

“AN ARMY OF WORKING-MEN:”
MILITARY LABOR AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN EMPIRE,

1865-1915

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ABSTRACT

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“AN ARMY OF WORKING-MEN:”

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Stephanie McCurry

This dissertation is a labor history of the United States army in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that soldiers constituted a partially-unfree labor force essential to the advance of U.S. imperialism. The project draws on government reports, military records, court-martial testimonies, memoirs, letters, and newspapers. It examines the U.S.’s military labor regime in pre-statehood California, the Reconstruction South, the trans-Mississippi West, and the southern Philippines.

Military labor, often performed under duress, allowed the United States to extend its authority across North America and around the world. Soldiers built roads and telegraph lines; mapped territory; supervised elections; assisted railroads and other private companies; and governed subject populations. This state-sanctioned labor regime relied on coercive and violent practices. Soldiers were paid less and enjoyed fewer rights and protections than their civilian counterparts. They were subject to physical punishments and humiliations for various infractions. In the most telling difference between military and “free” labor, soldiers could not leave their assignments even one day short of their enlistment period; “quitting” the army was criminalized as desertion.

As the United States extended its influence over new parts of the world, its military labor regime also expanded to include local populations. This study examines the army's attempts to exploit the labor of soldiers and indigenous populations as well as resistance to these efforts. viii

This project reframes the army's contributions to U.S. imperialism. Beyond the battlefield, soldiers worked, often under duress, on behalf of an ambitious and expansionary state. By focusing on the army's labor regime, it demonstrates the centrality of both the military and unfree labor to the construction of an American empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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ABBREVIATIONS

x

<i>Cong. Globe</i>	Congressional Globe
LC	Library of Congress
NA	National Archives
USAHEC	U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center

INTRODUCTION

1

In 1873, a group of military dignitaries celebrated the groundbreaking for a new telegraph line in Arizona Territory. Army officers and local leaders gave speeches, and the Twenty-Third Infantry Band provided music. Women played a conspicuous, if symbolic, role in the affair. The wife of Civil War hero and famed Indian-fighter George Crook “turned” “the first sod,” according to the *Army and Navy Journal*. The chief quartermaster’s wife, a Mrs. Dana, broke a champagne bottle over the first pole. It was a joyous occasion, and “a large and appreciative throng of observers” had come out to witness the event. Speakers heralded the new technology, which promised to “unite Arizona with the outside world.” Among the speakers was one Captain A. H. Nickerson, adjutant-general of the military department. He “alluded gracefully to the labors performed by our Army in the cause of science and civilization,” and noted that “while its sword was ever ready to defend our country’s glory in time of war, its services were no less efficient in time of peace, whether in exploring new routes for railroads in the Yellowstone country or in building telegraphs in Arizona.”¹

The following year, Minnesota Republican Mark H. Dunnell took to the floor of Congress likewise to praise the army’s work in the West. Dunnell, originally from Maine and briefly a colonel with the 5th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the Civil War, spoke passionately about the army’s importance. The West held enormous prospects and great riches, Dunnell told his fellow statesmen. As part of a longer defense of federal expenditures in support of “settlement” along the “frontier,” he insisted that the army

¹ This account of the day and Nickerson’s remarks is taken from “A Telegraph to Arizona,” *Army and Navy Journal* [hereafter *ANJ*], vol. 11, September 27, 1873.

made it possible for “the American citizen” to exploit the promises of the West. Dunnell² declared:

‘Westward the course of empire holds its way,’ and it is too late to say that the adventurous men of the East shall not find their way into the Territories of the country. These surveying parties are the prospectors to find out where lies the wealth of the country, and if it takes one hundred soldiers or five hundred to guard a surveying party, they are doing more service to the country than any other same number of men in the service and are the most productive men in the whole country.²

The “service” of soldiers guarding such surveying parties could not be underestimated, the Minnesota congressman reminded his colleagues. The “wealth of the country” – and the future of the American empire – depended on the army.

A handful of army officers and politicians recognized the significance of military labor. Yet such paeans to routine military labor were rare. Instead, the army’s activities beyond the battleground were usually deemed peripheral to its true mission; more often they were simply ignored. This dissertation examines the U.S. army’s labor regime in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that soldiers constituted a partially-unfree labor force essential to the advance of American imperialism. Military labor allowed the United States to extend its authority across North America and around the world. Soldiers built roads and telegraph lines; mapped territory; supervised elections; assisted railroads and other private companies; and governed subject population. This state-sanctioned labor regime relied on coercive and violent practices. Soldiers were paid less and enjoyed fewer rights and protections than their civilian counterparts. They were subject to physical punishments and humiliations for various infractions. In the most

² *Congressional Record*, House of Representatives, 43rd Congress, 1st Session, February 4, 1874, 1169.

telling difference between military and “free” labor, soldiers could not leave their assignments even one day short of their enlistment period; “quitting” the army was criminalized as desertion. Although many aspects of the army’s labor regime were remarkably consistent over time, it did change as the U.S. extended its reach around the globe. Soldiers in the outposts of empire continued to perform a great deal of manual labor, but they also became overseers of large local populations whose labor was bought, leveraged, or compelled by the U.S. government. The story of the U.S. army’s labor system reflects the persistence of unfree labor many decades after the end of chattel slavery in the American South.

This study begins in pre-statehood California, moves to the Reconstruction South, extends to the trans-Mississippi West, and concludes with the period of U.S. military rule in the southern Philippines. During and immediately following the Mexican-American War, the U.S. army occupied and governed California before Congress incorporated it as the thirty-first state in the Union. In the post-Civil War South, enlisted men served as police, supervised elections, and adjudicated disputes among civilians. In the West, they built roads and telegraph lines, escorted railroad surveyors, and mapped territory. Their labor opened up vast new areas to capital investment, while they helped dispossess indigenous peoples of their land and resources. After the Spanish-American War, the U.S. army carried out many of these same functions in its growing overseas empire. In the southern Philippines, for example, American troops built roads, surveyed land and created maps, collected taxes, and mediated between local populations. These responsibilities were familiar to officers and soldiers who had performed similar occupational work in North America.

This project reframes the army's contributions to U.S. imperialism. Although the 4
army is hardly understudied, military history has become an increasingly isolated subfield
within the historical profession. Within that subfield, however, military historians have
demonstrated the diverse range of activities undertaken by the army in the post-Civil War
era. Not only were soldiers assigned to "reconstruct" the occupied South, but they were
also at the frontlines of battles against organized labor, from the anthracite mines of
Pennsylvania to the Pullman factory in Chicago.³ Even the "Indian-fighting army" was in
reality so much more. In historian Michael Tate's words, it was a "multipurpose army"
that contributed to important developments in exploration and mapping, transportation,
communication, law enforcement, and medicine and public health.⁴ The story of the
army's efforts to crush Native resistance, whether through extermination, conquest, or co-
optation, was an essential part of its mission in the West. A consideration of the army's
ancillary duties, such as its function as a major employer and builder in the West,
enhances our understanding of the larger context for these military activities.

A reconsideration of the army's many roles contributes to recent scholarship
focused on the trans-Mississippi West in the nineteenth century. Although the army
played a crucial and complex role in the West, the "new western history" has sadly taken

³ See Jerry M. Cooper, "The Army as Strikebreaker— the Railroad Strikes of 1877 and 1894," *Labor History* 18, no. 2 (March 1977): 179–96; Joshua B. Freeman, "Militarism, Empire, and Labor Relations: The Case of Brice P. Disque," *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 80 (October 1, 2011): 103–120; Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-68* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Priscilla Murolo, "Wars of Civilization: The US Army Contemplates Wounded Knee, the Pullman Strike, and the Philippine Insurrection," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 80, no. 01 (2011): 77–102.

⁴ See Tate, *The Frontier Army*. A useful review of scholarship on the frontier army, much of it on the army's economic role in the West, is Bruce J. Dinges, "New Directions in Frontier Military History: A Review Essay," *New Mexico Historical Review* 66 (January 1991): 103–116.

little note of the army and its activities.⁵ According to one scholar, “A check of standard 5 publications by and about the New Western Historians reveals an almost total neglect of the frontier army as an element in the westering story.”⁶ Developments within social and political history may have shifted attention from the military in recent decades. Historian Sherry L. Smith, who has written about how enlisted men and officers viewed Native Americans, argues that in the post-Vietnam era, historians felt that “research on the army of the West implied sympathy with the military.” Even in more recent scholarship that avoids the racist pitfalls of earlier work, “the tendency to focus solely on the army reinforced the perhaps unconscious notion that only the white stories mattered.”⁷ The army, however, is essential to understanding the political, social, and economic history of the West.

Greater attention to the army also promises to illuminate the role of the state in the nineteenth-century. This has long been one of the major concerns of new western historians as well as a growing cohort of historians and political scientists.⁸ Writing back

⁵ The historiography of the “new western history” is extensive. The paradigmatic work remains Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). See also the collection of essays *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, eds. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. II Milner, Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1991). For a recent assessment of new western history, its achievements and its future prospects, see David M. Wrobel, “Introduction: ‘What on Earth Has Happened to the New Western History?’,” *Historian* 66, no. 3 (2004): 437–441. For a detailed argument about the importance of greater attention to the state in western history, see Karen R. Merrill, “In Search of the ‘Federal Presence’ in the American West,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 1999): 449–73.

⁶ Michael L. Tate, *The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), xiv.

⁷ Sherry L. Smith, “Lost Soldiers: Re-Searching the Army in the American West,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1998): 151. Military historians have also recognized the diversity within the army. The rank-and-file included European immigrants and African-Americans, as well as native-born white men, and Native Americans served as auxiliaries or “scouts.” For an overview of recent currents in military history, see R. M. Citino, “Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 1070–1090.

⁸ On new western historians’ concern with the state, see, for example, Alan Brinkley, “The Western Historians: Don’t Fence Them In,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1992 [accessed 2 July 2013].

against the romantic and myopic view that the West had been “settled” solely by hardy 6
frontiersmen and pioneers, scholars including Patricia Nelson Limerick and Richard
White have demonstrated the myriad ways the central state helped shape the western
economy and politics. White is perhaps most responsible for disabusing Americans of the
notion that the West was the terrain of individual initiative. “The American West, more
than any other section of the United States, is a creation not so much of individual or
local efforts, but of federal efforts,” White writes. “More than any other region, the West
has been historically a dependency of the federal government.” Despite this attention to
the federal government’s importance in the West, the army – perhaps the most powerful
and certainly the most numerically significant of state-sponsored institutions in the region
– has not attracted much attention. This study focuses attention on how the U.S. army
extended the influence and authority of the American state in the South, the West, and
overseas. Although it does not offer an assessment of state capacity per se, it
demonstrates how a relatively small national army carried out a variety of sweeping
political and economic functions in the nineteenth century.⁹

⁹ For the original call to “bring the state back in,” see Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For differing perspectives on the size and scope of the American state in the nineteenth century, see Richard Franklin Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Richard R. John, “Rethinking the Early American State,” *Polity* 40, no. 3 (July 1, 2008): 332–39; William J. Novak, “The Legal Transformation of Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, eds. Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 85-119. Although his work predates the new western history and scholarship in American Political Development (APD) by several decades, William Goetzmann demonstrated the crucial role of the army and the federal government in exploring and surveying the West throughout the nineteenth century. He focused on large-scale studies and surveying projects more so than routine scouts. See William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959);

The activities of soldiers and officers contributed to broad economic transformations in North America. This project shines new light on the relationship between the federal government and private interests, underlining the centrality of government-backed construction projects to the expansion of private investment long before the Keynesian economic policies of the mid-twentieth century. It also contributes to recent conversations about the persistence and importance of unfree labor in capitalist economies by focusing on the labor of soldiers.¹⁰ Indeed, this study shows how the army was riven by conflicts over the proper work of soldiers and their rights and privileges. Of course, the army was not a monolithic or hegemonic force. Enlisted men were neither architects of federal policy nor masters of their own fates. Whatever their personal opinions about the army's mission, soldiers had very little control over the terms of their own labor. Instead, they were part of an American working class experiencing firsthand

Exploration and empire: the explorer and the scientist in the winning of the American West (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). For a call for more research on Reconstruction and the American state, see Gregory P. Downs, "The World the War Made: The 'Disturbing Tendencies' of the Civil War and the New Map of Reconstruction," *Reviews in American History* 40, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 88-95.

Scholars of England and the Atlantic World have paid more attention to the relationship between the military and state formation. See, for example, John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); and John Donoghue, "'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 943-74.

¹⁰ On the new history of capitalism, see Jeffrey Sklansky, "Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism," *Labor* 11, no. 1 (March 20, 2014): 23-46; "Interchange: The History of Capitalism," *Journal of American History* 101, no. 2 (September 2014): 503-36; Seth Rockman, "What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?" *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (2014): 439-66; Jennifer Schuessler, "In History Departments, It's Up With Capitalism," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/07/education/in-history-departments-its-up-with-capitalism.html>. For a fairly recent and thorough overview of scholarship on U.S. empire, see Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011): 1348-91.

For *recent* debates on the relationship between slavery and capitalism, see Scott Reynolds Nelson, "Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery?" *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 2 (2015): 289-310, for a critique of the recent literature. For an early statement of what has become the new orthodoxy on the relationship between slavery and capitalism, see Walter Johnson, "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 2 (2004): 299-308.

the growing pains of capitalism and the demands of an aggressive imperialism. Oddly, 8
soldiers were both members of an exploited proletariat and the shock troops of
capitalism, objects of imperial aggression and agents of empire.¹¹

Historians have recently begun to recognize the importance of military labor,
particularly in the context of U.S. imperialism.¹² The editors of a recent volume on labor
and imperial history write, “No one would question whether factory workers are workers,
but labor historians have only just begun to incorporate military personnel into a broader

¹¹ Charles Sellers might dispute this point. He wrote, “Lawyers were the shock troops of capitalism” – a designation that I also believe has great merit, especially for the antebellum period about which he writes. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47.

¹² See, for example, the articles in a special edition of *International Labor and Working-Class History* devoted to exploring the relationship between militaries and labor: Joshua B. Freeman and Geoffrey Field, eds., “Labor and the Military,” special issue, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 80, no. 1 (2011): 3-147. For a recent compilation of essays with truly global perspectives on military labor, see Erik-Jan, Zürcher, ed., *Fighting for a living: a comparative history of military labour 1500-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

For accounts of the nineteenth-century U.S. army in the West that acknowledge the importance of labor, see Kevin Adams, *Class and Race in the Frontier Army: Military Life in the West, 1870-1890* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), and Janne Lahti, *Cultural Construction of Empire: The U.S. Army in Arizona and New Mexico* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

For a careful study of military labor in the context of the U.S.-Philippines War, see Justin Jackson, “The Work of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Making of American Colonialisms in Cuba and the Philippines, 1898-1913,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2014). Mary Renda shows how the U.S. military supported the construction of infrastructure during its occupation of Haiti in the early twentieth century, but as cultural history of the occupation her book does not look carefully at the actual building of infrastructure or the organization of labor under American military rule. See Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 117-119.

Other historians have demonstrated links between soldiers and workers in civilian society by examining how labor organizing influenced soldiers’ behavior. Christopher Capozzola shows how broader developments among workers in Manila shaped the way Philippine Scouts understood their rights and sparked their protest in a military context. See Capozzola, “The Secret Soldiers’ Union: Labor and Soldier Politics in the Philippine Scout Mutiny of 1924,” *Making the Empire Work*, 85-103. Of course, being able to recognize such evidence of worker solidarity and organizing among soldiers requires that historians first acknowledge that soldering was (and is) labor.

narrative of working-class history.”¹³ As labor historians explore the ways in which U.S. 9
power was exercised both domestically and overseas, they are beginning to recognize the
centrality of military work – not just military *might* – to the expansion of American
influence. By treating soldiers as workers, this study builds on excellent studies of
soldiers as “war-workers” in the British empire.¹⁴ It also speaks to histories of American
soldiers in the twentieth century and their complex relationship to working-class culture
and politics more broadly.¹⁵ Historians of the nineteenth-century U.S. have been less
willing to see soldiers as part of the U.S. working-class or to explore their service as a
form of labor than their eighteenth-century counterparts. Yet the military labor regime in
the post-Civil War period was a *state*-sanctioned regime of coerced labor. This study
therefore suggests new ways of understanding the federal government’s role in arbitrating
between the competing claims of free and unfree labor, and it adds another dimension to

¹³ Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman, “Introduction: Through the Looking Glass: U.S. Empire through the Lens of Labor History,” in *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, eds. Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 11.

¹⁴ My thinking has been especially influenced by the work of historian Peter Way, who has argued that soldiers in the eighteenth-century British army must be understood as “war workers.” See Peter Way, “‘black service...white money’: The Peculiar Institution of Military Labor in the British Army during the Seven Years’ War,” in *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74. The phrase “war workers” is from Way, *ibid.*, 62. There is a large literature on the culture and politics of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century maritime workers, including sailors in national navies but also merchant seamen, pirates, and others. For example, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

¹⁵ In the twentieth century, a study of the working-class backgrounds of Vietnam veterans and how their class identity shaped their responses to both the war and the anti-war movement is Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). For a fascinating account of how the U.S. army adopted the language of jobs and career to address the challenges of recruiting a volunteer army, see Beth L. Bailey, *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), and Bailey, “Soldiering as work: The all-volunteer force in the United States,” in *Fighting for a Living*, 581-612. See also Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good for?: Black Freedom Struggles and the US Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), on the experiences of black working-class soldiers.

the landscape of coercion that historians of contract, convict, and *padrone* labor have sketched in the American West and West.¹⁶

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This study connects the army and its soldiers to the larger sweep of continental and imperial U.S. history. It is not a regional history, but it draws heavily on scholarship on the South, the West, and U.S. empire. The chronological and geographic scope of the study is vital to its argument: that the labor of soldiers contributed to the *imperial* development of the United States. Tracing the army's movements also helps bridge the tenacious historiographical divide between the continental "expansion" of the nineteenth century and the imperial age of the early twentieth century. Only by looking at the army as it moved across the continent and across oceans can historians understand its global significance. The project of linking American continental imperialism – or, euphemistically, manifest destiny – with events in the late-nineteenth century is anything but recent. In 1969, William Appleman Williams argued that an ideological faith in the marketplace gave coherence to American expansion in the nineteenth century. Explaining the shift from continental to overseas expansion, Williams writes, "Given their strong traditional commitment to the marketplace conception of reality, and the experience they could so easily interpret as confirming that conception of the world, American agriculturalists moved from a continental to an overseas imperial outlook with relatively

¹⁶ On unfree labor in the American West after the Civil War, see Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

little intellectual difficulty or emotional shock.”¹⁷ Although adherents of the Wisconsin School differed among themselves about the key moments in this history, Williams and his counterparts agreed that the “roots of American empire” began to grow long before the Spanish-American War.

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By linking the South, West, and “imperial” Pacific, this study connects geographically disparate phases of U.S. imperialism in order to demonstrate ideological continuities in the overall project. In doing so, it also underlines the centrality of the U.S. army and military labor to various incarnations of the U.S. imperial project. Beyond the battlefield, soldiers worked, often under duress, on behalf of an ambitious and expansionary state. Drawing on government reports, military records, court-martial testimonies, memoirs, letters, and newspapers, this study demonstrates the key role of unfree military labor to the construction of an American empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first half of the study moves geographically from California in the 1840s, back to the South after the Civil War, and once again to the trans-Mississippi West in the 1870s and 1880s. In the second half, it follows the army to the southern Philippines, where officers and enlisted men encountered new challenges. However, one of the surprises of this journey is how little changed and how many methods and ideas developed in the continental U.S. were repurposed on the Pacific “frontier.” The first chapter, “Army of Occupations: The U.S. Army in the West and South,” explores the army’s experience of postbellum occupation and governance in the 1840s and 1860s, following the Mexican War and the American Civil War. It also

¹⁷ William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 271.

examines how political conflicts over the army's role in the South during Reconstruction¹² helped shape its western assignments on the Plains. Chapter 2, "'More laboring than soldiering': The U.S. Army as a Labor Force," argues that the labor of soldiers provided significant benefits to private individuals and investors in the West. It shows how the infrastructure soldiers built directly benefited certain landowners, ranchers, and speculators. Chapter 3, "'A slave in Uncle Sam's service': The Army and the Problem of Labor in the Gilded Age," makes clear that military service constituted a form of coerced labor that was increasingly exceptional in the late-nineteenth century. It reveals how soldiers protested their own exploitation by drawing on new ideas and expectations about labor and citizenship.

The second half of this project moves to Mindanao, a majority-Muslim region in the southern Philippines. Even after hostilities were declared over in most of the Philippines, U.S. troops continued to battle insurgents in this region. As a result of continued fighting and Americans' assessment that these Muslims and animists were not ready for civilian government, the U.S. created a special military government in Mindanao. The fourth chapter, "'A Despotical Machine': Labor and the Imperial Project," argues that the control of laboring populations was a top priority for army officers trying to establish a government in this region. Guided by a specific vision of economic development and a narrow, Eurocentric civilizational mandate, they attempted to fashion new labor systems that involved control over soldiers as well as local populations. Chapter 5, "'Two million industrious laborers': Military Dreams of a Plantation Colony," looks at how army officials promoted the private plantation economy in the Moro Province as well as the resistance they faced. Officers tried to attract American

investment by holding fairs and exhibitions and tailoring their military maneuvers to support planters' agendas. But the Moros' embrace of plantation agriculture was anything but enthusiastic. Labor shortages, evasion, and outright violence plagued American attempts to promote the plantation export economy. The sixth and final chapter, "Our Indian wards in the southern Philippines': Colonial Rule and the Labor of Ideas," explores the intellectual labor of the military elite. Army officers contributed to the U.S. imperial project by crafting narratives of American benevolence and indigenous and Filipino inferiority. Their writings and publications helped shape popular and academic understandings of the United States' place in the world. Taken together, these six chapters outline the broad and crucial role of military labor in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

* * *

In 1906, Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Bullard implored his fellow Americans to appreciate the army's important work. The public, Bullard believed, took for granted that soldiers expanded the reach of the United States and its empire. "All over this country, in the great West especially, there are thousands of miles of high-road that were originally laid out and made by the soldier, and today in use by his countrymen with no thought, be it not a sneer, for him who broke the way," Bullard wrote. He estimated the roads built by soldiers would "doubtless twice span this continent." The army was responsible for "opening" the West to "civilization." Bullard also credited the army with trying to civilize Native Americans and making possible the advance of the transcontinental railroads. Furthermore, as he wrote these words in the early twentieth century, Bullard insisted that soldiers they were replicating these accomplishments around the globe.

“Soldiers,” he declared, “have located, laid out, and, by the labor of their own hands 14
under killing heat, stalking disease, the awful cholera, have built in the Philippines great
roads that are letting in the light upon their dark places. Soldiers have covered the islands
with a network of telegraph lines that are subduing them to civilization.” Echoing a litany
of chores soldiers performed decades earlier in the trans-Mississippi West, Bullard
reminded readers that soldiers in the Philippines were “on guard day and night against a
treacherous enemy, camping, marching and fighting, surveying and building roads,
building bridges of iron and wood, logging, building and operating sawmills, quarrying,
erecting barracks and quarters, building ships’ docks, raising sunken steamers, building
and operating telegraph lines, establishing and running government – a dozen businesses
and professions at once.”¹⁸ Bullard expected that, as in the North American West,
soldiers would receive little credit for their labor in the Philippines.

It is not necessary to employ Bullard’s nineteenth-century rhetoric of
“civilization” to recognize that soldiers transformed the North American continent and
many overseas territories through back-breaking and thankless work. The army’s regime
of military labor helped push forward the capitalist development of the United States and
contributed to its emergence as an imperial power. Yet as he lamented, the work of
soldiers has been overlooked, perhaps willfully. Ideologies of nationalism, masculinity,
and honor have played a part in obscuring the unglamorous aspects of soldiering. By
excavating the army’s labor regime, this study throws new historical actors into bold

¹⁸ R.L. Bullard, “In Times of Peace,” *Overland Monthly* [*Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*] 47,
no. 2 (February 1906). Bullard’s writing recalls the first words spoken in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of
Darkness*: “‘And this also,’ said Marlow suddenly, ‘has been one of the dark places of the earth.’” Joseph
Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1990), 3.

relief: we find a small but effective military force, transforming the continent on behalf 15
of private interests; a federal government working hand in hand with capital; soldiers
whose decades of protest and resistance has largely been ignored; and armies of exploited
workers laboring on behalf of the American empire.

The chapters that follow explore this labor. Following soldiers beyond the
battlefield, taking note of the roads they built and the roads they supervised being built by
others, finding soldiers doing dozens of unexpected tasks, may yet change the way we
understand such fundamental aspects of the nineteenth-century United States as war,
peace, and work.

Army of Occupations: The U.S. Army in the West and South

In his first message to Congress as President, Andrew Johnson explained why he had restored the former states of the Confederacy to the Union. The decision rested, in part, on his opposition to military rule. “Now, military governments, established for an indefinite period, would have offered no security for the early suppression of discontent, would have divided the people into the vanquishers and the vanquished, and would have envenomed hatred rather than have restored affection.”¹⁹ Republican representative Thaddeus Stevens took issue with the President’s action in restoring the states to the Union. Stevens insisted that only Congress could determine the new relations between states of the former Confederacy and the United States. Yet despite his opposition to Johnson, in 1865, Stevens also spoke out against military rule. “Since the conquest [these states] have been governed by martial law,” Stevens said. Although the South was, in essence, a “conquered province,” and by the “law of nations,” the U.S. could decide what type of government it should have, Stevens thought an end should come to military rule. “Military rule is necessarily despotic, and ought not to exist longer than is absolutely necessary,” he admitted. Rather than being admitted as states, he argued that the rebellious states should be organized into “territorial governments.”²⁰

¹⁹ *Senate Journal*. 39th Cong., 1st sess., 11 (1865).

²⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 72 (1865). On Stevens’ ideas concerning territorialization, see Brooks D. Simpson, “Land and the Ballot: Securing the Fruits of Emancipation?” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 60, no. 2 (1993): 176–88. There is some evidence that freedpeople may have believed that the southern states would be turned into territories. In 1865, a black man named Aaron Bradley was brought up on charges of “using insurrectionary language.” Bradley was accused of “publicly proclaim[ing] that the Rebel or Seceded States were now in the condition of Territories, and that the colored people had a right to squat on and take possession of the lands therein, and no power less than an Act of Congress could remove them.” General Orders, No. 40, Savannah, Georgia, December 16, 1865, in

Congress did not adopt Stevens' plan to reorganize the former Confederate states 17 as territories. Instead, just over a year after Stevens' speech calling military rule "despotic," he championed a new piece of legislation. In "An act to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel States," Congress proposed the reestablishment of military rule in the South. In his remarks accompanying his veto of the act, Johnson denounced the legislation that would place the former Confederate states "under the domination of military masters." This "military despotism" would ultimately lead to something even worse – "Negro domination." Furthermore, Johnson warned, military government would "totally subvert and destroy the form as well as the substance of republican government in the ten States to which they apply. It binds them hand and foot in absolute slavery, and subjects them to a strange and hostile power, more unlimited and more likely to be abused than any other now known among civilized men. It tramples down all those rights in which the essence of liberty consists, and which a free government is always most careful to protect." On March 2, 1867, Congress passed the legislation, now better known as the First Reconstruction Act, over Johnson's veto.²¹

Johnson and Stevens were not the first American statesmen to debate whether military government conflicted fundamentally with American republican government. In the wake of the Mexican War, lawmakers and residents looked askance at the military government established in California. Nor was Reconstruction the last time U.S. troops would be tasked with duties normally associated with civilian government. This chapter

Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series 3, Vol. 1, Land and Labor, 1865, eds. Steven Hahn, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O'Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, Leslie S. Rowland (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 468.

²¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 271-280.

explores the army's role as an occupying and governing force in the nineteenth century. 18

It argues that the labor of occupation was central to the army's mission as the United States extended its boundaries across the continent and put down rebellion within its borders. The first section discusses one of the major overlooked precedents for Reconstruction – the military occupation and government of California from 1846-1850. The second section follows debates in Congress over the distribution of troops after the Civil War. It shows how the U.S. army was engaged in two simultaneous “reconstructions” – one in the former Confederacy, and other one in the trans-Mississippi West. Rather than an exceptional and unprecedented use of military power in a civilian context, southern Reconstruction was one of several attempts by the American state to use its military forces to incorporate new territory and peoples into the nation.

