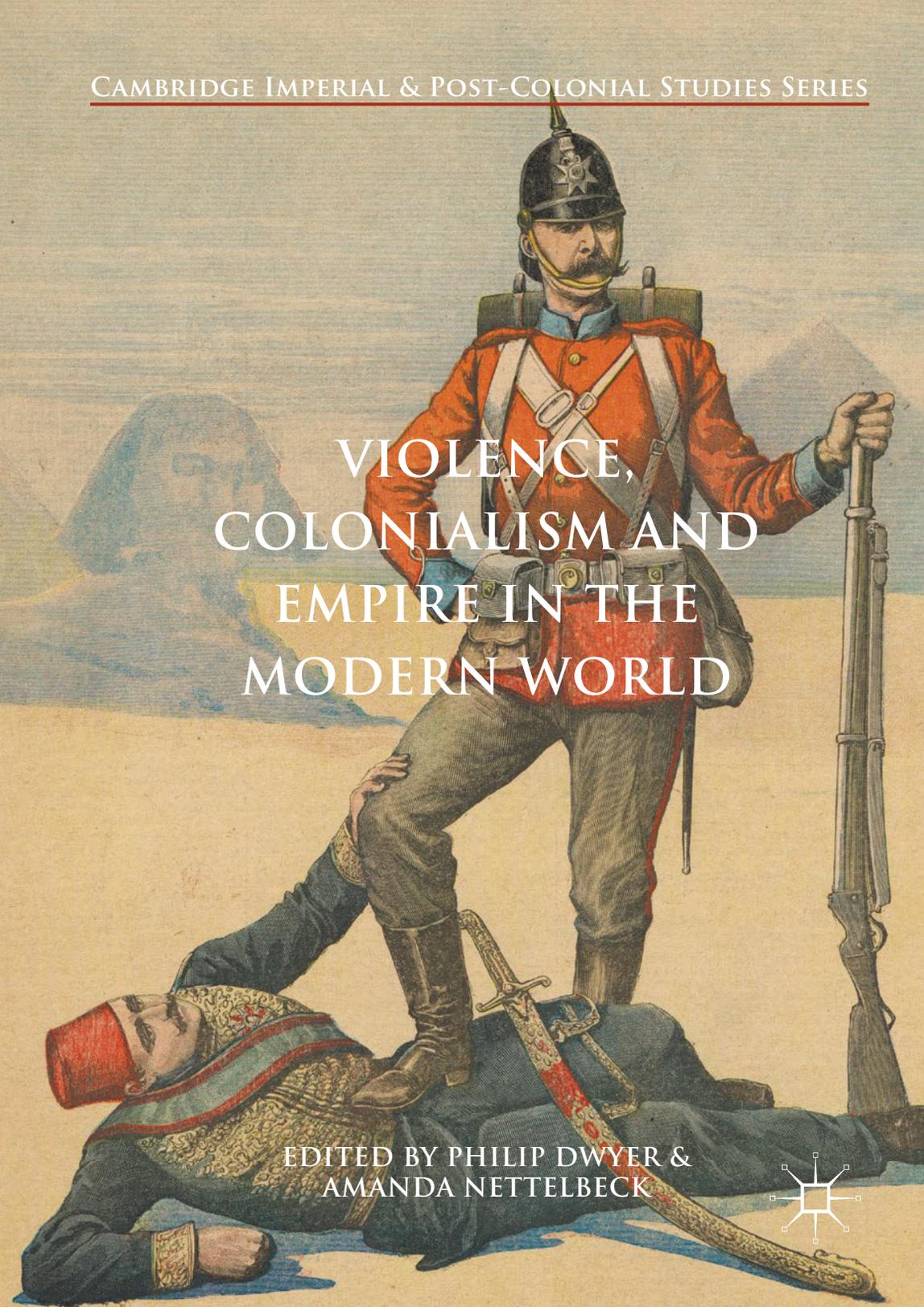


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VIOLENCE,
COLONIALISM AND
EMPIRE IN THE
MODERN WORLD

EDITED BY PHILIP DWYER &
AMANDA NETTELBECK



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Violence, Colonialism
and Empire in the
Modern World

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‘Savage Wars of Peace’: Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World

Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck

Violence has always been central to the long, complex history of empire and colonialism that stretches back over four centuries of the ‘modern era’. While the concept of empire has varied in its definitions, all empires shared a number of common features: they were multi-ethnic, asymmetrical and repressive power structures, governed by authoritarian powers that could be linked together by common (racial) ideologies.¹ The notion of empire is necessarily intertwined with that of colonialism: the first is expansionist in form; the other is a relationship in which foreign rulers—often European but also Asian—impose their authority, law and culture on peoples over whom they exert political, social and military control.² Most importantly, empires maintained a position of dominance through the constant threat or exercise of violence.³ Jock McCulloch

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has noted that our contemporary understanding of violence as an essential element of all modern empires has produced a sense that imperialism and violence are virtual synonyms, yet insufficiently understood are the complex ways in which the boundaries and definitions of that violence evolved over time and across colonial settings, in line with shifting political orthodoxies.⁴ Colonial violence was diffuse, multi-layered and enormously variable. And while violence is far from unique to colonial practices, it was always embedded in the social, legal, economic and gendered foundations on which colonial relations were built.

Exploring the shared and varied expressions of imperial and colonial violence is the object of this collection. Such a project carries with it the reminder that violence is a fundamentally ambiguous concept, whose meanings had a different cast across different practices and settings of colonialism. In this respect, violence can only be viewed as a process that is always historically contingent, not as a singular outcome or event.⁵ While it is often conventionally recognised as some form of physical harm—expressed for instance in acts of killing, rape or corporal punishment—violence has also always had an institutionalised dimension that disguises its presence in ordinary social relations.⁶ Its forms include psychological harm and trauma, as well as what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as symbolic violence.⁷ In the colonial context, the symbolic dimensions of violence encompass a range of strategies that legitimated the political marginalisation and social disempowerment of colonised peoples. These were perpetuated through imposed legal norms, religious institutions, education, surveillance and policing systems, as well as through sheer brute force.

Although the foundational role of violence in the process of empire-building is now widely accepted, we still need closer attention to the structural relationship between colonialism, empire and violence beyond spectacular moments in imperial history.⁸ This need has become all the more pressing because of recent attempts to revise histories of empire by political conservatives in Europe, as well as in former colonial nations. Niall Ferguson, for instance, has argued that the British Empire had more positive than negative outcomes as an engine of modernity and progress, while Keith Windshuttle has argued that state violence committed against Australian Indigenous people in the course of colonization constituted no more than the lawful policing of criminality.⁹ In 2005, the French ruling conservative party passed a law stating that high school teachers were to teach the history of colonisation in a positive light, especially that concerning North Africa.¹⁰ The Mekachera law, as it was

known, named after the former *baraki* and Minister delegate for Veterans Affairs, Hamlaoui Mekachera, was intended to be a means of recognising the contribution made by all those non-French who had fought on behalf of France in Indochina and North Africa, but its effect was to bring back an emphasis on the so-called advances brought to colonised peoples.¹¹ The law appears to have remained largely ignored by French high school teachers, but the emergence of modern-day proponents of empire underlines the difficulties historians face in conceptualising the violence at the heart of the colonial project.

The best-known theorists of the structural relationship between colonisation and violence in the post-Second World War era, both of them from the island of Martinique, are Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire.¹² Both argued that violence was central to the creation and maintenance of colonialism, as well as to the independence and decolonisation struggles that arose from within colonies. Over the past two decades, scholars have begun to analyse the systemic features of violence in greater depth—whether those features were physical, symbolic, institutional, legal or cultural—as a generative force that supported the making of empires, indeed the making of all civilizations.¹³ As a social force that has helped to build the modern world as we know it, the legacies of colonial violence can become invisible, sanctioned in law and normalised as an aspect of everyday life.¹⁴ As scholars have argued and as Michael Ebner demonstrates in this volume (Chap. 10), colonial ideals of progress and political maturation not only facilitated the acceptability of violence as an inherent aspect of colonial cultures but more than this, legitimated its apparent necessity.¹⁵

Recent analyses of the relationship between violence, colonialism and empire have not been without controversy, attracting some suggestions that the historical pendulum has swung the other way. Just as there is a desire in some quarters to whitewash or to gloss over the violence of the colonial project, some scholars have been accused of skewing the debates by focusing on the most spectacular aspects of colonial violence, or of oversimplifying the racism or the ‘civilising mission’ that underpinned it.¹⁶ Despite such criticisms, a considerable body of scholarship has emerged in recent years with the aim of building a nuanced picture of the role of violence, repression and atrocity in the colonial world, as well as of its enduring place in forms of representation and social memory.¹⁷ A good part of this scholarship analyses particular practices of violence as a tool of empire within clearly defined geo-political spaces, as do a number

of the chapters in this collection. With a somewhat different aim, this chapter identifies some of the shared expressions of violence within a comparative framework in assessing its place as an ever-present feature of modern colonial history. From the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, technologies, ideologies and conditions have radically changed, but the deployment or the threat of violence still remained at the core of colonial relations. Indeed, from the first encounters between Europeans and Indigenous peoples through to decolonisation processes in the twentieth century, violence was so prevalent that its legacies continue to structure cross-cultural relationships in post-colonial societies of the twenty-first century.

COLONIAL CONQUEST AND (CULTURAL) ELIMINATION

Both physical and symbolic forms of violence were common features of colonial societies across time and across empires, but the purposes and outcomes of that violence varied across different kinds of colonial setting. Scholars of colonisation and empire have sought to better understand those variations and their aftermaths by drawing a broad distinction between exploitative colonialism and settler colonialism.¹⁸ Exploitative forms of colonialism were predicated upon an objective to build economic wealth by extracting primary resources and labour from colonised territories for the benefit of the imperial centre. Settler colonialism, on the other hand, was predicated upon an objective to take possession of new territories and to transport the sovereignty of empire to them. While exploitative models of colonisation could potentially be exhausted by finite supplies of resources and labour, settler colonialism was and is a structure that never ends, for it entailed the alienation of Indigenous rights to land, politics and social traditions.¹⁹ Although different in purpose and outcomes, however, both models of colonization enabled colonisers to imagine the nature of colonised peoples and territories through the filter of an imperial lens.²⁰ In Elizabeth Mjelde's chapter in this collection (Chap. 3), for example, we see how environment and landscape were appropriated by empire in more than a literal sense; at a deeper level, the traces of violence that scarred colonial landscapes could be obscured and smoothed away by the perspective of an imperial worldview. In this sense, supposedly 'new' worlds were rendered 'civilised' by a range of violent strategies that could be as much symbolic as they were material.

At the same time, the role of material violence cannot be underestimated: it buttressed the imperial enterprise wherever it went and was often used with astonishing brutality. By its very nature, colonisation involved the subjection of peoples and their lands, cultures and laws. To the degree that this process of subjugation required physical force, violence was enlisted in the cause of what Rudyard Kipling famously referred to as 'savage wars of peace'.²¹ For example, Nathan Hensley has assessed that during the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901, at least 228 known armed conflicts took place across the British Empire. Counted among these are major wars such as the Crimean War and the Boer War, but many of the remainder constituted punitive colonial campaigns, of varying levels of intensity, that were designed to put down rebellions and unrest.²² The degree to which war and punitive force were used in the suppression of resistance is virtually impossible to reconcile with the belief that took root during the Victorian age that the British Empire was at its height of civilised progression. This disjuncture between imperial self-image and colonial realities reflects the 'fundamental paradox of the liberal empire'.²³

While Hensley's count of armed conflicts during the Victorian era is used to illustrate the extensive deployment of violence, it still vastly underestimates the number of private battles and forms of guerrilla warfare that were fought on colonial frontiers. Over the same era, for example, potentially hundreds of skirmishes were fought on the Australian and South African frontiers alone, some of them recorded only obliquely and many of them unrecorded. No one to date has attempted to count the number of clashes that took place across the British, let alone the French, Belgian, Italian or German colonial possessions. What is evident, however, is a disconnect between the rhetoric of a liberal empire, which included wide-spread expressions of humanitarian concern for Indigenous peoples, and the colonial violence that took place on the ground. Colonial wars were necessarily bloody, but as James Lehning argues in this collection (Chap. 4), they also performed cultural tasks central to the colonial project—they created imperial identities and ideologies; they created colonial worlds.²⁴

Invariably, Indigenous populations responded to the processes of colonisation with attempts to defend their lands, cultures and communities. Political or armed resistance was met in turn with state-sanctioned violence. Nonetheless, in cases where Indigenous forces were organised, armed resistance was often highly effective and it absorbed vast imperial resources to suppress. In assessing the effectiveness of the Xhosa guerrilla

fighters who fought serial wars on the eastern Cape frontier, for instance, Richard Price shows that their resistance to colonial intrusion ‘stretched the local capacity of the British army almost to breaking point’.²⁵ Likewise, James Belich has demonstrated that in spite of numerical odds against them, the resistance strategies of Māori forces through the cyclical New Zealand wars were strikingly successful, honed through skills of strong leadership, formidable battle tactics and impenetrable field fortifications. Their organised capacity to resist was indicated by the huge scale on which British troops were mobilised to repress them. In the biggest campaign of the New Zealand wars, for instance, some 18,000 troops were enlisted to oppose a Māori population that numbered little more than 60,000 men, women and children.²⁶ Even in smaller-scale colonial wars, such as took place on Australia’s nineteenth-century frontiers, Indigenous tactics of guerrilla warfare were highly effective in intimidating and deflecting colonial settlers, and in stretching the capacity of colonial troops or police.²⁷

A tipping point in the capacity of Indigenous peoples to resist colonisation came with technological advances in modern warfare, which gave European colonisers the upper hand.²⁸ Repeating rifles, maxim guns, dumb-dumb bullets and cannon meant that casualties, with rare exceptions, were always much higher among Indigenous forces. In his recent book *Replenishing the Earth*, Belich also suggests that another kind of tipping point arrived during the early to mid-nineteenth century when an exponential growth in the expansion of European empires profoundly undermined the capacity of Indigenous peoples to absorb the impacts of colonial invasion. The sheer pace of what he calls ‘explosive colonisation’ was such, he argues, that it changed ‘the nature of the problem facing indigenous peoples from a scale that they could often handle to a scale that they could not’.²⁹

There were some occasions on which European troops were bested—the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879 during the Anglo-Zulu Wars or the Fall of Khartoum in January 1885 are examples—but typically, resistance invited excessive retaliation. The Battle of Rorke’s Drift, lionised by Victorians and made famous by the 1964 film *Zulu*, is a case in point. An archaeological dig has only recently uncovered that Rorke’s Drift was also the scene of an atrocity. In the hours after the battle, hundreds of wounded Zulu left on the field of battle were bayoneted, hanged and buried alive in mass graves. More Zulus are estimated to have died in this way than in the battle, but the executions were covered up to preserve

the image of Rorke's Drift as a bloody but honourable fight between two forces that respected each other's courage.³⁰ This type of punitive action was not rare in the modern history of empire. Similar scenes took place, as Michelle Gordon shows in her chapter (Chap. 8), during the Anglo-Egyptian War in the Sudan from 1896–1899. It also occurred in China during the brutal repression that followed the Boxer War in 1900–1901. The Hague Convention of 1899 only applied to conflict conducted between 'civilised nationals'; and since the Chinese were not considered 'civilised', no humanity was shown to them.³¹ The same attitude was reflected in other modern empires in the process of suppressing resistance to colonial rule.

This is not to suggest that local or Indigenous responses to colonialism were defined only by open rebellion or armed resistance. In India, for example, communities dissented in different ways, from mass migration to suicide (or the threat of it).³² Protest was also expressed through diplomatic strategies such as petitioning, or alternatively through refusal to engage with colonial officials or institutions.³³ Importantly, too, colonised peoples also accommodated themselves to new colonial orders and economies in ways that enabled them to adapt and survive: the history of colonial relations is replete with examples of co-existence, exchange and collaboration.³⁴ In this respect, colonised peoples were not always and not solely victims of the violence of empire, for they were also adept negotiators in turning colonial systems to their own purposes, although with ambivalent outcomes.

This point can be illustrated by the degree to which many Indigenous peoples across the colonial world actively participated in police or paramilitary forces. So-called 'native corps' were often established by European colonial powers because they constituted a cheaper labour force than European police or military personnel, and because when deployed in their own countries, they brought a deep local knowledge that proved an advantage in opening up new territories as well as in controlling the empire. While this placed them firmly within the very structures of colonial control, scholars have begun to appreciate that their motivations were not necessarily aligned with those of their colonial employers. Strategic alliance with the systems of colonialism might be motivated by a desire to extend cultural or social authority in their own communities, to open up new avenues of resources, or to establish relationships with colonial authorities in ways that required some reciprocity.³⁵

But although many Indigenous people adapted to the colonial project, the frequency of colonial reprisals and massacres increased through the nineteenth century with the intensification of empires' territorial ambitions. Colonial massacres often occurred on a small scale that could be hidden from metropolitan oversight, but some of these events occurred on a disturbingly large scale, and were openly sanctioned by the colonial state. Such was the case, for instance, in the Amristar (Jallianwalla Bagh) massacre of 1919, in which the British Indian Army fired upon a crowd of peaceful protesters, resulting in casualties thought to be in the range of 1000–1500.³⁶ Britain was also responsible for the reprisal killings that took place after the First Uprising in India (the Mutiny) in 1857, which may have resulted in as many as 100,000 deaths.³⁷ While the killing of colonised subjects was legitimated as an unavoidable outcome of the state's responsibility to suppress disorder, the deaths of British civilians who became caught up in colonial uprisings produced moral outrage, accompanied by calls to respond with overwhelming force. When Sepoy forces captured and killed around 120 British women and children at Cawnpore during the Indian rebellion of 1857, the reaction in Britain was such that Dickens wrote in a private letter to Baroness Burdett-Coutts: 'I wish I were the Commander in Chief in India...I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested...proceeding, with all convenient dispatch and merciful swiftness of execution, to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the Earth.'³⁸

Similar calls for demonstrations of power and force were characteristic of the French Empire. French colonisation of Algeria during the 1830s was marred by systemic violence. Like the British, however, contemporary commentators reconciled this violence to a concept of a liberal empire, on grounds that force was the only means by which the security and progress of the empire could be protected. For instance, the liberal diplomat and political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, often associated in the English-speaking world with his book *Democracy in America*, supported the French military's use of razzias, a tactic of swift and brutal raids conducted against recalcitrant Algerian communities in order to repress all resistance.³⁹ As a member of the French Chamber of Deputies, Tocqueville delivered a speech in 1828 in which he described the French army's behaviour of killing, burning crops and villages, destroying towns, and abducting women and children as an 'unfortunate necessity' (*nécessité fâcheuse*).⁴⁰ We do not know how many Algerians died in the

nineteenth-century wars of conquest, but scholars have offered the likely figure as being somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million out of an estimated 3 million Algerians.⁴¹

It is interesting that historians have made much more of the war for Independence that raged between 1954 and 1962, in which far fewer Algerians died.⁴² Certainly, all of the British and French wars of decolonisation were violent, although the French wars were always bloodier than those of the British. All were guerrilla-type conflicts, and all involved far higher casualties of civilians than was true of European combatants. All involved atrocities that included torture, the killing of prisoners and the massacre of civilians. Such atrocities were committed—whether the imperial power was Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, British, American, Japanese or Soviet—wherever imperial forces came into contact with independence or insurgency movements.⁴³ Counter-insurgency, born out of the repressive violence against independence movements, was a military strategy used to protect imperial interests in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In the process, imperial powers singled out particular ethnicities or particular groups of people—those supposedly characterised by a ‘warlike temperament’—and used them in their struggle against ‘freedom fighters’.⁴⁴

Strategies of conquest and the suppression of resistance were by no means unique to European empires. Kelly Maddox examines (in Chap. 12) how as the Imperial Japanese Army launched its war of conquest, it systematically committed atrocities against local populations both before the outbreak of the Second World War and during the war. The Nanjing Massacre of 1937 is possibly the most infamous of these incidents, but was by no means an isolated event. The ‘Three Alls’ policy adopted in China—‘kill all, burn all, loot all’—was widely applied throughout the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

While some of the most violent colonial campaigns were undertaken by imperial forces and colonial governments, others occurred in the context of privatised violence committed by colonial settlers, beyond the view or sanction of the state. As Richard Price discusses in this volume (Chap. 2), private violence committed by settlers did not mirror the kind of large-scale state reprisals that followed open rebellions. Instead, it tended to be episodic, opportunistic and often intimate in nature. It was also endemic, particularly in regions where the oversight of law and government was limited. Reflecting what Elizabeth Elbourne has referred to as ‘the sin of the settler’, this kind of everyday violence became a

normalised aspect of colonial cultures—it was a quotidian event, even as it was concealed from open view.⁴⁵ A full history of such covert violence is difficult to recover because of the silences in which it was shrouded, but glimpses can always be found in euphemistic references to having ‘a picnic with the natives’ or teaching them ‘a lesson that they never forgot’.⁴⁶ Unsanctioned forms of settler violence against Indigenous people were as much a product of ‘fear and distain’ as they were a localised means of asserting power and control.⁴⁷ Wherever there was settler colonialism there was fear and anxiety, on both sides of the racial-cultural divide. At the same time, as Adrian Muckle reminds us in this volume (Chap. 11), colonial violence cannot be regarded only in terms of the relationship between coloniser and colonised; colonial states were complex social structures that involved multiple actors.

Whether authorised by colonial states or committed covertly, violence had become such an extensive strategy of conquest by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that some recent scholarship links the colonial project to the elimination of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁸ This line of enquiry has also produced some controversial debate about the purported genocidal nature of colonialism and its links to the Nazi Holocaust.⁴⁹ There is no need to reprise that debate here, except to say that the kinds of everyday violence that many of the authors in the following chapters detail is qualitatively different to genocide.

However, as Patrick Wolfe has famously argued, not all strategies geared towards ‘the elimination of the native’ required the use of physical force. Resisting a simplified assessment that colonialism, and most specifically settler colonialism, was inherently genocidal, Wolfe outlines how an array of other forms of institutional violence and cultural coercion were directed towards the ‘dissolution’ of Indigenous societies. Among others, these coercive strategies included officially encouraged miscegenation, which authorities around the colonial world believed would lead to the disappearance of Indigenous bloodlines; programmes of religious conversion and social re-education; the removal of Indigenous children from their families for placement in mission or training schools; prohibitions against speaking their own language; and a range of other assimilative programmes designed to eliminate all signs of ‘nativeness’ and ultimately absorb Indigenous people into the colonial body politic.⁵⁰ In effect, the eliminative impulse of colonial violence took multiple shapes, all of which contributed to a longer-term purpose to eradicate Indigenous difference.

STRATEGIES OF COLONIAL CONTROL

The social and legal order of the colonial state was built and managed through a variety of strategies and institutional tools that enabled colonial governments to manage and control their colonial subjects. Alongside pure force, these formed an adaptable system of colonial practices that maintained the fundamental imbalance of power structuring colonial relations. One of the most pervasive of these tools was law. Colonial legal regimes played a vital role in remaking the subjectivity of colonial subjects: colonial law not only negated their pre-existing laws but also criminalised their transgressions against colonial authority. 'Law-making is power-making', noted Walter Benjamin, 'and to that extent, an immediate manifestation of violence'.⁵¹ Over time and across colonial settings, the legitimate scope of state violence available to regulate recalcitrant subjects was subject to legal definition and redefinition. Martial law represented one of the most flexible expressions of this process, enabling colonial governments to enlist force as an extraordinary measure to repress insurgency or resistance. As Lyndall Ryan discusses in this volume (Chap. 5), colonial governors invoked martial law to order unruly frontiers that could not be brought to order through ordinary legal means; such was the case for instance when Governor George Arthur proclaimed a state of martial law against Indigenous Tasmanians in 1828. From the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of colonial self-government, martial law took on more clearly draconian roles to repress insurgency, to control Indigenous subjects or to contain settler demands. In 1865, for example, Jamaica's governor Edward John Eyre used the authority of martial law to put to death 439 Indigenous insurgents during the Morant Bay Rebellion.⁵² Although this event outraged liberals in the Metropole, who attempted to have him convicted of murder on three separate occasions, Eyre was acquitted three times. While imperial metropolises debated the legalities of extraordinary force, such debates had few reverberations in the colonies: martial law was an exceptional legal device used throughout the British Empire, as well as in the French Empire where it was referred to as an *état de siège*, literally 'state of siege'. In suspending the ordinary rule of law, it had many uses that ranged from the re-assertion of sovereignty against Indigenous threats to the repression of political threats from within the settler colonial state.

Another exceptional device of regulation that was enlisted by colonial governments was paramilitary policing, which had especially punitive

application to Indigenous peoples. Paramilitary police forces, which included the widespread use of ‘native’ forces, stretched the legal limits of state-sanctioned violence, enabling colonial governments to extend their control over resistant Indigenous populations in ways that civil policing could not. In this sense, while paramilitary police forces varied in composition across different colonial settings, they shared a fundamental role to build and to protect the economic and political goals of empire.⁵³ Civil rather than military-style policing may have been the ultimate goal of colonial governments, but this goal was dependent upon first bringing unsettled colonial territories to order. To the degree that Indigenous populations remained beyond the effective reach of civil policing, they were consistently subject to what David Anderson and David Killingray refer to as ‘special forms of administration’.⁵⁴ But even in their non-paramilitary forms, colonial police forces were essential to the development and protection of empires.⁵⁵ Strategies of colonial policing ranged along a spectrum from the ‘benignly hegemonic’ to the overtly coercive, but their purpose was always to enforce the laws of the ruling colonial power.⁵⁶ As Rhada Kumar demonstrates in her chapter on policing in the southern provinces of India (Chap. 7), policing was not only essential to the maintenance of imperial rule but was often its most visible symbol.

Historians have made the point that over the nineteenth century, practices of paramilitary policing and opportunistic settler violence on colonial frontiers gradually transitioned into the spread of courts and prisons, in what Mark Finnane and John McGuire call a ‘new locus of regulation’.⁵⁷ As the century progressed, this trend from forceful strategies to carceral ones was accompanied by other non-carceral means of coercion, like controlled management of food supplies.⁵⁸ This is not to say, however, that incarceration was a non-violent means of maintaining colonial authority; in the colonies ‘ethnic gulags’ were sometimes used to an extreme, and sometimes to complete the destruction of Indigenous peoples already begun. This was the case in Australia, California and Namibia.⁵⁹ Spain was the first European power to practice the large-scale ‘concentration’ of prisoners in Cuba. Britain followed with ‘concentration camps’ in South Africa during the Boer War, Americans with ‘zones of concentration’ in the Philippines and Germans with their *Konzentrationslager* in South West Africa.⁶⁰ Incarceration as an institutionalised aspect of colonial oppression was entrenched and impossible to dislodge, despite the nineteenth-century rhetoric of carceral reform.

Other aspects of colonial criminal justice systems allowed governments to manage the movement and rights of colonised labour forces. For instance, vagrancy laws were widely applied in racialised ways in colonial settings to control Indigenous labourers, to maintain surveillance over their presence in urban spaces, and to regulate their relations with white settlers.⁶¹ Master and Servants laws protected the power of colonial masters by enabling absconding Indigenous workers to be arrested and incarcerated on breaches of contract.⁶² In theory, colonised labour forces were usually provided with some legal protection, including under Master and Servants legislation, but in practice, the law rarely offered any redress for those who were subject to the forced or indentured labour practices that existed in most colonial and settler colonial countries. From the *corvée* in India to the use of workers in factories, pastoral stations, plantations, fisheries and mines around the colonial world, Indigenous and other colonised peoples who were drawn into colonial economies were either poorly paid or not paid at all.⁶³ Kidnapping of Indigenous labour was also endemic across the Pacific, and although illegal, such practices were subject to little legal control.⁶⁴

Another strategy of management that had special application to colonised people was corporal punishment. As scholars have argued and as Amanda Nettelbeck examines in this collection (Chap. 6), the flogging of Indigenous peoples remained a normative aspect of many colonial societies, despite humanitarian reforms over the nineteenth century that saw its use decline for other subjects of empire. In South Africa, for example, about 4000 men were sentenced to receive cuts or lashes between 1911 and 1914 alone.⁶⁵ Elsewhere around the British Empire, colonial authorities awarded floggings on Indigenous transgressors as a spectacular demonstration of summary justice, effectively creating what Stephen Pete and Annie Devenish refer to as 'a penal discourse bifurcated along racial lines, combining elements of the pre-modern and the modern'.⁶⁶ Beyond the sanction of colonial law, settlers also frequently drew upon corporal punishment as a means to control colonised labourers. Sometimes the recipients of these discretionary punishments were flogged to death, but although such cases produced moral outrage at the metropole, they had little impact in reining in the behaviour of settlers who considered it their right to control their workers as they saw fit.⁶⁷ More widely, corporal punishment took some extreme forms in the colonies. In King Leopold's Congo, for instance, where the line between private and state sanctioned violence was blurred, the amputation of

workers' hands and limbs was practised as a form of punishment. The whole country may have been the personal property of the Belgian king, but the violence was committed at the local level with the complicity of government authorities.⁶⁸

As a means and a method of colonial control, corporal punishment was intimately tied to colonial ideologies about race and masculinity. While the imposition of physical suffering came to be regarded as barbaric and 'unmanly' when applied to Europeans, this moral sensibility did not apply to 'natives' who, like children, were considered to require basic physical 'correction'. Christine Wu's chapter (Chap. 9) shows that the tendency of colonial rulers to infantilise colonised peoples was widespread and pervasive. A similar double standard applied to public executions, which became subject to reform across Europe over the nineteenth century on grounds that such practices belied the values of civilised societies.⁶⁹ Yet in a paradox of colonial thought, Indigenous peoples remained subject to public executions well after the turn to private execution for others on the grounds that the impression of such spectacular punishment would serve both as a deterrent to wrongdoing and as a reminder of colonial authority.⁷⁰

As scholars have explored in more detail over the past two decades, the racialised violence of empire was also strongly gendered. In all colonial settings, Laura Ann Stoler has famously argued, 'imperial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms'.⁷¹ Supported by a belief in imperial values of 'patriotic manhood and racial virility', gender inequality was embedded in the very structures 'of colonial racism and imperial authority'.⁷² The gendered dimension of colonial violence formed more than a set of acts or assumptions about the availability of colonised women as a sexual and labour resource for colonial men. More fundamentally, it shaped the relations of power that sustained the political and cultural institutions of colonialism itself.⁷³ Angela Woollacott, for instance, has explored how violence became normalised in settler colonies as an appropriate expression of colonial manhood, indeed how an ideology of masculine authority and political empowerment 'saturated' the colonial worldview.⁷⁴

The sexual and economic exploitation of Indigenous women was unquestionably endemic to colonial societies. At the same time, scholars have pointed out that intimate interracial relations were not only coercive, but also involved strategic negotiation by indigenous communities as means to develop economic exchange and security in a cross-cultural

world.⁷⁵ Yet as Larissa Behrendt reminds us, such relationships, even when consensual, 'took place against a background of colonial frontier and sexual violence'.⁷⁶ Gendered violence extended to the abduction or kidnapping of Indigenous women, and was perpetuated by a colonial ideology that positioned Indigenous women themselves as being 'naturally' subject to 'unregulated promiscuity'.⁷⁷ Although colonial authorities were often aware that the stealing or abuse of women was a direct cause of cross-cultural conflict on settler frontiers, they had little power or will to address it through means of the law.⁷⁸

Ultimately, the violence that underpinned strategies of colonial control—whether that was exerted through physical force or through institutionalised systems, forms of law, economic structures or gendered relations—does not solely account for the longevity of imperial rule over colonial possessions, but it does go a long way in explaining the dynamics of the colonial project. As scholars have pointed out, there is an unmistakable disconnect between the language of Enlightenment, liberalism and humanitarianism and the violence that pervaded the colonial project.⁷⁹ This raises again the question of what is distinctive about colonial violence compared to violence carried out in times of war or, indeed, times of peace. Although its individual expressions were many and varied, Fanon has suggested that colonial violence was made distinctive both by its purposes and by its effects. It was used to extend sovereignty over other peoples, and then to maintain a state of dominance over them. It held a clear subjugating role that was supported by an ideological belief in cultural and racial superiority. The effects and impacts of this violence were not only physical but also epistemic.⁸⁰ The question that remains is: how can we reconcile the rhetoric of modernity with the many forms of violence that took place in its name?

IN THE AFTERMATHS OF COLONIAL VIOLENCE

During the decades that followed the Second World War, the quest for independence from colonial rule led in turn to violent and often protracted conflicts, marking the decolonisation process with a new set of 'small wars'. As Bart Luttikhuis and Christiaan Harinck discuss here (Chap. 13), the violence of decolonisation also opened onto vexed questions about the status of former colonial subjects as 'enemies'. The aftermaths of colonial violence, as well as of decolonising struggles, continue to reverberate around the world as modern democracies come to terms

with the histories of violence on which they were built. A fuller record of colonial atrocities is still coming to light, continuing to challenge a once-orthodox understanding of imperial progress and the improving impulse of ‘civilisation’. Movements to redress historical injustices with efforts of restorative justice have been initiated both by Indigenous peoples of former colonial nations and by contemporary governments, expressed for instance in Native Tribal tribunals, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and national apologies.⁸¹

Reconciling with the colonial past is a process that is important not only to the Indigenous and other colonised peoples who continue to carry the burden of its legacies but also to the descendants of colonising powers who have inherited their wealth. Still, such efforts remain incomplete and often controversial. In *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, for instance, Elazar Barkan warns that even when formal processes of reconciliation lead to apology or restitution, there is the risk that the underlying structures of colonial domination remain unaddressed, closed off by a procedural understanding that moral resolution has now been reached.⁸² Until there is fuller engagement with understanding the scale and nature of the relationship between empire, colonialism and violence, its impacts will continue to echo in the present. We hope that this comparative collection on the nature of violence across colonial empires will contribute to the ongoing process of that engagement.

NOTES

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2. Barth and Cvetkovski, ‘Encounters of empires’, 6.
3. Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). On the concept of state monopoly on violence and the legitimated use of force, see the work of Max Weber in *Weber’s Rationalism and Modern Society*, ed. and trans. Tony and Dagmar Waters (London: Palgrave, 2015).
4. Jock McCulloch, ‘Empire and Violence, 1900–1939’, in Philippa Levine, ed. *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 220.

5. Aisha Karim and Bruce B. Lawrence, *On Violence: A Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
6. See, for instance, Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent in the Ordinary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).
7. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 239–243.
8. For an example of recent comparative work see A. Dirk Moses, ed. *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008).
9. Niall Ferguson, *Empire: the rise and demise of the British world order and the lessons for global power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). Keith Windshuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002).
10. On the context leading to the Mekachera law and the reactions it elicited see, Robert Aldrich, 'Colonial past, post-colonial present: history wars French-style', *History Australia*, 3 (2006), 14.1–14.10.
11. 'Harki' is the term used to describe Algerian Muslims who had fought for France during the Algerian War.
12. Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1955). On the structural relationship between violence and power more widely see, Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1970).
13. See for instance Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Elias Norbert* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1997); Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, eds., *States of Violence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).
14. On the visibility and invisibility of violence as a social force, see for instance Roderick Campbell, ed. *Violence and Civilization: Studies of Social Violence in History and Prehistory* (Oxford UK: Oxbow Books/Joukowsky Institute, 2013); Veena Das and Arthur Kleinmann, eds. *Violence and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
15. Angela Woollacott, 'Frontier Violence and Settler Manhood', *History Australia*, 6.1 (2009), 11.1–11.15.
16. Two controversial works that have provoked considerable criticism and considerable public debate are Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser, Exterminer: sur la guerre et l'état colonial* (Paris: Fayard, 2005); and Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Pimlico, 2005). See the review article by Stephen Howe, 'Colonising and exterminating? Memories of imperial violence in Britain and France', *Histoire@Politique*. *Politique, culture, société*, 11 (2010), <https://www.histoire-politique.fr>.

17. For the latter see, for example, Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
18. For instance, Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, Publishers, 1997), 10–11; Mary Gilmartin, ‘Colonialism/Imperialism’ in Carolyn Gallaher, et al, *Key Concepts in Political Geography* (Los Angeles and London: Sage, 2009), 115–123.
19. Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006), 387; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
20. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassell, 1999), 2–3.
21. Rudyard Kipling, ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (1899).
22. Nathan K. Hensley, *Forms of Empire: The Poetics of Victorian Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2; Richard Gott, *Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011).
23. Hensley, *Forms of Empire*, 2.
24. Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 11.
25. Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3.
26. James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), 316; 15.
27. Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (1981; rpt. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006); Nicholas Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2014).
28. For instance, John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002).
29. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and The Rise of the Angloworld, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 182.
30. Michael Lieven, ‘“Butchering the Brutes All Over the Place”: Total War and Massacre in Zululand, 1879’, *History*, 18 (1999), 614–632.
31. Susanne Kuss, ‘Co-operation between German and French troops during the Boxer War in China, 1900/1901: The Punitive Expedition to Baoding’, in Barth and Cvetkovski (eds), *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer*, 202.
32. Denis Vidal, *Violence and Truth: A Rajasthani Kingdom Confronts Colonial Authority* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

33. See for instance Ravi De Costa, ‘Identity, Authority and the Moral Worlds of Indigenous Petitions’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48:3 (2006), 669–698.
34. See for instance Lynette Russell, ed. *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European encounters in settler societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Leena Ghandi, *Affective Communities. Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
35. For case studies analysed in particular settings see for instance Thomas Dunlay, *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army 1860–1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); Richard Hill, *Policing the Colonial Frontier: The Theory and Practice of Coercive Social and Racial Control in New Zealand, 1767–1867* (Wellington: V.R. Ward, 1986); Marie Fels, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1847–1853* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988); K. I. Watson, ‘African Seypoys: The Black Police on the Eastern Cape Frontier 1835–1850’, *African Historical Review*, 1. 28 (1996): 62–78.
36. Derek Sayer, ‘British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919–20’, *Past and Present*, 131 (1991): 130–164.
37. Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (London: Penguin, 2003), which is eerily quite about anti-Indian atrocities.
38. Charles Dickens, *Letters from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841–1865* (London: Cape, 1953), 350–351 (4 October 1857).
39. On the nature and effect of the razzia as a French military strategy in Algeria, see Thomas Rid, ‘Razzia: a turning point in modern strategy’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21 (2009), 617–635.
40. Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser, Exterminer*, 7–8; Cheryl Welch, ‘Out of Africa: Tocqueville’s Imperial Voyages’, *Review of Middle East Studies*, 45:1 (2011), 53–61.
41. See Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 364–365.
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43. See, for example, Matthew Hughes, ‘The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39’, *English Historical Review*, CXXIV (507) (2009), 313–354.
44. Martin Thomas, Bob Moore, and L. J. Butler, *Crisis of Empire: Decolonization and Europe’s Imperial States, 1918–1975* (London: Hodder Education, 2008), 414.

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47. Tom Griffiths, 'Past Silences: Aborigines and convicts in our history' in Penny Russell and Richard White (eds), *Pastiche I: Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), 7–26; Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2013).
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51. Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', in Edmund Jephcott (ed., trans.) *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms and Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 295.
52. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 23–24; Hensley, *Forms of Empire*, 9.
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60. See, Jonas Kreienbaum, 'Deadly learning?: concentration camps in colonial wars around 1900', in Barth and Cvetkovski (eds), *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer*, 219–235; Dan Stone, *Concentration Camps: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
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65. Cited in Jock McCulloch, 'Empire and Violence, 1900–1939', in Levine (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 226.
66. Stephen Pete and Annie Devenish, 'Flogging, Fear and Food: Punishment and Race in Colonial Natal', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31: 1 (2005), 12.
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69. See for instance Randall McGowen, 'Civilizing Punishment: the end of public execution in England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33:3 (1994), 257–282.
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72. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 42.
73. Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Gender and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century' in Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
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80. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.
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PART I

Colonial Violence and ‘Ways of Seeing’

The Psychology of Colonial Violence

Richard N. Price

COLONIAL VIOLENCE

It is an odd but telling fact that until very recently the question of colonial violence has not figured much in the narratives of the British Empire. Surely no imperial historian would deny that violence was part of empire history. But I think it true to say that most commonly the issue of imperial violence has been safely confined to the categories of war, or an occasional “scandal” of empire ignited by an over-enthusiastic use of force. Yet, as I discovered (to my surprise, I must admit) in the Cape Colony archives whilst researching the British-Xhosa encounter in the nineteenth century, the presence of violence in empire cannot be reduced to the margins of its history. In those archives it was impossible to ignore the atrocities and the everyday violence that accompanied the expansion of British rule over the Eastern Cape. This was often “unofficial” violence; it was the violence of settlers against Indigenous peoples. And it was baked into the everyday experience of empire, at least in the

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early stages of settler colonial states, and often for much longer. When I turned my own research gaze away from the Cape and towards the other settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand during the same period of the early nineteenth century, it was impossible to ignore the presence of the same kind of violence I had glimpsed in the Cape.¹

If it is true that imperial historians have not typically highlighted settler violence as central to the experience of making empire, local historians of empire have long been aware of the phenomenon. What Elizabeth Elbourne referred to some years ago—adopting the phraseology of the humanitarian discourse of the 1830s—as “the sin of the settler” was familiar to those who worked in the colonial archives. This is particularly true in the case of Australia. Many years of official and unofficial silence, when histories of Australia carefully avoided or sanitized the degree of violence in its past, were broken in the early 1980s as national historians such as Henry Reynolds, and local researchers such as P.D. Gardener and Lyndall Ryan carefully documented the extent of settler violence.²

But once this happened, a storm of political and academic controversy—what became known as the “history wars”—broke over the findings of this research. In a sense, this was hardly surprising. The evidence of a deeply embedded tradition of violence against indigenous peoples sharply contradicted the dominant Australian sense of a benign national identity. The idea that the country had “another past”, in the words of Raymond Evans, was hard to take, and the fires of controversy were stoked when the would-be historian Keith Windshuttle mounted an extensive assault on scholarly integrity of those who had presented evidence of the violence. This set off a long and bitter controversy that became a national political issue in which historians who pointed to this aspect of Australia’s past were tagged as “black armband” purveyors of a disloyal past. Thankfully, it is unnecessary for an outsider such as myself to venture into that particular political and historical morass. Now that the dust has settled down, the claims of scholarly deception about frontier conflict have been effectively dismissed, and the presence and the scale of settler violence have been amply documented as an undeniable fixture in Australian history.³

Whether the extent of the violence was the same in other parts of the British empire is not clear. And what determines its local differences is also unclear. It may be particularly sharp, for example, where pastoralist settlers compete for land with hunter gatherers. What is evident, however, is the intimate association of violence with the making of empire

wherever it is experienced. And significant studies of frontier violence are beginning to appear for other areas of the British world. Major studies of frontier violence in South Africa have appeared, for example. It is a topic that is now attracting some attention in the largest settler colony of them all—the United States. The everyday violence of the State in colonies like Burma and India has been delineated. In New Zealand, where the degree of casual violence was, perhaps, less common than it was elsewhere, it has still proved necessary to rescue the brutality of the various frontier wars from the hush of posterity.⁴

Let me first define the key features of this violence, as I treat it here. First, it was quotidian, almost everyday in character, and personal. It was outside of the big-event violence like the Indian uprising of 1857. It was the kind of violence Elizabeth Kolsky has documented for India as being “an intrinsic feature of imperial rule” but which has also been “one of the empire’s most closely guarded secrets”. Evidence of such incidents can be found in official and unofficial records; in newspapers, and in published memoirs. This violence was primarily driven by the *settler* community, and it possessed a personal quality even when conducted by collective groups. Violent episodes ranged from set-piece battles between settler posses and indigenes, to informal parties of settlers going off hunting native people, to the individual murder of settler or aborigine in their isolated, lonely homestead.⁵

Second, its demographic impact on the Indigenous populations could be profound. The greatest efforts to delineate this have been in Australia. But reliable statistical measures have proved difficult to achieve and controversial. Estimates of the base indigenous population which suffered the violence are, of course, largely guess work; the records of violent incidents themselves are scanty and often unreliable. It has taken considerable ingenuity on the part of historians to come up with reasonable figures even for a region such as Queensland which was universally acknowledged to be a killing ground in the nineteenth century. But to give an idea of how the numbers have proved difficult to comprehend, in 1972 Henry Reynolds estimated a toll of 5000 indigenous people killed in Queensland. By the early 1980s this estimate had doubled, and the most recent total, after careful reconstruction of available records, is about 60,000—which is twice the number that Reynolds had thought was the total of indigenous peoples killed in all of Australia between 1788 and 1900. Looking at another area of Australia, one authority has estimated that such violence killed 11% of the indigenous population

in the Port Phillip (Melbourne) district in 1836 alone. In the case of Tasmania where the Indigenous population in 1800 was about 5000, it is estimated that about 1000 were killed by settler vigilante groups mainly between 1823 and 1831. And this dismal catalogue could be continued.⁶

Third, the relationship of this kind of violence to the State and to *State* violence was tangled. It was a violence that did not *necessarily* emanate from official policy or organs of the State. Even when committed by officers of the State, it frequently possessed a personal rather than an official quality. It was a category of violence that was racial, social *and* imperial, but which often stood outside the sphere of the State. Indeed, it was often hidden from the State for fear of legal sanction. The point is that at this historical moment of the early nineteenth century, the State did *not* have a monopoly on violence that was linked to imperial rule. Nor did it necessarily have clear legal guidelines or signposts to arbitrate its actions. This was one reason why the State's use of salutary terror as a strategy of punishing recalcitrant or troublesome natives was often—if not always—accompanied by detailed explanations and exculpations that were designed to reassure the Colonial Office and others of the necessity of such violence.

It is important to remember that colonial violence was not the same over time. Certain patterns and structures characterize the different periods of imperial rule. During the early nineteenth century state structures were frail and rickety. In this context, as Julie Evans has quite brilliantly argued, the condition of lawlessness *became* the law and it was precisely within this zone of legal anarchy that settler sovereignty was established. Governors and others were frequently incapable of imposing the kind of order they might have wished. Indeed, in the colonies of the southern seas, a viable network of legal institutions and policing capabilities was not fully established until the mid-century. Only then was the State in a position to claim the sole right to exercise of violence. Its subsequent failure to smother the tendencies to vigilante violence did not reflect the weakness of the State, however, but rather its appropriation of this practice from an earlier time.⁷

And the final quality of this violence that I wish to highlight was its sheer brutality, reflecting what Aimé Césaire referred to as the de-civilization and brutalization of the colonizer. Again there are many gruesome tales of atrocities packed into the colonial record. But let us just note briefly the popularity of decapitation as an expression of colonial rule in this period. Tattooed Maori heads were reported sold as “objects

of curiosity” in Sydney in the pre-1840 period. One early settler in Van Diemen’s Land killed an indigenous man, took the wife for a sex slave, and made her wear her ex-husband’s head around her neck. Even the Colonial Office, which was by this time accustomed to receiving reports of such events, could hardly believe their eyes when they read the account of this outrage. They were even more outraged when a few years later the Xhosa chief Hintsa was not only shot down in cold blood, his ears were cut off and his head *may* have been, too. Even if his head remained where it belonged, there were plenty of Xhosa skulls adorning settler homes around the Eastern Cape—and plenty in museums and other places in Victorian Britain where, of course, they were the raw material for phrenology and other “scientific” speculations.⁸

The question is: how are we to historicize and understand such episodes of colonial violence? Obviously, we can see them as the dark underside of empire, as reflecting its racial orderings and ideology. But the relationship of violence to the ideologies of empire is more complicated than that and deserves a deeper analysis. Thus, I think that this violence was as much prior to and constitutive of racial ideology rather than *just* following from it. As we shall see in the case of Indigenous Tasmanians, violence was crucial to justifying, even proving, a racial order of essential, inborn difference. Similarly, although we can argue whether colonial violence was exterminationist, even genocidal, it is still necessary to explain how the social dynamic of genocide was generated.⁹

This leads me to the analytical frame I will foreground here. It revolves around two questions. First, what were the interiorities of this form of colonial violence? What were the settler perceptions of the violence they perpetrated against indigenous peoples? How may we understand its behavioral and psychological dynamic? And secondly, to shift to a broader time frame, what do these subjectivities tell us about the problem of liberalism and empire? How was its presence reconciled with the idea that the British Empire was a liberal empire that operated on the principles of justice and freedom? How was the violence explained in the wider narratives about empire? This is particularly pertinent since violence is a constant theme of empire and the particular violence that I highlight here occurred at what one might call the humanitarian moment of the early nineteenth century when a discourse of humanitarianism shaped and framed colonial policy. How this violence was contained, explained and normalized in value systems both at an individual level and more broadly in the culture might then have lessons for the

question of how liberal societies explain the violence of imperial expansion. Indeed, as I shall suggest, I think the way colonial violence was handled in this period had an enduring impact on imperial culture in the British Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁰

ANXIETY AND FEAR

Understanding the interiorities of this colonial violence has to begin with its *personal* character. Indeed, violence frequently flowed out of such personal intimacies, particularly because colonial intimacies in this period were often *disordered* and *unordered*. The most obvious example of this was the sexual exploitation of native women. When settlers were killed by Aborigines, it was almost always because there was a personal attachment or grievance, and frequently this was sexual. Settlers paid no attention to the indigenous ties of attachment and felt free to use violence to secure their sexual partners. Thus Truganini, the celebrated indigenous woman who became one of George Robinson's guides on his "Friendly Missions" to bring the Tasmanian Aborigines into captivity, was first introduced to Western civilization when she was kidnapped by sealers. Her Tasmanian "husband" desperately swam out to the boat that was carrying her, managed to grab the gunwale only to have his grip released by an ax cutting through his fingers. On the same occasion, her mother and uncle were also murdered.¹¹

Obviously this incident (like the question of sexual exploitation more widely) reflected the arbitrary violence that the settler could exercise over the native. But did this describe the settlers' subjective assessment of their power? Hannah Arendt's meditation *On Violence* reminds us that "violence appears when power is in jeopardy". And the twentieth-century literature on the psychology of massacre and genocides has demonstrated how a subjective sense of vulnerability and weakness on the part of the perpetrators is essential for such violence to occur. I want to suggest that there was a close association in early settler society between fear and violence. Fear might seem a counter-intuitive quality to explain colonial violence, which is typically taken to reflect the assumption of imperial arrogance. But there is considerable evidence of a fearful vulnerability pervading early colonial society. Indeed, one might say that settler consciousness was riven with fear. The sociology of settler fear was, however, split and bifurcated. At a global level settler power was infinite because in the final analysis it could call upon

the boundless resources of the imperial State. But ironically Indigenous peoples almost certainly had a greater awareness of this than the settlers. For at the local level, settler power *felt* much more qualified and ambiguous. Early pastoralists in Australia were sometimes unable to keep employees because of their fear of indigenous attack. And this clearly reflected a deeply rooted aspect of early settler life. Henry Reynolds has remarked how Australians lived in fear of Aborigines well into the twentieth century, even in towns.¹²

Those who were in intimate contact with both sides of the frontier recognized this at the time. E.J. Eyre, for example, writing of his experiences as an explorer in South Australia, reported how “cowardly most of the men are in reference to the blacks. With the exception of Baxter and one other man, I could not depend upon one of them, nor do I believe, now that the blacks have actually been seen, that any men of the party except those two would go ten miles away from the camp if offered £100.” Indeed, he recounted with some amusement how, on one occasion returning to his camp from a scouting trip, he found men in great alarm, loading carbines, who claimed they were being hunted by a mob of Aborigines. But what they were responding to was only “three poor frightened blacks running as hard as they could away from two men and nearly out of sight...the fact was now evident that the moment my men saw a black face, they ran as fast as they could in one direction and the blacks in the opposite one—each mutually afraid of the other.” And George Robinson, whose expeditions to the Tasmanian Aborigines took him all over that island, told similar stories. Memoirs from pastoralists and others confirm this; they frequently describe how being alone on the sheep run was dominated by fear about hostile blacks who could not be seen but who were still felt to be surrounding and watching. Indeed, the stillness only made things worse and as one pastoralist put it, “such occasional sounds as did occur made me start involuntarily. I felt my life was in danger and I remained very much on the alert, and in a very prepared state of mind for fighting.”¹³

A long account of an incident in New South Wales that extended over several months in 1840 and 1841 suggests the tangled atmosphere of tension, vulnerability and violence that confronted many settlers as the new pastoral areas were opened up. In this case, the settler was ultimately named for indiscriminately shooting Aborigines possibly in conjunction with the mounted police. But prior to that there had been two attacks on his homestead and a series of harassments that included invading his kitchen,

demanding food and jostling, which only ended when he waved some pistols at them. Anxiety and fear were trigger emotions at more celebrated violent encounters such as Risdon Cove in Tasmania in May 1804 where the first clash occurred between Aborigines, a small army unit and settlers. And at the Myall Creek massacre in New South Wales in 1838 (when seven convict shepherds tied up, shot and hacked to death 30 Aborigines) whites in the district felt as if they were “in an enemy’s country” and, even with firearms, continued to feel vulnerable and unsafe.¹⁴

The idea that settler colonialism contained the qualities of fear and vulnerability has not been entered into the imperial historiography of empire. It is not surprising, however, that it is more commonly recognized at the local level. Thus, as Australian historians came to uncover the “culture of terror” that composed frontier society in this period, they also recognized that this mirrored an equal terror within settler mentality itself. Settlers were trigger happy because they saw themselves as exposed in an alien land and vulnerable to the superior power and knowledge of the aborigines. It was as if they existed in a veritable Hobbesian world surrounded by a natural wilderness whose dangers were reinforced by their exposure to human threats from people they could not understand.¹⁵

Indeed, anxieties of this kind were a wider theme of empire than the settler world alone. It is interesting to reflect on George Orwell’s account of his feelings around shooting a rampaging elephant in Burma to realize that anxiety in one form or another was a common imperial experience. As Orwell told it, the episode pushed to the surface the subjective, psychological tensions of Empire and “gave me a better glimpse...of the real nature of imperialism”. The dominant emotion that came to his mind at being put in the position of having to shoot the elephant was anger. He was angry at the squalid dirty work he was expected to do for empire. But he was also angry at the Burmese who were carefully watching his every move to see how he behaved, and aroused his racist distaste for the “evil-spirited little beasts who tried [every day, he claimed] to make my job impossible”. And he would have felt the “greatest joy in the world...to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts”.¹⁶

Anxiety and fear contained another subjective component that is also counter-intuitive to how we typically think of the hegemon of empire, and that is the way Indigenous peoples were endowed with enormous power in the settler imagination. Ironically, this was perhaps especially

true of those who were the most helpless victims of the imperial juggernaut. At the height of the Black War against the Tasmanian Aborigines, it was generally accepted among the settlers that the very existence of the colony itself was threatened, even though the Aborigines were being killed at an alarming rate. Their seeming ability to effortlessly meld into the topography, suddenly re-appearing when their victims were at their most vulnerable generated a sense that they were endowed with a super-human cunning and guile. During the period when “roving parties” were engaged in tracking natives supposedly to bring them into protective custody, there were accounts of natives being spotted, tracked and disappearing only to re-appear out of nowhere and set upon individual members of the roving party who had returned to their homes.¹⁷

The paranoid anxiety that was fed by real incidents of indigenous violence reflected the basic ignorance about indigenous societies that pervaded settler society. Most convicts and free settlers in Van Diemen’s Land, for example, never saw a Tasmanian Aborigine. Most had no direct knowledge about them, and what knowledge was available was largely anecdotal rumour (as was likely the case elsewhere). But of course this served only to increase their ominous power. To the settler on the ground, the silent and invisible world of the indigenes was mysterious, unknown and incipiently threatening. What was *known* about the local inhabitants was unstable. Systematized, classified, anthropological, historical and racial categories that would enable settlers to “understand” and explain (however incompletely) their indigenous neighbours had not yet emerged, or were in the process of formulation. And this created an *emotional volatility* in the way settlers looked at Indigenous people. Early settler literature is rent with the anxieties that this produced. So, for example, George Moore, an early settler in Western Australia in the 1830s, records the fluctuating rhythm of his feelings about the local natives. When their behaviour conforms to his expectations of how universal man would behave, the entry is benign and “humanitarian”. When the signals have switched and they do things that seem to come out of a moral no-man’s land, the entry is tense and hostile.¹⁸

Ignorance not only spawned fear, it also spawned faulty readings of what certain actions or signs meant. This was particularly true when settlers and others encountered large or small groups of Aborigines. Many of the major eruptions of frontier violence suggest that confusion and inability to decode behaviour were actively present in the colonial minds. Thus, even when there were determined intentions *not* to get into armed

conflict, clashes could still easily occur. One such incident occurred on the Rufus River in South Australia in 1841. In this case, a team of settlers and police had been put together under the command of Matthew Moorhouse, the humanitarian Protector of Aborigines, with the deliberate design of *avoiding* conflict—much to the grumbling discontent of settler voices in Adelaide. Nevertheless, a shooting match erupted precisely because whites interpreted certain moves by a group of Aborigines as threatening and were unable to understand what was being said by their parlaying group.¹⁹

Ignorance and lack of understanding also acted on subjective perceptions of indigenes to drain empathy from those who might otherwise be sympathetically inclined towards native peoples. Such people—and the Western Australia settler George Moore would be an example—found their sympathies severely challenged by behaviour that contradicted everything that they thought they knew about human behaviour. Different notions of property ownership were a common cause of dissonance between what a settler might *want* to feel about the Aborigines and what he was *led* to believe. Such was the case of George Lloyd, an early Tasmanian settler who prided himself on his decent treatment of the local Aborigines. He was, for example, very liberal with his distribution of food. But then some of his potatoes were stolen. How was he to understand this? It led him to believe that they would *rather* steal, since had they asked he would have gladly given. And, of course, he assumed that for their part the aborigines *knew* this about him.²⁰

Ignorance also fostered another feature of the psychology of colonial culture at this point in time: its tendency to project onto the Indigenous peoples the motives, feelings and nature of the colonizers themselves. The colonial record of this period is full of such reversals in which the indigenes are endowed with exactly the behavioural traits that are being deployed against them. This is, of course, a well-known psychological mechanism that allows the mind to assign blame for an atrocity onto the victim itself. Yet in the case of early settler society, it reflected a subjectivity that easily cast the settler in the role of victim. Settlers saw themselves as surrounded by a hostile physical environment, beleaguered by predatory indigenes *and* in addition denied protection by missionary inspired humanitarian policies of government. Some argued that this was to blame for the violence against the Aborigines and for the secrecy with which it was surrounded. It is not surprising then, that settler consciousness on this issue tended towards projective identification in which

the actual victim was the settler, not the massacred Aborigine. I think we can see this process operating in big and small ways in this period. The narrative that was developed in 1856–1857 by the colonial authorities in South Africa about the Xhosa cattle killing projected onto the chiefs the conspiratorial frame of mind of Sir George Grey and others who were plotting to use the supposed threat it posed to the colony to finally destroy the Xhosa polity. And the terrible atrocities at Myall Creek in NSW were justified by projecting onto the Aborigines exactly the kind of beings that were acted out by the white perpetrators.²¹

These attributes did not go unnoticed at the time. Some close observers of settler violence, such as the Aboriginal protectors, developed sophisticated understandings of it. There is a quite remarkable minute by James Stephen in 1841 where he comments on an episode of settler violence reported by the Governor of New South Wales. This was hardly the first time the Colonial Office had received such reports, so there is a note of pessimistic weariness that leaps out from Stephen's comments on the dispatch. But his remarks also reveal a penetrating insight into the *psychology* of settler violence from someone who lived in a pre-Freudian world. Stephen noted how the essence of the problem of racial conflict flowed from the hatred "with which the white man regards the black". And this hatred was driven by fear and,

from the consciousness of having done them great wrong and from the desire to escape the pain of self-reproach by laying the blame on the injured party. For these and such like reasons the black man is the subject of aversion so that in the most atrocious case imaginable a Jury acquitted the white criminals and the great body of the colonists took part with them. I know not what can be done or wisely attempted for the protection of these miserable people.²²

Stephen is here articulating how projective identification allowed denial of responsibility for acts that were contrary to the normative values of society. But this was a psychological reflex that operated extensively in empire. Thus, narratives were invented about the threats posed by the native people to the security and safety of settlers, which served to justify violence as a defensive, pre-emptive strategy. But these narratives were based as much upon rumour as upon fact—although they typically always had a factual element to them—and they actually reflected the violence that colonialists were willing to perpetrate upon the indigenous

peoples rather than the reverse. As Michael Taussig has put it, a kind of colonial mirror-effect was instigated “which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize”.²³

This was not the only psychological impulse that we can identify as underlying colonial violence, although it may very well have been the most important. There was also what is known as blindsight where one side of the brain does not admit to what another side of the brain knows very well has happened or is true. It seems probable that something like this must have been in operation amongst “humanitarians” who were implicated in the very atrocities of empire that they condemned. Let us take the case of George Robinson the famous “protector” of the Tasmanian Aborigines whom he sought to rescue from the violent attentions of the settlers in the early 1830s. After three arduous treks into the interior, Robinson persuaded, cajoled and coerced the remaining Tasmanians to move to the settlement at Wylabenna on Flinders Island in the Bass Straits. There he watched them begin to die off, one after the other, primarily from lung infections. Yet at no point during this process did he reflect on his responsibility for their plight; he continued to hold fast to the belief that he had rescued and saved them from a fate worse than death. Blindsight is one psychological mechanism that allows those who are implicated in atrocities to continue to live without overpowering shame or guilt. Such techniques were essentially strategies of individual coping that deserve more attention than they have so far received from historians concerned to understand the imbrication of humanitarian mentalities and colonial governance.²⁴

But what about the mechanisms that were used in the wider culture and society to explain colonial violence within the context of liberal values and prevent its presence from destabilizing the idea of liberal empire? This is a particularly relevant question to ask of the early nineteenth century, since it was the one moment when the claims of empire to be a liberal and liberating force reflected a genuine ideological position. It was the moment when the dominant (though, of course, not the only) discourse on empire stressed the potential reconciliation between the competing tensions and claims of Indigenous peoples and settlers. We can loosely call this a “humanitarian” policy since self-conscious humanitarians propagated it. Our hindsight that this promise was doomed to failure has led us to reduce our understanding of humanitarianism almost to caricature. Nevertheless, it deserves to be taken seriously as the

animating theme of policy both in the Colonial Office and in those areas of the empire that are discussed in this chapter. It is not helpful to suggest that it was a gross hypocrisy, or that it reflected the pious obscurantism of nineteenth-century evangelicalism, or even that it was a mere strategy of governance. More interesting are the mechanisms by which colonial violence was contained and explained within the context of this ideology. What was it in the broader culture that created the moral indifference that allowed violence to thrive?²⁵

LIBERAL EMPIRE AND VIOLENCE

In order to understand this, the place to start is to return to the State and violence. Obviously, the imperial State had a wide armoury of policies to regulate Indigenous peoples: one was what Sir John Craddock, writing from the Eastern Cape to Lord Liverpool in 1812 called “a proper degree of terror”. By which he meant the use of salutary violence to bring native peoples into line, or intimidate them into the necessary degree of respect for the colonial presence. Whether this was the first time such a notion had been formulated as a kind of policy statement is not clear. It would hardly be the first time that disciplinary violence was used as a strategy of rule. But it does seem to be the case that such a notion became normalized as a means of policy from this point. Undoubtedly, this was partly because the idea of salutary terror was consistent with the nineteenth-century notion that severe punishment was integral to behavioural reform, that a just measure of pain was necessary for the modification of criminal conduct.²⁶ It is not surprising that this perspective was part of colonial governance. This was why even the most humanitarian-minded official was prepared to admit its necessity under certain circumstances. After all, it had been similar humanitarians who had been involved in prison reform in the United Kingdom.

