Malays.

This is not what George Yeo, as a member of the Singapore government, had intended. He expressed his consternation in 2002 when he presented prizes at a Malay community function:

Earlier this year, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Tony Tan opened the World War II museum at Bukit Chandu in honour of Lieutenant Adnan Saidi and the Malay soldiers of C Company.

I took my wife and children there during the June holidays. I was told the museum has become a cultural shrine to many Malay Singaporeans. Lt Adnan and the men of Company C sacrificed themselves not for the Malay race, but as soldiers of the British Army fighting brutal invaders.

Like volunteers of other races who fought the Japanese, including pro-communists operating in the Malayan Jungle these Malay heroes helped to create modern Singapore.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, there were different reflections at Bukit Chandu. Although both the Malaysian and Singapore governments had tried to use Lieutenant Adnan and the mythology surrounding the Malay Regiment for their own ends in nation-building, each had found that it is more difficult to fix meaning than it is to fabricate celluloid stories and museums.

The Malay Regiment, even though it was patently a colonial army, has assumed in the postcolonial period a very different image from that of many former colonial armies in other parts of the world. It has come to be seen as representing nationalism rather than being viewed as an instrument of the colonial power. However, in postcolonial Malaysia and Singapore it represents two different variants of nationalism. In Malaysia, the Malay Regiment has been used by the government to enhance Malay nationalism by trying to revive a Malay martial tradition that was a part of the Malay Regiment from its conception. In Singapore, the same colonial army has been used by the government to represent a nationalism based on the idea of being prepared to defend Singapore, just as the Malay Regiment did in 1942.

However, as the mixed reactions to these government campaigns have shown, it is not easy to use history for the purposes of nation-building. In both Malaysia and Singapore, the high profile of the Malay Regiment as a source for war heroes can be contrasted with the fate of the core of the communist and anti-colonial Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army. After its Second World War anti-Japanese alliance with the British, MPAJA took to the jungles in 1948 to fight a communist insurgency against the returned British colonial authorities and then later against the independent governments of Malaysia and Singapore. This ensured that the heroic wartime acts of the members of this anti-Japanese army would never be officially celebrated in the postcolonial world, while those of the men of the Malay Regiment who fought against these communist guerrillas would be revered. The case of the Malay Regiment in Malaysia and Singapore offers an interesting insight into how colonial armies are sometimes viewed as representing nationalism. It

raises a new set of questions for colonial forces elsewhere. How have these forces been represented in ceremonies, museums, school textbooks, films and the other media?

### Notes

- 1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991 edn).
- 2 See the regimental history of the Malay Regiment for the Second World War, Wan Hashim Haji Wan Teh, *Perang Dunia Kedua: Peranan Askar Melayu [Second World War: The Role of the Malay Regiment]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993), pp. 74–8.
- 3 See the Malaysian Ministry of Defence's 'official' history of the Malay Regiment by Tan Sri Datuk Abdul Samad Idris, *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun [The Malay Regiment: 50 Years]* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Budiman, 1983), pp. 18–23; and Major-General Dato Nordin Yusof and Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda, *Honour and Sacrifice: The Malaysian Armed Forces* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Defence, 1994), pp. 1–2.
- 4 Mervyn Cecil Frank Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment: 1933–1947* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Public Relations, 1947), p. 5.
- 5 Nadzan Haron, 'The Malay Regiment, 1933–1955: A Political and Social Study of a Colonial Military Establishment in Malacca' (PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1987), Chapter 3; and see his 'Colonial Defence and British Approach to the Problems in Malaya, 1874–1918', *Modern Asian Studies* 24, 2 (1990), pp. 275–95.
- 6 Lt Col. J.R.G. Andre, 'The Malay Soldier in War and Peace', *Straits Times*, 30 December 1947, p. 6.
- 7 Dol Ramli, 'History of the Malay Regiment 1933–1942', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 38, 1 (1965), pp. 199–243, p. 200. For a recent history of the Johor unit, see Tunku Shahriman bin Tunku Sulaiman, 'The Johore Military Forces: the Oldest Army of Malay Regulars in the Peninsula', in *JMBRAS* 77, 2 (December 2004), pp. 95–106.
- 8 T. Iskander, 'Some Historical Sources Used by the Author of Hikayat Hang Tuah', *JMBRAS* 43, 1 (1970), pp. 34–47, at pp. 45–6.
- 9 Kassim Bin Ahmad, *Characterisation in Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1966).
- 10 See Anthony Crothers Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), pp. 38–9 and 112–13.
- 11 Ahmad Kamar, *Malay and Indonesian Leadership in Perspective* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor: Ahmad Kamar, 1984), p. 36.
- 12 See Mervyn Cecil Frank Sheppard, *The Adventures of Hang Tuah* (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1949) and *Hang Tuah* (Singapore: Shaw Brothers, Malay Film Productions, 1956).
- 13 *Hang Jebat* (Singapore: Cathay, Cathay Keris, 1961, reissued on disc in 2003).
- 14 Sheppard, *Malay Regiment*, p. 6.
- 15 Professor Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas interviewed in Mohamed Abid, *Reflections of Pre-Independence Malaya* (Subang Jaya, Selangor: Pelanduk, 2003), p. 74. See GFFG to A.E. Cooper, 29 May 1940, in Malay Regiment: Proposed Colours For, CO 717/141/51515/13 (Public Record Office, London).
- 16 Trafford Smith and J.D. Higham, 26 March 1949, Colonial Office London, in King's Commissions—Malay's 1949 CO 537/4657 and J.C. Morgan, Colonial Office, London, to Lt Col. Grist, 16 February 1949, in Re-Constitution of Malay Regiment, 1949 CO 537/4656 (Public Record Office).
- 17 See Milner, *Kerajaan*, and Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community, 1945–1950* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 18 Sir Henry Gurney to Colonial Office, 31 December 1948, in Reconstitution of the Malay Regiment 1948 CO 537/3576 (Public Record Office).