As the United States conquered and reconquered territory throughout the nineteenth century, soldiers played a variety of roles during occupations. These were not the traditional duties of soldiers on the battlefield: instead, they oversaw elections, managed city governments, protected freedpeople, dispensed aid, and assisted local police forces. Few historians, however, have treated the U.S. army as an army of occupation. Furthermore, Reconstruction scholars have not tried to connect postwar military occupation to previous military governments, such as the ones the United States administered during and after the Mexican-U.S. War.²² In *The United States Army and*

²² Studies of the U.S. army in Reconstruction include James E. Sefton, *The United States Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789-1878* (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1988); Joseph G. Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana, 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); William L. Richter, *The Army in Texas During Reconstruction, 1865-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987); Ted Tunnell, *Edge of the Sword: The Ordeal of Carpetbagger Marshall H. Twitchell in the Civil War and*

Reconstruction, 1865-1877, James E. Sefton portrays Reconstruction as an aberration

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from soldiers' other assignments in the nineteenth and twentieth century. "In historical perspective the role of the Army in the South from 1865 to 1877 was unique. There were no precedents for the task the soldiers faced, and the experience they gained was largely unneeded in the years following Reconstruction," Sefton writes. Robert Coakley argues that the army "played an abnormal role in civil government" during Reconstruction. He writes, "Never before or after, within the continental boundaries of the United States, did it exercise police and judicial functions, oversee local governments, or deal with domestic violence on the scale it did in the eleven ex-Confederate states from 1865-1877."²³

The nation indeed made novel demands of its military in the wake of the Civil War. The emancipation of four million black slaves – what W.E.B. DuBois called "easily the most dramatic episode in American history" – and subsequent Union victory created

Reconstruction (Baton Rouge, La.: LSU Press, 2004). There are also a number of biographies of military officers who served during Reconstruction. For example, see William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999); James L. McDonough, *Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Gainesville: Florida State University Press, 1972); Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). For a helpful historiographical essay on the army and Reconstruction, see Joseph G. Dawson III, "The US Army in the South: Reconstruction as Nation Building," in *Armed Diplomacy: Two Centuries of American Campaigning* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 39-64; and the bibliography in Dawson, *The Late 19th Century U.S. Army, 1865-1898: A Research Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), 55-68. The majority of these works fall into the category of traditional military history. Major social and political histories do not concentrate on the activities of soldiers or the army's role as an institution in Reconstruction. A decade ago, William Blair called for more research on regular and volunteer soldiers in the South. While the Freedmen's Bureau has been the subject of countless studies, Blair noted that little work had been done on the troops who "operated independently" and occupied the South for years after the bureau's demise in 1869. See William Alan Blair, "The Use of Military Force to Protect the Gains of Reconstruction," *Civil War History* 51, no. 4 (2005): 390-391. A recent book by Gregory Downs responds to Blair's call. Downs demonstrates the significance of the army in protecting the rights of freedpeople where it had troops on the ground, emphasizing the spatial geography of power in the South. Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). Even this recent literature, however, neglects the longer, imperial context for the U.S. army's occupation of the South.

²³ Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 268.

revolutionary possibilities for the South and the nation as a whole.²⁴ Soldiers became
arbiters of a new political economy based on free labor, and in many cases they were
responsible for defending the lives and property of ex-slaves. Nevertheless,

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Reconstruction was not the first time the U.S. had fought a war and assigned the army to
handle civil affairs for an interim period. The history of the army's work in the 1840s
points to key imperial precedents for the army's occupational duties in the Reconstruction
South. Despite the truly unique aspects of the army's role in Reconstruction, military
occupation itself was a constant feature of the expansion of the American state as the
army remained in place in conquered territories to carry out national policy after wars had
ended. By paying attention to those features of southern Reconstruction that resembled
prior and future occupations, historians can begin to revise one of the most stubbornly
exceptionalist narratives in U.S. history.

Imperial Precedents: The Army in California

In the summer of 1846, American forces raised the U.S. flag in California. They
continued to face resistance the rest of that year until the remaining Mexican troops
surrendered in January 1847. Still, despite near-constant agitation for civil government,
the U.S. army ruled California until 1849, in an early, little-known episode of military
rule. Military historian Joseph Dawson III observes that the U.S. captured half of
Mexico's territory in the course of the Mexican-American War – territory that would
subsequently become California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah. "Rather than
simply occupying these captured territories temporarily, the army administered them as a
prelude to United States civil government. The army's control was so complete and so

²⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 3.

pervasive that it was more than just martial law; it was military government,” Dawson 21 writes. In fact, the U.S. army confronted many of the same challenges in California that it would later face in occupying the South and the trans-Mississippi West. One of the major challenges in California, as it later would be in the Confederacy, was the opposition of some locals to military rule in the first place. In the summer of 1846, while the U.S. was still at war with Mexico, American emigrants established a weekly newspaper, the *Californian*, that advocated strongly for the establishment of a civil government. In its first editorial, the newspaper called for “the establishment of a colonial government in California.” The proponents wanted “a formal recognition of the territory of California,” a legislature, and a delegate sent to Congress.²⁵ Throughout its rule, the military faced challenges to its authority in California, including an “uprising” in Los Angeles that, according to historian Theodore Grivas, “almost resulted in a full-scale war.”²⁶ Subsequent military commanders promised the eventual formation of civil government in 1846 and 1847, and residents in San Francisco went as far as to hold a public meeting in March 1847 calling for the establishment of representative government; they even held elections.²⁷

These attempts at establishing civil government were complicated by ongoing

²⁵ Quoted in Joseph Ellison, “The Struggle for Civil Government in California, 1846-1850,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1931): 16.

²⁶ Theodore Grivas, *Military Governments in California, 1846-1850: With a Chapter on Their Prior Use in Louisiana, Florida, and New Mexico* (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1963), 187.

²⁷ The best accounts of the U.S. military period in California are Grivas, *Military Governments in California*, and Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). For general background on the U.S. army in the Mexican-American War, see Paul Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict during the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (Corpus Christi: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); James M. McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: NYU Press, 1994).

hostilities between the U.S. and Mexico and by the fact that California's political status 22
was inextricably tied up in the national debate over slavery. As late as January 1850,
President Zachary Taylor wrote hesitantly about his own role in determining the status of
California. In his message to Congress accompanying over 900 pages of documents
related to the military governments of California and New Mexico, Taylor wrote: "On
coming into office, I found the military commandant of the department of California
exercising the functions of civil governor in that Territory....I thought it best not to
disturb that arrangement....I therefore did not interfere with the powers of civil governor
as before; but I made no such appointment, conferred no such authority, and have
allowed no increased compensation to the commandant for his services." Taylor did,
however, insert himself into the national debate over slavery. He said the people of
California should determine their own "domestic institutions." Taylor warned, further,
that many in California are "native citizens of the United States, not inferior to the rest of
our countrymen in intelligence and patriotism." He believed such "American freemen"
would react poorly to any attempt to dictate the terms of their incorporation based on the
slavery question and would regard such any attempt as an "invasion of their rights."²⁸

Opposition to military rule was not limited to the residents of California. As early
as 1846, the issue of military government was hotly debated in Washington. Members of
Congress were particularly concerned that President Polk had authorized military
commanders to establish what amounted to territorial governments in California and New
Mexico. In December 1846, the House passed a resolution asking the President to

²⁸ U.S. Congress. House, *Presidential Message Transmitting Information on California and New Mexico*,
31st Cong., 1st sess., H.Ex. Doc. 17 (1849), Serial No. 573. Washington: 1850, 3. Hereafter, 573 H.exdoc.
17.

provide copies of all communications regarding the governance of California and New Mexico. The debate on the floor focused on the President's power as well as the justification for military rule. Whig representative Garrett Davis of Kentucky blasted Polk for "establishing, in a word, the whole machine of civil government" in California and New Mexico.

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What! Was our American President an emperor, sending forth his Agrippa and his Marcellus and his pro-consuls, to establish and to govern the provinces they might conquer by force of arms? Was the President of the United States, an officer deriving his breath and being from the Constitution of the United States, to authorize his satraps and his tetrarchs to set up governments at their pleasure, and prescribe to them laws and regulations at their discretion?

If this were the case, Davis demanded to know "by what imperial or regal authority his majesty undertook to act" in such a way.²⁹

The subsequent debate underlined the varied interpretations for what California and New Mexico were and how they could be governed. Stephen A. Douglas, representative from Illinois, defended Polk and the military on the basis of wartime powers. When the U.S. conquered Mexico's territory, "the government of Mexico over those provinces of course ceased to exist," Douglas argued. It "became not merely the right, but the imperative duty" of U.S. forces to establish a government in place of the Mexican one that he been "superceded." The justification for this action came from "the law of nations." It was most definitely "a military government," Douglas insisted. "Such a government was 'military' in its origin, and military in its maintenance; yet it might relate also to affairs civil and municipal, as well as to matters purely military." Douglas went farther than other Congressmen in the discussion to delineate the parameters of

²⁹ *Cong. Globe*, 29th congress, 2d session, 12 (1846).

military government. Such a government “might take care, and was bound to take care, 24 that justice was administered to the conquered inhabitants; that their rights and privileges in regard to life and property were duly respected, and that all internal affairs of the people were suitably arranged and provided for.”³⁰ Douglas further asserted that all territory taken by “conquest” was automatically annexed to the United States. “[I]f we should conclude a treaty with Mexico without boundaries,” Douglas declared, “all these conquered provinces, New Mexico, New Leon, Tamaulipas, California, would be and remain part of the territory of the United States. They would be ours by conquest, and they remain ours, unless receded.”³¹ His fellow congressmen did not all agree with Douglas’ expansive view of what constituted the nation’s territory. South Carolina’s Robert Rhett, for one, believed that if conquest necessarily implied incorporation, then the President had no right to make any territorial government for California or New Mexico. But the passionate South Carolinian insisted that these lands did not yet belong to the United States.

Was it true that California or New Mexico formed a part of the United States? We had, it was true, military occupation of both. But it was by arms that we held them, and by arms alone we had any right to control them. *Inter arms silent leges*. If the President commanded them at all it was a satrap -- he was a despot, so far as they were concerned: he wielded his power over them by the sword, and enforced it by the sword alone. *Sic volo sic jubeo* was his role, so far as law was concerned...He was a despot: he might do what he pleased -- might cut off the head of a judge if he so pleased.

It was the state of war that justified the President’s despotism – a point of view firmly rejected by the Kentucky congressmen, Garrett Davis. To underscore his contention that the nation’s democratic government applied to these conquered provinces, Rhett asked a

³⁰ Ibid., 13.

³¹ Ibid., 14.

rhetorical question that anticipated later debates about how far the Constitution extended.²⁵ Rhett insisted that he “utterly denied to any man such authority as this over any territory within the limits of this Union; but California and New Mexico are not part of the Union -- the Constitution of the United States does not extend over them.” To prove his point that the Constitution does not apply to these territories, Rhett challenged his colleagues with an absurd proposition: “Would any gentleman here say that every Mexican there had a right to the trial by jury?”³²

The debate in Congress in late 1846 pitted Whig congressmen against Democratic colleagues and a Democrat in the White House. Sectional politics intensified the conflict. The discussion involved more than rhetorical charges of imperialism. When Davis accused Polk of sending his “pro-consuls” to “the provinces,” and Rhett defended the Polk’s right to be a “satrap” and “despot,” the heated oratory reflected real concerns that territorial expansion was turning the United States into an empire. Unlike Rhett, Polk did not embrace his identity as a “despot.” On the contrary, he tried to deflect charges that he had sanctioned the establishment of anything but the most bare-bones administrative government in the West. In a responding to the House’s resolution, the President issued a special message to Congress on December 22, 1846. In it he emphasized that the military personnel had been instructed to establish nothing more than “temporary governments.” He admitted that some of the documents conveyed to Congress “purport[ed] to ‘establish and organize’ a permanent Territorial government of the United States over the Territory and to impart to its inhabitants political rights which under the Constitution of the United States can be enjoyed permanently only by citizens of the United States.” He insisted,

³² Ibid., 15.

however, “These have not been ‘approved and recognized’ by me.”³³ In January 1847, 26
Polk sent Kearny new instructions that recommended a more circumscribed role for
military personnel in establishing civil government. It is not surprising that Polk and his
military commanders struggled to define and justify their power on the ground in these
“conquered” lands. As John Mack Faragher writes, “There was no provision in the
Constitution for the establishment of an American empire. Polk’s men were making it up
as they went along.”³⁴

These debates did little to clarify the boundaries of military power for the officers
trying to govern California. Colonel Richard B. Mason, commander of the 1st U.S.
Dragoons, served as California’s second military governor from May 31, 1847 to April 9,
1849. Mason’s tenure overlapped with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the
discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill – two events that dramatically transformed the nature
and exercise of U.S. power along the Pacific. Upon assuming office, while the war with
Mexico was still ongoing, Mason explained, “This is a military government, and the
supreme power... is vested in the senior military officer of the Territory.” That power
derived from California’s territory as the spoils of war, but it was limited until the terms
of surrender were made. “Pending the war, our possession gives only such rights as the
laws of nations recognize; and the government is military, performing such civil duties as
are necessary to the full enjoyment of the advantages resulting from the conquest, and to
the due protection of the rights of persons and of property of the inhabitants.” Mason
tried to make clear that the residents of California did not enjoy full membership in the

³³ For a discussion of these debates in Congress, see Ellison, “The Struggle for Civil Government,” 20-22.

³⁴ John Mack Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 186.

United States. He continued, “No political rights can be conferred on the inhabitants thus
situated, emanating from the constitution of the United States.”³⁵ The same month, he
told another Sonoma resident that “many of my countrymen in California labor under a
mistake in believing that, because we are in possession of the country, we are under the
constitution and laws of the United States.” Still, Mason believed it was only a matter of
time before the people *did* enjoy the benefits of the Constitution. Once peace was
declared, Mason believed “to a *certainty*, to a great and *moral certainty*, California will
forever belong to the United States, and we all shall enjoy the blessings of our own
constitution and laws.”³⁶

Tidings of peace did not immediately bring the “certainty” Mason anticipated.
News of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, finally reached
California that August. At that point Mason implored his superiors in Washington for
more explicit instructions regarding the army’s proper role in the far West. In a letter
dated August 19, 1848, to the Adjutant General in Washington, D.C., Mason quoted from
instructions he had received “to take proper measures with a view to its (Upper
California) permanent occupation.” Notwithstanding the long delay in receiving news,
Mason expressed his confusion over exactly what he was supposed to do as a military
governor now that war was over. He hoped his superiors would send more specific orders
regarding the establishment of a civil government and clarify California’s standing in the
Union. He continued,

The above are the only instructions I have received from the department to guide
me in the course to be pursued, now that the war has ceased, and that this country

³⁵ Mason to L. W. Boggs, Esq., June 2, 1847, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 317.

³⁶ Mason to Mr. John Grigsby, June 3, 1847, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 318-319.

forms an integral part of the United States. For the past two years no civil government has existed here, save that controlled by the senior military or naval officer, and no civil officers exist in the country, save the alcades appointed or confirmed by myself. To throw off upon them, or the people at large, the civil management and country of the country, would most probably lead to endless confusion, if not to absolute anarchy; and yet what right or authority have I to exercise civil control in time of peace in a territory of the United States? or if sedition and rebellion should arise, where is my force to meet it? 28

Mason's supervision of the alcades was a major part of his work upholding the governmental structure the U.S. had inherited when it began to rule California. Literally translated "mayor," the alcade was in fact much more. Myra K. Saunders explains, "As the sole civil officer, the alcade could serve as mayor, arbitrator, justice of the peace, trial judge, and, in some instances, legislator."³⁷ He promised the adjutant general that he would continue to "exercise control over the alcades appointed" and "maintain order" until a civil governor arrived.³⁸ He planned to appoint temporary customs collectors so that the U.S. would benefit from trade passing through the California ports, and he would continue to supervise alcades and carry on governmental duties as before. All the same, he worried that he would not be able to actually enforce American sovereignty should he and his men face resistance.

Secretary of War William L. Marcy tried to clarify the situation for Mason. It was true, Marcy agreed, that with the war over the military government no longer "derive[d] its authority" from "the laws of war." But the treaty still "left an existing government -- a government *de facto* -- in full operation." It would continue until Congress "shall provide a government for them." Marcy further explained the source of the government's

³⁷ Myra K. Saunders, "California Legal History: The Legal System Under the United States Military Government, 1846-1849," *Law. Libr. J.* 88 (1996): 494.

³⁸ List of documents accompanying the report of the Secretary of War, December 1, 1847, 537 H.exdoc.1/5, 156- 157. Hereafter 537 H.exdoc.1/5.

prerogative now that the war was over.

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The consent of the people is irresistibly inferred from the fact, that no civilized community could possibly desire to abrogate an existing government where the alternative presented would be to place them in a state of anarchy beyond the protection of all law, and reduce them to the unhappy necessity of submitting to the dominion of the strongest.³⁹

In the meantime, however, before receiving further instructions from the War Department, Mason issued a proclamation “To the people of California,” upon receiving word of the peace treaty. Mason assured his audience that military government would not last long. Congress “will soon confer upon the people of this country the constitutional rights of citizens of the United States; and, no doubt, in a few short months we shall have a regularly organized territorial government: indeed, there is every reason to believe that Congress has already passed the act, and that a civil government is now on its way to this country, to replace that which has been organized under the rights of conquest.”⁴⁰ Yet again, Mason was more optimistic than circumstances warranted. He continued to languish without definite instructions from Washington while he tried to manage an increasingly tense political situation in the ostensibly “peaceful” American outpost.

Soldiers in the Far West had the difficult task of asserting U.S. sovereignty over a vast territory with limited manpower. Colonel Mason’s authority as the military governor nominally extended across all of California, an area of roughly 164,000 square-miles. But as he expressed anxiously to his superiors back east, he lacked the soldiers necessary to actually enforce American sovereignty should it be challenged. Mason had dismissed the volunteers whose terms of enlistment had expired, and he would soon have only “two

³⁹ Marcy to Mason, October 9, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 258-259.

⁴⁰ Proclamation, August 7, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 590.

companies of regulars” in the whole of California. In June 1847, Mason explained that 30
he had only one thousand troops in the whole state, spread across seven posts “at a long
distance from each other.” Secretary Marcy wrote, “Under almost any circumstances, this
force can hardly be regarded as sufficient to answer the purpose for which troops are
required in that country. Though all is now quiet there, and no serious apprehension is
entertained of disturbance, yet the country in our occupation is extensive, embracing
many positions which should be garrisoned, and the Indian race is there numerous, with
the propensity and habit of depredating.”⁴¹ In July, Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson, a
subordinate stationed in the south, informed Mason of an upsetting situation. Stevenson
believed that the army would have to abandon its post at San Diego unless reinforcements
could be sent from the north or from the Navy. Soldiers of the Mormon Battalion did not
plan to reenlist, and without their service there were insufficient forces to garrison the
post.⁴² This was a particularly unfortunate time to withdraw troops, according to
Stevenson. He worried about the possibility of attack from Mexico and an insurrection
among the *Californios*. Some of these land-owning Hispanic families opposed the
American occupation and, Stevenson believed, they were planning a rebellion in Los
Angeles. Meanwhile, he told Mason that the loyal *Californios* in San Diego had
“expressed great dissatisfaction” at the news that U.S. troops were going to leave the fort
there. “All consider it advisable to keep up a proper and well organized force at the Chief

⁴¹ Report of the Secretary of War, December 2, 1847, 515 H.exdoc.8, 57.

⁴² The United States government authorized Kearny to raise a battalion of soldiers from the Mormon Church. Five hundred volunteers agreed to serve for one year and would be discharged in California. The Mormon Church was planning to move west from Illinois to avoid persecution, and army service provided an opportunity for a number of Mormon men to travel west at government expense and provide protection for their families along the way. On the Mormon Battalion, see McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny*, 147-148; Sherman L. Fleek, *History May Be Searched in Vain: A Military History of the Mormon Battalion* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2006).

Seaport, towns and especially this Pueblo,” Stevenson wrote his commanding officer.⁴³

31

The military had long struggled to keep order and maintain even its major garrisons and important fortifications in California. Mason reported to the Adjutant General at the end of 1847 that regulars would be stationed in San Francisco and Monterey “to guard the large depots of powder and munitions of war, which cannot be removed.” He warned that “should the people refuse to obey the existing authorities, or merchants refuse to pay any duties, my force is inadequate to compel obedience.” Still, Mason was optimistic if apprehensive. “I do not anticipate any revolution or rebellion on the part of the Californians, although the southern district must be entirely abandoned by the military force now there; and, in fact, the minds of all men are so intently engaged upon getting gold, that, for the present, they have not time to think of mischief.” He hoped to receive more explicit instructions about the establishment of a civil government “as soon as possible.”⁴⁴ Mason’s limited forces were spread thin.

Once word of the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Fort spread, the army’s situation became desperate. It had been challenging to keep troops stationed everywhere they were needed in 1846 and 1847. By mid-1848, however, as reports of the great riches to be had in California travelled across the U.S. and around the world, it became impossible for the army to keep its soldiers away from the mines. Mason and his successor, Brevet Brigadier General Bennet C. Riley, tried to convey the critical nature of their situation to authorities in Washington. Governor Mason wrote,

⁴³ J.D. Stevenson to R.B. Mason, June 28, 1847, Records of the 10th Military Department, 1846-1851, National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microcopy 210, roll 2. Reproduced by the San Diego History Center, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/74summer/letters.htm>. Accessed February 22, 2016. Collection referred to hereafter as M210.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The discovery of these vast deposits of gold has entirely changed the character of Upper California. Its people, before engaged in cultivating their small patches of ground and guarding their herds of cattle and horses, have all gone to the mines, or are on their way thither; laborers of every trade have left their work-benches, and tradesmen their shops; sailors desert their ships as fast as they arrive on the coast, and several vessels have gone to sea with hardly enough hands to spread a sail; two or three are now at anchor in San Francisco with no crews on board.⁴⁵ ³²

Mason was not alone in recognizing the labor crisis caused by gold. A young William T. Sherman served as an adjutant (an administrative assistant to another officer) in California during the Mexican War, and he later recalled the drain upon the army caused by the gold rush. “At that time so demoralizing was the effect of the gold-mines that everybody not in the military service justified desertion, because a soldier, if free, could earn more money in a day than he received per month,” Sherman wrote in his *Memoirs*. The entire edifice of society seemed ready to collapse as gold fever swept the region. “Not only did soldiers and sailors desert, but captains and masters of ships actually abandoned their vessels and cargoes to try their luck at the mines. Preachers and professors forgot their creeds and took to trade, and even to keeping gambling-houses.”⁴⁶ As Sherman and the other military officials recognized, the discovery of gold had completely altered the landscape of labor in California. It caused a reshuffling of the social order as educated people “forgot their creeds” and dug for gold.

The army was vulnerable to these pressures on labor as well, revealing the extent to which the military operated within a larger market for labor. Like other employers, the army could not maintain its labor force. Colonel Mason reported that twenty-six soldiers

⁴⁵ Quoted in Saunders, “California Legal History,” 506.

⁴⁶ General William T. Sherman, *Recollections of California, 1846-1861*, 59. Reproduced in California As I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900, Library of Congress. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/calbk:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28calbk085div3%29%29:> Accessed 23 July 2015.

had deserted from Sonoma, twenty-four from San Francisco, and twenty-four from Monterey. “For a few days the evil appeared so threatening that great danger existed that the garrisons would leave in a body,” he noted. “Laboring men at the mines can now earn in *one day* more than double a soldier’s pay and allowances for a month, and even the pay of a lieutenant or captain cannot hire a servant. A carpenter or mechanic would not listen to an offer of less than fifteen or twenty dollars a day. Could any combination of affairs try a man’s fidelity more than this?” It was not only enlisted men who were tempted by the mines. “No officer can now live in California on his pay. Money has so little value, the prices of necessary articles of clothing and subsistence are so exorbitant, and labor so high, that to hire a cook or servant has become an impossibility, save to those who are earning from thirty to fifty dollars a day.”⁴⁷ Just a few months later, Mason wrote the Adjutant General that it did not make sense to send any more soldiers to California. “So long as the gold mines continue to yield the great abundance of metal they now do, it will impossible to keep soldiers in California; and it is of no use to send them here.” While soldiers made seven or eight dollars a month, “laborers and mechanics” earned up to \$100. Indeed, a ship was sitting in the San Francisco harbor without a crew because sailors could not be found for \$100 a month.⁴⁸

In 1849, the secretary of war reported that two-fifths of the initial force of 1,200 troops stationed in California had deserted eight months later. The army could not quickly respond to the labor shortage by raising wages, but it tried to implement other measures to retain its own labor force. The commanding officer had adapted to the

⁴⁷ Mason to Gen R. Jones, August 17, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 533.

⁴⁸ Mason to Gen R. Jones, November 24, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 648.

conditions by allowing “short furloughs” to small numbers of soldiers so they could 34
work their individual placers. The ad-hoc policy, however, did not solve the crisis. Brevet
Major General Persifor F. Smith, commander of the Third Military Division in the West,
wrote from San Francisco in the spring of 1849 that “the extent and richness of the gold
region have not been exaggerated.” Likewise “the exorbitant prices paid for labor, rent,
and subsistence, have hardly been fully set forth.” Smith also noted that the commanding
officers were instituting new policies to try to adapt to the labor shortage. In addition to
giving their soldiers leaves of absence to work their placers, Smith also issued
instructions that the quartermaster could hire back these same soldiers at the civilian rates
“as labor is hard to get.” Nevertheless, he did not want to see “large bodies of the men to
go to the mines.” It was one thing to grant leaves and “reward good conduct,” but Smith
was worried that the enlisted men might interpret liberal policies as concessions or signs
of weakness. Worse, they might begin to doubt the justice of the army’s demands on their
labor at all. “General” policies “would be either to acknowledge the right of the men to
modify their obligations as they please, or to confess our inability to enforce their
fulfillment.” Colonel Mason readily admitted that he could not retain soldiers; desertion
was rampant. But other officers, like Smith, were reticent to admit that gold had given
labor – and in this case, military labor – enormous leverage in California.⁴⁹

The new military governor, Bennet Riley, urged the adoption of a stronger – and
harsher – policy: capital punishment for desertion. In advocating for “the restoration of
the war penalty,” Riley argued that, “I can see no difference between desertion now and
desertion in the face of an enemy; nor any good reason why the extreme penalty of the

⁴⁹ Persifor F. Smith to General R. Jones, April 5, 1849, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 719.

law should not be restored.” Recognizing that the War Department may be unwilling to 35
take such a step, he also suggested that deserters be disqualified as citizens and forced to
forfeit their property, along with “confinement at hard labor upon any of the public
works, or in any penitentiary of the country.” In addition to these harsher punishments for
desertion, Riley also asked the secretary of war to provide greater inducements for
service, including a pay increase and “ a bounty of 320 or 640 acres of land...to all
soldiers who may serve faithfully the full period of their enlistments.”⁵⁰ Riley’s
recommendations were not adopted. At the end of 1849, the secretary of war reported
glumly that “the evil of desertions consequently continues to exist.”⁵¹

The discovery of gold caused global demographic shifts, brought thousands of
immigrants from around the world to minefields, and created new social and cultural
worlds in a matter of months.⁵² But at the same time as it depleted the ranks of the army
tasked with governing California, it also amplified the need for the army’s services. In the
same letter explaining why it was useless to send any more troops to California, Mason
also admitted that lynch law was a common response to widespread violence in the
territory. He described thefts and murders related to gold and how groups of local people
had determined justice and carried out hangings on their own. “You are perfectly aware
that no competent civil courts exist in this country, and that strictly speaking there is no
legal power to execute the sentence of death,” he wrote to officials in Washington. “But
the necessity of protecting their lives and property against the many lawless men at large

⁵⁰ B. Riley to Hon. George W. Crawford, Secretary of War, August 30, 1849, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 940.

⁵¹ Report of the Secretary of War, November 30, 1849, 90.

⁵² On the diversity and violence of Gold Rush California, see Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001).

in this country, compels the good citizens to take the law into their own hands. I shall not³⁶ disapprove of the course that has been taken in this instance.” Rather than apologize for “this state of affairs,” Mason believed it “illustrate[s] the absolute necessity of establishing a territorial government here as early as practicable. Common humanity demands it.”⁵³ His successor, Governor Bennet Riley, echoed the sentiment. He blamed in part the type of people who had been drawn to California in search of gold. “The discovery of the gold placers has attracted hither thousands of foreign adventurers, many of them from the lowest classes of society, and has produced a state of affairs here that will require [a] much stronger controlling force to preserve order than I can now command.”⁵⁴ Gold had intensified the need for more soldiers while also making it impossible for the army to retain its military labor-force. Nevertheless, Congress was no closer to establishing a civil government for California.

In spite of their small numbers and lack of clarity about their role, the meager troops assigned to California ultimately carried out a wide variety of tasks. Stephen W. Kearny, the first military governor appointed in February 1847, appointed alcaldes (the civil administrators) and issued decrees and decisions regarding land disputes. Kearny, who served for just one hundred days, also appointed Indian agents and port collectors. He instituted mail service between San Francisco and San Diego, assigning two soldiers to the job. Citizens could use the military-run express free of charge, and the service continued until replaced by the U.S. mail.⁵⁵ Kearny’s successor, Mason, ruled for longer

⁵³ Mason to R. Jones, December 27, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 653.

⁵⁴ B. Riley to General R. Jones, June 11, 1849, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 917.