Certainly salutary terror was the most common justification for State violence in the period. It was how the evangelical humanitarian Sir George Arthur justified execution of two Aborigines in 1826 when the Tasmanian Black War was heating up because, as he explained, it “would induce them to a more conciliatory line of conduct”. Sir George Grey used it as his excuse in 1846 for kidnapping and illegally shipping off several Maori chiefs to exile in the penal colony of Maria Island, Tasmania. Salutary terror was a purging violence; it was intended to induce good behaviour in the future and thus allow the business of Christianizing

improvement to get on. It was also a disciplinary violence that could be held over the heads of indigenes to keep them in line. This was how George Robinson used it on his ‘friendly missions’ to the Tasmanian Aborigines when he warned them that failure to accept his prescription for their survival (of removal to the islands in the Bass Straits) would mean that they would be exposed to the uncontrolled violence of the settlers.²⁷

Salutary terror was the point at which State violence legitimized settler violence. It normalized coercion as a necessary part of the pacifying, civilizing process. It cleared the way for the beneficent forces within the imperial mission. This is certainly how people like Arthur and Sir George Grey squared it with their consciences. There is an interesting little vignette in the memoirs of an Australian pastoralist writing of the 1840s where he tells the story of a disciplinary expedition against a sheep stealing tribe which resulted in several deaths and the capture of one man whom he allowed to think was to be hanged, even though it would not have been judicially proper. But the scare had its reformatory effect: “ever after he and I were the best of friends, as he ascribed his release entirely to me. And his tribe also reformed regarding sheep stealing, having been intimidated by the little police exhibition!!” Thus, when the history of these years came to be invented in the later nineteenth century, the bracing effects of salutary terror on the unruly natives was recorded as a beneficent gift from a stern but caring settler community and imperial regime.²⁸

And this brings me to the second consideration of how violence and the norms of liberal society were reconciled: the enduring theme of silence. We know that history is full of silences and that silence is not simply a matter of emotion. It is also true that silence is not the same as forgetting. Colonial violence, for example, is not so much forgotten by its perpetrators as shrouded in a blanket of cultural denial. Thus, Dutch colonial violence in Indonesia was known and even part of public awareness at the time. But it was not admitted as part of what the Dutch Empire was all about. And the same is surely true of violence in the British Empire, where its absence from the historiography represents the separation of its presence from the main story of what the British Empire was.²⁹

Silence, then, is an historical construct, and as such there are different regimes and protocols that govern its operation over time. Thus, one of the signal features of settler violence in the early nineteenth century was that it was openly admitted and talked about *in the public sphere*.

The playwright, William Moncrieff, for example, staged a London play in 1831 about the violence against the Tasmanian Aborigines. Colonial officials and commentators were fully aware of the extent of casual settler violence. They viewed it with horror and concern because of the challenge it posed to the possibility of a humanitarian policy for empire. But if the violence of race relations on the frontier was admitted in the public discourse, in the *private* discourse of the frontier the practice of *silence* was already deeply implanted in settler culture. This silence was enough to stymie the imperial State when it did rouse itself to try and fulfil its often declared principles of extending to the Aborigines the protection deserved by all subjects of Her Majesty. So, an official policy of avoiding violence coexisted with the settler practice of arbitrary savagery. Thus, an overlander party in the spring of 1841 from New South Wales to Adelaide led by Alexander Buchanan was involved in the quite unnecessary killing of several Aborigines—after seemingly rejecting their peaceful overtures—including a well-known local chief. A few days later the party met up with Governor George Gawler and the explorer Charles Sturt, who were engaged on a mission of conciliation to the Aborigines. They asked if the overlanders had experienced any trouble with Aborigines: “we told them they had been pretty quiet except at the Darling they had annoyed us a little. Did not say we had shot any.”³⁰

From studies of atrocities in the twentieth century we know well enough the phenomenon of group silence enforced by the power of collective pressure. The conditions of the frontier at this moment in time fostered a sense of informal group solidarity, which also served to protect perpetrators and to enforce silence. Memorialists admitted this to their private diaries. Thus, Henry Meyrick, writing of Victoria in the 1840s, noted how blacks were hunted down, men women and children “shot whenever they can be met with. I have protested against it at every station I have been in...in the strongest language, but these things are kept very secret as the penalty would certainly be hanging.” But he admitted to a growing moral indifference himself. There was a time he recorded when “my blood would run cold at the mention of these things, but now I am become so familiarized with scenes of horror from having murder made a topic of everyday conversation...If I could remedy these things, I would speak loudly though it cost me all I am worth...but as I cannot I will keep aloof and know nothing and say nothing.”³¹

Silence and various forms of denial serve to shield moral indifference. But they were not the best protections for an empire whose ideology

continued to project itself as carrying progress and development in its train. And for this, it was necessary to develop narratives that allowed the violence to be contained and explained within the discourse structures of liberal society. Such narratives involve the construction of a story that will fit the known facts, but serves to displace responsibility away from the belief system that is being challenged, in this case, the civilizing nature of the imperial process itself. An example of how this worked is provided by the development of a believable narrative to explain the racial violence against the Tasmanian Aborigines.³²

Towards the end of the Black War against the Tasmanian Aborigines in 1830, Lt. Governor Sir George Arthur set up a committee to develop both an account of the previous six years or so of violence and to make policy recommendations. The committee was composed of liberal minded members of Hobart's elite, chaired by the local leading cleric. The committee looked back over the previous 30 years and developed a narrative that gave full recognition to the violence of the settler community. It reported cases of women being thrown onto fires and natives being hunted like game on horseback. But it consigned such violence to the lawless past of the early settlement when free settlers had not yet displaced the convict element in the colony. "It would indeed appear that there prevailed at this period too general a forgetfulness of those rights of ordinary compassion, to which as human beings, and as original occupants of the soil, these defenceless and ignorant people were justly entitled. They were sacrificed in many instances to momentary caprice or anger." Indeed, there was to hand an identifiable under-class of convicts and sealers who lived in the islands of the Bass Straits whom the committee could blame for the violent history of white-Aborigine relations. This version of events, however, conveniently ignored the fact that most of the violence had taken place following the arrival of large numbers of free settlers in the 1820s.³³

And even whilst it was exposing the atrocities of the convicts and the settlers, the committee offered an historical narrative that centred evidence of the treacherous and untrustworthy nature of the Aborigines themselves. Thus, "insulated or unprotected individuals have never been perfectly secure"; they were always subject to the volatility of indigenous behaviour, which could switch from friendly to hostile without a moment's notice. The treacherous character of the natives was accepted. Even with the most friendly interactions, there remained in the character of the natives "beyond all doubt...a lurking spirit of cruelty and

mischievous craft” which led to the murder of stockkeepers whom they fell in with, in out of the way places, and who had given them no provocation. And even though the government had consistently insisted on the need to treat the Aborigines with humanity and kindness, such efforts went ill-rewarded by the Aborigines who “have lost the sense of superiority of the white man, and the dread of the effect of firearms which they formerly entertained and have of late conducted their plans of aggression with such resolution as they were not heretofore thought to possess and with a caution and artifice which renders it almost impossible to foresee or defeat their purpose.” It was at this point that martial law became necessary, and at this point also that a policy of hunting down the Aborigines by roving parties of settlers was justified. By the same token this also vindicated the “conciliatory” policy of indigenous people’s removal to islands in the Bass Sea where disease and infection rapidly shrank their numbers to a mere handful. So in the end the committee could conclude that violence came not from discrete and clear individual wrongs that were done to them by the particular individuals involved, but “from a wanton and savage spirit inherent in them and impelling them to mischief and cruelty”. Although this was a narrative that contradicted everything that such humanitarians knew and were prepared to admit, this was the narrative that was absorbed into British culture. It was the default position whenever the uncomfortable issue of the Tasmanian Aborigines was raised.

What we see here is a very common feature in the way self-consciously “civilized” societies handle actions by their members that transgress the self-proclaimed values of that society. Blame for the situation is transferred away from the perpetrator to the prey itself. In this case the convenient presence of sealers and convicts served to carry the weight of imperial responsibilities. But ultimately it was the Tasmanians themselves who were to blame. It was the cunningly treacherous nature of the indigenous character that forced the imperial power—much against its humanitarian will—to implement policies that allowed for precisely the same kind of personal violence that had been identified as the original cause of racial suspicion and hostility in the first place. In a wider frame, such a narrative served as a model for the way violence could be explained as an unavoidable by-product of the colonial encounter. This was not, however, the place where humanitarians started. Their initial assumption as they confronted the colonial encounter was that violence was a product of discrete conditions that could and should be removed.

Such narratives showed them that this was not necessarily the case and, therefore, allowed their consciences to be reconciled to the proximity of barbarity.

Having made this reasoned case, the committee then slipped easily into the rhetoric of settler fear and panic. It pronounced that the “total ruin of every Establishment is but too certainly to be apprehended unless immediate measures can be devised for suppressing the system of aggression under which so many are suffering”. All other measures of forbearance led by a conciliatory government have failed and now decisive measures of military repression were regrettably necessary. It may have been true that the natives were first led to this path of action by the outrages committed on them, which were “a disgrace to our name and nation and even to human nature”. But now the natives are visiting a revenge, not on the perpetrators, but on the innocent, even women and children.³⁴

The narrative that was developed here was a narrative of *displacement*. It was also a narrative that served the purpose of de-humanizing the Aborigines so that violence against them could be more easily reconciled with normative moral values.³⁵ The psychology of colonial violence was full of such strategies. Another favourite trope was the way indigenous violence showed no discrimination between innocent and guilty. Eighteen months after the Aborigines Committee made its report, news arrived of the murder of two settlers, Captain Thomas and Mr. Parker, who were known for their liberal humanitarian views of indigenous people with a record of treating them well. These men had been murdered, it seemed, because they trusted too much and were lured into a deliberate trap. One of these settlers was the brother of the Chairman of the Aborigines Committee itself. The predictable result was a fevered outcry in the organs of settler opinion. These murders were like petrol thrown onto the fire of settler fear and vulnerability. They were the final element in the construction of this narrative. If such men could be murdered, it was clear that the Aborigines were too far-gone in savagery to allow any other policy but that of repression, which now became an accepted wisdom throughout the settler society.³⁶

A narrative explanation of colonial violence was, therefore, constructed in the public discourse of the early nineteenth century at the same time that it was silenced in the private discourse. But by the late nineteenth century the ordering of this regime of silence was reversed. Now it was settler culture that was prepared to admit violence and

imperial culture that denied it. By 1870s, the settler generation wanted to leave their stories to posterity, and a developing nationalism demanded foundational narratives. In this context, silence about violence at the local level (and I am speaking now mainly of Australia, but I think it also applies to South Africa) was replaced by narratives that sought to integrate it into a wider narrative about national identity that pitted the hardy pastoralist settler against the harsh and challenging environment of the bush. Violence was sanitized in this process; it could not be denied, but it could be coded and re-contextualized as the product of the rough and difficult circumstances of the frontier. In the process many false arguments were created that are still being swatted down. One of the most audacious claims that began to be heard in this literature, and which still frames much historical discussion, was how policies designed to “protect” indigenous people were themselves responsible for the violence and did more harm than good. Even a governor like George Grey came in for condemnation for his “weak policy” of trying to restrain and contain settler violence!³⁷

But if this was true at the local level, in imperial culture more generally a silence descended in the late nineteenth century to supplant the more open acknowledgements of 50 years before. Although the story of the Tasmanian Aborigines was not forgotten—thanks to a few local historians who strangely continued to foster the spirit of early nineteenth century humanitarianism—it was fitted into dominant narratives such as the “vanishing races”.³⁸ Of course, this was a way of avoiding facing the violence that produced the vanishing. And these stories are to be found in the works of late nineteenth century writers such as Charles Dilke and Anthony Trollope as they circulated the empire writing official narratives for a popular audience. Nor of course did the continuing violence of the frontier in Australia get more than an occasional notice in the halls of power in London. So when Aimé Césaire and other early post-colonial thinkers announced the inherent violence of colonialism in 1950, it was in a way a *re*-discovery.

And so we return to where I began in this chapter. Until the recent past British culture learnt to treat this kind of colonial violence as aberrational, as something that was essentially out of the ordinary. Naturally, as Caroline Elkins and others have recently reminded us, those who made policy had a more sanguine view of the uses of violence. But the founding generations of imperial historians did not treat violence as of much account. Nor for that matter have more recent general histories. There is

no supplementary volume on violence in the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, for example.³⁹ But if it has tended to get erased from the imperial historiography, violence has sprung to prominence in the local historiographies of Australia in particular—as the various works cited in this chapter testify.

This is a lead worth pursuing. And not only to put the historical record straight, but also because it provides a way to enter into the history of emotions that was engaged in empire. It suggests that making empire was full of anxiety, fear and doubt and it reveals the *fragilities* that were part of the empire project. It is useful also as a way of teasing apart, in close detail, how it was that liberal society coped with and explained the violence that was integral to its engagement with empire. And this, of course, is a problem that is with us still.

NOTES

1. A start has been made to put violence into the narrative of empire by Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Kim Wagner, ‘Going Native: Colonial Informants and Contentious Intimacies’, North American Conference on British Studies. Little Rock, November 2015. Richard Price, *Making Empire. Colonial Encounters and Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
2. Elizabeth Elbourne, ‘The Sin of the Settler: The 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates Over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth Century British White Settler Empire’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial Studies*, 4.3 (2003); Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1982); and *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) were two of the earliest studies to document the extent of frontier violence. P.D. Gardener, *Gippsland Massacres. The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribes 1800–1860* (Warragul, Vic.: West Gippsland and Latrobe Valley Community Education Centre, 1983). More recently, Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten Wars* (Sydney, N.S.W.: NewSouth Publishing, 2013). For other characteristic examples see the following pieces by Lyndall Ryan, ‘Settler massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 34:3 (September 2010), 257–273, ‘Massacre in the Black War in Tasmania 1823–34: a case study of the Meander River Region, June 1827’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10:4 (December 2008), 479–499, ‘Settler Massacre on the Australian Colonial Frontier 1836–1851,’ Philip Dwyer, and Lyndall Ryan (eds), *Theatres of Violence. Massacre, Mass*

- Killing and Atrocity throughout History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 94–109. Timothy Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence. Queensland's Frontier Killing-Time* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2013).
3. Raymond Evans, 'The country has another past: Queensland and the History Wars', and Lyndall Ryan, "'Hard Evidence": the debate about massacre in the Black War in Tasmania', in Francis Peters-Little, Anne Curthoys, and John Docker (eds), *Passionate Histories myth, memory and Indigenous Australia* (Canberra: ANU E Press, Aboriginal History Monograph 21, 2010). Tom Griffith, 'The Language of Conflict', in *Frontier Conflict. The Australian Experience*, Bain Attwood and G.S. Foster (eds) (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 135–149. Keith Windshuttle's major challenge to the extent of frontier violence was *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002).
 4. Mohamed Adhikari (ed.), *Genocide on Settler Frontiers. When Hunter-Gatherers and Commercial Stock Farmers Clash* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2014), has important essays on South Africa and also Tasmania, Canada and the United States. For South Africa see also Nigel Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern Frontier in the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), and Susan Newton King, *Masters and Servants on the Cape's Eastern Frontier, 1760–1803* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For India, see Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For Burma see Jonathan Saha, 'A Mockery of Justice? Colonial Law, The Everyday State and Village Politics in the Burma Delta, c. 1890–1910', *Past and Present*, 217 (November 2012), 187–212. For the United States see, Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land. Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide. The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). James Belich, *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict. The Maori, the British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); Vincent O'Malley, 'Inglorious Dastards: Rangiaowhia raid and the 'great war for New Zealand'', *The Listener* (New Zealand), 25 February 2017.
 5. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, 1–2, 9.
 6. And this is not to take account of the cultural impact, which I will not address here. For discussions of the difficulties of making accurate counts of the violence see Richard Broome, "The Statistics of Frontier Conflict," in Attwood and Foster, *Frontier Conflict*, 88–98 and Raymond Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen, "'I cannot say the numbers that were killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier', Paper Presented to the Australian Historical Association, 33rd

- Annual Conference, University of Queensland, 7–11 July 2015 https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2467836, accessed 27 February 2017. Henry Reynolds, in *Forgotten War* (Sydney, 2013) 133–134. See also the very important work of Ian D. Clark, *Scars in the Landscape. A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803–1859* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies, 1995) who has uncovered 103 separate killing sites in Victoria most of which occurred between 1838 and 1842; Robert Foster and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Out of the Silence. History and Memory of South Australia's Frontier Wars* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2012); Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence*; Ryan, 'Settler Massacres on the Port Phillip Frontier, 1836–1851'.
7. The relationship of the law to this type of violence is another big question that I shall not address here. There is a large and growing literature by legal scholars relevant to these points. But of particular relevance to this argument are Julie Evans, 'Where Lawlessness is the Law. The Settler Colonial Frontier as a Legal Space of Violence', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 30 (2009), 3–22; Evans, 'Colonialism and the Rule of Law: The Case of South Australia', in Barry Dunstall and Godfrey Graeme, *Empire and Crime 1840–1940* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan, 2005), 57–77; Diane Kirkby and Catherine Coleborne (eds), *Law, History, Colonialism: The Reach of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
 8. Aimé Cesairé, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, 2000), 35; Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, CBE1/111, *Committee for the Care of Captured Aborigines. Minutes of Meetings. 17 February 1830–18 September 1832*, 9 March 1830, 24–25. It was a common practice to sever the heads of aborigine prisoners, especially perhaps those who had led an effective guerrilla war against the settlers. For an example see, George Fletcher Moore, *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia* (London: M. Walbrook, 1884), 206. For Maori heads sold in Sydney, see, British Parliamentary Papers, *Select Committee on Aborigines*, 1837, Report, 16 along with other gory details. For Hintsas, see Premish Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsas. Post Apartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009), 31, 55–58, 131–132. For the collection of skulls, see Andrew Bank, 'Of "Native Skulls" and "Noble Caucasians": Phrenology in Colonial South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 22:3 (Sept 1996): 387–403; Tom Lawson, *The Last Man. A British Genocide in Tasmania* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 165–171.
 9. For colonial violence as genocide, see, Lawson, *The Last Man*; Colin Tatz, 'Colonial Genocide in Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research*,

- 1:3 (1999), 315–352; A. Dirk Moses, ‘Genocide and Settler Society in Australian History’, in *Genocide. Critical Studies in Historical Concepts. Volume III. Colonial and Imperial Genocides*, A. Dirk Moses (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), 140–181. Adhikari (ed.), *Genocide on Settler Frontiers. When Hunter-Gatherers and Commercial Stock Farmers Clash*. And for a good discussion of this issue see Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 138–158.
10. The complicated relationship between humanitarianism and violence is addressed in Penny Edmonds and Anna Johnston (eds), ‘Empire, Humanitarianism and Violence in the Colonies’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 17:1 (Spring 2016).
 11. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice*, 9: ‘white violence vividly revealed the disorder and terror brought through colonial contact’; Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 75–84. For the Trugannini story see, Hon. Mr. Justice Crawford, et al., *The Diaries of John Helder Wedge 1824–1835* (Hobart: The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1962), xliii.
 12. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1969), 56; Thomas Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers. Being a Series of Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines Etc. Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellence Charles Joseph LaTrobe* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 219; Reynolds, *Frontier, Aborigines, Settlers and Land*, 3–31, 174; James Boyce, *Van Diemen’s Land* (Melbourne, Victoria: Black Inc., 2008), 38, 194–197, 284, 289. On fear more generally as an element of social violence see, Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy. The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 6, 42, 225; Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume I. The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119–126, 146; Kim Wagner, ‘“Treading Upon Fires”: The “Mutiny” Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India’, *Past and Present*, 218 (February 2013), 159–197. For an example of settler fear in the French colony of New Caledonia see, Adrian Muckle, ‘Killing the “Fantôme Canaque”: Evoking and Invoking the Possibility of Settler Revolt in New Caledonia 1853–1915’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 37:1 (2002), 25–44.
 13. Edward M. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria Then Called the Port Phillip District from 1841 to 1851* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1883), 51–54; Edward John Eyre [Edited with introduction by Jill Waterhouse], *Autobiographical Narrative of Residence and Exploration in Australia 1832–1839* (London: Caliban Books, 1984), 136–137; N.J.B. Plomley, *Friendly Mission. The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Association, 1966), 174, 524, 537, 865–867 for representative examples. Schwarz, *Memories of Empire*, 119 for a nice example from Queensland.

14. See, CO 209/309 New South Wales. *Original Correspondence Despatches*, April–June 1841, ff. 70–95. There are many accounts of the Risdon Cove massacre, at which up to 50 Indigenous people were killed. See Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1995), 76–77; Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 37–41. For the Myall Creek massacre see M. F. Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86* (Sydney, 1979), 46–47; R.H.W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists. Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s* (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 1974), 34–40; Michael Sturma, 'Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 9:16 (1985), 62–70.
15. Barry Morris, "Frontier Colonialism as a Culture of Terror." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 16, no. 35 (2009): 72–87; Sturma, "Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder."
16. 'Shooting An Elephant', <http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/887/> accessed 6 June 2012; Ranajit Guha, 'Not at Home in Empire', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (Spring, 1997), 482–493.
17. Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 865–66, 'They could not believe it...[the man was watched and on] his departure...[the natives] concealed themselves from the party and murdered him on his return.' Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 194.
18. Marie Fels, 'Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, Van Diemen's Land 1801–11,' *Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings*, 29:2 (1982), 47–79, on the generally peaceful relations of the first decade or so of contact. Moore, *Ten Years of Eventful Life*, 199–200, 211–218, 226–228, 380, 385, for representative examples. The experience parallels the missionaries' inability to read the signs recounted in my *Making Empire*, Chaps. 4 and 5. The importance of rumour as a means of political communication is another aspect of the ignorance of this phase of colonial relations. I do not have space to deal with that here.
19. For this very interesting incident, see Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Mythologizing Frontier Violence: Narrative Versions of the Rufus River Conflict, 1841–1899', *Journal of Australian Studies* 23.61 (1999), 75–82. And for just one example of how cultural mis-readings could lead to violence see, Charles Bonny, 'Autobiographical Notes', Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, *Proceedings 1901–1902*, 5, 89.
20. Cassandra Pybus, *Community of Thieves* (Port Melbourne, 1991), 50–55; see also Moore, *Ten Years of Eventful Life*, 120, 198–200, 211–216, 343.
21. See *Making Empire*, Chap. 11. For Myall Creek see, Michael Sturma, "Myall Creek and the Psychology of Mass Murder." See Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial. Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), for how knowledge about atrocities is processed and

- suppressed. This is a general feature of colonial society that has been (unsurprisingly) noticed more by those subject to its rule and culture than the perpetrators themselves. See, for example, O Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban. The Psychology of Colon Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1983).
22. For such a protector see Geoffrey Grainger, 'Matthew Moorhouse and the South Australian Aborigines, c. 1836–1856', (BA Honours Thesis, Flinders University, 1980). CO 201/309, New South Wales. *Original Correspondence Despatches April–June 1841*, ff. 63.
 23. For a good example of this process, see Michael Taussig, 'Culture of Terror—Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984), 494–495; Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 33–34, for the same theme in Queensland.
 24. For Wybalenna see N.J.B. Plomley, *Weep In Silence. A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement* (Sandy Bay, Tas.: Blubber Head Press, 1987). For the concept of blindsight, see Cohen, *States of Denial*, 6.
 25. We have only just begun to de-construct this period and the complicated and multi-faceted phenomenon of humanitarianism. The policies and work of colonial governors such as Grey and Arthur have to be seen in the light of their humanitarian sensibilities. For this see, Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*. See also, Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire. Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541–1954* (Oxford, 2013); Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler'; and Amanda Nettelbeck, "'We Should Take Each Other by the Hand": Conciliation and Diplomacy in Colonial Australia and North West Canada', in Kate Darian-Smith and Penelope Edmonds (eds), *Conciliation on Colonial Frontiers. Conflict, Performance and Commemoration in Australia and the Pacific Rim* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 36–53. For the recognition of the violence of colonial dispossession at the time see Saxe Bannister, *Humane Policy; or Justice to the Aborigines or New Settlements* (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1830).
 26. Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain. The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850* (London: Macmillan, 1989).
 27. Ben MacLennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror. John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (London: Low, 1870), 76. Salutory terror was not used only against indigenes, of course. Arthur used it in Tasmania as part of the strict disciplinary regime

- of his convict policy. See Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 168–169, for Arthur's judicial reign of terror in the mid-1820s. There are many examples of salutary terror as the justification for State led violence, such as the Pinjarra expedition in Western Australia. See Reynolds, *Forgotten Wars*, 55–56; and Pamela Statham, 'James Stirling and the Pinjarra', *Studies in Western Australian History*, 23 (2003), 167–194. The hopes that salutary terror would effect reformation were always doomed to be disappointed as some people realized this at the time, see J.E. Calder's comments on Arthur's use of it in *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits Etc., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*. (Hobart, 1875), 45. On Sir George Grey and the Maori convicts see Maori Convicts, 'Documents 1846–1847', Turnbull Library, MS 0714; Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Mythologizing Frontier Violence: Narrative Versions of the Rufus River Conflict, 1841–1899', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23.61 (1999), 75–82; and Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 178, for the combination of conciliation and terror as a strategy.
28. Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, 198–206; and John Wraithall Bull, *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia* (Adelaide: E.S. Wigg & Son, 1884 [reprint 1972]), 127, 309, are examples of the normalization of salutary terror as part of the civilizing process—how it was necessary to create dread in the minds of the aborigines in order to establish a safe place for the lives and property of the settlers.
 29. On the Netherlands see, Paul Bul, 'Colonial Memory and Forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia', in Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses (eds), *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence. The Dutch Empire in Indonesia* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 261–281. For the complicated issue of silence and its relationship to emotions and historical experience see, William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 52–53, 132–134.
 30. Alexander Buchanan, 'Diary of a Journey Overland from Sydney to Adelaide with Sheep, July–December 1839', Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, *Proceedings*, 1921–1922 (Adelaide, 1922), 72–76. For the way regimes of silence were reflected in the various phases of the historiography of the Tasmanian tragedy, see Lyndall Ryan, "'Hard Evidence": the debate about massacre in the Black War in Tasmania', in Peters-Little et al., *Passionate Histories*, 39–50.
 31. The play was, *Van Diemen's Land. An Operatic Drama in Three Parts*, F.J. Meyrick, *Life in the Bush (1840–1847). A Memoir of Henry Howard Meyrick* (London: Nelson, 1939), 136. This code of silence has a history, too, of course. After the Myall Creek massacre of June 1838 for which seven white settlers were convicted and hanged, the code of silence

- became much tighter. See P.G. Gardner, *Through Foreign Eyes. European Perceptions of the Kurnai Tribes of Gippsland* (Churchill, Vic.: Centre for Gippsland Studies, 1988), 31. This code of silence was not peculiar to the antipodes. Arthur had encountered it in Honduras when he tried to bring the white settlers there to brook for their brutality against the slaves. See Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, 51.
32. See Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, 74 et al. for an intelligent discussion of this.
 33. In fact, the Bass Straits sealers do not seem to have been an inherently violent community. See Patsy Cameron, *Grease and Ochre. The blending of two cultures at the colonial sea frontier* (Launceston, Tas.: Fullers Bookshop, 2011). To humanitarians, however, they were a disordered community without law or religion that was all too symptomatic of the frontier-like quality of the Empire in the southern seas at this point in time.
 34. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, *Aborigines Committee, Report 19 March 1830 CSO1/1/332/7578 Vol. 17, 54–56, 70–74*. See Lawson, *The Last Man*, 122 for the way this narrative goes into British culture and re-appears whenever Tasmanian Aborigines are discussed.
 35. Such narratives were also developed, of course, for specific events. In the case of the Myall Creek Massacre, this happened immediately through the reporting of the trials of the 11 men accused of the massacre in the *Sydney Herald*. See Rebecca Wood, 'Frontier Violence and the bush legend. The Sydney Herald's response to the Myall creek massacre trials and the creation of colonial identity', *History Australia*, 6:3 (2009), 1–19. And for the psychological dynamic involved in this kind of displacement, see Harris, Lasana T. and Susan T. Fiske, 'Dehumanized Perception: A Psychological Means to Facilitate Atrocities, Torture, and Genocide', *Journal of Psychology*, 219:3 (2010), 175–181.
 36. CO 280/30, Van Diemen's Land. *Original Correspondence. Despatches* (September–December 1831), 25 October 1831 Arthur to Goderich for an extremely interesting dispatch in which the Lt. Governor establishes this also as the official narrative of his administration's Aborigine policy. Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 9–13; James Erskine Calder, *Papers Re the Aborigines of Tasmania*, Mitchell Library, A597, 'Report on the Deaths of Captain Thomas and Mr. Parker'; Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 289. It was now felt that 'there could be no safety for the British while any Aborigine remained on Van Diemen's Land'.
 37. For a very good example of this see Bull, *Early Experiences of Life in Australia*, 69–72, 74–75; and also the essays in Thomas Francis, edited by C.E. Sayers Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers. Being a Series of*

Papers on the Early Occupation of the Colony, the Aborigines Etc. Addressed by Victorian Pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph LaTrobe (reprint Melbourne, Vic.: Heinemann, 1969). For a full discussion of this issue see Foster and Nettelbeck, *Out of the Silence*, Chaps. 5 and 9; Gardener, *Gippsland Massacres. The Destruction of the Kurnai Tribes 1800–1860*, 95–96; Gardener, *Through Foreign Eyes*, 20–21, 105–107. And for the way violence was normalized in the discourse of the State and politics in the later nineteenth century, see Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, 121–123, 130–132.

38. Thus, see Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, which is a quite remarkable account, sympathetic towards the Aborigines and clear-eyed about British violence, but which also repeats the official narrative that the violence was largely a product of degenerated Britons. And for the vanishing races, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings. Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races 1800–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).
39. There is however an essay by Jock McCulloch on ‘Empire and Violence, 1900–1939’, in Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Colonial Violence and the Picturesque

Elizabeth Mjelde

In 1819, Lieutenant William Lyttleton of the 73rd Regiment of Foot published *A Set of Views in the Island of Ceylon*, a collection of six large aquatints.¹ Lyttleton, an amateur artist, participated in Britain's second campaign against Kandy, Sri Lanka's inland kingdom, in 1815. The colonial government treated the occupation of the capital as a decisive victory, crucial not only to dominance of the island but also to Britain's larger imperial goals in and around the Indian Ocean. The military nature of Lyttleton's activities in Sri Lanka are apparent in these aquatints. Two of the six views were depicted from the vantage point of fortresses, while a third, *The Summit of the Balani Mountain* (Fig. 1), depicts the remnant of a fort which, as reported in the caption, had recently been the site of a Kandyan battery overlooking 'the only pass' to the inland capital. The aquatint signified a moment of conquest, since Kandy had been deemed unattainable by earlier Portuguese and Dutch colonial governments but was now accessible to the British. 'The road', Lyttleton pointed out, 'which winds the brow of the hill, terminating in a delightful valley, is now rendered passable for conveyances with the greatest facility, presenting no longer an almost insurmountable barrier to the Kandyan capital'.²

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Fig. 1 William Lyttleton *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*. Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Shelfmark XX/58

A Set of Views in the Island of Ceylon was informed by picturesque discourse, a form of representation that coincided with, aided, and served as a form of colonial violence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Decades before Lyttleton published these views, the picturesque had been, and to some degree continued to be, a popular way of representing the domestic landscape of Great Britain. Practitioners of the discourse depicted actual places by means of aesthetic guidelines designed to turn local sites into views that resembled seventeenth-century Continental landscape paintings. In doing so, they referenced work by Italian, French, and Dutch artists admired and collected by British elites. With the spread of picturesque practice to the colonies, artists transformed localities from the West Indies to Asia into visually uniform, familiar, and peaceful landscapes. Since many of those who produced such images were military officers like Lyttleton, an investigation of the relationship between epistemic and material violence resulting from colonial warfare is undertaken here, for the purpose of contextualizing picturesque imagery *vis-à-vis* the goals and activities of empire builders.

To present the Kandyan landscape in a manner that would appeal to viewers in the metropole, Lyttleton reimagined a place otherwise foreign to British eyes as one that would seem familiar. He chose a vantage point that opened to receding planes, and in which trees framed and contained the scene from both sides, aspects of picturesque composition that strong-armed viewers into associating the island's landscape with the types of scenes they searched for, sketchbooks in hand, while boating or walking in Scotland, Wales, or England. Moreover, Lyttleton eliminated local inhabitants from the picture plane or portrayed them as unidentifiable, passive figures.

Delocalizing Sri Lankan land and people in these ways amounts to profound misrepresentation, which is categorized here as a 'micro-action' of violence. I borrow this term from postcolonial theorist, Achille Mbembe, who conceptualizes colonial violence as marked by small actions—violence 'in what might be called the details'.³ I have examined descriptions of hundreds of incidents of violence in early colonial Sri Lanka, gleaned from unpublished letters and documents exchanged by government officials, to published government gazettes, to the memoirs of military officers, clergymen, gentlemen, civil servants, artists, and others who travelled to the island during the period of British conquest. Each act of violence described therein violated a body, or the bodies, of Asians, Africans, or Europeans, or elements of the natural environment. Because the picturesque advanced knowledge about colonized people and land in ways that altered, negated, or otherwise violated local realities, such images must be discussed as micro-actions of violence in British Sri Lanka.

To lay a groundwork for understanding how and why military officers and other picturesque practitioners, including professional artists, misrepresented land and people in the midst or aftermath of colonial warfare, I offer examples of the discourse from two battle spaces: Mysore, India in the midst of the Anglo-Mysore Wars of the late eighteenth century, and Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the first and second campaigns undertaken by the British against Kandy, from 1803 through 1805 and again in 1815. The images explored here are landscape views that bear evidence of colonial violence based on artists' inclusion of forts, remnants of forts, or weaponry at the sites depicted. Colonial artists skillfully enfolded military accoutrements into the landscape, subordinating and naturalizing evidence of conflict. These landscape views were pervasive ideologically as well as practical. They codified imperial values,



Fig. 2 Colin Mackenzie *Distant View of Savan-Droog in Mysore from the East Side*. ©British Library Board, London, Shelfmark WD573

particularly in the matter of colonial contestation of land, while passing as documentation of military action.

WARSCAPES OF ‘THE CARNATIC’

Distant View of Savan-Droog in Mysore from the East Side (Fig. 2), a wash drawing made in the early 1790s by Colonel Colin Mackenzie, an officer (eventually as an engineer) in the Madras Army, reveals a great deal about the spread of metropolitan picturesque practice into the colonial battle spaces of South India in the late eighteenth century.⁴ Mackenzie reduced nature’s colours to a monochromatic scheme, and included in his drawing only as much of the landscape as would fill a Claude glass,



Fig. 3 William Gilpin “An illustration of that wild kind of country...as we entered Cumberland,” from *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*. Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

an oval-shaped, blackened mirror used to convey the light and dark values of a scene while sketching it. Use of this tool required Mackenzie to stand with his back to the view and sketch instead its dark reflection. The officer framed the distant, elevated fortress with nearer hills, and attended to a minimum of local detail, just a few scattered trees. Regarding the terrain itself the drawing reveals little except Savandurga’s steep peaks. The British soldiers who took the fort of Savandurga would recognize it as the site of one of Tipu Sultan’s prisons, extremely difficult to reach and from which it was deemed impossible to escape. But the image would not likely invite questions about colonial conflict from non-military viewers in the metropole.

With no discernible reference to violence in the landscape, one less familiar with the distinctive silhouette of Savandurga might take the scene for a hilly region in Britain. A comparable image (Fig. 3) may be found in *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty* of 1786 by the Reverend William Gilpin, a singularly popular writer about the picturesque in England. Gilpin, who did not shy away from sites of ruined forts or otherwise difficult to access hilltop places in Britain, described

this view as ‘An illustration of that kind of wild country, of which we saw several instances, as we entered Cumberland.’⁵ Gilpin’s aquatint and Mackenzie’s drawing reveal the visual priorities shared by both artists: inclusion of a variety of shapes on land and in the sky, a recession of carefully framed spatial planes, and reliance upon a Claude glass to assist in the discernment of light and dark values as well as the reduction of local detail. At the spot Gilpin bound this print into the first volume of *Observations*, his text urged prospective artists to consider the importance of choosing the correct time of day to make a landscape sketch of mountains:

In every representation, truly picturesque, the shade should greatly over-balance the light. The face of nature, under the glow of noon, has rarely this beautiful appearance. The artist therefore generally courts her charms in a morning, or an evening hour, when the shadows are deep, and extended; and when the sloping sun-beam affords rather a catching, than a glaring light.⁶

With this advice at hand, readers likely considered the deep passages of shadow that cast the mountain into relief, and the amber colour of the print. Like Gilpin, Colin Mackenzie chose warm tones to depict Savandurga, suitable for imitating the sun’s first or last rays of day. Similarities in the approaches of these artists to their respective subjects might lead some to suggest a causal relationship between them, but in fact the aesthetic training of Gilpin as well as Mackenzie drew deep from the well of eighteenth-century British military representation.⁷

Like Mackenzie, professional artist Robert Home, in *Select Views in Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan; From Drawings Taken on the Spot* of 1794, relied on picturesque principles to construct views of sites for which Britain contended for military dominance.⁸ Home, who received permission from the East India Company to produce imagery in ‘the Carnatic’ during the Anglo-Mysore Wars, downplayed military accoutrements and action, and focused instead on elements of nature that could be handled by means of picturesque formulae. In an etching by William Byrne (Fig. 4) that carefully followed the composition and details of an original drawing by Home, *View of Shevagurry from the top of Ramgaree*, it is apparent that Home sought to provide viewers with the experience of standing on a hilltop, as if taking in an expansive view. Indeed, an accompanying text directs viewers to look deep into the landscape, where

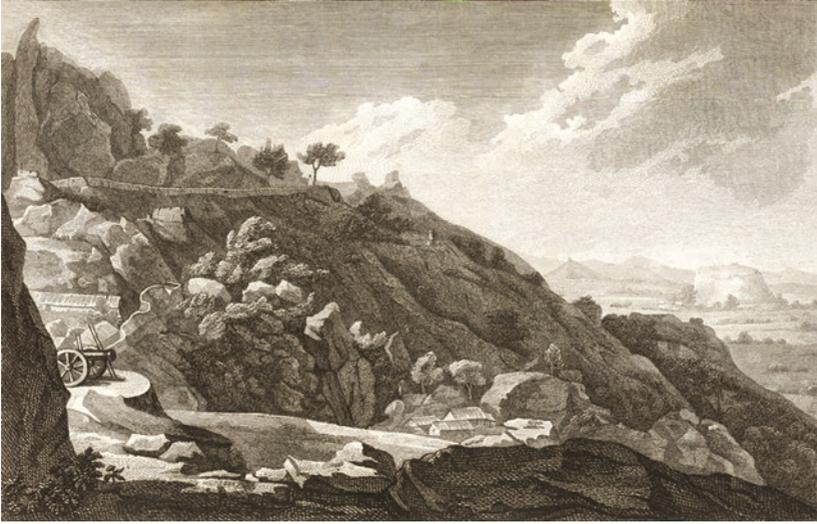


Fig. 4 William Byrne after Robert Home *View of Shevagurree from the top of Ramgaree*. ©British Library Board, London, Shelfmark W2567(19)

the walls of a fortress on a rocky outcropping can be made out. But unlike Mackenzie's drawing, which relied on the use of a Claude glass, Home's composition calls attention to the specificities of the foreground, to the extent that it is clear that he positioned himself within a fort. Its walls are visible in the upper third of the picture plane, a heavy gun situated at the lower left.

As if to justify his decision to include an explicit reference to weaponry, Home noted that the 'sterile soil' at the site was rich in iron, 'and applied to that worst of purposes, the fabrication of implements of war'. The terrain he described as 'wild and savage...abounding with barren rocks, and extensive thickets, the abode of tigers and other beasts of prey'. Of the presence of British soldiers, Home acknowledged that on 22 December 1791, troops 'attacked the lower fort and pettah,' after which the fort was surrendered, adding that 'it was found to be well provided with guns, provisions, and stores' and had recently been strengthened.⁹ But the artist eliminated soldiers from the scene, and even the cannon is marginalized to the extent that it is only partially represented, a diminutive object in a landscape where rocks and clouds play more

dynamic (visual) roles. As with Mackenzie's drawing, it is a severe, uneven terrain that lends an idea of danger to Home's composition, more so than accoutrements of battle. Lest it is assumed that the printmaker, Byrne, reduced the impact of the heavy gun in the landscape, comparison with the original drawing confirms that Home did not intend for it to be visually prominent. The cannon is easy to overlook in both images.

Scholars have suggested that picturesque imagery produced in the course of the Anglo-Mysore Wars aided viewers in practices of memorializing and imagining. The modes of artists' training in combination with their personal experiences of war may have resulted in the production of battle sites as landscapes 'where memory could subsequently be located and invoked' by individuals or collectively,¹⁰ the 'now vacant battlefields' stimulating viewers to construct imagined histories for the troops.¹¹ That picturesque imagery by Colin Mackenzie and Robert Home may have served these purposes is neither debated nor suggested here. Offered instead is a demonstration of ways in which such images were useful to the purposes of colonial conquest, first through a consideration of the ideas of writers about aesthetics whose texts relied heavily on matters of land and landscape. The ideas of Reverend Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight, metropolitan theorists who took the picturesque to heart, are deserving of special attention in this light. Each explored subjects as disparate as nature and property, art and imagination, and politics and violence—all factors of colonial wartime representation in South India and Sri Lanka. Second, to highlight the complicit nature of the picturesque when it is applied to a colony, the career of Sri Lanka's first British governor, Frederic North, is briefly contextualized *vis-à-vis* testimonies of specific incidents of violence on the island, and in relation to imagery produced in close proximity to Britain's campaigns against Kandy.

MEN OF 'POLITE IMAGINATION'

Since the picturesque required practitioners and viewers to consider landscape by means of particular patterns of representation, the roots of this discourse must be examined, to identify the values passed on to image makers in the colonies, especially with regard to conceptions of land. The three most influential metropolitan thinkers about the picturesque were personally preoccupied with issues concerning land ownership and maintenance. Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, both

of whom published their ideas about the picturesque as early as 1794, owned large properties in Herefordshire and managed them zealously. Reverend William Gilpin (whose aquatint of Cumberland was noted previously) was born at Scaleby in Cumbria, and while he did not inherit that estate, he maintained an affection for the property and visited it throughout his life.

William Gilpin's ideas about land were shaped by the values of property owners, to the extent that he assigned the boys at the Cheam School in Surrey, where he served as headmaster, with the task of managing individual garden plots. The 'more popular boys would sometimes possess very large estates':

portions of which they would either sell or let out as their affairs required. All however were obliged to cultivate their gardens. It was a law of the state, that whatever was neglected, escheated to the Lord; who gave it to those who would make a better use of it.¹²

Along with Price and Knight, Gilpin was an enthusiast of art and its history, as well, and devoted much attention to the matter of aesthetic taste, imposing his opinions about beauty upon the natural environment, sketching it according to picturesque rules.

Prior to the heyday of picturesque practice in Britain but leading directly to its door are the ideas of Joseph Addison, an early eighteenth-century writer, publisher, and politician. Addison contributed an essay to *The Spectator* in 1712 in which he addressed the subject of the imagination through a discussion of taste and nature.¹³ In a passage that seems to anticipate picturesque discourse, Addison determined that 'visible objects' could take many shapes, including 'agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious' and in this way '[a] man of polite imagination is led into a great many pleasures'.¹⁴ This 'man of polite imagination' is of interest to this study, he who, according to Addison, could 'converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue'. Such a man 'often feels greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession':

It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated part of Nature administer to his pleasures: so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind.¹⁵

Addison defined imagination in one conversant with art as an ability to see the world differently from others, to the extent that even ‘the most rude uncultivated part of Nature’ could charm and satisfy him.

It is as if Addison had foreseen the life of William Gilpin, who was insatiable in his consumption of art and who found every evidence of pleasure in applying art’s principles to the natural environment of Britain while sketching out of doors. The clergyman grew so attached to the idea that each element in the landscape must bolster the effect of the scene as a ‘picture’ that he could be dismissive of local inhabitants, even though ‘by far the largest number of people were employed on the land’ during the decades that Gilpin published his guidebooks.¹⁶ He occasionally expressed interest in the people he encountered on a picturesque tour, such as a suffering individual he met at Tintern, a woman who could ‘scarce crawl; shuffling along her palsied limbs, and meagre, contracted body, by the help of two sticks’.¹⁷ But Gilpin avoided producing sketches of scenes that included references to discomfort or to sharp disparity of social privilege. Departing from the countryside around Tintern, which he described as ‘a solitary, tranquil scene’, he came upon ‘great ironworks; which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity’.¹⁸ Gilpin produced aquatints of Tintern for his book about the Wye Valley, but did not acknowledge the ironworks or the suffering woman in the images.

Gilpin had brought out several books on the picturesque by 1794, when Uvedale Price, a baronet, classicist, and the owner of a large estate, Foxley, published *An essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and the beautiful; and, on the use of studying pictures, for the purpose of improving real landscape*.¹⁹ With this three-volume work Price threw his hat into the ring of writers who contributed to the literature of taste in eighteenth-century Britain, and used the project to register concern about the widespread employment of ‘improvers’—professional gardeners hired by landowners to refashion private property according to changing taste. To Price, improvers did a great deal of damage when they modified the environs of an estate so extensively that the property no longer looked natural. He once observed the rebuilding of a lane near a ‘gentleman’s pleasure grounds’ only to find ‘a great many labourers wheeling mould to this place; by degrees they filled up all inequalities, and completely covered the roots and pathways’.²⁰ Horrified by the gardeners’ disregard for the natural face of land, with its irregularities that ‘time only, and a thousand lucky accidents can mature’, Price labelled their work ‘the rash hand of false taste’.²¹

Yet to a greater extent than nature it was art that dictated Uvedale Price's sense of taste. Work by seventeenth-century landscape painters he admired, including Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin, served as the authorities for his picturesque principles, against which he compared and dismissed the ideas of popular landscape designer Capability Brown. According to Price, Brown had been 'bred a gardener, and having nothing of the mind, or the eye of a painter'.²² Since Brown lacked a gentleman's education as well as a painter's formalist training, in Price's eyes the celebrated designer could do little more than meddle with nature.

As with Gilpin and Price, practitioners of the picturesque in India and Sri Lanka relied upon imagery by seventeenth-century artists to dictate their approach to representation of the natural environment. While the compositions of colonial artists such as Mackenzie, Home, and Lyttleton were rooted in the prototypes Price admired, their views betrayed enough local detail to recall geographically identifiable places in South Asia. It may seem that Price had little in common with colonial artists other than particular tenets of taste, but his writing is linked to their work in poignant ways. For example, the idea of violated land led Price to think about the colonies. In the second volume of *An essay on the picturesque*, he recalled with regret his decision to destroy an 'old-fashioned garden' on his estate, giving way to 'prevailing opinion':

I doomed it and all its embellishments, with which I had formed such an early connection, to sudden and total destruction; probably much upon the same idea, as many a man of careless, unreflecting, unfeeling good-nature, thought it his duty for demolishing towns, provinces, and their inhabitants, in America.²³

By comparing the elimination of his old garden with the destruction of 'towns, provinces, and their inhabitants' by colonizers in the New World, Price cautioned readers about the danger of fashionable ideas. He considered the picturesque as an aesthetic that would weather time since it was grounded in the principles of art and anchored by an appreciation of nature. But the discourse also provided Price with a way to frame ideas about land, not only in theoretical but in material terms, since the practice of the picturesque led him to an awareness of the types of violence that threatened his property. Price wrote little of violence in colonized places. It was not his aim. Yet when he desired to articulate violence upon land in the strongest terms ('sudden and total destruction'),

he relied on a version of material violence that he associated with the colonies, that is, violence that he considered to be ‘careless, unreflecting, unfeeling’.

The same year Uvedale Price published *An essay on the picturesque*, his friend Richard Payne Knight responded with a poem dedicated to Price. The son of a clergyman, Knight inherited his property, Downton, from an uncle. Like Price, he was enamoured of seventeenth-century European landscape painting and managed his lawns and gardens accordingly, finding the work of improvers distasteful. And in *The Landscape, a didactic poem*, Knight, like Price, extended discussion of aesthetic taste to political matters, as he considered the domestic landscape in relation to European politics, concluding with France’s Reign of Terror.²⁴

Because Knight contextualized picturesque discourse in relation to contemporary political events, ideas of nationhood figure prominently in his poem, as in the following excerpt, in which he praised the English landscape:

Hail native streams, that full yet limpid glide!
 Hail native woods, creation’s boast and pride!
 Your native graces let the painter’s art,
 And planter’s skill, endeavour to impart;
 Nor vainly after distant beauties roam,
 Neglectful of the charms they leave at home.²⁵

Enthusiastic about the ‘charms’ of home, Knight lauded the domestic landscape in a series of comparisons with ‘distant beauties’. He countered Peru’s ‘vast Maragnon’ (Rio Marañon) with the ‘wide wand’ring Wye’ in Wales. Against those impressed by Ontario, where ‘Niagara roars’, he offered ‘Tiber’s broken, wild cascade’, unapologetically appropriating Italy’s geography as an extension of ‘home’.²⁶ Knight could claim Italy as part of the domestic landscape because of the large number of Italianate paintings that hung on the walls of town and country houses throughout Britain.

Richard Payne Knight positioned land to serve as a source of national pride but he did not require that art serve this lofty role. In an essay published in 1805, *An analytical inquiry into the principles of taste*, Knight cautioned men not to look to art ‘to correct national manners’

or ‘social virtue’: ‘as if men ever applied to such sources of information for directions how to act in the moral or prudential concerns of life, or ever looked at pictures for any thing other than amusement.’ Instead, the role he assigned to music, art, and poetry was that of ‘civilizing and softening mankind, by substituting intellectual, to sensual pleasures; and turning the mind from violent and sanguinary, to mild and peaceful pursuits’. Those drawn to the arts, he explained, ‘seldom or never disturb the tranquillity either of kingdoms or families; and if their lives are not very useful, they are always harmless, and often ornamental to society’.²⁷ Knight’s emphasis on tranquillity—that, as a result of being well-versed in the arts, a man of taste would be unlikely to ‘disturb the tranquillity of either kingdoms or families’—strikes the chord of the colonial picturesque. Surely, Knight was describing the life of a country aesthete like himself, but what if such a man were appointed governor of a colony?

WARSCAPES OF ‘CEYLON’

Frederic North, the first British governor of Sri Lanka, was, like Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, an ardent classicist and an aesthete. Upon being named the Fifth Earl of Guilford in 1817 he would also become a man of property.²⁸ Examination of the letters, dispatches, and proclamations Frederic North generated during the years he governed ‘Ceylon’, from 1798 through 1805, indicates that his primary goal was the production, maintenance, and, finally, the restoration of ‘tranquillity’ on an island in contention by two polities: Britain and Kandy.

Near the conclusion of his tenure as Sri Lanka’s governor, Frederic North surmised that his governorship had yielded positive results:

...the course of the law unobstructed; the revenue extremely increased; the country flourishing, beyond all former example, in industry, commerce, and *interior tranquillity*; the enemy reduced to the lowest pitch of misery and impotence; the stores tolerably provided; and the military force amply sufficient in numbers and in efficiency for all the service which it can be called upon to perform;....²⁹

Yet North had engaged the Kandyan kingdom in war, and had worked systematically to reduce it ‘to the lowest pitch of misery and impotence’.

By ‘interior tranquillity’ North likely referred to the commencement of a process whereby the Kandyans and Kandyan land would eventually

become subsumed under British law. But North failed to anticipate the cost of attempting to impose tranquillity—a term he associated with ‘good order’³⁰—upon a people who practised land management and ordered society in a manner differently from himself. While there is not opportunity here to discuss with sufficient complexity the events that led to his decision to send troops to invade the inland provinces, it is possible to juxtapose North’s claim to have established ‘interior tranquillity’ on the island against the testimonies of some who experienced violence as a result of that decision. Memoirs by Major Arthur Johnston of the Third Ceylon Regiment and Bombardier Alexander Alexander of the Royal Artillery both relay the suffering of troops who were profoundly outmanoeuvred while engaged in armed conflict with the Kandyans.³¹

In what reads as a survival narrative, Arthur Johnston, who in 1810 published *Narrative of the operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy, in the Island of Ceylon, in the year 1804*, recounted that, as a result of miscommunicated orders, he and a detachment under his command found themselves without reinforcements in Kandy, a situation that required a hasty retreat. During the descent to the island’s north-east coast the troops met with one mishap, misstep, or misfortune after another.³² Eventually, many of the soldiers reached Trincomalee, where Alexander Alexander, a non-commissioned officer, recorded their condition, upon arrival:

cold, wet, dirty, and lousy; almost all naked, many barefoot and maimed; officers and all were alike starved and shrivelled, their countenances haggard, forming an assemblage of the most miserable looking men it is possible to conceive. All had to go to the hospital, on their arrival; their strength appeared only to have endured to this point, then to have utterly deserted them.³³

Johnston, in his own words, appeared ‘carried in my cloak, fastened to a stick...emaciated by fatigue, and labouring besides under a severe dysentery’.³⁴ Alexander revealed in his autobiography what he learned of the detachment’s experiences inland. The local guides ‘had either lost their way, or pretended they had done so’ and Johnston, ‘in this dilemma, had recourse to the whip; he tied up the guides to the trees and flogged them, to make them look sharper’.³⁵ Testimonies of those who reached Trincomalee spoke not only of punishment enacted upon the bodies of local guides and porters, but gunshot, knife, or sword wounds aimed at,

sustained, or generated by British, Malay, or Lankan soldiers. Alexander also recorded the soldiers' accounts of brutality directed against animals and the destruction of Kandyan provisions and land, going so far as to ascribe violence to incidents of weather and the specificities of climate. While many military 'excursions' had made their way back to Trincomalee, Bombardier Alexander recalled that 'none went so far during my stay, or suffered anything like this'.³⁶ 'But,' he added, 'all the talk soon died away'.³⁷

Why the move towards silence, after the stories of suffering had been articulated? Surely the silence was not a move to forget. Arthur Johnston published his account just six years after the conclusion of the debacle, and while it took more than 25 years for Alexander Alexander to bring his memoir into print, it was not for lack of trying.³⁸ William Lyttleton published *A Set of Views in the Island of Ceylon* within four years of his participation in a later Kandyan campaign, during which he too experienced and witnessed diverse forms of violence. Marching through the island's interior, an elephant pursued and attacked Lyttleton and a sergeant; the latter was 'torn piecemeal'.³⁹ Yet in Lyttleton's *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*, Kandyan territory is depicted as a 'delightful valley'. The inland provinces had long been characterized by colonizers as terrifyingly pathless, with Kandyans firing 'in perfect security from behind rocks and trees',⁴⁰ but this aquatint conveys a landscape warm with sunlight and gentle hills. It is a composition that would likely bring Italy's Campania to the minds of nineteenth-century British viewers, or a fine summer day in Britain itself. Not unlike the diminishing 'talk' of violence in Trincomalee after the retreat of Johnston and his detachment in 1804, Lyttleton's image offers calm.

If imagery produced in the aftermath of conquest by Mackenzie, Home, and Lyttleton acknowledged, yet minimized, the appearance of British military activity in India and Sri Lanka, harbour views made by Samuel Daniell, a professional artist who resided on the island during the years following Britain's first war with Kandy, illuminate the extent to which picturesque discourse could negate altogether the realities of colonial violence. His *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee* (Fig. 5) is a case in point. Daniell arrived in Sri Lanka in 1806, the year after Frederic North concluded his governorship, and the image suggests that North had indeed left Sri Lanka in a state of tranquillity.

One of 12 aquatints that comprise Samuel Daniell's *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of*



Fig. 5 Samuel Daniell *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee: Taken from the Fort Ostenburg*. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Ceylon of 1808,⁴¹ *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee* depicts the strategically important harbour as a placid, luminous body of water, framed by a fort on the composition's right side. Daniell clarified his vantage point in the aquatint's subtitle, acknowledging that the view was made from Fort Ostenburg, but the written description he provided to accompany the print makes no mention of the fort or of soldiers garrisoned there. Instead, the artist directed viewers to consider the natural environment in the vicinity of the fort.

Daniell described the bay and harbour as 'bold and romantic' with a ground covering of 'the most luxuriant shrubbery, the verdure of which is perpetual'. Aside from a few cottages 'interspersed about the hilly coppices' (invisible to viewers of the aquatint), his text claims that '[the] whole surrounding country may almost, indeed, be considered as in a state of nature, there being very little cultivation carried on in the neighbourhood of the bay'. In the text that accompanies another harbour view in the series, *View of Caltura*, the artist acknowledged a fort at the site

but only to point out its excellent placement ‘upon an eminence, commanding the river’—a ‘delightful situation, [since] the mountain known by the name of Adam’s Peak is distinctly visible’. Daniell also referenced the presence of teak, coconut, and Palmyra trees that ‘finely clothe’ the riverbank and village of Kalutara.⁴²

Daniell’s celebratory descriptions of the environs of Fort Ostenburg at Trincomalee and the fort at Kalutara may as well have been written by a realtor. As early as October of 1802, the first year of publication of the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, a property on the island was advertised in similar terms: ‘as pleasantly situated as any Fruit gardens in the environs of Colombo, having a View over the Lake to the Fort & Cinnamon Gardens, as well for Riding as for Walking’.⁴³ Ten years on, the *Gazette* continued to publish such notices. In June of 1812, a country house on the island was listed for sale in the following terms:

most delightfully Situated on an Eminence, that Commands an extensive View of the sea, and the interior of the Country around – and, without exaggeration, is really worthy of the notice of any Gentleman in want of the like, being a short distance from the Fort.⁴⁴

These descriptions isolate aspects of landscape for the purpose of calling attention to what was most valued at the sites: the views afforded by access to them, particular trees or gardens, and ‘environs...for Riding as for Walking’. Geographer Nicholas Blomley finds that separating ‘a bounded space from the things and relations that inform it, thus imagining the space as a purely abstract and empty site’ is an act of territorialisation, part and parcel of ‘the logic of private property’. At such a site, meaning is conveyed through its natural attributes.⁴⁵ It is suitable to consider the work of colonial landscape artists in this light.⁴⁶ Daniell’s harbour views, produced at forts but emptied of military personnel, like the warscapes of Mackenzie and Home, insist that ‘Ceylon’ was available for habitation.

Set alongside the poignant descriptions of violence in the memoirs of Arthur Johnston and Alexander Alexander, picturesque imagery by Samuel Daniell and William Lyttleton may be understood to effect a conceptual transformation of places like Trincomalee, where there had been much testimony of suffering, and the Kandyan territory, which had seen centuries of military violence, into places of ‘good order’. Arresting as such images may have been to metropolitan viewers in the

early nineteenth century, the conversion of burned, scarred, and increasingly deforested sites into tranquil landscapes staffed by passive locals hints at something akin to propaganda, and highlights the complicity of picturesque discourse in matters of colonial violence.⁴⁷ Could it be that colonial agents began to consider seriously whether the island would be suitable for development as a plantation economy with the visually satisfying aquatints of Samuel Daniell and William Lyttleton before their eyes?

NOTES

1. Lieutenant William Lyttleton, *A Set of Views in the Island of Ceylon* (London: Edward Orme, 1819), unpag.
2. Lyttleton, *A Set of Views in the Island of Ceylon*, n.p.
3. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2001), 28.
4. Colonel Colin Mackenzie, *Distant View of Savan-Droog in Mysore from the East Side*, a wash drawing in the collection of the British Library, London.
5. Reverend William Gilpin, *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the mountains and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland*, 2 vols. (London: R. Blamire, 1786), v.
6. Gilpin, *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*, 162–163.
7. Gilpin's father, John Bernard Gilpin, was an officer in the 12th Regiment of Foot. While not formally designated a draftsman, John Bernard Gilpin admired the approach to landscape representation taught by Paul Sandby, drawing master for over 30 years at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. As Rama Sundari Mantena points out in *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India*, Colin Mackenzie's work as a surveyor was also indebted to Sandby's approach. See Rama Sundari Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 48.
8. Robert Home, *Select Views in Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan; From Drawings Taken on the Spot...* (London: Mr. Bowyer, 1794).
9. Home, *Select Views in Mysore*, 21–22.
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30. 'Proclamation No. 7 at Colombo', *Ceylon Government Gazette* 86 (12 October 1803).
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Categories of Conquest and Colonial Control: The French in Tonkin, 1884–1914

James R. Lehning

When the French announced, in a decree in 1888 organizing the *gendarmerie* in Tonkin, that ‘the conquest is completed’,¹ the declaration downplayed the continuities in violence that marked the entire period of French rule in Southeast Asia. In contrast to the optimism of this decree, the French faced opposition from Vietnamese elites, the officials loyal to Ham Nghi, the deposed Nguyen king; from armed bands who had thrived in the countryside of Tonkin for decades before the arrival of the French; and from deserters and regular troops from China. Asserting French control against these opponents necessitated frequent military and police operations. As warfare, these operations were influenced by nineteenth-century military practices in both Europe and the colonial empires, if for no other reason than that the officers who commanded French troops in Indochina had often previously been involved in European and other colonial wars. These practices, some historians have claimed, became more violent in the course of the nineteenth century. David Bell has argued that the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire transformed the disciplined warfare of the Old Regime into the ‘total war’ that marked

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military operations in the Vendée, Calabria, Russia, and Spain. Other historians have argued that subsequent colonial wars took on many of the same characteristics.²

The violence of European colonial conquest is difficult to avoid in the reports, memoirs, and other descriptions historians use. But to understand the expansion of European empires and the colonial regimes that expansion created, we need to move beyond this obvious truism. My argument here is not simply that colonial wars were violent, or that they asserted colonial control, but rather that they also performed cultural tasks central to the colonial project. As Jennifer Sessions has suggested, the violence of colonialism constituted imperial identities and ideologies,³ identifying the participants in colonial relationships and structuring the links between colony and colonizing power. In the same vein, Benjamin Claude Brower argued that in Algeria the ‘logic of colonialism tried to reduce [the actors] to colonizer and colonized’, and ‘establishing this divide was the work of the earliest forms of French violence, beginning in 1830’. Violence, in his view, ‘simplified the country’s considerable social complexity and the violence against law, property, and people’ and ‘engendered the social hierarchies of the new order’, although the binary categories of *barbares* (barbarians) and *civilisés* (civilized) were strained by the realities of the conquest.⁴

Violence, then, can serve as ‘an interpretive concept as well as a method for understanding’ colonial worlds, in this case that of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Tonkin.⁵ Using reports of military and police operations from the conquest and administration of Tonkin, this chapter examines the ways in which the violence of the colonial state formed a set of cultural practices that contributed to making that colonial world. Because these sources are French, this chapter can only speak about the French side of this process. But they indicate that as the French described their opponents—as ‘bandits’, ‘pirates’, ‘deserters’, or ‘Chinese’—they discursively created relationships between these groups and the French colonial state. The effect of these terms was to locate the opponents of French rule—rebels supporting the Nguyen claimant to the throne, Chinese soldiers, ethnic groups, and pirate bands—outside the French colonial polity as enemies against whom the exercise of violence was justified and, often, practised. But it is also apparent that, as Brower noted in Algeria, the terms were unstable in use. While not creating an undifferentiated colonial other, violence—by the French themselves, by the Chinese army, by deserters from that army, by Vietnamese

lettrés, and by bandits and pirates—destabilized the apparently clear divisions between the French and their indigenous allies, on the one hand, and the opponents of French rule on the other.⁶ Whether in military conquest or policing, then, violence was continually at work in making colonial Tonkin.