- 19 Sheppard, *Malay Regiment*, p. 12.
- 20 For a succinct overview of the battle, see Lim Choo Hoon, 'The Battle of Pasir Panjang Revisited', *Pointer* 28, 1 (2002). Online at [www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2002/Vol28\\_1/1.htm](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2002/Vol28_1/1.htm)
- 21 Conversation with Abu Talib Ahmad in September 2002 about his own boyhood in the 1950s and 1960s, and see his reflections on this topic in Abu Talib Ahmad, *Malay Muslims, Islam and the Rising Sun: 1941–45* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS), Monograph No. 34, 2003), p. 88.
- 22 *Malay Mail*, 14 February 1952, and *Singapore Standard*, 15 February 1958.
- 23 Arthur Ernest Percival, *The War in Malaya* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949), p. 291.
- 24 Sheppard, *Malay Regiment*, p. 3.
- 25 See the use of the quote in the official history of the Malaysian Armed Forces, by Major-General Dato Nordin Yusof and Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda, *Honour and Sacrifice*, p. 6; and also in Ismail Noor and Muhammed Azaham, *Takkan Melayu Hilang Di Dunia [The Malays Will Never Disappear off the Face of the Earth]* (Subang Jaya, Selangor: Pelanduk, 2000), p. 31.
- 26 See Handling of Resistance Movements in Malaya, 1946 CO 537/1570; Guerrilla Organisations: Rewards, 1948 CO 537/4245; and see Trafford Smith, 4 April 1949, Colonial Office, London, 1946, in King's Commissions—Malays CO 537/4657 (Public Record Office).
- 27 *Straits Times*, 13 February 1952, *Singapore Standard*, 14 February 1952, *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 1 March 1953, and *Malay Mail*, 1 March 1953.
- 28 Extract of a Letter to Sir Edward Gent from Mr M.C. ff Sheppard, Kings House, Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, dated 6 March 1946 in Reconstitution of Malay Regiment 1946, CO 537/1498 (Public Record Office).
- 29 See Abdul Samad Idris, *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun*, pp. 245–485; and Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941–1968* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), p. 146.
- 30 Trafford Smith, Colonial Office, 4 April 1949 in King's Commissions—Malays CO 537/4657 (Public Record Office).
- 31 *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 1 March 1953.
- 32 For information about the film *Sergeant Hassan*, see Ahmad Sarji, *P.Ramlee Erti Yang Sakti [The Magic of P.Ramlee]* (Subang Jaya, Selangor: Pelanduk, 1999), pp. 353–6; James Harding and Ahmad Sarji, *P.Ramlee: The Bright Star* (Subang Jaya, Selangor: Pelanduk, 2002), pp. 125–8, *Singapore Free Press*, 31 August 1958 and *Malay Mail*, 21 August 1958.
- 33 See *Straits Times*, 30 August 1958, and *Singapore Free Press*, 31 August 1958.
- 34 *Malay Mail*, 21 August 1958.
- 35 See *Singapore Standard*, 28 August 1958, and the credits in *Sergeant Hassan* (Singapore: Shaw Brothers, Malay Film Productions, 1958).
- 36 *Malay Mail*, 21 August 1958.
- 37 *Malay Mail*, 27 August 1958.
- 38 *Utusan Melayu*, 29 August 1958.
- 39 'Janganlah hendaknya ada lagi manusia seperti ini (Buang) di tanah air kita, kerana manusia seperti inilah yang akan merosakkan keturunan kita. Ya, memang bangsa kita masih muda dan masih lemah. Aku tak peduli ini semua. Harapanku adalah kita sesama bangsa bersatu-padulah hendaknya.' See *Sergeant Hassan* (Singapore: Shaw Brothers, Malay Film Productions, 1958).
- 40 See Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*.
- 41 *Utusan Melayu*, 19 September 1962.
- 42 Abdul Samad Idris, *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun*, pp. 1 and xvi; and Kassim Ahmad and Noriah Mohamed (eds), *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan dan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1997), p. xxviii.