⁵⁵ For details on Kearny’s accomplishments while military governor, see Harlow, *California Conquered*, 264-270.

and oversaw the transition from a wartime to a peacetime government. The following 37
account of the army's diverse duties in California suggests important similarities between
that assignment and the subsequent occupation of the post-Civil War South:

[Mason] appointed all officers and 'regulated' or removed them from office, called elections or declared them null and void. He determined the scope of military and civil jurisdiction, enforced the law, and interpreted or abrogated it. Monitoring the decisions of courts and referees, he approved, mitigated, or rejected the verdicts rendered. He instructed judges and alcaldes and assisted them in making arrests, organizing tribunals, and executing their judgments. He made investigations, appointed special boards, courts, and commissions, ordered a prisoner to Monterey for trial, and set court fees. He restricted immigration, imposed or prevented the collection of military contributions, and, with the cooperation of the naval commander, regulated import duties. He legalized the acceptance of gold dust at the customhouse in lieu of specie and launched an informal census of the population and resources of the country.⁵⁶

In many ways, the army's work in 1840s California was a combination of what they would undertake later in the postbellum South and West. Officers and soldiers monitored the political situation and regulated elections. Men like Kearny and Mason oversaw the type of civil affairs that would make Reconstruction duty in the South so complex and often unpopular. The situation in California also resembled Reconstruction in that commanders lacked clear orders about their role. The military governors, particularly Mason, found themselves in murky legal waters, and like officers assigned to Reconstruction duty, they faced sharp criticism from the people they were charged with ruling. They also dealt with Indian affairs, appointed Indian agents, and tried to keep peace between the Native population and local ranchers and landowners. At the same time, troops in California also performed labor characteristic of "frontier posts." They helped scout and explore territory, identifying potential resources, and they regulated

⁵⁶ Harlow, *California Conquered*, 281-282.

trade. Sherman recalled that soldiers spent a great deal of time in construction work. In 38 his memoirs he described an example of such quotidian military labor: “The company of artillery was still on the hill, under the command of Lieutenant Ord, engaged in building a fort whereon to mount the guns we had brought out in the Lexington, and also in constructing quarters out of hewn pine-logs for the men.”⁵⁷ In San Diego, the members of the Mormon Battalion were favorites among the locals because of “their constant employment on the public works.” Colonel J. D. Stevenson told Mason that their labor had made them “very popular with the people.” He continued,

[I]f they are continued they will be of more value in reconciling the people to the change of government than a host of Bayonets; they have made Bricks, dug and bricked up eight or ten wells and furnished a town heretofore almost without water at certain seasons of the year with an abundant supply. They are about to build a brick Court house, the fees of the Court are already accumulated and the Inhabitants paying for the materials and the Mormons doing the work, in short when within 80 miles of the place the inhabitants of every rancho asked permission for some of the good Mormons to come and work for them, to build an oven, a chimney, or repair the roofs of their houses, and I have been[,] in consequence of this good feeling[,] the more desirous to have them remain.⁵⁸

The construction work performed by the troops ingratiated them to the local population, particularly *Californios* who were not always in favor of the American occupation. Stevenson’s observation that their work had done more than “a host of Bayonets” to “reconciling the people to the change of government” echoes and anticipates many subsequent twentieth- and twenty-first century plans to win over local populations to military occupation through public works.

⁵⁷ Sherman, *Recollections*, 20.

⁵⁸ J.D. Stevenson to R.B. Mason, June 28, 1847, M210.

⁵⁸ 537 H.exdoc.1/5, 157.

While some troops were kept busy, other military personnel, particularly officers,³⁹ did not have enough to do in California. In his memoirs Sherman captured some of the boredom so typical of “frontier duty” at an isolated western post. He recalled that he “spent much time in hunting deer and bear in the mountains back of the Carmel Mission, and ducks and geese in the plains of the Salinas.” Once gold was discovered and the ranks of enlisted men depleted, officers had even more time on their hands. In 1849, stationed at the department headquarters at Monterey, Sherman was truly underworked. “With the few soldiers, we had next to nothing to do.” Later, when he became an aide to Brevet Major General Persifor Smith, he took side jobs. “As there was very little to do, General Smith encouraged us to go into any business that would enable us to make money.” Indeed, Smith had reported to the secretary of war that the dearth of enlisted men had made it impossible to engage in any major construction projects. “The high rate of labor here would seem (for it is likely to last some years) to render all heavy public works here inadvisable.”⁵⁹ Following Smith’s advice, Sherman and a few other officers helped survey land for “a newly-projected city of ‘New York of the Pacific,’ situated at the mouth of the San Joaquin River.”⁶⁰ Sherman was far from the only military man who decided to “go into...business.” In fact, historian Paul W. Gates writes that Sherman was one of the last of his cohort of army officers in California to do so. Gates writes about several naval and army officers who speculated in land and mining interests while on duty in California. From the highest-ranking officers like Stockton and Mason to subordinates like Halleck and Sherman, Gates shows that speculating and investing in

⁵⁹ Persifor F. Smith to Hon. W. H. Crawford, Secretary of War, June 20, 1849, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 745.

⁶⁰ Sherman, *Recollections*, 60.

what promised to be valuable land and mining interests was widespread among the military and naval elite. He even suggests that apart from the desire to make money, officers speculated and invested because they did not have enough military work to keep them busy. Gates writes, "Like Sherman, Ord, and other officers sent to California in 1846-1849 who had time on their hands and few responsibilities, George H. Derby, a lieutenant with the Topographical Engineers, arrived in San Francisco in 1849 and for the next seven years, with short periods of action, took up various outside tasks to keep him busy. He surveyed ranchos, for which his compensation was lots or acreage, drew up plans for extensive land speculations, and became a newspaper columnist, an editor, and well-known humorist."⁶¹ Army officers would continue to invest in the local economies of the places they occupied, whether in the trans-Mississippi West or the far western frontier of the Philippines.

The surplus time that officers like Sherman enjoyed should come as a surprise given the many duties that demanded the army's attention in Gold Rush California. Most of the major theaters of action in the Mexican-U.S. War were not in California. Nonetheless, the army faced potential threats from Hispanic *Californios* as well as Americans who opposed military rule. Mason's troops also had to contend with rumors of secessionist movements. In the spring 1848 rumors abounded of a group that planned to attack the Monterey prison and release the prisoners, hoping to recruit them to their movement to create an independent government for California. Secretary of State Henry W. Halleck and other leaders dismissed such rumors as unimportant or unfounded.

⁶¹ Paul W. Gates, "Carpentbaggers Join the Rush for California Land," *California Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1977): 119.

Historian Theodore Grivas says they were “never considered seriously as a threat.”⁶²

41

More serious, however, was the violence that broke out in 1849. “Nothing more clearly demonstrated the impotence of military rule in California than the wave of lawlessness and intimidation by mob rule that swept San Francisco during the first six months of 1849.” Many of these “ruffians and vagabonds” were former soldiers who had been discharged in California. Calling themselves “Hounds” or “Regulators,” they united together to terrorize foreigners and non-Anglos and remove them from the gold fields. “They assumed a sort of military organization, complete with discipline, largely a result of the military background of many of the members.” The Hounds attacked Chilean miners, stole brazenly from restaurants, and “extorted payments of money and jewels from people as a price to exempt them from their raids.” Grivas writes, “Colonel Mason and his seriously decreasing number of troops stood helplessly by and made no effort stop the lawlessness in San Francisco.”⁶³ This may well have been because the army simply lacked the personnel necessary to respond to events in San Francisco.

Apart from the interpersonal violence stemming from the gold fields, the army considered hostile Native Americans the greatest threat to peace and public order. At the time of the U.S. conquest of California, Native Americans made up a substantial portion of California’s population. Historian Albert L. Hurtado estimates that of approximately 10,000 Indians were “an important part of the California labor force” in the 1840s. Prior

⁶² Grivas, *Military Governments*, 195.

⁶³ Grivas, *Military Governments*, 201-202. On the regulators, see also William Henry Ellison, *A Self-governing Dominion, California, 1849-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 206.

to the Gold Rush, California's non-Indian population numbered about 14,000.⁶⁴ The American military government was chiefly concerned with the alleged raiding carried on by Native Americans targeting ranches. Ranchers throughout California reported increased thefts and raiding, and the government received multiple requests for additional military troops to protect them and their stock. More than one group of ranchers threatened to abandon their property if the U.S. army did not send troops to protect them.⁶⁵ But ranches were apparently not the only target of Indian raiding. In San Diego, Colonel J. D. Stevenson believed that "mission Indians" – or descendants of those Indians forced to labor on the mission properties – were stealing and vandalizing the mission at San Luis. He reported that they "are now advised and believe that all the Mission property of every kind, church furniture and all belong to them and hence they have a right to carry it off for their own use or destroy as they please." He reported that a group of fifty Natives had recently come to the mission, carried off property and chased away cattle, and accosted the "old Indian Chief" who served as the mission's caretaker.⁶⁶ Stevenson thought the government should appoint an Indian agent to deal with the problem and recommended, in essence, the reinstitution of the mission system. He thought the agent could "cause to be collected the most industrious and respectable portion of the Indians, set them to work, and while they provide comfortably for themselves by their labors on the [mission] property and take care of it."⁶⁷ The next month, however, Stevenson wrote Mason again – this time with a different report on the

⁶⁴ Albert L. Hurtado, "Controlling California's Indian Labor Force; Federal Administration of California Indian Affairs During the Mexican War," *Southern California Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (1979): 219.

⁶⁵ Hurtado, "Controlling California's Indian Labor Force," 222.

⁶⁶ Stevenson to Mason, M220, June 28, 1847.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

same Indians. He had received a delegation of “the principal Chiefs and some Eighty 43
Indians, originally of the San Luis Bay [Rey] Mission.” Nearly one hundred Native
Americans called on Stevenson, “request[ing] proof for the charges that had been levelled
against them of ‘Robbing the Churches [and] Inhabitants.’” They asked for an American
agent to be appointed for them. Describing his meeting to Mason, Stevenson explained,
“The Californians were their sworn enemies, and they could never be happy or at peace
under his orders.” The *Californios*, meanwhile, were “very much incensed, and alarmed,
at the boldness of the Indians coming here, in such force.” They demanded that
Stevenson order the Indians to leave the town and “break up their camp.” They also told
the army officers that the Indians were “completely armed with Spears, Pistols, Knives,
Rifles and plenty of Ammunition.” In order to investigate the situation, Stevenson
gathered the Indians together and ordered them to present all their weapons. He found far
less than reported and discovered that the story had been greatly exaggerated in order to
get the U.S. military personnel to take action against the Indians. Stevenson promised the
Indian delegation he would appoint an American agent for them within six weeks, and he
sent them off with beef from the quartermaster. Meanwhile, he told Mason, “I really do
not believe those Indians commit the depredations charged upon them, but that the wild
Indians and perhaps some bad Christian Indians do much mischief to the Inhabitants
there can be no doubt.”⁶⁸

The military governors in California slowly developed an Indian policy and
adopted various measures to address violence and raiding. They often expressed concern
for the well-being of California’s Native population. In 1847, Governor Kearny

⁶⁸ Stevenson to Mason, M220, July 12, 1847.

instructed Captain John A. Sutter, one of his new Indian sub-agents, to tell the Indians that the President of the United States is “their great father; that he takes good care of his good children.”⁶⁹ His successors were likewise worried about the poor treatment of Indians, as when Governor Riley reported that a party of mountaineers had committed “most horrible barbarities on the defenceless Indians” [sic].⁷⁰ Overall, however, the military government prioritized the needs of Hispanic landowners and then the American newcomers who sought a reliable workforce and protection from Indian raiding. Even benevolent policies stemmed from a desire to maintain public order and protect the interests of landowners. Hurtado writes, “When American officials acted to protect Indians from abuse and exploitation, they did so primarily to prevent Indian hostilities and to buttress landholders’ interests.”⁷¹ The army would experience many of the same pressures from landowners in later years who wished to secure a workforce in the post-Civil War South. Indeed, many of the same concerns resurfaced: Stevenson, for example, suggested Mormon soldiers be assigned to help the Indian agent. They “would be of great service in instructing the Indians how to cultivate the soil, and would at the same time form a strong guard for the Agent,” he believed.⁷² Landowners similarly petitioned the army asking that Indians be required to carry documentation from their employer entitling them to carry weapons.⁷³ The military government eventually did require Indians to carry passes if they traveled far from their homes.⁷⁴ Important differences

⁶⁹ S. W. Kearny to Captain John A Sutter, Indian Sub-agent, New Helvetia, April 7, 1847, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 294.

⁷⁰ Bennet Riley to Major General R. Jones, August 39, 1848, 573 H.exdoc. 17, 790.

⁷¹ Hurtado, “Controlling California’s Indian Labor Force,” 218.

⁷² Stevenson to Mason, M220, July 12, 1847.

⁷³ Inhabitants of San Diego, Resolutions, M220, June 27, 1847.

⁷⁴ Hurtado, “Controlling California’s Indian Labor Force,” 228.

distinguished the army's mandate in the California from its later work in the Reconstruction South – namely the very different national policies towards Native Americans, ex-Confederates, and freed slaves. Nonetheless, the history of military government in California makes clear that Reconstruction was not the army's first experience serving as interlocutor between laborers and landowners or its first efforts to regulate the flow of people in the service of an agricultural economy.⁷⁵

Military personnel, *Californios*, American settlers, and Native Americans no doubt wondered how long the U.S. military government would last. After the war with Mexico officially ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, the rest of the nation joined in the speculation about how California, as well as other territory gained in the war, would be incorporated into the Union. Would Congress create a territorial government for California, or would it enter the Union as a state? If the latter, would California be a free or slave state? In the summer of 1849, after Congress adjourned without deciding any of these issues, Governor Riley issued a proclamation calling for a convention to determine a civil government for California. Although Riley appears to have acted on his own with limited authority to do so, his instructions for the formation of a state convention closely resembled President Taylor's wishes as well. Taylor wrote Congress that "my desire [is] that each Territory should, if prepared to comply with the Constitution of the United States, form a plan of a State Constitution and submit the same to Congress, with prayer for admission to the Union as a state."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ On efforts to regulate black mobility in the postwar South and their antebellum antecedents, see William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1991), 33-43.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Grivas, *Military Governments*, 210.

Elections were held, and the people of California voted in favor of a state, rather than territorial, government. They elected a governor, secretary of state, and other officials, and they ratified a state constitution. This provisional civil government ruled until California was officially incorporated into the Union as a free state on September 9, 1850.⁷⁷

In pre-statehood California, the army *was* the United States government. During a time of instability and uncertainty, troops on the ground represented federal authority. While the military governors of California did not establish regimes of the same scope or scale as those in the South during Reconstruction, they and the soldiers under their command served an army of occupation and government. In California as in the former Confederacy, soldiers performed a large assortment of duties. Their “labor of occupation” ranged from building quarters to surveying lands, from making arrests to collecting customs fees. With few explicit instructions from Washington, officers deployed their limited troops in ways they thought would support American plans for the region. And not for the last time, soldiers performed labor for far less pay than their civilian counterparts. Once gold was discovered, both officers and regulars received pay far below the “going rates,” leading to the rash of desertions that threatened to thoroughly undermine the military occupation. Nevertheless, the U.S. government continued to rely on the army to not only protect its newly-conquered territory but to incorporate it into the larger polity by establishing mail service, collecting revenue, regulating Native Americans, and enforcing laws. While small, the army was an effective labor and

⁷⁷ On Riley’s proclamation and the meeting of the state constitution, see Grivas, *Military Governments*, 206-220. On political events in California after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, see Harlow, *California Conquered*, 316-353.

occupational force that the federal government used to assert its sovereignty in California.

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“A State of Quasi War:” The U.S. Army after the Civil War

In 1869, the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. army declared that his troops were at war. “While the nation at large is at peace, a state of quasi war has existed and continues to exist, over one-half its extent, and the troops therein are exposed to labors, marches, fights, and dangers that amount to war,” wrote William T. Sherman, a former adjutant in California who was now the army’s commanding general. “Were the troops withdrawn, or largely diminished, in Texas, the Indian Country, in Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Idaho, or Alaska, as well as in some parts of our southern states, I believe a condition of things would result amounting to anarchy.”⁷⁸ Just two years before, Congressman Thaddeus Stevens had described a similar state of affairs in the South. In calling for the passage of legislation that would set up military governments in the former Confederacy, he announced to the House of Representatives, “For two years [the southern states] have been in a state of anarchy; for two years the loyal people of those ten States have endured all the horrors of the worst anarchy of any country. Persecution, exile, murder have been the order of the day...”⁷⁹ Although the Civil War was over, “anarchy” prevailed throughout the South and West in the years following Appomattox.

This section explores how the U.S. army responded to demands emanating from the South and West after the Civil War. It points out continuities between the army’s

⁷⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1869. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, pt. 2, 41st Cong., 2d session, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), 25.

⁷⁹ Thaddeus Stevens, “Speech on the Military Government of the South, February 7, 1867, in Congress,” in Beverly Wilson Palmer and Holly Byers Ochoa, eds., *The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens, Volume 2: April 1865-August 1868* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 248.

occupational duties in 1840s California and the Reconstruction South. It also demonstrates how debates over the army's role in the South and West shaped policies in both "theaters." The United States made diverse calls on the American military establishment in the post-Civil War era. Troops battled against Native Americans. They protected mail trains and railroad construction crews on the western plains. They patrolled the Rio Grande in search of horse- and cattle-thieves. They mediated labor disputes between freedpeople and planters in the Mississippi Delta. At first army leaders were optimistically naïve about their multiple assignments. In late 1866, General Ulysses S. Grant wrote, "On the whole, the condition of the States that were in rebellion against the government may be regarded as good enough to warrant the hope that but a short time will intervene before the bulk of the troops now occupying them can be sent to our growing territories, where they are so much needed."⁸⁰ Soon Congress would task the army with a much larger role in the South, and the army would continue to be split between its southern and western assignments.⁸¹ Scholars have tended to examine these disparate challenges in isolation: historians of Reconstruction have seen the army as one player in the dramatic upheaval of the post-war South, while military and western historians have found the army in the southwest or on the Plains responding to threats, supposed and real, from Native Americans. It has been difficult for scholars to place

⁸⁰ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1866. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 39th Cong., 2d session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), 17.

⁸¹ Many years ago Harold M. Hyman observed that after the Civil War, the nation's military leadership created "two separate 'armies,'" – one devoted to "traditional duties" in the West and along the U.S.-Mexico border, and another assigned to "military government" in the South. Hyman offers an excellent account of how the army leadership's interacted with Johnson, leading to his impeachment. This short article makes clear the enormous significance of the army as a player in Reconstruction high-politics. See Hyman, "Johnson, Stanton, and Grant: A Reconsideration of the Army's Role in the Events Leading to Impeachment," *The American Historical Review* 66, no. 1 (October 1, 1960): 85–100.

Reconstruction and the Indian Wars together in a single narrative or analytical frame.

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Partly this is because the story of black emancipation and its aftermath has seemed so different from the nation's genocidal policies towards Native Americans. Moreover, historians tend to portray the army's role in Reconstruction as unprecedented – an unusual use of the nation's military forces at an exceptional moment.

In recent years historians have begun to expand the geographical and chronological boundaries of the Civil War and Reconstruction. They have produced new volumes dedicated to the Civil War in the trans-Mississippi West, and they have examined Reconstruction in terms of western issues. Historians have also begun to rethink categories like freedom, slavery, and citizenship by paying more attention to the West. For Elliott West, the Civil War and emancipation present a “paradox” when viewed alongside U.S. Indian policy, highlighting tensions over citizenship and belonging that had long been part of the American national story. In his study of the Nez Perce, he suggests that the emancipation of four million African-American slaves, the expansion of the territorial boundaries of the nation, and the bloody battles with Native Americans must be understood as part of the same period – what he calls “Greater Reconstruction.” The notion of a “greater reconstruction” illuminates many of the issues at work in the post-Civil War army. Calls for manpower from western “frontier” settlers created tensions for officers in places like Texas, where they also faced conflicts related to the recent civil war. But the army's experience on these continental fringes had even more far-reaching effects, as the post-war settlement between the Union and Confederacy intersected with U.S. wars of expansion and empire. Steven Hahn suggests that these southern, western, and global processes help us better understand the emergence of a

strong central state in the U.S. in the nineteenth century. Moving beyond regional and 50 national frameworks, Hahn regards the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Indian wars as important for understanding “American empire and imperial nationhood.”⁸²

The United States waged a series of military assaults in the mid-nineteenth century designed to extend its boundaries. Even after the army had successfully expanded the nation’s territory, it continued to face resistance and hostility in the South and West. The spoils of the Mexican War, referred to as the Mexican Cession, amounted to roughly 529,000 additional square-miles under the American flag, making it second only to the Louisiana Purchase in terms of territory added to the Union since the founding. Conflicts with Native Americans in Texas were part of ongoing efforts to effectively incorporate this territory into the nation – to establish real sovereignty over both the land, its resources, and its people. In the 1860s and 1870s, however, the federal government also had to *reincorporate* the South into the Union. Considered in terms of land mass, the former Confederacy trumped the Mexican Cession at nearly three-quarters of a million square-miles and represented far more people and agricultural resources.

The nation’s top military commanders communicated the scope and diversity of the army’s work in Reconstruction in their departmental reports. In 1867, the first year of

⁸² Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Steven Hahn, “Slave Emancipation, Indian Peoples, and the Projects of a New American Nation-State,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 3 (2013): 309, 324. For a sampling of recent scholarship on the West, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, see *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States*, eds. Adam Arenson and Andrew Graybill (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); *Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West*, ed. Virginia Scharff (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). Recent monographs include Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier*; Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). For an incisive overview of the historiography on the Civil War in relationship to the West and to Indian policy in particular, see Khal Schneider, “Distinctions That Must Be Preserved: On the Civil War, American Indians, and the West,” *Civil War History* 62, no. 1 (2016): 36–54.

Military Reconstruction, the ten former Confederate states were divided into five military districts. As General Ulysses S. Grant, serving as interim secretary of war, wrote, “The powers of these commanders are both civil and military.”⁸³ In the first military district, which included the former state of Virginia, all elections had been suspended. The district commander, Brevet Major General J. M. Schofield, was responsible for filling vacancies in state, county, and municipal governments. In addition, one of the army’s major tasks throughout Reconstruction was overseeing elections and selecting registrars. The legislation enacting Military Reconstruction specified that military commanders were to “appoint as many boards of registration as may be necessary, consisting of three loyal officers or persons, to make and complete the registration, superintend the election, and make return to him of the votes, list of voters, and of the persons elected as delegates by a plurality of the votes cast at said election.” If a plurality of voters voted for a convention, the commanding general would designate a time and place for the convention, advertise it publically, and the convention would “frame a constitution and civil government” according to the specifications outlined in First Military Reconstruction Act. Then the constitution would be ratified, again in a manner organized and approved by the commanding general.⁸⁴

These were the political duties that officers assigned to Reconstruction duty generally disliked. In Charleston, South Carolina, part of the second military district, there was a Bureau of Civil Affairs staffed by military personnel. The duties of the

⁸³ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1867. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 40th Cong., 2d session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), 21.

⁸⁴ First Reconstruction Act, March 2, 1867, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/first-reconstruction-act>. Accessed 29 February 2016.

bureau were described as “matters connected with registration under reconstruction acts.” However, A. J. Willard, heading up the bureau, “found their sphere largely increased” by the various legal questions that arose from carrying out the reconstruction orders. His account of the work carried out by the Bureau of Civil Affairs is quoted at length because it provides a sense of what duties devolved upon the army during the early years of Military Reconstruction:

The subjects acted upon under this title [civil administration] related principally to the appointment and removal of civil officers and qualification for offices, the consideration of the power and duties of civil officers, as modified by military orders, questions related to taxation, tot the reparation of roads, bridges, &c, the qualifications and drawing of juries, the establishment of military tribunals, and the preparation of rules and regulations for the government thereof; and to communications involving the construction of orders relating principally to the following topics: the abolition of imprisonment for debt, distress for rent, and the staying suits and executions in certain cases.⁸⁵

Major General George G. Meade, commanding the Third Military District, illustrated his Reconstruction responsibilities in terms of the amount of correspondence it entailed. “The amount of labor performed in carrying on the civil and military administration of my command, independent of what specially related to the civil bureau... will be seen by reference to the accompanying statement of my assistant adjutant general.” In the ten months covered by said statement, Meade’s command had received 5,432 letters, and sent 1,883 letters and 6,084 endorsements “covering orders, instructions, and decisions.” The Third Military District included Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. All three states had been “admitted to representation” by the end of 1868, and Meade was relieved that his “detached and scattered” troops could be brought together and stationed at railroad depots. He optimistically declared “the cessation of all intervention on the part of military

⁸⁵ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1867, 310.

officers in civil affairs,” but that would prove far from true as paramilitary groups continued to organize in opposition to the U.S. army, freedpeople, and former Unionists.⁸⁶

Responsibility for civil affairs engendered much of the same confusion and hostility in the South as it had in pre-statehood California. As in California, the army officers assigned to Reconstruction duty complained they had not received specific instructions regarding the parameters of their power. In his brief remarks as commander of the Department of the South, Major General Henry W. Halleck asked that “the powers and duties of officers in interfering in civil affairs be more clearly defined by law and regulations.” He explained, “Officers are frequently ordered in general terms to assist certain civil functionaries in enforcing the civil laws, and these functionaries often expect them to perform duties which are not entirely undefined, and which have heretofore been regarded as not within the power of the military to perform.”⁸⁷ Just over two decades earlier, Halleck had served as the secretary of the territory in pre-statehood California. In 1871, he once again he found himself engaged in the uncertain position of assisting with civilian duties.

In addition to overseeing elections, patrolling the countryside, and arresting criminals, the army also worked closely with freedpeople. Major General Sickles in South Carolina was one of many army officers who thought the solution to the South’s problems would be found in reestablishing the plantation economy. In 1866 he wrote to

⁸⁶ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1868. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 40th Cong., 3d session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), 80.

⁸⁷ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1871. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, pt. 2, 42nd Cong., 2d session, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), 59.

Washington, “When I assumed command in this State I found the labor question, the most important element of prosperity in an agricultural country, entirely unsettled. The freed people, the former laborers, and the only reliance for the immediate supply of the great desideratum, *labor*, were restless, unquiet and indisposed to make arrangements for continuous labor.” Meanwhile, the white landowners were “depressed, despondent, and hopeless” about the prospects of “securing sufficient labor to whiten the alluvial fields of the Mississippi valley once more with the great staple, cotton.” Sickles suggested to the assistant commission of the Freedmen’s Bureau that a circular be issued advising, but not requiring, freedmen to enter into labor contracts. “It was hence necessary to impress them with the sublime truths that freedom is not licentiousness; that it does not mean the right to do nothing and be supported by charity, whether national or individual; and that it is the duty of every human creature, possessed of the capacity, to work for his or her own support.”⁸⁸ Across the South army officers and bureau agents tried to encourage freedpeople to give up their dreams of being freeholders and enter into contracts with white landowners, many times their former masters. But opinion was not uniform, even among the army brass. Brevet Major General Nelson A. Miles, serving as assistant commissioner for the Freedmen’s Bureau in North Carolina, for one, worried about the region’s overreliance on cotton. “Scanty crops” had taken their toll on the population, forcing the bureau to issue rations of “meat and breadstuffs.” Miles thought cotton was “a risk”: “It consumes time in cultivation, preparation, and realization, and the result is, that there being no bread in the land, the poor must starve or the Government support them.” A few months later, Miles issued a circular urging freedpeople to plant consumable crops

⁸⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1866, 55.

in addition to cotton. It “advise[d] and urge[d] the planting of cereals in preferences to cotton; much of the past and present destitution arises from an undue attention to the production of the latter staple, and hereafter the officers of this Bureau, if called upon for assistance, will always take into consideration the endeavors of communities or individuals to provide for the production of breadstuffs.”⁸⁹ Individual army officers could exercise their own discretion in encouraging freedpeople to enter into contracts and plant certain crops. They also exercised discretion in responding to various appeals for assistance, whether stemming from material destitution or threats of violence.⁹⁰

Another time-consuming duty for officers in the occupied South was dealing with uncooperative civilian officials. The First Reconstruction Act, passed over Johnson’s veto on March 2, 1867, made clear the power of the military district’s commanders over the civil authorities in the former Confederacy. The legislation stated that “any civil governments which may exist therein shall be deemed provisional only, and in all respects subject to the paramount authority of the United States at any time to abolish, modify, control, or supersede the same.” Additional legislation was passed on March 23,

⁸⁹ Annual Report of the Assistant Commissioner for North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, October 9, 1867; Circular No. 1 dated January 17, 1868, Nelson A. Miles Papers, USAHEC.