THE LIMITS TO FRENCH POWER IN TONKIN

The French took possession of Indochina in fits and starts during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the early 1860s France gained significant parts of Cochinchina in the south, as well as a protectorate over Cambodia. In the 1870s, the remainder of Cochinchina was annexed, and expansion began to be focused in the north, Tonkin, in an attempt to open the Red River to trade with China. After a brief military campaign in 1884–1885 in the area between Hanoi and the Chinese border, a treaty was concluded at Tianjin giving France control of Tonkin.⁷ But the ambiguous status of the border between China and Tonkin complicated the French colonizing project. As Eric Togliacozzo has pointed out, colonial state making in Southeast Asia contributed to the creation of violence in border areas.⁸ The region between China and Tonkin was particularly susceptible to these contests. On the Chinese side lay a southwestern Chinese border region that had been settled over the previous centuries by immigrants from central China, and the border with Tonkin remained badly defined and scarcely mapped. This ‘illegibility’ of the border had already made the region the scene of frequent violence, but the French intrusion upset what tenuous stability existed. Even after the Tianjin Treaty the border remained porous for decades to come for Chinese troops and deserters as well as bandits operating in Tonkin.

Colonial state making and the extension of French rule into the border regions of Tonkin also meant defining the people who inhabited the region in relation to the colonial project. The French usually saw these people as either participants in colonization or as its opponents. They were certainly well supplied with the latter, and opposition to the French came from a number of different quarters. First, they faced opposition from the deposed nominal ruler of Vietnam, the Nguyen King of Annam, and his supporters. But, second, the region closest to the Chinese border, north of Hanoi and on the upper parts of the Red River, had long been the home of bandits, and the Treaty of Tianjin in 1885 did nothing to end those activities. While not often appreciated by French in

the metropole, these bandits posed a serious impediment to the colonization and exploitation of Tonkin.⁹ Most prominent among them were the Pavillons Noirs, who in the 1860s moved south from Yunnan into Tonkin around Laokay, where the Red River crossed the border between Vietnam and China.¹⁰ But the Pavillons Noirs were not the only problem. Other bands—such as the remnants of the Pavillons Jaunes, who in the 1870s controlled traffic on the Red River between Sontay and Laokay—also launched attacks on travellers and engaged in arms trafficking, kidnapping, and opium smuggling in the border region and only grudgingly agreed to submit themselves to French authority in return for French concessions that maintained the bandits' local authority.¹¹ These bands continued for decades to recruit new members from among the escaped prisoners and deserters from the French-organized militia and other military forces that quickly became a feature of the colonial regime.¹² Finally, especially after the turn of the century, these opponents of French rule were joined by Chinese soldiers who were using Tonkin to escape from increasing unrest in China.

AN AMBIGUOUS ENEMY

After the conclusion of the Tianjin Treaty with China, the French Expeditionary Corps spent the summer of 1885 engaged in campaigns that were aimed at 'bandits' and 'pirates' rather than the Chinese troops that had been their opponents on the campaign to capture Langson. The presence of these multiple groups in the region made it difficult for the French to settle on a term to identify their opponents. The same reports sometimes described the enemy as 'Chinese', but at other times as 'pirates' or 'bandits'.¹³ In November 1885, several local administrators were reported to have been assassinated by a band of 'Chinese' at Phu-an-Binh. A detachment of Tirailleurs Tonkinois dispersed a band of 'Chinese', while a French post in the region repulsed two attacks by 'pirates'. That month the French occupied a village abandoned by 'pirates' who left behind 'arms, munitions, cannons, horses, and provisions', suggesting they were an organized and well-supplied military force, and 'Chinese' threatening Hanoi were later identified as 'pirates'. The French captured the pirate chief, Doc-Hui, but other pirates remained in hiding in nearby villages.¹⁴ In late December 1885, the French operations reports note engagements with 'pirates' in the area between the Red River and the Clear River, 'bandits' at Phu-Tho

and Yen-Ninh, Pavillons Noirs at Cam-Nhan, 'Chinese' at Giap on the Clear River, 'pirates' between the Song-Calo and the road from Hanoi to Bac-Ninh, and 'pirates' near the Song-Calo.¹⁵ Another operation in December 1885 was aimed at 'Chinese and Annamite pirates' near Hung-Son north of the Song-Calo.¹⁶ Three years later, in January 1888, a force of French riflemen surprised 'Chinese pirates' in Cho-Cam, and one of the French officers, Lt. Haillot, entered the lodgings of the 'pirate chief' and shot two 'Chinese' as well as seven other 'pirates'.¹⁷

There is no indication in these reports that these were the same groups, and it seems likely that they were different in some ways. But the reports indicate that the French military faced an indeterminate enemy, even if the French did try to distinguish them by using different terms. The enemy was identified sometimes as Chinese, sometimes as 'pirates', sometimes as 'bandits', and occasionally as 'montagnards'. Particularly confusing was that these different groups often used the same tactics, launching hit-and-run attacks, controlling villages and roads, and benefiting from support by local authorities in the region.

It is apparent that the terms used by the French were unable to describe the situation faced on the ground by French troops, and this contributed to the ambiguous meanings of those terms. No doubt a significant part of the slippage of these terms stemmed from the overlap of the different groups who were shooting at the French troops in this mountainous terrain: some bandits came from China (but some did not); some bandits allied with supporters of Ham Nghi (but some did not); and the Chinese continued to dispute French control of the as-yet unmarked border. But the different terms used in these reports place these groups in specific relationships to the French colonial state that was extending its power into northern Vietnam at this time. Describing them as 'pirates' moved these opponents of the French out of the field of normal state-to-state (French vs. Chinese) relations and into one of illegality and extra-territoriality. The French could attribute to them a series of atrocities against villagers, a 'regime of terror' in the words of one French officer, and a dissolute life of opium-smoking and sexual exploitation of kidnapped women, and thus distinguish them not only from the French but also from the better-behaved Chinese regulars. Another officer derided the bandits he faced in the late 1890s as 'almost all former "pavillons noirs"', a kind of dilettante of piracy, habituated for fifteen years to live in luxury and to do almost nothing: an occasional expedition, but, in return, rich food, opium and alcohol whenever

he wishes, often even some “con gái” (young women) waiting until he finds a good occasion for [their] sale in China’.¹⁸ The language in these reports shows how the French discourse about this colonial conquest constructed the opponents of French rule—Chinese who could be negotiated with, at least in the French view, indigenous rebels, and bandits and pirates who had no such ‘state’ backing and therefore were much more difficult to deal with—and how these categories shaped the colonial venture. These distinctions mattered: it would prove difficult for the French to bring themselves to bargain with ‘outlaws’.

Soldiers in the field, however, cared little if the enemy was Chinese, a bandit or pirate, a rebel supporting Ham Nghi, or one of the ethnic minorities in the mountains around Laokay. But for those trying to formulate a strategy to ‘pacify’ Tonkin, it was important to identify them. The ways they did so placed France’s opponents in different groups discursively by the different terms used by the French officers mounting operations against them. But pirates occupied and fortified villages, perhaps having learned these techniques from the army from Yunnan that intervened in Tonkin in early 1884.¹⁹ Chinese troops utilized the support of local authorities, and adherents of Ham Nghi engaged in the fleeting attacks characteristic of the pirate bands in the area between the Red River and the Black River. Information about pirate bands was difficult to acquire, and often came to the French after the pirates had moved on from their supposed location. The terms themselves proved unstable, and the certainty they implied was often undercut in the field. The difficulties of identifying the enemy are apparent in the conclusion of a report from 1889: as a French column passed through a deserted countryside on its way back to its base in Sontay, it occasionally saw small groups of men at a distance, but was not able ‘to ascertain if they were pirates’.²⁰ It was, in short, a countryside in which anyone could be a bandit or a supporter of the French.

In 1890 the French made an agreement with one bandit leader, Luong Tam Ky, by which he agreed to submit to French rule in exchange for a subvention, control over a region around the Black River, and other concessions.²¹ But the region to the north of Hanoi, the Yen-Thê area, had long been a home to opponents of the Annam government, with bands finding it a good place to hide from the authorities. It quickly became apparent that the French had inherited from the Annam government a situation in the Yen-Thê in which a bandit chief, Hoang Hoa Tham, known as Dê Tham, ‘exercised uncontested control

over all of the countryside'. He reputedly led about 1000 men and was able to find new recruits among refugees from failed resistance groups in Hanoi and other cities as well as among peasants on whom the tax and labour burdens of the regime fell. In November 1890, a French column engaged Dê Tham's band in an effort to reopen the route to Langson, forcing the Dê Tham to move to a base near Hou-Thuong. An attempt by Legionnaires and Tirailleurs to drive them out was unsuccessful, as were several others at the end of December and in early January 1891. Finally, on 11 January, an attack on a fortified camp succeeded, with more than 150 pirates killed, including six chiefs. Dê Tham himself was wounded in the battle.²² In late November 1891 a band, identified in the report as being that of the 'pirate De-Thanh', was attacked at Ca-Dinh.²³ The French seem to have been able to do little about this challenge to their control of the region during the next few years, and in 1894, another operation was undertaken against them, 'failing completely'. In 1895, a concerted operation under Col. Joseph Gallieni brought three different columns to bear on them, and on 30 November 1895, Gallieni seized control of Dê Tham's headquarters in the Yen-Thê. Gallieni tried to prevent a revival of the band by destroying its principal strong points and through the '*tache d'huile*' tactic in which French control was progressively extended through military posts and armed villages.²⁴ In October 1897, Dê Tham submitted to French authority in exchange for a large agricultural concession in Yen Thê, but this proved to be only temporary.²⁵

The fighting in Tonkin between 1884 and the end of the century, therefore, was marked not only by violence—the various engagements I have recounted left dead and wounded on both sides, not to mention the villagers who are hardly ever included but who must have been caught in the operations—but also, on the part of the French officers writing these reports, an ambiguous definition of whom they were fighting. The terms 'bandits', 'pirates', 'rebels', and 'Chinese' distinguished between opponents who tended to slip together. All had similar characteristics: at least a semi-military organization; tactics that at times involved fixed fortifications, at times movement across the countryside; support from at least part of the local population; and an ambiguous relationship with China and the Chinese authorities across the border in Yunnan. They were also male, in contrast to the kidnapped women French units often sought to rescue. As the terms were used by the French, they also had in common a position outside the bounds of

the Tonkinese population that the French had come to rule. Thus, the French brought violence and death to these outsiders while at the same time seeking the support of the local population.

CHINESE DESERTERS, BANDITS, PIRATES, AND VIOLENCE AFTER PACIFICATION

The violence of French rule and the inability to determine who the enemies of that rule were would continue after the turn of the century. At least until 1908, attempts to suppress opposition were often seen by the French as policing rather than military operations. But seen in a longer perspective, there are obvious similarities between reports from the *gendarmerie* about crimes such as robbery and murder committed in the period of ‘calm’ between 1898 and 1908 and earlier reports of the Expeditionary Corps and the Tirailleurs Tonkinois.²⁶ The investigations into these robberies and assaults inevitably failed to find and arrest the perpetrators, and so they do not conclude with any definite identification or description of who carried out the crimes. In these incidents the initiative lay with the pirates. But the similarity of these police reports to the earlier reports by the Tirailleurs Tonkinois and other military units should lead us to be cautious about accepting any distinction between ‘pacification’ and ‘crime’. Instead, they suggest that Tonkin continued to be marked by the kinds of violence that had marked the campaigns by the French army and the Tirailleurs Tonkinois against bandits, pirates, rebels, and the Chinese army before 1898.

However the robberies in the first few years of the century were interpreted by the French, they had little doubt about the political nature of the wave of unrest that occurred in Annam and Tonkin in 1908. The French linked this to external influences from Japan and the events in China that led to the establishment of the Chinese republic in 1911. A number of Vietnamese students went to Japan to study in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the victory of that country over Russia in 1905 enhanced its reputation. Its attraction was furthered by its geographical proximity and that it was a constitutional monarchy, a system favoured by Vietnamese radicals who sought to restore the power of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam.²⁷

Closer to home, the weakness of the Qing empire in the first decade of the twentieth century contributed to instability in the provinces that bordered on Tonkin, and in 1908 Chinese developments spilled across

the border into northern Vietnam. The French claimed to remain neutral in this conflict between what they called 'Chinese reformers' or 'reformists' and regular Chinese soldiers, with French troops instructed only to arrest any on either side who entered the territory of Tonkin. The 'reformers' were apparently well-armed, and seem to have been dissident soldiers in the Chinese army who had deserted from their units and crossed the border in Tonkin.²⁸

In the course of several months of fighting, these 'reformists' would be joined by other opponents of the French. They would also challenge the French ability to make sense of their opponents, as the operations reports begin in June 1908 to use 'reformist' and 'pirate' interchangeably.²⁹ That summer another French column had also been engaged in operations against 'Chinese reformists' in Tonkin. The reports make clear the interchangeability of the different terms used, describing an operation beginning on 8 August, when they moved to Lang-Xum to destroy a small band of what were also described as 'pirates' who were thought to be the advance guard of a much larger column.³⁰

While it may have been clear to the French that these forces were Chinese deserters using Tonkin as a refuge from Chinese troops loyal to the Chinese government, there were others in Tonkin who, while outside of French rule, were not so clearly from beyond the border. In 1908 and 1909, 'piracy' revived in the regions around Yen-Thê, where Dê Tham had been active in the 1890s and where he had received a concession from the French in return for his submission to French authority. While he was certainly not the only bandit chief in the area north of the Red River, or even in the Yen-Thê, he seems to have resumed his activities several years earlier. There is evidence that Dê Tham had contact with the nationalist leader Phan Boi Chau in 1906, and that Dê Tham had joined the nationalist organization Duy Tan Hoi, accepting Prince Cuong Dê, a member of the Nguyen dynasty, as nominal leader. He was also training cadres from central Vietnam and, in exchange for military supplies and support if he made an attack on the French, promised to support future uprisings.

The revival of banditry in the countryside coincided with threats of urban violence, and several of Dê Tham's followers were involved in an attempt on 27 June 1908 to poison the French garrison in Hanoi. Dê Tham was expected by the plotters to attack a camp next to the Governor General's palace in Hanoi.³¹ It is not clear to what extent the revival of Dê Tham's activities, or those of other bandits in the

Yen-Thê, was related to the nationalist movement or to the passage of Chinese deserters through the region. But these events posed a challenge to French rule, and in late 1908 and 1909 operations were mounted against 'pirates' and 'bandits', with no indication in the operation reports of any connection to China. Reports about the presence of pirates were received on 6 September and 29 September, and a number of detachments of Tirailleurs mounted reconnaissance patrols in search of them. On 4 October, they received a report that the Dê Tham were in a ravine to the west of the village of Nui-Lang. On 5 October, a reconnaissance party was able to locate the hideout of the pirates, near the village of Nui-Lang, in a mountainous area difficult to reach. After a series of unsuccessful attacks in the afternoon, the French were forced to establish positions for the night.³² Around 5 p.m., the pirates attempted to flee, but were fired upon by the Tirailleurs. During the night, the pirates disappeared and, at 9 a.m., the column of Tirailleurs left Nui-Lang. In November, after French patrols had spent a month fruitlessly searching for the Dê Tham, local residents claimed that they had moved north, along a line of crests, in the direction of Yen-Thê.³³

Over the next few weeks, the Tirailleurs attempted to keep track of the several pirate bands that were moving around in the northern part of Tonkin. This involved both following up (usually incorrect) tips that the pirates were in a particular village, and establishing surveillance posts along routes that the pirates were likely to follow. On 7 December, supposedly as a result of this surveillance activity as well as their 'intolerable' physical situation, several pirates agreed to submit to French control.³⁴ The Spring and Summer of 1909, however, would see renewed efforts to stamp out the Dê Tham, sparked by their kidnapping of a Frenchman, M. Voisin, near Hanoi. As a result of this, beginning in July 1909 a column of Tirailleurs and other French troops mounted a lengthy campaign to destroy Dê Tham's band in the province of Phuc-Yen.³⁵ On 22 and 23 July 1909, the French column engaged with the pirates at Xuan-Lai. The afternoon of 22 July an emissary from Dê Tham arrived at the French command post with a message in which Dê Tham indicated that he did not wish to continue the battle and asked the French to cease firing. These negotiations went on until nightfall and at dawn on 23 July the French launched an attack on the village, but found it deserted. Several other villages in the area were also reported to have bandits in them, but were deserted when the French column arrived.³⁶ A search of the region failed to locate them.

Voisin was finally released on 25 July, after several pirate bands connected with Dê Tham had been destroyed by the French. The main group under Dê Tham was soon located and its position attacked, with a number of pirates killed. Once again, however, the survivors were able to escape under cover of darkness. In August, a coordinated operation of French infantry and indigenous police was able to locate them and drive them out of the region. In late August and September 1909, another coordinated effort attacked them near the Black River. While one engagement turned out to be with a local pirate band, in late September and October 1909 Colonial Infantry and Tirailleurs, along with local partisans, drove the Dê Tham, including Dê Tham himself, out of a fortified camp into a series of trenches in a narrow ravine. While the French were attempting to encircle the position, they suffered heavy casualties. During the night, under cover of rainfall and lightning, the remaining pirates escaped. Over the next few months, a number of leaders of the band either made their submission to the French or were arrested, isolating Dê Tham himself. The French placed a price on his head, which was finally collected in February 1913 when two Chinese—the only mention of Chinese in the reports—exposed his head at the market in Nha-Nam.³⁷ But while Dê Tham himself might be dead, some survivors of his band continued their activities. Several of these may have been connected to a plot to kill French administrators in August 1917 as the beginning of a larger insurrection in the Thai Nguyen area, where Dê Tham himself had been active a decade earlier.³⁸ But while the Dê Tham band seemed, to the French, to have a clear leader and organization, elsewhere in the province this was less apparent to them. The departure of the Dê Tham left the region open to other bands of pirates.

The French, by their own accounts, were constantly defeating banditry and other sources of disorder and opposition in Tonkin. In the late 1890s, Joseph Gallieni claimed that the Caï-Kinh, north of Hanoi, was purged of bandits, that the route from Hanoi to Langson was secure, and that Dê Tham and his bandits had been driven from the Yen-Thê. At the same time, his subordinate and disciple, Louis-Hubert Lyautey, was more cautious but nonetheless spoke about the ‘last convulsions of piracy’ in different parts of Tonkin. The French infantry captain Mordacq, who participated in operations west of the Yen-Thê at the same time, was convinced that the pirate bands had been chased out of the region and that ‘the pacification of Tonkin is complete’ in

1896.³⁹ According to the *Historique* of the Tirailleurs Tonkinois, piracy disappeared in Tonkin in 1898, and the bands were unable to reform themselves for a long time.⁴⁰ The preface to the post-1896 volume of the *Historique* of the Tirailleurs Tonkinois indicated that the period from 1898 to 1908 was ‘calme et très courte’.⁴¹ In 1902 the Governor-General, Paul Doumer, claimed that ‘Tonkin enjoys a perfect calm’ that some European countries would envy.⁴²

These reports described a slow but successful penetration of the power of the colonial state into Tonkin, marginalizing its opponents as it went. But resistance and violence were clearly constant characteristics of French colonial rule in Indochina even after the initial assertion of French control and before the growth of the nationalist movement of the mid-twentieth century, from the beginnings of French rule until the period between the World Wars.⁴³ Violence, it seems, was the tactic of choice for all participants, and this made violence against and from those marginalized opponents central to colonial expansion and rule. But these reports also suggest the instability of the terms the French used to describe their enemies in Tonkin, not only in the 1880s but a generation later. Irregulars such as the bands led by Dê Tham might be easily designated as pirates, but this suggested that there was no connection between them and other opponents of French rule, both within Indochina and across the border in China. It implied a firm, ‘legible’ frontier, mapped in the aftermath of the Tianjin treaty that conceded French control of Tonkin. But the border remained porous. Chinese ‘deserters’ sought refuge from their commanders by crossing into Tonkin, where for the French they remained separate from Dê Tham’s and other bandit leaders’ men: they were not called pirates, but deserters. As the French operations against them continued, Chinese authorities became involved in negotiating a resolution, while the French treated the deserters in the same way as they had treated ‘pirates’ or ‘bandits’. The French, it appears, never succeeded in closing the border: in 1919, the French were still tracking bands from China in the province of Quang Yen, who attacked a French supply convoy and inflicted severe casualties on the escort. These ‘bandits’ seemed to benefit from the complicity of local inhabitants, so much so that the French arrested a number of families and imprisoned the men. After the French caught up with them, the bandits dispersed into the forest and crossed back into China.⁴⁴

THE LANGUAGE OF CONQUEST AND THE VIOLENCE OF COLONIALISM

My focus in this chapter on the language used by the French troops to describe their opponents should not obscure the violence that these operations visited upon their opponents, that their opponents visited upon the French troops, as well as the violence experienced by those Vietnamese randomly caught in the crossfire between colonial forces and those resisting, for whatever reason, French colonial rule. I have not attempted a body count, but in what is a usual trope of colonial operations, these reports were, in general, quite good at providing information about French officers and subalterns who were killed or wounded, and they were relatively good at providing information about the indigenous soldiers, the *Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, who were casualties of these operations.⁴⁵ As for the bandits, pirates, Chinese, or rebels, the reports for the most part only provided rough numbers. Even from that information, however, it is apparent that northern Vietnam witnessed a significant amount of policing, gunfire, and death throughout the period from 1884 to 1914.

The danger of focusing on language is that it becomes only language, losing the materiality of the situation it attempts to describe. But the language of conquest and occupation examined here shows how the French placed their opponents outside the ranks of those that the French intended their colonial rule to benefit. The interchangeability and instability of the terms used suggest that they served not to identify a specific enemy, but to make an enemy: to place some people outside the sphere within which the French ruled colonial Tonkin. This construction, which was present not only during the initial conquest but also over the next 30 years, emerged from and enabled the violence of colonial Tonkin.

NOTES

1. Service historique de la Défense, Paris (hereafter SHD) 10 H 20 Dossier 13, *Historique de la Gendarmerie de l'Indochine (15 juin 1861 au 30 Avril 1930)*, 9. The French artificially divided the territory of Vietnam into three provinces, which they usually insisted were culturally different: Cochinchina in the south, Annam in the centre, and Tonkin in the north. This colonial division is often disputed. For a discussion of this, see David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885–1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 79–80.

2. David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007); Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser. Exterminer. Sur la guerre et l'Etat colonial* (Paris: Fayard, 2005).
3. Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 11.
4. Benjamin Claude Brower, *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 7, 18, 19, 51.
5. Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5–6.
6. For similar uses of the term 'rebellion' by French *Résidents* in the delta of the Red River, see Philippe Le Failler, 'Village Rebellions in the Tonkin Delta, 1900–1905', in Gisele Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux (eds.), *Viêt Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Vietnamese Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 61–62. Peter Sahllins notes the ambiguous terminology used to describe bandits on the French-Spanish border in the Pyrenees in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 104, 200.
7. For a detailed account of these events, see Charles Fourniau, *Vietnam: Domination coloniale et résistance nationale, 1858–1914* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2002), 231–353; and Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy, 1880–1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). The border delimitation is described by a French Naval doctor who was a member of the commission in Dr. P. Neis, *The Sino-Vietnamese Border Demarcation 1885–1887* (trans. by Walter E.J. Tips; Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998 [1887]).
8. Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). More generally, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
9. H. Méhier de Mathuisieulx, *En Captivité chez les pirates tonkinois* (Tours: Alfred Mame et fils, 1895), 51; H. Méhier de Mathuisieulx, *Dans la brousse: Souvenirs du Tonkin* (Tours: Maison Alfred Mame et fils, 1907), 21.
10. Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839–1861* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), esp. 126–131; Ella S. Laffey, 'The Making of a Rebel:

- Liu Yung-fu and the formation of the Black Flag Army', 84–96 in J. Chesneaux (ed.), *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Ella S. Laffey, 'French Adventurers and Chinese Bandits in Tonkin: The Garnier Affair in Its Local Context', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 6 (1975), 38–51; Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam: The Story of a Chinese Intervention* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 98–112; 134–136; 203–205; Théodore Cahu, *L'Amiral Courbet en Extrême Orient: Notes et correspondance* (Paris: Léon Chailley, 1896), 20. See also Bradley C. Davis, 'Black Flag Rumors and the Black River Basin: Powerbrokers and the State in the Tonkin-China Borderlands', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6, 2 (2011), 16–41; 'Rebellion and Rule under Consular Optics: Changing Ways of Seeing the China-Vietnam Borderlands, 1874–1879', *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 11 (June 2014), 59–91; and *States of Banditry: The Nguyen Government, Bandit Rule, and the Culture of Power in the Post-Taiping China-Vietnam Borderlands*, Unpublished PhD diss., University of Washington, 2008. On Chinese support, see Eastman, 47–48.
11. Fourniau, *Vietnam*, 465–472; 621–625. The Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi were major producers of opium in China, and smuggling from there to northern China and elsewhere often ran through Tonkin to Haiphong and from there north and east by sea. The budget of French Indochina was partially based on revenues from an opium monopoly originally used in Cochinchina after 1860, taken over by the colonial administration in 1883, and extended to Cambodia, Annam, and Tonkin in the course of the 1880s. These monopolies were 'farmed' until 1899 and 1900, when the state administration took over direct control. Most opium sold was not produced in Indochina. Rather, it was purchased from British India and, in the 1880s and 1890s, increasingly from Yunnan. There are indications that in the twentieth century the French withdrew some of the Indian opium they acquired for sale outside of the monopoly, and substituted Yunnan opium, which was of lesser quality than that from India. See Paul Doumer, *Situation de l'Indochine française de 1897 à 1901* (Hanoi: F.H. Schneider, 1902), 9–10; Kathryn Meyer and Terry Parssinen, *Webs of Smoke: Smugglers, Warlords, Spies, and the History of the International Drug Trade* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 46, 56–60, 81–83; Chantal Descours-Gatin, *Quand l'Opium Finançaît la Colonisation en Indochine* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), 130–137, 144–148, 152–158; Jonathan Spence, 'Opium Smoking in Ch'ing China', 143–173 in Frederic Wakeman, Jr., and Carolyn Grant (eds.), *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

- Press, 1975); Hakiem Nankoe, Jean-Claude Gerlus and Martin J. Murray, 'The Origins of the Opium Trade and the Opium Régie in Colonial Indochina', 182–195 in John Butcher and Howard Dick (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Sun Yat-Sen and the French, 1900–1908* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1979), 85; Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), and Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian opium trade, 1750–1950* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. 120–125, 153.
12. Paul Chack, *Hoang-Tham Pirate* (Paris: Les Editions de France, 1933), 37.
 13. SHD 10 H 15, Dossier 1a. *Journal des marches et opérations de l'Etat major du corps expéditionnaire du Tonkin commandement du General Millot*, 12–13 Mai 1884; 22–24 juin 1884; SHD 10 H 16 12, *Le Général de Négrier à Hanoi, Rapport sur les opérations des troupes sous ses ordres du 3 au 6 janvier 1885*, 1–2.
 14. SHD 10 H 15.
 15. SHD 10 H 15.
 16. SHD 10 H 15.
 17. SHD 10 H 15, *Journal des Marches et Opérations des Troupes de l'Indo-Chine, Année 1888, 1ere Trimestre*.
 18. Frey, 70–81; Le Capitaine Mordacq, *Pacification du Haut Tonkin: Histoire des dernières opérations militaires: Colonnes du Nord (1893–1896)* (Paris: Librairie Militaire R. Chapelot et Cie, 1901), 33.
 19. McReady, 228, indicates that Liu Yung-Fu and the Pavillons Noirs learned to construct elaborate dugout fortifications when they met up with the Yunnan army in January 1884. The Chinese had learned the techniques from miners in Yunnan during the recent rebellion in that province.
 20. Mordacq, 18; SHD 10 H 19, dossier 4¹, *2eme Régiment Etranger 3e Bataillon, Historique du Bataillon, 20 novembre 1884–31 décembre 1889*, 150–154; see also Neis, 23–24.
 21. Fourniau, *Vietnam*, 468.
 22. SHD 10 H 19, Dossier 7, 13–15. On Dê Tham, see Marr, 73–74; Michael P.M. Finch, *A Progressive Occupation?: The Gallieni-Lyautey Method and Colonial Pacification in Tonkin and Madagascar, 1885–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 159–162; Claude Gendreau, *Le Dê Thám (1846–1913): Un résistant vietnamien à la colonisation française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).
 23. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 1, 51–52.
 24. SHD 10 H 19, Dossier 7, 15; Joseph Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin* (Paris: Librairie Militaire R. Chapelot, 1899), esp. 36, 156; Joseph

- Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892–1896) par lui-même* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1941), 183–212; Louis-Hubert Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar (1894–1899)* (Paris: A. Colin, 1920), T. 1, 112; T. 2, 51; Finch, 116–167.
25. SHD 10 H 19, Dossier 7, 22. Lyautey and other officers derided this as a ‘pseudo-submission’. Lyautey, T. 1, 250; Mordacq, 6.
 26. See the reports in France, Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence), Gouvernement Générale d’Indochine, 6142–6164.
 27. Fourniau, *Vietnam*, 721, 742; Kawamoto Kuniye, ‘The Viet-Nam Quang Phuc Hoi and the 1911 Revolution’, 115–127 in Etō Shinkichi and Harold Z. Schiffirin, *The 1911 Revolution in China: Interpretive Essays* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984); Barlow, 29–40.
 28. Gendre, 87–91.
 29. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 30–32.
 30. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 33.
 31. Michael G. Vann, ‘Fear and Loathing in French Hanoi: Colonial White Images and Imaginings of “Native” Violence’, 52–76 in Martin Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind, Vol 2: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Marr, 134, 181, 193–194; Fourniau, *Vietnam*, 704–705.
 32. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 44–48.
 33. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 49–52.
 34. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 53–55.
 35. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 36. See also Gendre, 145–150; Chack, 208–236; Fourniau, *Vietnam*, 717–720.
 36. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, 37–38.
 37. SHD 10 H 19, dossier 1, 188–215.
 38. Marr, 234–235.
 39. Gallieni, *Trois colonnes*, 34, 146; Lyautey, T. 1, 260, 288; T. 2, 35; Mordacq, 3, 32.
 40. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 1, 72–73.
 41. SHD 10 H 18 Dossier 2, *Historique du 1^{er} Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*, 2^{ème} partie, 1898–1914, 1, 2.
 42. Paul Doumer, *Situation de l’Indo-chine (1897–1901)* (Hanoi: F-H Schneider, 1902), 736.
 43. R.B. Smith, ‘The Development of Opposition to French Rule in Southern Vietnam, 1880–1940’, *Past & Present*, 54 (1972), 94–129; David Del Testa, ‘S’adapter pour ne pas être expulsé: les manifestations paysannes de Vinh en 1905’, 136–147 in Gilles de Gantès and Nguyen Phuong Ngoc (eds.), *Vietnam: le moment moderniste* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2009); Marr, 212–277;

Truong Buu Lâm, *Resistance, Rebellion, Revolution: Popular Movements in Vietnamese History* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984); and Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 141–176.

44. SHD 10 H 19, dossier 1, 247–249.
45. William Gallois, ‘Dahra and the History of Violence in Early Colonial Algeria’, in Martin Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind*, Vol. 2, *Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 10.

PART II

Colonial Authority and the Violence of Law

Martial Law in the British Empire

Lyndall Ryan

According to journalist Richard Gott, martial law was a legal device which allowed colonial governors in the British Empire to ‘detain and torture subject peoples’, with no questions asked, and to ‘annihilate those rash enough to dissent’.¹ A key feature was that it ‘rendered immune from prosecution the actions of agents’ operating under its aegis although, as historian Mark Finnane points out, its use signalled the fragility of colonial authority.² When considering its deployment across the British Empire however, it is not only the fragility of authority that is notable, but the frequency with which it was used to put down a wide range of insurgents. In 1867, the British lawyer, A. W. Finlason contended that without martial law the British Empire would collapse.³

This view of martial law, however, stands in stark contrast to the doyens of British constitutional law, William Blackstone and Alfred Dicey, who simply could not conceive of it being invoked in Britain after 1689 on the grounds that it had no authority in law.⁴ What then is martial law and how did it become the legal lynchpin of the Empire when in Britain it was considered to have no authority in law? What were the circumstances in which it was invoked in the Empire, how long did it

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remain in force, and how did it impact upon colonial subjects? This chapter reviews the origins of martial law in England and how it became a critical component of the prerogative powers of colonial governors in securing the Empire from internal rebellion and external attack. It then provides examples of its operation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way of demonstrating its flexibility as a legal method of repression and its trend to become more draconian over time.

ORIGINS OF MARTIAL LAW

According to the legal historian J. V. Capua, martial law emerged in England in the fourteenth century when Edward III set out the Royal Prerogative as a personal suite of undefined powers that enabled the monarch to legally assert his sovereignty over the Kingdom. It appears that a monarch would declare martial law ‘in a time of open rebellion’, or in wartime when invasion was threatened and that it replaced all other laws which were suspended. It was closely connected with military rule in that military tribunals were used to try rebels and traitors who were considered enemies of the monarch. Thus martial law was an undefined personal power held by the monarch; its success relied upon his having loyal troops at his disposal to enforce it.⁵ Legal historian John M. Collins considers that martial law was in more or less permanent operation in England for most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as successive usurping monarchs tried to assert their sovereignty over other usurpers and a possible Spanish invasion. In 1628, however, martial law was contested by the English Parliament, which considered that Charles I was abusing its use in peacetime. The Parliament passed the Petition of Right, which reasserted the principle of Magna Carta that no free person should be imprisoned, outlawed, exiled or executed in peacetime except by ‘due process of law’.⁶

The right of the monarch to declare martial law under the Royal Prerogative was severely limited by the Bill of Rights of 1689, which affirmed the supremacy of Parliament and the rule of law.⁷ When martial law was declared in 1715 and 1745 to suppress the Jacobite uprisings, it was done so in the name of the King and Parliament and the same process was used in 1780 to suppress the Gordon riots in London.⁸ From that time on, martial law was never again invoked in Britain.

But this was certainly not the case in the Empire. According to Collins, from the beginning of England’s imperial adventure in Ireland and

North America in the sixteenth century, colonial governors were not only invested with the monarch's undefined powers of the Royal Prerogative, they considered that in these far flung jurisdictions, 'martial law was the best form of law'. They had no hesitation in declaring martial law and setting up courts martial to convict a wide range of people they considered were enemies of the English state. They included rebels, soldiers, sailors, colonists, vagrants, known criminals, illegal retainers and rioters.⁹

After the rule of law came into effect in England in 1689 however, it was not readily translated to the settler colonies in North America and the plantation colonies in the Caribbean. Some colonial assemblies tried to follow the English Parliament in limiting the reserve powers of their colonial governors but the move was more about empowering the legislature to declare martial law during a slave rebellion in the absence of gubernatorial leadership than supporting the rule of law. Indeed, colonial governors continued to be invested with the undefined powers of the Royal Prerogative that not only included the power to declare martial law to contain insurgency and rebellion but also to banish their colonial subjects without trial to other parts of the Empire.¹⁰ As John McLaren points out, by the end of the American War of Independence in 1783, although the reserve powers of the monarch were in steep decline in England, in the Empire the reserve powers of colonial governors were being reinforced in reaction to the loss of the American colonies and to the success of the French Revolution.¹¹

MARTIAL LAW IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

English legal historian Charles Townshend considers that martial law was first used in the form that became recognisable in the British Empire in the nineteenth century during the Irish Rebellion of 1798.¹² In this instance the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and senior members of the Irish Parliament declared martial law to suppress insurgent resistance by deploying soldiers to burn down their villages, shoot and kill insurgents, and bring others to court martial, where they were convicted of treason and hanged. Others were banished to the Colony of New South Wales.¹³ Although two of the alleged insurgents brought cases of wrongful arrest before the courts, the judgments indicated that martial law granted legal immunity to the soldiers and police acting as agents of the Crown and that any insurgent who was arrested could expect summary punishment.

Their fate lay not in the jurisdiction of the civil court, but in a military court and the discretion of the Crown's representative.¹⁴

The same approach was adopted by the Governor of New South Wales, Philip Gidley King, in swiftly suppressing the Irish Convict Rebellion of 1804.¹⁵ He used the reserve power to declare martial law in the region where the rebellion was taking place and over a period of five days he deployed the garrison to track down and kill some of the rebels, ensured that the leaders were arrested and summarily convicted of treason by a military court and sentenced to hang in chains. Other rebels were banished to a penal settlement.¹⁶ In other parts of the colony, however, where lieutenant-governors were in control and no civil courts were available, one of them declared martial law for five months to prevent looting during a drastic food shortage and another declared it for six months to track down outlaw bushrangers who were contesting British sovereignty.¹⁷ In the latter instance, however, the governor lacked sufficient military and police resources to bring more than two of the outlaws to summary justice.¹⁸

In the period between the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and settler self-government in the 1850s, when thousands of British white settlers colonised the homelands of Indigenous peoples across the Empire, colonial governors were expected to advance and secure British sovereignty over these regions at the expense of their Indigenous subjects. They usually declared martial law after consultation with the Executive Council, a small body of unelected officials in the colony that included at least one legal officer.¹⁹ They used this approach to declare martial law four times against the Xhosa in the Cape Colony (South Africa) and a similar number of times against the Aboriginal people in the Australian colonies, twice against the Kandyans in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Maori in New Zealand. Some of them claimed they were deploying the measure as the only effective way of forcing Indigenous insurgents to accept British sovereignty.²⁰

The colonial governors who invoked martial law before 1855 usually did so for between four to six months to enable troops to carry out full-scale military campaigns against Indigenous insurgents either to drive them out of their homelands or to force them to surrender.²¹ In Ceylon (Sri Lanka) however, when martial law was declared in 1818 it appears to have remained in force for at least a decade while Indigenous insurgents were suppressed and dispossessed and British settlers occupied their homelands and established coffee plantations.²² In this

instance, a dual legal system was put in place, with martial law applying to Indigenous insurgents and the rule of law applying to the settlers. A similar system prevailed in Van Diemen's Land between 1828 and 1832 where martial law only applied to the Indigenous insurgents.²³ In British Kaffraria it applied to every person who lived in the newly conquered province from 1847 to 1851 and many instances of summary injustice were recorded.²⁴

In most parts of the Empire, however, martial law was used as a declaration of war against Indigenous insurgents who contested British sovereignty. But unlike a formal declaration of war which was made against a sovereign nation or group, martial law did not recognise Indigenous sovereignty. In defeat Indigenous leaders held few bargaining chips in negotiating a genuine outcome for their people and in many cases they were banished to other parts of the colony or the Empire. In the case of settler uprisings, martial law was deployed in Upper and Lower Canada in 1836 and 1837 and in the Australian Colony of Victoria in 1854, to suppress their demands for self-government.²⁵ Although they were put down in brutal and bloody events, unlike most Indigenous insurgencies, the settlers were more successful in achieving their aims.

It was not until the 1840s, however, in response to its use against Indigenous peoples in South Australia and New Zealand that some settlers began to question the use of martial law on the grounds that it was outside of the principles of the rule of law.²⁶ They were surprised by the reaction of the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, James Stephen, a leading humanitarian and champion of the rule of law. 'Martial law', he wrote in 1847 in response to Governor George Grey's use of it in New Zealand, 'is but another name for the suspension of all law; It is a measure which necessity justifies, but for which the Act of Indemnity is necessary for even when necessary it is illegal'.²⁷ What Stephen's comment reveals is that the declaration of martial law is a political act in that, according to Australian legal historian Julie Evans, it 'rests on shallow ground in law'.²⁸ Indeed, as David Dyzenhaus points out, the use of martial law in the British Empire was based more on political expediency than legal necessity.²⁹ Nevertheless, the declaration of martial law in this period was a means both of asserting the rule of law and simultaneously of placing it under suspension. As a flexible form of law, colonial governors in this period could even see its use as being consistent with an instrumentalist kind of humanitarianism.

The first definition of martial law that best explained its use in the Empire appeared in 1867 in the aftermath of the Morant Bay affair in Jamaica where the governor, Edward John Eyre, in conjunction with the Colony's legislature, declared martial law in 1865 to put down an uprising by former slaves. During the month that it was in force, more than 400 former slaves were shot dead and 600 others were flogged, 1000 of their dwellings were destroyed and an alleged rebel leader who was declared guilty of treason by a military tribunal was summarily executed.³⁰ The shocking event created a furor in Britain about the legitimacy of martial law in the Empire. In the ensuing debate between the advocates of the rule of law and the supporters of martial law, the latter won the day.

Their legal spokesman, W. R. Finlason, defined martial law as 'the final power colonial governors could impose upon dissidents under their jurisdiction who were perceived to be in an act of rebellion'.³¹ It not only enabled them to use military force against all kinds of insurgent subjects across the Empire in 'rendering immune from prosecution' those agents of the governor who disposed of the insurgents, it also denied the insurgents their legal rights. For that reason Finlason considered that martial law was a necessary measure to control the Empire, and that without it, the Empire would collapse.³²

Finlason's definition not only clarified what Stephen had been reluctant to admit, that martial law was a political device that colonial governors could use to suppress resistance to British rule, it also appears to have continued as the accepted definition across the Empire until the end of World War II. It appears, for example, to have influenced Nussar Hussein's fine study of the operation of colonial rule in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³³ He found that martial law was one of several violent measures regularly invoked by the British authorities to keep their Indian subjects in a state of oppression and was the most difficult to contest in the courts.³⁴ He concluded that it was most effective in the aftermath of the First Uprising in 1857 (the Mutiny) and after World War I when it was in place for nearly two decades as a key strategy to suppress the Independence movement. It was during this period that the Massacre of Amritsar took place.³⁵

Other studies of martial law have focused on the first half of the twentieth century, from the Boer War 1899–1901 to the British Mandates in Iraq and Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁶ They indicate that martial law became more draconian as resistant subjects became better

organised and better armed and more difficult to identify. In a celebrated case from the Boer War, where the extent of permissible military activity during a state of martial law was contested, a British patrol had travelled through enemy territory to a farmhouse in order to arrest several individuals suspected of dealing with the Boer insurgents. In the haste for a safe return, the British commanding officer ordered the suspects to be transported without delay. When a farm worker ‘proved dilatory’ in providing a horse bridle for the return trip, the British commander ordered a soldier named Smith to shoot the offender and he promptly did so. At the urging of the family involved, the government of the Cape of Good Hope brought a charge of murder against Smith for his action. The case was heard before a Special Court established by the British mandate to hear cases under martial law in South Africa and after due deliberation it declared Smith not guilty of wilful murder on the grounds that he was acting in good conscience in obeying an order from his superior officer.³⁷

The use of martial law became even more draconian after World War I and Townshend suggests that military governors in the British Protectorates in Iraq and Palestine were desperate to find relevance for themselves and their armed forces in what was considered as a period of peace. On at least one occasion a governor in Palestine had to be restrained by legal counsel in the Colonial Office from using martial law as a tool for the complete eradication of the villages of alleged Arab dissidents.³⁸ In this new military environment of air strikes and long-range mortar attacks, the Colonial Office began to replace the legal uncertainty of martial law with more legislatively defined coercive measures although there is still no agreement about what they were and when they were put in place. The more draconian Defence of the Realm Act of 1920 began to gradually supersede martial law in some parts of the Empire, although it was still in place in India and Burma at the end of World War II.³⁹ By 1950, colonial governors in non-self-governing parts of the Empire were using other extreme coercive measures such as the Emergency Regulations in Malaya 1948–1958 and the regulations put in place in Kenya in the 1950s to incarcerate Mau Mau rebels in detention camps.⁴⁰ A recent article in the *Guardian* newspaper suggests that the archive of this period of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya remains concealed from public scrutiny in the bowels of the British Foreign Office and contains evidence of systematic torture and 400 charges of abuse of detainees.⁴¹ It questions the benign view of Empire promoted by historians such as Niall Ferguson, Andrew Roberts and Lawrence James.

DISCUSSION

What is clear from this account is that until a British colony gained self-government, a colonial governor, as long as he ruled with an Executive Council, held an open-ended power to take whatever steps he decided were needed to deal with what he considered was insurrection by colonial subjects and could keep it in force for as long as he thought fit. According to Simpson, ‘action taken under this prerogative power, as decided by the executive (that is, the governor in executive council), was legal; martial law was thus the form of law imposed by the Crown in conditions of crises’.⁴² Indeed ‘the common practice of making a formal proclamation of martial law was associated with this view’, even though it came to be settled by law officers in the Colonial Office in 1838, that in common law such a declaration ‘did not confer any powers which would not have existed without it’.⁴³ Nevertheless, in many parts of the Empire where colonial governors ruled without an Executive Council, such as in Palestine in the 1920s and in times of rebellion, it became commonplace for a colonial governor, acting on behalf of the Crown, to take whatever action was necessary to suppress insurgents and rebels. The absence of clear guidelines from the Colonial Office on this issue ensured that Finlason’s definition remained in place until the end of World War II and usually left the colonial subject without legal redress.⁴⁴

CHARACTERISTICS

The absence of a comprehensive study of the use of martial law across the Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries makes it difficult to know exactly how often it was invoked. Richard Gott’s account of the British Empire between 1757 and 1857 reveals 35 instances of its use although the number is by no means complete. However it does state that martial law was deployed against just about every kind of rebellious subject in the Empire ranging from Indian princes to Irish peasants, black slaves and indentured labourers, Indigenous peoples and white settlers and British convicts.⁴⁵ Finlason in his text on martial law in 1867, referred to 90 different reported legal cases arising from various proclamations of martial law across the Empire, and although there were two cases arising from a particular declaration of martial law, such as in Ireland in 1798, most of the others appear to have single cases arising from specific declarations of martial law.⁴⁶ However, in focusing only

on the few cases that he considered could inform the legal issues arising from the Morant Bay affair, he left the reader to ponder the rest. All the same, from the known cases, it should be possible to identify the key characteristics of martial law as it was practised in the Empire.

The key purpose of martial law in the Empire was either to assert or protect British sovereignty. Three examples from the settler colonies between 1815 and 1855 demonstrate the variety. Martial law was most often used in this period to deprive Indigenous peoples of their sovereignty and make them into British subjects. As noted above, this occurred on at least four occasions in the Cape Colony, on four occasions in the Australian colonies and at least twice in Ceylon and New Zealand. In each case, the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples was erased with considerable loss of life and their leaders were either executed or banished to other parts of the Empire. In the Australian colonies it is estimated that martial law was directly responsible for the loss more than 1000 Indigenous lives and in the Cape Colony, the number of Xhosa lives lost during the 13-year period of martial law in British Kaffraria alone is more than 20,000.⁴⁷

In the settler colonies, as noted above, martial law was also used to suppress other kinds of colonial subjects such as convict rebels and bush-rangers who contested British sovereignty. In these cases they were similar to the suppression of rebellions of slaves and indentured labourers in other parts of the Empire.⁴⁸ The final example from the settler colonies is the use of martial law to put down white settler demands for self-government. The suppression of the rebels in Upper and Lower Canada in 1836 and 1837 and of the rebels at the Eureka Stockade in the Australian Colony of Victoria in 1854 are the best known examples. In the Canadian case, the rebel leaders were tried and hanged before court martial and others transported to Van Diemen's Land.⁴⁹ In the Victorian case, settler outrage was so great against the colonial authorities that the rebel leaders escaped conviction and in the following year some of them were elected to the first parliament under settler self-government.⁵⁰

In other parts of the Empire, however, martial law was an all too familiar repressive measure against those who contested British sovereignty. In India it was used to keep dissident subjects under military control for long periods of time with the loss of nearly a million lives and to reprise Hussein it was the most difficult to contest in the courts of all the repressive measures that were put in place in India in the aftermath of

the First Indian Uprising in 1857.⁵¹ The statistics are not only shocking they reveal the fragility of an Empire under increasing stress.

Another characteristic is that its purpose was more often to protect white settlers than other subjects in the Empire. In the few cases of settler rebellion, in Upper and Lower Canada in 1836–1837 and in the colony of Victoria in 1854, the rebels were considered to be threatening British sovereignty as exercised by the colonial elite. In these cases, however, the separation of colonists by class and ethnicity and by different nationality suggests that martial law was sometimes used to maintain as well as protect the settler elite.

Yet another characteristic is the range of tactics that was used to enforce martial law. The most dramatic was the full-scale military operation of up to 1000 troops that was deployed to drive Indigenous subjects out of their homelands either across the border into non-British territory, or into an area or region within British territory that was not required by the settlers. It was used in the Zuurfeld region of the Cape Colony in 1811 and 1819 to drive out the Xhosa and again in 1835 and 1847 to establish and hold new territories. It was also used in Ceylon in 1818, in New South Wales in 1824, in Van Diemen's Land in 1830 and in New Zealand in 1847. In each case troops were deployed into three or four detachments as a strategy to drive the insurgents before them in a pincer movement until the objective was reached. The tactic was not always successful however. In Van Diemen's Land, the military operation of 1830, known as the Black Line, ended with the capture of two Aboriginal men and the killing of two others.⁵² But the sheer number of troops assisted by an equal number of settlers had the desired effect over the following year when most of the remaining Aboriginal people in the war zone were either forced to surrender or were shot.⁵³

Another tactic was the use of the punitive expedition consisting of 3–20 soldiers whose purpose was to attack and burn villages where insurgents resided and then shoot them and bring others to court martial. This tactic was certainly used against the Xhosa in the Cape Colony in 1835, against the Canadian rebels in Upper and Lower Canada in 1836 and 1837 and against Indigenous insurgents in South Australia in 1840. In this case it was alleged that members of the Milmenrura clan of the Ngarrindjeri people had killed up to 26 survivors of the brig *Maria* which had been wrecked on a reef south of the Coorong on the South Australian coast on a voyage between Adelaide and Hobart. The event is considered as the largest murder of white people by Indigenous

people in Australia's colonial history.⁵⁴ Aware that he could not bring the alleged murderers to trial because there were no survivors, and Indigenous people were not permitted to give evidence in court, the governor of South Australia, George Gawler, declared the case 'beyond the limits or ordinary British justice' and decided to proceed 'on the principles of martial law'.⁵⁵ He despatched a police party to the Coorong with specific instructions to identify up to three of the murderers and enforce summary justice without trial by hanging them over the grave site of the murdered white people.⁵⁶ However there is dispute about whether further summary justice was carried out against other Milmenrura people.⁵⁷

In the aftermath of the First Indian Uprising, however, the punitive expedition was used with increasing effect against people whose legal status as British subjects was undecided. In this case as pointed out above, it was used to great effect against Boer settlers in South Africa in 1899–1901. By the twentieth century it appears to have replaced the full-scale military operation and become the most common tactic for tracking down insurgents.

Yet another tactic was the use of massacre. Under martial law, the soldiers, police and defence force personnel could act against alleged insurgents with impunity. In the nineteenth century, the declaration of martial law was the opportunity to conduct massacres of Indigenous peoples in Van Diemen's Land, the Xhosa in the Cape Colony and the Kandyans in Ceylon. In India there appears to have been several instances where massacre was carried out in full view of witnesses. In the aftermath of the First Indian Uprising in 1857, groups of Muslim rebel soldiers were individually strapped to the face of cannons which were then fired. Then in Amritsar in 1919, British troops fired on 20,000 people who were gathered for an illegal meeting, killing 380 people and wounding more than 1000 others.⁵⁸ As a result of this incident, General Dyer, the commander of the British troops was retired from the army, but was never charged let alone convicted for his brutal behaviour.⁵⁹

Another characteristic is the extraordinary flexibility in the time period that martial law could remain in place. When deployed as a short sharp shock, it was exceedingly effective. This was certainly the case in the Irish Convict Rebellion in New South Wales in 1804 and in the response to the *Maria* Massacre in South Australia in 1840.⁶⁰ However from the cases that I have studied in the period before settler self-government, a similar effect was achieved when it was in place from between three to six

months. But in each case its effectiveness relied on the colonial governor having sufficient military resources at his disposal. This was not the case for Thomas Davey, the lieutenant-governor in Van Diemen's Land who declared martial law against outlaw bushrangers in 1815. Even though it remained in operation for six months, the lack of military manpower ensured that only two bushrangers were captured and executed.⁶¹

In many parts of the Empire, however, martial law remained in force for years at a time not only rendering the insurgents vulnerable to attack by British forces but also the settlers it was designed to protect. In Van Diemen's Land in the three years that it was in force, more than 90 settlers were killed, including women and children, one third more than in the earlier period.⁶² In the Boer War where it was in force for more than four years, the risk to civilians increased in each year and in Palestine and Iraq where it was in operation for nearly a decade, civilian deaths increased exponentially from more sophisticated military strategies, such as the use of air strikes and long-range weapons attacks on civilian villages.

A further characteristic is that in the aftermath of the First Indian Uprising in 1857, the use of martial law appears to have intensified and the provisions became more draconian. Indeed, several historians have cited the Boer War as the critical starting point but without a comprehensive study of martial law it could well have been in earlier decades. However, it was the Boer settlers who were not designated combatants who were first to be arrested and taken before military tribunals rather than civilian courts and were often placed in that new British invention, the concentration camp.⁶³ Townshend also points to its draconian use in the British Mandates of Iraq and Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s where anyone could be declared an insurgent and deported to a concentration camp without trial.⁶⁴

A final characteristic is that some colonial governors appear to have been more enamoured of martial law than others. Two of them in particular stand out. George Arthur declared martial law on two occasions against the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land in 1828 and 1830 and, in the latter case, conducted a major military operation against them in order to drive them from their homelands and banish them to an offshore island. Then in 1838, when posted to Upper Canada, he used the residual power of martial law to convict 30 settler rebels in a military tribunal and after hanging three of them he used the power of banishment to transport 23 others to Van Diemen's Land.⁶⁵

George Grey is known to have either declared or continued to operate under martial law on at least four occasions. As Governor of New Zealand, he declared martial law in the northern part of the North Island in 1845 to enable troops to attack the Maori pa at Ruapekapaka and again in the Lower Hutt Valley region between April and September 1846 so he could deploy 600 British troops to 'clear out' Maori insurgents who were fighting for their sovereignty. In the aftermath he used a military court to convict two Maori leaders as common criminals for attacking British soldiers and hanged one of them. He then had seven others convicted on several charges, including having 'been taken in arms in open Rebellion against the Queen's Sovereign Authority and Government of New Zealand' and sentenced them to transportation to Van Diemen's Land.⁶⁶ Eight years later he was despatched to the Cape Colony and took a special interest in the new province of British Kaffraria where martial law had been in place since its inception in 1847. According to Denver A. Webb, Grey found the opportunity to rule under martial law 'attractive and useful in driving his interventionist programmes' until his departure in 1860.⁶⁷ His goal was to make the Xhosa 'useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue; in short, a source of strength and wealth for this colony, such as Providence designed them to be'.⁶⁸ When he returned to New Zealand in 1861 for a second term as governor he held much reduced powers as the colony had achieved self-government. Undeterred by these restrictions, in August 1863, he issued a Proclamation that included the same powers as martial law, demanding that the Maori chief, Weraora, give up his sovereignty and commanded the military campaign that led to his capture.⁶⁹ He then persuaded the Executive to accept the proclamation *after* the fact.

Yet both governors considered they were humanitarian imperialists who believed that their actions represented the best interests of the benign British Empire. The deployment of martial law enhanced their careers in the period of humanitarian imperialism in that it demonstrated their strength of purpose in a crisis.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of the use of martial law in the British Empire reveals that it was a flexible mechanism that could be quickly invoked to address a wide range of resistance from small-scale insurgencies to major

rebellions. It could remain in place for just a few days or it could be in force for several decades. As a flexible form of the rule of law, colonial governors in the period before settler self-government had no difficulty in seeing its use as an instrumentalist form of humanitarianism. But it was not effective without the availability of troops to carry it out.

The impact of martial law on the Indigenous peoples was devastating. They were not only destroyed in great numbers, but in losing their sovereignty which the British only acknowledged in New Zealand, the opportunity for redress was virtually impossible. In many cases the only way the survivors could exist was to become a fringe group in colonial society. Finally, in keeping with the increasing complexity of Empire in the aftermath of the First Indian Uprising, martial law became less a temporary suspension of the rule of law, rather it became the legal backbone of the Empire. For, as this chapter has demonstrated, without it the Empire would surely have collapsed.

NOTES

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17. Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia a History Volume One the Beginning*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73; Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania vol. 1, from the earliest times to 1855*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 578, note 9.
18. Robson, *History of Tasmania*, 578.
19. Simpson, *Human Rights and the end of Empire*, 67.
20. Martial law was declared against the Xhosa in 1811, 1819, 1835 and 1847; against the Aboriginal people in 1824, 1828, 1830 and 1840; against the Kandyans in 1818 and 1848; and against Maori in 1845 and 1846.
21. Martial law was in force for five months on Norfolk Island in New South Wales, in 1790; for six months in Van Diemen's Land in 1815; for four months in New South Wales in 1824; in the Cape Colony for three months in 1818 and six months in 1819; and in New Zealand for four months in 1847.
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23. Lyndall Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines A History since 1803* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012), 84–90.
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30. For the most comprehensive account of the uprising and the aftermath in London, see, Kostal, *A jurisprudence of power*.
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32. Finlason, *Commentaries on Martial Law*, 12.
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43. Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire*, 61.
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46. Finlason, *Commentaries on Martial Law*, 25–30.
47. The figure for the Australian colonies is an estimate drawn from the four period of martial law. For the Cape Colony see Webb, 'More than Just a Public Execution', 300.
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53. Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, 138–139.
54. Foster, Hosking and Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions*, 13.
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Flogging as Judicial Violence: The Colonial Rationale of Corporal Punishment

Amanda Nettelbeck

The gradual turn against corporal punishment in the nineteenth-century Anglo world has been often noted by historians of crime and punishment, particularly in the context of a rising concern with social and legal reform. In her recent book *Polemical Pain*, Margaret Ambruzzo has explored how the humanitarian sentiments of sympathy and social improvement that thrived with the transatlantic anti-slavery movement produced a gradual loss of public faith in the infliction of bodily suffering as an effective deterrent to wrongdoing, and led to a broader ‘transformation in moral thinking’ about pain as a tool of discipline that was no longer appropriate for modern and progressive societies.¹ Intersecting with the anti-slavery movement, a range of related humanitarian campaigns for social reform also flourished during the early nineteenth century that directed political energy away from corporal punishment and towards the introduction of more humane systems of discipline in the military, penal colonies, prisons and schools.²

By the 1820s, the effects of this broad social shift towards liberal reform and more humane forms of punishment were starting to be seen

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in a trend against the lash as an instrument for disciplining slaves as well as women and children, sailors and soldiers, convicts and criminals. Yet despite the powerful influence of humanitarian campaigns to curb corporal punishment within a range of institutional settings over the first half of the nineteenth century, flogging continued to have an extended life into the twentieth century as a form of judicial punishment for specific groups of people. In this sense, as Angus McLaren has suggested, later nineteenth-century arguments in favour of the lash pose a challenge to ‘the generally accepted account of nineteenth-century criminals [and others] being subjected to ever more “humane”, rational, and reformist punishments’, and indicate that social justifications for the infliction of bodily pain were not neatly divided from the progressive moral sensibilities of the nineteenth century.³

Around Britain’s Empire, colonised people remained subject to flogging as a judicial punishment long after it declined in application to other groups. The extended use of flogging as an exceptional form of racialised punishment was visible both in ‘exploitative’ colonies that were reliant upon Indigenous labour and in settler colonies where colonial governments sought to transform Indigenous people into a new kind of colonial citizen.⁴ With different degrees of emphasis, the lash continued to be applied to Indigenous bodies in both these kinds of colonial setting as an instrument of control or of ‘education’, well after the reformist era that saw corporal punishment gradually become replaced with the principle of the reformatory prison.⁵ Yet for many colonial authorities, the suitability of the lash as an instrument for disciplining colonised people also carried other forms of rationale beyond the fact that it served as a powerful means to subdue disorder and resistance, or to display the controlling power of colonial authority. A striking feature of some late nineteenth-century arguments for its application to Indigenous people was that it could be justified as being more ‘humane’ than the alternative of incarceration. Flogging ultimately served Indigenous people’s interests, ran this rationale, because it was an immediate form of punishment they could comprehend, and as a display of judicial violence it helped to protect them from the kind of retributive violence from settlers that was otherwise difficult to regulate at colonial frontiers.

This chapter will trace some of the arguments that supported flogging as an exceptional mode of punishment for Indigenous people in Britain’s late colonial world well after the mid-nineteenth century when corporal punishment fell into wider disuse. It will firstly compare some of the

social and moral debates of the early nineteenth century that produced declining reliance upon corporal punishment as a mode of discipline, and later debates that contributed to its revival as a suitable form of judicial punishment for specific groups. Drawing upon the settler colonial case of Western Australia, where flogging was re-introduced in 1892 as a provision of the amended *Aboriginal Offenders Act*, it will then unpack the threads of a complex colonial reasoning that the revival of corporal punishment for Indigenous people was not only a more effective mode of discipline than carceral measures, but also a more ‘merciful policy’.