- 43 See Ismail Noor and Muhammad Azaham, *Takkan Melayu Hilang Di Dunia*.
- 44 Mohamed Abid, *Reflections of Pre-Independence Malaya*, p. 74.
- 45 Abdul Samad Idris, *Askar Melayu: 50 Tahun*, pp. 1–16.
- 46 *Malay Mail*, 1 and 3 March 1958.
- 47 *Straits Times*, 29 and 30 August 1958.
- 48 *Malay Mail*, 1 March 1958, and *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 27 April 1958.
- 49 *Berita Harian*, 13 February 1967, and *Straits Times*, 13 February 1967.
- 50 *New Straits Times*, 1 and 2 March 1983.
- 51 *New Sunday Times*, 13 February 1983.
- 52 *The Star*, 2 March 1983.
- 53 See Sheppard, *Malay Regiment*, pp. 51–2.
- 54 Sabihah Osman, Muzaffar Tate and Ishak Ibrahim, *Sejarah Tingkatan 3: Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah [History for Form 3: Secondary School]* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990), p. 5.
- 55 *Berita Harian*, Malaysia, 1 August 2000.
- 56 *Straits Times*, 3 July 2000.
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *New Straits Times*, 27 September 2000.
- 59 Z.A. Penang, 'Many Confusing Scenes in the Movie "Lt Adnan"', *New Straits Times*, 29 August 2000.
- 60 'Apabila kamu besar nanti, boleh jadi pahlawan negara. Kamu sambung pesan datuk moyang kita; terus berjuang membela agama, bangsa dan tanah air kita. Jangan siasikan amanah yang diberikan kepada kamu.' See *Leftenan Adnan* (Kuala Lumpur: Golden Satellite, 2000).
- 61 'Selama ini, kita biarkan orang lain menjaga tanah air kita. Kita biarkan orang putih mempertahankannya tanpa kita sedar maksud niat di sebalik mereka itu. Ini tanah tumpah darah abang. Abang sepatutnya menjaganya, mempertahankannya. Sebab itu abang jadi askar.'
- 62 'Dulu kita ingat orang putih boleh jaga kita, bangsa kita, keturunan kita dan tanah air kita. Kita sangka tak siapa boleh lawan mereka. Tapi hari ini, ramai di antara mereka yang telah berundur. Kita tak boleh salahkan mereka. Kenapa mereka berundur? Buat apa mereka berkorban nyawa mempertahankan negara orang? Inilah masanya untuk kita buktikan kita boleh jaga agama kita sendiri.'
- 63 'Sejarah Melayu membuktikan kita pernah menakluk nusantara. Kita mampu membina empire besar; mampu membuat kapal-kapal besar, lebih besar dimiliki Portuguese. Itu sebelum kita dijajah. Orang mulai nampak kelebihan kita, kehebatan kita. Sebab itu mereka takut bila kita nak menuntut hak kita. Bertapa susahnyanya, Paduka Seri Sultan Perak, Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negeri Sembilan, Raja Chulan dan Undang Lauk Rembau memperjuangkan untuk menubuhkan askar Melayu. Kerana, mereka tahu Melayu yang merdeka, mampu menggagalkan dunia. Ingat, bangsa Melayu, bangsa bebas dan berdaulat. Dan, bangsa Melayu juga yang mencipta pepatah *biar putih tulang, jangan putih mata*.' For details on the Malay proverb see Mubin ff. Sheppard (ed.), *The MBRAS Book of Over 1,600 Malay Proverbs with Explanations in English* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, Monograph No. 22, 1992), p. 26.
- 64 For box-office figures see FINAS: Perbadanan Kemajuan Filem Nasional Malaysia, at [www.finas.gov.my/kutipantayanganfilembi.shtml](http://www.finas.gov.my/kutipantayanganfilembi.shtml); and the numerous web-based discussion groups set up by young Malaysians.
- 65 Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore, *Social and Economic History of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: Longman, 1985), p. 150.
- 66 *Straits Times*, 12 May 1999.
- 67 The banned books are Xinma Qiaoyou Hui (ed.), *Malaiya Renmin Kangri Jun [Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army]* (Hong Kong: Witness Publishing, 1992); and Xinma Qiaoyou

Hui (ed.), *Malaiya Renmin Kangri Douzheng Shiliao Xianji* [*Selected Historical Materials of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Struggle*] (Hong Kong: Witness Publishing, 1992).

68 Curriculum Planning and Development Division Ministry of Education, Singapore, *History of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: Longman, 1994), p. 145.

69 For the quotation, see Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore, *Social Studies: Discovering Our World. The Dark Years: Activity Book, 4B* (Singapore: Federal, 1999), p. 22. See also *ibid.*, p. 21; and Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore, *Understanding Our Past-Singapore from Colony to Nation* (Singapore: Federal, 1999), p. 78.

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