⁹⁰ On the U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen’s Bureau, see George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen’s Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955); Paul A. Cimbala, and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999). A few excellent works that deal with the establishment of new labor relations and interactions between bureau agents, army officers, and freedpeople are: Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

again over Johnson's veto, which underlined the supreme power of the military over the 56
"provisional" extant governments. In case there was any doubt, the "supplementary act"
stated it was "the true intent and meaning" of the First Reconstruction Act that "the rebel
states...were not legal State governments; and that thereafter said governments, if
continued, were to be continued subject in all respects to the military commanders of the
respective districts, and to the paramount authority of Congress." The district commander
was empowered to "suspend or remove from office" whatever official as he saw fit.⁹¹

Despite the clarity of the decree, civil officials challenged district commanders' authority. In Georgia, Major General John Pope threatened the provisional governor, Charles Jones Jenkins, with removal if he continued to oppose Reconstruction. Jenkins had gone to Washington to seek an injunction from the U.S. Supreme Court against the establishment of Military Reconstruction. (The Court denied to hear the petition for want of jurisdiction.)⁹² Pope wrote Jenkins, "In your address to the people of Georgia, which occasioned this correspondence, you denounce the acts of Congress, which I am sent here to execute, as 'palpably unconstitutional' and 'grievously oppressive,' and advise the people, whatever may be the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, to take no action under those laws. While you counsel them not to resist by violence, you at the same time, by open official denunciation of the law, invite the very action which you seem to deprecate," Pope wrote. He told Jenkins in no uncertain terms that he could not continue to openly defy Reconstruction and still remain in office. "It is manifestly

⁹¹ First Reconstruction Act, March 2, 1867, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/first-reconstruction-act>. Accessed 29 February 2016.

⁹² Richard Zuczek, *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction Era [Two Volumes]*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 334.

impossible for me to perform the duties required of me by the acts of Congress while the 57
provisional governor of the State is opening denouncing them and giving advice to the
public in his official capacity.” Pope informed Jenkins that if this behavior continued,
“the whole civil government of the State” would have to be “overthrown, and military
substituted.”⁹³ Pope was spared the nuisance of removing Jenkins; that duty fell to his
successor, Major General George Meade.

One of more notable conflicts between military and civilian authority involved
Major General Philip H. Sheridan. As commander of the Fifth Military District, Sheridan
carefully monitored political events at the parish, city, and state level. He used the powers
granted by Congress to remove officials he deemed antagonistic to Reconstruction. These
included the governors of Texas and Louisiana as well as twenty-two councilmen in New
Orleans, among many others. These actions earned him the ire of President Johnson, who
wanted to limit the army’s – and Congress’ – power in the South. Despite the opposition
of General Ulysses S. Grant, Johnson removed Sheridan from command of the Fifth
Military District in August 1867. Later that fall, Sheridan was unapologetic about his
actions. In his official report to Washington, Sheridan insisted that “nearly every civil
functionary, from the governor down” in Texas and Louisiana had been “soldiers or
aiders and abettors in the rebellion.” They were, he said, elected for the very purpose of
opposing the United States government, and they continued to oppose “the law” and
Sheridan himself. He defended himself on the grounds that these officeholders were
essentially traitors and “aliens,” having opposed the Union and placed themselves outside
of it. “There was only one reasonable course to pursue, and that was remove every civil

⁹³ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1867, 324.

officer who did not faithfully execute the law, or who put any impediment in the way of its execution – and this course was adopted.”⁹⁴ 58

Politics during Reconstruction was not limited to courtrooms and governors’ offices. Violence was one of the defining features of political mobilization during this period. As historians have amply demonstrated, white southerners organized in paramilitary groups in order to terrorize African-Americans and suppress their political activities. In addition to African-Americans, they also targeted white Unionists.⁹⁵ Jeffrey C. Davis, Brevet Major commanding the District of Kentucky, which fell outside the boundaries of Congress’ order and was not governed by the Reconstruction Act, nonetheless tasked his troops with responding to this threat. As early as 1866, he described “bands of ‘guerillas’ and ‘negro regulators’” who were intimidating people in the countryside. “The increase of robbery and lawlessness, and the ineffectual measures taken by the civil authorities to suppress these bands, rendered it my duty to offer to the citizens more protection from the military than I had before found necessary.” He assigned detachments of soldiers to accompany Freedmen’s Bureau agents and to arrest “desperadoes.” Davis would then turn over the criminals to civil authorities.⁹⁶

Before his transfer, Sheridan described a similar state of unrest and violence in Texas. “The condition of civil affairs in Texas was anomalous, singular, and

⁹⁴ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1867, 380. On Sheridan’s actions as commander of the Fifth Military District, see Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 46-62. On Sheridan in Texas, particularly from the perspective of the army, see Richter, *Army in Texas*, 97-115.

⁹⁵ On the violence of Reconstruction, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁹⁶ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1866, 57.

unsatisfactory,” he wrote. Unfortunately, Sheridan could not rely on the support of civil 59
authorities to protect the citizens of the state. He reported that Governor Throckmorton
(whom Sheridan later removed from office) wanted to remove troops from east and send
them to the frontier, confident that “justice would be done to freedmen, Union men, and
our soldiers in the courts.” Sheridan insisted, however, “But justice is not done.” He
recounted a recent incident in which two soldiers were shot to death. Although the grand
jury would not indict their killers, they did charge another officer with burglary “because
he broke into the house of some citizen in his attempt to arrest” the murderers. The
situation was ludicrous, in Sheridan’s assessment. He wrote grimly, “My own opinion is
that the trial of a white man for the murder of a freedman, in Texas, would be a farce.”⁹⁷

The effect of this ongoing violence was, in many cases, to restore the South to
conditions that had prevailed *before* the war. A freedmen’s bureau agent in Texas wrote
about the “fearful amount of lawlessness and ruffianism” in his state. “Armed bands
styling themselves Ku-klux, &c., have practices barbarous cruelties upon the freedmen.
Murders by the desperadoes who have long disgraced this State are of common
occurrence.” But the government simply did not have the resources on the ground to
prevent such violence. “The civil authorities have been overawed, and, in many cases,
even the bureau and military forces have been powerless to prevent the commission of
these crimes....In consequence of this condition of affairs a kind of quiet prevails among
the freed people lacking but little in all the essentials of slavery.”

Army officers believed that safety was a function of the location of bureau agents
and army troops. In South Carolina, Major Gen. D.E. Sickles wrote that in parts of his

⁹⁷ Ibid., 46.

state, “a freedman has little security for life, limb, or property, apart from the presence and protection of a garrison of United States troops.” It was not only freedpeople who suffered violence. “Magistrates, constables, jurors, and witnesses, residing far from a garrison, are intimidated by threats of retaliation from enforcing the ordinary legal remedies against these bandits and guerillas.”⁹⁸ The Texas bureau agent echoed these sentiments: “In the more remote districts, where bureau agents are 50 or 100 miles apart, and stations of troops still further distant, freedmen do not dare or presume to act in opposition to the will of their late masters.” As a result, freedpeople were not even trying to “exercise rights conferred upon them by the acts of Congress.”⁹⁹ If people’s safety could not be ensured, then new laws were meaningless. Historian Gregory Downs affirms what these army officers expressed in their appeals for reinforcements. Downs writes, “But if proximity was at the heart of the army’s power, the military was nearly powerless in places it did not reach. In regions far from military stations, guerilla warfare raged.”¹⁰⁰ Despite the “intrusive, expansive occupation of the Southern countryside” that Downs describes, many regions were in fact too far from a garrison to enjoy the protection and security federal soldiers tried to provide.

The army worked to protect African-Americans and loyal citizens from pervasive violence, but commanders were well aware of their own limitations. Their reports are filled with requests for increased manpower. In 1868, General George G. Meade told General Grant that there were “unmistakable signs of disorder in [Georgia] and Alabama from secret organizations, such as have disturbed Tennessee.” Meade assured his superior

⁹⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁹ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1868, 1052.

¹⁰⁰ Downs, *After Appomattox*, 32.

that he would issue “a very stringent order” and pursue other means to “check this evil.” 61

But Meade, like so many other commanders in both South and the West, felt that his troops were “insufficient to control all parts of these States.” Meade was especially apprehensive about the upcoming elections. These were events that usually triggered attacks on freedpeople and Unionists as paramilitary groups sought to “intimidate voters,” as Meade himself recognized in this case. He wrote Grant, “If you can spare a regiment, any companies you can send will be of great value.”¹⁰¹ Too often, however, there were no regiments to spare.

Southern and Western Occupations

While the U.S. army carried out Congress’ mandate, serving as the governmental authority in the former Confederacy and preparing the way for the South’s reincorporation into the nation, it was also acting as an “army of occupation” in the trans-Mississippi West. In the same reports that detailed the conflicts, intrigues, and administrative minutiae of Reconstruction, other officers reported on affairs along the border with Mexico, in the arid deserts of the southwest, and on the Great Plains. Their duties in the West largely concerned Indian hostilities, but in some places, army officers faced the challenges of Reconstruction alongside those of the “frontier.” This was particularly true in Texas. In 1865, a man in northeast Texas wrote Governor Andrew Jackson Hamilton to inform him that every day one could hear remarks such as, “the war is not over yet and that it will come up in a different form” and “the South is only held quiet by the bayonet and that as soon as the soldiers are dismissed the war will come up in a different form.” Expressions of hostility toward the Union were common. In nearby

¹⁰¹ Meade to Grant, April 4, 1868, U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1868, 100.

Parker County, an American flag raised over the courthouse was “torn down and torn to 62
pieces” [sic]. Although the “perpetrators of this outrage” were known, they eluded
punishment. Echoing many similar petitions, this resident declared, “the Civil Law is
powerless, Murder[er]s walk about with impunity. Horsestealing murder & robbery are the
order of the day.” Reflecting Texas’ position at the crossroads of the West and South,
residents feared not only ex-Confederates but Native Americans as well. “Indian Raids
are quite common in all the counties west of this and three or four have been made in the
N.W. Portion of this County.” White people had abandoned their homes and fled the
region. Distance and isolation only added to their troubles. The petitioner informed
Hamilton that they had had “no mails and have not seen a news paper for 6 weeks.”¹⁰²

Places like Tarrant and Parker County, Texas, defy the neat regional narratives
that have long distinguished “southern” and “western history.” Individuals like the one
who petitioned Governor Hamilton felt both the violence of Reconstruction and the
violence of the Indian Wars. Unionists there had survived – and won – the Civil War, but
the war had not settled many critical issues. As this man wrote Hamilton, many who had
taken the amnesty oath “openly advocate the restoration of slavery” and still kept their
slaves in bondage. Even as they faced these “southern” problems, such communities also
served as outposts of an expanding U.S. empire in the West. The withdrawal of troops
from the Plains during the war years had provided breathing room for Native American
tribes. It would take several years before the U.S. army was able to rebuild posts and

¹⁰² Birdville, Tarrant County resident to Governor Andrew Jackson Hamilton, October 30, 1865, Hamilton
Papers, Box 301-50, Folder 30, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

assert sovereignty over such places. In the meantime, indigenous peoples “hostile” to U.S. imperialism survived by assaulting such frontier communities.¹⁰³

The army in the West faced the same challenges of limited manpower as commanders in the South. Troops were charged with policing vast expanses of territory over which they were supposed to exert the sovereignty of the federal government. In the South, the threat came from bands of “regulators” or the “Ku Klux,” groups of former Confederate soldiers who continued to defy the authority of the federal government while terrorizing African-Americans and loyal “Union men” (and women). In the West, the threat was more dispersed but also considered a threat to national interests and the security of American citizens. After his transfer west, General Philip H. Sheridan continued to fulfill his duties with passion. General Sherman reported in 1868 that “General Sheridan in person was laboring with every soldier of his command to give all possible protection to the scattered people in that wide range of country from Kansas to Colorado and New Mexico.”¹⁰⁴ Sherman and Sheridan believed Indian hostilities were holding back settlement and impeding the progress of the railroads. Peaceful compromise was out of the question. “It is idle for us longer to attempt to occupy the plains in common with these Indians,” Sherman warned. The West was made for grazing, not farming. The plains Indians were pastoral people and hunters; the two ways of lives were incompatible. Sherman explained, “All of our people there are necessarily scattered, and have more or less cattle and horses, which tempt the Indian, hungry, and it may be

¹⁰³ See Robert Marshall Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1868, 5.

starving for want of his accustomed game; and he will steal rather than starve, and to steal he will not hesitate to kill. Therefore, a joint occupation of that district of country by these two classes of people, with such opposing interests, is a simple impossibility, and the Indians must yield.”¹⁰⁵

Economic interests dictated that the Indians “must yield,” and remain on the reservations assigned to them. Sheridan was particularly concerned about the economic impact of raiding and Indian violence. He estimated that 5,000 head of cattle had been run off from their ranches and from freight trains. Ranchers had abandoned their lands. “Unless the Indians are crushed out, and made to obey the authority of the government, there will be a total paralysis of some of the best interests of this section of country. All confidence is destroyed.”¹⁰⁶ Sherman had ordered two of his top generals to protect main lines of trade and transit – the Missouri River and the Union Pacific railroad – “with jealous care.” Other troops would make sure the Indians stayed on their reservations; otherwise, Sheridan was under orders to “destroy or punish the hostile Indians of his department” until they submitted to the U.S.’s reservation plans for them.

Sheridan, Sherman, and the other architects of U.S. military policy did not lack resolve in dealing with Native Americans. They simply lacked the manpower to enforce their ambition to make their enemy “yield,” in part because the army was charged with increasing responsibility and an ever-larger territory to occupy, administer, and secure. Sherman recognized as much in 1868. He reminded his superiors in Washington of the very different circumstances he faced in the West. “You will observe that whilst the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 20.

country generally has been at peace, the people on the plains and the troops of my command have been constantly at war, enduring all its dangers and hardships, with none of its honors or rewards.” Part of the problem was that Americans were pushing the “frontier” of settlement further west before the army had “secured” it for them. “Our people continue as heretofore to settle on the exposed points of the frontier, to travel without precaution which a well known danger would suggest, and to run after every wild report of the discovery of gold or other precious metal, thus coming into daily contact and necessary conflict with discontented and hostile Indians.” The federal government did much the same when it “extend[ed] the surveys of public land westward.” Railroads and mail routes also pushed westward, preempting the army. “Over all these matters the military authorities have no control, yet their public nature implies public protection, and we are daily and hourly called on for guards and escorts, and are left in the breach to catch all the kicks and cuffs of a war of races, without the privilege of advising or being consulted beforehand.”¹⁰⁷ The army, meanwhile, could not catch up to the demands placed on it. Even in terms of physical infrastructure, the army could barely house its soldiers. In 1870, the commanding general described an army of occupation stretched to its limits to deal with an expanding area of responsibility. “These men are stationed in forty-two States and Territories at two hundred and three organized military posts. The establishment of new posts as settlements advance is constantly rendered necessary, and the expense of providing temporary shelter in inclement regions of the country is unavoidably great. During the past year nearly one hundred and fifty buildings for

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., xli.

barracks, hospitals, and store-houses have been ordered to be erected.”¹⁰⁸ As Chapter 2 details, the expansion of the army’s sphere of responsibility transformed many enlisted men into little more than construction workers for the army of western occupation.

66

At the same time as the army faced these growing demands, Congress slashed appropriations and reduced its strength. In 1866, the Army Appropriations Act limited the army to 54,000 men. Four years later, Congress reduced the army’s size to 37,313 by cutting the number of infantry regiments and line brigadiers. Another act in 1870 “of sweeping scope,” according to Robert Utley, further reduced the ranks and the officer corps. In 1874, Congress limited the enlisted strength the army to 25,000 men. “In five years Congress had cut the army in half,” Utley writes.¹⁰⁹ Army insiders did not anticipate how much the army would change from its post-war high. In October 1865, the *Army and Navy Journal* reflected on the proposed cuts to army appropriations. The *Journal*, devoted to reporting on the interests of members of the two branches of the nation’s military establishment, claimed to support “economy” but thought it best that the U.S. retain an army large enough to answer the varied calls on it. “But we trust that no consideration of economy will inspire Congress with a penny-wise, pound-foolish [policy?] in regard to the Permanent Army.” The *Journal* believed it was “not necessary... to maintain a large establishment and a numerous Army.” Instead, they suggested Congress authorize a minimum of 50,000 troops and a maximum of less than 100,000. “True economy will take pains that, while the Army is small, it may nevertheless be good, and, while it may not be numerically formidable, it shall be, at

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1871. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, pt. 2, 41st Cong., 3d session, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 15.

least, efficient and vigorous,” the *Journal* opined.¹¹⁰ The *Army and Navy Journal* and its 67 readership decried Congressional belt-tightening that ultimately brought the army to a strength of about 25,000 men. Nonetheless, even this reduced establishment was far larger than the army of 1860.

The issue of army appropriations underscores how Americans understood the army’s role in responding to these different threats. Well into the 1870s, debates over the army, its size, scope, and functions, remained tied to broader conflicts over the post-Civil War reunification of the United States. While Democrats charged President Grant with using the country’s military to suppress liberty and uphold illegitimate governments in the South, other legislators defended troops stationed all over the continent. Still others contrasted the legitimate use of troops along the “frontier” with their illegitimate deployment in the South. In this way, the politics of Reconstruction and western imperialism intersected in debates over the future of the U.S. army. In both regions, the army was responsible for asserting the authority of the federal government and incorporating peoples and places at the periphery into the state’s orbit. In both, soldiers performed a diverse range of jobs off the battlefield – representing federal savings to some while embodying government waste to others.

In February 1869, James A. Garfield, chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs and a future president, presented the committee’s proposal, H.R. 803, “making appropriations for the support of the Army for the year ending June 30, 1870.” Garfield discussed changes in the size of the army since 1860, noting that according to the army reorganization bill of 1866, the authorized maximum of the army was around 80,000 men

¹¹⁰ “The Permanent Army,” *ANJ*, October 28, 1865, 152.

and the minimum was about 47,000. By 1868, 52,948 troops served in the army. “The Army is now below the minimum,” Garfield told his colleagues. The Committee on Military Affairs did not recommend any reduction in the number of cavalry troops because these were needed for Indian-fighting, but it did think the infantry regiments could be reduced from forty-five to thirty regiments due to progress made in the South. “We believe that the work of restoration of the late rebel States has so far progressed and the more pacific prospects of the South under the incoming Administration will warrant us in making this measure of reduction in the line of the Army,” Garfield said. The committee also recommended reducing the number of officers in the army by reorganizing various staff departments. The proposed legislation did not specify the “precise extent” of the reductions, however, leaving that up to the President’s discretion.¹¹¹

After outlining some of the basic features of the proposed legislation, Garfield turned to the more controversial aspects of the army bill. Anticipating criticism, he boldly defended the officers of the army. Some officers would be made superfluous by the organization of the staff departments, but he insisted they needed to be respected rather than treated as leeches of the government’s largess. Army officers, he reminded the House, “are at this very time employed in important, perilous duties. We are in the midst of an Indian war; and a large portion of our Army is still required in the South to maintain the public peace. When faithful officers in the unreconstructed States are bearing the reproaches and scorn of unrepentant rebels, and suffering in the name of the Republic the indignity of those who hate it, their position will be a most wretched one, if to the

¹¹¹ *Cong. Globe*, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., Feb. 9, 1869, Appendix, 180.

contempt of their enemies should now be added the neglect and injustice of their friends.” He quoted Fernando Wood, the former mayor of New York City turned congressman, who had earlier called officers “idle vagabonds” who lived off the “poor tax-payer.” Garfield defended the officers who had served in the Civil War, turning the issue of army appropriations into a question of Union loyalty. Referring to Wood’s ardent support for the Confederacy, Garfield declared: “It may become him, who has never had any sympathy with the Army when it was engaged in putting down the rebellion waged by his friends, to call them ‘vagabonds,’ but it does not become this House to indorse by its action so unworthy a sentiment.”¹¹² Years after the end of hostilities, the Civil War continued to divide legislators in their opinion of the national army and its worthiness.

Party lines did not always dictate how lawmakers felt about the army. Garfield received some of his sharpest criticism from a fellow Republican, Benjamin F. Butler, who proposed an amendment that would have cut the army far more drastically than the military affairs committee suggested. Butler’s plan limited the army to 25,000 men and cut the officer corps in half. Yet no one could charge Butler with having little “sympathy” for the army officers in the South or being one of those “unrepentant rebels” who wished for the collapse of the Union. Nicknamed “Beast Butler,” he had earned the scorn of southerners during his occupation of New Orleans. During his tenure in Congress, he became a leading Radical and he would go on to craft major pieces of Reconstruction legislation, including the initial version of the Enforcement Act of 1871. When Butler spoke in 1869, however, he spoke for reduction because he believed the army was unnecessary to protect the gains of the war. Referring to Grant’s upcoming inauguration,

¹¹² Ibid., 181.

he declared, “We will want no army in the South after the 4th day of March next. An event will then happen which will be more potent for peace than soldiers in every village and hamlet. It will then be understood that all disorder and riot and murder must cease.” As for the West, Butler did not think “the few thousand Indians in the field – perhaps I ought to say hundreds of Indians” required more than 25,000 soldiers.¹¹³

Not all Republicans agreed that Grant’s election would bring peace to the South. Another Radical, Samuel Shellabarger of Ohio, spoke instead of war. He thought there was still plenty of “insubordination, want of personal safety, danger of bloodshed, violence, assassinations, danger of proscription, [and] danger of interference with elections” in the South.¹¹⁴ Shellabarger spoke in favor of the milder cuts proposed by the Committee on Military Affairs, and he reminded his audience that Grant himself did not think the time was right for more severe reductions. Other Republicans were also concerned about the fragility of the southern peace. James Mullins, a staunch Republican from Tennessee, opposed the inclusion of \$1,000 in the legislation for the construction of an arsenal in Georgia. He claimed the people of Georgia could not yet be trusted with an arsenal. “It is unsafe in every sense of the word. They are not reconstructed. They have defied the Government; they have looked you in the face and said ‘Your reconstruction law is without constitutional foundation.’ They have run rough shod over us, horse, foot, and dragoons; they have drive out the men that were loyal and elected those that suited their own notions of reconstruction,” Mullins insisted. “This goes into the hands of the enemy, and nowhere else... They treat you on the Kuklux system; they rob you, whip

¹¹³ Ibid., 183.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 189.

you, burn you, and finally shoot you if they cannot get rid of you in any other way. Now,⁷¹ I do not want to give them the materials to shoot me and other loyal men in this Congress or out of it.”¹¹⁵ Mullins’ amendment to strike out the Georgia arsenal appropriation was not voted down.

The fight over army appropriations went beyond Republican in-fighting. Congressman Benjamin Boyer, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, spoke on behalf of the reconstructed, giving voice to Mullins’ most dire admonitions. Referring to Shellabarger’s speech on the absence of peace in the South, Boyer agreed that it was the South that consumed the army’s attention – quite unjustly, in his opinion. “Ay, sir, it is the reconstruction policy of Congress which has necessitated the continuance of this vast Army at this enormous cost to the nation. We have an Indian war on the plains; but our Army is not there defending the frontier.” He claimed too many troops were in the South “acting as a body-guard for the bastard governments” of Reconstruction. There was no legitimate reason for troops to be stationed in the “quiet” South, apart from the “despotic government” (the United States). According to Boyer, Congress had to maintain a large army, not to ensure peace in the South, but to protect its tyrannical government. Reconstruction was a continuance of war, not a way to peace. It did not take long for Boyer to turn to the question of legitimacy. Reconstruction was not only illegitimate because it was robbed a “brave people” of their rights, but because it empowered African Americans. “At the South the natural order of things has been reversed. The social pyramid has been inverted. It has been made to stand on its apex, and is held in that unnatural position by the points of surrounding bayonets.” In only slightly different

¹¹⁵ *Cong. Globe*, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., Feb. 8, 1869, 967.

words, the congressman from Pennsylvania expressed the same sense of dramatic social 72 reversal as the former slave who told his former owner, “Bottom rung on top now, boss.”¹¹⁶ But for Boyer, there was hope because not all of the proper and legitimate leaders of the South had succumbed to Republican tyranny. “In Georgia, white men still hold out against the attempt to degrade them to the level of an inferior race.” Presumably he referred to the recent purge of black officeholders in Georgia. The previous fall, Democrats and some white Republicans joined together to have thirty-two African-Americans unseated from the state house and senate. In response, a large group of freedpeople decided to rally in Camilla. They were met at the courthouse square by heavily armed whites, who dispersed the rally and killed at least nine African-Americans. While still early in the chronology of the state’s Reconstruction history, Camilla was “the beginning of the end for Republican rule in Georgia.”¹¹⁷ Yet Boyer spoke approvingly of Georgians’ brave resistance to the “degradation” of an “inferior race.” Such intransigence, he believed, explained why Republicans like Shellabarger opposed reducing the army any further.¹¹⁸

Both Mullins and Boyer agreed to a certain extent about the centrality of the U.S. army to the course of Reconstruction. Both worried about how and in whose interest military power would be used in places like Georgia, which was far from peaceful. But they differed in their estimation of the legitimacy of the army’s continued occupation of the South. Mullins feared that arms could fall into the hands of the “unreconstructed”

¹¹⁶ Sage American History, <http://sageamericanhistory.net/reconstruction/reconstruction.html>.

¹¹⁷ On Camilla, see Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, 289-292; quotation on 292. On questions of political legitimacy and the formal political gains made by African-Americans in the South, see Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, chapter 5.

¹¹⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., Feb. 17, 1869, 1328-1329.

people of Georgia, while Boyer praised the “brave” men who resisted the tyranny of the 73
Republican Party and the “inferior race” it had empowered. Radicals like Butler became
accidental allies of Democrats like Boyer. Skeptical of the army’s ability to maintain
peace, Butler placed his faith instead in Grant’s election. He insisted that “Troops will not
prevent murders and will not prevent riots in the South,” and instead called on Grant and
civil authorities to restore and maintain order throughout the South.

On March 3, 1869, Congress passed an appropriations bill that cut the number of
infantry regiments and reduced the army to an authorized strength of 45,000 men. This
would not be the end of “retrenchment” for the army, however.¹¹⁹ In the 1870s,
opposition to Reconstruction intensified while westerners’ calls for protection and
military aid increased. In the appropriations debate of 1870, James Brooks, a Democrat
from New York, berated the army for its “suppression of human liberty and self-
government in eleven States of the Union.”¹²⁰ By 1874, the criticism of the army’s
activities in the South was even more severe, but its defenders in the West were more
vocal. Samuel J. Randall spoke in favor of a “strict and legitimate economy” and vowed
to authorize appropriations only for “absolutely legitimate purposes.” For Randall, a
Pennsylvania Democrat who would go on to serve as speaker of the house, the army in
the South did not meet his standards for legitimacy. He made the political geography of
troop distributions clear: “The fault is not in the number of the Army; the fault is in the
assignment of the Army. I say, take your Army from the South; take your Army from
Louisiana, and put it to its legitimate purposes – for the defense of the lives of our

¹¹⁹ Jerold E. Brown, *Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 39.

¹²⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., June 20, 1870, 4618.

citizens, and not for the crushing of the liberties of our people.”¹²¹ Randall did not want 74
the army defending the rights of African-Americans in the South, but he would support
its use in the West. Fellow Democrat James B. Beck of Kentucky echoed Randall’s
concerns. Beck insisted that the army could be reduced even further, to 20,000 men, and
still carry out its duties in the West.¹²² For Congressional Democrats and their Republican
allies who wanted to remove troops from the southern states, the issue of frontier
protection worked in their favor. They could advocate “economy” and lower taxes while
insisting that the army’s resources be assigned to “legitimate” purposes – the removal of
troops from the South and their reassignment in the West.

No place could match the drama of Reconstruction in Louisiana, and no state
better symbolized for Democrats the illegitimacy of federal military intervention in
politics. Several factions vied for control of the state legislature and the executive office,
and following the disputed election of 1872, a “Fusion” cabal of Liberal Republicans and
Democrats had even set up a “shadow” government. President Grant ultimately
recognized the Republican William Pitt Kellogg as governor, infuriating Democrats.
Meanwhile, the countryside was heating up. In Grant Parish, a group of African-
American Republicans took control of a courthouse, laying claim to the reins of political
power. Hundreds of militant whites, including members of the White League and the
Klan, surrounded the courthouse with artillery and a canon. A few days later, they
attacked the courthouse, leaving over one-hundred African-Americans dead. Kellogg,

¹²¹ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 1024 (1874).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1024.

concerned about the stability of Republican rule across the state and no doubt worried about saving his own neck, begged General Emory to send more federal troops.¹²³

Meanwhile, in the winter of 1874, legislators invoked Louisiana as a powerful symbol for their respective assessments of federal power. Even Republicans who supported retrenchment believed troops were needed in Louisiana, while Democrats were willing to gut the army if only to get them out of Louisiana. John Coburn, a Republican from Indiana, spoke for the Committee on Military Affairs. He believed that the situation had so improved in the South as to make troops unnecessary throughout most of the region. “A few years ago, perhaps a few months ago, it was necessary to keep troops there on account of the prevalence of disturbances; but I feel that now a time has arrived when public policy, as well as sound sense, dictates that troops shall in a great measure be withdrawn from that country. I believe that troops are necessary in the State of Louisiana only; I do think that at New Orleans there is a necessity for an armed force, perhaps a regiment.”¹²⁴ By 1874, approximately 3,200 troops were still stationed in the Division of the South, which ran from Kentucky to Florida and west to Louisiana (but excluded Texas).¹²⁵ House Democrats, however, would not be satisfied until every federal soldier was transferred. Tammany Democrat Samuel S. Cox called the 300 troops stationed in Mississippi “a sham and a shame.” But he reserved his most acerbic criticism for Louisiana. “As to Louisiana. Louisiana! I would vote for an amendment to this bill that not a dollar shall be given to the Army, or, rather, not a soldier used, not a sword

¹²³ See Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, 292-295; Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 144-145.