THE DECLINE AND RETURN OF FLOGGING IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH EMPIRE

Flogging has had a long history as a deterrent to social disobedience and as a symbolic assertion of social order.⁶ However, in the shift towards liberal reform in early nineteenth-century Britain and its empire, the 1820s represented a decade of transition when moral distaste generated declining use of the whip, and this downward trend continued through the 1830s and 1840s. Increasingly seen as a practice that was ‘degrading, barbaric, and despotic’, flogging was first prohibited for use on female prisoners through legislation introduced in Britain in 1820.⁷ Female slaves still remained subject to corporal punishment after this time, but over the following years legal prohibitions on the flogging of female slaves and restricted conditions on the flogging of male slaves were introduced in some parts of the British Empire, mirroring a wider campaign for humanitarian reform in the slave colonies that culminated in the *Abolition of Slavery Act* of 1833.⁸ Even before this legislative change, however, testimony given to a House of Commons Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery indicates an uneven reliance upon the lash in the British dominions where slaves constituted the backbone of the colonial labour force: in some quarters flogging was still regarded as a necessary stimulus to labour, while in others it was already becoming rarely used.⁹

Humanitarian arguments for the reform of corporal punishment also influenced its declining application in the Australian penal colonies from the 1820s. A recent statistical study by Penelope Edmonds and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart indicates that in Van Diemen’s Land, the penal colony that became most notorious for its systematic brutality against convicts,

rates of flogging peaked in 1822 and declined thereafter.¹⁰ Encouraged by the success of the anti-slavery movement, campaigns for the humane treatment of convicts gathered pace through the 1830s.¹¹ In his 1838 report of a House of Commons Select Committee established to advise on the state of the convict transportation system and its scope for improvement, Sir William Molesworth drew strongly on the rhetorical evils of slavery to highlight their parallels with the physical tortures of convict punishments. Elaborating on the arbitrary brutalities of a system in which overseers held discretionary power to authorise heavy floggings for relatively minor offences such as insubordination or insolence, the Molesworth Committee report became widely regarded as one of the triggers that brought about the end of the convict transportation system.¹²

Beyond the colonies, comparisons to slavery also drove forward calls for the reform of factory conditions at home in Britain, especially for child workers. During 1831 and 1832 a House of Commons Select Committee on Factory Children's Labour gathered testimony on unregulated whippings amongst other abuses imposed on the youth who worked in Britain's factories. As the Molesworth Committee report would do a few years later in its recommendations for reform of the convict system, the Factory Children's Labour Committee report emphasised the comparisons between the plight of child workers and that of slaves, and contributed to the introduction of the *Factory Act* of 1833 that enshrined new protective regulations in law.¹³ Through the 1830s, other legislative changes and government inquiries directed towards the protection and amelioration of vulnerable subjects were emblematic of an appetite for humanitarian reform that was more diverse than the call to improve the legal and social rights of any one group.¹⁴ Instead, this strengthening humanitarian turn reflected a broader adjustment occurring within the moral code of nineteenth-century western societies, and it was symptomatic of a developing social sensibility that the deliberate infliction of human suffering was 'immoral'.¹⁵

The growing moral sensibility that placed new prohibitions on corporal punishment was at least partially shaped by evolving middle-class expectations of decency, respectability and manliness that would mature and strengthen as the Victorian age progressed, at least within metropolitan Britain if not at its colonial frontiers.¹⁶ As historians have argued, these social expectations came to associate the act of flogging with a complex set of gendered codes. Diana Paton's work on decency, gender

and the lash considers the ways in which the later stages of the abolitionist movement supported and perpetuated a hardening sentiment that 'flogging was worse when inflicted upon a woman', not least because the exposure of the female body it required was considered uniquely provocative and morally indecent. By the 1830s, she shows, a growing concern with decency and female modesty was redefining flogging as a form of punishment that was imagined as suitable only for male offenders, a belief that was reflected in efforts of the Colonial Office to outlaw the flogging of women in Britain's Crown colonies.¹⁷

In another reflection of the consolidating moral codes that would become characteristic of the Victorian age, flogging was also increasingly regarded as a dishonourable and humiliating instrument of punishment in the masculine world of the military, where it had long been used to assert hierarchical order and serve as a deterrent to disobedience. In her analysis of early to mid nineteenth-century naval reform, Myra Glenn has argued that campaigns to abolish flogging in the navy were less centred on humanitarian opposition to the infliction of pain than they were centred on the demeaning aspect of corporal punishment as something that stripped men of their inherent manliness.¹⁸ Underpinned by a liberal humanitarian belief in the 'dignity of man' and an Enlightenment belief in the power of reason, reformist campaigns against flogging in the military, like those against the flogging of (male) convicts and prisoners, pressed forward an argument that rational rather than brutal measures would provide the most powerful motivation for the cultivation of men's better natures and of their capacity for self-restraint. A moral conviction that flogging undermined the natural dignity of both the recipient and the enforcer further supported campaigns against it as an ignoble practice.¹⁹ In the House of Commons, the abolition of flogging in the army was urged on grounds that it was more likely to make men 'barbarous' than penitent, so was injurious not only to the individual but also to the service and to the nation.²⁰

Yet humanitarian arguments against flogging as a punishment that sat in opposition to principles of decency and the 'dignity of man' did not hold for all groups through the nineteenth century. In his study of masculinity and criminal justice in nineteenth-century England, Martin Wiener shows how male violence, particularly against women, became subject to ever-more severe judicial punishments within a Victorian society that was occupied with values of respectability and honour, and that increasingly defined violence as demeaning to the civilising impulses of

imperialism.²¹ But while the serious violent crimes he examines, such as homicide and rape, remained subject to trial by jury in a superior court, Angus McLaren's work on lower-order sexual and social offences at the *fin de siècle* shows how a late nineteenth-century culture of moral disapproval helped to produce a resurgence of flogging as a summary punishment considered suitable for men who committed 'deviant' acts—that is, acts which offended hardening Victorian values of moral decorum.²² By the 1850s, flogging in Britain had become largely restricted to crimes of treason, but demands for its revival gathered pace from the 1870s in response to 'moral' offences such as earning a living from prostitution, acts of domestic abuse, indecent exposure, public displays of transvestism and other forms of sexual exhibitionism. The powers of summary jurisdiction that allowed magistrates to award punishments of floggings late in the nineteenth century were provided through existing provisions of the *Vagrancy Act* of 1824; these provisions had largely lapsed in usage but had never been repealed, and so men found guilty of social order offences of a sexual kind could be flogged as 'incorrigible rogues'.²³

The moral arguments in late nineteenth-century Britain that led to a revival in flogging as a judicial punishment for certain kinds of sexual 'delinquency' were premised on a social understanding that men who were capable of such acts forfeited their natural right to an assumed state of dignity. A similar social understanding extended to Britain's colonies, where the Victorian codes of manliness, decency and human dignity were not applied in the same way to the bodies of colonised men. In multiple sites of the (former) British Empire, flogging continued to be applied as a racialised punishment well into the twentieth century, serving both as means of regulating black subjects and as a symbolic marker of white sovereignty. In accordance with Victorian sensibilities on gender, however, legally sanctioned flogging was predominantly reserved as a male punishment, although not in all cases. Nor did this restraint apply to non-judicial floggings where colonists privately took the whip to Indigenous workers, including women.²⁴

Either as a judicial or as a non-judicial punishment, flogging was enlisted in various colonial settings to secure the security or appease the fears of colonial society: it served equally as a means to control frontier disturbances, to manage large colonised labour forces and to sooth white anxiety about black crime in settings where colonised populations significantly outnumbered colonial incomers.²⁵ As Stephen Pete and Annie Devenish have put it in their study of flogging in colonial Natal, while

metropolitan societies had mostly shifted from strategies of corporal punishment to those of penal confinement by the mid-nineteenth century, at Britain's colonial peripheries elements of 'pre-modern' punishments remained central to the discipline of colonised subjects, creating 'a complex colonial discourse which linked ideas of punishment to those of race and colonial domination'.²⁶

The arguments that justified flogging as a racialised punishment in the colonies had several strands. In Britain's African colonies, where black populations were much larger than the white population, a sense of settler vulnerability contributed to the development of a normative colonial culture in which authority could be asserted through physical force. Pete and Devenish have shown that in Natal, a social undercurrent of settler fear played a significant role in maintaining a prevailing colonial belief that strong deterrents were required for the repression of disobedience or resistance within a large African labour force, and that those deterrents had to be harsh and visceral to be understood by the 'savage' mind. This ideology sustained a 'cult of the cat' well into the twentieth century, captured in the comment of Natal's Attorney General in 1909 that there was 'a law for the kafir in this country and the law is to flog him and to flog him severely'.²⁷

Importantly, the judicial power of colonial states to flog African workers was also tied to an assertion of political independence unshackled from fear of imperial intervention. Within settler frontier societies that distanced themselves from what they deemed the armchair humanitarianism of metropolitan Britain, the right to impose corporal punishments on black subjects was perceived as the right to disregard the views of an imperial metropole that was overly concerned with 'native rights' and out of touch with the realities of colonial life.²⁸ David Anderson has analysed the continuing power of this sentiment of political independence in early twentieth-century Kenya, where local judicial authorities continued to support a normative culture of corporal punishment for Indigenous Africans to a degree that was 'unrivalled anywhere in the British colonies'.²⁹ It was not until the decade following World War I, Anderson argues, that Kenya's freedom to impose both judicial and non-judicial corporal punishments on black workers was subjected to legal reform, forced through by the Colonial Office after a series of fatal flogging scandals caused outrage in London.³⁰

But in addition to serving as a means of colonial management and as a display of colonial power, colonial authorities and settlers also frequently

saw the flogging of Indigenous people as having an educative function. Drawing upon the hierarchical principles of stadial theory that positioned Indigenous people as being inherently immature in their capacity for reason and self-restraint, this kind of colonial argument commonly drew parallels with children in justifying the use of the whip on Indigenous bodies. As one correspondent to the Australian colonial press put it in 1887, ‘a native is only a child of bigger growth’ and therefore the lesson of a whipping was beneficial in the same way that ‘fathers occasionally administer [one] to their children to save them from being spoiled’.³¹ This ideology of tutelage through corporal punishment perpetuated a colonial assumption that Indigenous people more readily understood the lessons of physical suffering than they understood more abstract disciplinary measures; it also justified the flogging of Indigenous offenders in front of gatherings of their countrymen, for it was felt that a public spectacle of suffering would be effective in teaching the wider group to learn the lesson of immediately-administered justice.³² In all these respects, corporal punishment in a colonial context was racially bifurcated in a way that created and upheld embodied categories of ‘colonial difference’.³³

FLOGGING AS ‘MERCIFUL POLICY’ IN LATE COLONIAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Across nineteenth-century Australia, Indigenous people were still subjected to the lash after the broader social shift towards more carceral modes of punishment. Russell Hogg suggests that alongside other non-carceral strategies such as rationing, flogging had such a regular role in the management of Indigenous people on Australia’s settler frontiers that it could be considered ‘a cultural and symbolic practice as much as a legal and political one’.³⁴ Similarly, in discussing the role of flogging in helping to set the terms of colonial power in Australia, Anna Haebich describes the ‘branding’ of Indigenous people with the lash as part of ‘the shadowy underbelly of colonial society. Their colonised bodies bore testimony to the violence of a civilising project that used the pain of corporeal punishment to discipline and imprint civilised habits’.³⁵ The social toleration of flogging as a racialised punishment was particularly pervasive in colonial economies where settler masters used it throughout the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, as a means of keeping Indigenous workers in line. In this implicitly-understood context

of colonial labour relations, Russell Hogg argues, corporal punishment was seen to hold a 'quasi-legal' status that fell somewhere between unlawfulness and communally-sanctioned justice, demonstrating that colonial understandings of legitimate violence were not restricted to a 'straightforward state monopoly'.³⁶

If the continuing toleration of flogging as a non-judicial form of Indigenous punishment was pervasive across Australia, in the last decade of the nineteenth century it had revived life as a judicial punishment in the newly self-governing colony of Western Australia. Under the terms of the amended *Aboriginal Offenders Act* (1892), magistrates or Justices of the Peace could award summary punishments of 25 lashes to Indigenous men, with or without an additional term of imprisonment of up to two years, and a dozen lashes to boys aged less than 16.³⁷ These were exceptionally wide summary powers compared to those available to magistrates and Justices of the Peace in other Australian colonies. In South Australia and Queensland, colonies whose governments were similarly managing actively-contested northern frontiers in the late nineteenth century, magistrates could not authorise floggings and could only award prison sentences of one year for some non-capital offences.³⁸ In reviving flogging as a specifically racialised summary punishment then, Western Australia had less in common with its sister Australian colonies than it had with the British African colonies where legally-sanctioned corporal punishment continued to serve as a normative strategy for the control of black subjects.

The flogging of Indigenous offenders had in fact been legally available as a summary punishment in Western Australia throughout the second half of the nineteenth century for all but a decade. It was first introduced in 1849 as a provision of the *Ordinance to provide for the Summary Trial and Punishment of Aboriginal native Offenders*.³⁹ This provision remained in place until 1883, when the 1849 Ordinance and its later amendments were repealed by a new *Aboriginal Offenders Act* that removed the capacity of magistrates to award flogging sentences, and that limited summary punishments to prison terms of up to two years with or without hard labour.⁴⁰ But the revival of flogging a decade later in 1892 reflected the government's need to find a way to regulate an on-going and protracted state of racial conflict on Western Australia's northern frontiers. Through the 1870s and 1880s, settlers in the north made constant complaints that Indigenous people were killing their cattle 'wholesale' and that the government afforded them no

legal protection, while it let Indigenous crime go unpunished.⁴¹ Against this backdrop of settler grievance, accounts circulated in the press of a normative culture of abuse against the large numbers of Indigenous people who now worked as an indentured labour force in valuable colonial economies, and whose treatment drew regular comparisons to slavery.⁴² Such claims prompted the local government to undertake a number of dedicated inquiries into the treatment of Indigenous people in the north, although with little effect.⁴³ Settlers' demands for more government support had considerable political and economic leverage; their vociferous complaints that Indigenous people enjoyed immunity from the law was sometimes accompanied by the sentiment that they were forced to take the law into their own hands.⁴⁴ It was into this environment and its fraught state of race relations that flogging was re-introduced as an exceptional legal measure for the summary punishment of Indigenous offenders. Not surprisingly, followed by absconding from service, the most regularly prosecuted Indigenous offence under the summary jurisdiction of magistrates was theft of livestock.⁴⁵

The return of flogging as a racialised punishment in Western Australia was justified, as it was in Britain's African colonies, on grounds that the prospect of imprisonment served no deterrent to Indigenous crime, and visceral measures were required to control it; indeed, some magistrates and settlers argued that Indigenous men were glad of a spell in prison because it provided them with free food and clothing.⁴⁶ It was 'of no earthly use to preach morality' to Indigenous people, ran a press editorial in support of the return of flogging, when the only effective deterrent they could understand was 'brute force'; summary punishment on the spot was additionally seen to have the practical benefit of saving the government from having to bring Indigenous prisoners potentially hundreds of miles to the nearest magistrate for trial.⁴⁷ The idea that Indigenous people understood corporate punishment more clearly than incarceration was also held up to support a familiar colonial sentiment that it had an educative role in teaching them how to obey expected codes of conduct and that, as with 'naughty children', this lesson needed to be reinforced with a firm hand.⁴⁸

These interlinked rationales in favour of flogging as an exceptional racialised punishment were broadly shared across the British colonies, but in Western Australia an additional rationale for its revival as a specific punishment for Indigenous people was that it constituted a more humane policy than imprisonment. The reasoning of this argument

was that because flogging was the only effective means of teaching Indigenous people to understand the law, and because its display of justice would deter settlers from carrying out acts of retributive violence against them, its availability as a summary punishment would help the government to regulate conflict on the colony's frontiers through legal means, and thereby serve towards the long-term legal protection of Indigenous people themselves. This reasoning framed the Attorney General's comments in support of flogging when the proposed amendments to the *Aboriginal Offenders Act* came before the Legislative Council in January 1892. The 'depredations of aboriginals' on the colony's frontiers had become so pressing, he stated, that unless the government steered them onto a 'better footing', settlers would be tempted to 'take the law into their own hands'. Flogging was a punishment the recipients could comprehend, and the whip 'did them far more good than any imprisonment'. The maximum number of 25 strokes proposed by the government was 'very slight', and would help prevent conditions in the outlying districts decline 'from bad to worse'. He trusted, then, that the parliament would recognise the return of lawful flogging under the *Aboriginal Offenders Act* as 'a merciful policy'.⁴⁹

The idea that flogging represented a more humane policy than its alternatives because it interrupted the cycle of frontier conflict and deterred settlers from more violent responses was also apparent in public sentiment. One correspondent to the press argued that the return of flogging constituted a 'moderate' policy, because 'physical pain inflicted on a score of the natives in the presence of their brothers' had an 'impressive' effect upon them, and unless they learned 'obedience and submission to our laws', settlers would be obliged to act for themselves and 'many more lives will very probably be sacrificed'.⁵⁰ Notably, the Chief Protector of Aborigines himself accepted flogging as a relatively benign punishment, one that was more humane than banishment to prison. In his report for the year 1900–1901, he described the whipping of Indigenous offenders as parallel to the caning of schoolboys, and defended the authorised government whips as causing less pain than alternative instruments because their lashes were free of knots and made of 'small cord'.⁵¹

The Chief Protector's description of the government-authorised whips as causing no more than the requisite amount of pain opened onto the ambiguous problem of how to define the difference between legal floggings of Indigenous prisoners by the state and illegal floggings of

Indigenous workers by settler masters. The flogging of Aboriginal workers was known to be a standard practice within the northern pastoral and pearling sectors, and before that as part of labour relations further south. While technically illegal, the private practice of inflicting corporal punishment on Indigenous servants was—within certain limits—considered acceptable as a measure for ‘educating’ them into good behaviour, even by personnel of the Aborigines Department who were charged with monitoring their legal protection. In his 1892 report to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, for instance, travelling inspector Charles Straker noted that most station owners ‘chastised’ their Aboriginal employees with a ‘light thrashing’, a practice he accepted to the extent that ‘settlers must have a certain amount of liberty to punish natives’.⁵² However, when this tolerated culture of physical ‘chastisement’ crossed a line, settlers could be prosecuted for assault. And when they beat servants to death, they exposed themselves to more serious charges.

The most notorious of these cases came to public notice in late 1897, when brothers Ernest and Alexander Anderson were charged with murder after having flogged to death three Indigenous servants who absconded from their *Bendhu* station in the northern district of Marble Bar. The circumstances of this case drew wide disapprobation in the colonial press, not least because the settler jury returned a verdict not of murder but of the lesser crime of manslaughter. Alexander Anderson died of typhoid awaiting trial but his brother Ernest received a sentence of life imprisonment for the crime, although he only served five years.⁵³ While the publicity centred on the *Bendhu* case reflected a moral distaste for flogging at this extreme, the public disapproval the case generated was focused not on flogging as an everyday reality of labour relations but rather on the fact that the gender and age of the Anderson brothers’ victims—two women and an elderly man—made the flogging an especially unmanly act.⁵⁴

As this and other cases indicated, the local colonial government had to draw a clear distinction between flogging as judicial punishment and its definition as unlawful assault. To this end, the conditions that separated judicial and privatised flogging were highly calibrated. Lawful floggings were to be conducted only in the presence of a magistrate or Justice of the Peace, a Protector of Aborigines or a police officer. They had to correspond with a specified number of lashes, and they had to be inflicted using no instrument other than the government-endorsed ‘cat o’ nine tails’ or birch rod. The stock whip, which was the instrument usually on

hand amongst settlers, was strictly prohibited.⁵⁵ These rather arbitrary distinctions between legal and illegal forms of corporal punishment produced controversy on numerous occasions, for instance when Justices of the Peace sanctioned the flogging of Aboriginal prisoners with a prohibited kind of lash, or when the magistrates and Justices who awarded sentences of lawful flogging in their courts subjected their own Indigenous workers to unauthorised floggings at home.⁵⁶

This system of Indigenous punishment did not pass without protest. One critic—a former police constable—noted that floggings were one of the principal causes that prompted Indigenous workers to run away from their employers, exposing them in turn to arrest under the *Masters and Servants Act* and a judicial flogging as summary punishment for absconding from service. He also pointed out the contradictions of a system in which Protectors of Aborigines, the very officials charged with providing Indigenous people with legal protection, worked to administer their punishment. Scorning the parallel drawn by the Chief Protector between flogging and the caning of schoolboys, he drily observed that, unlike the flogging of Indigenous prisoners, schoolmasters do not ‘half kill the child to bring about the desired effect’. In a direct rejection of the Chief Protector’s defence of the government-authorized whip as a relatively humane instrument, he emphasised that the cat o’ nine tails was attached with nine lines of cord ‘about two feet six inches long, with from four to six knots in them, the whole weighting about 11 ounces. With this instrument I have seen natives most brutally cut about by the “flogger”, [who receives] payment at the rate of 10s per head from the Government for every native he flogs’.⁵⁷ Another correspondent agreed with the problem of Protectors of Aborigines overseeing the floggings, noting that the key duty of a Protector should be to protect, not ‘to uphold the rotten laws...and to make last the chains that bind the slaves’.⁵⁸ The *Aborigines Protection Act* may as well exist ‘to legalise slavery’, stated another correspondent to the press, while yet another drew parallels between the treatment of Indigenous people in Western Australia and the old evils of the convict system that was now considered to be ‘the most discreditable institution of Australia’.⁵⁹

Despite some voicing of criticism, however, the idea that flogging Indigenous people was kinder and more beneficial to them than imprisonment survived well into the twentieth century. At a 1937 federal government conference on Aboriginal welfare, delegates discussed the potential advantages of summary corporal punishment as a strategy of

Indigenous governance. Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Joseph Carrodus, argued that the lapse of time between committing an offence and being tried for it made other forms of judicial punishment meaningless to Indigenous people, whereas a 'native is capable of understanding the meaning of punishment given on the spot'. Professor John Burton Cleland, Chairman of the South Australian Advisory Council of Aborigines, concurred that there was 'much to be said for inflicting some form of corporal punishment, on the spot', but in an effort to tie it to Indigenous agency, he suggested it 'should be administered only after consultation with the old men of the tribe, and should actually be administered by them or under their direction'.⁶⁰ Ultimately, the discussion closed with a resolution against any move to formalise a nationwide system of Indigenous corporal punishment, although informally it continued to be practised in Australia, as in other parts of the former Empire, well into the twentieth century.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

From the early nineteenth century onwards, the humanitarian politics that achieved the abolition of slavery and propelled social reform into a wider arena had a direct impact upon the decline of corporal punishment as a mechanism of order and deterrence. Colonised people remained the notable exception around the British Empire, reflected in their continued subjection to flogging as a judicial punishment, as well as a non-judicial one in the private domain of labour relations. While settlers tended to fear Indigenous populations as an ever-potential force of resistance and threat, requiring subjection to the firm hand of state control, colonial sentiment and state policy also positioned them as uniquely 'child-like', requiring improvement through tutelage and guidance. This ambivalent combination of colonial fear and colonial notions of guardianship help to explain why flogging continued to be imposed upon Indigenous people well after the age of social reform that brought about its decline for other groups.

This pattern might be quite predictable in the context of colonialism and the forms of judicial violence it sanctioned, but perhaps less predictable were the arguments posed by Western Australian law officers and supported by the Chief Protector of Aborigines in defence of flogging as a more 'merciful policy' than carceral measures. Justified on grounds that Indigenous people were immune from the lessons of incarceration, this

argument reasoned that only the physical immediacy of corporal punishment would bring them to an understanding of justice and thereby protect them from settlers' retributive vengeance outside of the law. The parallels between this late nineteenth-century revival of flogging as a specifically racialised punishment and the outlawed systems of slavery and convictism were not lost on some commentators. Yet as Russell Hogg has put it, the continued toleration of corporal punishment into the twentieth century revealed the limits set by colonial states on Indigenous people's entitlement 'to civic recognition, citizenship and rights'.⁶²

NOTES

1. Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2011), 1–2. See also Myra Glenn, *Campaigns Against Corporal Punishment: Prisoners, Sailors, Women and Children in Antebellum America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984).
2. See for instance David B. David, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); J. R. Dinwiddy, 'The Early Nineteenth-Century Campaign Against Flogging in the Army', *The English Historical Review* 97. 383 (1982), 308–331; Clark Nardinelli, 'Corporal Punishment and Children's Wages in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Explorations in Economic History* 19 (1982), 283–295; Myra Glenn, 'The Naval Reform Campaign Against Flogging: A Case Study in Changing Attitudes Towards Corporal Punishment, 1830–1850', *American Quarterly*, 35. 4 (1983), 408–425; Douglas Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste, and Army Discipline in India, 1820–1850', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 23:2 (1995), 211–247; Henrice Altink, "'An Outrage on All Decency": Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780–1834', *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 23:2 (2002), 107–122; Penelope Edmonds and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, "'The Whip is a Very Contagious Kind of Thing": Flogging and Humanitarian Reform in Penal Australia', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 17:1 (2016), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/613283>.
3. Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870–1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), 19.
4. Jurgen Osterhammel has described a line between 'exploitation' colonies, which are directed towards exploiting the economic gains of a colony's native labour and resources, and 'settlement' colonies, which are directed towards the possession and re-settlement of a colony's lands. Jurgen

- Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, Publishers, 1997), 10–11. Over the past two decades, settler colonial scholars have elaborated on the particular character of settler colonialism and its ongoing status as what Patrick Wolfe has famously termed a ‘structure’, not an ‘event’. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassell, 1999), 2–3. On the distinctive political and structural features of settler colonialism see also Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
5. Mark Finnane, *Punishment in Australian Society* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 115; Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel, ‘Thick Hides: Whipping, Biopolitics and the White Soul of Power’, *Social Semiotics* 19. 1 (2009), 47–48. On the historical transition between corporal punishment and incarceration see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975; rpt. translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977).
 6. Glenn, ‘The Naval Reform Campaign’, 408; Finnane, *Punishment in Australian Society*, 108–118; G. Geltner, *Flogging Others: Corporal Punishment and Cultural Identity from Antiquity to the Present* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).
 7. George Ryley Scott, *The History of Torture Throughout the Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 137.
 8. A. F. Hattersley, ‘Slavery at the Cape’ in A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians, eds. *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates*, vol 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 269.
 9. *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions* (London: J. Haddon, 1833), 2518–2524; 5041–5042.
 10. Edmonds and Maxwell-Stewart, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/613283>.
 11. John Ritchie, ‘Towards Ending an Unclean Thing: the Molesworth Committee and the Abolition of Transportation to NSW, 1837–1840’, *Historical Studies*, 17:67 (1976), 144–164.
 12. The Molesworth report observed that the convict system in New South Wales allowed a magistrate, himself generally a master of convicts, ‘to inflict 50 lashes on a convict for “drunkenness, disobedience of orders, neglect of work, absconding, abusive language to his master or overseer, or any other disorderly or dishonest conduct”’. In Van Diemen’s Land, ‘the law which determines the condition of a convict servant is severer’. *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Transportation* (London: Henry Hooper, 1838), 10.

13. *Report from the Select Committee on the 'Bill to Regulate the Labour of Children in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom, with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, vol 2, British Parliamentary Papers no. 706 (1831–32); Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 254.
14. Perhaps the best-known example of socially reformist legislation introduced in Britain during the 1830s was the *Poor Law Amendment Act* of 1834 which established centralised powers, exercised by a Board of Commissioners, for administering relief to the poor. *An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor in England and Wales* (4&5 Will. IV, c. 76) 1834. Beyond Britain itself, an important humanitarian intervention into social policy for the British colonies during the 1830s was the 1835–1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), although its report did not contain reference to practices of corporal punishment.
15. Ambruzzo, *Polemical Pain*, 2.
16. Angela Woollacott has argued that beyond Victorian England, in its colonies violence was integral to the development of a particular kind of settler colonial manhood. Whereas violence was increasingly disapproved as being counter to metropolitan expressions of manliness that were grounded in principles of respectability and restraint, in the settler colonial context violence contributed directly to the building of a nascent national feeling and it implicitly underpinned colonial culture and politics at many levels. Angela Woollacott, 'Frontier Violence and Settler Manhood', *History Australia*, 6:1 (2009), 11.9–11.11.
17. Diana Paton notes that although amelioration legislation outlawed the flogging of women in Crown colonies, colonies that could administer themselves according to their own legislative powers did not necessarily follow suit. Diana Paton, 'Decency, Dependence and the Lash: gender and the British debate over slave emancipation 1830–1834', *Slavery and Abolition*, 17:3 (1996), 173; Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870* (Duke University Press, 2004), 110–112.
18. While Glenn's focus is on reform in the American navy, her argument is also applicable to early-to-mid-nineteenth century campaigns for military reform in Britain. Glenn, 'The Naval Reform Campaign', 414.
19. Finnane, *Punishment in Australian Society*, 109.
20. 'Flogging in the Army', British Parliamentary Debates, 19 June 1832, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol 13 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1833), 888–889.

21. Martin J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
22. McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 13–14.
23. *The Vagrancy Act 1824* (5 Geo. 4 c. 83), s. 10; McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 16–17.
24. Steven Pierce has shown that in northern Nigeria where criminal law was administered through ‘native courts’, the application of flogging was accepted by British authorities but was vexing where it did not correspond to their understandings of different categories of person; hence the flogging of women caused official dismay in a way that the flogging of men did not. Steven Pierce, ‘Punishment and the Political Body: Flogging and colonialism in Northern Nigeria’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 3:2 (2001), 207.
25. In addition to the above, see Stephen Pete and Annie Devenish, ‘Flogging, Fear and Food: Punishment and Race in Colonial Natal’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31:1 (2005), 12; Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel, ‘Thick Hides: Whipping, Biopolitics and the White Soul of Power’, *Social Semiotics*, 19:1 (2009), 48; David M. Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and the “Raw Native”: Settler Society and Kenya’s Flogging Scandals, 1895–1930’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37:3 (2011), 479–497.
26. Pete and Devenish, ‘Flogging, Fear and Food’, 3.
27. Cited in Pete and Devenish, ‘Flogging, Fear and Food’, 4.
28. Pete and Devenish, ‘Flogging, Fear and Food’, 5; Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and the “Raw Native”’, 479–480.
29. Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and the “Raw Native”’, 479.
30. Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and the “Raw Native”’, 480.
31. ‘The Native Question’, *Victorian Express*, 3 September 1887, 5.
32. Anderson, ‘Punishment, Race and the “Raw Native”’, 213.
33. Pierce, ‘Punishment and the Political Body’, 218.
34. Russell Hogg, ‘Penalty and Modes of Regulating Indigenous Peoples in Australia’, *Punishment and Society* 3.3 (2001), 361.
35. Anna Haebich, ‘Marked Bodies: A Corporeal History of Colonial Australia’, *Borderlands eJournal*, 7:2 (2008), 8–9.
36. Hogg, ‘Penalty and Modes of Regulating Indigenous Peoples’, 361.
37. *An Act to amend ‘The Aboriginal Offenders Act 1883’ and to authorise the Whipping of Aboriginal native Offenders* (55 Vict. no.18) 1892.
38. Western Australia Legislative Council Minutes, 2nd Session 1883, A10, State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA).
39. *An Ordinance to provide for the Summary Trial and Punishment of Aboriginal native Offenders in certain cases* (12 Vict. no 18) 1849, s. 2.
40. *The Aboriginal Offenders Act* (47 Vict. no 8) 1883.

41. For instance, *The Perth Gazette and West Australian Times*, 11 October 1872, 2.
42. The Reverend John Brown Gribble was particularly vocal about colonial violence in the north-west and the abuse and exploitation of Indigenous people by settlers and police. His accusations circulated in the colonial press, were taken up by the Aborigines Protection Society in London, and were published in a pamphlet. J. B. Gribble, *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land, or Blacks and Whites in North-West Australia* (Perth: Stirling Bros., 1886).
43. *Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Transactions Arising out of the Homicide of and Other Alleged outrages on Aboriginal Natives* (Perth: Government Printer, 1873); *Legislative Council Instructions to and Reports from the Resident Magistrate Despatched by Direction of his Excellency on Special Duty to the Murchison and Gascoyne Districts* (Fairbain Report) (Perth: Government Printer, 1882); *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council to Consider and Report upon Questions Connected with the Treatment and Condition of the Aboriginal Natives of the Colony* (Perth: Government Printer, 1885); ‘Correspondence on the Gribble Case, 1884–1887’, Acc 388, AN1/1, Box 1, items 3–32, SROWA; *Report of the Royal Commission of the Condition of the Natives* (Roth Report) (Perth: Government Printer, 1905).
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45. Amanda Nettelbeck, ‘“Keep the Magistrates Straight”: Magistrates and Aboriginal “Management” on Australia’s North-West Frontiers, 1883–1905’, *Aboriginal History* 38 (2014), 21.
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51. *Western Mail*, 21 September 1901.
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54. For instance, *Western Australian* 5 January 1898.

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58. 'Slavery in WA', *Sunday Times*, 24 May 1903, 11.
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62. Hogg, 'Penalty and Modes of Regulating Indigenous Peoples', 361.

Seeing like a Policeman: Everyday Violence in British India, c. 1900–1950

Radha Kumar

Madras Presidency, sprawled across the southern end of peninsular India, comprised around two dozen districts and occupied an area of 141,189 square miles.¹ The Government of Madras administered this vast southern province from its capital at Fort St. George, located in the port town of Madras. The provincial police force was also headquartered in Madras, in a beautiful neoclassical building that overlooked the calm waters of the Bay of Bengal. The building's occupants, however, looked away from the sea, towards the province's hinterlands. Theirs was the task to supervise the working of the district police, to ensure that law was enforced and order maintained across the province. But what really could they see of rural Madras from this distant, urban perch? How did a force of 30,000 manage a population of 40 million?² One way the police coped with the numerical disparity and geographical spread they faced was by reacting rather than preventing—specifically, by responding to 'trouble' quickly, with spectacular use of violence. In twentieth-century Madras Presidency, armed police units were 'quickly sent to deal with any variety of disturbance or resistance to colonial control—a religious

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riot one day, perhaps, a strike in a factory the next, a rural fracas the day after.³ Police firings were strikingly visible expressions of colonial authority. Moreover, they made their way into governmental records as a matter of course. Understandably, then, this overtly violent aspect of police authority has been fairly widely studied.⁴

This chapter argues that police encounter with rural populations was, however, not limited to such moments of sudden and spectacular violence. A decrepit building that served as the police station in one small town; a dusty board announcing the station's presence in another; a sandal-shod, khaki-clad constable trudging his way to a distant village. Somewhat dull, seemingly trivial—these actions, persons, and sites enabled inhabitants of the Tamil countryside to experience police authority in very different ways from that described above. Less bloody, more frequent. And, consequently, as a less discordant, more proximate presence that lodged itself neatly in the rural landscape. In particular, this chapter examines the police beat to argue that colonial policemen acted as agents of state surveillance and coercion at the level of the quotidian. In this incarnation, the colonial police not only represented an alien and repressive state, in addition, they also represented a state that slid into the rhythms of everyday life. Of course, policemen in this milder incarnation were not an entirely benign presence, but rather always carried the threat of violence. I argue, therefore, that the police beat brought colonial subjects under the gaze of the state and made them vulnerable to the force of its law.

Having said that, perennial financial constraints meant that maintaining a routine police presence in the vast countryside was a very real challenge for the colonial government. In twentieth-century rural India, the police force was thin relative to the area and population it needed to manage, as historians have demonstrated for Madras and Bombay Presidencies.⁵ In the southern, Tamil-speaking districts of Madurai, Tirunelveli, and Ramanathapuram in Madras Presidency, which this chapter studies, there was a police station for approximately every 100 square miles in the first half of the twentieth century. In the countryside, this ratio was even smaller, shrinking to one station for every 150 square miles or so.⁶ Each district maintained a force of around 900 policemen, resulting in a ratio of one policeman per 5 square miles and per 2000 people.⁷ I propose that their lack of numbers notwithstanding, the colonial police did exercise routine authority in southern Madras Presidency by resorting to a number of measures, such as the

incorporation of village officials into police bureaucratic functioning and a carefully planned allocation of police resources that ensured optimal monitoring of the colonial economy.

The colonial police were therefore not only a coercive apparatus established to secure the British Raj, they were also integral to the governmentalization of the state, and were strategically deployed to enable the expansion of settled agriculture, the development of a productive labour force, and the circulation of people and commodities. To this end, the Madras police were not evenly distributed across the province, contrary to their implicit claim in certain records—for instance the annual administrative reports submitted by the department to the provincial government. This report unfailingly opened with a map displaying the number of ‘serious offences against person and property’ that had occurred in each district of Madras Presidency that year. These statistics were displayed through use of patterned symbols—darker, denser images for increasing levels of crime, offering its reader an immediate grasp of the varying occurrence of crime across the Presidency. The map represented Madras Presidency as a homogenous and bounded space where law was administered uniformly.⁸ Furthermore, in its positivist projection of crime, the map suggests perfect police visibility into this political entity. Of course, in practice, police gaze was limited; the arm of the state and its law did not extend evenly across the territory. Rather, a ‘narrowing of vision’ was required to make the countryside legible to the colonial state.⁹ This was provided by the imperial political economy, which, as Manu Goswami has shown, ‘shaped the reconfiguration of the relationship between state and space in colonial India,’ especially in the post-1857 years.¹⁰ Police records from Madras Presidency show evidence of extraordinarily detailed planning that went towards determining the location of station houses across the province, so that the rhythms of a colonial economy that relied on agriculture and trade continued undisturbed.

Colonial policemen did not operate only in their station houses; they also monitored the subject population on carefully charted beats whose route and frequency could be changed periodically. The beat was critical in determining where exactly the police would be present, how often, and in what numbers. Further, it enabled the police gaze to fall upon a far wider area than would have been possible from just the police station. Drawing on a range of sources—from richly detailed cartographic and narrative resource allocation plans produced by senior, European,

police officials to routine, and previously unexplored, notes maintained by native inspectors at local stations—this chapter examines the police beat in the Tamil countryside in the first half of the twentieth century. I argue that policemen on the beat acted, first, as agents of state surveillance and, second, as agents of routine state violence. In the pages that follow, I study the quotidian practices of beat policemen (who were inevitably natives)—what they wrote, whom they watched, where they walked. An examination of these routine practices reveals the articulation of colonial governmentality in the documentary and embodied practices of lower-level state functionaries.

In examining everyday forms of state coercion and surveillance, and the knowledge-production practices that underlay these, this essay aligns itself with two strands of the scholarship on colonial power and governmentality: (1) the imbrication of colonial knowledge in the exercise of colonial authority; and (2) the violence inherent in colonial rule. Historians and anthropologists of modern India, most notably Bernard Cohn, have examined how the production of colonial knowledge objectified India, ‘coding...India in ways that rendered it increasingly available for colonization.’¹¹ Importantly, colonial knowledge mapped India in terms of communities defined by caste and religious identity, rather than as a nation of (bourgeois) individuals.¹² In the following pages, I show that policing too drew on colonial knowledge that mapped the population as thrifty and labouring castes, criminal castes, litigious castes, and so forth. Policemen used this knowledge on the beat so that certain communities were policed more closely and with greater violence than were others.

Colonial governmentality in India relied not only on the production of colonial knowledge, it also required the exercise of violence.¹³ Scholars of colonialism have challenged the liberal claims of nineteenth-century empire to highlight the constant tension between rule of law and rule of force in the exercise of imperial authority. Partha Chatterjee asserts that although introducing modern law to an ostensibly lawless nation was central to legitimizing British presence in India, there were racial limits to the rule of law, and the liberal project was always limited by the need to maintain difference between the colonizer and the colonized.¹⁴ Nasser Hussain characterizes the colonial condition as one of ‘permanent exception’ where the British government always had the option of suspending normal law and invoking the state of exception in order to maintain political power.¹⁵ This essay also foregrounds the

violence inherent in colonial rule, but argues somewhat differently that state violence in colonial India was not only witnessed when the law was suspended or subverted, but rather was part of the very process of law enforcement. State coercion was continuous and subtle, and woven into the warp and weft of everyday life in the form of policing.

In order to retrieve the everyday role of the beat policeman in colonial governance, I juxtapose planning documents produced by senior police officials with surveillance registers maintained by inspectors at local police stations. In using these records, I go beyond the more commonly used sources in South Asian legal historiography, which emphasize legislation and litigation over the moment of law enforcement. Furthermore, police surveillance registers are kept permanently at police stations and do not make their way to an official archive—hence, they are not easily accessible either to the public or to scholars. I gained access to station records dating from the 1930s at six police stations in Tirunelveli district and two stations in Ramanathapuram district (present-day Virudhunagar district). The Tirunelveli records, which I use for this essay, cover about 50 villages and several dozen hamlets, and provide a rare glimpse into police practice at the most locally documented level.

MAPPING COMMUNITIES

Going on beats to monitor suspect populations was one of the principal functions of constables, whose other tasks included patrolling highroads, guarding the treasury and sub-jail, writing journal entries, and escorting prisoners. Around a third of constables in the southern districts of Madras Presidency were staffed specifically for beat duty.¹⁶ The beat was important enough that it informed the allocation of police resources—the number of criminal suspects requiring surveillance in different villages was frequently factored in while planning the location and staffing of stations. Asking for the establishment of an outpost to Munnirpallam station in Tirunelveli, police planners asserted that crime in the locality was fairly heavy and that ‘some eight surveillance K.D.’s (Known Depredators) who could not, except with difficulty, be properly checked from Munnirpallam, reside in the adjoining villages.’¹⁷ In addition, police jurisdictions were frequently realigned to make the beat less arduous. In 1938, for instance, Kuliyaneri and Anaikulam villages, 12 miles away from Kadayanallur station and connected only by a cart-track impossible to traverse during the rains, were reallocated to a

different station, only 6 miles from the villages.¹⁸ Likewise, Vagaikulam outpost, 6.5 miles on an inaccessible route from Tattaparai station, was transferred to a different, more accessible, station.¹⁹ The term ‘itineration’ featured prominently in all planning documents, and some planning maps even depicted the roads and cross-country paths to be taken from the station house to various villages to be covered on the beat.

Strictly speaking, the Second National Police Commission of 1902 had abolished the village beat, having assessed the previous policy wherein constables undertook beats to *all* villages as impractical and ineffective. Instead, in an effort to target police resources to the ‘really dangerous,’ the Commission recommended that constables now only undertake beats to specific places, at specific times: villages whose authorities were untrustworthy; villages where especially ‘dangerous criminals, or gangs’ resided; and ‘camping grounds, *serais*, ferries and all places of public resort.’²⁰ In this targeted effort at surveillance, colonial knowledge that classified and objectified the subject population—often based on community—played a key role. Police inspectors maintained a range of information pertaining to the subject population in their station records: notes on each village in their station jurisdiction, lists of all suspected criminals and their movements, as well as more detailed information on particular caste-communities that were seen as requiring extra surveillance. In this section, I examine the documentary practices of the station policeman that guided him on his beat and simultaneously enabled the reproduction of knowledge of community and criminality.

By the late-nineteenth century, the notion that certain communities were inherently criminal (by virtue of training or heredity) had gained currency in colonial governance, and was crystallized with the passing of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (henceforth ‘CTA’).²¹ The Act attributed criminality at the level of the community, for simply belonging to it, rather than at the level of an individual for a particular crime. The objects of criminal tribe legislation were often vagrant communities that did not practice settled agriculture. The legislation, by empowering the state to restrict criminal tribe members’ movements and allot them agricultural land or an alternative livelihood, cultivated labouring subjects; its implementation therefore contributed to the functioning of the colonial economy. In the southern Tamil countryside, Maravars, Kallars, and Koravars were among the principal castes declared criminal. One reason for Maravars being notified under the CTA was that they participated in a system of informal village policing, called *kaval*, criminalized by the

colonial government since the early-nineteenth century.²² This knowledge of *kaval* as criminal, and *kavalgars* (the participants) as criminals, was created and perpetuated through colonial anthropology and frequent governmental directives aimed at eradicating the system.²³ At the level of police practice, *kavalgars* inevitably found their way into police registers as criminal suspects. Station houses were established, and surveillance beats laid out, to police *kavalgars* in particular, and Maravars in general. In addition, most police stations that I visited had on their files something called a 'Marava Form.' This form very likely was restricted to police stations within Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram districts, where Maravars were a numerically dominant caste. It was probably used for around three decades (1920s–1940s), when the CTA was in force in Madras Presidency. It thus captures a very historically specific enactment of the broader discourse on criminal castes.

The Marava Form listed 11 questions, whose answers were filled in by local inspectors. The information it gathered was on the *kaval* system in a village—whether it existed, who its beneficiaries were, and who its victims. But in gathering this information, the form assumed the exercise of 'Marava oppression' through the practice of *kaval* in the colonial countryside. The very framing of the questions thus assumed the primacy of caste identity within the village as well as an inextricable link between caste and criminality. For instance, the form asked inspectors to list the number of houses in the village by caste, the attitude of powerful castes towards Maravars, whether Marava oppression arose from *kaval*, whether other villagers consented to *kaval* or resented it, would the oppressed villagers depose against Maravars, and so on. Responses to these questions varied across the villages, followed no clear pattern, and are of little help in estimating the actual prevalence of *kaval*. However, they do show the categories in which police functionaries repeatedly wrote about caste and crime.²⁴ On several forms, the answer to whether *kaval* existed was a simple 'nil.' Yet, these same forms also contained answers that presumably were informed by the questions. For instance, the information for Mavadi village claimed twice that there was 'no *kaval* system' and yet asserted that 'Maravars will commit any type of crime if *kaval* is refused.'²⁵ Likewise, the form for Keezhapillayarkulam village declared that 'there is no oppression by Maravas' but that the village munsif Rangasubbaraya Iyer 'is afraid of the Marava' and that 'somebody will come out boldly to depose against the Maravas.'²⁶ For Kokkulam village, the inspector stated that there was 'no Marava oppression and no *kaval*,

even while claiming that the villagers were ‘ready to repose in police cases against Maravars if offered police backing.’²⁷

The questionnaire brought together identities of caste and class, and wove them into criminal categories that permitted policing. (For example, ‘What are the names of the leading oppressive Maravars and have they any means of livelihood other than oppression?’) Concomitantly the responses often tied together these elements, enabling native appropriation of the enmeshed categories of caste, class, and criminality. For instance, Pallikkottai village had no *kaval* system, according to the form, but:

if *kaval* is refused the *kavalgars* give unnecessary trouble by impounding cattle, maiming them or administering poison to them. They also destroy the standing crops of the villagers...Most of the Maravas in this village have no means of livelihood except by the oppression committing property crimes, threatening extortion and setting fire to the houses and will commit any type of crime.²⁸

Despite their standardized format, the Marava forms from Tirunelveli depicted a complex situation on the ground. Documents from senior police officers however translated this messy data into accessible statistics and neater narratives of oppressive Marava *kaval* that needed to be policed and uprooted. Discussing *kaval* in neighbouring Ramanathapuram district, the Inspector-General of the Presidency F.A. Hamilton noted in 1929 that:

in the 20 villages for which statistics have been gathered, there are 256 *kavalgars* receiving payment annually of Rs.14310. This gives an average payment of Rs.4-8-0 a *kavalgar* each month. These figures will convey some idea of how formidable is the system that has grown up and has now to be displaced by the provision of a number of police sufficient to protect the villagers of Chettinad from the...intimidation and extortion of the criminals in their midst.²⁹

These statistics were used in a police effort to eliminate *kaval* and influenced the placement of stations and men across Ramanathapuram. For instance, a new station and outpost were opened in Kadaladi to monitor 132 bad characters through beats that were to be undertaken to each of the attached villages as often as thrice a week.³⁰

The overlapping categories of criminality and caste were also reflected in the typology of persons who needed to be policed, which included types such as the suspected criminal, *kavalgar*, Notified Member, Habitual Offender, Bad Character, wandering gang, and Known Depredator (referred to as the KD).³¹ In some records, these classifications do not mean much—the terms are used interchangeably or KD is used as an umbrella category. But others suggest that the typology of criminals translated to police practice: some suspects warranted a closer and more frequent watch, while others could be monitored less frequently. Some were monitored through daily beats, others through nightly beats, one-day beats, twice-weekly beats, miscellaneous beats, and so on.³² For instance, a proposal drawn up to reallocate police resources within Ramanathapuram district in 1929 included a map of Mudukulathur—one of the regions within the district.³³ The map contained the boundaries of each village in the region, and the number of people to be policed in each, broken down into numerous, seemingly fine, categories, such as Marava population, Marava conviction, Non-Marava Conviction, those Suspected in Cases, those needing a Close Watch, and those who only warranted a Non-Close Watch, with legends for each of these categories. Papangulam village, for example, had 170 MPs, 8 MCs, 1 NMC, 8 Ss, and 12 CWs. Each station in the map was staffed, and some police outposts established, upon aggregating these numbers and calculating the distance to be covered on the beats.

Calculations for police staffing were often astonishingly localized and specific to the category of criminal under surveillance. In 1930, officials budgeted for two constables for Tirupattur station, who would be sent to patrol two villages within its limits, Kandavirayanpatti and Nachiapuram, where nine and seven *kavalgars*, respectively, resided.³⁴ Likewise, they suggested increasing the strength of the Neikuppai station, whose two beat constables were fully occupied in monitoring the 15 bad characters registered in the adjoining three villages. Sikkal station had 38 bad characters and four criminal tribe members residing in five villages, and needed four constables to check them, while Sayalkudi station had 29 bad characters residing in four villages, and therefore needed four beat constables.³⁵ Police officers considered it vital to patrol such areas which had registered criminals and criminal suspects, however few in number. This was usually at the cost of other swathes of land—forested, mountainous, or, simply, ‘quiet’—which were perceived as not requiring a regular police beat.

COERCION ON THE BEAT

While the policing of criminal tribe members is conspicuous in the government archive, police surveillance was not limited to notified members but, in fact, extended to the larger population too. Every police station in Madras Presidency was required to maintain a narrative record on each village within its precincts. Known as the Part IV records, these contained ‘notes on important factions and disputes, especially between castes and communities, and regarding the commissions of serious breaches of the peace...In short any information which may be useful to a new station-house officer, having no previous experience of the station, should be entered in this register.’³⁶ Some police stations contained typewritten forms that comprised the opening entry of the Part IV record for a village—the form asked for the geographical position of the village, its population, (listed by community), factions, ‘miscellaneous bad characters,’ festival and market days, *kaval* details, and so on. Regardless of whether a form was provided for the local inspector or not, the Part IV record sought to map each village within a station’s jurisdiction in terms of its geography, communities, spaces, and times that needed extra surveillance. For example, the description for Manur village mentions the location of the village relative to neighbouring large towns, its inhabitants whose activities needed to be monitored, and festivals that needed to be policed.

This is a small village situated 9 miles north of Tinnevely on the Tinnevely-Sankarankoil road. Pallars form the bulk of the population.³⁷ There is a strong ill-feeling between the VM who is an acting man from Tinnevely and the karnam the permanent resident of Manur, in which one is trying to entangle the other in some criminal case or other.³⁸ Both the village officers do not cooperate with the local police. There is an ayurvedic dispensary maintained by the Tinnevely district board. Treatment in this dispensary is offered free. There is a temple which gets an annual income of Rs.4000 which is under the management of the Tinnevely temple committee. One Shunmugasundram Pillai is the manager of the temple. Every year in the Tamil month of Avani a festival called Moolam [*unclear*] is celebrated and a lot of crowd from the neighbouring villages of other taluks visit. 2 constables are usually deputed during the festival for bundobust.³⁹ Pickpockets are likely to visit. The police station is the only government building in this village. There is no other thing worthy of mention. [Sd. IP, Tinnevely].⁴⁰

Apart from detailing spaces and people to be watched, the description also made it clear that the rest of the village (men who beat their wives? landholders who exploited labourers?) did not merit police surveillance: ‘there is no other thing worthy of mention.’⁴¹ Descriptions such as the one above were often not dated, conveying the impression that the record captured the image of an unchanging village.⁴² For instance, the record for Pallamadai describes the village succinctly, as follows:

This is a small village, consisting of a few houses of Pallas, Shepherds, Nadars and Muhammadans. Pallikottai Maravas were doing *kaval* for this village and now it has been completely stopped and so this village is often troubled by Pallikottai Maravars. This depends upon a fairly big tank lying near for agricultural purposes. Police informants: 1. Thalayari Sankarasubbu Thevan, 2. Velliah Kone.⁴³

The note is signed by the inspector but not dated.⁴⁴ The details that the inspector chose to include in this four-line note are indicative of where the police saw need for their intervention. *Kaval*, as mentioned earlier, was criminalized by the colonial government and policed vigorously. Tanks were an important source of irrigation, and, presumably, of conflict too, in Tirunelveli. However, even as the inspector’s note captures some of the larger concerns of the colonial state, it displays the messiness of immediate, local knowledge in its classification of the villagers: two caste categories, one occupational category, and one religious.

As opposed to other police records, which could be periodically destroyed, the Part IV records were meant to serve as a continuous record of the jurisdiction of each police station. Opening remarks like the ones cited above were followed by periodic updates (a few times a year) filled in by successive police inspectors. These were brief reports on crimes, on suspected criminals who needed surveillance, or on tensions between communities that needed to be smoothed. Together, they formed a continuous, documented history of crime, or the lack of it, in a village. For the historian, the journal offers a glimpse of moments when colonial subjects challenged authority in ways that were violent and visible to the state. For policemen, who wrote and read these records, the journal shaped their knowledge of crime and, consequently, their policing practices—specifically, the direction and frequency of their beat.

While some entries in the Part IV record indicated that there was nothing requiring immediate police attention in that village, others

warned of crimes that were brewing and had to be prevented, while the rest described crimes that had had occurred and were being investigated. The cadence of these updates suggests the role of routine, coercive police authority in maintaining 'order' by preventing hostilities from escalating into conflict. Such hostilities often concerned ritual or social privilege, and took the shape of competing rights of various communities over village spaces: temples, streets, and burial grounds.⁴⁵ Police intervention ensured that simmering conflicts did not boil over, sometimes over a period of several years. For instance, in December 1932 the Manur station inspector noted the 'frequent ill-feeling' between the Pallars (considered low, ritually 'impure' castes) and Maravars of Mavadi village.⁴⁶ In one instance, the Pallars put up a bund near their burial ground to prevent their corpses from being washed away during floods. The Maravars objected to this and complained to the revenue authorities, who took action against the Pallars for encroachment. The inspector noted that 'the feeling deserves to be watched.' Nine months later, he updated his remarks to a terse 'No trouble in the village Mavadi.' Presumably, the tension abated but did not die, for in 1937 he again noted that there was no sign of ill-feeling between the two groups 'after the warning given by (him).'

Therkululam village presents another instance where the police actively intervened to prevent challenges from lower caste groups to the established spatial order.⁴⁷ In the 1940s, some Hindus of the village, very probably belonging to a lower caste, converted to Islam: they were called the Navamuslims ('New Muslims'). The late-1940s and early-1950s witness several instances when the Navamuslims tried to assert their rights over the village spaces, only to have their attempts foiled by the police. Successively, their attempts to bury a child in a plot disputed by the Hindus, to construct a mosque close to the village church, and later to build it near the Hindu temple, were all put down by the local magistracy and police. In 1946, the police sent a daily beat to the village; a few years later, Sub-Inspector Natarajan still had to send two constables 'to watch the events,' and to warn the parties 'to not take the law into their own hands.' Presumably, the police surveillance worked this time, for the next few entries in the station records graduate from reporting that there was no trouble in the village to, four years later, 'there is nothing important' in this village, thus dimming it from the police radar.⁴⁸

There is no mention of overt coercion in the police journals, but there are 'warnings,' as in the examples above: 'there is no sign of ill-feeling

at present, after the warning given by me.’⁴⁹ Understandably, the notes rarely mention what exactly the ‘warning’ was. It may have been a euphemism for threats, or it may have been a warning that proceedings under the security sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 would be taken against the disputing parties, or it may have entailed a judicious combination of the two tactics. While recording a caste conflict in Thazhiyoothu village in 1937, the Inspector wrote that ‘both parties [Hindu and Christian Nadars] have been personally warned that they would be run in under 107 CPC and are quiet now,’⁵⁰ and, eight months later, that ‘there has been no trouble in this village between the R.C. converts and the Hindus after the warning given by the C.I.’⁵¹ Sometimes the language describing police intervention is more conciliatory. Following a conflict in Melapillayarkulam village in 1938, the inspector noted that ‘both the parties were advised to sink their differences and live amicably. They have promised to do so.’⁵² Similarly, after intervening successfully to ‘restore goodwill’ between two groups in Chittanpacheri, the police noted that ‘the S.I. must visit this village often and be in touch with the feelings and satisfy himself that the compromise is genuine and that the parties are keeping quiet.’ But, he continued, ‘at the slightest manifestation of trouble, there should be no hesitation in taking security action...’⁵³

To the historian, the vocabulary of social harmony, of the absence of ‘trouble’, seen in these police writings suggests instead the effective functioning of strong arm of the state: the maintenance, in fact, of Order.⁵⁴ Even if coercion was not overt, the very presence of policemen, the extra beats deputed to areas of ‘trouble’ may have been menacing enough to subdue protest. Station-house records indicate that the police gaze and stave were frequently, and effectively, redirected to maintain order.

Increased police surveillance may not have been simply procedural, a matter of sending a beat constable to a disturbed location. Rather, the language used in the journals emphasizes the act of watching, suggesting that surveillance was quite deliberate. For example, ‘the village should be frequently visited and the feelings watched’;⁵⁵ ‘this is a crime country... (that) requires police attention during dark nights’;⁵⁶ ‘S.I. will watch further development...’;⁵⁷ ‘S.I. will watch the situation’;⁵⁸ ‘the situation is, however, needs (sic) frequent watch’;⁵⁹ ‘S.I. shall watch the feelings between the parties’;⁶⁰ ‘Rama Koravan and his brothers... were registered as C.W. suspects... They are under close watch. This village requires very close attention during dark nights...’;⁶¹ and so on. The use of the

acronym ‘C.W.’ (Close Watch) suggests that the typology of surveillance mentioned earlier was not restricted to policy, but also translated to practice. More broadly, the detailed, but relatively distant, plans made by senior police officers to ‘manage populations’ towards ensuring the smooth functioning of the colonial economy transform in these journals into the more immediate, bodily practices of the local Sub-Inspector.⁶²

CONCLUSION

Interventions by the police to defuse societal tension were not always successful, and cases of failure are more easily found in the government archive. For instance, the provincial government’s *Fortnightly Report* from 1930 mentions that Tiruchuli ‘was the scene of a small riot between caste Hindus and ‘untouchables’ arising out of a private quarrel. The affair was not serious, although the police had to open fire, and order was quickly restored.’⁶³ Such reports, which show police intervention once a conflict had erupted, suggest at first glance that the police were distanced from society and unaware of its fault lines. However, a closer reading of the pre-history of such conflicts sometimes reveals scattered references in the governmental archive itself to the disciplining attempts made by the police to contain the dispute.⁶⁴ In addition, the evidence from police station records suggests that the police surveillance of villages did in fact happen regularly, and was influential in checking caste conflict, especially in contexts where lower-caste groups were not politicized. I suggest, therefore, that archival records of violent caste conflicts may be read as much as an indication of the heightened political mobilization of the conflicting parties, as of police absence. Lower castes usually entered the government records only when they were strong enough to resist caste authority.

Through a close look at the police beat in the Tamil districts of southern India in the first half of the twentieth century, I have argued in this chapter that the colonial police were not an entity distant from rural society, appearing only at moments of violent protests. Rather, they held a widespread and regular, albeit selective, presence in the Tamil countryside. Contrary to the ideal of a force uniformly spread across the Tamil landscape, the colonial police monitored certain places and certain people more than they did others. Rural police stations covered areas ranging from 75 square miles to 200 square miles.⁶⁵ Beats to villages that had registered criminals, however few in number, were prioritized over

those that did not. Inhabitants of the colonial countryside were, then, not uniformly objects of coercive state authority. Drawing on colonial knowledge which objectified community, privileged property, and criminalized vagrancy, police practices redirected the constable's gaze (and staff) towards 'dangerous' spaces and 'criminal' subjects. The state's gaze was not a panoptic one, all-seeing and steadfast. Rather, it was moving and rhythmic, directed along the beat, to target specified individuals and discipline specific activities, with coercion. This routinized and well-calibrated violence was directed towards refashioning rural society and maintaining the rhythm of a colonial social order that depended on agriculture and trade.

NOTES

1. Charles Benson, *Statistical Atlas of the Madras Presidency*, 1895, 1. Maps29c28, British Library, London. (Does not include area of princely states within the Presidency's borders.)
2. Population figures are from the 1921 Census of India, and include the population of princely states. Police force figures are broadly for the first half of the twentieth century, though numbers increased substantially, to over 40,000, with the outbreak of the Second World War.
3. David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 9.
4. The classic work on the Madras police is David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859–1947*.
5. Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule*; Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, 'Customs of Governance: Colonialism and Democracy in Twentieth Century India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 41:3 (2007), 441–470.
6. As of 1925, Tirunelveli district had 877 policemen spread over 4325 square miles, resulting in one policemen per 4.9 square miles. Government Order (hereafter G.O.) 753, Judicial, 28 December 1925. G.O.169 Judicial 4 February 1905, Tamil Nadu Archives (hereafter TNA).
7. These figures include urban centres, and are from 1928, midway through the period studied here. G.O. 243 Public Police, 17 April 1930, TNA.
8. There is an extensive literature on spatial theory and modern cartography. For this paper, I have relied principally upon Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991); and

- Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: the geographical construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
9. James Scott, *Seeing like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 11.
 10. Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 45.
 11. Foreword by Nicholas Dirks in Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), xv.
 12. Gyan Prakash, 'The Colonial Genealogy of Society: community and political modernity in India,' in *The Social in Question: New bearings in history and the social sciences*, ed. Patrick Joyce (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).
 13. Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
 14. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).
 15. Nasser Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the rule of law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).
 16. In the 1925 Tirunelveli reallocation, 31% of all constables hired were for KD beats and 17% to patrol the high roads, while the corresponding numbers for Madurai district were 16 and 8% respectively. In addition, constables were also allotted to 'miscellaneous beats.' G.O. 750 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925, G.O. 753 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925, TNA.
 17. G.O.753 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925, TNA. See also G.O. 750 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925 for several similar examples.
 18. G.O. 3496 (ms), Home, 15 July 1938, TNA. For more examples, see G.O. 467 (ms), Public Police, 31 August 1935, TNA.
 19. G.O. 3496 (ms), Home, 15 July 1938, TNA.
 20. A *serai* is an inn. East India (Police). *Report of the Indian Police Commission and Resolution of the Government of India*. London, 1905, par. 140.
 21. Criminal tribe discourse has been widely discussed in South Asian historiography. See, among others, Anand Pandian, *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating virtue in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Meena Radhakrishna, *Dishonoured by History: 'Criminal tribes' and British colonial policy* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2001).
 22. *Kaval* skirted the line between pillage and protection. In some cases, *kavalgars* (policemen) were regularly paid by villagers for their security; in case of theft, they retrieved the goods or reimbursed the victim. In others, villagers paid the policemen fees to be exempted from theft. In most

- colonial writing, *kaval* was depicted as a form of extortion that had flourished in the political chaos of the eighteenth century, a claim that bolstered the legitimacy of colonial rule. The colonial government attempted to eradicate *kaval* for over a century, with no success.
23. For the interplay between colonial anthropology and governance in objectifying caste identities, see Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).
 24. Of the census, Cohn writes that ‘through the asking of questions and the compiling of information in categories which the British rulers could utilize for governing, it provided an arena for Indians to ask questions about themselves.’ Bernard S. Cohn, ‘The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,’ in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 230.
 25. Manur police station, Mavadi village records, 10 May 1943.
 26. Manur police station, Melapillayarkulam village records, 1943.
 27. Panavadali Chatram police station, Sayamalai Valasai–Kokkulam village records, 10 February 1946.
 28. Manur police station, Pallikkottai village records, May 1943.
 29. G.O. 243 (ms), Public Police, 17 April 1930, TNA.
 30. G.O. 243 (ms), Public Police, 17 April 1930, TNA.
 31. The acronym KD was so commonly used that it slipped into spoken language as a Tamil word. For instance, *Kedi Billa Killadi Ranga* is the name of a Tamil film released in 2013. ‘Notified member’ referred to someone notified under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1911. *Kavalgars* were native police that the state had criminalized. A habitual offender was someone who had been convicted for more than one crime.
 32. Planning documents rarely define these terms, assuming knowledge of them. G.O. 750 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925, G.O. 753 Press, Judicial, 28 December 1925, TNA.
 33. Police beats were especially important in Mudukulathur, where the government had rescinded the Criminal Tribes Act, 1911 for the local Maravars in 1929, and instead proposed that ‘what was needed in this tract of country was the construction of roads and the opening of police stations.’ G.O. 151 (mis), Law, 22 January 1929 and Memorandum no 583–581, Judicial, 22 February 1929, cited in G.O. 243 Public Police 1930, TNA.
 34. G.O. 243 Public Police 17 April 1930, TNA.
 35. G.O. 243 Public Police 17 April 1930, TNA.
 36. That is, Part IV of the Station Crime History. Part I of the Station Crime History listed the crimes that had been registered for that year; Part II

- was a schematic map of the station limits and indicated the geographic distribution of crime; Part III was a register of the known criminals within that area. G.O. 1364 Judicial 5 December 1922, TNA.
37. Pallars are a local Dalit caste.
 38. Village officers—VM (Village Munsif) was the headman and the *karnam* was the accountant.
 39. *Bundobust*—preparatory security arrangements.
 40. Manur police station, Manur village records, date c.1932.
 41. I found no mention of gender related conflict in the police records that I read, except in cases where these overlapped with inheritance disputes. In contrast, this is a prominent theme in Dalit feminist writing. Bama, tr. Lakshmi Holmstrom, *Sangati: Events* (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Viramma, Josiane Racine, and Jean-Luc Racine, *Viramma, Life of an Untouchable* (New York, Paris: Verso; UNESCO Publishing, 1997).
 42. The colonial conception of an unchanging village community is seen in this police measure of maintaining continuous village notes. See David Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge,' in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, eds Carol Appadurai Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).
 43. Manur police station, Kanarpatti village records.
 44. Similar cases of undated signatures following the opening Part IV information is found for Taghanallore village, Mavadi village, Manur village, and Pillayarkulam village, all in Manur station.
 45. For a description of the socio-spatial dynamics of domination and subordination in a Tirunelveli village, see Diane P. Mines, *Fierce Gods: Inequality, ritual, and the politics of dignity in a South Indian village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
 46. Manur police station, Mavadi village records.
 47. Manur police station, Therkukulam village records.
 48. Surveillance and suppression were not the only responses of the state to these politics of space. Several government orders from across the twentieth century allot land to marginalized communities (Christians, Muslims, Dalits) for burial and cremation grounds and housing complexes.
 49. Manur station records, Mavadi village, September 1937.
 50. Thazhiyoothu station, Thazhiyoothu village, April 1937. CPC—Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.
 51. Thazhiyoothu station, Thazhiyoothu village, 22 December 1937. R.C.—Roman Catholic. C.I.—Circle Inspector.
 52. Manoor station, Melapillayarkulam village, 1938.

53. Thazhiyoothu station, Chatram Kudiyiruppu village, Chittanpacheri, 1939. S.I.—Sub-Inspector.
54. For the classic text on interpreting official writing, see Ranajit Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,' in Ranajit Guha ed. *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
55. Thazhiyoothu station, Thazhiyoothu village, April 1937.
56. Thazhiyoothu station, Rajavallipuram village, 22 December 1937.
57. Thazhiyoothu station, Chatram Kudiyiruppu village, 30 September 1934.
58. Sankarankoil police station, Vaadikkottai village, 30 June 1937.
59. Manur station, Melapillayarkulam village, 1938.
60. Manur station, Manur village, 28 June 1945.
61. Thazhiyoothu station, Chatram Kudiyiruppu village, Chittanpacheri, 22 December 1937. Signed by Inspector Padmanabha Iyer.
62. For example, 'to...secure more efficient management of the station areas, it is proposed to...'; 'the present Virakeralampudur station...has proved an unmanageable charge'; and 'the town station will include in its limits a compact and easily manageable block...' in G.O. 753, Judicial, 28 December 1925, TNA.
63. *Fortnightly Report for Madras Presidency* for the second half of December 1930, TNA.
64. For example, G.O. 62 (ms) Public Police, 7 February 1933, TNA.
65. Kodaikanal station, located on the hills and clearly an outlier, serviced 413 square miles.

PART III

Dynamics of Colonial Warfare

The Dynamics of British Colonial Violence

Michelle Gordon

Considering the ubiquity of violence across the British Empire and the extent to which British colonists repeatedly found themselves at war in a vast number of ‘small wars’,¹ it is essential to research lesser-known British colonial campaigns to illuminate the ways in which outbreaks of violence occurred and how this violence was fundamental to the British imperial system. Historians have increasingly explored the methods of violence used across the Empire, from its inception until its eventual demise.² This chapter will consider three examples of British colonial warfare: the Perak War in Malaya (1875–1876); the ‘Hut Tax’ War in Sierra Leone (1898); and the Anglo-Egyptian War of Reconquest in the Sudan (1896–1899). It will examine the importance of colonial administrators in shaping events on the ground, emphasising the relevance of racial prejudices to their interaction with Indigenous populations. It argues that the actions of the ‘men on the spot’ were integral to outbreaks of violence. Racial prejudices are central to explaining a common approach among colonial administrators in their interaction with Indigenous populations across the Empire as well as the willingness of British troops to utilise extreme methods of violence. While these campaigns differed in scale and scope, a comparative approach reveals the ways in which these conflicts were all

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part of the ‘logic’ of the British Empire, which accepted the need for swift and decisive action in the face of any Indigenous opposition to British colonial rule.

The timing of these cases is significant, occurring as they did after the Indian Mutiny in 1857, which is understood as a ‘watershed moment’ regarding the utilisation of extreme violence to suppress Indigenous resistance to British rule.³ The incidents under discussion were part of a long European tradition of colonial warfare and each campaign utilised a variety of methods of violence to enforce and maintain the British Empire. Those methods included collective reprisals, scorched earth policies, punitive expeditions, looting, a disregard for international standards of warfare, and the neglect and massacring of the enemy wounded. These military tactics were justified as necessary based on the ‘uncivilised’ nature of the ‘natives’. Racial prejudice and the fundamental imbalance between the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised’ created inherently violent situations. In the cases to be examined in this chapter, as across the Empire, brutal suppression of any resistance was viewed as necessary to ‘teach’ the local population the ‘benefits’ of British rule.

THE PERAK WAR, 1875–1876

Before the Perak War of 1875–1876, British policy had been one of ‘liberal non-intervention’ on the Malay Peninsula.⁴ However, a series of local disputes and dynastic quarrels in the region led the Colonial Office to consider an increased role in the states surrounding the Straits Settlements. Internal conflicts were having a detrimental effect on the trade of British and Chinese merchants and as a result a petition was sent to the British government requesting action against this perceived ‘anarchy’.⁵ On 20 September 1873, Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, decided to send the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Andrew Clarke, to Perak—a state on the northwest of the Malay Peninsula—with instructions to report back on the situation.⁶ However, Clarke went beyond his mandate of reporting and the result of his visit was the Pangkor Engagement of 1874,⁷ which established a British Residents System, arranged a peace settlement between warring Chinese factions and attempted to settle the succession dispute in Perak that had been ongoing since the death of Sultan Ali in 1871.⁸ At the election in 1871 there had been three potential successors to consider: Rajas Abdullah, Ismail and Yusuf. The last was the son of the late Sultan,

but he was passed over due to his unpopularity as a 'ruthless commander'; Abdullah was considered 'an opium-smoker and a coward' and hence Ismail was elected.⁹ However, Abdullah continued to dispute this outcome and wrote to the British in an attempt to gain their favour.¹⁰ To settle this and other outstanding issues, Clarke summoned a meeting at Pangkor Island, just off the coast of Perak, on 20 January 1874. At the meeting, Clarke decided upon Abdullah as the new Sultan and neither Ismail nor Yusuf were in attendance and by electing Abdullah, Clarke created a highly ambiguous situation in which 'the settlement recognised one of the three claimants without securing his acceptance by the other two'.¹¹ Clarke also introduced a system of residential 'advice', which meant that the new Sultan was subject to British advice that 'must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom'.¹² This system was to prove highly problematic given the ambiguous role of the Residents and the extent to which the chiefs were obligated to act on this 'advice'.

The actions of Perak's first Resident, James Birch, both contradicted Clarke's instructions and further antagonised Perak's various chiefs and the new Sultan. The chiefs were particularly disgruntled by Birch's attempts to change laws regarding taxation and the practice of debt-slavery.¹³ As one scholar has pointed out, by 'striking at the chiefs' means of livelihood, Birch managed to create a common resistance among men who agreed, perhaps, in nothing else'.¹⁴ Frustrated by Abdullah's refusal to cooperate, Birch viewed him with contempt and threatened to have him removed from the throne.¹⁵ In September 1875, Governor William Jervois (Clarke's successor) travelled to Perak to investigate the growing tensions among the chiefs.¹⁶ Rather than address their grievances, British powers were to be increased in the form of a new Proclamation introducing a new system in which two British officers would be appointed as Queen's Commissioners to carry out the administration of the country in the name of the Sultan, with the assistance of a Malay Council. However, Jervois failed to consult with the Colonial Office regarding his plans.¹⁷ At this time, Birch received several death threats, but did not inform Jervois.¹⁸ Instead, he began to distribute the new Proclamation throughout Perak and although Birch had been warned that the posting of the Proclamation would not be allowed in the village of Pasir Salak, he went ahead regardless and was murdered there on 2 November 1875.¹⁹

In the immediate aftermath of Birch's murder a garrison was sent to carry out a surprise assault on the village. As a result of the hasty and

disorganised manner in which the attack was arranged, it was unsuccessful and 17 officers and men were killed, including the Commissioner in charge.²⁰ P.B. Maxwell, the former Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements described how rumours now circulated of a general rising across the Malay Peninsula by ‘fanatical Malays’.²¹ The need for further violence to suppress Indigenous opposition to British influence was typically justified in the British press thus: ‘The ferocity of the native broke out, and there was nothing to hold it in check. The result was the outrage at [Pasir Salak] and the war of chastisement which has been triumphantly pursued.’ Furthermore, it was stated that ‘It would be absurd to suppose that we have finally tamed the most turbulent of races by a few sharp defeats in jungle skirmishes and by the burning of a dozen stockades.’²² Consequently, further violence was deemed necessary because of the ‘nature’ of the ‘natives’.

In the aftermath of the failed attack at Pasir Salak, Jervois now planned for a military campaign to find and punish those culpable for Birch’s murder and suppress any potential resistance. Jervois communicated his objective to the Colonial Office: ‘it is most advisable to make a display of power, and that difficulties present and future will cease by the adoption of such a course’.²³ However, Lord Carnarvon (Kimberley’s successor), warned Jervois against a prolonged conflict stating, ‘I am anxiously expecting to hear further of the proceedings of the forces. I assume that military operations will not be unnecessarily extended.’²⁴ Nonetheless, Jervois went on to order a naval blockade of the Perak coastline,²⁵ and colonial troops were instructed to show an ‘imposing display of force’.²⁶ On their return to Pasir Salak, the colonial troops indiscriminately burned down houses and the village, which had been deserted, was destroyed on arrival²⁷—it was reported that ‘the village was fired, and the banks for a mile and a half were ablaze’.²⁸ This policy of scorched earth was undertaken in order to ‘make an example’ of the villages and to exact punishment on potential resisters to British colonial rule.²⁹ The suffering of the general population was compounded by the blockading of the coastline, which soon resulted in a scarcity of rice amongst the inhabitants. Ismail, the ex-Sultan who was suspected of complicity in Birch’s murder, and his people were effectively held hostage by Jervois who stated that ‘If no opposition is shown to our troops, and there is a pacific settlement of the affairs of the country, food will be allowed to come in as usual.’³⁰ As Major J.F.A. McNair confirmed, when Ismail surrendered ‘he was in a destitute condition, his people emaciated,

many of them ill while many more had been left behind in the jungle and had died off'.³¹ The village of Kota Lama was also repeatedly targeted for destruction by colonial troops,³² and on 3 January 1876 a village in Kuala Kangsar was the scene of a summary execution in which troops were sent to identify three alleged outlaws, with instructions that 'the officer in command will at once hang [the outlaws] opposite or near their house and set fire to the buildings. The men are to be left hanging.'³³ Only one of these men was found and hanged.

The British also undertook punitive expeditions in nearby Sungei Ujong in 1874 and 1875, although there was no direct connection between these actions and events in Perak.³⁴ British tactics were very similar in each case: in Sungei Ujong, Lieutenant Hinxman concluded on 9 December 1875 that, 'The enemy were now in full retreat up the hill at E. I formed up my men and poured effective valleys into them. We now gave three cheers and burnt the village.'³⁵ While the British campaign in Perak resulted in the large-scale destruction of the area, looting and suffering as a result of the naval blockade, more often than not British troops were met with deserted villages rather than heavy resistance.³⁶ Jervis was central to these events and his desire to suppress any potential resistance played a key role in the escalation of the campaign. Ten days after Birch's murder Jervis acknowledged that 'Disaffection most likely restricted to small portion of the country; wise, nevertheless, to act as if not so.'³⁷

Changes to the Residents system were minimal in the aftermath of the war and clearly British military intervention made this uncertain system of government tenable.³⁸ All those found guilty of involvement in Birch's death were either hanged or deported, resulting in a situation which 'cleared Perak of both Sultans and nearly every chief of the first and second rank'.³⁹ However, the circumstances in which the trials of the alleged collaborators were carried out were highly questionable.⁴⁰ The documentation regarding the trials is incomplete and most of the accused were not even formally charged or questioned; their guilt had been predetermined.⁴¹

THE 'HUT TAX' WAR, SIERRA LEONE, 1898

In the British Protectorate in the hinterland of the Colony of Sierra Leone the 'Hut Tax' War broke out in 1898.⁴² Similar to the circumstances which led to the Perak War, Indigenous dissatisfaction in the

face of increased British colonial rule was met with obstinance on the part of the man on the spot, which escalated the situation and led to prolonged violence and the destruction of the local area. The newly declared Protectorate Ordinance,⁴³ which would establish British power in the region, included the introduction of a tax that each household had to pay.⁴⁴ This section will focus on the conflict which broke out in the North of the Protectorate against the Temne chief, Bai Bureh, although a second conflict led by the Mende tribe broke out in the South of the Protectorate at the end of April. The two conflicts were very different in nature, although they did overlap.⁴⁵ British involvement beyond the boundaries of the Colony⁴⁶ had increased in recent years and included the introduction of the controversial Frontier Police Force in 1890, which was known for its arbitrary violence. The introduction of the tax under the new Governor of Sierra Leone, Frederic Cardew, came at a time when local chiefs were becoming increasingly disgruntled at the loss of their sovereignty as a result of a series of treaties with the British colonial administration after 1807, which were achieved with increasing force.⁴⁷

Cardew was determined to enforce his policies despite the chiefs' opposition, as well as the misgivings of the Colonial Office—which criticised Cardew's policies for being 'too ambitious and premature'.⁴⁸ Cardew toured the country to explain his policies, although 'the terms were dictated, not negotiated'.⁴⁹ As J. D. Hargreaves argues, the colonial administrators took little time to try and understand the customs and traditions of the local population.⁵⁰ Initially, the chiefs' protests were voiced through peaceful means in the form of petitions and while the administration had ample chance to revise or withdraw the taxes in light of the chiefs' objections, only slight revisions were made. Cardew was not interested in negotiating and in a meeting with the chiefs on 15 November 1897 he provided an explanation for his policies but then refused to discuss the matter further.⁵¹ While the chiefs came away from this meeting dejected, Cardew optimistically stated: 'I was glad to have the opportunity of showing them how they had been misled and how unfounded their grievances were.'⁵²

Tax collections began with force on 1 January 1898 by the Frontier Police who dealt harshly with those who refused to pay or endorse the tax. The administration's methods of punishment included arresting chiefs and punishing them by flogging, as well as handing out sentences of hard labour; although the chiefs' actions were not actually illegal.⁵³

Throughout this time, rumours were circulating that the Temne chief Bai Bureh—a signatory of the Temne petition—was planning a revolt.⁵⁴ Captain W.S. Sharpe, the District Commissioner of Karene—Bai Bureh’s district—had written to the chief announcing his intention to visit him and collect the tax from him personally; the letter was returned unsigned and Sharpe perceived this action as a clear affront, although Bai Bureh later claimed not to have received the letter.⁵⁵ Cardew decided that a show of force was needed and a group of Frontier Police was sent out on orders to have the chief arrested, as a result of his having ‘defied’ Sharpe.⁵⁶ However, as the Frontier Police set out to arrest him, they were met with a group of the chief’s ‘warboys’ who threw stones and jeered at the troops. Inspector General Major A.F. Tarbet ordered the force to open fire on the crowd and hence the first shots of the campaign were fired.⁵⁷

After hostilities broke out, Bai Bureh undertook a campaign of guerilla warfare against the British. He retained the initiative from 23 February until 1 April 1898, during which time the British only took the offensive once,⁵⁸ and the West India Regiment was left demoralised and exhausted.⁵⁹ Although Bai Bureh’s tactics inflicted few casualties,⁶⁰ the British struggled to fight an enemy they could not see and were forced to adapt their strategy. As General F. M. Carleton reported: ‘You can do nothing in return unless you happen to catch the enemy in the open which is very seldom. All you can do is burn their villages and occupy the country.’⁶¹ Flying columns were then sent out, which as Lieutenant C. Foulkes stated, ‘took the enemy by surprise and inflicted serious casualties on them for the first time’.⁶² The British now initiated a policy of scorched earth in which they systematically burnt down towns, villages, food stores and crops; this destruction was accompanied by looting.⁶³ The military reports provide lists of the villages they burnt down as the forces traversed the country.⁶⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Marshall later acknowledged that the towns were destroyed in order to ‘make an example’ of them and to ‘intimidate the other states’ and therefore deter further unrest.⁶⁵ Through these practices the local population was forced into a state of submission and left to fend for themselves in an area wrought by devastation. It has been claimed that Cardew was very ‘alarmed’ by the systematic destruction of the area, although he did endorse the burning of areas linked to Bai Bureh.⁶⁶ However, Major Buck, who commanded a flying column, justified the large-scale destruction as necessary ‘though it may seem hard on the women and children’.⁶⁷

After the rainy season, from November 1898 until April 1899, punitive expeditions were carried out for the 're-establishment of authority' across the Protectorate.⁶⁸ Bai Bureh was captured on 12 November 1898 and deported to the Gold Coast. Nevertheless, Cardew expressed his desire to reassert British authority in the region due to a lack of British presence in the remoter areas of the Protectorate, stating: 'the natives have had no evidence of the power and resources of Her Majesty's Government other than the presence of isolated posts here and there...'.⁶⁹ The punitive expeditions had their intended effect and the tax was continued; the Indigenous population realised that for now they would have to accept a British colonial presence.⁷⁰

THE ANGLO-EGYPTIAN WAR OF RECONQUEST IN SUDAN, 1896–1899

The tactics used by the Anglo-Egyptian forces in the reconquest of the Sudan under the command of the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, Herbert Kitchener, were particularly extreme, even if the circumstances of the war were also very different to the two cases discussed above. The reconquest took place over a longer period from 1896 until 1899. The background to the reconquest is the fall of Khartoum in 1885, the death of General Charles Gordon at the hands of the Mahdists and the humiliating withdrawal of British and Egyptian forces.⁷¹ British objectives in the Sudan campaign were clear and they sought to defeat the Khalifa 'Abdallahi Muhammad (the Mahdi Muhammed Ahmad's successor after his death in 1885) and occupy the country. This and the desire to avenge the death of Gordon had much support in Britain.⁷² The need to avenge Gordon's death was also effectively impressed upon the troops by Kitchener who reminded them that they should 'Remember Gordon'.⁷³ The Mahdia was presented as a brutal regime with horrendous tales, which were undoubtedly exaggerated, while the Sudanese were portrayed as a 'savage race'.⁷⁴ These accounts, suggests P.M. Holt, 'should be regarded primarily as war-propaganda' used to justify the reconquest.⁷⁵

A number of small battles took place in the reconquest campaign prior to the final battle at Omdurman, notably at the Atbara on Good Friday (8 April 1898). This battle was particularly brutal and one participant described it as a 'chaotic dogfight' in which 'it was almost impossible to take prisoners'.⁷⁶ British tactics here included the killing of the enemy wounded⁷⁷; it was a telling precursor of the devastation which

was to result five months later in the final major clash of the campaign in Omdurman. In contrast to the other two cases discussed, the Mahdists fought the British in open battle and the results were devastating for the Mahdist troops. The final battle took place on 2 September 1898 and 11,000 of the Khalifa's army were killed and 16,000 wounded—although the number of actual fatalities would have been significantly higher due to the neglect and killing of the wounded.⁷⁸ In contrast, Anglo-Egyptian forces lost just 48 men and 382 were wounded.⁷⁹ Once again, many of the enemy wounded were killed by the Anglo-Egyptian troops. Winston Churchill, who served at Omdurman as both a war correspondent and soldier, argued that Kitchener's failure to reissue a statement regarding the sparing of the enemy wounded contributed to 'a very general impression that the fewer the prisoners, the greater would be the satisfaction of the commander'.⁸⁰ Furthermore, contemporary accounts of the aftermath of Omdurman describe the enemy wounded lying unaided on the battlefield waiting to die, days after the battle.⁸¹ Henry Keown-Boyd has argued that the tactics of killing the enemy wounded were a normal part of Anglo-Sudanese warfare and their treatment certainly needs to be viewed within the wider context of practices of British colonial violence.⁸² Various elements of Kitchener's campaign received public criticism in Britain; aside from the slaughter and neglect of the enemy wounded, there was also the bombing of the Mahdist's tomb and the looting of Omdurman after the battle.⁸³ As well as the looting of the belongings of the dead Mahdist troops, homes in Omdurman were looted on the evening of 2 September and acts of revenge were carried out.⁸⁴ As one British soldier stated, there were 'desperate dervishes hidden away in the town and a good deal of promiscuous shooting went on, especially after dark'.⁸⁵

Moreover, scholars have underscored how famine conditions in the country were exploited by the British for the war effort and have shown how the general population suffered greatly as a result.⁸⁶ Throughout the reconquest campaign, the local population also endured raids at the hands of the Mahdists and they clearly found themselves caught in the middle of the conflict.⁸⁷ It has been argued that Kitchener's actions after the reconquest worsened conditions as he prioritised the building of his 'new Anglo-Egyptian capital' over alleviating the peoples' suffering.⁸⁸ 'Kitchener', for example, 'adamantly refused to cancel some of the train-loads of building materials destined for Khartoum which were needed to supply grain for the famine stricken provinces.'⁸⁹ Indeed, Kitchener

exploited the inhabitants' situation in order to gain cheap labour for the building of new infrastructure, including his planned new railway. He justified the exploitation of local labour on the grounds that the railway 'could never be made nearly as cheaply as at present'.⁹⁰

THE 'MAN ON THE SPOT' AND THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

British politicians in London were reliant on colonial administrators on the periphery for accurate assessments of colonial conflicts and were subject to the objectives of these men.⁹¹ The case of Perak demonstrates the difficulties of the Colonial Office's reliance on Jervois. Carnarvon received a request for troop reinforcements before having received a full explanation of events on the ground, due to delays in communication.⁹² He was particularly concerned regarding Jervois' motivation and noted his dismay: 'I am utterly disenchanted with Jervois. I believe he is getting up a little war of annexation but I am nearly powerless to stop it.'⁹³ The cases of Perak and Sierra Leone particularly demonstrate the inability and refusal of administrators to consider the perspectives of the local leaders. Furthermore, in both cases these men ignored peaceful Indigenous opposition *and* their actions contradicted the official policy of the Colonial Office. Both Jervois and Cardew discounted Indigenous perspectives and their opposition as 'illegitimate'; their actions were influenced by racial prejudices, a belief in their own innate 'superiority' and the knowledge that they could rely on the full might of the British Empire on the periphery if faced with Indigenous resistance. Importantly, within these two cases a pattern can be identified in which the British colonial authorities provoked the local population, which then led to retaliation, and was followed by condemnation and used to justify brutal suppression by the British. The ultimate result was the increased presence of the colonial power. Hence, the 'men on the spot' were integral to creating precarious situations in which a violent outcome was increasingly probable.

The manner in which the colonists dealt with the native populations demonstrates a sense of superiority typical of the British Empire; racial prejudice is essential to an understanding of outbreaks of British colonial violence and the nature of this violence.⁹⁴ For example, in the Protectorate, Cardew displayed great arrogance and prejudice towards the Indigenous population and he appears to have made no genuine attempts to communicate with the chiefs and continually blamed them

and their aversion to the ‘methods of civilisation’ for the hostilities.⁹⁵ The ‘civilised’ versus ‘barbaric’ dichotomy was key to justifications for colonial conquest and contemporary accounts of Birch’s murder in Perak were also viewed within this dichotomy. In response to his murder *The Times* wrote, ‘Whether the Malays have only broken out in a momentary spasm of that savage frenzy peculiar to their race we must wait patiently to see.’⁹⁶ Cardew rationalised that ‘petty wars’ in West Africa were largely ‘the result of the contact of the forces of civilisation with those of barbarism’,⁹⁷ and stated that he was dealing ‘with a people that are practically savages—some are cannibals...accustomed to the most despotic sway on the part of their chiefs.’⁹⁸ Clearly, this way of thinking was used to justify colonial interference.

The Colonial Office had officially been in favour of a more moderate approach regarding the establishment of British colonial authority in both Perak and Sierra Leone and was keen to avoid prolonged military interventions, as Carnarvon articulated in his hope of containing the conflict in Perak:

My hands are *extraordinarily* full of very heavy work now. Moreover I shall probably be obliged to annex Zululand...I therefore much desire to keep the existing system in the Malay Peninsula for a time at all events: and I think it can be done.⁹⁹

However, just because politicians in London may have been reluctant to engage in hostilities on the periphery in the first place, as in Perak and Sierra Leone, does not mean that they were averse to the use of more extreme tactics when it came to it. Regarding actions on the ground, the colonial system of administration was often criticised by contemporaries. In the case of Perak, for example, British officials were criticised by *The Straits Times*: ‘Officials are getting too much addicted to asking for leave to go home...This leads to endless acting appointments...confusion and delay in the transaction of public business.’¹⁰⁰ However, in the case of the Sudan, the role of administrators and communications between the metropole and the periphery were of less importance as Kitchener’s objectives were clear and while Lord Cromer, Consul-General of Egypt, was ultimately responsible for the campaign, Kitchener was clearly accountable for the methods used and troop conduct.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, with regards to Kitchener’s orders and the levels of force to be used, he was decidedly vague.¹⁰² While the majority of the troops present were

Egyptian and Sudanese,¹⁰³ the campaign was very much led by the British and although it seems unlikely that Kitchener gave explicit orders to massacre the wounded and those trying to surrender—although such claims were made¹⁰⁴—it is clear that troops were able to freely interpret his orders and there were moments in which the Anglo-Egyptian troops had ‘free rein’, as in the case at the Atbara, and as Ernest Bennett stated in his controversial article, with regards to the massacring and looting of the wounded, ‘certainly no protest was made’ by British officers.¹⁰⁵ It seems that in each case, the levels of force were at the discretion of the colonial forces. In Perak, Jervois refused to provide McNair with precise instructions regarding ‘the pacification of the country’ and stated, ‘I am unwilling to hamper you with minute instructions which you may find it impossible to carry out, but I desire you in all eventualities to keep these ends in view.’¹⁰⁶

In all three cases examined in this chapter, British violence was justified as necessary to ‘liberate’ the local inhabitants from ‘barbarism’, whether from ‘Malay fanaticism’, the ‘despotic’ chiefs in Sierra Leone or the ‘fanatic’ Mahdia.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the ‘natives’ were viewed as ‘inferior’ and hence, undeserving of ‘civilised’ methods of warfare.¹⁰⁸ For example racist assumptions were in evidence regarding the use of explosive bullets in the colonies and these debates highlight the contradictory nature of British colonialism and the concept of ‘civilised warfare’. While the St. Petersburg Declaration in 1868 had banned the use of these bullets, it was argued by the British that their use was justified against ‘uncivilised’ foes such as the Mahdists, as ‘Civilised man is much more susceptible to injury than savages.’¹⁰⁹

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of immense international pressure for the British Empire, which could not afford to expose any weakness in its colonial authority.¹¹⁰ The context of the ‘Scramble for Africa’ and Britain’s waning colonial dominance is important here. Mark Levene has emphasised the relevance of perceived threats to European imperialism at the *fin de siècle* and measures of extreme violence on the part of European colonists.¹¹¹ The extreme nature of colonial warfare was heightened by the imbalance of relations between the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised’ in the Empire because of Britain’s vastly larger number of troops and supplies, in the face of which the native populations could not hold out long and certainly not without suffering significant casualties. This colonial imbalance was compounded by perceptions of the ‘nature’ of the ‘natives’ in the face of any opposition

and British force could become entirely disproportionate to the situation at hand. On the part of the indigenous opposition it has been noted that colonial wars were often fought with a sense of fatalism, as the indigenes were ‘staring into the abyss...with their one and only chance to break free’.¹¹² Henk Wesseling has also emphasised that ‘colonial wars were absolute: The colonial conquerors came to stay. Their aim was the permanent and total subjection of the population.’¹¹³

Lessons were ‘learnt’ across the empire in relation to dealing with recalcitrant Indigenous populations and precedents of violence were constantly being set, which demonstrated that both politicians in London and the ‘men on the spot’ were able and willing to accept the utilisation of more extreme methods if necessary. The Indian Mutiny in 1857 is a case in point and Kim Wagner has argued that the Mutiny was instrumental to an approach by the British in which they responded to what the violence ‘could become’ and this approach, Wagner argues, contributed to the ‘disproportionality of colonial state violence’.¹¹⁴ Individual instances of British colonial violence need to be viewed within their broader historical context and this includes the wider framework of extreme violence and mass killing. Until recently, there appears to have been reluctance within imperial history to engage in discussions regarding the more negative aspects of the British Empire and, in particular, the role of genocide and atrocity.¹¹⁵ The extent of the use of violence in the British Empire is often underplayed and its history sanitised.¹¹⁶ Clearly, force was integral to the Empire’s continued existence and as the instances of violence discussed above demonstrate, brutal methods could and would be utilised against perceived British colonial ‘enemies’ when it was felt that colonial authority was challenged. Outbreaks of extreme violence were accompanied by everyday colonial violence and studies on this subject convey the ways in which quotidian violence continued in a variety of forms after the establishment of colonial rule.¹¹⁷ As Jill Bender argues in reference to the Indian Mutiny in 1857, these two types of violence are connected and ‘macromoments’ of violence, ‘dramatically shaped the accepted use of force in the colonies’.¹¹⁸

Scholars are considering the importance of ‘knowledge’ and ‘learning’ with regards to European colonial violence and the extent to which an ‘archive’ of colonial violence was ‘transferred’ both within and across European empires.¹¹⁹ Instances of unrest—including the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865—loomed large in the minds of British colonists and their actions were informed by this ‘knowledge’.¹²⁰ Colonel

Anson made it clear that individual colonists considered instances of violence elsewhere. Not only was he involved in the operations in both Perak and Sungei Ujong, on his way to Penang to deal with disturbances there, Anson stated, ‘Just before leaving England I had read the whole account of Governor Eyre’s riots in Jamaica, and having no one on whose advice I could rely, and having had no time to make myself acquainted with the customs and habits of the nations, I felt doubtful and somewhat nervous in regard to the measures I should take.’¹²¹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By examining lesser-known cases of British colonial violence, a pattern emerges regarding the ways in which communication between the periphery and the metropole and the actions of the men on the spot affected conditions on the ground, antagonising the Indigenous peoples and contributing to the outbreak of conflicts and the escalation of violence. The British Empire repeatedly became immersed in cycles of violence on the ‘turbulent frontier’ as ‘Governors continued to try and eliminate the disorderly frontier by annexations which in turn produced new frontier problems and further expansion.’¹²² The actions of colonial administrators—informed as they were by ideas of racial superiority—ensured that outbreaks of violence were all but inevitable. Due to the continuously hasty actions of individuals such as Clarke, Birch and Jervois, who sought to make their mark and refused to negotiate with local leaders, the end result was an intensification of violence, colonial domination and suffering for the population. Vague orders and an imbalance in resources intensified the violence once it broke out. The willingness of British colonial forces to carry out extreme methods of violence in the colonies further ensured the continuance of British colonial power; this willingness was also informed by views of Indigenous populations as ‘inferior’ and ‘illegitimate’. While sometimes small in scale, these wars nevertheless devastated whole communities and they warrant further examination—it is important to look beyond ‘a few striking examples’ to understand the nature and extent of British colonial violence.¹²³ Considerations of the dynamics of British colonialism offer an important historical context in which European colonialism provided experiences of extreme violence and precedents of brutal conquest; within this context, the British Empire was a key driving force.¹²⁴

NOTES

1. Charles Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Tales End Press, 2012 [London: Stationery Office, 1899]), Kindle edition.
2. Explorations of violence and decolonisation have been particularly fruitful. See for example, Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
3. Jill C. Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11.
4. First through the East India Company and then the Straits Settlement, which became a Crown Colony in 1867. See A. J. Stockwell, 'British Expansion and Rule in South-East Asia', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 377. C. D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1.
5. Petition to Ord, *Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements*, C.1111 (1874), 30–32; C. Northcote Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867–1877* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960), 109–110.
6. See for example: W. David McIntyre, 'Britain's Intervention in Malaya: The Origin of Lord Kimberley's Instructions to Sir Andrew Clarke in 1873', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 2:3 (1965), 47–69.
7. P. L. Burns, 'Introduction', in Burns and C. D. Cowan (eds), *Sir Frank Swettenham's Malayan Journals 1874–1876* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), xvi.
8. See M. A. Mallal, 'J. W. W. Birch: Causes of his Assassination' (M. A. thesis, University of Malaya, 1952); Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874–1895* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970 [1968]); Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*.
9. As Mary Turnbull explains, Perak had an intricate power structure: the sultan was at the apex, followed by the *raja muda* and then a hierarchy of chiefs: see C. Mary Turnbull, *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei* (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1981), 130. See Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, 73.
10. See Sadka, *Protected Malay States The Protected Malay*, 47.
11. Sadka, *Protected Malay States*, 80.

12. The Pangkor Engagement is reproduced in Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, 323–325.
13. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*, 223.
14. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, 222.
15. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, 223.
16. Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*, rev. edn. (London: Lane, 1929 [1927]), 199.
17. Jervois set out his plans in his despatch on 16 October 1875 to Carnarvon, but this was not received until 22 November 1875, *Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements*, C.1505 (1876), 31–38.
18. Cited by Jervois as he addressed the Straits Settlements Legislative Council on 29 October 1875, C.1505, 75.
19. For an assessment of the events leading up to Birch's death see, Mallal, 'J. W. W. Birch'.
20. J. F. A. McNair, *Perak and the Malays* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1878), 377; Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*, 234.
21. P. Benson Maxwell, *Our Malay Conquests* (London: P. S. King, 1878), 60.
22. *The Times*, 21 December 1875.
23. Jervois to Colonial Office, 13 November 1875, C.1505, 54.
24. Carnarvon to Jervois, 27 December 1875, C.1505, 111.
25. Jervois to Carnarvon, 2 December 1875, C.1505, 119.
26. Jervois to Colborne, Enclosure 7 in No. 93, 18 November 1875, C.1505, 127–128.
27. Stirling to Ryder, 16 November 1875, C.1505, 235.
28. 'The Malay Peninsula', *The Times*, 25 December 1875.
29. Jervois to Carnarvon, 29 December 1875, C.1505, 244.
30. Jervois to Ismail, Enclosure 40 in No. 93, 29 November 1875, C.1505, 140.
31. McNair, *Perak and the Malays*, 407–408.
32. Jervois to Carnarvon, 14 January 1876, C.1505, 268; Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya*, 296–297.
33. Ross to Garforth, 2 January 1876, The National Archives (hereafter: TNA) CO882/3; Enclosure: Maxwell to Colonial Secretary, 1 March 1876, CO882/3; Maxwell to Colonial Secretary, 5 June 1876, CO882/3.
34. See William Francis Patrick Napier, 'The Malays: and A Few Words Regarding Perak and Salangore', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, (1876), 22–23.

35. Hinxmann, 9 December 1875, TNA CO276/6. See also H.B. Rich, 'The Campaign in the Malay Peninsula: November 1875–February 1876', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, (1876), 17.
36. See for example: Dunlop's Report, 16 November 1875, CO276/6.
37. Jervois to Carnarvon, 12 November 1875, C.1505, 24.
38. W. David McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865–75: A Study of British Colonial Policy in West Africa, Malaya and the South Pacific in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 316.
39. Sadka, *Protected Malay States*, 92.
40. Sadka, *Protected Malay States*, 92.
41. Sadka, *Protected Malay States*, 93. See *Enquiry as to Complicity of Chiefs into the Perak Outrages: Précis of Evidence*, (Singapore, 1876).
42. Originally described as a house tax, 'hut tax' was a pejorative term created by the Freetown press to express their disdain for direct taxation: Arthur Abraham, *Mende Government and Politics under Colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone 1890–1937* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1978), 133.
43. See Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 541.
44. See J. D. Hargreaves, 'The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 12:1 (1956), 65.
45. See Abraham, *Mende Government*; T. J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London: Macmillan, 1901); C. Braithwaite Wallis, *The Advance of Our West African Empire* (London: Unwin, 1903).
46. For further explanation see Hargreaves, 'Sierra Leone Protectorate', 56.
47. Kenneth C. Wylie, *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne: Temne Government in Sierra Leone 1825–1910* (New York: Africana Publishing, 1977), 160.
48. Cited in Abraham, *Mende Government*, 132.
49. Zubairu Wai, *Epistemologies of African Conflicts: Violence, Evolutionism, and the War in Sierra Leone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Kindle edition.
50. Hargreaves, 'Sierra Leone Protectorate', 63.
51. After the chiefs had waited in Freetown for two months to speak to him: as summarised by David Chalmers in his report. Chalmers was commissioned to conduct an enquiry into the reasons for the outbreak of the war, see *Sierra Leone: Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner and Correspondence on the Subject of the Insurrection in the Sierra Leone Protectorate 1898: Part I, Report and Correspondence*, C.9388 (1899) [hereafter: Chalmers Report Part I], 22–23.
52. Cardew to Chamberlain, 24 December 1897, TNA CO879/55.

53. Chalmers Report Part I, 32.
54. *Sierra Leone Report by Her Majesty's Commissioner and Correspondence on the Subject of the Insurrection in the Sierra Leone Protectorate 1898 Part II, Evidence and Documents*, C.9391 (1899) [hereafter Chalmers Report Part II], 215.
55. Chalmers Report Part II, 214.
56. Chalmers Report Part II, 216.
57. For Sharpe's account of these events see Chalmers Report Part II, 217.
58. Michael Crowder with LaRay Denzer, 'Bai Bureh and the Sierra Leone Hut Tax War of 1898', in Crowder (eds.), *Colonial West Africa: Collected Essays* (London: Frank Cass, 1978), 89.
59. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 564; Appendix D, 'Staff Diary 24 February to 20 and 27, 28 March 1898', TNA WO32/7624.
60. Woodgate, 17 April, 'Karene Report on Operations 14 April to 24 April 1898', TNA WO32/7626.
61. Private Papers of Brigadier General F. M. Carleton DSO, Documents. 20718, 8 May 1898, Imperial War Museum.
62. Major General Charles Howard Foulkes (1875–1969): GB0099 KCMA Foulkes 4/1, King's College Liddell Hart Military Archives.
63. Michael Crowder, 'West African Resistance', in Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 16; Wallis, *The Advance of Our West African Empire*, 81. The need for such tactics in the face of a conflict with no clearly defined enemy was argued by Callwell, *Small Wars*.
64. 'Karene Report on Recent Operations', TNA WO32/7623; Chalmers Report Part II, 228.
65. Chalmers Report Part II, 342.
66. Crowder, 'Bai Bureh', 91.
67. Cited in LaRay Denzer, 'A Diary of Bai Bureh's War: Part I: February 1st—April 1st: Bai Bureh Holds the Initiative', *Sierra Leone Studies*, New Series 23, (1968), 59.
68. Cardew to Chamberlain, 23 July 1898, CO879/55.
69. Cardew to Chamberlain, 23 July 1898, CO879/55.
70. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 601.
71. See: P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of its Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1958]).
72. Holt, *Mahdist State*, 240.
73. See: Unsworth, 16 April 1898, Sudan Archive, University of Durham Library (hereafter: SAD) 233/5; Winston S. Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, vol. II (London: Longman's Green, 1899), 196.

74. See for example: Rudolf C. Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879–1895*, trans. F. R. Wingate (London: Arnold, 1896); Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001), 136.
75. Holt, *Mahdist State*, 273.
76. Egerton, Memorandum, SAD/477/8. E. W. C. Sandes, *The Royal Engineers in Egypt and the Sudan* (Chatham: Institute of Royal Engineers, Mackays Ltd, 1937), 217, n2.
77. See for example: Private George Teigh in John Meredith (ed.), *Omdurman Diaries 1898: Eyewitness Accounts of the Legendary Campaign* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 1998), 85.
78. See: M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2–3.
79. Holt, *Mahdist State*, 240.
80. Churchill, *River War*, vol. II, 195.
81. See Medical Officer Major Adamson's account of his departure from Omdurman for example, in Henry Keown-Boyd, *A Good Dusting: A Centenary Review of the Sudan Campaigns 1883–1899* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986), 241. The following work was central to these claims: Ernest N. Bennett, 'After Omdurman', *Contemporary Review*, 75 (1899), 18–33; cf. W. Gatacre, 'After the Atbara and Omdurman', *Contemporary Review*, 75 (1899), 299–304. Churchill, *River War*, vol. II, 225.
82. Keown-Boyd, *A Good Dusting*, 243. On the massacring of the enemy wounded by the British in the Zulu War see, Michael Lieven, "'Butchering the Brutes All Over the Place": Total War and Massacre in Zululand, 1879', *History*, 18 (1999), 614–632. For further discussion of the reconquest in relation to European colonial violence and Nazi genocidal violence see, Michelle Gordon, 'Colonial Violence and Holocaust Studies', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 21:4 (2015), 272–291.
83. See Bennett, 'After Omdurman', 24–25; Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, 3; 'Ismat Hasan Zulfo, *Karari: The Sudanese Account of the Battle of Omdurman*, trans. Peter Clark (Bath: Warne, 1980), 236.
84. See for example: Hunter, 'Sudan Campaign May–Oct 1898', SAD/964/3. Colonel John admitted to killing several Emirs the night after the battle: Maxwell to Wingate, 24 May 1908, SAD/282/5; see also Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, 4.
85. Clayton, 4 September 1898 SAD/942/7/87.
86. Steven Serels, 'Feasting on Famines: Food Insecurity and the Making of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1883–1956', (PhD, McGill University, 2012), 190. See also Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 134.

87. See for example: *Sudan Intelligence Report* 56, 6 October to 12 November 1898, SAD.
88. Serels, 'Feasting on Famines', 191–192.
89. Gabriel Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate: Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1899–1916* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 3.
90. J. Gorst to Cromer, Egypt Confidential No. 4 (1898), TNA FO78/5050.
91. See for example Roger D. Long, *The Man on the Spot: Essays on British Empire History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995).
92. Jervois to Carnarvon, 16 November 1875, C.1505, 86.
93. Peter Gordon (ed.), *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1857–1890: Colonial Secretary and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (London: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2009), 272.
94. See Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).
95. LaRay Denzer, 'Sierra Leone-Bai Bureh', in Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance*, 243–244.
96. 'The Responsibilities of Empire', *The Times*, 10 November 1875.
97. Cardew to Chamberlain, 28 May 1898, TNA CO267/438.
98. Cardew cited in Abraham, *Mende Government*, 132.
99. Cited in McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier*, 307: emphasis in original.
100. 'Leave of Absence', *The Straits Times*, 19 June 1875. See also Mallal, 'J. W. W. Birch', 37.
101. See Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, 3.
102. Though Lord Salisbury had voiced his support for extreme methods from the beginning of the campaign. See Salisbury to Cromer, 20 March 1896, TNA FO633/114.
103. See Holt, *Mahdist State*, 230. On the role of Sudanese troops see Ronald M. Lamothe, *Slaves of Fortune: Sudanese Soldiers and the River War 1896–1898* (Oxford: James Currey, 2011).
104. Lt. H. V. Fison claimed that Kitchener gave orders prior to the battle that 'all wounded Dervishes passed over had to be bayoneted'. Cited in Frank Emery (ed.), *Marching Over Africa: Letters from Victorian Soldiers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 171.
105. Bennett, 'After Omdurman', 20.
106. Jervois to McNair, 23 December 1875, C.1505, 250.
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Disciplining Native Masculinities: Colonial Violence in Malaya, ‘Land of the Pirate and the Amok’

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On the morning of 4 June 1901, in the British Crown Colony of Singapore, a Malay man named Ibrahim fatally stabbed a woman, Tasmia, in his rented house at Little Cross Street. Armed with his spear, Ibrahim then murdered two unsuspecting neighbours in the vicinity before turning his steps towards Arab Street. Slashing and chasing frightened pedestrians with his weapon, Ibrahim was finally overpowered by an onlooker who struck a mortal blow to his skull with an improvised club. Ten people perished. Seven others suffered grave injuries. The colony’s journalists were quick to report on the grisly details of Ibrahim’s sudden and gratuitous attack on the co-inhabitants of his rented residence and the innocent bystanders along Arab Street. ‘No motive can be assigned for the murderer’s action’, concluded a reporter for one of Singapore’s leading English newspapers, *The Straits Times*. ‘[Ibrahim] was practising as a quack doctor, and was not known by anyone.’¹

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Although Ibrahim's motives could not be ascertained since he perished in the midst of the public melee in Arab Street, the colony's English newspapers and its readers were convinced of the 'nature' of this egregious act. Indeed, Ibrahim's actions were unquestionably categorised in the newspapers as an act of 'amok'—a pattern of indiscriminate, homicidal behaviour supposedly observed mainly amongst Malay-Muslim men. Ibrahim's 'amok' was, indeed, singled out and immediately identified as 'one of the most shocking cases of amok-running that had ever occurred in Singapore'.² But what did amok-running really mean in colonial society? How can we account for the fact that Ibrahim's actions were taken for granted as an act of 'amok', whilst bearing in mind the absence of any explanations or motives for his actions? More importantly, what can this phenomenon, as well as colonial perspectives about such 'native attacks', reveal about the significance of violence and power relations between colonials and indigenous populations in colonial society? How can we best analyse and understand examples of 'male native violence' such as amok, given that the analytical tools and current narratives of colonial histories at our disposition have mainly focused on frameworks opposing European *actors* of violence with indigenous *resistance*, instead of 'native' perpetrators of violence?

In this chapter, I argue that colonial attempts to understand amok were founded upon an inherently occidental framework of analysis, which saw Malay violence not as culturally-sanctioned but as an affirmation of the primitive character of native men silently churning beneath their self-effacing and timid veneers. This interpretation of amok provided colonials with a moral high ground based upon European mores, in which amok could readily be woven into a totalising narrative that justified the 'civilising mission'. It was further imposed upon indigenous populations through the use of harsh punitive measures designed to intimidate or coerce indigenous societies to comply with the new colonial system of thought, which was then set in place within the colonial-ordered world of indigenous lands. Analysing the relationship between this colonial framework of thought and interpretations of indigenous acts of violence, this chapter explores how colonial authority used amok as an instrument to assert control over indigenous societies, both on a physical and psychological level. Underlying this colonial system of thought is the seemingly inherently 'schizoid' nature of colonial policy—that is, the moralising discourse of the 'civilising mission' or the need to tame indigenous 'primitive' impulses through the benevolent tutelage of European

imperialism, with the parallel necessity of corroborating the *need* for these indigenous societies to require colonial tutelage in the first place.

As a case in point, consider the reactions to Ibrahim's amok, which took centre-stage in the forums of colonial Singapore's newspapers shortly after the incident. One concerned member of the public, signed 'Q.E.D.', wrote to the editor of *The Singapore Free Press*, urging the need to implement swift and effective punitive measures to help end amok in Malaya. To that end, Q.E.D. drew upon the observations of the Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, Frank Swettenham, who dedicated a chapter on amok titled 'Faulty Composition' in his book, *The Real Malay* (1900). Quoting Swettenham's description of the delivery of justice in the 1846 case of Sunan, a Malay 'amok-runner' of Penang who was hanged, drawn and quartered,³ Q.E.D. advocated for a similar punishment to be meted out in cases such as that of Ibrahim's amok. '[W]hatever the explanation—whether these fiendish excesses were due to the result of fanaticism, superstition, overweening pride or ungovernable rage,' reasoned Q.E.D., 'public justice demanded that the perpetrators should be visited with the severest and most disgraceful punishment the law could inflict.'⁴ Thus, pointed out Q.E.D., in 1846 colonial authorities had 'directed that the murderer be drawn from prison to the place of execution on a hurdle and hanged, and that after death, the body be handed over to the surgeons for dissection, and that the mangled limbs, instead of being restored to friends for decent burial, be cast into the sea, thrown into a ditch, or scattered on the earth'.⁵ Reflecting that 'this judgement must have made a strong impression on the Muhammadan population of Penang at the time', the writer argued that 'this line of policy [...] would be far more effectual in exterminating this fearful species of crime than any effort in this direction by depriving natives of all dangerous weapons'. Thus concluded Q.E.D.: 'Destroy all notions of glory that may be attached to amok-running in the eyes of the natives and make the execution of such multi-murders as appalling as possible as in the above instance. This should lessen the prevalence of amok.'⁶

As Q.E.D.'s initials or pseudonym (*quod erat demonstrandum*, 'thus it has been demonstrated') suggested, a firm demonstration of the full coercive power of the law would, according to the letter-writer, sufficiently intimidate and caution the local population from running amok. This coercive power functioned on a physical and psychological level. Even in death, 'amok-runners', who most colonials in Malaya believed

were largely Malay-Muslim men,⁷ would face the penalty of having their corpses disposed of in a manner that was ‘in flagrant violation of the Islamic teaching that requires all dead to be buried in a decent and religious manner’.⁸ In this sense, European laws and colonial knowledge of indigenous mores were intertwined in a particularly shrewd but cruel strategy of resistance against amok that qualified as a form of psychological violence and trauma. More importantly, this form of colonial reprisal was not so much directed at the deceased perpetrator but at the native population at large, which the colonising power sought to intimidate, sanction and caution. But Q.E.D.’s suggestion also inspired similar threats. Indeed, this proposal seemed to have caught the immediate attention of the editor of *The Singapore Free Press*, for the latter published his reply on the same day as Q.E.D.’s letter on 7 June—just three days after Ibrahim’s amok. Taking Q.E.D.’s suggestion of harsh exemplary punishment one step further, however, the editor recommended that ‘all persons who run amok should be buried with the carcass of a pig tied to their bodies’ for, as he reasoned, death by hanging in the case of an amok-runner, who ‘does not fear death, but rather courts it [...] is no more deterrent than convicting a European murderer to eat a lump of sugar’. Thus argued the editor:

With Oriental phases of crime we must apply Oriental remedies. The pig is our ace of trumps in this case. It will deter from amok, if the man who meditates it has to face the certainty that there is no paradise but rather *Jehannam* for him, and that his grave companion is to be the unclean beast. That would probably smash amok forever [...] Let us have ‘the pig, the pig, and nothing but the pig,’ as the real bogey for would-be-amokers.⁹

The journal’s ‘Oriental remedy’ instantly inspired a flurry of responses from members of the public. One reader, ‘W.W.B.’, enthused that ‘the suggestion of the pig is an extremely good one and in the interest of all law-abiding citizens’, expressing the firm wish ‘that the Government of the Straits Settlements [in British Malaya] will give the matter the serious consideration it deserves’.¹⁰ Another reader, signed ‘P.A.R.’, wrote to affirm that the suggestion of such a punishment had been ‘strongly supported [...] by several people with whom I have conversed on the subject’.¹¹ But this idea of ‘pig burials’ for Malay-Muslim amok-runners was not supported unequivocally. A representative of *The British North Borneo Herald* questioned the effectiveness of coercive punishment,

raising the query that the inclination to commit amok might have stemmed from a non-voluntary impulse, such as a ‘temporary fit of madness’, culturally sanctioned as part of a ‘savage custom’.¹² ‘If to “run amok” means to commit wholesale murder after much deliberation and planning then let us adopt the pig threat in its entirety,’ reasoned this writer, ‘but if on the other hand the “*amoking*” tendency is the outcome of a brain diseased by long periods of mental worry, anxiety and jealous promptings then no threat will avail much.’¹³ In concluding, the writer stressed the importance of recognising amok as being distinct from murder in Malaya: ‘Murder is committed by the civilised human being under the influence of morbid passions and therefore of a diseased brain. The savage “*amoks*” under somewhat exaggerated symptoms of the same state of mind.’¹⁴

Although this radical suggestion of ‘pig threats’ as a deterrent of amok soon faded in time, the public discussion it engendered is illustrative of the colonial anxieties, perceptions and speculations that existed and circulated in British Malaya over the subject of amok.¹⁵ As these correspondences between members of the public and the editor of *The Singapore Free Press* indicate, the grave degree of violence committed by ‘amok-runners’ both fascinated and deeply disturbed Europeans and the Anglophone community in the colony. Indeed, some were sufficiently provoked or inspired enough to support a particularly vicious form of reprisal deliberately aimed at desecrating both the body and soul of amok-runners. Furthermore, the careful descriptions in the press of the gruesome and lurid details of each episode of amok in Malaya, such as Ibrahim’s case in 1901, the 1846 case of Sunan, or that of the spate of ‘particularly violent’ cases of amok between 1898 and 1901,¹⁶ also suggest that members of colonial society frequently encountered sensational and frightful examples of this purportedly ‘native’ form of violence.

Yet, for all the attention paid towards amok as a ‘fearful species of crime’ in Malaya,¹⁷ there was no general consensus on some of the most basic questions concerning the juridical definition of amok. Indeed, as the 1901 discussion over Ibrahim’s amok in *The Singapore Free Press* illustrates, members of colonial society differed in their beliefs over whether amok qualified as a premeditated criminal act, or an involuntary malaise and mental illness that pushed Malay-Muslim (male) victims to commit aberrant acts of violence. Some of these colonials considered amok as a form of mental disorder innate to ‘Malay nature’ or character. As case in point in 1905, the *Eastern Daily Mail*

and *Straits Morning Advertiser* warned that ‘lunacy [among Asiatics] is by no means uncommon, the *amok* of the race being but a mode of expression of an inherent mental weakness’.¹⁸ A combination of fear and uncertainty on the seemingly uncontrollable, volatile and violent ‘nature’ of ‘amokers’, along with the colonial determination to maintain order over the indigenous population in Malaya thus contributed towards demands for forceful, stringent measures against amok. Yet, at the same time, in stark contrast to the heated debates and speculations over the uncertain origins or causes of amok, the *definition* of amok was vague, but largely unquestioned. The word itself was freely and commonly employed in colonial Malaya. The assumption that ‘amokers’ were Malay-Muslim men also went mostly unchallenged. So too was the supposition that these ‘amok-runners’ committed violent acts spontaneously without any provocation. Thus, members of colonial society easily and unproblematically identified and interpreted events such as Ibrahim’s actions in 1901 as ‘amok’.

HISTORICISING AMOK

Despite the gaps in our knowledge of amok, little has been done thus far to historicise or to situate amok within the broader context and framework of colonial discourse.¹⁹ Rather, much of what we know, understand or think about amok stems mostly from popular literature, along with a handful of articles from journals on psychiatry. Indeed, amok is a prominent trope in the work of nineteenth and twentieth century novelists and travel-writers such as Isabella Bird, W. Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad.²⁰ Non-Anglophone novelists, such as Stefan Zweig (*Der Amokläufer*, 1922) and Henri Fauconnier (*Malaisie*, 1930), who were equally fascinated by amok and its connotations of an exclusively ‘native’ or ‘primitive’ example of violence in Malaya, have also brought some of the more sensational and dramatic aspects of amok to a wider audience by using it as a key theme in their writing.²¹ Given that the bulk of our understanding and imagination of amok continues to be fed by the imaginative world of fiction, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of the invented myths and colonial perspectives on amok have continued to persist into the post-colonial.

As case in point, amok remains classified as a ‘culture-bound syndrome’ in psychiatric and popular literature today.²² More astonishingly, Malay politicians such as Mahathir bin Mohamad, the former Prime

Minister of independent Malaysia (1981–2003), have echoed the familiar colonial discourse that European intervention or ‘civilisation’ eradicated amok in Malaya. Mahathir wrote in his polemical book, *The Malay Dilemma* (1970):

Amok represents the external physical expression of the conflict within the Malay, which his perpetual observance of the rules and regulations of his life causes in him. It is a spilling over, an overflowing of his inner bitterness [...] In a trance he lashes out indiscriminately. His timid, self-effacing self is displaced. He is now a Mr. Hyde – cruel, callous and bent on destruction. But the transition from the self-effacing courteous Malay to the amok is always a slow process. [...] Today the amok is only a legend. Civilisation has subdued the Malay [...] But it remains an essential part of his make-up, a basic part of his character.²³

Other Malay-Muslim leaders have also interpreted or appropriated amok in unexpected ways in post-independent Malaysia. For instance, in 2006 during the General Assembly of Malaysia’s largest political party, UMNO’s (United Malays National Organisation), Secretary-General Datuk Mohamad Rahmat cautioned non-Malays from challenging UMNO’s stance on communal racial politics, which favour ethnic Malays, by directing a pointed message to non-Malays: ‘Don’t test the Malays, they know “amok”. We don’t want to reach that level.’²⁴ Indeed, some Malay politicians have latched onto amok as a marker of a ‘displaced, essential masculinity’,²⁵ by deliberately citing amok as a possible knee-jerk reaction to threats against Malay rights.²⁶ In these ways, amok is a striking example of how colonial discourses can be reappropriated as an instrument for communal politics in the post-colonial era.

The above discussion has sought to trace the evolution of occidental perceptions and negotiations of amok within the broader framework of European encounters with indigenous peoples in the Malay archipelago. In doing so, it examines how colonials regarded amok as a symbol of the ‘violent and ungovernable manliness of the natives’²⁷—a dangerous trait of ‘the real Malay’—which needed to be suppressed and controlled. Moreover, colonial understandings of amok both fetishised and exoticised aspects of native violence. In the following discussion, this chapter turns to how colonial administrators, doctors and other observers were armed with self-righteous beliefs on the need for the ‘civilising mission’, as well as pseudo-scientific theories based on speculation and

superficial observations which merely sought to affirm and corroborate their implicit bias on native violence. It aims to illustrate how violence (or in this case, ‘native’ acts of violence) could be re-appropriated as justification for the colonial civilising mission in Malaya. This challenges some of the existing literature on amok, which has unquestioningly presented the notion that the ‘penetration of modernising influences’, as well as ‘[t]he forces of modernisation also generated changes in the Malay personality’ to such a degree that the Malay tendency to ‘commit amok’ vanished in time.²⁸

Further, this chapter considers the role of psychiatry and law in the framework of colonial violence in Malaya. Extant literature on amok has overlooked how such disciplinary mechanisms, which were often presented either in technical legalese or in the more palatable language of the ‘civilising mission’, could also be a form of masked violence against Malays in the colony. For instance, the penalty of public hanging was not only alien to indigenous peoples; it was also a terrifying tool of repression in its own right. Consider the testimony of the Malayan scholar, Munshi Abdullah (1796–1854) on local reactions to public hangings: ‘When people were hanged in public [...] some cried from fright, others shook to their very bones at the sight; many also took caution to themselves; not forgetting it for their lifetime.’²⁹ Some of the other punishments carried out in the aftermath of public executions could also be deeply disrespectful or culturally insensitive to Malay-Muslim communities in Malaya. One well-known and oft-cited example is that of Sir Stamford Raffles’ decision to exhibit the mangled corpse of Syed Yasin, a Pahang ‘amoker’ who had stabbed William Farquhar, the first Resident of Singapore, in 1823.³⁰ Although Syed Yasin, who perished during his amok, had been ‘so cut about by the infuriated people that [his body] could not be recognised’, a furious Raffles commanded that Syed Yasin’s already mutilated corpse ‘be sent around the town, in a buffalo cart, and the gong beaten to tell the people what he had done; and after that hung up in the iron cage [...] on a mast; which was done, and it remained there for a fortnight’.³¹ In the eyes of Malay Muslims, Syed Yasin’s punishment was thus extremely harsh, for swift burials (within a maximum of three days) were the expected norm amongst Muslims. Indeed, the severity of the penalty remained a topic of discussion in Malaya even as late as in 1955, when a correspondent of *The Straits Times* underlined the fact that ‘the stern treatment of the body of a holy man appalled the Malay population. Proper burial with the appropriate rites is essential for

the last offices of the meanest layman. For a priest to be denied such last rites was too dreadful to contemplate.³²

In light of some of the more recent scholarship on justice systems in Victorian England, it may also be useful to draw parallels from the argument that punitive measures and actions against male culprits and perpetrators of violence could have also operated on a gendered understanding of violence, crime and punishment.³³ As case in point, Martin Wiener's 2006 study on how changes in ideas about manliness affected decision making in the Victorian justice system in England offers an interesting comparative on the severity of the punishment meted out to 'amok-runners', who were judged as perpetrators of a 'hyper-masculine' form of violence.³⁴ These parallels, comparisons and possible connections between justice systems in the metropole and the colonies stimulate and encourage further work on an analysis of amok and its evolution within a historical framework.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF AMOK AND ITS 'MARTIAL ORIGINS'

According to Henry Yule and Arthur Burnell's classic, *Hobson-Jobson* (1886), the earliest records of European encounters of amok date to the sixteenth century in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Many of these preliminary observations indicate that Europeans understood amok as a form of martial 'behaviour' of some of the fearsome 'natives' that they encountered on their travels in Asia. Yule and Burnell note that 'amok' originated from the Malayalam word, 'amar-khan', meaning 'a warrior' (from the stem word 'amar', which means 'fight' or 'war'). Amok's martial origins or 'military connotations' was likewise noted by John Crawford, the second Resident of Singapore (1823–1826), who defined amok as the act of 'run[ning] furiously and desperately at any one; to make a furious onset or charge in combat'.³⁵ Other scholars have also argued that 'amok' was a battle cry of pirates in the Malay archipelago, and that Malay warriors at the charge would shriek 'Amok! Amok!' to 'reinforce their own courage as well as to terrify their opponents'.³⁶ The link between amok and the reputation of the Malays as ferocious and formidable warriors was such that Charles Buckley (1844–1912), proprietor of *The Singapore Free Press*, had considered and even equated '[t]he charge of the English at Waterloo, or the French over the bridge at Lodi [...] as illustrious pengamoks [amok-runners]'.³⁷

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, amok's association with 'martial' behaviour and 'native' belligerence led it to be viewed with much dread and apprehension by European traders and sailors in the Malay archipelago. Indeed, in this era, European interests prioritised the establishment of friendly and peaceful ports—a prerequisite for successful and profitable trade. As such, the popular image of 'hyper-violent' natives who could run amok at the slightest provocation would discourage trade, or any form of colonial consolidation or assertion of authority in the region. This image of the 'violent native' was further perpetuated by the observation of these early traders that Malay customs and traditions meant that 'no Malay man was ever seen unarmed. The men usually carried from three to eight weapons, and boys of a few years old two or three.'³⁸ For colonials such as Hugh Clifford, these practices created a cultural background in which acts of violence were common. Thus in 1897 Clifford warned readers in his book, *In Court & Kampong*: 'in independent Malay States everybody goes about armed [...] As a consequence, madmen often run amok.'³⁹

This threat of 'violent natives' was made particularly real in 1875, when Malay 'amokers' murdered the first British Resident of Perak, James Birch. A correspondent of *The Straits Times* declared the amok 'not only execrable for its treacherous atrocity, but [...] unparalleled in the history of this Settlement'; an event only comparable to Syed Yasin's amok in 1823 as discussed earlier, as this was the 'only one instance of a British official having been attacked by a Native' in this manner.⁴⁰ Twenty-five years after Birch's murder, Frank Swettenham attributed the purportedly violent nature of the Malays to the lack of order in Malaya; in a land where there was 'no fountain of justice or appeal' and 'in a society where might was right',⁴¹ Malays were thus forced to resort to arms. In his view, British intervention, which had established a justice system and brought order and peace to parts of Malaya under British control, had since reduced the inclination (or necessity) of the Malays to run amok or to arm themselves. Thus concluded Swettenham in *The Real Malay*: 'The man who used to walk about with three daggers in his belt, two spears in his left hand, a sword under his right arm, and a gun over his shoulder, now goes into the jungle with only a chopping-knife; and the boy of tender years has given up his array of miniature weapons for a slate and a bundle of books.'⁴²

‘FOREDOOMED TO RUN AMOK’: A MALAYAN ‘CRIMINAL CULTURE’?