¹²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 1012 (1874).

¹²⁵ “Report of the Adjutant General,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1874. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 43rd Cong., 2d session, Vol. 1, 84.

drawn or bayonet fixed, for carrying out the godless tyranny and detestable usurpation in 76 Louisiana,” Cox fumed. “Sir, the condition of Louisiana is a blazing outrage. The Senate knows it; the House knows it; the President himself knows it; the grangers know it; the very mouth of the Mississippi proclaims it. I will not vote to use our Army for any such illegitimate purpose.” Another Democrat from New York, Clarkson Nott Potter, called the army’s activities in Louisiana “not only the greatest outrage, but the greatest political crime of the time.” Asserting that Grant had used the army to prop up the Kellogg administration, rather than protect a lawfully elected executive, Democrats held up Louisiana as an example of the worst federal overreach. “So long as [troops] are liable to be used to dragoon a sovereign State by the fiat of the President and to override the will of its people, I am against any increase of the Army. I would rather see the Army of the United States without an enlisted man than see” a “repeat” of Louisiana. Yet despite his opposition to the military presence in Louisiana, Potter, too, wanted troops to be “put upon the border.”¹²⁶

By 1874, few Congressmen spoke out in favor of a broad, vigorous military presence in the South. But they still used Reconstruction to promote the army in the West. Charles W. Kendall of Nevada found common cause with Washington Whitthorne, a Tennessean who had served in the Confederate Army. The Nevadan agreed that “there is small necessity for a military force in most of the Southern States.” But Kendall insisted that the settlers “from Texas in the south to Montana and Washington Territory in the north” required the protection of the U.S. army. These were the hardy pioneers who had “found that vast country a wilderness, and have built up instead prosperous,

¹²⁶ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 1171 (1874).

powerful, and advancing commonwealths.” He, along with James W. Nesmith from Oregon, disparaged the federal Indian policy and the religious reformers who had failed to civilize and convert Native Americans to Christianity. The delegate from Arizona Territory, Richard C. McCormick, heightened the sectional fervor, this time east versus west rather than north versus south. McCormick accused his eastern colleagues of trying to dictate western policy. He himself, as a delegate from a territory, lacked voting power – a fact that further underlined the West’s political subordination.

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Other Congressmen used their oratory to suggest the West’s grand commercial prospects. The wealth of the West, according to Minnesota Republican Mark H. Dunnell, would benefit the entire nation and deserved the full support of the federal government. Dunnell lamented the “disparaging remarks” that other congressmen had made about the frontier “as though it were indeed a costly portion of the country” and “as though it were costing us altogether too much to take care of it.” Instead, he declared the frontier “the most fruitful portion of the country.” But here, departing from the usual tribute to the valor of the individual pioneer, Dunnell praised the work of the army. Soldiers, he insisted, were essential to supporting “the genius of the American citizen.” Where they guarded surveying parties and prospectors, soldiers were “the most productive men in the whole country.”¹²⁷ Dunnell invoked the army’s imperial mission as well. “Westward the course of empire holds its way,” he declared. Here, empire-building might be an antidote to sectionalism: Congressmen from around the country could all appreciate the commercial prospects of the West and the “productive” work soldiers did there.

¹²⁷ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 1169 (1874).

Eastern lawmakers also associated their support for the army with calls for the expansions of wealth and prosperity. Isaac W. Scudder, a Republican from New Jersey, expressed the hopes and concerns of eastern businessmen – he was a director of the New Jersey Railroad and later worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad – when he gestured towards the army’s western responsibilities. “Our commercial relations with all parts of the world are daily and hourly growing more intimate,” Scudder declared. He described the threats and dangers that would arise with intensifying global connections, predicting that new commercial relations linking “the city of New York... westward across this continent to the Pacific Ocean, and then...to the East Indies” would “bring about collisions” and continue to make military strength essential. Closer to home, Scudder, like his colleagues, spoke of the “vast frontier with Mexico” and the instability which continued to plague this neighboring country. Altogether, the U.S. faced a host of potential threats: “hostile Indians,” “a large and extended immigration,” and “the bold and restless young men of our own people seeking homes in the far West.” All these circumstances called for a generously funded and well-staffed army. “Under this state of circumstances, it seems to me hardly possible that we can safely rely on a permanent reduction of the Army,” Scudder concluded.¹²⁸

For many congressmen, the unprecedented nature of the American continental empire was enough to justify a sizable military establishment. In January 1874, Republican Charles Albright spoke out in favor of “economy” – a watchword of the day – but against slashing the army’s funding. He reminded his colleagues that 30,000 American soldiers provided a host of services to the nation, all at bargain prices. Soldiers

¹²⁸ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 1014 (1874).

were “clerks, messengers, watchmen, signal sergeants, commissary sergeants, hospital 79
stewards” who “sav[ed] the Government large sums of money.” If soldiers did not do this
work, Albright noted, the American state would still need to pay for these services – but
at higher rates. Moreover, soldiers in 1874 had far more responsibilities than their
predecessors because the nation itself had expanded in reach and in ambition. The
recalcitrance of Native American tribes demanded a strong military presence throughout
the trans-Mississippi West. “At no former period in our history did we have the same
extent of territory to watch and guard over,” Albright continued. “Never before did we
have to deal with all the Indian tribes at one and the same time. And hence there never
was the same necessity for so many troops for this purpose. Never before did we have so
large a border to take care of or such a long line of sea-coast to defend.”¹²⁹ Conjuring up
the image of “faithful” soldiers stationed across a vast American empire, the
congressman from Pennsylvania described troops

on the arid, barren, and burning sand-wastes of Arizona, or in the cold and
howling regions of the Rocky Mountains, standing sentinel by turn over the
Indian and the frontiersman, or guarding the great transcontinental thoroughfare,
or protecting and escorting scientific exploring parties; in other instances guarding
railroad engineer parties and railroad construction parties, or sent away up in the
fog-banks of Alaska taking care of the fisherman, fur-trader, and Indian.¹³⁰

Albright captured well the contours of an imperial American state, and he was not
alone in connecting army appropriations to empire-building. Military insiders had long
made the same argument in speaking out against cuts to military spending. It was clear to
the editors of the *Army and Navy Journal* as early as 1867 that Congress could not reduce

¹²⁹ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 993 (1874).

¹³⁰ *Congressional Record*, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., 989-991 (1874).

appropriations and at the same time expect troops to monitor and protect a constantly 80
expanding domain. The *Journal* ran a front-page article detailing various proposals to
annex additional territory to the United States: from Sonora in northern Mexico to British
Columbia to St. Thomas and St. John in the Caribbean, and beyond. While Congressmen
spoke of “economy and retrenchment,” they also entertained proposals “for the
annexation of the greater part of the habitable globe, situate[d] between the Atlantic,
Arctic and Pacific Oceans and the Gulf of Mexico.” “[I]t seems that it is now proposed,
simultaneously with depleting [the army] below a point where it is already too weak, to
increase its duties and responsibilities; to annex territory in all the corners of the Western
Hemisphere, continental and insular, from the frigid to the torrid zone,” the editors wrote.
The army was already inadequate for the responsibilities Congress had thrust upon it in
the South and in Indian country; how could it be expected to sustain further imperial
expansions? “We shall say nothing against Congress, if it abandon annexation, Indian
government and military reconstruction. But while it proposes or endorses these plans, it
is foolish to talk of cutting down the Army.”¹³¹ Of course, most of these plans faltered;
the U.S. did not acquire the Danish Antilles until World War I, and British Columbia
remained part of the northern dominion. But the *Army and Navy Journal* had cause to
believe the United States was on an imperial spree, having purchased Alaska from Russia
only a few months before. Just two years later in 1869, the *Journal* again decried
retrenchment at a time of continental expansion. “We cannot play the part of empire-
founders, of continent-absorbers without being prepared to keep up an Army more than
25,000 to 30,000 strong. The sentiment of our people, tired of war thought it may be, yet

¹³¹ “The Annexations and the Army,” *Army and Navy Journal*, December 21, 1867.

sets strongly toward the acquisition of territory.”¹³² The editors believed it was “but a question of time” until Canada and Mexico were absorbed into the United States.

Those specific plans did not come to pass, but imperial ambitions help prevent Congress from utterly reducing the army’s ranks. Congressmen like Durnell, Scudder, and Albright were leery of reducing the army too much as long as the U.S. fought to assert its sovereignty over recalcitrant Native Americans and protect the people and resources along the Mexican border. As a result, Democrats who opposed federal intervention in the South had to contend with others who wanted the U.S. to maintain a strong federal presence along the “frontier.” In Texas, where threats from Native Americans and instability in Mexico had long collided with Reconstruction politics, lawmakers defended the army against further cuts, acting in their “western” interests rather than going along with their southern colleagues. According to Robert Wooster, Senator Samuel B. Maxey and Representative Schleicher, two Texas Democrats, “agreed to oppose further military cuts in return for a large army presence along the Rio Grande.”¹³³ In this instance, imperial commitments trumped southern fears of military occupation.

The tension between the army’s southern and western duties continues to animate contemporary assessments of the nineteenth-century army. Some military historians consider the army’s post-war southern assignments a distraction from its true calling in the West fighting Native Americans. Robert Utley remains skeptical of Sheridan’s

¹³² Quoted in Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Men of Color to Arms!: Black Soldiers, Indian Wars, and the Quest for Equality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 50.

¹³³ Robert Wooster, “The Army and the Politics of Expansion: Texas and the Southwestern Borderlands, 1870-1886,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 93, no. 2 (October 1, 1989): 159.

argument that the army was needed more to protect African-Americans in Texas than to 82
guard the lives and property of white settlers from Native violence. He argues that Sheridan as well as General Hancock were “preoccupied” with Reconstruction. On the other hand, the frontier situation “remained unappreciated by top commanders.” Utley seems unpersuaded by J.J. Reynolds’ argument that 384 citizens were killed in Texas in 1867, but only twenty-six were killed by Native Americans. This, he insists, was “small consolation to frontier settlers who knew that huge property losses and constant insecurity were part of the reckoning too.”¹³⁴

James E. Sefton believes that only “extremists” expected more than 18,000 troops stationed in the South in the fall of 1868. More troops were not feasible, he argues, because of the army’s western duties. Sefton writes, “Since the bulk of the Army was needed for the Plains, any more thorough blanketing of the South than was in fact carried out would have required an increase in the size of the Army. Congress, however, was bent on a decrease rather than an increase.”¹³⁵ Not only “extremists” in the 1870s but historians today lament the fact that more troops were not assigned to Reconstruction duty. William Blair argues that troops should have remained in the South until the turn of the century, pointing to instances of racial violence and intimidation as late as 1898. Yet like Sefton, Blair believes it would have been politically impossible for Congress to commit more troops to the South while fighting a war against Native peoples in the West. “Committing 10,000 to 20,000 troops to long-term occupation of the South was unthinkable for practical, economic, and political-ideological reasons,” Blair writes.

¹³⁴ Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 166, 168.

¹³⁵ Sefton, *United States Army and Reconstruction*, 207-208.

“Securing territorial expansion and settlements for white people in the West commanded⁸³ a higher policy objective than protecting racial adjustment in the South.”¹³⁶ More recently, historian Gregory Downs has suggested that the real tension was not between the South and the West, but between demands for more troops and demands for retrenchment. Politicians were committed to reducing the budget, and they often took aim at army appropriations. Downs argues that the federal government lacked the “capacity” to fully act on its “newfound powers and ambitions.”¹³⁷

Debates in Congress show that the withdrawal of troops from the South and their reassignment on the Plains were politically motivated. Democratic lawmakers staged a deliberate assault on Reconstruction by cutting military appropriations. But opposition to Reconstruction effectively ended up reducing the number of troops available for both western and southern duties.¹³⁸ The rush of settlers to the West and intensifying conflicts with indigenous peoples certainly played into the hands of lawmakers intent on ridding the South of federal troops. They exploited the politics of western expansion to ensure that the troops who did survive their budget cuts would be stationed in the West and not assigned to peacekeeping and policing duties in the South. Although army commanders in the West did not always receive the additional troops they requested, the War Department did shift the majority of the nation’s soldiers to western assignments by 1870.¹³⁹ The army avoided even further cuts – and survived into the late-nineteenth

¹³⁶ Blair, “Use of Military Force,” 398.

¹³⁷ Downs, *After Appomattox*, 94, 101.

¹³⁸ James Sefton has mischaracterized the debates over army appropriations. He claims that “In the debate over the act of March 3, 1869, which reduced the Army’s size, only one or two members referred to Southern affairs at all.” In fact, at least five members of Congress spoke at length about “Southern affairs” during discussions of the March 3, 1869 legislation. Sefton, *United States Army and Reconstruction*, 208.

¹³⁹ Downs, *After Appomattox*, 232.

century at twice its 1860 size – due to growing support for its western duties. Even as members of Congress voted to reduce the size of the army, they preserved a far larger military force than the one their parents or grandparents had known in the name of American empire. Enough lawmakers agreed with the congressman from Minnesota that “Westward the course of empire holds its way” that the army survived the deep cuts advocated by many Democrats. Again the politics of expansion and sectionalism met in Texas, where Democratic lawmakers held off even more extreme cuts in order to preserve a military presence along the U.S.-Mexico border. Ultimately, Reconstruction helped shape U.S. imperial policies while those western concerns helped ensure that the boldest plans for reconstructing the South never came to fruition.

Conclusion

Military government, military rule, and military occupation became subjects of fierce debate at several moments in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The idea of the military supplanting civilian government seemed to smack of tyranny, despotism, and imperialism. It should come as no surprise, then, that the debates over such use of military powers arose at times of continental expansion when the United States was, in fact, extending its sovereignty over new peoples and territories. The rhetoric of imperialism was often invoked at such moments, both in opposition and support of the U.S. empire. Whig congressman Garrett Davis meant to disparage President Polk and his allied Democrats when he exclaimed in 1846, “Was our American President an emperor, sending forth his Agrippa and his Marcellus and his pro-consuls, to establish and to govern the provinces they might conquer by force of arms?” The editors of the *Army and Navy Journal*, on the other hand, were excited to “the play the part of empire-founders, of

continent-absorbers.” At each of these moments, Americans looked to their history for precedents – prior experiences of military government and occupation to provide guidance and justification for their contemporary challenges. 85

In the 1840s, William H. Halleck, the secretary of the territory, searched for precedents to help guide the army in dealing with military and civil affairs in California. Halleck, who was also trained in the law, referenced a Supreme Court case involving the early incorporation of Florida into the United States. Myra K. Saunders writes that the Florida decision led military authorities in California to suppress a new legal code military governor Colonel Richard B. Mason had drafted because it did not accord with the precedent they had discovered.¹⁴⁰ Decades later, at the turn of the twentieth century, a handful of scholars “rediscovered” the military government of California. David Yancey Thomas, a historian who taught at Hendrix College in Arkansas, wrote *A History of Military Government in Newly Acquired Territory of the United States*. Thomas penned chapters on Louisiana, east and west Florida, New Mexico and California. He then went on to examine contemporary military governments in Alaska, Hawaii, the Philippines, Porto Rico, Samoa, and Panama. While Thomas mentioned the unpopularity of military government of the South during Reconstruction in his preface, his book did not deal with the South. Perhaps Thomas, a southerner whose dissertation was supervised by William

¹⁴⁰ Saunders, “California Legal History,” 503. The case was *American Insurance Company v. Canter*, 26 U.S. 1 Pet. 511 511 (1828).

F. Dunning at Columbia, did not wish to elevate the Reconstruction governments in a book that treated military governments that were considered justified.¹⁴¹

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Nominally disinterested scholars like Thomas were not the only ones looking to the nation's history of military government. In 1901, Charles Magoon, an architect of U.S. imperial policy who worked in the Bureau of Insular Affairs (within the War Department), published *Reports on the Law of Civil Government in Territories Subject to Military Occupation by the Military Forces of the United States*. At over 800 pages, the tome covered a variety of legal and political questions related to the country's very recent imperial expansion as well as chapters on the Jefferson and Polk presidencies. He also devoted space to the history of military government in California and New Mexico.¹⁴² The report was important enough to attract notice from academic and legal experts. But it also earned a review in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which noted, "The almost forgotten questions presented by the military governments of Arizona, New Mexico, and California are discussed at length." The *Tribune* thought that in addition to lawyers, the report would also "be interesting to laymen who care to study the constitutional aspect of the question and the civil functions of armies of occupation. It is almost as important in these days to administer properly territory occupied by an army of invasion as it is to invade the territory and drive out the enemy."¹⁴³ The Chicago newspaper was prescient. For

¹⁴¹ David Yancey Thomas, *A History of Military Government in Newly Acquired Territory of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904). On Thomas, see Mary Elizabeth Massey, "David Yancey Thomas: Historian," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1948): 221–26.

¹⁴² On the importance of Magoon's reports for determining colonial policy, see Owen J. Lynch, "The U.S. Constitution and Philippine Colonialism: An Enduring and Unfortunate Legacy," in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 360–361.

¹⁴³ "Civil Government by the Military," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1902, 12.

decades to come, U.S. military and civilian officials would take enormous interest in post-conquest occupations.¹⁴⁴

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The United States imposed military rule over territory in the wake of various imperial conflicts in the nineteenth century. Seen in the context of these other episodes, the use of military government in the South during Reconstruction no longer appears anomalous. Instead, it becomes clear that the federal government used military occupation and military governments to assert its authority over recalcitrant populations and valuable territory. In pre-statehood California, the post-Civil War South and the West, the U.S. army was an important source of labor. Soldiers performed not only the requisite “killing labor” of conquest but also carried out a wide range of administrative tasks that allowed the U.S. to cement and sustain its power. They served as manual laborers, escorts, election supervisors, labor arbitrators, and much more. These occupations suggest the importance of the military as a flexible administrative body that was especially useful as the United States fought and conquered territory, from the time of Jefferson forward. They also make clear that the stories of southern Reconstruction and western expansion belong to the same larger narrative, one about growth of an imperial American state.¹⁴⁵ The next chapter examines the centrality of military labor in the late-nineteenth-century West as the army worked to secure its dominion on the region’s land and resources.

¹⁴⁴ The contemporary military literature on post-conflict occupation is vast. For a sense of the scope of this literature, see Jeanette M. Moyer, “Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Selected Bibliography” (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College Library, 2007). <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/library/bibs/postcon07.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ The colonial American state in the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century has attracted greater attention in recent years. See the essays in Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); McCoy and Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible*.

“More laboring than soldiering:” The U.S. Army as a Labor Force

Reflecting on his military service in the 1870s, Corporal Emil A. Bode declared, “There is more laboring than soldiering in the U.S. Infantry.” Such laboring included chopping and hauling wood, working at the lime kiln, cutting and packing ice, and, as Bode put it, “having the pleasure to try muscle in the rock quarry.” Bode, a German immigrant who enlisted in 1877, often found himself digging trenches for the construction of the military telegraph and laying “hot iron telegraph poles” in the sand and gravel in Indian Territory. “We were soon as well acquainted with handling a crowbar as we were in the manual of arms or any other military exercises,” the corporal recalled.¹⁴⁶ Bode’s superiors agreed. Major General John Pope reported that soldiers in his Department of the Missouri spent so much of their time building, repairing, hauling, and chopping that posts were, essentially, “garrisoned by enlisted laborers rather than soldiers.”¹⁴⁷

Bode was not alone, nor was his regiment exceptional in the amount of manual labor it performed in the course of its service in the West. In the decades after the Civil War, the U.S. army was an army of workers. Soldiers performed the quotidian chores with which armies of occupation were always tasked: they repaired quarters, prepared food, cared for animals, and dug holes for waste. But enlisted men, at the forefront of an expanding continental empire in the nineteenth century, also carried out a host of

¹⁴⁶ E. A. Bode, *A Dose of Frontier Soldiering: The Memoirs of Corporal E.A. Bode, Frontier Regular Infantry, 1877-1882*, ed. Thomas T. Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 65, 75.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1877. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 45th Cong., 2d session, Vol. 2, (serial 1794), 67.

ambitious infrastructural projects. Robert Wooster, in his study of Fort Davis in western 89 Texas, writes that “the influence of the military forces that occupied the region quickly extended far beyond the battlefield...Soldiers escorted the travelers, improved the roads, laid the telegraph wires, and protected the railroads that linked the region to the outside world.”¹⁴⁸ All across the West, in places where labor was scarce and civilian wages were high, the army was not only engaged in punishing unfriendly Native Americans and securing the Rio Grande border against cattle and horse thieves. It was also a relentless and dependable labor regime, committed to opening obscure corners of the West to settlement and investment. Soldiers, far from the battlefield and often overlooked by their civilian counterparts, quietly transformed the landscape of places like western Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Their labor yielded spectacular – and devastating – results.

In the post-Civil War era, soldiers’ labor helped the U.S., reunited if not reconstructed, consolidate its hold over the trans-Mississippi West. The defeat of the slave South and the ascendance of capitalism around the world turned the fruits of soldiers’ labor into the spoils of empire. This chapter examines the work enlisted men performed, arguing that their labor was essential to the emergence of a stronger national presence in the West as well as new capitalist enterprises. Soldiers represented a reserve of not-quite-free laborers available for a wide range of projects: building forts, roads, and irrigation systems; escorting railroad surveyors and mail coaches; and mapping unknown territory. Rather than paying civilians, investors in private concerns depended on the

¹⁴⁸ Robert Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads: Fort Davis and the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006), xi. Wooster has been attentive to the army’s non-combat roles in the nineteenth century. He understands them in terms of “nation building” activities rather than imperialism or western conquest. See Wooster, “The Frontier Army and the Occupation of the West, 1865-1900,” in *Armed Diplomacy: Two Centuries of American Campaigning* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 65-76.

army for much of the infrastructure and protection they required.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the military's organization and disciplinary code perfectly suited the conditions for labor in the West, where the challenge of maintaining a labor force was exacerbated by the region's vastness.¹⁵⁰

By focusing on the army, this chapter illuminates the crucial role of the state in the West, especially its contributions to capitalist development. New western historians have long argued that the federal government played an active part in the region. "The American West, more than any other section of the United States, is a creation not so much of individual or local efforts, but of federal efforts," writes Richard White. "More than any other region, the West has been historically a dependency of the federal government."¹⁵¹ Federal policies, especially those regarding land and Native Americans, decisively shaped the western political economy. The federal government, as an active presence in all things western during this period, was a key player in harnessing the region's resources for use by eastern and foreign investors. The army was the most visible manifestation of federal power on the ground and involved in a range of activities, only one of which was doing battle with Native Americans. Examining soldiers' labor is

¹⁴⁹ Despite a resurgence of interest in the new "history of capitalism," few scholars take up the relationship between the U.S. army and expansion of capitalism in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Interest in the early republic has been somewhat greater. See, for example, Lindsay Schakenbach Regele, "Manufacturing Advantage: War, the State, and the Origins of American Industry, 1790-1840," PhD diss., Brown University, 2015; Andrew J.B. Fagal, "The Political Economy of War in the Early American Republic, 1774-1821," PhD diss., Binghamton University: The State University of New York, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ A helpful statement about the relationship between coerced labor and the land-to-labor ratio and its consequences in the West is Howard Lamar, "From Bondage to Contract: Ethnic Labor in the American West, 1600-1890," in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, eds. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 294-296.

¹⁵¹ White, *Misfortune*, 57.

a promising way to understand the entanglements between private capital and the American state in the nineteenth century.¹⁵²

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As an enlisted man put it in 1888, the “U.S.A. is an army of working-men, not an army of soldiers.”¹⁵³ For too long, such statements were regarded as irrelevant to the enormous changes happening in the West and around the world in the nineteenth century. This chapter argues that this “army of working-men” helped transform the United States and deserves further study. It does so first by tracing the debates in the 1860s and 1870s over the proper role of the U.S. army. In the aftermath of the Civil War, army officers, policymakers, and legislators disagreed about the mission of the peacetime army. These debates reveal a military establishment tasked with several different objectives. Second, the chapter explores the various types of labor soldiers routinely performed. It concentrates on three discrete areas of economic development in the southwest and how soldiers contributed to them: railroad construction, ranching, and mining. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining the activities of one army officer, Colonel Benjamin Grierson, whose career exemplified the “developmental vision” guiding the U.S. army between 1865 and 1890.

The Post-Civil War Army

When the last Civil War volunteers mustered out of the service, the U.S. army faced two formidable challenges: the Reconstruction of the South and the “Indian problem” in the West. Both tasks were frequently unpopular, and they were fraught with

¹⁵² See Smith, “Lost Soldiers,” 149-163. One recent work that deals with soldiers’ labor but is not a typical work of military history is Janne Lahti, *Cultural Construction of Empire: The U.S. Army in Arizona and New Mexico* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012). Lahti makes soldiers’ labor central to his argument, but he sees conflicts over labor largely in terms of identity, culture, and class, but not political economy.

¹⁵³ “Why Our Soldiers Desert,” *ANJ*, December 22, 1888, 324.

conflicts over the military's proper role in restoring law and order to the former Confederacy and in managing the interactions between Native Americans and restless white settlers. Historian Jerry M. Cooper writes, "The army needed policies defining its place and role in American life, indicating what civilians expected of the military. Neither Congress nor the executive branch provided a design for military policy."¹⁵⁴ In many ways this was because "the American people" wanted many different things from the military, depending on who and where they were. The unpopularity of the army among former Confederates was easy to understand; they were a defeated population living in under the military occupation of their erstwhile enemies. In the West, settlers demanded the army's intervention and expected soldiers to eliminate Native tribes who continued to occupy valuable western land. The military brass, meanwhile, claimed throughout the 1860s and 1870s that what they could accomplish was limited by conflicting national policies.

By 1870, managing the country's indigenous population in the West demanded most of the army's attention and resources.¹⁵⁵ According to Robert M. Utley, the preeminent historian of the Indian Wars, "Indian service was the primary mission of the army."¹⁵⁶ As troops reoccupied western posts abandoned during the Civil War, the army was forced to reckon with its obligations to both white settlers and the Native Americans. "These Indians are universally, by the people of our frontier and of our isolated Territories, regarded as hostile, and we, the military, charged with a general protection of

¹⁵⁴ Jerry M. Cooper, "The Army's Search for a Mission, 1865-1890," in *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present*, eds. Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1986), 178.

¹⁵⁵ For figures on the allocation of troops in the South versus the West, see Downs, *After Appomattox*, 189 and 232.

¹⁵⁶ Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 45.

the infant settlements and long routes of travel, have to dispose of our troops and act as though they were hostile,” Lieutenant General William T. Sherman, one of the army’s highest ranking officers, wrote in 1866.¹⁵⁷ Yet civilian agents were responsible for the “guardianship” of these people, further complicating the military’s position. Were Native Americans the enemies of the United States or its wards? The boundary between “hostile” and friendly tribes was often unclear, and many military officers believed that federal policies intended to help the natives were hindering the army’s mission. In 1869, Lieutenant General of the Army Philip H. Sheridan remarked with characteristic scorn, “If a white man commits murders or robs, we hang him or send him to the penitentiary; if an Indian does the same, we have been in the habit of giving him more blankets.”¹⁵⁸ The army leadership felt their efficacy was limited by policies dictated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Sherman argued throughout this period that the bureau’s responsibilities should be transferred to the War Department so the military could properly manage “the Indian problem.”¹⁵⁹

Debates within the army and the government throughout this period took place in the context of Congressional budget cuts. At the very moment when the army confronted recalcitrant former Confederates, the threat of Mexico’s civil war spilling over its Rio Grande border, and mounting hostilities with Native tribes on the plains, Congress slashed the army’s budget and reduced its manpower. In 1868, the army faced “the first of a succession of cutbacks that severely weakened the army line.” A total force of

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Secretary of War. Annual Report, 1866, 21.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1869. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 41st Congress, 2d session, Vol. 1 (serial 1412), 38.

¹⁵⁹ A good synopsis of Sherman’s position is Cooper, “Army’s Search,” 179-181; for more detail, see Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), especially chapters 4 and 5.

54,000 soldiers was initially reduced to just over 37,000. By 1874, additional legislation ⁹⁴ had cut the army to 25,000 enlisted men and 2,000 officers.¹⁶⁰ It would stay roughly this size throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Cooper writes, “Army leaders could only speculate as to their institution’s future place in American society, for the cuts were based on cost, not on some rational program aimed at long-range goals.”¹⁶¹ For most of the late-nineteenth century, this reduced force was scattered over a vast western territory. After 1870, when only a skeletal force remained on Reconstruction duty in the South, at least 70 percent of American soldiers were stationed in the West.¹⁶²

Military officers often spoke of their mission in the West in terms of the extension of “civilization,” and by this they meant the expansion of white Americans’ social and economic institutions. In their official reports and unofficial correspondence, the army brass made it clear that they believed Native Americans hopelessly impeded the advance of such institutions. In the first year of the Peace Policy, Sherman wrote to his brother John, a senator from Ohio: “The more we can kill this year, the less will have to be killed the next war, for the more I see of these Indians the more convinced I am that they all have to be killed or maintained as a species of paupers. Their attempts at civilization are simply ridiculous.”¹⁶³ Nearly a decade later, his assessment had changed little. In his annual report to the secretary of war, Sherman referred to the Indian as “our inveterate enemy; the enemy to cultivation, to labor of any sort, and to all civilization; and that this

¹⁶⁰ Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 15.