During the period of Birch’s murder in the later half of the nineteenth century, colonial opinions on amok were also informed by ‘scientific’ approaches such as racial anthropology. These approaches to amok and to the understanding of the ‘Malay race’ also ran parallel to the beginning of colonial psychiatry in Malaya. The following opinion expressed by a correspondent in *The Straits Times* in 1874—a year before Birch’s murder—is particularly revealing of the connections and conclusions that some drew concerning the ‘Malay character’, their equatorial environment, and amok:

The nature of the Malays of our island is not unlike their clime. Beneath their civil and apparently gentle surface fierce passions smoulder, which require but a spark to kindle into a devastating flame. Maddened by jealousy, or some real or fancied wrong, the ordinary mild Malay becomes a demon. Then his eyes glare like those of a wild beast, out leaps his *kris* (ceremonial knife) or *parang*, and he rushes on the amok, smiting every one he meets.⁴³

Such environmentally deterministic theories of ‘the Malay character’ persisted into the twentieth century. As one *Straits Times* reporter noted in 1911, ‘[t]he East is remarkable for certain forms of crime which hardly find any parallel in other parts of the world [...] the hot weather, the ascending climax of heat, tedium and discomfort brings with it an outburst of homicidal crimes distinguished generally by their suddenness and the slightness of the provocation.’⁴⁴ These observations led some to imagine that the ‘gentle and tragic Malayan, victim of racial hysteria’, was ‘foredoomed to run amok towards an inevitably violent end’.⁴⁵ The inevitability of this ‘condition’, according to some European observers, was due to the fact that ‘Malays have been here so long [in the Peninsula] that the climate has by this time done its worst [...] their doom is sealed [...] they will survive only as objects of scientific interest to the ethnologist and the historian.’⁴⁶

The reputation of Malays as being ‘foredoomed’ to violent behaviour also led colonial policemen to employ a contraption known as a ‘man-trap’ for the purposes of apprehending ‘amokers’. According to the Dutch Admiral Johan Stavorinus, these weapons were also used in the neighbouring colony of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), where local

‘officers of justice were provided with a pole, ten or twelve feet in length, at the end of which there was a kind of fork made of two pieces of wood, three feet long, which was furnished within with sharp iron spikes. This was held before the wretched object of pursuit, who in his frenzy, ran into it and was thus taken prisoner.’⁴⁷ In British Malaya, the nineteenth-century writer-explorer Isabella Bird affirmed that she had ‘even seen the two-pronged fork which was used for pinning a desperate amok runner to the wall’,⁴⁸ while her contemporary, the medical doctor W. Gilmore Ellis, claimed that the terrifying contraption was only used by policemen ‘in the more uncivilised parts of Malaya’.⁴⁹

‘CIVILISING’ AMOKS: DIAGNOSING VIOLENCE

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, archival sources further suggest that European residents and officials in the colony were of the opinion that amok was a psychiatric condition—in other words, that it was not a pre-meditated crime.⁵⁰ In this regard, the private records of the Colony Coroner and those of the police are particularly helpful in pinpointing when and how the shifts in opinion about amok as an act of crime or a psychiatric condition came about. As a case in point, the sources indicate that one of the earliest coroner’s records, which listed amok as a possible cause of death (accidental or otherwise) is an entry dated 2 January 1911, when Colony Coroner Alexander Gentle inspected the corpse of Si Wan, a Malay woman in her late thirties who was the victim of the amok of a Riau Malay, known as Salleh. After the post-mortem of Si Wan’s ‘fearfully hacked about loins, legs and body—entrails protruding’, Gentle wrote: ‘This seems to be a case of “amok” and this behaviour of the murderer, on the passage from Johore to Singapore and after the fatal assaults when he tried to stab himself—raises the suspicion that he was temporarily insane.’⁵¹ Gentle’s notes suggest that by 1911, the term ‘amok’ was accepted as a cause of death (used inter-changeably with ‘murder’), and more tellingly, that it was linked to the possibility of mental illness.

These opinions from the Coroner’s Court and the judiciary on amok and its ‘nature’ as a medical (or psychiatric) condition were echoed in the medical articles of colonial doctors. For instance, Dr. Ellis emphasised in his articles that amok was a mental condition: ‘the impulse to amok is sudden and uncontrollable [...] [it is] a peculiar condition of mind Malays get into’.⁵² Thus Dr. Ellis argued that since ‘those who

amok from a sudden impulse are [...] unable to refrain from obeying that impulse, and moreover are unconscious as to what they do whilst obedient to their impulse', these amokers 'therefore should not be held responsible for any action they may commit during their paroxysm of mania—a mania that would even come under the definition of insanity as held by lawyers'.⁵³ Yet another Colonial Surgeon, Thomas Oxley, postulated in 1846 that Malay 'amok-runners' were 'labouring under some gastric disease or troublesome ulcer, and these fearful *ébullitions* break out upon some exacerbations of the disorder'.⁵⁴ Similarly, one of his colleagues, a certain Dr. Fox, described amok as a 'peculiar and almost unique form of racial psychosis [...] the man (it is never a woman) seizes a weapon, generally his *kris*, runs into a house or street and attempts to kill the first person, usually his best friend or his wife, who crosses his path'.⁵⁵

Even though cases of amok also involved non-Malay perpetrators,⁵⁶ doctors, writers and colonials attributed amok to Malays largely based upon their assumption that 'the Malay character' was fundamentally violent. In comparison, they believed that other non-indigenous 'Asiatic peoples' in Malaya were supposedly 'of a different temperament from the Malays'.⁵⁷ As a journalist of *The Singapore Free Press* remarked in 1912, '[t]emperamentally all the Malay races are exceeding highly strung and nervous'.⁵⁸ For Frank Swettenham, this volatile and violent nature of 'the real Malay' led him to declare and conclude with remarkable confidence that: 'I believe that about sixty per cent of the Malays who *meng-amok* [run amok] are mentally diseased, usually from inherited causes'.⁵⁹ In many ways, these opinions on amok and 'native violence' were also informed by contemporary environmentally deterministic theories which posited that the oppressing Malayan climate had 'foredoomed' the Malays to run amok. For instance, in 1923, Colonial Surgeon Wellington blamed the equatorial climate of Malaya for the ill mental health of its inhabitants. According to him, Malaya's 'continual summer' was 'enervating and bad for the nervous system [...] The tissues become lethargic and muscles and brain refuse to act with the vigour natural in a temperate climate'.⁶⁰ Similarly, Kenneth Black, Professor of Surgery at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore, added in 1933 that the 'noxious stimuli' in the tropics would 'culminate in irritability, memory loss, poor concentration, impaired self-control, alcohol abuse, mental breakdown, insanity, and suicide'.⁶¹

By the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial administrators in Malaya were confident that amok had ‘almost ceased’ due to one ‘simple explanation’; as colonial intervention in Malaya had brought ‘hospitals, lunatic asylums, and a certain familiarity with European methods of treatment, the signs of insanity are better understood, and those who show them are put under restraint before they do serious damage’.⁶² This emphasis upon the fruits of the ‘civilising mission’ in Malaya was already apparent in Swettenham’s writings as early as 1895 in his book, *Malay Sketches*, in which he triumphantly declared:

Malaya, land of the pirate and the âmok, your secrets have been well guarded, but the enemy has at last passed your gate, and the irresistible Juggernaut of Progress will have penetrated to your remotest fastness, slain your beasts, cut down your forests, ‘civilised’ your people, clothed them in strange garments, and stamped them with the seal of a higher morality.⁶³

In a similar vein, the narrative of the ‘civilising mission’, which was used to make sense of amok, was also frequently couched in a parent-child dichotomy. More precisely, while colonials presented or considered themselves as playing a parental role in the guiding, disciplining and ‘civilising’ of their native wards, the local and indigenous populations of Malaya were often portrayed as helpless, infantile subjects in need of protection and guidance. Indeed, in the words of a correspondent of the *Glasgow Evening Times* who had been confronted by an amok-runner in Singapore, ‘[i]t is highly complimentary to the white man that, whatever the natives may say about him, they always flock to him in times of danger. My presence seemed like a protecting wall to them [...] “Tuan, Tuan” [Sir, sir], they howled. “Amok! Amok!”’⁶⁴ On the other hand, colonials described Malay ‘amokers’ as wild, primitive or savage children lacking any self-control over their emotions and bodies. As one colonial surgeon at the Government Lunatic Asylum in Singapore put it, a Malay ‘amoker’ was akin to ‘an ill-tempered child that breaks out into a storm of temper without rhyme or reason’.⁶⁵

Such an interpretation was also common elsewhere in the Malay archipelago, such as in the Philippines, where colonials regarded amok as a phenomena ‘revealing a combination of infantile misjudgement, deficient self-control, and primitive reflex’.⁶⁶ In Malaya, medical professionals such as the psychologist F.H. Van Loon also postulated that the mentalities of ‘all primitive races resemble very much the psyche of

children [...] The higher a people (or individual) is civilised, the better it learns to control its affective reaction.’ Thus argued Van Loon: ‘The peculiar psychic nature of the Malay is responsible for the symptoms which render this syndrome [amok] entirely different from similar ones in Europe.⁶⁷ In the eyes of colonial administrators, education, civilisation and moral discipline—introduced as a result of colonial rule—were necessary and decisive in altering the nature of the Malay with ‘amazing quickness’, converting Malays who were ‘blood-thirsty and lawless in the extreme’:

The metamorphosis has been extraordinary, for in the place of the wild, uncontrolled savage there is now the lazy, listless Malay who seeks only to live a quiet life with as little trouble as is possible [...] in an incredibly short time Malaya has been transformed from a land of impenetrable jungle peopled with ferocious savages into a prosperous country of rubber, tin, coconuts and other products [...].⁶⁸

Colonial narratives on ‘native violence’ and amok thus reveal how colonial administrators, law-enforcers, and medical professionals contributed towards the assembling of ‘knowledge about “indigenous psychologies” that facilitated rule’.⁶⁹ Their negotiations on controlling amok illustrate ‘the ambitions and the methods of an encompassing imperialism’,⁷⁰ while highlighting the instrumentality of culturally-sanctioned acts of violence in a colonial-ordered world.

NOTES

1. ‘Terrible Case of Amok’, *The Straits Times*, 4 June 1901, 2.
2. Ibrahim’s actions were not unique. Rather, his case was one amidst many similar cases of ‘amok’ which took place around the turn of the twentieth century. See the discussions in the following news articles: ‘A Terrible Case of Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 11 May 1901, 2 and ‘A Terrible Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 4 June 1901, 2. For a comparison of similar cases before 1900, also see ‘Amok in Perak’, *The Straits Times*, 27 December 1898, 3; ‘An Amok at Penang’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 April 1899, 2; ‘Two Dutch Extradition Cases: The Amok of Amang and Mat Salleh’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 22 July 1899, 3 and ‘Another Amok Case: Tragic Affair at Tanjong Rhu’, *The Straits Times*, 26 June 1900, 2.

3. Frank Athelstane Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures* (London: John Lane, 1900), 232–257.
4. ‘Correspondence: Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 June 1901, 2.
5. ‘Correspondence: Amok’, 2.
6. ‘Correspondence: Amok’, 2.
7. *Amok* was a practice unique to Muslims in the eyes of certain members of colonial society. Thus Q.E.D. wrote of the necessity to ‘disabuse their minds and also that of the prisoner, of any false notions of courage, heroism or self-devotion which Muhammadans might possibly, but Muhammadans alone of all mankind, could ever attach to such base, cowardly and brutal murders, which none but the devil himself, the “father of lies”, could ever have inspired’. *Ibid.*
8. Syed Hussain Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16 to the 20 Century and its Function in the Ideology of Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 128.
9. Editor’s reply to ‘Correspondence: amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 June 1901, 2. Jehannam refers to the fires of purgatory.
10. ‘Amok: To the Editor’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 10 June 1901, 3.
11. ‘Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 11 June 1901, 3.
12. ‘Amok Running’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 9 August 1901, 3.
13. ‘Amok Running’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 9 August 1901, 3.
14. ‘Amok Running’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 9 August 1901, 3.
15. This suggestion was last mentioned 10 years after the discussion on *amok* in 1901. See ‘Burial of Suicides’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 4 August 1911, 7. This news article suggests that the punishment may have been implemented in Malaya. However, I have not come across concrete evidence of this sentence being meted out. See a discussion of ‘pig burials’ in ‘Amok: Two Natives Awaiting Trial in Sandakan [Sabah] Gaol. Difficulties as Regards Decision’, *The Straits Times*, 15 April 1909, 10. Sunan’s case (1846) was last mentioned in 1960. See ‘Why Should an Amok Be Hanged? A Penang Poser’, *The Straits Times*, 22 October 1960, 7.
16. See, for instance, the case of Haji Ali bin Haji Hassan of Minto Road in Kampong Buggis, in ‘A Terrible Case of “Amok”’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 17 May 1900, 3 and the case of Hasan

- of Weld Road in 'Amok Case In Weld Road', *The Straits Times*, 11 May 1901, 2. Both cases cited here occurred in Singapore.
17. 'Correspondence: Amok', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 June 1901, 2.
 18. 'Insanity Among Asiatics', *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 23 October 1905, 2.
 19. John C. Spores, *Running Amok: An Historical Inquiry* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Centre, 1988). Spores' work is, to the best of my knowledge, the only (non-medical) monograph on amok available today. As we shall see, literary scholars have contributed far more substantially towards a history of amok through their study of colonial literature and texts.
 20. Some of the most popular works which feature amok as a main theme include Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), and his popular short-story, *Karain: A Memory* (1897). A film adaptation of the former was recently released in 2012.
 21. Fauconnier's novel was awarded the prestigious Prix Goncourt (1930). This award suggests that *Malaisie* enjoyed a wide readership and benefited from substantial publicity in its time.
 22. Ronald C. Simons and Charles C. Hughes, *The Culture-Bound Syndromes: Culture, Illness and Healing* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985); also see the American Psychiatric Association's *DSM-IV-TR—Diagnosical and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington D.C.: APA, 2000), 655 and 899.
 23. Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 151–52. The first edition of this book was published in 1970 by Asia Pacific, Singapore.
 24. Cited in Ooi Kee Beng, 'Malaysia: Abdullah Does it His Own Vague Way', in Daljit Singh and Lorraine C. Salazar (eds), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2007* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publications, 2007), 190. Also see Julian C.H. Lee, *Islamization and Activism in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 47.
 25. Philip Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford & the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlements & Malaya 1895–1907* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000), 47.
 26. Julian C.H. Lee, *Islamization and Activism in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publications, 2010), 47; similarly, Thomas Williamson has also argued that '[t]hrough labeling dissent as an illness called amok, the state effectively hides its own violence'. Thomas Williamson, 'Communicating Amok in Malaysia', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 14, no. 3 (2007), 343.

27. Eddie Tay, *Colony, Nation, and Globalisation: Not at Home in Singaporean and Malaysian Literature* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 26.
28. Spores, *Running Amok*, 135 and 141.
29. 'Notes of the Day. Singapore Executions', *The Straits Times*, 20 January 1937, 10. Also see Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir, *The Hikayat Abdullah: The Autobiography of Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir (1797-1854)*, trans. A.H. Hill (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1953), 169-74.
30. 'Perak', *The Straits Times*, 27 November 1875, 1. According to John Cameron, this was the first case of amok in colonial Singapore. See John Cameron, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India* (London: Smith, Elder /Co., 1865), 259.
31. Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore* (Singapore: Fraser & Neave Ltd., 1902), 99-100; The body was displayed for only three days, for 'Malay people became upset with Raffles' humiliating public display of Syed Yasin's body.' See Maziar Mozaffari Falarti, *Malay Kingship in Kedah: Religion, Trade, and Society* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), 80.
32. 'Grave of Man Who Knifed British Resident Became a Shrine', *The Straits Times*, 19 March 1955, 9.
33. Martin J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness, and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
34. Amok is referred here as being 'hyper-masculine'. Gaik Cheng Khoo, *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 193.
35. Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: Being a Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms: Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive* (London: John Murray, 1886), 12-16.
36. Ng Beng Yeong, *Till the Break of Day: A History of Mental Health Service in Singapore, 1841-1993* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2001), 58.
37. Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, 100.
38. Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, 25.
39. Hugh Charles Clifford, *In Court & Kampong: Being Tales & Sketches of Native Life in the Malay Peninsula* (London: G. Richards, 1897), 79.
40. 'Perak', *The Straits Times*, 27 November 1875, 1.
41. Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, 259-261. Swettenham's (rather optimistic) opinion contradicts the reality of the situation, as presented in newspaper reports on amok. For instance, in the case of the 1901 discussions of amok, some still felt it necessary 'to suggest to the Government the advisability of strictly controlling the possession, if not

- sale, of dangerous weapons'. See: 'Amok-Running', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 6 June 1901, 3. This letter later inspired others, such as Q.E.D., to write to St. Clair about amok.
42. Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, 259–261.
 43. 'Jottings From a Tropical Island', *The Straits Times*, 30 May 1874, 2.
 44. 'Running Amok', *The Straits Times*, 22 July 1911, 12.
 45. 'The Soul of Malaya: Frenchman's Remarkable Book', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 25 November 1931, 7. This article is a review of Henri Fauconnier's first novel, *Malaisie* (1930).
 46. Arnold Wright and Henry Adolphus Cartwright, eds, *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain publishing Company Ltd., 1908), 227–228.
 47. 'Running Amok. Dutch Admiral's Experiences in Netherlands-India. Sees Terrible Punishment', *The Straits Times*, 26 October 1910, 11. Also see Stravorinus' account in: Johan Splinter Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East-Indies*, trans. Samuel Hull Wilcocke (London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1798), 292; in the Dutch East Indies, amok was also 'one of the only indigenous crimes recognised under [Dutch East India] company law [...] defined by gender and ethnicity'. See Kerry Ward, 'Defining and Defiling the Criminal Body at the Cape of Good Hope: Punishing the Crime of Suicide under Dutch East India Company Rule, circa 1652–1795', in Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao (eds), *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 53.
 48. Isabella L. Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (London: John Murray, 1883), 208.
 49. W. Gilmore Ellis, 'The Amok of the Malays', *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 39, no. 166 (1893): 326; cited in Spores, *Running Amok: An Historical Inquiry*, 88. Spores adds that '[t]he presence of the restraining device in the rural villages and in the more uncivilised parts of Malaya' renders it 'difficult to imagine such a pervasive presence of the device without its serving an utilitarian purpose'.
 50. Robert L. Winzeler, *Latah in Southeast Asia: The Ethnography and History of a Culture Bound Syndrome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27. Winzeler notes that amok started to be considered 'in psychiatric terms' during this era. Prior to that, there was little infrastructure and few medical professionals who would/could have facilitated this shift in thinking about amok. As a case in point, the first 'Insane Hospital' in the colony was only completed in 1841.
 51. Coroner's Inquest & Inquiries, *Microfilm Number: AD 008 (1910–1911)*, National Archives of Singapore, Singapore. Gentle's colleague, House

- Surgeon Sugars (Singapore General Hospital), also scribbled: ‘Stabbed in the throat. Murder Amok?’
52. ‘Dr. Ellis on ‘Amok’, *The Straits Times*, 16 August 1893, 2.
 53. ‘Lunacy in the Straits’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 31 May 1892, 3.
 54. ‘Why Should an Amok Be Hanged? A Penang Poser’, *The Straits Times*, 22 October 1960, 7.
 55. ‘Running Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 15 May 1895, 3. Fox’s opinion that amok was exclusively restricted to men was also affirmed by the doctor Henry Berkley, who underlined that amok ‘seems to be entirely confined to individuals of that race (Malay) [...] It never affects women.’ Henry Johns Berkley, *A Treatise on Mental Diseases* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1900), 574. (Amok is listed under ‘Psychoses peculiar to tropical regions’.) Although women also committed amok (as described in the press), medical professionals never recognised them as being ‘true’ cases of amok. For instance, the 1906 trial of a Malay woman who had wounded three persons during an episode of amok in Perak could have given cause for commentators to challenge the assumption that all ‘amok-runners’ were men. (‘Untitled’, *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 28 February 1906, 2.)
 56. For instance, a fatal stabbing incident involving a Chinese man from the Malay State of Kedah was later deemed not to be a case of amok—presumably because the culprit was not a Malay. ‘Kedah Stabbing Not An Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 30 September 1937, 6. For one of the earliest newspaper records of amok committed by a Hokkien Chinese, see ‘Untitled’, *The Straits Times*, 2 April 1864, 2. Another example of an amok committed by a Sikh is found in the following article: ‘A Sikh Runs Amok’, *The Straits Times*, 13 December 1894, 3. Other articles indicate that Europeans in the ‘tropics’ committed amok: ‘Europeans Amok’, *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 12 January 1906, 3.
 57. ‘Latah and Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 13 April 1912, 3.
 58. ‘Latah and Amok’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 13 April 1912, 3.
 59. Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, 254.
 60. Ng, *Till the Break of Day: A History of Mental Health Service in Singapore, 1841–1993*, 60.
 61. Ng, *Till the Break of Day*, 60.
 62. Swettenham, *The Real Malay: Pen Pictures*, 253. Also see ‘Red Murder’, *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 December 1904, 2.

63. Frank Athelstane Swettenham, *Malay Sketches* (London: John Lane, 1895), ii.
64. 'When a Malay or Chinese Runs Amok. Thrills in China and New Guinea. Story of Narrow Escapes from Two Madmen', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 27 September 1932, 3. Former colonial policemen, however, disagree with such an assessment. As one recalled: 'We all felt that if we came across an amok we were in for real trouble [...] everybody expected you to do something and what on earth could you do?' Charles Allen, ed., *Tales From the South China Seas: Images of the British in South-East Asia in the Twentieth Century* (London: Futura Publications, 1984), 122–123.
65. Botho Scheube, *The Diseases of Warm Countries: A Handbook for Medical Men* (London: John Bale, 1903), 511.
66. Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006), 141.
67. F.H.G. Van Loon, 'Amok and Lattah', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 21, no. 4 (1927): 434; in Spores, *Running Amok: An Historical Inquiry*, 103.
68. 'Malaya of Yesterday and To-Day', *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 10 March 1924, 3. However, colonial administrators and writers such as Hugh Clifford also stress that the 'metamorphosis' never penetrates the real character of 'the Malay' fundamentally. In his cautionary tale of Saleh, a Malay prince who was educated in England, Clifford notes that Saleh found 'English' values of 'honour, duty, morality [...] new ideas difficult to assimilate' and 'numbing to the brain'. Saleh is incapable of coping with the idea that he was 'made all wrong from the beginning', loses manly 'self control' and finally runs amok. Hugh Clifford, *Sally: A Study and Other Tales of the Outskirts* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1904), 34–41; 81, 94.
69. Richard Keller, 'Madness and Colonization: Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800–1962', *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 2 (2001): 296–297.
70. David Arnold, *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 2.

Fascist Violence and the ‘Ethnic Reconstruction’ of Cyrenaica (Libya), 1922–1934

Michael R. Ebner

In the spring of 1931, Italian colonial authorities ordered the construction of a fence on the border between Libya and Egypt. By September, 270 kilometres of cement, chain-link fence, and barbwire stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Oasis of Jaghub. Italian authorities constructed the fence in order to deny Omar al-Mukhtar and his resistance fighters safe-havens and material support in neighbouring Egypt. Thus Cyrenaica, the eastern province of Libya, which was already completely separated from Tripolitania (Libya’s western province) by the desert of Sirtica, had now been also cut off from Egypt to the east of the fence. The peoples of Cyrenaica, particularly those living on the fertile highlands of the Jebel Akhdar, were the major source of support for Omar al-Mukhtar’s anti-colonial insurgency.¹ The year before the fence went up, Italian authorities ordered the deportation and internment of between one-half and two-thirds of the civilian population of Cyrenaica—between 90,000 and 110,000 people.

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General Pietro Badoglio, the governor of Italian Libya, explained the policy and its potential consequences to General Rodolfo Graziani, the military governor of the province responsible for implementing the deportations:

Above all it is necessary to create a large, well-defined area to separate the submissive population from the rebel formations. I do not deny the significance and gravity of this measure, one that could mean the destruction of the so-called submissive population. But at this point the path has been laid out and we must follow it until the end, even if the entire population of Cyrenaica must perish.²

Under Graziani's direction, the Italian military rounded up the Bedouin population and marched them across the desert, sometimes hundreds of kilometres, to a network of concentration camps located in desert and semi-desert regions near the western coast of Cyrenaica.³ Thousands of sick and elderly people died during the deportations and, inside the worst camps, mortality rates from disease, starvation, summary executions, and other deprivations were high, up to twenty-five percent in some camps. According to 'Umran Abu Shabur, a survivor of the El Agheila camp, 'Every day we counted about fifty dead bodies who were taken from the concentration camp for burial. They were either hanged, or shot by the guards, or died because of hunger and disease'.⁴ Survivors of special 'punishment camps' alleged that internees were beaten, tortured, raped, and maimed by Italian and Eritrean camp guards.⁵ When Italian authorities dissolved the camps three years later, only 70,000 people were released. Estimates of the number of deaths resulting from the deportations, concentration camps, and wartime hostilities range from 35,000 to 70,000.⁶ The internment of civilians in Cyrenaica, and their subsequent resettlement, constituted the culmination of the Fascist regime's increasingly violent efforts to 'pacify' Cyrenaica.

This chapter examines colonial violence as a subject, a method of colonial rule, and an interpretive lens for understanding the strategies and goals of Fascist imperialism. As Ned Blackhawk noted in his study of the early American west, violence offers 'the clearest and at times only windows' for understanding the relationship between empire building and dispossessed peoples.⁷ Several typologies of violence—military, economic, cultural, and social—suffused the increasingly one-sided and bloody conflict between the Italian state and the tribes of Cyrenaica. The military conflict featured the atrocities of a classic guerilla war, conditioned somewhat by the semi-nomadic existence of the Bedouin

resistance fighters, the guerillas' practice of sometimes traveling with their families and livestock, and the vast expanses of desert that served as the backdrop to the war. In the economic sphere, the Italian state confiscated lands, systematically destroyed livestock and crops, prevented harvesting, and fundamentally dissolved the bases of a subsistence economy, forcibly settling various ethnic groups and channelling their economic activities into manual labour and a sedentary life. In the cultural sphere, the religious institutions that formed the bedrock of the Senussi Muslim society were confiscated, their leaders arrested and confined. Finally, in the social sphere, the entirety of these actions, which culminated in the internment of over 100,000 civilians, tens of thousands of whom perished, was the 'ethnic reconstruction' of Cyrenaica, the complete destruction and reordering of the economic, social, and cultural existence of the local population in order to provide Italian colonists with land and a submissive labour pool.

Beyond strategic motives, Italian colonial violence served ideological purposes, as the imperial state framed these typologies of violence as tools for making imperial subjects. As scholars of French Algeria have noted, violence simplified a very complex society into categories of 'colonizer and colonized'. Colonial violence constructed the very identities of the imperial colonizer and the colonized subject, and the social hierarchies of the new colonial order.⁸ The larger goal, facilitated by the deportation of Bedouins to concentration camps, was not only to dispossess local people of fertile lands, but also to 'reconstruct' the population, transforming them from atavistic, rebellious nomads into submissive, docile colonial subjects. Violence—military, economic, cultural, social—was the method. Fascist empire building in Cyrenaica followed what Patrick Wolfe has called 'the logic of elimination', whereby the goal of settler colonialism was to dispossess the native population of not just their land, but also the institutions, cultural practices, and economic activities that formed their communal identities prior to colonization. Indeed, the justifications of Italian military authorities made clear that only by eliminating natives—either physically or structurally—could 'subjects' be created.⁹

CYRENAICA, THE BEDOUINS, AND ITALIAN COLONIALISM

One of the central claims Italian authorities posited in support of confiscating territory was that the Bedouins of Cyrenaica did not engage in agriculture. However, the resistance of Cyrenaica to colonial rule drew its strength largely from the agricultural, pastoral, and religious practices

of the Bedouin tribes. Unlike the inhabitants of coastal cities and their environs, the Bedouins of Cyrenaica, particularly those of the highlands of the Jebel Akhdar, had never submitted to Italian, or Ottoman, colonial authority. Though often referred to as ‘nomadic’, they had developed economic and social practices that were inextricably linked to the fertile land of the Jebel. Unlike most of Libya, the Jebel received sufficient rainfall during the winter, between October and April, to allow for agriculture, including cereals and transhumant animal husbandry. The Bedouins raised sheep, cows, camels, and goats. Grazing on lush vegetation, these animals produced the milk, butter, wool, and hides that provided relative wealth, not to mention political and economic independence, to the people of Cyrenaica. Common practice was for tribes to sow barley in the fall and early winter, then move their herds southwards onto the grassy steppe, and then return to the Jebel for the dry season to harvest and continue to graze their animals. By Ottoman estimates, in 1913 Cyrenaica had 713,000 sheep, 546,300 goats, 83,300 camels, 23,600 cattle, and 27,000 horses. Cyrenaica exported tens of thousands of sheep and goats, as well as butter and grain surpluses. In Evans-Pritchard’s estimation, Cyrenaica was ‘a rich country for Bedouin, a poor country for Europeans’.¹⁰

The Senussi, a Sufi Muslim order that settled in Cyrenaica in the nineteenth century, provided the Jebel with its central political, economic, religious, educational, and philanthropic structures. The Senussi thus were the *de facto* state in Cyrenaica, knitting together the various tribes. The landholdings, livestock, and buildings of the Senussi, centred around *zamiyas* (shrines or lodges), generated considerable income. Additionally, the Senussi collected local taxes in the form of a tithe.¹¹ Economic independence, combined with a high degree of social and cultural cohesion, meant that the Bedouin of Cyrenaica had never been subjugated by the city, the tax collector, or the empire. They had successfully resisted the Ottomans in the nineteenth century and the Italians in the twentieth, at least up until the early-1930s.

The Italian decision to pursue colonies in the Mediterranean in the first part of the twentieth century came as a result of pressure from the pro-imperialist and nationalist groups that had cropped up around the turn-of-the-century.¹² However, the choice of Libya was made on the basis of there being no other places left to colonize in North Africa. Although tens of thousands of Italians lived in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, few lived in Libya, and Italian policy makers had very little

knowledge of, or contacts with, Libya until the years just before the invasion. Even in 1911, the Italians understood little about the geography or population of the place.¹³ Like Italy's earlier attempts at entering the imperialist project in East Africa, seizing and holding territory proved difficult and costly. Already in the third week of October, Italy suffered a major setback when a combined Libyan-Ottoman force attacked Italian units, killing 600. For this, the Italians inflicted a brutal revenge, summarily executing approximately 1800 inhabitants of Tripoli and deporting thousands of men, women, and children to small penal islands off the coast of Italy.¹⁴

Italian incursions into Cyrenaica, and the Senussi's recalcitrant resistance, wreaked havoc on that province's economy and population. Three years after Italy's invasion of Libya in 1911, the population of Cyrenaica had dropped precipitously, due less to direct casualties of the Italian military and more to the crop failures, starvation, and disease that military occupation, war, and resistance brought. Although the Ottoman Empire sued for peace and signed a treaty relinquishing Libya to Italy in 1912, the Italian military never asserted full control over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and major military setbacks in 1914 and 1915 led Italian authorities to lose control of all but a few coastal areas, and even those took approximately 100,000 soldiers to hold.¹⁵ Meanwhile, notables in Tripolitania had declared a republic, which lasted officially until 1923. By the end of First World War, the Italian presence in its new colony looked very much like it did after the first weeks of the invasion of 1911. In Cyrenaica, the Senussi remained fully in control of the Jebel Akhdar.

FASCIST LIBYA

While most colonial powers during the interwar period had entered a period of reorganizing and exploiting their colonies, Italy was only just beginning to expand and consolidate power in its colonial possessions. More than economic or geo-political motives, the politics of prestige motivated Italian imperialists. Italy had largely missed out on the Scramble for Africa, and the Treaty of Versailles left many Italians feeling that they had been shortchanged by the postwar settlement, both in the Balkans and in Africa. Finally, Italy's hold on its own colonial possessions had become tenuous, largely due to the First World War. Prior to the Fascist seizure of power, a series of weak liberal governments struggled to resolve domestic problems, much less pursue a forceful foreign policy.

For Italians in favour of colonial expansion—the Italian Nationalists foremost among them—imperial expansion was part of a broader push to restore and enhance Italy's standing in European international affairs.

Fascist ideas about colonialism were often vague and unformed, but nevertheless embraced the 'spirit of imperialism'. Mussolini had been a strident anti-imperialist, as a member of the Socialist party, as recently as 1911, and had only come around to endorsing imperial expansion a few years before becoming head of state in 1922. In *The Doctrine of Fascism*, which he co-wrote with philosopher Giovanni Gentile, Mussolini argued that empire was 'an expression of vitality'. Peoples that were 'rising, or rising again' were always 'imperialist', and any renunciation of empire was a 'sign of decay and death'. Much like Fascism itself, Mussolini viewed empire as an enterprise that demanded 'discipline, the coordination of all forces, duty and sacrifice'.¹⁶ Without initially developing any coherent colonial policy, Fascists nevertheless instinctually viewed imperialism as an existential matter that should take the form of a life-and-death struggle.¹⁷

In the colonies, then, the arrival of Mussolini to power meant a stark shift in Italian policy. Mussolini immediately appointed as Minister of the Colonies one of the chief exponents of Italian imperialism, the Nationalist Luigi Federzoni. The practices of compromising with local elites, establishing shared sovereignty over territory, and even paying homage and stipends to local elites came to an end. While some of these policies had begun under Mussolini's predecessor, the overall style of colonial policy was quite different. At every turn, the new regime denounced Liberal Italy's colonial policies as demeaning to the *patria*. Under Fascist rule, there would be no compromises, and local populations that offered Italy anything other than total subordination would face repression. From the regime's very beginnings, Mussolini sent high-ranking Fascist bosses to the colonies, where they often drew upon their skills as organizers of irregular violence to terrorize recalcitrant populations. In Somalia beginning in 1923, for example, Fascist boss Cesare Maria De Vecchi imported tactics of squad violence and terror to extend control over the hinterland. In Libya during the 1920s, the Italian military razed villages and became one of the first European powers to drop poison gas on civilians.¹⁸ Reflecting on these tactics, many Fascists claimed that cold-hearted violence would demonstrate the character of the Fascist 'new man'—not only to the populations of Somalia, Eritrea, Libya, and Ethiopia, but also to other Europeans and even to Italians

themselves. Fascists viewed their willingness to use violence as one of the central factors that set their imperialism apart from the failed colonialism of the Liberal era.¹⁹

Though the Fascist approach to empire differed from that of liberal era policies, there were continuities with earlier, more strident strains of colonial thought in Italy. Giuliano Bonacci, a pro-imperialist journalist, proclaimed in 1913 that Italian colonial policy faced a choice between 'a policy of extermination or elimination of the indigenous populations who would, ipso facto, be replaced by our colonists' and 'a line of conduct based on respect for local traditions'. The matter would ultimately depend on the 'greater and lesser resistance' of the local population.²⁰ Liberal policy, while often brutal, leaned more toward 'respect for local traditions', while throughout the 1920s, Fascist policy moved increasingly toward 'extermination or elimination'.

Under Mussolini, Fascist colonial policy soon pushed for the Italian 're-conquest' of Libya, though the previous liberal government had already begun military operations designed to consolidate Italian rule. Due to the setbacks of the First World War, Italian control in Libya was limited to a few coastal cities and 'outposts' fewer than 50 kilometres inland. There were three provinces within the Libya territory. Tripolitania, the western province, was separated from Cyrenaica, the eastern province, by 600 miles of desert, and the Fezzan, which consisted almost entirely of desert, lay to the South. Although the military was engaged in both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania during the initial stages of the 're-conquest', the resistance in Tripolitania was weaker, and Italy's conquest smoother, so that by the mid-1920s, most of the province was under Italian control.

The Italian military's operations in Libya were frequently presented to the Italian public as 'policing' and 'restoring order', but in fact the military was fighting a war, with full scale military campaigns. In one early action in January 1923, which gives some perspective, 9000 soldiers, mostly Eritrean *askari*, attacked Tarhuna, killing 1500 'rebels' and wounding another 3000. Giuseppe Volpi, the Governor of Tripolitania, then confiscated all arms, camels, horses, carts, and homes of the rebels and their families.²¹ Here and elsewhere in the conflict, mass executions of alleged combatants were common.²² Thus, the Italians fought a brutal war of military skirmishes, property confiscations, and mass executions, which would ultimately include the use of poison gas against the caravans and tented settlements of the resistance fighters and their families.

Over the course of three years, Volpi oversaw the conquest of Tripolitania, with the Italians suffering 620 dead, 1924 wounded, and 36 missing, while the Arab forces were left with 6500 dead.²³ As early as late-1924, Volpi felt confident that the province was ready for Italian settlement, reporting to the Minister of Colonies, Luigi Federzoni, that on the highlands of Tripolitania, there was work and fortune for ‘tens and tens of thousands of Italians’.²⁴ However, while Volpi repeatedly portrayed Tripolitania as definitively pacified, guerilla bands persistently reformed and attacked Italian units. In May 1925, during the visit of the new Italian Minister of the Colonies, Lanza di Scalea, the rebels regrouped and attacked the Italians at Bir Tarsin. One hundred twenty Italians were killed or wounded, and Volpi was subsequently replaced as Governor of Tripolitania by the Fascist Quadrumvir, General Emilio De Bono.²⁵ Despite this setback for the Italians, De Bono inherited a Tripolitania from Volpi that had largely been rid of armed resistance.

The hallmark military achievement of the De Bono era occurred in 1928 with a five-month military campaign along the twenty-ninth parallel designed to deal a blow to the resistance and occupy the oases that lay between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. It was the largest military campaign since Italy’s initial invasion of Libya in 1911, and relied heavily on bombing campaigns, which included tons of poison gas (mainly phosgene), in some cases dropped on caravans of men, women, children, and livestock.²⁶ With the success of the military campaign, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica came under the rule of one military governor. De Bono aspired to this office, but he was recalled and replaced by a rival, General Badoglio, one of the regime’s most important military officers.

Throughout the 1920s, the Italian military had much less success in Cyrenaica, where Omar al-Mukhtar’s resistance, and the tribes that supported it, were much more powerful and resilient. The guerilla bands, or *duar*, that resisted Italian incursions into Cyrenaica were embedded in society, and their activities, strengths and weaknesses were tied to the social, economic, and cultural structures of the Jebel. Attacking Italian forces in small bands, the *duar* were able to disappear quickly, reintegrating into civilian life. New fighters easily and quickly replaced insurgents who were killed. Unlike ‘settled’ or fixed populations, this society was highly mobile, moving or fleeing whenever the Italian military threatened to impose its will. Thus, the fighters traveled in caravans with their families and livestock. Attilio Teruzzi, a Fascist general appointed to govern Cyrenaica between 1926 and 1929, explained the problem:

Thus, against 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000 rebels, dressed in picturesque rags and badly armed, often 5,000 or 10,000 of our soldiers are not sufficient, because the rebels are not tied down to anything, are not bound to any impediment, have nothing to defend or to protect, and can show themselves today in one place, tomorrow 50 kilometers away, and the following day 100 kilometers away, to reappear a week later, to vanish for a month, to disperse to fire from afar on an unarmed shepherd, on a patrol of inspection, or on a column which files along the edge of a wood, or at the foot of a hill.²⁷

Unable to engage the *duar* or match their stealthy peregrinations and local knowledge, Italian forces relied heavily on their overwhelming technological superiority, including trucks, armoured cars, artillery, airplanes, and poison gas. Indeed, in moments where resources were scarce and the path forward uncertain, Italian authorities sometimes relied exclusively on terror bombings of Bedouin caravans and settlements, which included incendiary bombs and poison gas.²⁸ In 1927, between July and September, air force bombing throughout the Jebel and highly mobile, mechanized 'mopping-up groups' killed 1300 men and took 250 women and children prisoners. Tens of thousands of livestock were also killed or captured. These actions led to a temporary halt to resistance activities. Yet, in this operation, the Italians recovered only 269 rifles. Omar al-Mukhtar's *duar* had mostly survived the onslaught, and the majority of casualties and suffering fell upon society at large.²⁹

The entire nexus of civilian society, agriculture, animal husbandry, and anti-Italian resistance was vexing to Italian military authorities. The rebels' ability to reform after major defeats continually frustrated the generals, who over the course of the 1920s began to contemplate harsher measures, increasingly directed against the crops and livestock of tribes who supported the insurgency. In early 1926, weeks after the Italian capture of the city of Jaghub, General Mombelli, the official responsible for military operations in Cyrenaica, ordered his troops to prevent the Bedouins of the Jebel from taking in their harvest, and to confiscate or kill all livestock, with the goal of starving the population into submission. This measure led to fierce fighting, and ultimately the destruction of both crops and animals.³⁰ Bombing and strafing livestock, in particular camels, also became common. Despite these seemingly fatal blows to their livelihood, the resistance continued.

DEPORTATIONS AND INTERNMENT

In 1928, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, chief of the general staff, became the first governor to rule both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. In exchange for agreeing to serve in Libya, Badoglio asked for his appointment to last five years, giving him enough time to subdue the resistance and begin developing the colony. Upon arrival, he offered an amnesty for those rebels who laid down their arms, but for those who continued to resist, he warned: 'I will wage war with powerful systems and means, which they will long remember. No rebel will be left in peace, neither he nor his family nor his herds nor his heirs. I will destroy everything, men and things'.³¹ In a February 1929 circular to colonial officials, Governor Badoglio again reiterated the consequences should the 'population not realize the moral and material benefit of standing with us, submitting voluntarily to our customs, our laws'. If they did not, Badoglio lamented, the Italians would face a 'perpetual struggle', sitting atop a 'powder-keg ready to explode', and in the end 'destroy the entire native population'.³²

In August, Mohammed Idris, the highest ranking Senussi leader, who had fled to Egypt in 1923, named Omar al-Mukhtar his sole representative in Cyrenaica. Al-Mukhtar's forces and the Italians had been operating under the vague terms of a previously negotiated armistice. When al-Mukhtar withdrew from peace negotiations, Badoglio and his generals accused the insurgent leader of violating the terms of the armistice and, in November 1929, the Italians launched an attack on al-Mukhtar, but did little damage.³³ Emilio De Bono, the Fascist officer who formerly governed Tripolitania but returned to Italy as Vice-Minister of the Colonies, strenuously called for the construction of concentration camps and the bombardment of Mukhtar's rebel forces with poison gas.³⁴

In March 1930, frustrated with the progress of the campaign, Governor Badoglio appointed General Rodolfo Graziani Vice-Governor of Cyrenaica. While Graziani was not a 'first hour' Fascist, he became one of the regime's most trusted, effective, and brutal generals. Moreover, Graziani was the first high-ranking military figure to declare himself as holding 'decidedly fascist principles'.³⁵ In a short auto-biographical article published in the pro-imperialist journal *Oltremare*, Graziani declared himself a 'fascist from birth'.³⁶ The promotion of Graziani signalled the beginning of the end for al-Mukhtar's forces and the inhabitants of the Jebel. De Bono and Badoglio had become

convinced that internment of the entire civilian population was the only means of bringing an end to the insurgency. According to Badoglio, the population of Cyrenaica furnished the *duar* with money, sustenance, and men, all the while informing Omar al-Mukhtar of the Italians' 'every move...and the minute details' of their military preparations. The matter no longer required 'a balm', but rather a 'surgical action'. 'I thus admit', wrote Badoglio, 'that only the use of force will allow us to cut this Gordian Knot [...] The only way forward is above all to isolate the *duar* from the remaining population and to break the entire network of the organization between the population and the *duar*. I do not want to hide that the measure is grave, complex, and not certain to succeed immediately'.³⁷ 'It is therefore urgent', Badoglio concluded, 'that the entire subject population should be herded into a restricted space, in such a way that we can keep suitable watch over the people and maintain an absolute gap between them and the rebels. Having done that, we can then move on to direct action against the rebels...'.³⁸

As early as May 1930, the Italians rounded up the populations who lived closest to Italian outposts in the highlands of the Jebel Akhdar and deported them westward to the coast. This action was largely a test run for the massive deportations that would occur the following month. However, before large scale deportations and internment of civilians began, Italian authorities confiscated the vast landholdings, buildings, and livestock of the Senussi religious communities, which provided the central educational, economic, philanthropic, and political structures in Cyrenaica. The property of the Senussi, centered on *zawiyas* (shrines or lodges), generated considerable income, which Italian authorities believed was funding the resistance. Additionally, the Senussi collected taxes, and generally knit together the various tribes of Cyrenaica.³⁹ After confiscating these holdings, the Italian authorities deported Senussi leaders to island internment colonies in Italy. Thus, not only was the Senussi state destroyed, but thousands of hectares of Libya's most fertile land fell into the hands of Italian authorities, and the local economy collapsed. Further exacerbating the plight of the region's peoples, the Italian military engaged in a systematic campaign to destroy hundreds of thousands of sheep, goats, cows, and camels, which resulted in the loss of eighty to ninety percent of the region's livestock, devastating a crucial aspect of the subsistence economy of the region for years to come.⁴⁰

The deportations of the civilian population of Cyrenaica excluded approximately 50,000 people living in urban areas and another 15,000

in coastal areas, and a few thousand living in oases.⁴¹ These populations were technically considered *sottomessi*, meaning they had formally submitted to colonial rule, though Italian officials felt certain that even the *sottomessi* contributed to the resistance, either out of conviction or fear of retribution.⁴² The deportations instead affected the semi-nomadic populations of the highlands, which numbered around 100,000. Beginning in June, the various tribes of the Jebel Akhdar were cleared out of the highlands and sent to camps near coastal cities, to the north and west of the Jebel. However, simply clearing out the highlands proved insufficient for defeating the resistance, as many of the material, financial, and social bonds that connected the civilian population to the resistance remained unbroken. Thus Graziani and Badoglio ordered more radical measures: the transfer of the entire population further away, to the desert and semi-desert areas south of Bengasi and in the Sirtica.⁴³ Guarded by Eritrean *askari*, who were ordered to shoot anyone who fell behind, tens of thousands of men, women, children, and the elderly trekked between 200 and as many as 1100 kilometres. There are no records of the number of individuals who died *en route*. In the new settlements, Graziani recalled, ‘all the camps were encircled by a double line of barbed wire; food was rationed; the pastures reduced and controlled; and exiting the camps was subjected to special permits’. The internees were subjected to ‘severe punishment’ (*rigore estremo*), ‘without remorse’. Complaining about forms of ‘passive resistance’, Graziani reminded his subordinates, ‘the Government is coldly disposed to reduce the population to the most squalid hunger should it not comply absolutely with orders’.⁴⁴

Thanks largely to this complete removal of the population, not to mention the fence constructed on the Egyptian border, Italy’s war against anti-colonial resistance in Libya finally ended in 1932. Perhaps most significantly, the previous year, the Italian military captured Omar al-Muhktar, the symbol of that resistance, and executed him by hanging in front of 20,000 silent internees at the Soluch concentration camp.

‘ETHNIC RECONSTRUCTION’

The fundamental justification for Italian colonialism, during both Liberalism and Fascism, was demographic. According to Italian imperialists from at least the early part of the twentieth century onward, Italy was a young nation with an expanding population and a land shortage.⁴⁵ The millions of immigrants who had left Italy for the Americas, European

nations, and other points demonstrated Italy's need for colonies. Some anti-imperialists viewed Italian communities abroad as 'free colonies', which alleviated unemployment and demographic pressure within Italy, while simultaneously stimulating the economy through remittances. Pro-imperialists, by contrast, viewed mass emigration as an embarrassing national disaster, which sapped Italy's vitality and shamefully displayed an inability to provide for its own people. However, Italian attempts at using Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya as outlets for mass settler colonialism failed. Few Italians were willing to relocate to colonies that offered uncertain job prospects and risky agricultural schemes. The United States, Latin America, other European nations, and even other places in Africa offered better opportunities. No matter how large the resources the state devoted to developing mass colonialism, Italian colonies never absorbed more than a fraction of Italian immigrants. Indeed, the largest of Italy's overseas territories could have never supported more than tens of thousands of colonists.

Mussolini nevertheless consistently maintained that the central justification for colonies was the demographic expansion of the Italian race. In his view, a nation either acquired colonies and expanded, or remained at home to perish. Even in the late-1930s, when the Empire was sucking up a vast portion of national expenditures—without providing any concrete benefits to Italy—the Fascist regime steadfastly pursued the policy of mass colonization as the only hope for Italy's future. Even some of the most ardent imperialists acknowledged the falsehood of the demographic argument, yet still insisted that Italy's future depended on mass colonization of Libya and Ethiopia. In a memo to Mussolini, Luigi Federzoni, the founder of the pro-imperialist Nationalist party who served twice as Minister of the Colonies, acknowledged that mass colonization was essentially a 'political act' related to foreign diplomacy:

The colonization of Libya must be a *means* more than an *end*: it must allow us to place a few hundred thousand of our countrymen there who will make a part of Africa's Mediterranean shores Italian *in fact* as well as in law. [This is] a problem of colonial politics in that its solution is the *only means* to guarantee our *definitive* possession; and [thus it is] a problem of foreign policy.⁴⁶

The public justification for Fascist Italy's colonial policy was thus based on a myth about mass colonization as a solution to a purported

demographic crisis. The real crisis, though it did in fact involve the Italian population, might have been a crisis of nation building. Italy needed a few hundred thousand colonists not for demographic or economic reasons, but because the conquest and settling of these territories would simultaneously make a new kind of Italian and demonstrate to all parties—Italians, Europeans, local populations—that Italy and the Italians were who Mussolini said they were.

In Cyrenaica then, for the first time really, we see the extreme consequences of the realization of the Fascist vision of demographic expansion and settler colonization, mixed with utopian musings about founding a new civilization: the removal or annihilation of another people.⁴⁷ Over and over in his writings, Governor of Cyrenaica Graziani connected the destruction of the people of Cyrenaica to the creation of a new, better civilization. In an undated draft of a speech to be delivered to Fascists on the topic of Cyrenaica, Graziani wrote, ‘nothing new can be constructed if one does not destroy completely or in part a past that no longer belongs in the present’. On the very next page, he reiterated the same thought. ‘The act of destroying’, he proclaimed, ‘is a sad and legitimate reality when it serves to reconstruct humanity upon new foundations’.⁴⁸ Like General Badoglio, General Graziani believed that the thing to be destroyed was the population of Cyrenaica, either all or part.⁴⁹

In books and articles from 1933 onward, Graziani regularly and repeatedly insisted that he went to Cyrenaica without intentions of inflicting violence or repression on the general population. Therefore, Omar al-Mukhtar and his supporters were at fault. Such justifications, by any Italian authority, ignored one simple fact: the peoples of the Jebel Akhdar would have been removed from the region whether they resisted or not. Indeed, the Jebel was the most fertile land in Cyrenaica, and the camp inmates would never return to it, for it was reserved for Italians. Once the internment camps had been established, colonial officials produced a series of reports, orders, and colour-coded maps that all referred to the ‘Ethnic Reconstruction of Cyrenaica’, a massive resettlement of the tribes of the Jebel. In one report, Graziani wrote, ‘all of the ethnic groups of Cyrenaica have been relocated to the territories they inhabited prior to their concentration in the desert of Sirtica and in the south of Benghazi, with the exception, of course, of the areas of the highlands of the Jebel reserved for the activities of the State Agency for Colonization, which must remain clear of the native populations’.⁵⁰ Groups that were allowed to return to the Jebel were given, or returned to, lands on

the margins, which were least suitable to agriculture. Official justifications for this land grab referred mainly to the Bedouins poor stewardship of the land and, more generally, a virulent antipathy toward nomadism. Graziani considered nomadism an 'imminent danger' that had to be 'controlled and checked'. The caravans of the nomad 'could be compared to that of a swarm of destructive locusts'. Moreover, their uncivilized, rebellious nature led inevitably to anti-colonial resistance. As such, Graziani wrote:

the nomads have no justification and no right to insist on remaining in... the Cyrenaican Jebel...rather they must be excluded from it forever, leaving the place to the thousands and thousands of Italian arms that stretch out to it, anxious to till and enrich this ancient Roman land. The nomads must instead be situated in the territories of the pre-desert boundary, which are also largely conducive to pastoralism and sowing...But even in this case, their movements, their sustenance, their settlements must be strictly controlled by government officials and troops...⁵¹

Had the population of Cyrenaica not resisted the Italians militarily, they would have still lost their land. Either the Italian government would have paid them well below market value, as occurred in Tripolitania, or had they refused to sell, they would have had their land confiscated.⁵² As Wolfe has noted, 'the reproach of nomadism renders the native removable. Moreover, if the natives are not already nomadic, then the reproach can be turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy through the burning of corn or the uprooting of fruit trees'.⁵³ The highlands of Cyrenaica, much like the rest of the best cultivatable land in the Italian Empire, was reserved for Italian colonialists, whose presence in the colonies would transform a territory that Italy possessed on paper into a true Italian colony.

In addition to ending the resistance and facilitating the appropriation of fertile land for Italian colonists, colonial authorities also intended the camps to discipline and shape new colonial subjects. 'Ethnic construction' was thus partly about reconfiguring the ethnic geography of Cyrenaica, and partly about engineering a different kind of population. The regime had always viewed the nomadic peoples of Cyrenaica as atavistic, lawless, and subversive, and so the camps became part of a larger goal of settling the population. The camp system was three-tiered, consisting of regular 'concentration camps', which held civilian populations; 'punishment camps' (*campi di punizione*), which interned individuals,

families, and groups who resisted the Italian occupation in any way; and 'reeducation camps' (*campi di rieducazione*), which held children taken from families interned in other camps in order to create a class of functionaries loyal to Fascist colonial authorities.⁵⁴ Thousands of children, many of them the offspring of insurgent fighters, received special rations and were taught to honour and respect Italy and its Duce. Boys were taught lesson in agricultural techniques and received pre-military training, and girls were taught to cook, clean, and sew.⁵⁵ The reeducation camps continued to function long after the other camps had been dismantled. The camp schools also produced many of the recruits for the Libyan battalions who would be deployed in Fascist Italy's next colonial conquest, the invasion of Ethiopia.⁵⁶

In public, Graziani insisted that life in the camps represented an improvement in the Bedouin standard of living. Speaking to Italian and foreign journalists in June of 1931, the military governor refuted the notion that 'the transfer of these populations' constituted a 'special form of oppression and vexation'. The deportations had brought 'no radical change' and 'no disruption' to their lives. 'Just as they lived in tents before', Graziani opined, 'they now live in them in new settlements'. Graziani insisted that these new settlements were not 'true concentration camps', because real camps take 'stable populations living in populated centers' and gather them in a 'specific location'. In this case, Graziani informed the public, the Italian military was transferring 'nomadic populations that preserve, in their new environment, their same routines of life, though they are circumscribed and controlled'. 'And whether they live on the Jebel or on the coast of the Mediterranean', concluded Graziani, 'it's the same thing'. In fact, in their new location, he added, 'the nomadic populations can more easily benefit from state provisions related to welfare, the economy, and sanitation that before, due to their constant transigrations, they were not able to receive'.⁵⁷

Graziani's assurances aside, high rates of mortality, executions, torture, rape, widespread disease (especially typhus), and other deprivations have been thoroughly documented.⁵⁸ Even the regime's own internal documentation illustrated the devastating impact of the camps, particularly as colonial authorities began contemplating releasing the internees. One provincial commissioner stationed on the Jebel wrote to Graziani's second-in-command, 'Your Excellency knows and understands the miserable conditions to which the populations of Cyrenaica have been reduced'.⁵⁹ In the Soluch concentration camp, officials deemed

several groups incapable of providing for themselves. One ethnic group ('Awaqir') had relied previously on pastoralism, but had suffered a 'significant decrease' in the size of their herds and had no land upon which to grow grains. Another group ('Abid-Orfa'), who had previously relied on pastoralism and gathering firewood, had no means of sustenance because their herds had been reduced to an 'insignificant number' of animals.⁶⁰ The same official, looking beyond the dissolution of the concentration camps, hoped that the regime would begin a campaign of 'attraction and penetration in the settlements', which should be led by an official who does not 'limit his activity to pure control, but also works to promote every economic and commercial activity in this province'. He noted that 'the mentality of the old officials, persuaded by the routine established during ten years of rebellion' considered 'the native settlement only as an entity to be guarded, ignoring the economic and social life'.⁶¹

Despite acknowledging the complete inability of the internees to provide for themselves, the quashing of the resistance led colonial authorities to begin looking ahead to a brighter future for the inhabitants of Cyrenaica, all made possible by the camps. Writing to General De Bono, Graziani explained that the concentration camps were preparing 'for a new tomorrow a more docile population, habituated to work, who will surely bond itself...to the new territories to which it has been transferred, losing the habit of nomadism and acquiring the tastes and needs of a sedentary population, upon which the programme of pacification and development of Cyrenaica must necessarily be founded and sustained'.⁶² Their future prosperity depended entirely on their being submissive in the face of Italian authorities. Graziani, on the eve of the dissolution of the camps, promised, 'The native populations, reduced to full obedience, will swiftly deliver themselves to a future of civic prosperity without precedent'.⁶³ One of the roles envisioned for these newly settled, former nomads was to work on roads and other public works projects implemented by the colonial regime. In a September 1933 article titled 'From the Ethnic Normalization to the Economic Reconstruction of Our Colony', the newspaper *La Cirenaica* declared that the dissolution of all of the concentration camps marked the completion of 'the ethnic reconstruction of Cyrenaica', reporting that 'ten thousand natives are already working on the roads of the Jebel and the Marmarica [region] with various agencies'.⁶⁴

The Italian authorities primary goal was thus not the physical annihilation of the entire population. Instead, in accordance with the 'logic

of elimination', Italian colonial authorities objected primarily to the Bedouins being members of tribes, who occupied lands, practised agriculture, engaged in trade, and established religious institutions.⁶⁵ Once these markers of permanence were destroyed—land occupancy/ownership, religious institutions, grazing rights, animal husbandry—these Bedouin tribesmen could remain in the colony. That many resisted, and so effectively, meant that Italian authorities pursued a policy of physical removal and annihilation, at least up to the point that the resistance was broken and the Bedouin tribes became an undifferentiated mass of colonial subjects, suitable for new roles in the new Italian colonialist society.

CONCLUSION

By many definitions, what the Italian military did in Libya in the early 1930s constituted genocide.⁶⁶ Understanding this moment in the history of Italian Fascism, not to mention Cyrenaica, is important for many reasons. First, but not foremost, scholars have known about the internment of the civilian population for decades, but this episode in the history of Fascism has generally been treated as a marginal event, belonging to a separate line of investigation from the mainline or 'real' history of the Mussolini regime. Studies of Fascist crimes, camps, and atrocities in East Africa, North Africa, the Balkans, and other places have not yet significantly altered historical or popular perceptions of the Fascist regime—that is, most people think that Fascism 'wasn't that bad'. Moreover, this line of research has not really changed scholarly interpretations of the nature of Italian Fascism. In this chapter, I have suggested that empire and violence were central to the Fascist project—atrocities in the colonies constituted the imperial regime and colonial identities. Constrained by innumerable forces at home, Fascists found outlets for realizing their totalitarian fantasies abroad. If the making of Italy failed to make Italians, and the Fascist 'Revolution' failed to make Fascists, then perhaps the violent conquest of an empire would make Italians truly Fascist.

Second, though the historical field of twentieth century Europe has been saturated with studies about violence (Nazi, Soviet, Allied, Francoist, and so forth), few of them even mention this not insignificant event, or really any episode in Italian Fascism's long history. It might be an exaggeration to say that the genocide in Cyrenaica was unprecedented, but it certainly was extraordinary. Most historians of Europe assert or imply that Fascist Italy had little blood on its hands. Mussolini

operated a mildly repressive police state, they claim, and was never really sincere about his anti-Semitism.⁶⁷ This claim, aside from being historically misleading, does an enormous injustice to the history of Libya and the hundreds of thousands of ordinary people whose lives were ended or forever scarred by Italian colonialism. One could certainly argue that the genocide in Cyrenaica had less to do with Fascism and more to do with the nature of modern European colonialism. However, leaving it out of the investigative framework for understanding Italian Fascism implies something profoundly insulting. It suggests that although Fascist Italy may have killed and interned large numbers of people, the regime did not kill people who really mattered.

Viewing Italian colonial policy in Cyrenaica through the framework of violence distils the Fascist regime's strategies, actions, and ideology down to their essence. The Italian colonial authorities' use of military, economic, cultural, and social or ethnic violence functioned not simply to defeat the Bedouins' resistance and take possession of their land, but also to destroy and refashion anew the people of Cyrenaica. Throughout the 're-conquest', colonial officials acknowledged over and over that their policies might lead to the destruction of the entire civilian population. Though acceptable, this dire outcome did not exactly materialize. However, the Fascist regime's policies deliberately and successfully followed the 'logic of elimination', annihilating the economy, culture, and social practices of the region's people. By the time the regime established the concentration camps, colonial authorities could begin talking about the 'ethnic reconstruction of Cyrenaica'. Official maps and documents related to this 'reconstruction' referred most explicitly to the geographic placement of the peoples of Cyrenaica, but another, very prominent policy motive, and layer of rhetoric, was the larger project of creating submissive colonial subjects through atrocity.

NOTES

1. Giorgio Rochat, 'La repressione della resistenza in Cirenaica, 1927–1931', in Giorgio Rochat (ed.), *Guerra italiana in Libia e in Etiopia. Studi militari 1921–1939* (Paese: Pegasus, 1991), 93–97.
2. Badoglio to Graziani, June 20, 1930; published in Giorgio Rochat, 'La repressione della resistenza araba in Cirenaica nel 1930–31, nei documenti dell'archivio Graziani', in *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia*, 1973, no. 110, 16–17.

3. The six largest camps held approximately 78,000 people. The total number of individuals interned during this period was 90,761, not including those who died during the weeks long marches across the desert. The total number of deportees was over 100,000, more than half the total population of the region. Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, vol. 2: *dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Roma: Laterza, 1986–88), 179–189.
4. Quoted in Eric Salerno, *Genocidio in Libia: Le atrocità nascoste dell'avventura coloniale italiana, 1911–1931* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2005), 96–97.
5. Ottolenghi, *Gli italiani e il colonialismo. I campi di detenzione italiani in Africa* (Milano: SugarCo, 1997), 144–148.
6. Based on 1923 and 1936 census data, Rochat estimates that a minimum of 30,000 died as a result of the Italian campaign in Cyrenaica. This figure does not, however, account for population increase during the 1920s, and, Rochat concludes, a more likely number is 40,000, while the number 70,000 proposed by another scholar could also be possible. See Rochat, 'La repressione della resistenza in Cirenaica', 82–83.
7. Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5–6.
8. Benjamin Brower, *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 11, 19. See also Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011).
9. Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4 (December 2006), 387–409.
10. Edward Evans Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 38.
11. On the Senussi, see Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *Forgotten Voices: Power and Agency in Colonial and Postcolonial Libya* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 25–26.
12. See Alexander De Grand, *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism* (Nebraska, 1978).
13. Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2002), 34–47.
14. Labanca, *Oltremare*, 114–115.
15. Labanca, *Oltremare*, 119.
16. Benito Mussolini, 'La Dottrina del Fascismo' in Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (eds.), *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini* (Florence: La Fenice, 1961), vol. 34, 131.
17. Enzo Santarelli, 'The Ideology of the Libyan 'Reconquest' (1927–31)', in Enzo Santarelli (ed.), *Omar al-Mukhtar: The Italian Reconquest of Libya* (London: Darf, 1986), 21–26.
18. Spain had also used poison gas in Morocco during the 1920s.