¹⁶¹ Cooper, “Army’s Search,” 175.

¹⁶² Cooper, “Army’s Search,” 182.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956,) 223.

very weakness entails on the General Government the great cost of Indian wars.”¹⁶⁴

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Occasionally army officers spoke of their duty to improve the condition of Native Americans, but if that was not possible, they were committed to removing them as obstacles to the progress of railroads, farms, and other emblems of American civilization.

For men like Sherman and Sheridan, the army’s role in eradicating the Indian problem meant decisively putting down Native resistance to the encroachment of white settlement. “Hostiles” were those who attacked emigrant trains, sabotaged railroads, and, after the launch of Grant’s “peace policy” in 1868, those who wandered from their assigned reservations. Sheridan summarized the mission of the frontier army in his 1873 report as commander of the Division of the Missouri:

To give protection to the citizens of the frontier against these Indians and to guard the long line of our Mexican border against robberies by Mexican citizens and Indians living in Mexico; to explore unknown territory and furnish escorts to surveying parties for scientific purpose and for projected railroads; to assist and guard the railways already built and other commercial lines of travel; to aid in the enforcement of the civil law in remote places; and to do generally all that is constantly required of our Army in the way of helping and urging forward everything which tends to develop and increase civilization upon the border, and at the same time to protect the Indians in the rights and immunities guaranteed them under existing treaties, has been the work of the troops in this military division for the past year, and that work has been successfully accomplished.¹⁶⁵

The particular nature of the “Indian problem” – the fact that Native Americans were an unconventional enemy in their style of warfare and that the army’s mission was couched in civilizational terms – meant that soldiers were involved in a range of activities that went beyond battlefield fighting. Utley calls the western army a “police force” and notes

¹⁶⁴ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1877. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 45th Cong., 2d session, Vol. 2, (serial 1794), 6.

¹⁶⁵ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1873. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 43rd Congress, 1d session (serial 1597), 40.

that the army's mission involved "much more than merely Indian fighting."¹⁶⁶ Combat 96
was atypical, even if it has been the army's best remembered and most celebrated work
by subsequent generations. Instead, soldiers spent most of their time engaged in
"punishing, unheroic, usually fruitless reconnaissance over hostile terrain, pounded by
rain, snow, or scorching sun, searching for an invisible enemy."¹⁶⁷ One historian
estimates that "every day spent in pursuit of hostilities [was] matched by fifteen or twenty
given over to unvarying garrison duty."¹⁶⁸

Soldiers indeed spent little time in active pursuit of "hostiles." Far more often
they were engaged in various types of labor. Some of these auxiliary duties, such as
cooking and maintaining their camps, were a necessary part of the soldier's duty, while
others, such as road-building, were generally considered distractions from the army's
"real" work. General Sherman called such chores "a kind of labor that ought not to be
imposed on our reduced establishment."¹⁶⁹ Colonel J.J. Reynolds, commander of the
Department of Texas, said "the varied calls made upon our soldiers for labor... unfit them
for soldiers."¹⁷⁰ Despite the widespread consensus that the army's labor regime was poor
military policy and contributed to the army's high rate of desertion (discussed further in
chapter 3), the practice of assigning soldiers to non-military tasks continued throughout
the Indian Wars. In part this was because the army was chronically underfunded. But it
was also a consequence of the army's broad mandate to "advance civilization" in the
West, which necessarily involved soldiers in a range of activities.

¹⁶⁶ Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 46.

¹⁶⁷ Utley, *Indian Frontier*, 161.

¹⁶⁸ Cooper, "Army's Search," 182.

¹⁶⁹ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1870. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 41st Cong., 3d session, Vol. 2, Pt. 1 (serial 1446), 5.

¹⁷⁰ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1870, 41.

Within the army, there was general agreement that soldiers were an important source of labor. Officers spoke often and openly about the “valuable service” provided by enlisted men. But increasingly in the decades after the Civil War, the amount of labor required for auxiliary assignments – building and fatigue as well as escort duties – became a source of concern for military brass. Top officers and the broader military community, reflected in publications such as the *Army and Navy Journal*, were worried about the future of the U.S.’s military establishment. What was the proper balance between manual labor and military preparedness? What was the American army’s mission? Was it an Indian-fighting army, or should it be prepared to face other states’ armies? One concerned party wrote the *Army and Navy Journal*, “Any and every military man must admit, and does admit, that it is impossible to set up, drill, and make a perfect soldier of a man whose time and attention is largely taken up with occupations and drudgery entirely foreign to the military profession. As a soldier he must always be a ‘botcher’ in his business, and equally so as a mechanic.”¹⁷¹ The *Journal*’s editors were likewise among the most outspoken advocates for the development of more sophisticated American military presence, one on par with the great European powers like Prussia and France. Its pages often advocated improved training for troops and more advanced weaponry. But even the journal’s editors recognized that, due to Congressional parsimony, army commanders were between a rock and a hard place when it came to soldiers’ labor. This was an old problem, but one the army was unable to adequately address during the “frontier” period.

¹⁷¹ “By the labor of troops,” *ANJ*, May 27, 1882, 995.

In 1871, the *Army and Navy Journal* explained that, “The inefficiency alleged against the Army in the Indian country arises from causes not inherent in the service, but contingent to it.” The problem of “poorly garrisoned” forts was compounded by the demand for labor, which soldiers had to meet. “The number of soldiers ready for field duty is still further reduced by the drafts constantly made upon the ranks for mechanics, laborers, teamsters, etc., in accordance with the orders that no civilian shall be employed about a military post in any work for which soldiers can be used. As there is always a great deal of work to be done about a post – cutting and hauling wood, hay, rebuilding and repairing quarters, barracks, corrals, etc. – it usually happens that there are barely men enough to exempt from ‘extra’ and ‘daily duty’ to furnish the ordinary escorts and guard mounts.”¹⁷² The same conditions existed twenty years later; the army failed to find a budget-friendly alternative to soldiers’ labor in the nineteenth century.

Although often neglected in today’s western history, the army’s labor problem was not overlooked by contemporaries. The *Army and Navy Journal* recognized that there was a price to be paid for the army’s reliance on soldier-workers; the exigencies of frontier duty made many demands on the army, not all of which were strictly related to training and drilling. But however necessary, these demands seemed to impede the U.S.’s maturation into a world-class military power and even hampered its ability to address pressing security concerns at its borders. Why should soldiers build roads and saw lumber when hostile Native Americans, thieving Mexicans, and even unreconstructed Southerners terrorized citizens and challenged the authority of the U.S. government? For

¹⁷² “The Army on the Frontiers,” *ANJ*, February 4, 1871.

many, the army seemed to be returning to its antebellum condition, unprepared to fill the 99
role expected of a strong national army.

The great irony is that those quotidian chores and “extra duty” details actually constituted the U.S. army’s most consequential work. Far from holding the U.S. back compared to its European peers, the army’s use of soldiers’ labor holds one of the keys to its ascent as a global power. Francis Paul Prucha writes about the antebellum frontier army, “The significant contribution that United States troops made to the development of the frontier was possible only because they constituted, above everything else, directed manpower. They were a labor force unequalled in compactness and unity of purpose by any group of frontiersmen.”¹⁷³ After the Civil War, as western settlement accelerated, that “directed manpower” was trained on building transportation and communications infrastructure. Soldiers worked on roads, telegraph lines, and railroads. They also supported the new firms that looked to invest in the West, particularly in the areas of mining and ranching.

By adopting a broader view of the army’s activities in the West, it is also possible to appreciate the importance of the American military labor to the great economic and political transformations of the late-nineteenth century. Even during the height of *laissez-faire*, the American state played an active role in the expansion of capitalist enterprise through its army. While we tend to think of the military as somewhat peripheral in liberal

¹⁷³ Francis Paul Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet; the Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest, 1815-1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953), 34. One of the earliest works to investigate the “non-military services of the army in the West,” Prucha’s perceptive study highlights the military’s role in a frontier economy of the upper northwest (present-day Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and northern Illinois) between 1812 and 1860. This study examines some of the continuities between the antebellum and post-Civil War armies. At the same time, it also explores important changes in the post-Civil War period that accelerated the pace of economic development in the West in the 1870s and 1880s.

states, this is not always the case. As Peter Way writes about eighteenth-century Britain, 100
“State, capital, and armed forces formed a triad, a military-commercial complex, that lay
at the heart of the international process of primitive accumulation.”¹⁷⁴ David Harvey has
suggested “accumulation by dispossession” as a more accurate term for Marx’s primitive
accumulation because it underlines the ongoing nature of the process rather than
relegating it to a “primitive” or prehistoric phase of capitalism. The history of the U.S.,
particularly the experiences of Native Americans, certainly makes clear that the violent
processes of dispossession were ongoing, geographically specific, and not limited to an
“early” phase of capitalism.¹⁷⁵ Harvey’s “accumulation by dispossession” provides a
useful framework for understanding events in the latter part of the nineteenth-century
West as the central state, through its military, worked hand in hand with small and large
investors to open the region for different types of capital investment. Beginning in the
1860s, the West, “the great natural-resource reservoir and the investment arena for
eastern U.S. and western European capital,” became home to new mining ventures,
extensive rail systems, and vast commercial ranching enterprises.¹⁷⁶ The daily, nearly
invisible labor of thousands of enlisted men underwrote this capital investment, in turn
linking the region to financial and industrial sectors across the world. As historian Julie
Greene writes, “The U.S. military served as a linchpin in the complex interconnections
between capitalism and imperialism. The labor history of military service and the
vicissitudes of capitalism intersected in numerous ways during the late nineteenth and

¹⁷⁴ Way, ““black service...white money””, 62.

¹⁷⁵ David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital* (London ; New York: Verso, 2010), 310.

¹⁷⁶ William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 65.

early twentieth centuries.”¹⁷⁷ The army undertook work that was imagined to promote the
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advance of white settlement into remote corners of the West. In the process, enlisted men
provided a variety of services to private investors and enterprises related to security,
intelligence-gathering, and infrastructure-building. In some cases, companies benefited
from the “unintended consequences” of the army’s activities in the West. In other cases,
such as railroad company escorts, the army directly subsidized private enterprises
because officers believed they served the larger civilizing mission. It was indeed an
“extraordinary global economic transformation,” and in their own way, soldiers
contributed to it.¹⁷⁸

The Work of Empire

Soldiers in the western army performed a vast array of chores ranging from
skilled to unskilled. They often began by constructing the places where they and their
officers would live. In Arizona and New Mexico, this meant forming adobe bricks;
soldiers in western Texas operated lumber mills. Troops often spent weeks or months
living under canvas while they constructed quarters for officers and erected their own
barracks. Often the labor provided by troops was taken for granted. Colonel Ranald
Mackenzie certainly assumed that the men under his command would frequently be
occupied with non-military duties. In 1871, as part of a lengthy monthly report on the
activities of enlisted men and officers at Fort Concho, Texas, Mackenzie wrote, “Besides
the foregoing, much manual labor has been performed by the troops in the erection of the

¹⁷⁷ Julie Greene, “The Wages of Empire: Capitalism, Expansionism, and Working-Class Formation,” in *Making the Empire Work*, eds. Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 43. I encountered Greene’s work in the latter stages of this project. Her thoughts on military labor and its relationship to the twin processes of capital and imperial expansion complement my own.

¹⁷⁸ Robbins, *Colony and Empire*, 64.

buildings, and other exigencies incidental to a new and large Post.”¹⁷⁹ At Fort Concho, a 102 strategically important post near the Staked Plain, soldiers were often needed to build and repair buildings as much as they were expected to scout for hostile Native Americans or accompany a mail coach.

Christopher C. Augur, a distinguished Civil War officer who commanded the Department of the Platte and later Texas, understood the value of soldiers’ labor to an underfunded and understaffed army. In 1873, he updated Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan on the progress of work at Fort Clark, a post on the lower Rio Grande that the army reoccupied after the Civil War.¹⁸⁰ Augur’s letter gives a sense of the various duties soldiers performed, helping the military expand its influence in the West even during a period of economic retrenchment. He wrote,

They [buildings] will have to be built of Stone - that being the cheapest material available - cheaper even than adobes, there being a stone-quarry easily worked, directly at the Post. The Stables are to be built entirely by the Companies occupying them and the only expense I have permitted to be incurred for them is the sheathing and shingles for roofs and for stalls and feedboxes. Most of the roofing for all the buildings is also to be put on by the troops and their services will be made available too, as far as practicable, in quarrying and laying the stone in the wall. All the Lumber and shingles will be hauled by our own teams, mostly from Austin or Cuero.¹⁸¹

Augur allowed that he would have to hire “Civilian Masons and Carpenters and a few Experienced Quarrymen,” but the vast majority of the work would be completed by troops at Fort Clark. These men would quarry the stone and lay it for the buildings, haul

¹⁷⁹ Fort Concho Post Returns, February 1871, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M617, Roll 241), Ancestry.com, accessed 4 July 2013.

¹⁸⁰ On Fort Clark and other Texas forts in the nineteenth century, see Loyd Uglow, *Standing in the Gap: Army Outposts, Picket Stations, and the Pacification of the Texas Frontier, 1866-1886* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2001).

¹⁸¹ C.C. Augur to P.H. Sheridan, September 16, 1873, Christopher C. Augur Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

lumber and shingles from over 200 miles away, build stables for horses, and put roofs on ¹⁰³ the buildings. This state of affairs described the army's labor regime throughout the West in the post-Civil War period.

Beyond their duties at their own posts, soldiers' labor transformed the western landscape with new transportation and communications infrastructure. First, they built thousands of miles of road, usually through uninviting terrain. Much of this work was done by hand. As one historian of the western posts writes, "Troops used blasting powder but often paths were cut over rocky hills with picks and shovels. Troops rooted out persistent scrub cedar, mesquite, and prickly pear. Where a route led across a river or creek, men often had to cut down the banks to make an easier grade. Along hillsides they sometimes built stone retaining walls to prevent slides or washouts."¹⁸² The mid-1870s were an especially active period for road-building in western Texas. Fort Griffin in northern Texas was one of the launching points for the army's Red River War on the southern plains in 1874. That same year, however, when Lieutenant Colonel George Buell led troops from Griffin north and west to punish Comanches and Kiowas who attacked buffalo hunters at Adobe Walls, soldiers were building new roads in the vicinity. In February 1874, Buell reported, "1st Lieut John Whitney 11th Infantry with 2 non com officers and 20 privates Infantry one ambulance and eight 6 mule teams left post en route to Dallas Tex, there to purchase lumber for use at the post. Lt Whitney was ordered to

¹⁸² Uglow, *Standing in the Gap*, 47.

open a new and direct road from this post to Dallas measuring distances, grading...&c 104
&c.”¹⁸³ They were still absent two weeks later when Buell submitted the monthly report.

Troops at the quieter Fort McKavett were frequently assigned to road-building duties. In April 1874, the commanding officer reported that men of the Fourth Cavalry and Tenth Infantry had left the post to “explore for a more direct and better road from this post to Fort Clark Texas via Fort Territt and the head spring of the West Fork of the Nueces.”¹⁸⁴ They were absent just over two weeks and marched 258 miles in the course of their work. In December 1875, men from the Tenth Infantry and the Tenth Cavalry were “sent out to explore for a more direct road from this post to Fort Stockton, Texas.” They returned over a month later, having traveled 511 miles.¹⁸⁵ In March of 1874, company “I” of the Ninth Cavalry “performed the usual Garrison duty at Fort Davis,” but then was assigned to detached duty “to open a road from (near) El Muerto to East-end of Bass Canon Texas and for scouting duty.” They arrived at their assigned post after marching 75 miles.

The army’s concern with infrastructure also led to improved communication in the remote corners of the West. The telegraph was one of the earliest innovations in long-distance communication that the army pioneered and made widely available for western settlers under the auspices of military necessity. The telegraph was first used extensively during the Civil War when Congress established the Signal Corps to undertake the

¹⁸³ Fort Griffin Post Returns, February 1874, RG 94, NA [NA] (Microfilm M617, Roll 429), Ancestry.com, accessed 3 January 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Fort McKavett Post Returns, April 1874, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M617, Roll 688), Ancestry.com, accessed 3 January 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Fort McKavett Post Returns, December 1875 and January 1876, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M617, Roll 688), Ancestry.com, accessed 3 January 2013.

construction and repair of the device for use by the Union Army.¹⁸⁶ Its advantages for a 105
military force separated by enormous distances and challenging terrain soon became
apparent. Historian Thomas T. Smith writes, “After the war, commanders and military
administrators on the frontier were quick to demand a telegraph system for use as an
instrument of command and control and as an apparatus for the quick dissemination of
information in the vast region. On July 24, 1866, Congress called for the construction of
government telegraph lines to be used by military and postal authorities in the West.”¹⁸⁷
However, Congress was slow to take action and appropriate funds to the construction
project in the southwest.

Construction of the telegraph proceeded quickly in Arizona and New Mexico. The
army-built line from San Diego to Prescott and Tucson was completed in 1873 and “was
used for private civilian purposes from the beginning,” according to historian William H.
Lyon. This Arizona line was then linked to New Mexico’s military telegraph. The
installation of the telegraph did not begin in earnest in Texas until 1875, but it made rapid
progress thanks to the substantial details of enlisted men assigned to labor on it. In Texas,
it took just eleven months to finish most of the line. In 1877, Secretary of War George W.
McCrary reported that the troops had “nearly completed the lines in Arizona, New
Mexico, and the Texan frontier,” with 3,200 miles of line in operation.¹⁸⁸ By 1882, 1,565
miles of telegraph line connected forts across Texas.¹⁸⁹ Lyon, writing in 1968, recognized

¹⁸⁶ See Rebecca Robbins Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the US Army Signal Corps* 30 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), 9. <http://www.history.army.mil/books/30-17/Front.htm>, accessed 19 July 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 165.

¹⁸⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1877, xvi. On the telegraph system in the southwest, see also Lahti, *Cultural Construction of Empire*, 191-192.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 166-168.

that the army's investment in the military telegraph was in fact significant to the development of a "corporate frontier" in the southwest. "In the field of communication," he wrote, "the government provided direct aid...[The southwestern telegraph] represented a direct and important contribution to capital development."¹⁹⁰

Enlisted men from local posts were assigned to lay the poles and stretch the wire that formed this extensive communications network, with the Signal Office overseeing the project. The work itself was grueling. On one occasion, Emil Bode of the 16th Infantry was sent to build the line between Forts Sill and Reno. In June 1878, he was assigned along with fifteen other infantrymen to dig three-foot holes for the poles; several civilian "wire stretchers" followed behind the enlisted men to place the wire. Bode recalled:

Our hands were sore and blistered from handling the tools and hot iron telegraph poles for the first few days, but soon got accustomed to the work and burning sun. We moved along in pairs to the designated spots for the holes, here digging in loose sand, there in solid sandstone or gravel, or trying our muscles and temper on the sticky black sod of rich bottom lands. It was altogether a very dry and tiresome piece of work for our unaccustomed backs. But this lasted only a few days and we were soon as well acquainted with handling a crowbar as we were in the manual of arms or any other military exercises.¹⁹¹

Troops spent months in the field laying the line. A company of thirty-one men from the 10th Infantry, under the command of Lt. Charles L. Davis, was assigned to work on the line in August 1875. They did not return until October, when it was reported they had finished the line between Forts McKavett and Concho. But two months later, an officer and thirty enlisted men were sent back into the field, this time with orders to build the

¹⁹⁰ William H. Lyon, "The Corporate Frontier in Arizona," *The Journal of Arizona History* 9, no. 1 (April 1, 1968): 6-7.

¹⁹¹ Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*, 74-75.

line between McKavett and San Antonio. They did not return to their post until the following May.¹⁹²

Once installed, the telegraph lines required frequent maintenance and repair. They were the object of sabotage by Native American and other adversaries of the military, as well as the occasional casualties of reckless gunplay. Bode recalled several details to build and repair the lines. The lines were “constructed of wood poles between the fort and the border, consequently easily damaged by prairie fires and storms, which had to be repaired by details of troops sent by the military.”¹⁹³ While stationed at Fort Davis, he, two recruits, and “a colored driver” – likely a civilian from the area – were assigned to repair the telegraph line that ran between Davis and Fort Quitman on the upper Rio Grande. “The fire had done its work. Telegraph poles, rotten and dry from long standing, were still burning while some of the stumps dangled on the wire. We replaced them with iron poles which had previously been distributed in different places along the road.”¹⁹⁴ The army learned from experience that the wooden lines were no match for the annual prairie fires, so they began building the line with iron poles and replacing wooden ones.¹⁹⁵

The maintenance of the lines strained the resources of the individual posts. Alfred L. Hough, the commanding officer of Fort Davis, wrote the adjutant general in 1882 about the miserable state of the line west of his post. Lt. Col. Hough estimated that one hundred new poles would be needed to repair the line. His report reflects the near-

¹⁹² Fort McKavett Post Returns, October 1875, December 1875, and May 1876, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M617, Roll 688), Ancestry.com, accessed 19 July 2013.

¹⁹³ Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*, 114.

¹⁹⁴ Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*, 182.

¹⁹⁵ Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*, 74.

constant drain on the post's manpower from such auxiliary duties. "A repairing party has
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been out for two thirds of the time since I Have been in command here," he wrote. "To
put up these, poles will require transportation for carrying rations, forage, and poles, and
supplying water for the detachment, which this Post cannot now supply, and I can only
send out a repairer with a pack mule for such partial work as may be actually required for
temporary use." As an alternative to repairing such a long distance of line, Hough
suggested that a new line of eighteen miles to Marfa, following the Southern Pacific
Railroad, be built instead.¹⁹⁶

The telegraph helped support the army's strategic goals in the West. In the southwest especially, the new technology allowed soldiers to communicate rapidly from hundreds of miles away. Yet when army officers spoke about the benefits of the telegraph, they did not speak in purely "military" terms. The immediate context of the construction of this telegraph line was the frequency of raids carried out by Mexicans and Native Americans, particularly along the Rio Grande border. But stopping these raids was inextricably connected to a larger "civilizational" mission. In 1874, the chief signal officer, General Albert J. Myer, remarked that the telegraph in Texas would not only deter raiding, but be an "aid equally efficient to advance the civilization of the country....Little settlements will grow up, the military posts of the frontier and interior will not longer be isolated." The telegraph, he argued, would further promote "the inducement to enterprise, to carry settlement forward."¹⁹⁷ In 1877, as construction of the

¹⁹⁶ A.L. Hough to Adjutant General, July 17, 1882, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group (RG) 393, NA. (Hereafter RG 393.)

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in L. Tuffly Ellis, "Lieutenant A. W. Greely's Report on the Installation of Military Telegraph Lines in Texas, 1875-1876," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (July 1965): 70.

line continued in the southwest, the chief signal-officer echoed his earlier declarations 109 about civilizing work of the telegraph: “There can be no constructions more important for holding a frontier or protecting the first steps of advancing civilization than the telegraphic lines.”

For top army brass like Myer, it was impossible to distinguish between the military function of the telegraph – facilitating communication so that soldiers could better respond to attacks by raiding parties – and the larger goal of promoting white settlement in the isolated parts of the southwest. “Advancing civilization,” after all, meant advancing the line of white settlement and promoting the frontier economy, and the telegraph was essential to these goals. In the same report cited above, the chief signal-officer noted the benefits accruing to those outside of the military. He wrote, “Aside from the benefits resulting from the connection of military posts,” the telegraph also provided “incidental protections the stations at frontier villages upon the lines give the country through which they pass, thus aiding its development and advancing the commercial interests.”¹⁹⁸ Although contemporaries like Myer spoke in the language of “civilization,” they also made it clear that, for them, civilization meant the promotion of “commercial interests.” While the civilizational discourse entailed ideas and ideologies about white Americans’ cultural and social superiority, on a more material level Myer believed the army’s work supported the objectives of private business people. He and others within the military saw nothing wrong with the army providing services at a discount rate to

¹⁹⁸ Annual report of Secretary of War, 1877, Vol. 4: Signal Office [enclosed with 1793 H.exdoc.1], November 10, 1877, 144.

private individuals and investors. On the contrary, such support was inextricably tied to the army's mandate to advance civilization. 110

The military telegraph reflects a larger pattern in the army's project of western conquest after the Civil War. The labor of enlisted men often led to golden opportunities for private firms, sometimes in unanticipated or unplanned ways. Anyone could send messages over the army's telegraph system for a fee, and local people took advantage of this resource. In some cases, the telegraph carried more civilian messages than military ones. Civilians paid a higher rate than the government, and fees collected from this service helped defray, but not recoup completely, the army's investment.¹⁹⁹ But as time went on, the army's initial investment in the communications infrastructure of the southwest paid even larger dividends to certain individuals. Thomas T. Smith writes, "By 1883, the secretary of war was abandoning army telegraph lines when appropriate commercial lines were constructed to serve the same location, or auctioning off military lines to interested business enterprises."²⁰⁰ Of course, such "interested business enterprises" were able to take advantage of the construction work enlisted men had already carried out. Furthermore, the army had already absorbed some of the initial risk of such an investment because civilians' active use of the military telegraph had established the market for this service. Private firms who bought the telegraph lines from the army already had evidence that local people would be willing to pay for the communication service. Today, economists would point to the "positive externalities"

¹⁹⁹ Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 167.

²⁰⁰ Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 168. Auctioning off lines was a common practice by the army and continued into the twentieth century when lines were no longer deemed necessary for military purposes.

created by the army's investment in this communications system.²⁰¹ Through the army, 111
the federal government provided the funding necessary for the construction and
maintenance of a telegraph line. Private individuals and then businesses benefited from
the availability of the communications infrastructure without paying the full value of the
service and, later, of the infrastructure itself. From the perspective of army officers like
Myer, this chain of events was completely proper because support for private businesses
served the army's tacit goal of "advancing civilization." Yet by overlooking the
important service the military provided such commercial interests, historians have failed
to account for the ways the U.S. army, particularly through soldiers' labor, contributed to
private economic development of the region.

"More than the usual claim:" Railroads and the Army

The army's relationship with the railroads furnishes another example of what one
historian calls the "blurring of imperial and laissez-faire goals."²⁰² The 1870s and 1880s
were the heyday of line-building in the southwest, but the military's commitment to
supporting the expansion of railways was established immediately following the Civil
War. General Sherman spoke often about the many advantages the army would derive
from the railroads, not only in terms of immediate material benefits, such as cheaper
transportation for goods and troops, but in the larger civilizational function of the
railroads. In his annual report to the secretary of war in 1867, Sherman discussed the
support troops had provided the Omaha Pacific and the Kansas Pacific railroads, two
"important enterprises, in which the whole civilized world has an interest." He had

²⁰¹ "Positive externalities," Economics Online,
www.economicsonline.co.uk/Market_failures/Positive_externalities.html, accessed 3 March 2014.

²⁰² Tate, *Frontier Army*, 306.

ordered troops in the region when the lines were building to “extend to both these roads 112 as much military protection and assistance as the troops could spare.” Sherman noted the unusual nature of the army’s relationship with the railroads and felt it was necessary to justify his troops’ support of these private businesses. “These roads,” he wrote, “although in the hands of private corporations, have more than the usual claim on us for military protection, because the general government is largely interested pecuniarily.”²⁰³

Railroads were lauded for reducing the army’s transportation costs, especially across the vast distances of the West. Sherman, while acknowledging these material considerations, had a larger vision of the railroads’ military purpose. Once the transcontinentals were completed, Sherman asserted, “then the solution of this most complicated question of Indian hostilities will be comparatively easy, for this belt of country will naturally fill up with our own people, who will permanently separate the hostile Indians of the north from those of the south.”²⁰⁴ By promoting the settlement of “our own people” at the expense of the Indians’ access to these lands, the railroads would allow the army to counter the threats from hostile Natives more effectively. Quite simply, the roads meant white settlement and the end of indigenous people’s dominion over the western plains.

Politicians shared Sherman’s enthusiasm for the great work of Indian-fighting the railroads would accomplish. In 1869, the report of a Senate committee investigating “government aid to additional railroads to the Pacific” declared that,

Pacific Railroads will settle the Indian Question. They can only be permanently conquered by railroads. *The locomotive is the sole solution of the Indian question...* The railroads will settle the country as they progress...*As the thorough*

²⁰³ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1867. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 40th Congress, 2d session (serial 1324), 36.

²⁰⁴ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1867, 36.

*and final solution of the Indian question, by taking the buffalo range out from under the savage, and putting a vast stock and grain farm in its place, the railroads to the Pacific are surely a military necessity.*²⁰⁵

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Both Sherman and the authors of the committee report called railroads the “solution” to the Indian problem. They believed railroads did more than facilitate military operations. The railroads served a larger political purpose, accomplishing technologically rather than militarily the army’s ultimate goal – the elimination of Native Americans from the West. Policymakers understood the Indian question as more than a military problem; it was a problem of political economy. The basic question was who would have access to the immense resources of the West. The goal of white settlement was clearly stated by the committee: Americans sought to “tak[e] the buffalo range out from under the savage” and replace it with ranching and farming operations. The committee members were tragically correct. The eventual subjugation of the Comanches on the southern plains in the 1870s fit this sequence of events. Pekka Hämäläinen argues that the Comanches’ defeat was “not a military but an economic one” brought about by the massive and rapid destruction of the buffalo in the early 1870s. The Comanches, he writes, “were a society fatally crippled by poverty, malnutrition, and a loss of cultural order,” and these larger issues predetermined their defeat at the hands of U.S. army troops.²⁰⁶ The railroads indeed played a role, according to Hämäläinen, because the Kansas Pacific Railroad connected professional buffalo hunters to eastern markets where they disposed of countless hides. Just as Sherman and the Senate committee members hoped, the railroads helped the army

²⁰⁵ “The Policy of Extending Government Aid to Additional Railroads to the Pacific by Guaranteeing Interest on Their Bonds: Report of the Majority of the Senate Committee on Pacific Railroad,” February 19, 1869 (Washington : Government Printing Office, 1869), 15-17. Emphasis in original.

²⁰⁶ Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 339-340.

accomplish its mission of ridding the Plains of Native Americans by undermining the tribes' political economies.

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The editors of the *Army and Navy Journal*, the leading publication of the armed forces, echoed the committee's words later in 1869 in a front-page feature entitled "Our Military Highway." In characteristically grandiose language, the *Journal* lauded "an enterprise so remarkable for the vastness of its conception, the rapidity and energy of its accomplishment, and its wealth of possible results...the Pacific Railroad." Insisting that the true value of the transcontinental lay in its "political, military, and strictly national importance" rather than its "commercial advantages," the editors expressed what leading military figures like Sherman also recognized: that the railroads served a political function in a nation so recently rent by civil war. As the *ANJ* declared, the railroad "does something more than 'link ocean and ocean,' -- it grapples with hooks of steel the widely-distance people, that live under one Government, three thousand miles and more asunder." The journal editors went on to discuss the need for a transportation network linking far-distant peoples from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, and they noted the strategic value of such infrastructure should the army be needed in California. The war, they argued, made obvious the need for such linkages between the regions; had California gone with the South, or if the western states ever expressed secessionist impulses, the results would have been devastating for the Union. But the railroads happily put such fears to rest: "The Pacific Railroad and its many feeders, the *other* trans-continental railroads, and their branches, will soon form a powerful network of commercial interest, and will do more than anything else to produce what our Fathers desired, 'a more perfect

Union.”²⁰⁷ Here was a portrait of national harmony achieved through commercial ties – 115
very similar, in fact, to the one envisioned by early national statesmen. James Madison, for example, hoped that a system of roads and canals would “bind[] together the various parts of our extended confederacy.”²⁰⁸ His “republican vision” was premised on western expansion and internal improvements – a political model in which transportation infrastructure helped connect and unify a far-flung population with different needs and interests.²⁰⁹ Madison’s concerns are usually associated with the debates of Jefferson’s presidency, but the need for the unity achieved through internal improvements was never more urgent than after the Civil War.

The *Army and Navy Journal*, as the mouthpiece of the military establishment, saw in the railroads the best solution to two pressing “military problems”: the Native Americans and the Mormons. They did not offer an explanation of how the railroads would help to eradicate polygamy, the nation’s only objection to Mormonism according to the editors, but on “the Indian business,” they had clearer ideas. Much like the senators and General Sherman, the *ANJ* believed the answer was white settlement. They wrote, “the steady roll of the new tide of emigration will gradually crowd the Indian out of its path; civilization will spread west, as it has east, and the weaker will go to the wall; in the process, the Indian will probably be handled worse than ever hitherto – but it is destiny.” Here the editors voiced a certain amount of pathos about the fate of the Native Americans. Their tone would harden in the years to come, as Indian hostilities increased

²⁰⁷ “Our Military Highway,” *ANJ*, May 15, 1869, 609. Italics in original.

²⁰⁸ James Madison, *Presidential Messages*, I, 562-563. Quoted in Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 81.

²⁰⁹ Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 201 and passim.

and the resolution of the “problem” they represented ended up being less bloodless than 116 expected. Nevertheless, army officers and Congressmen agreed that the transcontinental railroads served a larger political purpose – helping stitch together a nation torn apart by civil war – and therefore deserved the full resources and attention of the military.

The army’s support for the railroads in the southwest followed from these policies, but they were adapted to the special challenges the army faced in the region. In 1873, General C. C. Augur, commanding the Department of Texas, endorsed a petition from residents supporting the construction of rail lines between Austin and the Rio Grande. Augur explained his endorsement on the basis of the relationship between economic development and peace. By increasing the commercial connections between the U.S. and Mexico, he argued, the railroad would help mitigate raiding. Mexico would have more of an interest in stopping the raids and protecting the border if their northern provinces were more important economically. Augur wrote, “Open and unsettled borders have ever been the theater of violence and robbery, those intimately connected with commerce and business as a rule peaceful and friendly.”²¹⁰ But his support for the railroads extended beyond letter-writing on their behalf. The next year, in 1874, Augur assured J. W. Throckmorton, a former governor of Texas and then a land commissioner for the Texas & Pacific, “We are so much interested in the completion of the Railroad that I am prepared to do anything in my power to further any movement that conduces in the least to that End.”²¹¹ What was in his power was to assign troops to escort construction and surveying crews, employed by the railroads, that worked throughout

²¹⁰ C.C. Augur, Endorsement, 4 January 1873, Box 3, Augur Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

²¹¹ C.C. Augur to Hon. J.W. Throckmorton, 10 July 1874, Box 3, Augur Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

Texas in the 1870s and 1880s. Historian Robert Wooster writes that the military officials¹¹⁷ “assisted the railroads every step of the way” in the state. Thanks to the protection afforded them by escort parties assigned from nearby posts like Fort Quitman and Fort Clark, lines of the Southern Pacific Railroad and Texas & Pacific Railroad were completed in the early 1880s.²¹²

The army’s relationship with the railroads had shifted substantially since the Civil War. In one of the most complete studies of the army’s ties to the railroads, Robert Angevine credits the war with “expand[ing] the role of the federal government and the military in the economy,” particularly with regard to railroads. He writes, “In 1862, Lincoln refused the Union Pacific’s request for a military escort and provisions for its surveying party on the grounds that ‘there was no authority for the Government to aid in making the surveys.’” The War Department changed its approach, however, and in 1865, “Secretary of War Edwin Stanton called for ‘the vigorous prosecution of the works of the railroads to connect the Mississippi Valley with the Pacific coast, as a military precaution and a measure of economy, deserving the fostering care of the government.’”²¹³ Escorting parties, which Lincoln had denied the private companies, became a routine part of the army’s duties in the West after 1865. Sheridan, in a report for the Military Division of the Missouri, listed “to...furnish escorts to surveying parties for scientific purpose and for

²¹² Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads*, 109.

²¹³ Robert G. Angevine, *The Railroad and the State: War, Politics, and Technology in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 166.

projected railroads; to assist and guard the railways already built and other commercial lines of travel” among the primary duties of his troops in 1873.²¹⁴ 118

General Augur first became tutored in a generous attitude towards the railroads as commander of the Department of the Platte in the 1860s. Native Americans were disrupting work on the Union Pacific in 1867, attacking railroad parties, and killing company workers, and they had even derailed a train. In response to appeals from Grenville M. Dodge, the Union Pacific’s chief engineer, Sherman and Augur deployed more soldiers to guard the line, hoping to reassure workers and maintain the pace of construction.²¹⁵ But the army’s help extended beyond escorting parties. Angevine writes,

In addition to protection, the army also provided the Union Pacific with supplies. ‘The commissary department was open to us,’ Dodge later boasted...The army’s generosity surprised even Dodge. ‘There was nothing we could ask them for that they did not give, even when regulations did not authorize it,’ he marveled, ‘and it took a large stretch of authority to satisfy all our demands.’²¹⁶

Such practices were not unique to the Union Pacific. In Texas, one post commander “routinely issued rations and tobacco to the engineers and survey teams of the Texas and Pacific Railroad.” Those favors were frowned upon in that department, however, and eventually the officer was ordered not to issue any more rations to the T&P crews.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, the army’s assistance to railroads was not limited to sharing its provisions. Angevine describes the army as “a private police force working to protect the interests of the Union Pacific.” For example, in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory, the army located bases near the UP construction sites and then responded when the railroad faced

²¹⁴ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1873. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 43rd Congress, 1d session (serial 1597), 40.

²¹⁵ Angevine, *Railroad and the State*, 180-181.

²¹⁶ Angevine, *Railroad and the State*, 181.

²¹⁷ Tate, *Frontier Army*, 78.

opposition from locals who refused to recognize the company's (unofficial) title to the lands it occupied.²¹⁸ Elsewhere,

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Officers allowed civilian construction crews to secure timber and stone from military reservations without cost. They also permitted depots to be erected on post lands even though there was no clear legal authorization to do so. Patrols sometimes answered the call of executives to remove squatters from company-owned land rants, and officers infrequently loaned army rifles and ammunition to vulnerable work crews.²¹⁹

In his study of the Union Pacific, historian Robert G. Athearn described Sherman and Sheridan's enthusiasm and support for the railroads. They saw them as the key to western settlement and believed the military gained more from their construction than they contributed in terms of protection. In addition to the more diffuse benefits of "civilization" made possible by the transcontinentals, the War Department reported "dramatic" savings by using rail transportation rather than wagons, and expected to reap further financial benefits as more lines were built.²²⁰ The army also hoped to influence the placement of the lines, but according to Angevine, "the railroads exerted a greater influence on the army's choices regarding locations and facilities than the army did on the railroads' decisions."²²¹ Furthermore, by making lands accessible to white settlers, the railroads also expanded the territory the army needed to monitor and protect. In 1870, the secretary of war drew attention to this fact, saying, "with the opening to settlement of the wilder portions of the country, army posts are pushed further and further into the wilderness, and as the stations are extended the expenses of transportation are and will

²¹⁸ Angevine, *Railroad and the State*, 182.

²¹⁹ Tate, *Frontier Army*, 77.

²²⁰ Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 210.

²²¹ Angevine, *Railroad and the State*, 183.

remain very great.”²²² While officers like Sherman, Sheridan, and Augur lauded the railroads as helping them accomplish their mission in the West, in concrete terms it is more difficult to quantify the benefits which accrued to the military. It is certain, however, that the enlisted men who carried out the officers’ orders saved railroads like the Union Pacific and Texas and Pacific significant sums that, in their absence, they would have needed to pay out in fees to private security firms, leases, and ammunition and provisions.

The Army and the Birth of Texas Ranching

The army’s investments in the West fell into two major categories: infrastructure and knowledge. Roads, telegraphs, and railroad escorting parties fall into the first category. Here the labor of soldiers yielded concrete, material, and visible dividends for white settlers and capitalists who invested in the region. But soldiers also produced knowledge, manifested in maps as well as treatises on the region’s terrain and mineralogical and agricultural resources. This knowledge constitutes the army’s second major investment, one that was at least as crucial to the development of capitalism in the West.

“To explore unknown territory” was often cited as one of the army’s primary tasks in the post-Civil War West, but its ambitious mission to study, map, and then transform the landscape was part of a long national project – one that reached back even to the eighteenth century and Thomas Jefferson’s employment of Lewis and Clark.²²³ In

²²² Quoted in Athearn, *Union Pacific Country*, 206.

²²³ Quotation from U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1873, 40. On the various mapping projects throughout the nineteenth century, see Susan Schulten, *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-century America* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

the late-nineteenth century, American soldiers stood parallel to a host of colonial projects¹²¹ taking place simultaneously across the globe, including the British in India, the French in West Africa, and the Russians in their own hinterland of Siberia.²²⁴ In the U.S., historian William G. Robbins writes, “Perhaps the greatest of the early federal services – hence subsidies – to would-be financiers and potential investors in western enterprise were the U.S. Army reconnaissance and exploring expeditions of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, including the great railway surveys conducted in the 1850s.” These were not simply neutral fact-finding missions; they benefited first and foremost the investors – some American but also British – who were interested in western railroad development. As Robbins points out, these expeditions were not “disinterested exercises in scientific curiosity” but “the means for providing real and practical information for an expanding American empire.”²²⁵

Although the U.S. had invested considerable resources in the exploration and mapping of the West before the outbreak of the Civil War, Americans still knew astonishingly little about what lay beyond the Mississippi. As William H. Goetzmann writes, “Despite the years of prewar experience in the West, and the monumental efforts of several generations of military and civilian explorers, there was still not enough useful and reliable geographical information about the country.”²²⁶ Historians have long recognized that the U.S. army was an important surveyor and map-maker. Large-scale expeditions such as Clarence King’s 1867 Fortieth Parallel Survey and John Wesley

²²⁴ The literature on imperial cartography and exploration is extensive. A recent study of comparative European colonial projects and their reliance on geographic knowledge is R. A. Butlin, *Geographies of Empire: European Empires and Colonies, C. 1880-1960* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²²⁵ Robbins, *Colony and Empire*, 66.

²²⁶ Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 391.

Powell's journeys through the Rocky Mountains and Grand Canyon attract the lion's share of attention. Such wide-ranging, state-sponsored surveys were prerequisites for white settlement and capital investment throughout the nineteenth century. Thomas T. Smith writes, "Corps of Topographical Engineers were responsible for exploring, surveying, and mapping the military routes that would eventually form frontier Texas' transportation and communication network... These lines of communication, although fiscally inexpensive, served as the foundation of the commercial infrastructure of north, central, and western Texas."²²⁷ But perhaps because of the focus on these special branches devoted to map-making, such as the U.S. Geological Survey and the engineers corps, it has been easier to ignore the ways the regular army units, made up of enlisted men, contributed to the buildup of geographic knowledge about the West.

One such routine but influential expedition in the southwest focused on the Staked Plain or *Llano Estacado*, the name given to the vast expanse of tableland in western Texas and New Mexico. The Llano is "perhaps the largest isolated, non-mountainous area in North America," and its 30,000 square miles of "pure, featureless plain" had captured the imagination of European explorers, poets, and ambitious states since the sixteenth century.²²⁸ In 1875, Lt. Colonel William R. Shafter, commander of the Twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment, was ordered to explore the Staked Plain, with instructions to rid the area of "hostile" Natives while making note of important topographical features that might contribute to the army's knowledge of the enigmatic plain. The enormity of the Llano and its eerie topography contributed to Euro-American perceptions of its

²²⁷ Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 8.

²²⁸ John Miller Morris, *El Llano Estacado: Exploration and Imagination on the High Plains of Texas and New Mexico, 1536-1860* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1997), 2.

danger and mystique, but these assumptions also helped explain why Native Americans 123 had used the Llano as a refuge from Spanish and then American settlers for centuries. Shafter's first mission was to hunt Indians, but it quickly became apparent that the larger purpose of the five-month expedition was to compile intelligence about what Shafter would call the "resources" of the Staked Plain.

Shafter was not the first or even the most celebrated of the Llano's explorers. That honor most likely goes to Captain Randolph B. Marcy, a career military officer who led an expedition in 1849 accompanying a group of emigrant gold-seekers traveling to California along the southern route via Santa Fe. Marcy and his group of soldiers and engineers traversed the northern Llano, and his descriptions of the plains yielded one of its most enduring epithets. His commentary on the region's prospects for habitation are worth quoting at length because they shaped American perceptions of the Llano:

When we were upon the high tableland, a view presented itself as boundless as the ocean. Not a tree, shrub, or any other object, either animate or inanimate, relieved the dreary monotony of the prospect; it was a vast illimitable expanse of desert prairie -- the dreaded Llano Estacado of New Mexico; or, in other words, the great Zahara of North America. It is a region almost as vast and trackless as the ocean -- a land where no man, either savage or civilized, permanently abides; it spreads forth into a treeless, desolate waste of uninhabited solitude, which has always been, and must continue, uninhabited forever; even the savages dare not venture to cross it except at two or three places, where they know water can be found.²²⁹

Marcy's depiction of the Llano as the "great Zahara" destined to be "uninhabited forever" clashed with American hopes for the West. Unlike the lush prairie lands to the north, this

²²⁹ United States War Dept., Joseph Henry, Spencer Fullerton Baird, and United States Army Corps of Engineers, *Reports of Explorations and Surveys: To Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean* (A.O.P. Nicholson, Printer, 1856), 24. Quoted in Morris, *El Llano Estacado*, 261.

“treeless, desolate waste,” held out no prospects for settlement and civilization. It was a place even unfit for “savages.” 124

Despite Marcy’s assessment, however, the U.S. army continued to explore parts of the Llano. In 1853, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis ordered an expedition to scout the 32nd Parallel, part of a fact-finding mission in support of a southern route for the transcontinental railroad. Captain John Pope, one of the officers commissioned for this work as part of the Pacific Railway Survey, ultimately spent nearly four years exploring the Staked Plain. Most of that time was devoted to an elaborate engineering project called “Pope’s Wells,” in search of an artesian water supply for the Great American Desert. In 1858, Pope’s venture was finally abandoned, a failure, and soon thereafter the Civil War called Pope and other officers away from western Texas.²³⁰

The army’s efforts to map and understand the Llano Estacado in the post-Civil War period were a continuation of these earlier efforts, but they took place in a different political and economic context. The question for army officers in 1870s was less about the route of the transcontinental railroad and more about the line of settlement, which was steadily moving west and south. While some ranchers, including Charles Goodnight, the “father of the Texas Panhandle,” had established operations farther north, they still avoided the Llano, but it was clear that white settlers would embrace an opportunity to spread out farther south. The timing of Shafter’s expedition also aligned with recent military events. The Red River War of 1874-1875, the army’s final assault against the powerful Comanches, had cleared most of the hostile Natives from the region, but

²³⁰ Morris provides a fascinating account of Pope’s attempts to construct an aquifer system on the Staked Plain. See Morris, *El Llano Estacado*, 311-324.

officers in Texas wanted to make sure there were no stragglers seeking refuge in their longtime haunt, the Llano Estacado.²³¹

Shafter, with almost 450 black enlisted men from the Tenth Cavalry and Twenty-fourth Infantry, departed in July 1875 and returned in December. The soldiers were accompanied by a company of the so-called “Seminole-Negro Indian scouts,” led by their commander Lt. John L. Bullis, a group of Tonkawa scouts, “several medical officers, blacksmiths, packers, teamsters, and other civilian employees,” along with twenty-five mule teams, one hundred mules, and a beef herd to slaughter for meat.²³² This motley assortment was “one of the largest scouting expeditions ever assembled in West Texas,” according to Shafter’s biographer, Paul H. Carlson. Shafter broke the enormous party into a few detachments charged with exploring different sections of the Staked Plain, along with instructions from department headquarters to make special note of watering holes, vegetation, and important topographical markers. Officers were instructed by Shafter to create maps of the areas they traversed, underlining the significance of intelligence-gathering to this mission.

Most of the country scouted by Shafter’s command had been visited, in one way or another, by European and American explorers before him. Shafter’s innovation was to examine this formerly sinister landscape with an eye towards the current preoccupations of his day – namely, the prospects for ranching on the Llano Estacado. As for Marcy, Pope, and others before him, the critical question was water. Shafter detailed the

²³¹ Paul Howard Carlson, “Pecos Bill”, *a Military Biography of William R. Shafter* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1989), 75-76.

²³² Carlson, “Pecos Bill”, 77. On the black Seminole scouts, a group with their own remarkable history, see Kenneth Wiggins Porter, “The Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts 1870-1881,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1952): 358–377.

availability of water as well as grass at various landmarks in a lengthy report on the expedition. Early in his travels he found the area surrounding Fort Concho nicely suited for grazing: “Commencing at Fort Concho, the valley of the North Concho for sixty miles is well adapted to grazing, having sufficient wood for all necessary purposes and good running water the entire distance.” The country there was “covered with excellent grass, considerable mesquite timber of small growth” and “having several streams and springs of good water.” He reserved even higher praise for the area near Fresh Fork canyon. There he expected “corn could be grown the whole length of the canyon without irrigation, except in unusually dry seasons,” and the grass was likely “excellent” and fuel “easily obtained.”²³³

As Shafter moved north, he found even better prospects for settlement. Between the 32nd and 33th Parallel were a series of important springs and wells. Some of these had been visited but not thoroughly explored by his predecessors. In 1849, Marcy, for example, noted that Mustang Springs was probably a permanent watering place.²³⁴ J. H. Byrne, who kept the diary of Captain Pope’s 1854 expedition, wrote that the land around Big Spring “could, no doubt, be cultivated successfully if there was natural or artificial irrigation.”²³⁵ Shafter likewise touted the possibilities of grazing in this area. Sulphur Springs and Big Spring, about 30 miles apart, both featured “water excellent” and he was confident that “inexhaustible quantities by any amount of stock that can be fed within reach of them.” Paul Carlson notes that Lt. Baldwin, who led the expedition around Big

²³³ Martin L. Crimmins, ed., “Shafter’s Explorations in Western Texas, 1875,” *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 9 (1933): 86.

²³⁴ Morris, *El Llano Estacado*, 262.

²³⁵ Quoted in Morris, *El Llano Estacado*, 314.

Spring, discovered sources of permanent water that would “support large herds of livestock.” Carlson writes, “His information made it easier for cattlemen later to locate water for their herds, and the area he covered soon filled in with ranches.”²³⁶

Shafter reserved his highest praise for an area called “Moo-cho-ko-way country,” just north of Big Spring. Here he discovered mesquite timber, “sufficient for all necessary purposes of settler,” and “stone convenient for building.” The water was “excellent and inexhaustible” and the valleys, he believed, could be irrigated. Shafter confidently declared, “I do not think there is any doubt but corn could be raised without irrigation nearly every year.” Such pronouncements were a far cry from Marcy’s depiction of “vast illimitable expanse of desert prairie” or “a region almost as vast and trackless as the ocean.” Quite the contrary. Shafter spoke of an entirely different landscape, one perfectly suited to the ambitious, land-hungry settlers who sought to raise cattle and sheep on the Texas plains. He told his superiors, “As grazing country it is unsurpassed by any portion of Western Texas from the Gulf of New Mexico and Indian Territory.”²³⁷

Shafter’s expectations about the prospects for cattle in the Llano proved prescient. In the next fifteen years, many of these areas became some of Texas’ most storied cattle country. In 1877, C. C. Slaughter established an operation near Big Spring that grew into one of the largest ranches in western Texas, encompassing over a million acres and stretching all the way to Lubbock and New Mexico. Slaughter became known as the “Cattle King of Texas,” a sobriquet of immense meaning in a region and era known for its cattle barons. Slaughter not only built a vast ranching empire, but he also established

²³⁶ Carlson, *Pecos Bill*, 83.

²³⁷ Crimmins, “Shafter’s Explorations,” 89.

ranching as a serious and powerful business in Texas. He was among the first to introduce barbed wire and new forms of mechanization to his operations, and he helped start one of the first cattlemen's associations in the state.²³⁸

The Big Spring area was not the only landmark on the dreaded Staked Plains to become a flourishing garden in the 1870s. To the north, Shafter discovered the considerable charms of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos. He wrote, "the whole country is covered with luxuriant grass, affording pasturage for immense herds of buffalo and would be sufficient to maintain thousands of cattle and horses."²³⁹ Indeed, this area was part of Quitaque country, where one of the first cattle ranches south of the Palo Duro Canyon was soon established. In 1877, brothers George and Jim Baker established an operation with 2,000 cattle south of the caprock ridge, which they later expanded to cover 140,000 acres in three counties. In the early 1880s, the Baker brothers sold their holdings to the JA Ranch, the legendary operation backed by the Scottish financier John Adair and managed by Charles Goodnight.²⁴⁰ The JA was one of the largest and most celebrated of the enormous Texas ranches, covering over 1.3 million acres at its height. The Bakers and then Goodnight found the country to be as amenable to grazing as Shafter had predicted.

Another major ranch also moved into the area scouted by Shafter's men. In his report Shafter noted that area around Casa Amarilla, about forty miles from the Double Mountain Fork, was similarly suited to grazing. He remarked upon a "large tank of fresh

²³⁸ <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsl01>. See also David J. Murrah, *C.C. Slaughter: Rancher, Banker, Baptist* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

²³⁹ Crimmins, "Shafter's Explorations," 87.

²⁴⁰ <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/apq03>. On Goodnight and the JA Ranch, see William Thomas Hagan, *Charles Goodnight: Father of the Texas Panhandle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

water that I believe is fed from springs as I could not perceive any diminution [sic] in it 129
after using it for two days with my whole command.” He also noted some “large pools of
living water, with plenty of wood” and declared it “an excellent place for sheep or
horses.”²⁴¹ The Yellow Houses area, as it would come to be called, turned out to be a
prime location for cattle as well. In the early 1880s, ranchers began arriving at Yellow
Houses. In a few years it became the southern headquarters of the XIT Ranch, the largest
ranch in the West and “probably the largest fenced range in the world,” enclosing well
over three million acres in Texas.²⁴² In one month of 1887 alone, Yellow Houses received
30,000 new head of cattle for the XIT.²⁴³

Shafter did not merely anticipate these developments – his expedition contributed
to the establishment of cattle ranches in the Llano Estacado in the 1870s and 1880s. Word
of Shafter’s findings spread through the publication of his official report. Historian
William Leckie writes, “The report, widely circulated and read, spawned a swift
movement of cattlemen, sheepherders, and homesteaders to claim and settle this last great
home of the Southern Plains Indians.”²⁴⁴ In fact, it was reprinted in Homer S. Thrall’s *A
Pictorial History of Texas, from the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers, to A.D.
1879*, a popular account of the state’s history, geography, and notable figures, featuring
illustrations of the state.²⁴⁵ Shafter’s report caught the attention of leading political

²⁴¹ Crimmins, “Shafter’s Explorations,” 87.

²⁴² J. Evetts Haley, *The XIT Ranch of Texas and the Early Days of the Llano Estacado*. New ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 3.

²⁴³ Haley, *XIT Ranch*, 45-46; 81.

²⁴⁴ Shirley A. Leckie and William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 149-150.

²⁴⁵ Homer S. Thrall, *A Pictorial History of Texas, from the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers, to A.D. 1879*. 5th ed. (St. Louis, Mo.: N.D. Thompson & Co., 1879).
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t2g742553>. Shafter’s report begins on page 41.

figures as well. J. W. Throckmorton, the former governor of Texas and railroad executive, now a congressman representing the state's third district near Dallas, wrote the secretary of war asking for more information about Shafter's findings. After referring to the official report, which he had read, Throckmorton requested a copy of the map Shafter had made. "A portion of the country explored and mapped by Col. Shafter, is embraced in my congressional district, and is hence of great interest to my constituents. I would there-fore respectfully request to be furnished with a copy of Col Shafter's map, which will be of great service in enabling pioneers to utilize the valuable information obtained by Col. S especially in regard to the exact location of many watering places not before discovered."²⁴⁶ It is not known exactly which "constituents" Throckmorton meant, but while serving in Congress, he remained in the employment of the Texas and Pacific Railway Company. The geography of the Llano would have been of interest to his railroad associates as well as other potential ranchers, investors, and land speculators.

Reading the report, it is not difficult to understand why investors and cattlemen decided to move into the region. As William Leckie writes, "The colonel's report and accompanying maps would surely have warmed the heart of a Staked Plains Chamber of Commerce had such existed."²⁴⁷ Shafter's narrative was especially crafted with cattlemen in mind, and his observations about the supply of water, timber, and stone helped revise the perception, developed over centuries and epitomized for Americans by Marcy's writings, that the Llano was a barren wasteland. Instead, he advertised the abundance of

²⁴⁶ J.W. Throckmorton to the Secretary of War, 27 Feb 1877, 2832 AGO 1876, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, NA, Washington, D.C. Accessed through Fold3.com, 6 Feb. 2013.

²⁴⁷ Leckie and Leckie, *Buffalo Soldiers*, 149.

water and grass for grazing. Paul Carlson, a noted historian of western Texas, writes, “Knowing that Indians no longer ranged over the Llano Estacado, settlers, close on the heels of the Shafter expedition, invaded the empty land. Sheepmen, cattlemen, merchants and others pushed first into the canyons and river valleys of the High Plains before spilling into the tableland.” Stock-raisers came to the Canadian River Valley in 1875 and 1876, but others went farther south to Yellow Houses. According to Carlson, “Most of the early settlers entered the region as a result of the success of the Shafter campaign.”²⁴⁸ By the 1880s, the landscape of the Llano had been transformed. Marcy’s “great Zahara” was home to some of the West’s most extensive ranching operations, teeming with cattle destined for the great stockyards of Chicago and the eastern cities beyond.