19. See Eileen Ryan, 'Violence and the politics of prestige: the fascist turn in colonial Libya', *Modern Italy*, 20:2 (April 2015), 123–135.
20. Giulano Bonacci, *Il califfato, l'Islam e la Libia* (Rome, 1913), 23–24. Quoted in Santarelli, 26.
21. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 18–20.
22. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 34.
23. Emilio Canevari, *La guerra italiana. Retroscena della disfatta* (Rome: Tosi, 1948), 302, n. 2.
24. Quoted in Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 22.
25. De Bono was one of the four Fascists who organized the 'March on Rome', leading to Mussolini's seizure of power, hence the title 'Quadrumvir'.
26. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 94, 101.
27. Attilio Teruzzi, *Cirenaica verde: due anni di governo, dicembre 1926-gennaio 1929* (Milan: Mondadori, 1931), 338–339.
28. For multiple accounts of such bombings, see Eric Salerno, *Genocidio in Libia*, 59–71.
29. Giorgio Rochat, 'The Repression of Resistance in Cyrenaica (1927–1931)', in Enzo Santarelli (ed.), *Omar al-Mukhtar: The Italian Reconquest of Libya* (London: Darf, 1986), 21–26, 44–45.
30. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 105–106. See also Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, 177, 179.
31. Rochat, 'Repression of Resistance', 52.
32. Circular printed in Massimo Adolfo Vitale, *L'Italia in Africa: Serie Storico-Militare*, Volume Primo, *L'opera dell'esercito: avventimenti militari e impiego, Africa Settentrionale, 1911–1943* (Italia: Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, 1964) 199–201.
33. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in libia*, 159–160.
34. See De Bono to Badoglio, 25 November 1929, in ASMAI, Libia, pos. 150/21, f. 90. tel 7647.
35. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in libia*, 165.
36. Rodolfo Graziani, 'L'autobiografia di un soldato d'Africa', *Oltremare* 4:4 (April 1930), 166.
37. Badoglio to De Bono (Minister of Colonies), July 1, 1930, in ACS, Scattola 11, Fascicolo 14, Sottofascicolo 7.
38. Quoted in Rochat, 'Repression of Resistance', 73.
39. Ahmida, *Forgotten Voices*, 25–26.
40. Rochat, 'Repression of Resistance', 83.
41. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 179.
42. Clemente Menzio, 'Dieci anni di storia cirenaica', in ACS FG, Busta 9.
43. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in libia*, 180.
44. Graziani, *Cirenaica pacificata*, 104–105.
45. See Claudio Segré, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

46. Quoted in Segre, *Fourth Shore*, 65. (emphasis in Federzoni's original text).
47. Omar Bartov links political utopias to the annihilation of others in *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4–5.
48. Rodolfo Graziani, 'Mia conclusioni', 4, in ACS, Archivio Graziani, Fasc. 13, Sotto.Fasc. 1: 'Atti Varie Cirineica'.
49. See Graziani, 'Le popolazioni', in ACS, Archivio Graziani, Scattola 9, Fasc. 13, Sottofascicolo 5.
50. See Graziani to Governor of Libya and Ministry of Colonies, 'Situazione general della Colonia alla data odierna', April 1934, in ACS, Archivio Graziani, Scattola 11, Fascicolo 14, Sottofascicolo 9: 'Relazione finale'.
51. Graziani, *Cirenaica pacificata*, 122–123.
52. On various methods by which Italian authorities registered land in the public domain (expropriation, sales, forced sales, and 'robbery'), see Segre, *Fourth Shore*, 47–54, 62–76.
53. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism', 396.
54. For explanations of these typologies and general discussion of Italy's concentration camps in its African colonies, see Gustavo Ottolenghi, *Gli italiani e il colonialismo. I campi di detenzione italiani in Africa* (Milano: SugarCo, 1997), 144–148.
55. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in libia*, 189.
56. Rochat, 'La repressione della resistenza in Cirenaica', 96–97.
57. Clemente Menzio, 'Dieci anni di storia cirenaica', in ACS FG, Busta 9.
58. See Salerno, Ottolenghi, among others.
59. ACS, FG, Busta 9, Fascicolo 13, sottofascicolo 3, Commissario del Gebel-Barce, to Vicegovernatore (Graziani), June 27, 1932.
60. ACS, FG, Busta 9, Fascicolo 13, sottofascicolo 3, Commissario Regionale to Vicegovernatore, February 18, 1933.
61. ACS, FG, Busta 9, Fascicolo 13, sottofascicolo 3, Commissario del Gebel-Barce, to Vicegovernatore (Graziani), June 27, 1932.
62. Quoted in Del Boca, *Gli italiani in libia*, 189.
63. ACS, FG, Busta 9, Fascicolo 13, sottofascicolo 3, Commissario del Gebel-Barce, to Vicegovernatore (Graziani), June 27, 1932.
64. 'Dalla normalizzazione etnica alla ricostruzione economica della nostra Colonia', *La Cirenaica*, September 30, 1933.
65. Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism', 397.
66. For definitions of 'genocide', see Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2010).
67. See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'A Lesser Evil? Italian Fascism in/and the Totalitarian Equation', in Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin (eds.), *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 137–153.

PART IV

Repression and Resistance

Contesting Colonial Violence in New Caledonia

Adrian Muckle

This chapter is about the ways in which different forms of colonial violence were or were not contested on local and imperial scales in the French settler colony of New Caledonia.¹ Developing David Riches' idea that a defining feature of violence is its 'contested legitimacy', I identify and examine the arguments and agreements about violence and the justifications for it in three connected instances of violence drawn from the archive of a small war in New Caledonia.² The aim is to bring into focus the moments of contestation that can be identified and where possible explore what they reveal about the dynamics, structures and relationships that are part of the history of colonial violence in New Caledonia: the tensions between the administration and different categories of settlers; the relations between gendarmes and administrative chiefs; the role played by missionary critics; and the part that indigenous conceptions and practices of violence had in shaping settler reactions.

The violence in question has a particular context: an archipelago in island Melanesia settled by the ancestors of the indigenous Kanak people as early as 3200 BP and annexed by France in 1853, becoming a site for

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penal transportation from 1864 to 1897 and, especially from the 1890s onwards, a destination for a trickle of free settlers. In its 1911 census the colony counted about 50,000 inhabitants including: nearly 29,000 Kanak; about 11,000 free French settlers; some 5600 convicts and freed convicts; and about 4000 immigrant labourers from Indochina, Java, Japan and other parts of Oceania.³ Beginning in the 1870s Kanak were forced into reservations (known misleadingly as *tribes/tribus*) which constituted not much more than 10 per cent of all land by the early 1900s. While this loss of land provided the basic structural violence of colonisation, further layers were added by the efforts to mobilise Kanak and indentured labour for the colony's mines and plantations and by the administrative regime known as *Pindigénat* introduced in 1887 which allowed administrators to fine, imprison and intern colonial subjects without recourse to the justice system for offences deemed 'special' to indigenes and designed to enforce labour requisitions and tax collection.

New Caledonia's place at the geographical and historiographical intersection of the French Empire and the Australian colonial frontier is also worth noting by way of introduction. Some of the tools of colonial rule and violence used in New Caledonia had their origins in Algeria (*Pindigénat*) or had been tried in French Guiana and Australia (penal colonisation), while its cattle stations and plantations were an extension of the Australian pastoral frontier. In relation to the latter frontier this discussion of violence's contested legitimacy presents part of the wider 'colonial dialogue' that Banivanua Mar has examined in Queensland where voices of colonial dissent were a permanent feature that indicate 'the very reasoned and conscious foundations of colonialism's violence'.⁴ It also intersects with histories of France's colonial empire where renewed attention to the workings of *Pindigénat* has allowed 'a reassessment of the role of violence in the practice of colonial authority'. Here too an important point is that contestation and reform were a fundamental part of its logic as well as providing 'alibi' and 'rhetorical cover' for arbitrary violence and practices.⁵

THE EVENTS: THE ARREST OF CÉU, THE GRASSIN 'AFFAIRE' AND THE DEATH OF BAUGANE

The first of the three connected instances of violence examined here was the arrest on 9 February 1917, in the north-east coast settlement of Oué Hava, of a Kanak *petit chef* named Céu.⁶ Ordered by gendarme Saint-Martin in his capacity as syndic (agent) for the Service of Native Affairs,

the arrest followed Cému's refusal to serve a 15-day prison sentence and pay a 100 franc fine—the maximum sentences that could be imposed under the *indigénat* for refusing to obey a labour requisition. Cému also had failed to pay a still earlier fine of 50 francs and had forbidden five men from his *tribu* from serving an eight-day prison sentence. In order to end 'this permanent rebellion' and 'activities likely to have a deplorable influence among the natives of the region', Saint-Martin had 'resolved to arrest him to force him to submit to the punishment that he had refused to submit to voluntarily'.⁷

As described in the report that Saint Martin wrote three days afterwards, the arrest was carried out by his subordinate, gendarme Traynard. Not daring to enter Cému's *tribu* for fear of 'serious incidents', Traynard had summoned him to the nearby home and trading store of a local settler, Henri Grassin, and seized him as he set down his machete to accept a drink. In the struggle that ensued Traynard had fired his revolver over the heads of three of Cému's retainers to prevent them from intervening. Handcuffed and with a rope tied around his neck Cému had been led away by Traynard with the help of Grassin's adult son, Roger, a recently mobilised soldier on home leave. Saint-Martin reported that 'It was with a real sense of relief that settlers in the centre of Tipindjé learnt of the arrest of *petit chef* Thiéou who was feared for his deceit and spitefulness. He is impervious to any civilisation, vindictive and aggressive, and in a word possesses all the qualities of a perfect savage. He is also fiercely opposed to the enlistment of native volunteers.'⁸

In a further report written a month later Saint-Martin justified his decision as a pre-emptive measure taken in an atmosphere of insecurity created by the compulsory mobilisation for the Great War of many of the colony's male French citizens and the recruitment of Kanak as volunteers: he had feared that Cému might 'give himself up to violence over the said population or that he might so incite his subjects at a time when the region's mobilised men have rejoined their units. I hope that such an eventuality will not occur, but in the presence of a native chief with such a mentality, who considers whites to be intruders and who is imbued with the *canaque* nationalist principle it would be prudent to anticipate everything.'⁹

Public thanks for Cému's arrest quickly followed. In March Henri and Roger Grassin both received 'official recognition' for 'the courage and devotion which they demonstrated[...]by spontaneously coming to the assistance of the Gendarmerie during a particularly difficult and perilous arrest'. Traynard, too, received an official testimonial for his

role in the arrest during which Cému had ‘put up a furious resistance’.¹⁰ Characterised variously as a ‘savage’, a ‘war chief’ and a ‘canaque nationalist’ opposed to military recruitment, Cému was given a three-year internment sentence under *l’indigénat* for his ‘open rebellion against French authority’.¹¹

At the end of April 1917, a little more than two months after Cému’s arrest, war broke out in New Caledonia’s north following a more elaborate but much less successful attempt by the head of the Service of Native Affairs to arrest another Kanak *petit chef* deemed, like Cému, to be a troublemaker and obstacle to military recruiting.¹² Lasting nearly a year, the war involved on the one hand Kanak raids on isolated settlements and stations culminating in several attacks on military posts (causing fewer than 20 deaths) and in reply a series of punitive expeditions involving the practices of scorched earth conducted by French and Tahitian troops, Kanak auxiliaries and settler volunteers (resulting in at least 200 deaths).

It was seven weeks into this conflict, on 16 June, that authorities recovered the mutilated and decapitated body of Henri Grassin from nearby his ransacked and partially burnt home. Along with one of his Javanese employees, Santaviredjo, and his neighbour, Ludovic Papin, he had been killed the same day in a raid by a Kanak war party. The remains of his wife, Clémence, would be recovered nearby several weeks later. They were not the first settlers to be killed in the conflict, but their deaths, as described in Governor Repiquet’s report for June, had ‘alarmed, even terrorised the very impressionable population of the region. Living under the empire of fear, the inhabitants of the interior see rebels everywhere.’¹³ In the following weeks and months authorities stepped up the repression.

The third act of violence considered here is an obscure one that almost passed unremarked in between the various punitive expeditions sent against the ‘rebels’ in the months following the Oué-Hava attack. Writing to his spiritual superior Bishop Claude Chanrion on 28 July, Catholic priest Alphonse Rouel, a corporal serving in one of the military detachments sent in pursuit of the ‘rebels’, reported that a prisoner at the Tipindjé post near Oué Hava had been killed by soldiers, one of whom was Roger Grassin:

On...July 14 the marines pushed into the river, killed with rifle shots and then hacked to pieces with axes an unfortunate canaque prisoner who was being taken to empty his slop bucket in the water under the eyes

of Captain Sicard and lieutenant Carrique. Grassin's son was one of the butchers. The only excuse for the murder is that its authors were drunk. The official version will be that the poor man was trying to escape. That's absolutely false: I have it from eyewitnesses.¹⁴

Another reference to this killing casts doubt on the precise date, but confirms that a man was killed while escaping. On 26 July Protestant teacher Jemès Eleicha wrote to missionary Maurice Leenhardt from Tipindjé reporting that: 'There is a man who was in prison when we arrived here and who died today. He was killed by rifle fire near the water. He was escaping. His name is Baougane.'¹⁵ A subsequent letter from Rouel to Chanrion makes it clear that the incident somehow had been brought to the attention of authorities (perhaps through Chanrion). Rouel noted that counter-accusations blaming the killing on settler 'volunteers' rather than soldiers were unsurprising, but untrue: 'they're trying to cover themselves; fortunately the facts are clear as are the eyewitnesses'. The latter included 'a young corporal named Pern', an unnamed employee of the Ballande trading company and several others not known to Rouel.¹⁶ About this event little more of any substance is known though as shall be seen it has not been altogether forgotten.

The interconnected acts of violence involving the arrest of Céu, the killing of the Grassins and their neighbour and finally the killing of a Kanak prisoner did not occur in isolation. They occurred in the context of heightened emotion and insecurity created by the Great War—including the mobilisation of French citizens and recruitment of Kanak for the war in Europe—and in a settler colony in which neither European nor Kanak was a stranger to the other's capacity for violence. Examination of the ways in which each act was (or was not) contested shows that each can be located within a longer history and the structures of violence associated with colonial settlement.

THE ARREST OF CÉU: ADMINISTRATIVE VIOLENCE IN QUESTION

It cannot be said that the violence involved in Céu's arrest was openly contested by the Kanak; colonial hegemony was such that Kanak voices of protest were seldom if ever heard unmediated. Céu though had resisted physically and Saint-Martin reported Céu's subsequent statement explaining his fear of prison and challenging the administration's justification for his arrest (he had refused to carry out a requisition for

more labourers until those previously requisitioned had returned to their *tribu*).¹⁷ While we must imagine the degrees of physical and symbolic violence experienced and perceived by the men who were held back at gunpoint and who watched their chief being led away in chains, there is no question that the circumstances of the arrest were denounced within wider Kanak circles where they created considerable apprehension. Pwädé Apégu (Poindet Apengou), another *petit chef* imprisoned during the wider conflict, later related the impact that the arrest had on his own elders and his relations with the gendarme in his own district. In March 1917, his elders had berated him in the following terms for his willingness to carry out the administration's work and his misplaced confidence in French authorities:

You're not seeing things straight. You trust the whites, but you must remember what they did to Amane of Poyes [in 1908], to Moimba at Poya [in 1915] and to Thieou at Oué Hava [in 1917]. Even longer ago when the natives burnt a church near Wagap [in the 1860s] the soldiers intervened, shot some of our people and the rest disappeared. Perhaps you think that your medals will save you? You're mistaken. The government will do with you as it did with the others.¹⁸

Here Céu's arrest was only the latest incident in a longer history of violence reaching back to the 1860s. That at least two of these events (the arrests of Amane and Céu) had involved deception is also salient. In March 1917, the 'intense fear' created by such warnings, admonitions and precedents (which may be characterised as a form of psychological violence) had been all too evident to gendarme Faure who saw it in on Pwädé's very 'physiognomy' when he responded to a summons from Faure saying: 'Tell me now if something bad is going to happen to us. If you have to arrest me then say it; not knowing what's going to happen is making me sick.'¹⁹

That it was the violence of the administration and its symbolic dimensions, as much if not more than its physical dimensions, that was in question also can be seen in what Pwädé and his elders did not say: which was that his own father—a man named Céu Uniin (Thiéou Ounine)—had been the victim of a brutal assault by a settler with a notorious reputation for violence against the Kanak. The 1909 assault that left Uniin partially blinded and with the nickname 'one-eye' had highlighted the propensity of settlers to turn their own 'blind eye' to the violence perpetrated against the Kanak. A settler jury had acquitted the assailant, settler

Léon Leconte, of any criminal charge. The case had been contested by the administration which made a successful civil case for damages on Uniin's behalf and referred the outcome to the Ministry of Colonies in Paris where the Director of Political and Administrative Affairs summed up the main lesson to be drawn: 'In my opinion this affair seems to show that acts of violence committed on natives are not considered by the jury with all the impartiality desirable.'²⁰

Criticism of Cému's arrest from within European circles—including the Protestant and Catholic missions—was even less evident. That there was no public denunciation was even more understandable given the wartime context. The strongest comment was one made by the Protestant missionary Leenhardt who, after meeting Traynard and hearing his dramatic description of the arrest, wrote to his wife that 'The gendarme saw despair and acted as if for a maniac. It shows a gendarme's psychology, but also a gendarme's imagination; a professional imaginative deformation. How dangerous it is for a simple ordinary man.'²¹ As he went on to explain in the same letter, Leenhardt's encounter with Traynard occurred shortly after he was informed by the head of the Service of Native Affairs, Alfred Fourcade, of the similar subterfuge being prepared for the arrest of another presumed troublemaker. Leenhardt had advised against the plan and had urged a more forthright approach, he wrote, but had not criticised Fourcade directly or openly because he was 'working in *the unknown*'.²² This concession is telling; in the absence of adequate knowledge about the sources of unrest amongst Kanak violence was deemed more acceptable. It was not until the 1919 trial of the 'rebels' arrested during the war that broke out following the failure of Fourcade's subterfuge that his actions publicly were called into question. Nearly every European witness with an opinion on the matter (including Leenhardt) would argue that more open and direct force had been required earlier.²³

While Traynard's arrest of Cému gave rise to no formal protest in 1917, similar actions had been much criticised over the preceding two decades. The arrest forms part of a history of administrative violence centred on the *indigénat* and in turn on the relationship between the administrators and gendarmes who were the agents of the Service of Native Affairs in the interior and their principal counterparts, the Kanak men designated as administrative *petits chefs* or *grands chefs*. In the late 1890s and early 1900s these relations gave rise to sharp public criticisms of administrative violence on the grounds of its arbitrary dimensions and excesses. The Catholic and Protestant missions called out the violent words and

practices of individual administrators and gendarmes on a number of occasions and made use of their wider networks to bring criticism to bear on the administration.²⁴ Still more critical was the colonial inspectorate, which denounced the system that underpinned particular instances of violence—the *indigénat*. In 1902, it castigated the administration for failing to provide the Kanak with any guarantee for their property or freedom while subjecting them to an unfair tax regime and allowing them to suffer ‘a regime of imprisonment and excessive fines’ and instances of ‘serious cruelty’.²⁵ It singled out one administrator whose role ‘consists only of dispensing ill treatment’, and who had ‘committed veritable excesses in exercising the powers conferred on him’. In a three-month period, he had passed sentences amounting to 125 days in prison and 560 francs in fines for a population of no more than 350 adults, and in a fit of rage beat one man so badly that he was no longer able to work.²⁶ Similar concerns again were raised in 1907 when the inspectorate detailed widespread abuses of power and procedure in the use of the *indigénat*’s special infractions by which syndics were deemed to have ‘arbitrarily extended’ their power.²⁷ Five years later, in 1912, an inspector observed that the Head of the Service ‘is known only by the punishments that he issues’.²⁸

In response to such criticism the administration addressed only the ‘excesses’, denying or contesting the level of violence involved while entrenching the system. Thus a commission set up in 1899 to investigate ‘the arbitrary actions, violence and brutal language’ of an administrator and the violent threats used by two gendarmes—as denounced by the Catholic mission—conceded that an administrator indeed had kicked a chief with his foot, but argued that he had not done so in the course of his official duties and that it could not have damaged the chief’s ‘prestige’ as the chief in question had none. Two gendarmes denounced for threatening Kanak with a punitive expedition were found to have been deliberately misrepresented by their interpreters.²⁹ In a similar fashion an investigation into the administrator denounced by the inspectorate in 1902 accepted the administrator’s explanation that he had succumbed to “fits of impatience” but noted that this was ‘especially regrettable... because he was an administrator and could in this capacity ‘correct’ or punish in a legal manner any natives that he had complaints about.’³⁰ Typically such individuals were removed and posted elsewhere while, as suggested in the 1902 example, the system itself was upheld.

In the case of Céu the nearest thing to public questioning of his arrest was a brief exchange at the 1919 trial when Saint-Martin was asked by the judge why Céu had not been referred to the judicial service for prosecution and trial following his attempt to resist arrest. This question was a challenge to legitimacy of the *indigénat* under which Céu instead had been punished administratively. The question prompted a lawyer for the prosecution to protest ‘against the tendency to cast all the responsibility for the revolt onto a civil servant’. The proceedings then moved on with Saint Martin offering his own view that the revolt was due to the damage caused by settler cattle rather than the actions taken by gendarmes such as himself.³¹

THE GRASSIN ‘AFFAIRE’: SETTLERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON TRIAL

The Oué Hava attack exemplifies even more strongly how the perception of violence could vary according to the social identity and perceived respectability of the victims. That three were free settlers, including a woman, who were widely believed to have maintained good relations with Kanak heightened the perceived violence in the eyes of the colony’s free French settlers. The death of the Javanese worker and the several other attacks in which penal settlers or other socially marginalised figures were killed in similar circumstances received much less public attention.

Like Céu’s arrest, the Oué Hava attack and the local responses to it in the form of various presumptions, rumours and blame have a place in a longer history. European responses to attack ran along well established faultlines between settler and administrative perspectives that had been shaped by earlier instances of violence—notably the colony’s 1878 war in which 200 settlers had been killed in surprise attacks. On the one hand, settlers were mindful of the potential threat to their own lives and the intimate and intense character of Kanak violence. On the other hand, officials systematically sought to dismiss or play down the spectre of Kanak violence or revolt and generally attributed any threats to the actions of dangerous Kanak individuals, freed convicts (especially ‘Arabs’) or ‘bad colonists’ with established reputations for violence against Kanak.³² Bound up in both settler and administrative thinking was an awareness of the reciprocal dimensions of Kanak violence or the ethic of payback—something usually derided as vengefulness or vindictiveness in European representations, as seen in this excerpt from an 1893 military contingency plan:

The canaque is very vindictive and his desire for vengeance can only be extinguished in the blood of his enemy. – A Canaque, for example, never forgives the imprisonment of a chief, an act of brutality, the rape of a woman, etc.[...]The Canaque is profoundly accustomed to hiding his sentiments and it is impossible to obtain from him the confession of the grievance that he harbours in his heart; and, when he has decided to satisfy his hatred, he prepares in the shadows and makes use of the most informal methods to surprise and to kill his enemy.³³

All of these ideas about the likelihood and nature of Kanak violence exercised a powerful influence in the various European reactions to the attack of 16 June 1917. They speak to what has been described in Australia as ‘the relationship on the ground between intimacy and violence (as interaction and violence co-existed), as well as to [the] central importance of violence to frontier relationships’.³⁴ What was most in question was the nature of the vengeance that was presumed to have motivated the perpetrators; had Grassin been a martyr of French law and order for the arrest carried out under *l’indigénat* or was he a settler who had crossed the line of acceptable behaviour in his own private dealings with Kanak? Or were the actions of the administration itself to blame; had it failed to provide settlers with adequate protection?

In the days and weeks immediately following the attack rumour and opinion swirled around the few known facts. Most explanations centred on Henri Grassin’s involvement in Céu’s arrest four months earlier. On the day after the attack the missionary Leenhardt and another settler ‘wept together for Grassin and Papin [and] deplored their error in the arrest of the chief’.³⁵ Two days later Leenhardt met gendarme Traynard who blamed himself for what had happened and appeared to be in a less than sound state of mind: ‘I think he’s capable of shooting on an innocent person at night.’³⁶ In its 23 June edition the *Bulletin du Commerce* published Grassin’s last letter to his son dated 11 June in which he had related his fears for his safety and the failure of the administration to post any soldiers at Oué Hava. The administration ought to have known better, the *Bulletin* observed, given that Grassin was a ‘readymade victim for canaque vengeance, and the Administration knew it, because of his courageous help in arresting an influential chief some time beforehand’.³⁷ Over the following fortnight, Leenhardt modified his initial assumption, writing on 8 July that ‘vengeance’ was being advanced as a ‘motive’ to deflect attention from the possibility that the ‘massacre’ could have been avoided:

‘the self-serving legend of the arrest of Ceu is being told everywhere and the Administration, relieved at its good fortune, will consecrate it in order to conceal its own gross error under the cloak of praise’.³⁸

The presumption that vengeance was at play in Kanak actions had predated the attack and had informed the decision to not provide the Oué Hava settlers with protection. Five days beforehand (on the same day that Grassin cabled Nouméa asking for military protection and wrote to his son), adjutant Bécu, in charge of the nearby military post and flying column, had attributed the activities of ‘rebels’ in the area to the violent reputation of the manager of a nearby cattle station, a *métis* named Emile Guillemard: ‘The Guillemard family, renowned for its brutality of old, is not much loved by them. *For the moment the demonstrations in the upper Tipindjé must not be seen as anything more than a case of private vengeance.*’³⁹ Thus it seemed to Bécu that only supposed bad colonists rather than respectable free settlers such as Grassin and Papin had anything to fear.

Much of the European reaction and outrage was shaped by the belief that the Grassins and Papin were decent settlers who had maintained amicable relations with Kanak, but some doubt was cast on this. The Catholic bishop, Chanrion, noted that authorities in Nouméa were unsurprised by Grassin’s fate and that it was an instance of ‘personal vengeance’.⁴⁰ Unattributed rumours that Grassin had been involved in the illicit sale of firearms to Kanak and might have contributed to his own fate were publicly rebutted in a letter to *La France Australe*, by his neighbour Eugène Ragot who insisted that Grassin had helped a gendarme to uphold French law despite the cost to his own reputation ‘and had not hesitated in the face of a very likely vengeance’.⁴¹

Another rumour that circulated was the possibility that the attack had involved ‘Arab’ *libérés* (freed convicts). Ten days after the attack, Bécu reported what he had been told by local settler, Gabriel Sangarné: ‘Sangarné tells me that two Arabs were amongst the rebels who killed Grassin and Papin. The way in which the victims were mutilated doesn’t belong to the natives, he assures me.... The natives have told R.P. Murard that there were also one or two *libérés*. The Arabs were disguised as canaque warriors.’⁴² This rumour was not substantiated in any way, but it reflected longstanding fears about the penal population as a significant source of violence. Since the 1890s, *libérés* and especially those from North Africa referred to generally as ‘Arabs’ had been ‘perceived as a threatening group who fed a proliferating “discourse of fear”’.⁴³

Whereas settlers generally presumed an act of calculated vengeance some Kanak presumed that the attack had been carried out in anger and in the heat of the moment. According to a rumour, reported three days later by Joseph Murard, the Catholic missionary in the neighbouring Hienghène valley, the attack had been an act of vengeance directed not at Grassin but the aforementioned station manager:

The rebels who sacked and burnt Mr Guillemard's hut (the upper Tipindé station) the previous Sunday were looking for [Guillemard].... [H]aving learnt that G[uillemard] had gone to Mr Grassin's place, they went to see if he was still there, but without any ill intention towards this settler. Having seen them [approach], Mr Grassin quickly took up his rifle and fired hastily into the mass. Three natives are supposed to have been killed ... and it was then that, in fury, the rebels killed Mr Grassin, mutilated him so atrociously – then killed Mr Papin – I don't know how much basis there is to this 'rumour' – the gendarmerie hasn't heard anything about it.⁴⁴

There was no subsequent evidence to suggest that the 16 June attack was anything other than a surprise attack, but the rumour was a scenario that local Kanak initially considered to be plausible. It was compatible with indigenous norms of violence and warfare, which have been characterised by their explosive qualities. As observed by Douglas: 'most actual attacks on Europeans, like those on other Islanders, were sudden, delivered in heat, and fairly short-lived'.⁴⁵

In 1918–1919 the various public and private exchanges within the settler community gave way to a more general debate about the underlying causes of the entire war, which illustrate more generally the important tension between the administration and the settlers as officials in particular sought to distance themselves from the violence of the frontier. Governor Repiquet's December 1917 report on the war's 'profound causes' sought to head off criticism of the administration by insisting both on the inevitability of a racial clash inflected by savagery and nationalism and on the idea that 'rebels' had attacked 'not so much the administration which they know to be well-intentioned as the settler in whom they see their enemy'.⁴⁶

Settlers more generally were at pains to reject accusations that their actions were to blame for the war. Settler Auguste Henriot used his 1918 deposition to affirm that 'canaque discontent was not caused by the settlers'; greater harm had been done, he argued, by gendarmes who abused their powers and by the system of 'native police'. Although

warned about growing discontent and the danger to settlers, the administration 'had preferred to not believe in the effervescence' which had ended with the murder of settlers. Henriot also observed that settlers were not responsible for the failed stratagem that resulted in the outbreak of war and that they had not played a leading part in the repression. And he concluded: 'Nor are the settlers any more responsible for the discontentment of the Canaques who have been pushed back into the mountains and only come into contact with whites when one or other of the parties is discontent [about labour relations].'⁴⁷

In 1919 several men accused of involvement in the Oué Hava attack were amongst the 78 'rebels' who stood trial. The bill of indictment alleged that the attack had been ordered by another local *petit chef*, Néa, who had wanted to avenge Céu's arrest.⁴⁸ Néa, however, was acquitted following his own testimony that he had in fact helped Traynard and the Grassins to arrest Céu—a crucial detail which underscored the exaggeration involved in the official accounts of the arrest—and testimony from Roger Grassin that his father had never doubted Néa's sincerity. The 'real culprits', Roger Grassin declared, had not been brought to trial while the main causes, in his view, were the damage caused by cattle and the recruitment 'by force' of Kanak as *tirailleurs*.⁴⁹ He thus directed attention towards the region's cattle station owners (with whom his father also had been in dispute) and the actions of the administration.

The trial ended, however, by providing a new explanation for the attack—one that most Europeans had scarcely countenanced. Several Kanak witnesses alleged that it had been secretly ordered by another chief in order to cast suspicion on his rivals (including Néa) and bring the repression down on them. According to this scenario, European acts of violence such as the arrest of Céu had not been central to the Kanak agenda.⁵⁰

THE DEATH OF BAUGANE: A CASE OF SETTLER VENGEANCE?

In contrast to the recriminations surrounding the Grassin 'affaire', the death of Baugane was veiled by a public silence and went largely but not totally uncontested. The silence itself says something about the degree to which it was perceived as (il)legitimate; while perhaps condoned by those soldiers and settlers who knew of it, it was not publicly celebrated in the same way as the official actions of the military in the course of the repression. A similar silence can also be found in the later

historiography of the war. Although the great majority of its victims were Kanak (at least 200 as opposed to fewer than 20 Europeans) the fact that it is the violence of Kanak—cast as ‘savagery’—that has been most publicly recalled or remembered illustrates the hold that settler discourse and discursive structures have had over these events.

Like many other instances of colonial violence Baougane’s violent end appears only to have been challenged in private and away from the public record. The likelihood that it involved an unsanctioned act of vengeance involving Roger Grassin goes a long way to explaining this silence. Leenhardt, for instance, passed no comment on the report that he received from Jemès Eleicha on the prisoner’s death (which itself did not identify Grassin or imply any condemnation of those involved) and one of his own earlier comments on Roger Grassin suggests that he might have seen such an action as comprehensible. Observing Roger Grassin’s return to Tipindjé as part of the detachment under Captain Sicard on 21 June, Leenhardt noted that ‘He is full of hatred for the Wéava and sees more clearly through the end of his rifle than within himself. What a frightful situation and so many others must have known this in the north of France.’⁵¹

The report by Catholic priest and corporal Alphonse Rouel did though form part of a wider debate about the violence involved in the punitive expeditions sent out against the Kanak ‘rebels’. The letters that he wrote to Chanrion while serving in a military detachment provide some of the most excoriating denunciations of the violence mobilised against the ‘rebels’ in 1917 including that of the settler and Kanak volunteers involved in the repression.⁵² At the same time the colony’s *Bulletin du Commerce* called attention to complaints from settler volunteers serving in Rouel’s detachment about his presence and suggested that the Catholic priest’s proper place was in the barracks. The two officers who Rouel denounced were the same two men portrayed in the *Bulletin* as heroes. Actions by soldiers on 9 and 11 July, in which up to 15 Kanak were believed to have been killed, brought praise from the *Bulletin* according to which these attacks ‘finally offer some satisfaction to the public demand for energetic operations’. Sicard and Carrique, had ‘shown themselves to be true leaders who know how to combat the ferocious savages[...]fighting not for their independence, but simply to satiate their bestial passion, their hatred of whites and the base resentment of two *métis* and several Arabs[...]known to have been completely canaquified [*encanaqués*] for some time’. The *Bulletin* hoped that these operations would not be curtailed by those demanding ‘clemency’ and ‘temporisation’.⁵³

It was not until more than four decades later that any more public reference to Baougane's death emerged. In 1963 Australian journalist Lewis Priday, drawing on the reminiscences of local settlers, wrote in *Pacific Islands Monthly* that Roger Grassin had taken 'his revenge' for the death of his parents with 'his service rifle' and that 'A Noumea court later acquitted him of murder after he declared that the blood of his mother and father called for vengeance.'⁵⁴ Priday's story contains many factual inaccuracies (including the suggestion that Roger Grassin had been serving in France at the time of his parents' death and did not take 'his revenge' until his return) and there certainly was no public criminal trial, but as discussed below there may well have been a closed military tribunal.

CODA

Six decades after the original events, the legitimacy of the violence involved in Céu's arrest and in the death of the Grassins was still at play in writing about '1917' as New Caledonia experienced another period of violent conflict—the infamous 'events' of 1984–88 which pitted supporters and opponents of the Kanak independence movement against each other. The emphasis still placed on Céu's arrest in accounts of '1917' and narratives of Kanak resistance to French colonisation drew critical reactions from those defending the settlers' reputation. The principal reactions were to accounts of '1917' in geographer Alain Saussol's 1979 study of colonisation and land spoliation and journalist Lionel Duroy's 1988 account of the December 1984 massacre by the descendants of local settlers of 10 unarmed Kanak and the scandalous 1987 acquittal of the perpetrators on the grounds of legitimate self-defence.⁵⁵ Writing in the bulletin of New Caledonia's historical society in 1982 and again in 1989, Henri Grassin's grandson, Paul Griscelli, rejected the lingering suggestion in both books that his grandfather had contributed to his own death by participating in the arrest. He insisted that the 1917 conflict was essentially a war between Kanak chiefs in which the Oué Hava settlers were innocent victims who had been abandoned and failed by the administration.⁵⁶

Another quarter-century later, in an account published as a website blog in May 2015, Griscelli reiterated the case made in the 1980s and presented new details which he attributed to his late uncle, Roger Grassin. According to this version of events—presented as information told to Griscelli directly by his uncle—Roger Grassin appeared before a military tribunal for the murder of a prisoner who had been shot by

another soldier to prevent him giving evidence of a conspiracy on the part of station owners to engineer the revolt. Rather than enacting vengeance, Grassin had taken the place of the other soldier 'who did not have any personal motive for vengeance' in the knowledge his case would be looked on with sympathy by authorities.⁵⁷ Notwithstanding its conspiracy theory dimension, this account represents a further instance of the ongoing contestation of violence by a descendant of two of the victims.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The three cases illustrate the variety of forms that violence could take in this colonial situation. Céu was arrested under the regime of administrative violence that was *l'indigénat*. Although ostensibly ordered for his failure to carry out labour requisitions, his arrest by force was also justified as a pre-emptive measure to prevent him inciting violence. The stratagem and subterfuge chosen reflected the precarity of power relations and involved both physical and symbolic violence. The case of the settlers killed at Oué Hava highlights different assumptions about the nature of violence. Whereas some Kanak privileged the idea of an attack made in anger, settlers privileged the idea of a meditated attack on innocent victims compromised by the administration, while the administration was inclined to see it as directed at bad colonists. Like Céu's arrest, the violence involved was much more than physical; its suddenness and the identity of its victims created widespread fear as well as calls for retaliatory violence. The attack was widely interpreted widely as a form of innate and foreseeable vengeance on the part of Kanak. As shown by the death of Baougane, however, vengeance or retribution could also be the work of settlers.

The ways in which these acts of violence were contested also collectively demonstrate some of the broader dynamics, structures and relationships that must be considered as a part of a history of colonial violence in New Caledonia in the early-twentieth century. Historian Isabelle Merle has written that rather than experiencing an 'overt violence, New Caledonia suffered from a climate of insecurity, from a latent violence that was contained but always present'.⁵⁹ When violence was exposed, as in the moments described in this chapter, the prevailing climate and tensions played a key role in shaping local reactions and the ways in which violence was contested. Amongst Kanak the symbolic violence of Céu's arrest caused widespread consternation and fear; the arrest

exposed the violent underpinnings of the relations between gendarmes/syndics and chiefs which maintained the *indigénat*. Amongst Europeans, the violence involved in the killing of the Grassins and Papin was heightened by their status as free settlers with reputations for having maintained good relations with the Kanak whose former lands they occupied. Ideas about the respectability, virtue or morality of free (as opposed to penal) settlers were important elements in the debates that then took place among Europeans around the explanation of the violence carried out by Kanak. One of the most striking contests was the clash between the prejudices of those inclined to attribute violence or potential violence to the actions of bad colonists and those who defended the reputation of the Grassins and Papin.

In the archival record the critiques of missionaries both Catholic and Protestant are by far the most strident, but in these instances neither mission spoke out in public; for the most part their condemnations remained silent protests. It is striking, however, that colonial violence in its various forms—structural, symbolic, physical—was widely recognised in official reports and in public debates such as the 1919 trial. Some denounced the violence of the administration in its use of the *indigénat* and in its wartime recruitment. Others stressed the structural violence of colonisation, the clash of races and the damage caused by the pastoral frontier. All sought to diminish their own responsibility and in this they were both greatly aided by the evidence that an intra-Kanak agenda was at play in the Oué-Hava attack. Ultimately, this allowed colonial violence to be set aside and downplayed.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws in part from research published in *Specters of Violence in a Colonial Context: New Caledonia, 1917* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012).
2. David Riches, 'The Phenomenon of Violence', in David Riches (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 7–10; Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, *Violence: Theory and Ethnography* (London: Continuum, 2002), 3. I have also deployed this same approach with a focus on the punitive expeditions organised in 1917 in "'Thoughtlessly savage words": the contested legitimacy of colonial violence in New Caledonia, 1917–18', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 18:1 (2017), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/655210> 2017.

3. *Journal officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (hereafter JONC), 2616, 16 mai 1911.
4. Tracey Banivanua Mar, 'Consolidating violence and colonial rule: discipline and protection in colonial Queensland', *Postcolonial Studies*, 8:3 (2005), 315.
5. Gregory Mann, 'What was the *indigénat*? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa', *Journal of African History*, 50, 3, 2009, 332, 336 and 338. See also: Samuel Kahlman, 'Introduction: Colonial Violence', *Historical Reflections*, 36:2 (2010), 1–6.
6. Outside of quotations I use the modern spelling Céu. In colonial records his name appears as Thieou or Tieou. Leenhardt identified him as 'Céou (Tchéou) Batepoanwhane'. Maurice Leenhardt, 'Les événements de 1917 en Nouvelle-Calédonie: géographie des tribus et des chefs', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 58 (mars–juin, 1978), 19–22.
7. Saint-Martin, Rapport au sujet de l'arrestation du petit chef Thieou, no. 259, 12 février 1917, Archives de l'Archévêché de Nouméa (hereafter AAN) 21.1.
8. Saint-Martin, Rapport au sujet de l'arrestation du petit chef Thieou, no. 259, 12 février 1917, Archives de l'Archévêché de Nouméa (hereafter AAN) 21.1.
9. Saint-Martin, Rapport sur les agissements du petit chef Thieou, no. 16, 12 mars 1917, AFF POL 741, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence (hereafter ANOM). By this time the arrest had been reported in the 28 February issue of *La France Australe*.
10. Décision du 12 mars 1917, JONC, 2841, 17 mars 1917; Décision du 20 avril 1917, JONC, 2847, 28 avril 1917.
11. Saint-Martin, Rapport sur les agissements du petit chef Thieou de Oué-Hava, no. 16, 12 mars 1917, AFF POL 741, ANOM; Repiquet à Colonies, no. 536 du 27 septembre 1917, AFF POL 741, ANOM; Arrêté portant internement aux Nouvelles Hébrides, pendant trois ans, du petit chef Thieou, no. 619, 24 août 1917, AFF POL 741, ANOM.
12. For more detail on this attempted arrest see Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 33–35 and 51–54.
13. Repiquet (Gouverneur) à Min. des Colonies, 28 juin 1917, 12H2 (8:254), Département de l'armée de Terre, Service historique de la Défense, Vincennes (hereafter DAT, SHD).
14. Rouel à Chanrion, Station Laborderie—Tipindjé, 28 juillet 1917, AAN 20.1.
15. Elaicha à Misi, Tiwandé, 26 juillet 1917 (French translation), 54APOM4 (pièce 236), ANOM. The original letter is located in the series 12 J, ANC. It is possible that there were separate incidents on 14 and 26 July, but in my opinion this is unlikely.

16. Rouel à Chanrion, Tipindjé, 10 août 1917, AAN 20.1.
17. Saint-Martin, Rapport au sujet de l'arrestation du petit chef Thicou, no. 259, 12 février 1917, AAN 21.1.
18. Interrogatoire de l'indigène Poindet, la Prison Civile, 1er février 1918, AAN 21.1.
19. Faure, "Affaires de Koné" Rapport du Brigadier Faure sur les débuts de l'insurrection de 1917 en Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 76 (1983), 71.
20. 'Affaire Leconte', note dated 22 octobre 1909, NC 231, ANOM.
21. Leenhardt à Jeanne, à bord St. Pierre, 28–29 avril 1917, 12 J, ANC.
22. Ibid.; Leenhardt à Jeanne, Do Néva, 1 mai 1917, 12 J, ANC.
23. Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 55 and 161–162.
24. These networks included the Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme.
25. Meray (Inspecteur des Colonies) à Min. des Colonies, Paris, 21 août 1902, CONTR 821, ANOM.
26. Meray (Inspecteur des Colonies) à Min. des colonies, no.28, Nouméa, 24 mai 1902, CONTR 821, ANOM.
27. Revel (Inspecteur des Colonies), Rapport no. 23, 18 mars 1907, NC 209, ANOM; Fillon (Inspecteur des Colonies) à Min des Colonies, no. 22, Nouméa, 15 mai 1907, AFF POL 741, ANOM. Cf. Isabelle Merle, 'De la "légalisation" de la violence en contexte colonial. Le régime de l'indigénat en question', *Politix*, 17: 66 (2004), 137–162.
28. Revel (Inspecteur des Colonies), Rapport no. 47, 19 janvier 1912, AFF POL 3196, ANOM.
29. Nouvelle Calédonie et Dépendances, *Commission d'enquête nommée à l'occasion des troubles de Wagap, Ina, et Tiéti* (Nouméa: Imprimerie Calédonienne, 1900), 8–13.
30. Rapport sur l'enquête faite au sujet des faits relevés contre M. Dehné, administrateur à Canala, Nouméa, 13 juin 1902, FM, ee/ii/882/4, ANOM.
31. 'Affaire des rebelles—28e audience', *La France Australe*, 25 août 1919.
32. On this dynamic more generally see Adrian Muckle, 'Killing the "Fantôme Canaque": evoking and invoking the possibility of revolt in New Caledonia (1853–1915)', *Journal of Pacific History*, 37:1 (2002), 25–44.
33. Exposé des opérations successives à exécuter dès que l'ordre de mobilisation sera parvenu dans la colonie, 1893, 12H1 (dossier 4), DAT, SHD.
34. Elizabeth Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler: the 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth-Century British White Settler Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 4:3 (2003), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v004/4.3elbourne.html: para. 34.

35. Leenhardt à Jeanne, [Tiparama], 17 juin 1917, 12 J, Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Nouméa (hereafter ANC).
36. Leenhardt à Jeanne, Poyes, 19 juin 1917, 12 J, ANC.
37. 'L'assassinat de la Wé-Hawa', *Bulletin du Commerce*, 23 juin 1917. In an earlier edition, on 19 May, the *Bulletin* had noted that Céu's arrest 'at the instigation of a courageous settler, Mr Grassin, has deprived the canaques of one of their war chiefs who made no secret of his animosity towards the French'.
38. Leenhardt à Jeanne, Do Néva, 24 juin 1917, 12 J, ANC; Leenhardt à Jeanne, Do Néva, 8 juillet 1917, 12 J, ANC.
39. Bécu (Chef de la Section volante de Hyenghène) à M. le Commandant Supérieur des Troupes du Groupe du Pacifique, Rapport no. 5, Hienghène, 11 juin 1917, 12H2 (8:32), DAT, SHD. My emphasis.
40. Chanrion à Murard, Nouméa, 27 juin 1917, AAN 20.1.
41. 'Lettre de E. Ragot', *La France Australe*, 5 juillet 1917.
42. Bécu (Chef de la Section volante de Hyenghène) à M. le Commandant Supérieur des Troupes, Rapport No. 8, Hienghène, 27 juin 1917, 12H2 (8:246), DAT, SHD.
43. Isabelle Merle, *Expériences coloniales: la Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853–1920)* (Paris: Belin, 1995), 207–208 and 210–211.
44. Murard à Chanrion, Hienghène, 19 juin 1917, AAN 39.5.
45. Bronwen Douglas, *Across the Great Divide: Journeys in History and Anthropology* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 146–47. See also: Douglas, 'Fighting as Savagery and Romance: New Caledonia Past and Present', in *Reflections on Violence in Melanesia*, ed. Sinclair Dinnen and Alison Ley (Leichardt and Canberra: Hawkins Press and Asia Pacific Press, 2000), 53–64.
46. Repiquet à Min. des Colonies, no. 727, 7 décembre 1917, Causes profondes de la rébellion, AFF POL 742, ANOM.
47. Déposition du témoin Henriot Auguste, no. 874, 2 octobre 1918, AAN 21.7.
48. Parquet du Cour d'appel de Nouméa, Acte d'accusation—affaire des rebelles, 10 juin 1919, AAN 21.9.
49. Cour d'assises, 29e audience, 25 août, *La France Australe*, 26 août 1919. Several other Kanak witnesses identified another chief as being responsible.
50. On the trial testimony see Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 160–164 and 189–190.
51. Leenhardt à Jeanne, Do Néva, 24 juin 1917, 12 J, ANC.
52. Rouel à Chanrion, Amoa, 28 juin 1917, AAN 20.1; Rouel à Chanrion, Station Laborderie-Tipindjé, 28 juillet 1917, AAN 20.1

53. 'Dans le nord de la colonie', *Bulletin du Commerce*, 8 septembre 1917; 'Communiqué', *Bulletin du Commerce*, 14 juill. 1917.
54. Lewis Priday, 'Sixteen Europeans Died in Last Native Revolt in New Caledonia', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 34 (Oct. 1963), 81–83.
55. Alain Saussol, *L'Héritage: Essai sur le problème foncier mélanésien en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris: Musée de l'Homme, 1979), 318; Lionel Duroy, *Hienghène, le désespoir calédonien* (Paris: Barrault, 1988), 101–102. Also in question was anthropologist Jean Guiart's article, 'Les événements de 1917 en Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 26–29 (1970), 272.
56. Paul Griscelli, 'Le Massacre des Grassin (rébellion de 1917)', *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 51 (1982), 33–42; idem., 'Et voilà comment on écrit l'histoire, mise au point à propos de *Hienghène le désespoir calédonien* (L. Duroy)', *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 79 (1989), 73–75. Griscelli called out basic errors in these publications, but he also upheld the 1919 charges against Néa (despite his acquittal) and defended his rival, Kavéat, who had been presumed guilty (insisting that Kavéat's relations with the Tipindjé settlers had been friendly).
57. Paul Griscelli, 'Cold Case: Cannibalisme et conspiration dans le nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1917', 21 mai 2015, <http://coldcase28.blogspot.co.nz/2015/05/cannibalisme-et-conspiration-dans-le.html>, accessed 1 June 2015.
58. I have not been able to verify whether a court martial took place. Griscelli writes that all reference to it was expunged from his uncle's military records. In his account the prisoner is identified as Poigny, a brother of the principal Kanak leader, Noël. The year given, 1919, bears no correlation with the event described by Rouel and Elaicha, but may be a typographical error.
59. Isabelle Merle, *Expériences coloniales: la Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853–1920)* (Paris: Belin, 1995), 207–208 and 210–211.

From Liberation to Elimination: Violence and Resistance in Japan's Southeast Asia, 1942–1945

Kelly Maddox

In December 1941, having temporarily incapacitated the US Navy following a surprise attack at Pearl Harbour, Japanese forces swept through Southeast Asia in a series of lightning strikes which saw a drastic increase in the size of the Empire. From the outset, conflict in the region was characterised as a ‘benevolent endeavour’ pursued on behalf of Asia which, should Japan be successful, would be liberated from the ‘tyranny’ of Western imperialism.¹ In spite of these pan-Asian overtones, however, war in the Pacific proved to be detrimental to the welfare of local inhabitants who suffered hardships under increasingly oppressive and exploitative occupation policies. Scholars give estimates in the millions for the total number of Southeast Asians who lost their lives in this supposedly magnanimous conflict.² While these deaths were often the consequence of deteriorating wartime conditions, many were a direct result of Japanese violence. Although by no means ubiquitous, atrocities and human rights violations were certainly more widespread

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at this time. In fact, in some localities the quotidian violence of foreign occupation, long-endured by Southeast Asian peoples, radicalised further under Japanese rule as soldiers summarily executed large numbers of military-aged males, engaged in comprehensive scorched-earth policies and enacted reprisal massacres that occasionally targeted whole populations. In the Philippines, for instance, the final months of occupation saw the military embark on a devastating campaign of destruction, especially in Manila and its surrounding provinces, which left countless towns and villages decimated and resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 civilians.

The tribunals conducted by the Allies in the aftermath of the Second World War copiously documented the brutality and cruelty of Japanese forces in Asia. More than that even, in placing the Japanese Empire under the spotlight, the trials provided a unique opportunity for both oppressor and oppressed to recount their experiences, offering useful insights into the relationship between violence and empire. Nevertheless, the narrative, as established during these trials, was one in which Imperial Japan was framed as an Asian counterpart to Nazi Germany.³ Certainly, there were, and still are connections to be made between these two powers, especially in respect to their shared dissatisfaction with the international system and their efforts to establish a 'New Order' in their respective regions. The emphasis on Japan's Axis connection, however, has contributed to a narrow focus on the origins of Japanese aggression as lying in the increased militarism and authoritarian politics in Japan at that time. As a result, the imperial character of violence perpetrated against Asians who stood in the way of the Japanese Empire has largely been overlooked.

In this chapter, I address this issue by exploring the imperial dynamics of Japanese violence in Southeast Asia, highlighting that the death and destruction visited on local inhabitants under Japanese occupation was rooted in the demands of establishing and maintaining control in the region. The sudden expansion of the Empire in 1942, for example, had raised some serious practical problems for Japanese forces overstretched by the demands of the arduous and costly war in the Pacific and by continuing efforts to end the quagmire-like conflict in China (ongoing since 1937). As a result, they sometimes dealt with the difficulties of governing vast territories populated with peoples of diverse cultures and customs through recourse to repression, coercion and violence. Such techniques were not new. Not only had practices including massacres

and scorched-earth tactics been fundamental to the military's attempts to consolidate control in China, they had become a core component of Japanese occupation strategy having been honed during early encounters with local populations in Japan's formal colonies of Taiwan and Korea. As in other empires, resistance was often a catalyst to the adoption of violence as a means of population control. Efforts to establish Japanese rule in Taiwan, Korea and China had all been hindered by periodic outbursts of armed resistance and had involved the radicalisation of practices that were progressively more ruthless as Japanese troops learned valuable lessons about the nature of asymmetric, colonial-style conflict.⁴

In Southeast Asia, an area where the Japanese hoped to win support for their professed 'liberating mission', opposition from local populations was even more crucial to the emergence and radicalisation of violence. The development of tenacious armed opposition in the Philippines, for instance, was fundamental to the shift away from limited pacification efforts and promises of liberation in 1942 to violent subjugation and the eventual adoption of measures that allowed for the elimination of large numbers of Filipino civilians in 1945. Where racial arguments may have enabled and justified the use of violence in other empires, for the Japanese, insecurities, fears and perceptions of threat were more prominent factors in the acceptance of increasingly brutal methods of suppression. Beginning with an overview of Japanese attitudes towards violence and resistance in Southeast Asia, I then analyse violence in the Philippines (one of the most thoroughly documented, yet relatively under-studied instances of extreme violence in the Empire) in order to emphasise the importance of what might be termed security logics, to understanding the complexities of the relationship between violence and resistance, not just in the Japanese Empire, but in empires generally.

VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The way in which conflict in the Pacific was characterised by the Japanese leadership as a benevolent struggle on behalf of the peoples of Asia meant that, as the subjects of the professed 'liberating mission', other Asians were not viewed as enemies. In fact, military strategists recognised that the compliance, if not the support, of local populations would be indispensable to the successful prosecution of the war, especially since Japanese forces had limited resources to spare in the administration of the occupied territories.⁵ Furthermore, their cooperation was coveted; they were

to play a vital role in the realisation of Japan's grand vision of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere intended to be an economically prosperous and autarkic regional defensive bloc based both politically and culturally on Japanese values.⁶ The military leadership, having had difficulties maintaining troop discipline in China, came to realise that atrocities perpetrated against 'peaceable citizens' had meant that 'no pacification in the world, no matter how well executed, gain[ed] anything but the hatred of the Chinese'.⁷ Thus, in Southeast Asia, there was a more determined effort to minimise opportunities for violence.

Troops were 'strictly forbidden' from looting or 'disgracing' local women and, in efforts to stamp out these crimes, harsher punishments were implemented. Since it was recognised that such acts were opportunistic and usually committed by men whose behaviour became 'lax' when out from under the 'watchful eye of authority', commanders were advised to reduce 'unnecessary foraging' expeditions and to send a responsible leader when they were unavoidable. Access to local inhabitants was also restricted and troop movements closely monitored, especially in densely populated areas where soldiers were required to get passes to enter certain zones.⁸ If taken prisoner, Asians were to be treated 'benevolently and humanely' and commanders were warned that '[v]iolence, insult and bad treatment must not be inflicted without good reason'.⁹ Finally, it was repeatedly stressed that 'natives' be treated kindly and their religion and customs be respected.¹⁰ Sources indicate that the *kempeitai* (military police) were more rigorous in their efforts to keep troops in line in Southeast Asia. A Japanese sergeant interrogated in October 1943 had even remarked that 'there was no possibility of ill-treating natives...as Military Police were insistent that they should not be antagonised'.¹¹ Violence would, nevertheless, become an issue and, at times, a policy in Southeast Asia.

Japanese attitudes towards those they 'liberated' went some way towards facilitating the persistence of sporadic atrocities perpetrated by individual soldiers. Though there were some exceptions, soldiers tended to look down upon the peoples of this region as backwards, lazy, uncivilised and inherently inferior, especially given their status as colonial subjects.¹² An unwavering belief in Japanese superiority had a detrimental impact on relations with local populations, despite an embrace of pan-Asian ideals in some quarters. Troops expected their so-called 'Asian brothers' to address them as 'masters' and often forced them to

bow, threatening slaps to the face, humiliation or worse if they did not show enough deference or respect.¹³ As Grant Goodman has observed, the arrogance of Japanese soldiers belied declarations of an ‘Asia for the Asiatics’, highlighting the hypocrisy of Japanese pan-Asianism and reinforcing the very colonial relationship that Japan claimed to be overturning.¹⁴ Much like in other empires, such attitudes allowed troops to rationalise otherwise morally reprehensible and objectionable measures against peoples who, according to Third Class Seaman Yokoda Shigeki, ‘could not be treated in the same manner as the Japanese’.¹⁵ The origins of violence as an element of occupation policy, however, lay more in Japanese attitudes and responses to opposition.

Indeed, while troops had been instructed that ‘[t]o harm non-resistant natives is to shame the banner of the Imperial Army and bring about misunderstandings’, such constraints were, as implied by the quotation, not applied to those who offered opposition.¹⁶ Warnings, such as the following extract from a speech delivered by Lieutenant-General Honma Masaharu in the Philippines on 16 February 1942, were circulated throughout the region:

... if you fail to understand the true and lofty purpose of Japan, and instead obstruct the successful prosecution of the military activities and tactics of the Imperial Japanese Forces, whoever you are, we shall come and crush you with our might and power, and thus compel you to realize by means of force the true significance and meaning of our mission in the Far East.¹⁷

Japanese forces ‘impelled to take extreme measures with those who did not understand [their] real motive and prevented the peace’ utilised those practices developed through numerous encounters with resisting Asian populations since 1895.¹⁸ Throughout the occupied areas, populations were warned of the perils of opposing Japanese rule and terror tactics including; on-the-spot executions, public displays of violence, reprisal killings, destruction of property and collective punishments were used to reinforce these warnings. The *kempeitai* as the primary agents responsible for the maintenance of peace and order were given considerable discretionary powers to raid, arrest and execute on the slightest suspicion and used torture as a primary means of ‘investigation’.¹⁹

The military’s hardened and uncompromising attitudes to resistance at this time were partly influenced by prior experiences in Taiwan, Korea

and particularly China, where troops had so recently engaged in grueling anti-guerrilla campaigns. To a large degree, however, they were shaped by the belief that Japan faced an existential crisis in the turbulent and uncertain context of the 1930s and 1940s. The Japanese leadership, having depicted Japan as a fellow victim of Western oppression, had framed war in grandiose, existential terms which placed the nation's prestige at stake as they claimed to fight, not only for the independence of Asia, but for its continued existence in a racial struggle for survival.²⁰ This was more than a convenient rhetoric designed to win over other Asians. The military's pursuit of an autarkic regional bloc was part of a strategy for mitigating long-standing trepidations about Japan's security in an international world viewed as divided between the 'strong' (the colonisers) and the 'weak' (the colonised). Having been forced into the imperial world of the nineteenth century as an unequal member of the treaty system in Asia, the Japanese leadership's pursuit of empire, notwithstanding the nation's later rise to 'great power' status, was partially driven by concerns about Japan's ability to compete with other empires in a cut-throat and perilous imperial world system.²¹ Such views continued to shape Japanese thinking and contributed to the rationalisation of Japan's advance into Southeast Asia in the 1940s as self-defence. Indeed, according to the Imperial Rescript declaring war in December 1941, Japan 'for its existence and self-defense [had] no other recourse but to appeal to arms and to crush every obstacle in its path'.²²

This ostensible existential crisis was rooted in the economic depression of the 1930s which saw the Japanese economy suffer as the internationalism of previous years receded in favour of protectionist trade policies. International condemnation at the military's attempts to secure economic self-sufficiency through outright aggression first in Manchuria, and later in China, soured foreign relations, particularly with Britain and the United States.²³ As a result, by the 1940s, a growing number of prominent Japanese figures, such as Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō, had become resentful of an international system which, as they saw it, threatened vulnerable 'have not' nations like Japan who did not have access to abundant resources and vast markets.²⁴

The strain placed on the nation by the continue failure to resolve conflict in China, in addition to a series of economic sanctions which culminated in a full trade embargo imposed by the USA and its allies in July 1941, led to a growing panic at the perceived economic crisis that confronted Japan.²⁵ Southeast Asia's rich resources, market potential and

strategic location came to be perceived as vitally important for Japan's continued survival as an independent nation. More importantly, the notion of creating a Co-Prosperity Sphere, as an evolution of earlier anti-Western and pan-Asian ideas for an Asian Monroe Doctrine and later a New Order in East Asia, gained traction as a means by which Japan could alleviate its apparent existential crisis and ensure its future national security.²⁶ In short, there was much at stake for Japan in the successful occupation of Southeast Asia.

As a consequence, the welfare of Southeast Asian peoples was not an immediate priority and with Japanese interests paramount, they would be required to completely submit to the demands of occupation, regardless of how exploitative or oppressive they might be.²⁷ Military strategists were aware that there would be hardships but insisted that '[n]atives [would] have to reconcile themselves to such pressure as is unavoidably involved for them in acquisition of resources vital for our national defences and the local self-sufficiency of our occupation forces'.²⁸ It was also noted that pacification efforts must not interfere with wartime goals and that 'no measures shall be taken for the sole purpose of placating the natives'.²⁹ Aside from encouraging exploitative and oppressive policies, as Japanese forces set about the swift acquisition of resources, the perception of war as a zero-sum game, Japan's success in which hung on the successful mobilisation of the resources of Southeast Asia, made resistance at this time an intolerable threat to the leadership's solutions to maintaining the nation's independence in an ostensible struggle for survival. In this context, violence became permissible in response to local opposition. As the Filipino population discovered, as the wartime situation in the region deteriorated, a heightened sense of insecurity and threat caused the Japanese military to employ progressively more radical solutions to the problem of resistance.

A REIGN OF TERROR IN JAPAN'S 'PHILIPPINES FOR THE FILIPINOS'

When Japanese forces entered Manila in January 1942, they hoped for, perhaps even anticipated, a warm welcome as benevolent liberators of the Islands. The Philippines had a long history of opposition to Western imperialism and Filipino revolutionaries had, in the past, appealed to Japan for assistance in their fight for independence.³⁰ As such, in spite of concerns that the Filipino people were pro-American, highly Westernised and lacking an 'Oriental character', Japanese strategists

expected to create a nominally independent, self-governing and most importantly, pro-Japanese 'Philippines for the Filipinos' at the heart of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.³¹ The reality in the Philippines was very different, however. While the rhetoric of liberation and an 'Asia for the Asiatics' had won support for Japanese forces in Indonesia and Burma (Myanmar), such overtures had been less attractive to the Filipino people who had secured promises of independence from the USA and were already governed as a commonwealth.³² Aware of atrocities perpetrated in China, and having heard rumours of soldiers' brutality in the provinces, the people of Manila were apprehensive of, if not outwardly hostile, to Japanese troops who entered the capital in January 1942.³³ The lacklustre welcome, the obvious ambivalence of the populace and the continued resistance of thousands of Filipino soldiers, who fought alongside the Americans as they carried on their defence in Bataan, heightened Japanese trepidations about the potential for opposition in the Islands. A short bout of unrest and looting preceding their entry into Manila, though swiftly suppressed, did little to assuage concerns. For the most part, it was still generally believed that Japan could win support through pacification efforts and policies designed to 'revive' Filipino culture through the propagation of 'Asian' values and customs. However, occupation forces sought to decisively establish Japanese rule, thereby preempting further disturbances, by using violence to terrorise the people into submission.³⁴

Thus, at the same time as appealing for cooperation in his address on 2 January, Honma warned that 'offering resistance or committing a hostile act against the Japanese Armed Forces in any manner, leads the whole native land to ashes'.³⁵ Filipino civilians were soon to discover that this was not an empty threat. Justifying their behaviour under a broad rubric allowing for punishment of acts that went 'against the interests of the Japanese forces', soldiers followed through with fervour and brutality.³⁶ The 'severe punishments' meted out in the first weeks of occupation were often arbitrary and excessive. One man, for example, was shot in the back in the first few days of occupation simply for refusing to bow to a Japanese sentry. Indeed, Filipinos were summarily executed for acts that ranged from attacks on Japanese installations, the distribution of pro-American flyers or, as two civilians discovered in February 1942, failing to walk around sandbags. In some cases, Filipinos were impelled to watch the torture, beating or execution of their fellow countrymen.³⁷ When the perpetrators of seditious acts could not be identified, Japanese troops

took hostages and imposed collective punishments.³⁸ As in other areas, the *kempeitai* utilised a ruthless and pre-emptive policing strategy that involved establishing coercive spy-networks through the ‘neighbourhood associations’ system, which monitored the activities of the local populace and held them collectively accountable for disturbances in their areas.³⁹ As a consequence, José Reyes observed, Filipinos ‘lived in constant dread, fear, and anguish brought about by a reign of terror’.⁴⁰ This reign of terror, however, far from acting to deter opposition, contributed to the growth of a nascent resistance movement which became the most sustained and fierce of efforts to oppose Japanese forces in Southeast Asia.

‘UNRULY ELEMENTS’: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARMED RESISTANCE

During the first few months of occupation, the sentiments of the Filipino populace shifted decisively against Japan, especially as the hypocrisy of Japanese pan-Asianism became more and more apparent.⁴¹ The Japanese Military Administration, though somewhat successful in co-opting the political elite (more a reflection of an alignment of interests than enthusiasm for Japan’s ‘Philippines for the Filipinos’), had only minimal success in winning over the populace.⁴² The limited pacification efforts employed were unable to offset the harsh realities of wartime occupation. As heavy-handed economic initiatives began to severely impact standards of living and intrusive cultural policies began to impinge on day-to-day life in the Islands, Filipinos grew ever more resentful of Japanese occupation.⁴³ People sought an outlet for their frustration through resistance activities. For many this involved small, passive acts of defiance such as hiding products the military wanted to procure, secretly listening to American broadcasts, and not accepting military notes as currency. In some respects, continuing on as normal in spite of the Administration’s efforts to reorient Philippine society represented a tacit rejection of Japanese rule. Some, however, offered more direct assistance to a burgeoning guerrilla movement in the Islands by providing supplies, shelter and intelligence, along with some minor engagement in seditious activity.⁴⁴ The increased support offered by the populace would prove pivotal in transforming what originally were small, straggler units operating independently into a more developed resistance movement.

Early opposition to Japanese rule had emerged in the form of scattered American and Filipino soldiers who, having successfully evaded capture, formed small guerrilla bands that operated in the mountainous and remote provincial regions. Limited in numbers, ill-equipped and lacking experience in guerrilla tactics, these units were largely ineffective and were generally ignored by the Japanese who were focused on fighting the bulk of American and Philippine forces until their surrender in May 1942. For much of that year their effectiveness continued to be undermined by deficiencies in organisation, experience and equipment, as well as the communication and logistical difficulties associated with the geography of the archipelago. Prone to infighting and factionalism, they were also impeded by a lack of unity and some groups also had an uneasy relationship with local communities as they plundered supplies and enacted violent reprisals to prevent collaboration with the Japanese.⁴⁵ The growing antipathy of the populace towards Japanese forces, however, reinforced and facilitated resistance activities in the Islands gradually improving the effectiveness of guerrilla units who grew to rely on support from local communities to sustain them. Though the importance of the guerrillas has been exaggerated—they were, after all, never a threat in a military sense—the pervasiveness of guerrilla activity in the Islands hindered Japanese efforts to consolidate their control outside of the main cities.⁴⁶ More importantly, it forced the military, in spite of plans for a more collaborative, hands-off approach, to devote more and more resources to the occupation than they had initially planned.⁴⁷ After riots on Negros Island in August 1942 sparked a succession of serious uprisings in the Visayas, Japanese forces found peace and order increasingly difficult to maintain in the Islands.⁴⁸ By the end of 1942, war in the Pacific had begun to turn against Japan placing a greater strain on the nation's economy and adding to the importance of successfully consolidating the resources of Southeast Asia. Commanders, therefore, came under greater pressure to resolve the situation in the Philippines, particularly since they now faced small-scale guerrilla warfare, sustained and supported by an increasingly hostile populace.

‘INTENSIVE OPERATIONS’: ANTI-GUERRILLA WARFARE, 1942–1943

As expected given the military’s attitudes to opposition, Japanese responses to the spread of guerrilla activity in the Islands involved violent methods of suppression. In November 1942, it was announced that having exhausted their patience with these ‘ignorant and misguided people’, the military would employ ‘intensive operations...to the end that these unruly elements may be completely wiped out’.⁴⁹ In addressing the difficulties associated with confronting an enemy that was mobile and not easily identifiable from civilians, commanders advised their subordinates not to rely on traditional encirclement techniques. Instead, because ‘punitive action’ was deemed to be the ‘best method of pacification’, these new ‘intensive operations’ were to be focused less on engagement with guerrillas and more on destroying their bases, in addition to severing vital support from local communities, through violent reprisals against *barangays* (villages) suspected of having harboured them.⁵⁰ From then on, areas where there was evidence of guerrilla activity were at risk of bombardment, destruction of property and reprisal massacres.⁵¹ Japanese troops were, nevertheless, instructed to be somewhat restrained in their efforts lest they incite further enmity from the populace. A 16th Division intelligence report documenting operations in Pampanga, for example, had explained that ‘although the burning of houses harbouring the enemy is necessary to prevent their being used during future attacks, wanton burning of houses should be avoided... . Every soldier should realise that the local inhabitants are greatly influenced by his slightest action.’⁵²

However, intelligence reports began to reveal that the guerrillas, far from being ‘wiped out’, had become more audacious over the course of 1943. By this time, their organisation, efficiency and tactical skill had improved, especially with aid from Allied intelligence operatives who helped to coordinate operations, provided useful intelligence and covertly delivered supplies to the Islands.⁵³ The guerrillas, emboldened by Allied victories in the Pacific, began to supplement subversive acts of sabotage, espionage and dissemination of propaganda with more daring raids and incendiary assaults in areas believed to be collaborating with the Japanese.⁵⁴ In mid-1943, at a peak in guerrilla activity, Japanese installations were attacked, soldiers were murdered in daylight and, amid a series of strikes throughout Luzon in June, an assassination attempt

was made on José P. Laurel, a collaborator and future president of the 'independent' Philippine Republic.⁵⁵

Japanese forces responded to the intensification of guerrilla activities with punitive expeditions enhanced by a practice that came to be known among Filipinos as 'zonification'. In a typical 'zonification' operation, Japanese troops would descend on an area, usually between curfew hours of midnight and 5 a.m., blocking all access points. At dawn, soldiers would go door-to-door rounding up all male civilians, and occasionally women and children too, forcing them out of their homes to congregate at a nearby church or school. While they waited, usually without food, water or sanitary provisions, to be 'investigated' by the *kempeitai*, thorough searches of houses (often accompanied by looting) would be carried out. In some cases, investigations involved men passing in front of a 'magic eye'—a hooded informant—who would point out those who allegedly had guerrilla connections. The *kempeitai* supplemented this procedure with torture techniques to force confessions and had the power to execute those they suspected of guerrilla affiliation.⁵⁶ 'zonification' brought terror to the provinces as they focused anti-guerrilla operations more directly on the civilian population and placed men in particular at greater risk of more systematic violence.

The implementation of these practices was believed to have been a crushing blow to the resistance movement since there was a lull in guerrilla activity from late 1943 until spring 1944.⁵⁷ Of course, this had also coincided with the declaration of Philippine independence on 14 October 1943 and a subsequent period of amnesty during which Japanese forces suspended punitive expeditions to encourage guerrillas to surrender with promises of full pardon.⁵⁸ Once the period of amnesty had elapsed, the cycle of violence constituted and fuelled by Philippine resistance and the progressively more systematic responses by Japanese forces over the course of these years resumed in spring 1944. However, a shift in the geopolitical context at that time sparked a further radicalisation of anti-guerrilla strategy and initiated a spiral of violence which would, ultimately, drive the Japanese military into unleashing extreme violence on the Filipino populace.

‘SHEER BRUTALITY’: RESPONDING TO THE AMERICAN INVASION, 1944–1945

By early 1944, it was clear that Japan was losing the Pacific War and that an American return to the Philippines was imminent. For the first time, the Islands were to have a decisive role in the war as a final opportunity to thwart American forces before they began their attack on Japan itself. Essentially, the Philippines had become an area of utmost importance in a war that many troops had come to believe would mean ‘national death’ if they should be defeated.⁵⁹ There was considerable work to be done in terms of constructing fortifications ready for the coming battle and defence preparations were made all the more challenging by the deteriorating situation in the Islands.⁶⁰ In anticipation of the American invasion, guerrilla units put aside their internecine struggles working together to sabotage defence works, stockpile weapons, gather intelligence and, much to the alarm of the Japanese forces, encourage popular unrest.⁶¹ Though initially viewed as potential collaborators, years of hostility and tenacious resistance had contributed to a growing concern among Japanese commanders that the Filipino people were resolutely and irredeemably ‘anti-Japanese’.⁶² Efforts to incite unrest as the Americans continued their advance in the Pacific, therefore, became a ‘prime concern’ for occupation forces since it was understood that an uprising would seriously jeopardise the successful defence of the Islands.⁶³

In response, a more rigorous anti-guerrilla campaign was launched which, according to intelligence reports, caused Japanese units to be engaged in almost continuous punitive operations from spring 1944, having conducted 939 expeditions in April followed by no less than 1037 separate actions in June.⁶⁴ These operations involved even more indiscriminate methods of suppression. For instance, on Panay Island, where the military had limited control outside the main city of Iloilo, it was explained that because the inhabitants were ‘all hostile’, the commander had ‘requested not only that, as is normal when a punitive expedition is sent out, the houses be burnt, but that even the women and children be killed’.⁶⁵ However, such efforts continued to be ineffective and after the first American landings at Leyte further added to the precarious conditions in the Islands, Japanese forces, now under the command of the ‘Tiger of Malaya’ Lieutenant-General Yamashita Tomoyuki, employed an anti-guerrilla strategy that saw an increase in the scale and intensity of violence visited on the Filipino populace.⁶⁶

During punitive expeditions in areas known to have a strong guerrilla presence, Japanese forces became much less thorough in their efforts to identify insurgents. Men were often executed *en masse*. Warrant Officer Yamaguchi Yoshimi, for example, had written in his diary on 28 November 1944 that the new punitive actions had been ‘something to look forward to’ since ‘all men are to be killed’.⁶⁷ In Leyte, an island in the Visayas that had been plagued with disorder for much of the occupation, the landing of US troops on 20 October 1944 was accompanied by mass killings of civilians carried out as Japanese soldiers evacuated the region.⁶⁸ Operation orders received by the 26th Division Field Hospital, active in the area on 16 November, revealed that the Division Commanding General who had ordered all ‘natives’ be killed had sanctioned such measures.⁶⁹ At this stage, commanders’ decisions to adopt more ruthless practices were contingent on their interpretations of local conditions, specifically, the extent of the guerrilla presence and the proximity of US forces.⁷⁰ Once the Americans had begun their assault on Luzon in January 1945, however, Japanese forces gave up attempts to identify insurgents and implemented an indiscriminate defence strategy that involved the intentional destruction of villages and the large-scale massacres of Filipinos, including women and children, in areas of military importance.

The capture of Luzon, as the largest and most strategically important island, would signify a decisive victory in the coming battle. With so much at stake at this time, commanders placed great emphasis on the exigency of the situation, mobilising their troops by reminding them that they were engaged in a struggle for survival in this war.⁷¹ Years of failed attempts to ‘wipe out’ resistance had seen parameters for admissible action continually extended, distinctions between combatants and non-combatants blurred, if not completely disregarded, and taboos in respect to the treatment of civilians serially broken. These past experiences, the appearance of deeply-rooted anti-Japanese sentiment among the Filipino people, and the critical wartime situation facilitated the further radicalisation of Japanese anti-guerrilla strategy at this time. According to an order issued by the Kobayashi group, a unit stationed in Manila for much of the occupation, troops in the city had been instructed on 13 February 1945 that since ‘there are several thousand Filipino guerrillas’ and that ‘even women and children have become guerrillas...all people on the battlefield with the exception of Japanese military personnel, Japanese civilians and Special Construction Units...will be put to

death'.⁷² Survivors later recounted their horrific experiences at the hands of soldiers who shot men, women and children on sight, marched into hospitals to kill patients in their beds, waited by entry points to gun-down those who tried to flee homes that had been set alight, threw hand grenades and other explosives into buildings where crowds had gathered for shelter and placed machine guns along the Pasig River to prevent escape to areas of the city already liberated by the American forces.⁷³ In the surrounding provinces, Batangas and Laguna in particular, Japanese forces were even more brutal as they engaged in what would be described during the post-war trials as a 'cold-blooded extermination campaign'.⁷⁴ Japanese forces, having adopted a comprehensive scorched-earth strategy that indiscriminately targeted civilians, moved throughout these regions leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. Numerous small villages were obliterated and many civilians were massacred in accordance with orders, like those received by a unit operating around Tanuan on 8 March, which had instructed troops to '[s]hoot guerrillas. Kill all who oppose the emperor, even women and children.'⁷⁵

One soldier lamented the 'sheer brutality' of spending every day in February 'hunting guerrillas and natives'.⁷⁶ Another, Private First Class Matsuoka Itoji of the 23rd Division, was troubled by the actions of his unit when they took 'advantage of darkness' to go out and kill the 'natives', writing that, '[i]t was hard for me to kill them because they seemed to be good people'.⁷⁷ However, having long been told that defeat in this war would mean 'national death' for Japan, soldiers came to rationalise such measures as necessary 'for the country's sake'.⁷⁸ For example, recording his unit's recent actions in Calamba on 13 February 1945, company commander Fujita Eisuke wrote that 'for security reasons, all inhabitants of the town were killed and all their possessions were confiscated'. He exposed the reasoning behind such acts in a subsequent entry on 17 February:

...because ninety percent of the Filipinos do not feel pro-Japanese but on the contrary are anti-Japanese, Army Headquarters issued orders on the 10th to punish them. In various sectors, we have killed several thousands (including young and old, men and women, and Chinese, in addition to Filipinos). Their houses have been burned and valuables have been confiscated.⁷⁹

At the trial of Fujishige Masatoshi, held responsible for Japanese brutality in Batangas and Laguna, Uehara Zenichi, an adjutant for the 17th Division under Fujishige's command, represented the military's rationale when he explained that in order to successfully defend against the American invasion, it had been vital that Japanese forces suppress the insurgency in the Islands and, since previous efforts had failed and the populace appeared to be assisting the guerrillas, more 'resolute measures' were deemed necessary.⁸⁰ In other words, the large-scale massacres of civilians and the widespread destruction of towns and villages in early 1945 were deemed acceptable methods of conduct, legitimised and rationalised as necessary security measures in the face of a hostile and threatening situation in the Islands and the Pacific more generally.

CONCLUSION

Violence was not initially part of the Japanese military's imperial pursuits in Southeast Asia. Though they perpetrated widespread atrocities, soldiers were not, as was argued by the prosecution during the Tokyo Trials, unleashed on the peoples of the region with the intention of doing so. In fact, military strategists hoped that their pan-Asian rhetoric and professed goals of liberation would inspire cooperation among the colonial subjects of Western empires. As such, military leaders were more determined to prevent the atrocities and brutalities that had impeded their efforts to win local support in occupied China. Nevertheless, the context and framing of this conflict, far from precluding violence as a method of population control, actually warranted it as a necessary solution to the threat of resistance. Indeed, the insecurities that had driven Japanese interest and fuelled an ambitious strategy of region-building in Southeast Asia, allowed for the use of violent measures against peoples who opposed Japanese occupation. As in other empires, the experience of opposition would prove to be a catalysing factor in the acceptance of violence as a means of maintaining control. The centrality of resistance to Japanese violence in Southeast Asia explains the significant variation in treatment of the populations of this area. In British Malaya, for example, the Malay people (who had welcomed Japanese forces) were treated well in comparison to the Malayan Chinese who, having engaged in anti-Japanese activities and fought alongside the British, became victims of large-scale massacres after the fall of Singapore in February 1942.⁸¹ Much like the extreme violence perpetrated in the Philippines, massacres in British

Malaya were rationalised as security imperatives necessary for the establishment of Japanese rule.⁸²

Indeed, perceptions of insecurity and threat, though not the sole factors fuelling violence at this time, were highly influential in justifying and legitimising the adoption of methods of population control that appeared to be in contradiction to Japan's professed benevolent objectives in the region. In the Philippines, resistance from the local populace and Japanese responses to it had constituted and cultivated a spiral of violence, the intensity of which varied over the course of the occupation according to shifts in local conditions. However, it was the heightened sense of insecurity in the Islands, which seemed to necessitate the use of more extreme methods of suppression in 1945. Towards the end of 1944, the Philippines had become important as the site of the last decisive battle before the invasion of Japan itself, a role it for which it was ill-prepared. At the same time, the Japanese faced an impending American return to the Islands within a context of more audacious guerrilla activity and a potential uprising from the Filipino people, believed to be wholly anti-Japanese at this point. Past failures and new pressures derived from a geopolitical context that seemed to spell disaster for Japan in its apparent struggle for survival, laid the foundations for reasoning that large-scale massacres of civilians and destruction of towns and villages in areas of tactical importance were a strategic and justifiable necessity.

Analysis of the imperial dynamics of Japanese violence in Southeast Asia, then, provides a foundation for understanding violence in the Empire as part of a process of radicalisation triggered by resistance but also contingent on the interplay between multifarious contextual factors and the impact that had on the pursuit of security objectives. While there were different dynamics that underlay Japanese imperialism, violence in the Empire manifested in ways that were not unlike that of other empires. Consequently, the significance of security logics to the relationship between resistance and violence, brought out in the analysis of this chapter, is essential to understanding the role of violence in empire as a whole.

NOTES

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12. Ethan Mark, 'The Perils of Co-Prosperity: Takeda Rintarō, Occupied Southeast Asia, and the Seductions of Postcolonial Empire', *American Historical Review*, 119(4) (2014), 1192–1193.
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14. Grant K. Goodman, 'Introduction', in *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during World War 2* ed. Grant K. Goodman (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 3–4.
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16. ATIS: Current Translations No. 52, Doc. 573, 17.
17. Cited in *Official Journal of the Japanese Military Administration (hereafter Official Journal)*, Vol. 1, 8.
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Nothing to Report? Challenging Dutch Discourse on Colonial Counterinsurgency in Indonesia, 1945–1949

Bart Luttikhuis and C. H. C. Harinck

INTRODUCTION

The historical literature on colonial wars and colonial violence has seen a resurgence over the past two decades, but only rarely in the historiography is the appropriateness of the qualifying adjective ‘colonial’ questioned.¹ Naturally, violence is a crucial element of colonialism, as most colonies were taken, maintained and abandoned through violent confrontations and intense forms of everyday violence. In other words, violence is intrinsic to colonialism. As Frantz Fanon famously put it, modern colonialism is ‘rule by means of guns and machines’.²

The vast literature on the mid-twentieth century wars of decolonization can be divided, very broadly, into two schools. On the one hand there are those, often with close ties to the creators of present-day

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military doctrine, who study the wars in, for example, Malaysia (1948–1960) or Algeria (1954–1962) through the eyes of counterinsurgency theory ('COIN'). As a result, libraries have been filled with books on the strategies and tactics of *insurgency* and *counterinsurgency*. The instrumental demands of military doctrine developed in the wake of the recent wars in e.g. Afghanistan or Iraq have seen military historians and theorists return to these libraries. The other school of historiography on wars of decolonization is more firmly lodged in colonial history departments, where scholars often study these conflicts as the endpoint and culmination of a long tradition of colonial repression and anti-colonial rebellions. The failure to analyse the particular 'colonial-ness' of the violence of the wars of decolonization is a surprisingly common feature of both these schools. The so-called 'COINdinistas' tend not to be very interested in the colonial pedigree of these wars, whilst colonial historians often seem to assume the peculiarity of the colonial context as a given.³

In this chapter we re-examine the war of decolonization in Indonesia between the Dutch colonizer and the nascent Indonesian Republic (1945–1949), taking our cues from both schools of thought described above, and comparing Dutch and Indonesian sources on the violence perpetrated by Dutch colonial forces. Although the Dutch-Indonesian war has received ample historiographical attention, especially from Dutch colonial historians, Indonesian sources have so far been almost entirely disregarded. As we show in this chapter, that neglect has resulted in certain blind spots regarding the impact of the violence of Dutch decolonization on Indonesian society. And ultimately, combining the perspective from the Dutch and Indonesian sources also yields new insights into the nature of that violence. Viewing different sources from both sides helps us see how this war of decolonization had both colonial and conventional modern military genealogies.

This chapter first provides an empirical contribution to the discussion regarding the use and nature of (military) force by the Dutch in Indonesia 1945–1949, and by colonial powers in the context of decolonization in general. We offer new insights from Indonesian source material in addition to Dutch sources. But more importantly, the chapter is a broader appeal to listen to subaltern voices when studying and analysing 'colonial' violence—not only to read against the grain of the colonial archive, but also to go looking for alternative archives. It is precisely in the period of decolonization that these alternative archives become more widely available because former 'subalterns' started writing in greater

numbers. Such sources not only help us to reduce and overcome the limits and limitations of colonial sources, but they also open up new, hitherto underreported, worlds.

Through the case studies discussed below, we identify four aspects of the Indonesian war of decolonization that appear in a new light when seen through Indonesian eyes: the notoriously thorny distinction between combatants and civilians in guerrilla warfare; the role of small-scale violence like arson and theft; the interpretation of the practice of mass-arrests; and the consequences of artillery, aerial and naval bombardment. To date, Dutch historiography has remained in the dark on the disruptive effects of Dutch warfare on Indonesian society and has consequently clung to a colonial perspective. Colonial violence seen through the eyes of the (formerly) colonized appears not only more everyday, more invasive and more arbitrary than we have so far been able to see, but also more conventional than the simple framing of these wars in terms of ‘colonial violence’ has merited.

EMBEDDED HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Indonesian War of Independence developed after the capitulation of Japan and the subsequent Indonesian declaration of Independence in August 1945. The Dutch had expected to quickly restore their colonial sovereignty, but instead upon arrival found themselves confronted with an independence movement determined to break away from the Dutch empire, if need be by force. The Dutch never officially recognized the ensuing conflict as a war—which on the Indonesian side also contained elements of civil war and revolution—even though it claimed large numbers of casualties on both sides. For most of the time, the conflict consisted of guerrilla actions by Indonesian (regular and irregular) forces and counterinsurgency efforts by the Dutch. Two large-scale campaigns initiated by the Dutch in July 1947 and December 1948 were designated ‘police actions’ to avoid the appearance that this was in fact a war. But neither campaign could end the conflict on terms favourable to the Dutch. Ultimately, after international and economic pressures were mounted against the Dutch forcing them to relent, a transfer of sovereignty was brokered. Taking effect on 27 December 1949, it brought the war to an end.⁴

As is the case in any modern war, this conflict was also fought on paper,⁵ which can partly explain the differences between Dutch and

Indonesian sources. But just as importantly, the authors of these sources quite literally had different perspectives, which gave them access to different information and allowed them to come to different interpretations. As historians we are taught to read our sources critically, and when possible to carefully weigh sources with different backgrounds and origins. Yet somehow, when writing about the Indonesian war of Independence, this lesson seems to have been forgotten. When we consider the Dutch historiography, the literature is almost exclusively based on Dutch sources. The Indonesian archives have simply not been consulted.⁶ Anglophone literature traditionally has paid more attention to Indonesian sources, but generally has little interest in the Dutch military effort.⁷

Since the end of the war, the topic of Dutch military violence in Indonesia 1945–1949 has made intermittent appearances in Dutch historiography as well as in Dutch public discourse. The central question, debated over and over again, has remained the same over these past decades: was the use of ‘excessive’ violence (read: war crimes) by Dutch forces a structural feature of the military effort, or were such events mere incidents, perpetrated by ‘derailed’ individuals? The most recent public debate started in the late 2000s as a consequence of two civil court cases brought against the Dutch state by representatives of Indonesian victims, which were more or less concurrent with similar debates in Britain about state responsibility for violence during its wars of decolonization in Malaya and Kenya.⁸

Recent academic publications, meanwhile, seem to agree that the Dutch military breached the laws of war on a regular basis and most likely in a structural way, engaging in such acts as summary executions, the bombardment of civilian targets, arson and pillaging.⁹ Although Dutch historiography has become more critical, the absence of Indonesian voices in these more recent works remains palpable. This exclusive focus on Dutch sources has produced a form of embedded historiography: the Indonesian adversary or civilian only comes into view over the shoulders of Dutch soldiers.

Another common conclusion of the recent literature, in this case with a longer tradition, has been to assign a large part of the responsibility for the most extreme Dutch violence to the Dutch colonial army (the Royal Dutch-Indies Army or KNIL, consisting of locally recruited soldiers) rather than the metropolitan Army (The Royal Army or KL, consisting of conscripts and volunteers shipped in from the Netherlands

to assist the colonial army). Many authors identify a colonial ‘genealogy of violence’ as a key contributing factor to the extreme violence of the war of decolonization (and colonial rule in general).¹⁰ But the fact alone that the KL provided more than twice as many soldiers as the KNIL should make one wary. More importantly, although the Dutch supreme command in Indonesia was largely made up of officers from the KNIL, they took their cues not only from previous colonial conflicts but also from lessons learned from their British and American allies in the Second World War. The commander of the army, General Simon Spoor, for instance, spent formative years as head of the Dutch East-Indies Intelligence Service during the Second World War, in which he aimed to put this service on a modern footing. Much of his energy in the early years of the Dutch-Indonesian war was spent thinking about the applicability of ‘modern’ war organization and technology—air power, artillery, special services—to the Indonesian theatre.¹¹ Closer attention to the Indonesian source material might have opened our eyes more readily to the extent to which the Dutch military violence in this war was actually ‘conventional’ rather than a simple continuation of age-old colonial practices.

‘CIVILIANS’ OR ‘ENEMIES’?

One of the most striking differences between the Indonesian and Dutch sources is their classification of Indonesian casualties: were these ‘civilians’ or ‘enemies’? Only traces of what must have been a daily struggle to discern between civilian and combatant can be found in Dutch military reporting. Wildly lopsided numbers of casualties—friendly losses: none, enemies losses: several dozens—are common.¹² Yet all inflicted casualties are simply designated ‘enemy losses’. In Dutch reports, then, actions with such discrepant numbers connote successful military operations with heavy enemy casualties. The correlating Indonesian sources meanwhile frequently speak of large numbers of ‘civilian casualties’.

The disparity between the Dutch and Indonesian sources on these issues can be seen as typical of strongly politicized and asymmetrical armed conflict. In guerrilla and anti-guerrilla warfare—as practised in Indonesia between 1945 and 1949 and during many other colonial wars and counterinsurgencies—making the distinction between civilians and combatants is crucial yet notoriously difficult.¹³ The problem is reflective of the nature of guerrilla warfare in general. Take for example the

action at Tanjung Balai, 4 August 1947. On that final day of the first large-scale Dutch military offensive of the war, a column of armoured cars supported by infantry from the Z-Brigade was tasked with capturing the town and smugglers' haven of Tanjung Balai on Sumatra's north coast as quickly as possible, before the ceasefire would be effective.¹⁴ From the report of one of the infantry units involved, we learn that after a successful advance the town was occupied at the cost of 300 'enemies' killed, out of an opposing force of an estimated 4000 fighters. The Dutch attacking force itself did not suffer any fatalities.¹⁵ According to the report of the armoured car squadron, the enemy had been 'completely surprised' and subsequently suffered 'many killed, total impossible to determine' while trying to escape across the river.¹⁶

Two commemorative works written shortly afterwards offer a more personal view of this action, dubbing the enemy retreat over the river a 'tropical Dunkirk'¹⁷ and describing the 'destruction' that was inflicted upon the enemy.¹⁸ The description as a 'tropical Dunkirk' is revealing: the frame of reference of this author is the Second World War, rather than some previous colonial war. The various descriptions in Dutch military sources offer the view of a successful surprise attack on an enemy stronghold in which many perished, although the amount of weapons captured was relatively small.

When we read an Indonesian source on the same attack, a very different story emerges. According to an internal report of the Indonesian Ministry of Defence, the Dutch troops descended on the town 'like blind pigs', randomly shooting at shopping locals in the market place and firing at people trying to escape over the river. In the harbour, clerks and workers were lined-up and mowed down with machine guns. The total number of 'victims among the population' amounted to 300 people, according to the Indonesian Defence Ministry.¹⁹ Clearly, the Indonesian report deals with the same incident in which 300 people were killed. But the Dutch and Indonesian reports differ starkly in their description of the behaviour of the Dutch troops and the character of the victims: were they civilians or combatants? In short, Dutch sources speak of a successful military action, while the Indonesian source speaks of a war crime.

Another example can be found in the context of a Dutch 'mopping-up operation' (*zuiveringsactie*) on 13 October 1947 in the hilly countryside surrounding Karanggede, Central Java. Abdul Haris Nasution,²⁰ one of the most important Indonesian military leaders during the conflict and the author of a multi-volume chronicle of the war of independence

(*Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan*), paraphrases an Indonesian military report on this action:

Two Dutch companies, supported by a tank and 3 airplanes, attacked 2 villages in the Karanggede area. Many civilians have been shot and kidnapped. Along their entire route [the Dutch] destroyed and set fire to the houses of inhabitants. [...] The Petak mosque (Karanggede sub-district) was shot to pieces by the Dutch. The number of casualties among the people [*korban rakyat*] as a result of the Dutch attack on those two villages was 89 killed (including two babies), and three people kidnapped.²¹

Such a large operation is not difficult to find in the archives of the Dutch armed forces, but the description is markedly different from Nasution's. The action reports from units involved identify seven enemy fighters killed with a further 30–40 estimated. They do describe the destruction of a mosque by artillery fire, but they also explain that the mosque was used as an ammunition and explosives dump. During this action large amounts of landmines, ammunition and other explosives were captured.²² As in the case of Tanjung Balai, we see in the case of Karanggede that the numbers of casualties were counted by the dozens in both the Indonesian and Dutch sources, whilst the characterization of these casualties differs.

When we compare the Indonesian and Dutch sources in these and similar cases it is often challenging to come to a final assessment of what really happened, and how the casualties should be interpreted. The golden mean is not always to be found exactly in the middle. It appears, for instance, that the latter case described here, the Dutch attack on Karanggede and the bombardment of a mosque, leaves room for an interpretation where most casualties (possibly including civilians) were the result of an attack on a legitimate target: the ammunitions dump in the mosque. The attackers probably took less effort in avoiding the risks of collateral damage than we would find acceptable today, but the Indonesian source in this case shows selective reporting by not mentioning that the mosque was used for ammunition storage.²³ Conversely, in the case of Tanjung Balai it is the Indonesian report that gives us more explicit detail—indiscriminate fire on civilians in the market place, executions near the fish market—while the Dutch sources give no indication of even an attempt to differentiate between civilians and combatants. In this case the Indonesian source seems to fill a hiatus in the Dutch sources,

instead of directly contradicting them. The assessment is therefore not necessarily always the same: the context determines the relative credibility of sources.

Carefully weighing the content and context of different sources can sometimes help us move forward and make an educated guess of what may have happened. Yet sometimes, we fail to even get that far and have to satisfy ourselves with simply juxtaposing two divergent views. Take for example another incident recorded by Nasution, which in his wording clearly amounts to a war crime:

At 8:00 a.m., 28 August 1947, a Dutch section surrounded the village of Kebon Tengah, 3 km southwest of Kedungwuni (Pekalongan). The houses were shelled with incendiaries, setting the village ablaze in no time. Inhabitants who tried to flee were mowed down by machinegun fire, killing 96 people. The total number of houses burned was 55.²⁴

Through memoirs and testimonies from Dutch veterans of the conflict, we know that methods like these were in fact used at times.²⁵ Yet we also know that Indonesian sources could frequently exaggerate the number of victims.²⁶ In this case of Kebon Tengah, our contextual knowledge is too limited to determine an accurate interpretation. The report of the Dutch battalion (2-4 RI) stationed nearby merely states: ‘23 August–30 August [1947, BL/CH]. This period too was marked by intensive patrolling and mopping-up operations [...]. 28 August: received fire near Kebontengah.’²⁷

Comparing the different sources does not therefore always resolve ambiguity surrounding cases like Tanjung Balai or Karanggede, let alone about Kebon Tengah. But what the inclusion of Indonesian sources does contribute is a clue about where to look. After all, if we had only used the Dutch archives, none of the three cases mentioned above would have caught our attention. Only the comparison between Indonesian and Dutch sources shows us the limitation in the discourse of either: not every ‘enemy killed’ was a combatant, and neither was every civilian casualty the result of intentional ‘cruelty’. Moreover, the Indonesian sources in all these three cases highlight (possible) atrocities perpetrated with the help of ‘modern’ technological weaponry (machine guns, artillery) by units of the metropolitan Dutch army, rather than by members of the Dutch colonial army.

ARSON AND PILLAGING

Another aspect of Dutch warfare in Indonesia that tends to be underappreciated when only Dutch sources are consulted is the disruptive effect of small-scale violence such as arson or pillaging. The public and academic debates in the Netherlands about ‘excessive’ violence perpetrated by Dutch troops in Indonesia have focused on a limited number of shocking affairs in which large numbers of Indonesians were summarily executed.²⁸ But for many Indonesians, smaller-scale (but more pervasive) forms of violence hit closer to home. In particular it seems to have been a common practice among Dutch patrols to burn down houses in the villages they visited—at least if we follow the Indonesian sources. Arson, or indeed theft and pillaging, is rarely ever mentioned in official Dutch military reporting, although we do sometimes encounter it in veterans’ memoirs.²⁹

In the archives of the Indonesian National Police we discovered four reports dating from October 1947 until January 1948, composed by a certain Soekardono, the head of police in the Lumajang area (East Java).³⁰ Lumajang at this time was (formally) controlled by the Dutch, which means that Soekardono must have written his reports from hiding places in the surrounding countryside. He reported on various incidents and events to his superiors in Yogyakarta, listing both Dutch and Indonesian acts of violence. For 7 November 1947, for example, we read:

At eleven o’clock in the morning, Pak Potjet and his wife were apprehended in Dorogowok (Kunir) by Moeki’s band [a local irregular Indonesian guerrilla group, BL/CH], because they were suspected of espionage for the Dutch army. His house was set on fire. Pak Potjet and his wife were eventually murdered by Moeki’s band.³¹

As for Dutch actions and violence, Soekardono describes acts ranging from a case of rape, the arrests of local village heads and other dignitaries, to the unwanted installation of a new village head, or the simple fact that a patrol passed through a certain village.³² But featuring most prominently in Soekardono’s list (as in fact in similar reports from other regions that are kept in the same archive file) are instances of arson and theft. He reports such acts taking place around the district of Lumajang several times a week, usually registering the incurred damage in minute

detail: anything from burned houses worth several thousand Rupiah to a stolen hat worth Rp30.

Take, for instance, an action on 28 October 1947. According to Soekardono, 48 Dutch soldiers came to the village of Jatirejo, where they burned down two houses. The first to be set alight was the house of Mr. Tarah, 'a house with a tiled roof and a kitchen, including the household effects consisting of tables, chairs, cabinets, wooden beds' and various foodstuffs. Before setting the house on fire, the Dutch soldiers had stolen from Mr. Tarah items worth Rp5000. The local community house was also set on fire, amounting to a damage of Rp300. The soldiers subsequently entered several houses, all of which they 'left empty'. Soekardono lists eight houses, each with an exact list of the items stolen and their respective worth. Finally, the account reports that one of the inhabitants of the burgled houses, a certain Murijam, had been beaten and subsequently taken away to the local Dutch headquarters.³³

Tracing incidents like this—reported with great frequency by Soekardono and his colleagues elsewhere in Indonesia—in Dutch military sources turns out to be much more difficult than in the case of large-scale actions like Tanjung Balai or Karanggede. For some events it is impossible even to find a reference at all, apparently because the daily patrol activity was deemed so mundane that it was not considered militarily relevant to specify. In other instances, we merely find records that a patrol had indeed passed through the village in question but without any further details. It was not uncommon for units to report only in the most general terms. 'Apart from normal patrol activity nothing to report' and similar phrases abound.³⁴ In any case, Dutch sources almost never mention the damage inflicted, let alone confiscation of household effects. Regarding the incident in Jatirejo described above, a long search ultimately yielded no more than a succinct reference in a report from the field security section of the Marine Brigade (*Veiligheidsdienst Mariniersbrigade*, VDMB): 'Detachment Tempeh 28/10 during patrol in vicinity Jatirejo [...] 2 men arrested.'³⁵

A result like this is the rule, not the exception. Not only for the Marine Brigade in East Java, but also for Dutch forces in other regions of the Indonesian archipelago, incidents of arson or theft as well as skirmishes with the enemy during routine patrol activity were barely deemed worthy of a cursory mention. Considering the lack of corresponding Dutch sources, the credibility of the Indonesian reports is sometimes difficult to gauge. Soekardono's lists appear relatively trustworthy due to

his balanced reporting and the absence of sensational claims based on second- or third-hand rumours, while some other Indonesian officials clearly exaggerated in their reports, either to place blame on their adversaries or to impress their superiors. Nevertheless, given the large frequency with which arson and pillaging are reported, it seems justified to conclude that this kind of small-scale—but very disruptive—violence was commonplace.

Such small-scale violence is an endemic part of warfare, which often escapes mention in official sources. In this case, however, it also has a specific colonial dimension. One of the big differences between colonial and metropolitan law, in Indonesia as elsewhere, concerned the protection of private property. To put it bluntly, it was easier to destroy or steal property in a colonial setting even though military regulations officially warned against the practice for opportunistic reasons.³⁶ Destruction of enemy or suspected property and houses did indeed have a long colonial pedigree, also outside of official wartime. Whereas arson and theft are common in warfare more generally, in the colonial situation the barriers against these kinds of transgressions were lowered.

ARRESTS AND SWEEPS—OR KIDNAPPINGS AND THE ‘SOUTH-SULAWESI METHOD’?

Apart from the evidence for arson and pillaging, Soekardono’s reports also offer illustrations of yet another conspicuous difference between the Dutch and the Indonesian sources: the way in which arrests were perceived and experienced, especially the large-scale ‘screenings’ of villagers. In the months described by Soekardono, the months following the conclusion of the first ‘police action’, the Marine Brigade carried out extensive patrols and large-scale mopping-up operations throughout East Java, usually referred to as *sweeps*. Both during the routine patrol activity and the *sweeps*, significant numbers of villagers were detained. When studying the VDMB’s operational reports and weekly summaries for this period, we encounter the arrests of dozens of people on an almost daily basis, with comparatively few weapons captured.³⁷ The total casualties inflicted by the Marine Brigade between 21 July (the start of the ‘police action’) and 1 November 1947 amounted to 5621 enemies ‘shot down’ (*neergelagd*) and 3467 taken prisoner.³⁸

Indonesian officials describe these mass arrests rather differently. Soekardono consistently designated the arrested as having been ‘kidnapped’ (*ditjulik*). For 2 November 1947, for instance, he notes that Dutch forces had ‘kidnapped’ 50 people from the village of Dorogowok and brought them to Lumajang. ‘About 3 days later, 10 people returned home reporting that they had been severely beaten by the Dutch, because they had been suspected of planning a nightly attack on Lumajang.’³⁹ In other cases of individual arrests Soekardono equally describes the prisoners as ‘kidnapped’. On 10 November at 5 a.m. for example, the *djurutulis* (clerk) of the Yosowilangun sub-district was dragged out of his bed and ‘kidnapped’ to Lumajang by six Dutch soldiers.⁴⁰ A Dutch intelligence report for that day only notes that a patrol went to said village and confiscated 33 rolls of barbed wire as well as 140 iron corkscrews.⁴¹

The distinction between ‘arrested’ and ‘kidnapped’ may seem like a semantic triviality, but it is a clear example of the different perspectives that Indonesian and Dutch sources offer. Indonesian officials considered Dutch rule over Indonesia as illegitimate and therefore interpreted their actions as ‘kidnappings’.⁴² On the other hand, the Dutch authorities invariably described as ‘kidnappings’ attempts by Indonesian authorities or ‘gangs’ to arrest village heads and others suspected of cooperating with the Dutch.⁴³ These diametrically opposed viewpoints in themselves may be unsurprising, but things become problematic when we consider the effect on Dutch historiography: the Indonesian strategy to take out pro-Dutch civil servants is still today referred to as a campaign of large scale ‘kidnapping’, a term that is rarely if ever used for the Dutch strategy of ‘arresting’ suspicious or unsympathetic village heads—a strategy that is in some respects very similar.⁴⁴

Because of the semantic continuity with Dutch sources in the historiography, the Dutch perspective on the war has equally been perpetuated, a perspective in which Indonesian authorities did not even have the theoretical possibility to ‘arrest’ officials who in their eyes were disloyal. It should of course be granted that many of the arrests by Indonesian groups did indeed qualify as ‘kidnappings’ by most standards. The boundary between official policy, individual acts of revenge, and criminal intent was often vague. We know for example that several Indonesian irregular bands engaged in kidnappings in order to extract ransom. Nevertheless, this cannot take away from the fact that in the eyes of officials of the Indonesian Republic, many ‘arrests’ of pro-Dutch civil

servants were entirely lawful. By not acknowledging this semantically, Dutch historiography perpetuates a perspective that inherently treats *all* Indonesian groups as ultimately illegitimate.

Although the numbers of prisoners taken by the Dutch as mentioned above for the Marine Brigade are by no means insignificant, they represent just the tip of the iceberg even for this unit. The 3467 arrestees over a period of 10 weeks only include individuals who eventually were sent off to a prison or detention centre, not the much larger groups of people occasionally detained only for a short period of time.⁴⁵ In the operational area of the Marine Brigade, sweeps in which several hundred civilians were ‘rounded up’ (*bijeengedreven*) were common.⁴⁶ These groups were subsequently ‘screened’ for the presence of enemy fighters, after which those found innocent were sent home.⁴⁷

The marines involved seem to have considered such screenings as a relatively harmless and humane method. Those ‘rounded-up’ probably felt differently. We saw this with Soekardono, who spoke of the ‘kidnaping’ of 50 inhabitants of the village of Dorogowok. The difference in perception becomes even clearer if we look at the sweep that was conducted on 31 January 1948 in Kebonsari and Jrebeng, two villages a few kilometres south of the garrison town of Probolinggo. In the relevant VDMB intelligence report we find that around 900 (male) inhabitants were taken to Probolinggo. During the rounding-up, some ‘escapees’ were shot.⁴⁸ The Indonesian authorities (in this case the Department of Information of the Malang residency in a letter to the Ministry of Information) described this sweep in much more violent terms: ‘The number of inhabitants from the villages of Kebonsari-kulan and Jrebeng-lor shot by means of the “South-Sulawesi method” amounted to 125, according to information received from Dr. Santoso, Head of the General Hospital.’⁴⁹

The term ‘South-Sulawesi method’ refers to the ruthless counter-guerrilla campaign conducted by Dutch special forces under Captain Raymond Westerling in South Sulawesi between December 1946 and February 1947. This campaign, in which at least 3000 and possibly more people were killed, has since become the most infamous atrocity committed by Dutch troops, and had already at the time gained notoriety. The central element of Westerling’s *modus operandi*—which the author of the citation above references when speaking of the ‘South-Sulawesi method’—was to surround a village, round up the inhabitants and

‘screen’ them on the basis of previous intelligence or the help of other prisoners, and then to summarily execute those found ‘guilty’.⁵⁰

Whether or not this method was used on the central square of Probolinggo on 31 January 1948, and whether the number of 125 people executed comes close to the reality, we simply do not know. Indonesian propaganda regarding this ‘atrocious’ prompted an internal investigation by the Dutch army command, for which none other than the commander of the Marine Brigade himself was commissioned. He concluded that there was no basis for accusations that marines had ‘randomly shot villagers’ or for ‘treacherous shooting after an order to run had been given’. The commander was taken at his word, ending the investigation.⁵¹

Interestingly, during the investigation no-one seems to have expressed concern over the wording of the order for the *sweep* itself: ‘Clear the kampong Kebonsari south of Probolinggo [...] and round up all male inhabitants to be handed over to the VDMB’. Apparently, screenings on a massive scale in which an entire population was ‘rounded up’ were normal and even desired, as long as no inhabitants were ‘randomly’ shot.⁵² This attitude seems to echo a long-standing colonial tendency to consider the entire population as potentially threatening and (implicitly) to not consider *habeas corpus* to apply to the colonized population. Mass arrests and internments are a feature of counterinsurgency also beyond colonial contexts, and certainly were practised widely in various theatres of the Second World War. But still the tactic’s ubiquity in the colonial context should not be glossed over.⁵³ Dutch sources provide no Indonesian voices, lacking insight into how these supposedly non-violent methods were perceived by the objects of the screening. The reports by Soekardono and the Ministry give an indication: they felt subjected to a largely arbitrary policy of kidnapping and abuse. ‘Subaltern’ sources from the period of decolonization thus throw new light on an aspect of colonial oppression with a long pedigree.

AERIAL, ARTILLERY AND NAVAL BOMBARDMENTS

A final blind spot in the Dutch sources are the effects of bombardments, so-called ‘indiscriminate’ fire. It has been frequently noted by historians that the risks of collateral damage and civilian deaths were high with the use of heavy weapons. The number of casualties caused by bombardments possibly exceeds the total deaths caused by infantry violence.

Nevertheless, precious little has been written on this type of violence.⁵⁴ This is all the more significant because (as we know from Dutch military sources) the use of bombardments was more explicitly informed by recent lessons from the Second World War, whilst the various forms of extreme ‘contact violence’ (summary executions, torture, intimidation) have clearer origins in colonial tradition, at least for the Dutch-Indonesian case.⁵⁵

The lack of interest in bombardments means that its effects only receive cursory attention in most Dutch sources: the physical distance involved in bombardments and the fact that such attacks were not necessarily followed by a ground attack meant that the consequences were frequently not known. Indonesian sources tell us more. We have already encountered the use of artillery bombardment in the case of Karanggede, while Kebon Tengah was shelled by mortars. Aerial bombardments also appear frequently in the Indonesian sources. Take, for example, the combined aerial-naval attack on Indonesian gun positions in Lhokseumawe (Aceh) on 3 June 1949. In a report from the military governor of Aceh to the temporary emergency government of the Indonesian Republic, we find that around 2 p.m. four Dutch aircraft and a naval vessel off Lhokseumawe bombarded and strafed the town, continuing their attack for an hour and 20 minutes. The military governor further reported:

[A]mong the targets hit by machinegun fire were two schools, and some other houses. The number of casualties on our side was 3, including 1 fighter and 2 girls who were still in the school benches. Furthermore, two houses burned down [...] and three others were heavily damaged.⁵⁶

Tracing this action in the Dutch archives is not difficult. Each aerial and naval operation was carefully recorded. Regarding the attack on enemy gun positions in Lhokseumawe, the headquarters of the air force reported one hit and a few ‘near misses’; one bomb ‘accidentally’ hit the local graveyard. During the operation, an ad hoc decision was taken to attack several other enemy positions in the town (a military camp and some air-defence positions). The result of the attacks are merely described as follows: ‘Results: enemy guns probably destroyed as there was no returning fire.’⁵⁷ We do not learn where the ‘near misses’ actually hit.

The same pattern repeats itself in all cases of aerial bombardment that we investigated in both the Dutch and Indonesian sources. In Dutch

sources the focus is on the achievement of the action's goals and the amount of ammunition and ordinance used. Where information was available a few words would be spent on the operation's efficiency, but usually very little was known. In the Indonesian sources, by contrast, we find many reports relating the collateral damage and civilian casualties resulting from these kinds of attacks. Particularly prominent are accounts of civilians on public roads becoming the target of strafing from Dutch aircraft—what must have been the ultimate terror experience.

The discrepancy between Dutch and Indonesian sources in these cases does not consist of a fundamental disagreement on what happened, but rather it challenges the received perspective on these events. For the Dutch military leadership—and in its wake for many Dutch historians—the air force was an instrument to conduct concentrated attacks on enemy targets without too much risk of friendly casualties. For many Indonesians, the Dutch use of the air arm was a case of arbitrary mass-violence: it was as if the sky came falling down. In that regard, it is also noteworthy that such air attacks feature prominently in Indonesian pictorial representations from this period.⁵⁸

In the case of Lhokseumawe described above, as in most other cases of Dutch (aerial) bombardment, the attack seems to have had a legitimate target. Moreover, we should not forget that legal and moral opinions on 'military necessity' and 'collateral damage' have undergone radical change since the late 1940s.⁵⁹ At the very least, however, cases like Lhokseumawe once again demonstrate that an exclusive focus on Dutch sources delivers a one-sided view: the view from the cockpit, not the view from the street under fire.

CONCLUSION

The only way to fully understand the nature of colonial counterinsurgency, and especially its consequences, is to study the sources on both sides of the conflict. This might seem obvious. Unfortunately, it does not frequently occur in the context of Indonesia's war of decolonization. Studying the era of decolonization, in Indonesia as elsewhere, offers new opportunities to investigate colonial violence from the perspective of those subject to it.

In this chapter we examined both Dutch and Indonesian sources on the 1945–1949 Indonesian War of Independence, and identified critical aspects of the war that can be understood in more detail or in a new light

by using Indonesian sources. Our findings suggest that some specific forms of violence, such as the destruction of property and mass arrests, had an especially strong colonial pedigree, while others were more in line with recent developments in conventional forms of military thinking and practice. Of course, as the Dutch military endeavour in Indonesia was that of a colonial state attempting to preserve its authority, Dutch violence in this war was, in a narrow sense, by its very definition 'colonial violence'. The problem is that simply characterizing all violence that occurs in a colonial situation as 'colonial violence' tends to suggest that such violence must therefore also be uniquely 'colonial' in nature. But focusing on the colonial-ness of the violence seems to add little explanatory value in terms of understanding when, why, and how violence was actually used. We therefore suggest that it may be more useful to shed the facile equation of all violence in a colonial situation as 'colonial violence', and instead to examine more thoroughly to what extent colonial violence was, indeed, 'colonial' in nature.

Our findings also demonstrate the degree to which Dutch historiography has retained an enduringly colonial perspective on the disruptive effects of Dutch military practice on Indonesian society in the struggle for decolonization. Closer attention to Indonesian sources can help to address hiatuses in our knowledge, shed new light on incidents previously considered of little importance, and teach us not only about the goals and targets of colonial violence but also about its nature, effects and consequences. That former colonizers and former colonized still often have fundamental differences of memory on war and decolonization partly results from not studying each other's sources.

NOTES

1. See Dierk Walter, 'Warum Kolonialkrieg?', in Thoralf Klein and Frank Schumacher (eds), *Kolonialkriege: Militarische Gewalt im Zeichen des Imperialismus* (Hamburg, 2006), 14–43.
2. Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York, 1963, paperback edition 1991), 39.
3. The classics of counterinsurgency literature include Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (London, 1966); David Galula, *Counter-insurgency: Theory and Practise* (Westport, 1964). For an overview see, Ian F.W. Beckett, 'British counter-insurgency: a historiographical reflection', *Small wars and insurgencies* 23: 4–5 (2012), 781–798;

- Martin Bürger, 'From the Classics to Cultural History: Perspectives for Insurgency und Counterinsurgency Research', in Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, Jan Hoffenaar and Alan Lemmers (eds), *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Irregular Warfare from 1800 to the Present* (Den Haag 2011), 245–255.
4. The Anglophone literature on this war is limited and draws almost exclusively from the Dutch historiography: Jaap de Moor, 'Colonial warfare, theory and practice: the Dutch experience in Indonesia 1816–1949', *Journal of the Japan-Netherlands Institute*, 2 (1990), 98–114; Petra Groen, 'Militant response: the Dutch use of military force and the decolonization of the Dutch East Indies, 1945–1950', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21:3 (1993), 30–44; Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses (eds), *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence: The Dutch Empire in Indonesia* (Abingdon, 2014). More has been written in English on the Indonesian side of the 'revolution', though mostly with little interest for Dutch actions (see Note 8).
 5. Muhammad Yuanda Zara, "'Trust me, this news is indeed true": representations of violence in Indonesian newspapers during the Indonesian revolution, 1945–1948', in Luttikhuis and Moses (eds), *Colonial Counterinsurgency*, 214–239.
 6. Rémy Limpach, *De brandende kampongs van generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam 2016); Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, 'The civil and military dimensions of Dutch counter-insurgency on Java, 1947–49', *British Journal for Military History*, 1 (2015), 67–83; Gert Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië: Getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2015). A partial exception to this trend is Benjamin Bouman, *Van Driekleur tot Rood Wit: De Indonesische Officieren uit het KNIL: 1900–1950* (Den Haag 1995).
 7. Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution* (Hawthorn, 1974); Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945–1949* (North Sydney, 1991); William H. Frederick, *Visions and heat: the making of the Indonesian revolution* (Athens, Ohio, 1989).
 8. For an overview of the Dutch debate see, Stef Scagliola, 'Cleo's "unfinished business": coming to terms with Dutch war crimes in Indonesia's war of independence', in Luttikhuis and Moses (eds), *Colonial Counterinsurgency*, 240–260. On the British court cases see, Huw Bennet, 'Soldiers in the court room: the British army's part in the Kenya Emergency under the legal spotlight', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39 (December 2011), 717–730; Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Batang Kali massacre ruling clears way for UK supreme court appeal', *Guardian* (19 March 2014).

9. Limpach, *Brandende kampongs*; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*; Bart Luttkhuis en A. Dirk Moses, 'Colonial counterinsurgency and mass violence: the Dutch empire in Indonesia', in: Luttkhuis and Moses, *Colonial Counterinsurgency* 1–24.
10. Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'A genealogy of violence', in Colombijn and Lindblad, *Roots of violence*, 33–61; Limpach, *Brandende kampongs*, 705–708; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 18–19, 177.
11. Jaap de Moor, *Generaal Spoor: Triomf en Tragiek van een Legercommandant* (Amsterdam, 2011), 61–63, 70–71, 162.
12. Between 6 September and 12 December 1946, for instance, 65 Dutch and 1655 Indonesians were killed according to Dutch military reports (a ratio of 1:25): National Archives The Hague (henceforth NL-HaNA), Armed Forces NI, 137. Similarly, between 1 February and 20 May 1949, the Marine Brigade suffered five soldiers killed whilst inflicting 1598 killed on the 'enemy', according to the overviews in: NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096.
13. For discussion of the Dutch reaction to Indonesian insurgency see, Brocades Zaalberg, 'The civil and military dimensions'; Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*, 17–102; De Moor, *Westerling's oorlog*, especially 25–36.
14. For a general overview of the action: National Archives The Hague (henceforth NL-HaNA), Ministry of Defence: Armed Forces in the Netherlands-Indies, 2.13.132 (henceforth Armed Forces NI), 352, Daily overview Z-brigade command, 3–4 August 1947.
15. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3238, Corps history 1-1 RI August 1947.
16. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3305, War diary 1 Squadron Armoured Cars, Report on the action of Monday 4 August 1947. We further consulted: NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1272, 3291, 3323 en and 3344.
17. Hans Post, *Bandjir over Noord-Sumatra II* (Medan 1948/1949), 166.
18. M.W. Rombout, *Ter herinnering aan Uw verblijf op Sumatra 1-1 R.I.* (Belawan, 1948), 8.
19. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (henceforth ANRI), Arsip Kementerian Pertahanan (henceforth KemHan), 1322, Report from the department of information and publication for the minister of Defence, 19 September 1947.
20. Abdul Haris Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Regarding the Indonesian War of Independence; Bandung 1977–1979). For this chapter we used volumes V, VI, X. This work of Nasution has never been translated into Dutch or English, which probably contributed to impeding its reception in Dutch historiography. On Nasution see, C. L. M. Penders and Ulf Sundhaussen, *Abdul Haris Nasution: a political biography* (St. Lucia, 1985).

21. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan VI, Perang gerilya semesta I* (Bandung, 1978), 169.
22. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3294, Corps history 2-2 RVA fourth quarter 1947, 13 January 1948.
23. Cp. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 2977, Overview regarding the movements and actions in the period from 1 October 1947 until 31 December 1947, 8 January 1948.
24. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan V, Agresi militer Belanda I* (Bandung, 1978), 506.
25. Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 187–190, 211–215.
26. Nasution for example (*Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan X*, 128) mentions two confrontations on 9 March 1949 (near Ploso and Jombang) in which a total of six Dutch soldiers were allegedly killed. Dutch sources only mention a few wounded soldiers. According to the information of the usually reliable Dutch War Graves Foundation, not a single Dutch soldier was killed on 9 March in East-Java. See especially: NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1858 and 1901; [https://oorlogsgravenstichting.nl/zoeken?object=persoon&q=&filter\[0\]=overlijdensdatum&value\[0\]=09-03-1949#zoeken-form](https://oorlogsgravenstichting.nl/zoeken?object=persoon&q=&filter[0]=overlijdensdatum&value[0]=09-03-1949#zoeken-form) (30 November 2015).
27. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3248, Overview of movements etc. 2-4 RI third quarter 1947, 30 September 1947.
28. Jan Bank (ed.), *De excessennota: Nota betreffende het archiefonderzoek naar de gegevens omtrent excessen in Indonesië begaan door Nederlandse militairen in de periode 1945–1950* (The Hague, 1995); Scagliola, ‘Cleo’s “unfinished business”’; Luttkhuis, ‘Juridisch afgedwongen excuses’.
29. Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 190–200, 310–319; Limpach, *Brandende kampongs*, 419–439.
30. ANRI, Kepolisian Negara RI 1947–1949 (henceforth PolNeg), 498.
31. ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 19 November 1947.
32. ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 15 March 1947; ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 19 November 1947.
33. ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 19 November 1947. About two weeks later, on 13 November, another comparable action was conducted in the same village.
34. See e.g.: NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3238, Corps history I-1 R.I., 1947. Similar phrases can be found in: NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 3253, Overview of actions in which 2-6 RI participated, 1946–1947.
35. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1853, Intelligence report VDMB 1 November 1947. Lumajang was in the operational zone of the Marine Brigade rather than the army.

36. Limpach, *Brandende kampongs*, 435, 439.
37. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1856–1857; NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096.
38. NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096, Operational report 1–15 September 1947; NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096, Operational report 15–31 October 1947; NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096, Operational report 15–31 October 1947: appendix ‘Overview on the period 21 July–1 November 1947’.
39. ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 19 November 1947.
40. ANRI, PolNeg, 498, Transcript ‘miscellaneous incidents’, 19 November 1947.
41. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1871, Situation report 13 November 1947.
42. Cf. on the same semantic tendency in Indonesian newspapers: Zara, “Trust me” 232–234.
43. E.g.: NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1853, Intelligence report 2 November 1947. On the Indonesian campaign to ‘arrest’/‘kidnap’ village heads loyal to the Dutch: Harry Poeze, ‘Walking the tightrope: internal Indonesian conflict, 1945–49’, in: Lutikhuis and Moses, *Colonial Counterinsurgency*, 176–197.
44. Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen*, 247–251; Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog* passim; De Moor, *Westerling’s oorlog* 237, 261, 265; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor: triomf en tragiek van een legercommandant* (Amsterdam 2011) 280, 310; Poeze, ‘Walking the tightrope’.
45. More extensively on this distinction: Bart Lutikhuis, ‘Generating distrust through intelligence work: Psychological terror and the Dutch intelligence services in Indonesia 1945–1949’, *War in History* (forthcoming 2017); Remco Raben, ‘Zonder vorm van proces’, *Historisch nieuwsblad*, Nr. 10 (2014) 33–39.
46. NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2096, Operational report 1–14 September 1947, 6.
47. Unfortunately, it is as yet unclear to what extent this practice was also prevalent in other units at different locations.
48. NL-HaNA, Armed Forces NI, 1854, Situation report 30 January 1948–31 January 1948.
49. ANRI, Kementerian Penerangan, 93, Letter from Malang department of information to the Ministry of Information, 21 February 1948.
50. IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebes affaire*; De Moor, *Westerling’s oorlog*, 128–159.
51. See for the Dutch investigation: *Excessennota* 24–26.
52. *Excessennota* 24.

53. David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–1967* (Oxford 2011), 105–137; Luttikhuis, ‘Generating distrust’.
54. Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen* 210–212; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië* 187–190. Limpach (*Brandende kampongs*, 389–419) deals with mechanical violence somewhat more extensively, but most of his in-depth case studies still focus on various forms of contact violence.
55. The undue overemphasis of colonial historians on contact violence has therefore resulted in an overemphasis on supposedly unique colonial genealogies of violence. E.g. Schulte Nordholt, ‘Genealogies’; Limpach, *Brandende kampongs*, 63–119, 705–711, 750–751; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 18–19, 177.
56. ANRI, Rasjid, 240, Letter from Governor of Aceh to PDRI, 28 June 1949.
57. NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2206, Summary HQ Military Aviation concerning operations Hulstkamp I and II and action Lho Seumaweh on 2 and 3 June 1949, 1 September 1949. See further: NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 2209, Chronological report action against Lho Seumawé, 8 June 1949; NL-HaNA, Navy Command, 1275, Situation report HQ Military Aviation, 7 June 1949.
58. See, for example, the drawings by Mohammed Toha, made during the Dutch occupation of Yogyakarta (December 1948) in Pieter Eckhardt and J. P. Sigmond (eds), *Kind in de oorlog: Mohammed Toha schildert Yogyakarta 1948–1949* (Amsterdam, 2009); Remco Raben, ‘Getuige in opdracht: de val van Djokja door de ogen van Mohammad Toha’, in *Oorlog! Van Indië tot Indonesië 1945–1950* (Arnhem, 2015), 24–25.
59. G. Palmer-Fernandez, ‘Civilian Populations in War, Targeting of’, in *Encyclopaedia of Applied Ethics*, 2nd edition (London, 2012), 459–466; Karma Nabulsi, ‘Evolving Conceptions of Civilians and Belligerents: One Hundred Years After the Hague Peace Conferences’, in Simon Chesterman (ed.), *Civilians in War* (London, 2001), 9–24, 15–18; Sahr Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage: Americans, Noncombatant Immunity, and Atrocity after World War II* (New York, 2006).

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