The most remarkable consequences of Shafter’s 1875 expedition had nothing to do with fighting Native Americans or defeating lawless bands of raiders – those aspects of the army’s role in the West that were most often discussed in official reports. But Shafter did have a “military” assignment: his instructions from department headquarters included an order to clear hostile Natives off the Staked Plain, which it was assumed they used as a refuge between raiding operations. Yet his men discovered very few Native Americans in the course of nearly five months. In fact, Shafter felt he needed to apologize for how little his report dealt with troublesome Natives. “I regret that so little actual damage was inflicted on the Indians – one killed and five captured being the extent in that direction,” Shafter wrote. “Of the destruction of their supplies the showing is a little better.” He boasted that his men had managed to destroy one large camp and one small camp that they encountered in their scouting. Overall, what Shafter’s expedition

²⁴⁸ Carlson, *Pecos Bill*, 86.

revealed was how little the army and white settlers needed to fear the indigenous population of the Llano. Indian tribes that had once roamed the southern plains were defeated and their populations routed from at least this corner of the southwest. Shafter felt confident that there were no “Indian[s] east of the Pecos and south of Red river.” Furthermore, with the intelligence gathered about watering holes and the new roads enlisted men had constructed, monitoring the region would be much easier. Shafter recommended the army concentrate troops near “the more important watering places on the plains.” His final recommendation in his official report underscored how much perceptions of the Llano had changed thanks to his scouting operation. “I believe that if two or three permanent camps were established on the edge of the plains, of three or four companies each, that the frontier settlements in Western Texas would be advanced one hundred and fifty miles within two years.”²⁴⁹ His estimation may have been slightly ambitious, but in a few years the Staked Plain became an important part of the region’s economic scene.

Shafter’s mission was a fairly routine example of the army’s scouting duties in the southwest. It cannot compare in scale to the expeditions undertaken by the Corps of Engineers, but it represents more fully the “knowledge-labor” commonly produced by American soldiers. Like the military telegraph system, such scouting operations had an immediate military goal – in this case, to eliminate Native Americans from a particular region. But the army’s interest in private economic development formed the larger context of the mission, reflected in the instructions from Shafter’s superiors to make note of the region’s terrain and suitability for settlement. His mission was not unusual in

²⁴⁹ Crimmins, “Shafter’s Explorations,” 94.

combining military and economic imperatives. Custer's 1874 expedition in the Black Hills was "largely a military reconnaissance," according to Richard White, but he also took with him a small group of civilian scientists whose interest was gold, not war-making. Custer himself lobbied for a geologist to accompany his soldiers. He wrote General Terry, "The country to be visited is so new and believed to be so interesting that it will be a pity not to improve to the fullest extent the opportunity to determine all that is possible of its character, scientific and otherwise."²⁵⁰ Military and economic objectives were inextricably connected for Custer as well as for Shafter. As with soldiers' work on telegraph lines and railroads, the labor of enlisted men in such reconnaissance and scouting expeditions underwrote the development of the ranching and mining operations in the late-nineteenth century.

Mining in West Texas

The army's contributions to the mining industry in the western U.S. were wide-ranging. Some officers used their postings at remote stations in the West as platforms for personal investment, and the prospects for money-making were considerable when it came to mining. Lieutenant John L. Bullis of the 24th Infantry was one such investor. Bullis served in western Texas as commander of a special group, the so-called "Seminole-Negro scouts," and his scouting assignments gave him unique opportunities to gather information about the resources of the countryside.²⁵¹ According to historian Bruce Dinges, Bullis was "among the largest of the soldier speculators." Because he was "in the enviable position of commanding the military escort for railroad surveying

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Donald Jackson, *Custer's Gold: The United States Cavalry Expedition of 1874* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 50.

²⁵¹ On Bullis' career with the scouts, see Porter, "Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts": 358–377.

crews,” Bullis learned at the earliest stages where railroads were planning to build and hence what parcels of land would increase in value as a result. Furthermore, the government’s land grants to railroads helped them become large landowners in the West, providing incentive for the companies to prospect for mineral wealth as well. In 1879, for example, Bullis provided a 30-man escort for a “major expedition” of the International and Great Northern, Texas and Pacific, and Southern Pacific Railroad, which was looking for mineral deposits in the vicinity of Fort Davis. Bullis’ experiences on this trip paved the way for extensive land speculation in western Texas.²⁵²

The companies who backed the expedition hoped to find lucrative deposits of silver in the region, but so did individuals like Lt. Bullis. Sam Woolford writes, “Railroads at that time were being offered sixteen sections of land for each mile of road-bed constructed, and the railroads backing the mineral explorers in the Chinatis were heavy holders of land in the Big Bend country.”²⁵³ Burr G. Duval, a representative of the International and Great Northern Railroad who kept a fascinating diary of the 1879 expedition, several times noted that Bullis, who accompanied the group solely to provide protection against an Indian attack, was himself interested in the mining potential of the Chinati Mountains. On February 12, he wrote, “Bullis had found a lead some 6 miles N.W. of camp, a picked specimen from which panned out about 10 oz. We are sinking a shaft in that quarter also.”²⁵⁴ On March 1, Duval, bored with life in camp and the unremarkable discoveries of the prospectors overall, wondered how Bullis was so busy.

²⁵² Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads*, 114.

²⁵³ Sam Woolford, ed., “The Burr G. Duval Diary,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1962): 503, fn. 17. Hereafter, “Duval Diary.”

²⁵⁴ “Duval Diary,” 502.

While Duval had spent the day reading a “trashy love story” (“Reaping His Wild Oats”),¹³⁵ he noted that, “Niccolls and Bullis have been out several days, surveying as it is said, Surveying what?”²⁵⁵ Two days later, he noted that Niccolls and Bullis returned from five days of surveying, “footsore and weary.”²⁵⁶

Duval was right to wonder about the time Bullis spent scouting on his own. Years later Bullis bought land in the Big Bend region. Between 1882 and 1884, he placed claims on 53,520 acres of land in Pecos County.²⁵⁷ But Bullis’ break likely came just after the railroad company expedition had concluded. The following year, in 1880, John Spencer, who had been prospecting in the Chinatis since before the Civil War, shared the discovery of an ore deposit with Colonel William Shafter, who was stationed nearby. Spencer and Shafter decided to join in a business partnership with Bullis and Lt. Louis Wilhelmi of the 1st Infantry. Together, the four officers bought nine sections of school district land in the vicinity where Spencer had found ore. Although the partners did not have the requisite capital to establish a mining operation themselves, they held on to the land until they were bought out by the California-based Presidio Mining Company. Legal troubles between the partners ensued when Bullis refused to sell sections of land he had bought in his wife’s name and on which silver had been found. Eventually the case, *Presidio Mining Company v. Alice Bullis*, was heard by the Texas Supreme Court in 1887. The court ruled in the company’s favor, and Presidio launched a full-scale silver

²⁵⁵ “Duval Diary,” 505.

²⁵⁶ “Duval Diary,” 505.

²⁵⁷ Bruce J. Dinges, “Colonel Grierson Invests on the West Texas Frontier,” *Fort Concho Report* 16 (1984): 6.

mining operation on the land shortly thereafter.²⁵⁸ The mine established on the Bullis land continued to operate into the 1940s.

The army's contributions to the development of mining in the West followed many of the patterns apparent in ranching. Scouting parties looked for "hostile" Native Americans, but they were also instructed to search for signs of mineral wealth and note the suitability of the terrain for agriculture. Edward O. C. Ord, commander of the Department of Texas, was well-pleased with soldiers' work in the trans-Pecos region. He reported to the secretary of war that scouting parties had uncovered rich grazing country as well mineral deposits. He wrote, "Silver-lead, iron, and copper districts have been discovered, and specimens of both silver and gold ores brought in."²⁵⁹ On a larger scale, General Custer hoped there might be gold in the Black Hills, and news of his party's discovery created a veritable gold rush in 1874. Military officers believed that the exploitation of mineral resources by white Americans would complement the army's goals of "pacifying" hostile Native Americans. Richard White writes that Custer's gold "also served the strategic goal of undermining the Sioux economy and loosening their grip on their land."²⁶⁰ But some officers also hoped to line their own pockets. Lt. Bullis, for example, was keen to supplement his army salary with profits from mineral prospecting and speculation. Yet his efforts to enrich himself were eclipsed by that of another "empire-builder" in western Texas.

Benjamin Grierson and the Developmental Vision

²⁵⁸ For details on Spencer's discovery as well as the legal dispute between Bullis and the other officers, see Paul H. Carlson, "The Discovery of Silver in West Texas," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 54 (1978): 55-64.

²⁵⁹ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1878. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 45th Congress, 3d session (serial 1843), 81.

²⁶⁰ White, *Misfortune*, 130.

Colonel Benjamin Grierson went beyond Bullis in the diversity of his investments, and he also distinguished himself in his efforts to involve other officers in his money-making schemes. Like so many of his contemporaries, Grierson emerged as a respected officer in the Civil War. But his real accomplishments came after the war, when he took up a variety of positions in Texas and the southwest.²⁶¹ On one occasion, for example, Grierson tried to convince the army to expand Fort Davis by purchasing land bought by Lt. Mason Maxon, his niece's husband and regimental quartermaster, and George A. Brenner, the regimental bandmaster.²⁶² Grierson also invested in land – he owned at least 45,000 acres in western Texas at various times – and he used his personal relationships and his position as an army commander to help protect his investments. Michael Tate writes, “Grierson appointed Maxon regimental quartermaster in 1882, and in that capacity the lieutenant sometimes detailed soldiers to undertake repair projects on Grierson's [sheep] ranch.”²⁶³ Like so many speculators of his era, Grierson also hoped to profit from the spree of railroad building in western Texas. In 1883, along with two other subordinate officers, two of his sons, and other “prominent citizens,” he incorporated a railway company with plans to build a narrow-gauge line between Marfa and Fort Davis. Unfortunately for Grierson, the troops were transferred away from Fort Davis and the railroad scheme collapsed.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ On Grierson, see William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors: General Benjamin H. Grierson and His Family* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

²⁶² Mary L. Williams, “Empire-Building: Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson at Fort Davis, 1882–1885,” *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 66 (1985): 62. Grierson also tried to convince his superiors to expand other subposts near land he had purchased himself. See Williams, 64.

²⁶³ Tate, *Frontier Army*, 288.

²⁶⁴ Dinges, “Colonel Grierson,” 9.

Several historians have latched onto Grierson as an archetype of the officer-investor in the western army. His story is all the more compelling because it is so unfortunate: most of his attempts at land speculation fell through, the Marfa railroad never materialized, and when Fort Davis was closed and Grierson's command transferred to the Department of Arizona, his hopes for material wealth evaporated. He died a debtor.²⁶⁵ Yet Robert Wooster rightly points out that Grierson was much like his contemporaries in the officer class. He "took actions that were hardly unique – only the scope and intensity of his ventures distinguished Grierson from the norm," Wooster writes. "Garrison members followed their commander's example: land speculation, ranching, mining, and railroad development proved fertile fields for soldier-entrepreneurs during the 1880s."²⁶⁶ Yet men like Grierson and Bullis were small-scale investors who looked to much larger capitalists to realize their financial ambitions. Bullis and Shafter eventually sold their land to a larger mining company, and when Grierson was attempting to build a short-line railway, he traveled to New York to meet with Collis Huntington, hoping for the railroad magnate's backing. Army officers may have been important in attracting such investment to the remote corners of western Texas, but they operated on a small scale. Their significance lies not in their individual pursuits, but in their plans for the future of the southwest and the way they understood the army's role in it.

The pursuit of profit that Grierson exhibited in his personal activities was reflected in his official duties as a commander of the Tenth Cavalry and then the District of the Pecos. Grierson exemplified what might be termed a "developmental vision,"

²⁶⁵ Dinges, "Colonel Grierson," 11.

²⁶⁶ Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads*, 109.

shared by many of his fellow officers in the post-Civil War army. Through this developmental vision, Grierson and like-minded officers understood the army's role in the West primarily in terms of preparing the region for settlement and investment by white Americans.²⁶⁷ Grierson dedicated himself – and his troops – to extending the influence of the army in remote corners of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. They did this by expanding posts, building roads, assisting the railroads, and scouting and mapping little-known regions. Grierson believed that these auxiliary duties were inextricably bound up with the U.S.'s military priorities in the region. To fight hostile Native Americans and secure the Rio Grande border, soldiers had to know the territory inside and out, and they needed a reliable network of roads and supply lines to support their expeditions. Although he did not amass a personal fortune in western Texas, Grierson was nevertheless one of the army's "empire builders."²⁶⁸

Grierson's career reflects the diverse, multivalent role of the army in the West. In 1878, Major General Edward O. C. Ord formed the District of the Pecos, which included Forts Concho, Davis, and Stockton, largely in response to the threat posed by Victorio, the leader of a group of Warm Springs Apaches who had escaped from the San Carlos reservation. Grierson, appointed commander of the new district with his headquarters at Fort Concho, established a string of subposts at key watering places in western Texas

²⁶⁷ Brian Balogh uses the phrase "developmental vision" to describe a set of ideas associated with advocates of internal improvements in the early republic. The army's role in the post-Civil War period was in some ways a continuation of these ideas, but the changed political and economic landscape of the late-nineteenth century made the army's role in promoting a developmental vision distinctive. Balogh, *Government Out of Sight*, chapter 3.

²⁶⁸ Wooster refers to Grierson and his cohort as the "Fort Davis empire builders." See Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads*, 114. Similarly, Mary L. Williams' essay on Grierson's investments is titled "Empire-Building." Both Wooster and Williams, however, refer to Grierson's attempts to build a *private* empire, and they are less interested in connecting his personal ambitions to his official duties and his vision of the army's purpose in the southwest.

where it was assumed Victorio and his raiders would reenter Texas. Victorio was eventually killed in Mexico in 1880, and the army's efforts to subdue the renegade Apaches dominated military accounts of this period.²⁶⁹ As important as the so-called "Victorio War" undoubtedly was to Grierson and other officers, a developmental vision guided his actions and informed even his approach to capturing Victorio. His first steps as commander of the new district centered on information-gathering and road-building. He ordered troops to not only scout the country in search of hostiles, but to map it as well. Grierson believed that a more thorough understanding of the terrain and a system of coordinated paths would, in the long run, enable the U.S. army to wage a successful campaign against its enemies.²⁷⁰ On some level, he understood that the remaining confrontations with Native Americans would be waged by wile, and superior firepower alone would not give the army a sufficient advantage; soldiers would also require a more intimate knowledge of the environment.

In 1878, his first year commanding the new district, Grierson made several lengthy expeditions and inspected Forts Stockton and Davis, the other posts under his command. At the end of the year, he was able to report to Major General Ord that his subordinates had scouted nearly 25,000 miles and he himself had traveled more than 3,000 miles.²⁷¹ Ord was pleased and a little surprised with the results of Grierson's explorations, the implications of which extended far beyond strictly military matters. In his 1878 report to the Secretary of War, Ord noted Grierson's work in western Texas: "I have to report that the explorations by scouting parties of the mountain country west of

²⁶⁹ On the Victorio War, see Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 359-365; Wooster, *Frontier Crossroads*, 101-107.

²⁷⁰ Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*.

²⁷¹ Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 254.

the Pecos have developed, unexpectedly, well-watered and quite extensive grazing lands,¹⁴¹ both plain and valley. Silver-lead, iron, and copper districts have been discovered, and specimens of both silver and gold ores brought in. A map of the country, which will give most valuable information, is now in preparation.”²⁷² A few months later, Ord sent the promised map to the adjutant general. He was quick to take credit for the information garnered from these scouts: “Under instructions from these headquarters to the Commanding Officer, District of the Pecos, extensive explorations by scouting parties have been made. The valuable information this secured, has been embodied in a map of that district, compiled under the direction of the district Commander.”²⁷³ The activities of soldiers in the District of the Pecos underscores the centrality of intelligence-gathering and exploration to the army’s operations. Even at a time of heightened military preparedness and increased activity by hostile Native Americans, most soldiers were not employed in activities that directly involved hunting renegade Apaches or Mexican outlaws. Instead, their days were spent performing labor that uncovered the rich possibilities of western Texas for white settlement and investment.

The “valuable information” condensed into Grierson’s map represented many weeks and months of labor by the enlisted men under Grierson’s command. Ord gestured towards this labor when he wrote the adjutant general, “In gaining the information thus embraced, a vast amount of work was done in the field by Officers, Companies, and detachments, the aggregate distance marched by the troops being 24,469 miles. The figures indicate the extent of the information, which has been transferred to the map now

²⁷² U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1878, 81.

²⁷³ Brig. Gen. E.O.C. Ord to Adj. Gen. of the Army, April 16, 1879, Box 4, Benjamin Henry Grierson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago. Hereafter, Grierson Papers.

transmitted, adding greatly to its value.”²⁷⁴ Before soldiers could map such remote areas, 142 they first needed to find their way across the high plains and through the mountains, which meant clearing brush and building roads before thoroughly scouting the countryside. In these activities, Grierson took a particularly hands-on approach. In 1879, for example, Grierson spent about three weeks with three other officers and Company “F” of the 25th Infantry, an all-African-American regiment under orders to build a road from Fort Davis to Fort Clark. He personally instructed the black soldiers about the location of the road and oversaw their labor. In his report, Grierson noted that he adjusted the route initially proposed for the wagon road due to the “very dry and parched appearance of the country surrounding Stockton.” He traveled ahead of the company to scout out the path of the road, then looped back to the company and directed their route. Assigning Company F to work near Fairview Pass, he met up with Company G, 25th Infantry, and set them to work on the road at Mesquis Canon “where in one day a smooth good road around a very rough rocky bad hill was made.” After about twelve days of this work, Grierson returned to Fort Davis where he received a telegram from headquarters instructing him to stop work on the road from Pena Blanco to Clark. The next day, Grierson returned to Mesquis Canon, where he sent half of G Company to meet Captain Schooley and the other half to come with him to Pena Colorado “doing such work while en route as was necessary to put the road in excellent condition.” “While the command rested,” Grierson himself went ahead to scout the location for the road to Pena Blanco. “It was only after hard, persistent work, passing and repassing back and forth and climbing hills and mountains, that a practicable road could be found. I succeeded however, in

²⁷⁴ Brig. Gen. E.O.C. Ord to Adj. Gen. of the Army, April 16, 1879, Box 4, Grierson Papers.

finding passes through the hills and mountains heretofor deemed impassable for wagons,” he wrote. Grierson was especially pleased with the road he mapped out, although he barely noted the actual labor performed by his troops. In his narrative of events, the great accomplishment was his success in finding a path for the road that avoided hills. Unmentioned but assumed is the back-breaking labor the 25th Infantry soldiers performed under the Texas sun. Grierson wrote: “completed the location of the road and am pleased to state that there is not even one hill over which the road passes for the entire distance from Mesquis Canon to Pena Blanco - the road too is over hard gravel and solid smooth ground and well supplied with wood, water, and excellent grazing which will make this road for all time to come, one of the very best in Texas.” Even the absence of a subject in this sentence elides the labor performed. *Who* completed the location of the road? The requisite army records tell us what Grierson himself failed to mention – that the black soldiers of Company E spent eight months and the men of Company G three months building “one of the very best” roads in Texas.²⁷⁵

Grierson continued on his way, accomplishing great feats of construction by proxy: “When returning to Concho I opened a direct route from Pena Colorado to intercept the one I opened last year from Stockton to Pena Blanco at a point where the latter enters the mountains, from the south.” But even this was not enough to satisfy Grierson’s ambitions for the trans-Pecos region. He enclosed a map drawn by Ordnance Sergeant Robert F. Joyce, U.S. Army, “under [his] careful supervision,” which included not only the roads

²⁷⁵ Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, January 1880, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M665, Roll 255), Ancestry.com, accessed 11 September 2013. Kevin Adams notes officers’ use of the passive voice in many of their writings dealing the work performed by subordinates. He argues that even in their sentence structure, officers “denied enlisted men agency by erasing their labors.” See Adams, *Class and Race*, 48-51.

constructed but also those Grierson recommended. The “dotted lines indicate the proposed continuation of the road” which Grierson assured his superiors would be easy to complete. “I am confident from personal observations,” wrote Grierson, that “a proposed road....can be readily opened with but little trouble or labor.”²⁷⁶

Grierson estimated that the troops had marched a total of one thousand miles in the course of their detail. They had opened part of a road between the two posts, and he looked forward to the completion of the road. Of course, the ultimate reward of all these exertions extended far beyond the construction of a road for military use. He reminded his superiors that, should his advice be followed regarding the route of this new road, “much more valuable country [would be] opened up for travel and settlement.”²⁷⁷ Ord echoed Grierson’s observations about the developmental possibilities of the trans-Pecos. In 1879, Ord wrote in his report to the Secretary of War, “Americans are pushing west and northwest, and as soon as the new military road -- much nearer the river -- from Fort Clark to Fort Davis, now under construction by the troops of this department, shall have been opened, quite a number of cattle ranches will be established near and north of the Rio Grande, and along the Pecos.”²⁷⁸ Indeed, as detailed above, the 1880s would witness a remarkable burgeoning of the cattle industry in western Texas. Grierson had read the writing on the wall.

Taken together, Grierson’s activities in his second year in command of the District of the Pecos represent in microcosm the developmental program carried out by soldiers’ labor. In 1879, Grierson sent a detailed summary of the work accomplished by

²⁷⁶ B.H. Grierson to Asst. Adj. General, September 23, 1879, Box 4, Grierson Papers.

²⁷⁷ B.H. Grierson to Asst. Adj. General, September 23, 1879, Box 4, Grierson Papers.

²⁷⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1878, 91.

his soldiers to the assistant adjutant general of the Department of Texas. A remarkable document for both narrative style and content, it demonstrates the scope of work undertaken by his troops. Early in the year, they built a telegraph office and repair station. In the spring Grierson was unexpectedly sent to New York City to serve on the Hazen-Stanley court martial, but even during his absence, he was pleased that his troops “had generally been as active and energetic in the discharge of the duties assigned them as could be expected under the circumstances.” Grierson was anxious to return to his duties at the helm of a large construction operation in the trans-Pecos. The first agenda item was road-building. “From knowledge gained of the country to the southwest of Stockton and Davis last year (1878) I considered it very important in order to facilitate future operations, that a good wagon road be constructed from Davis, to Pena Colorado, with view of opening up the country towards the Rio Grande - Fort Clark and Presidio-del-Norte.” In August, he assigned two companies to this “important work.” As noted in the September report discussed earlier, Grierson personally traveled to Pena Colorado “to push the work forward on the Davis and Clark road” and to explore the countryside in that vicinity. He recommended the construction of a new wagon road, but noted that it would be difficult and time-consuming to build west from the Pecos. “Captain Schooley’s company has been eight months working upon the road in Mesquis Canon near Fort Davis, and two other companies of the 25th Infantry, have worked for months upon it to the southward, and two others are now at work beyond the limits of my

District.”²⁷⁹ All told, his troops “opened” 300 miles of new roads and constructed 200 miles of telegraph line between Fort Davis and Fort Quitman.

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Only a few scattered references throughout the report indicate that these are military troops and not construction crews. In June and then again in October, Grierson noted that his troops were called away from their regular duties to respond to threats from hostile Indians, but they quickly dealt with these distractions and returned to the pressing work of building and mapping. Beyond road work, soldiers had also built new lodging for officers and themselves. “Rough but comfortable stone quarters have been erected by the labor of troops, without expense to the Government.” At Grierson’s Spring, the Tenth Cavalry had constructed a forage house, telegraph office, and infantry quarters. At Pena Colorado, another subpost, the two companies of the 25th Infantry had erected “quarters for one Company of Infantry, Forage House and Corral.”

The soldiers of the District of the Pecos had accomplished much impressive work in the year 1879. Grierson was eager for his superiors to take note of the far-reaching program of improvements he had carried out through their service. He ended his report with a reminder of the important work he had supervised: “The vast amount of valuable service rendered by the troops of this District, in scouting and exploring the country, working on roads, quarters and telegraph lines, may be more fully understood from this report.” In clear language, Grierson defines what counts as soldiers’ “valuable service” – he does not mention the “Indian problem” or “depredations,” even though the trans-Pecos region was prime raiding ground for Mexican, American, and Native horse and cattle thieves. Instead, Grierson hopes he will be rewarded for the army’s truly significant work

²⁷⁹ B.H. Grierson to Asst. Adj. General, Dept. of Texas, December 31, 1879, Box 4, Grierson Papers.

in the west – the work of development. In a none-too-subtle bid for recognition he concludes, “I trust that the earnest and successful efforts put forth to open up and develop the resources of the country, and give security to settlers, will be properly considered, appreciated and recognized, by those in higher authority.”²⁸⁰

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Grierson did not have to wait too long to receive confirmation that his achievements were valued. The following February, Assistant Adjutant General Thomas M. Vincent commended Grierson on his “arduous and energetic services of the past year.” He more than hinted that Grierson should expect to be recognized and rewarded by his superiors, even beyond Ord: “The services rendered...in scouting and exploring the country, working on roads and telegraph lines, thus marking earnest and successful efforts to develop the resources of the country, cannot, as to value, be well estimated; but, no doubt, they will be properly considered, appreciated, and recognized by the higher authorities, as they are now by the Department Commander.”²⁸¹ Vincent echoed Grierson’s laundry list of army accomplishments, and he assured the faithful career officer that his troops’ labor – the scouting, exploration, building roads, laying telegraph line, and general development of “resources” – would earn him commendation.

Grierson and his contemporaries shared grand ambitions. Although they were concerned with pay raises and promotions, military officers also felt themselves to be engaged in work of world-historical importance. They commanded more than ditch-digging and road-building, after all: they were at the helm of a great national endeavor on

²⁸⁰ B.H. Grierson to Asst. Adj. General, Dept. of Texas, December 31, 1879, Box 4, Grierson Papers.

²⁸¹ Thomas M. Vincent, AAG, to Commanding Officer, District of the Pecos, February 11, 1880, in “Brief sketch of General Grierson’s Services, with a Few Extracts from Special Testimonials and Recommendations of General Officers and Other Officials. From Records filed in War Department, 1861-1884,” 1885, Box 5, Grierson Papers.

the western frontier. Vincent spoke to these aspirations when he reassured Grierson that 148
his work would be duly appreciated:

Thirty-four thousand four hundred and twenty miles of marches; three hundred miles of roads opened; two hundred miles of telegraph constructed, -- all, except a portion of the telegraph, consummated in one year, -- involve efforts which will lead to lasting results, of which, as tending, greatly, to advance civilization, yourself and command may well be proud.²⁸²

Grierson was part of a milieu of nineteenth-century career military officers who believed deeply in the civilizational role of the U.S. army in the West. Indeed, it is clear from Grierson's reports throughout his tenure as commander of the District of the Pecos that he understood his and the army's role as pivotal to the settlement – even civilization – of this corner of the West.

In this vein, Grierson's biographers, Shirley and William Leckie, describe Grierson as a productive, rather than destructive, officer – a civilizer in the grand sense of the nineteenth century. They write, “By temperament a builder and developer rather than a destroyer, he set out to make his district not only safe, but attractive to potential settlers as well.”²⁸³ Yet even Grierson's version of peaceful development was premised on the destruction of indigenous societies. Although he may not have relished killing Native Americans, there was no space for them in his vision of a prosperous and civilized West. In practice, Grierson's developmental vision was an effective means of ridding the southwest of the recalcitrant Natives who had impeded for centuries the complete settlement of the region by states like Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Ultimately, however, the developmental program Grierson pioneered proved incredibly destructive of

²⁸² Thomas M. Vincent, AAG, to Commanding Officer, District of the Pecos, February 11, 1880, in “Brief sketch of General Grierson's Services,” 1885, Box 5, Grierson Papers.

²⁸³ Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 251.

indigenous societies, despite the words of one private in the Ninth Infantry, who wrote he was ‘...beginning to think the soldiers in the Department of the Platte know better how to handle pick & shovel than they do a gun.’”²⁸⁴ How did the soldier’s “pick and shovel” compare to a gun from the perspective of Native societies fighting off the encroachments of settlers and the American state? The pick and shovel were not obvious weapons, but they yielded many casualties nonetheless, including the Native economies and communities that could never coexist with the army’s developmental program.

This “creative destruction,” coming as it often did cloaked in an ideology of progress and civilization, may in fact be the most significant “legacy of conquest” in the American West.²⁸⁵ At the highest level of leadership, the army believed its efforts had been secondary to rather bloodless technology. In 1880, Sherman pronounced, “The progress of settlement west of the Mississippi in the past fifteen years has been simply prodigious...This is largely due to the soldier, but in an equal, if not greater measure, to the adventurous pioneers themselves, and to that new and greatest of civilizers, the railroad.”²⁸⁶ Contemporary historians have also adopted this perspective. Robert Utley writes, “Despite all the wars of the Peace Policy, the Indians did not succumb to military conquest...More than the army, railroads, settlements, and all the numbers, technology, and other trappings of an aggressive and highly organized society brought defeat to the

²⁸⁴ Quoted in Don Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 93.

²⁸⁵ On creative destruction, see Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008). Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

²⁸⁶ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1880. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 46th Congress, 3d session (serial 1952), 4.

Indians.”²⁸⁷ From a different standpoint Pekka Hämäläinen echoes Utley when he calls the Comanches’ downfall “not a military but an economic one.”²⁸⁸ For Hämäläinen, the real conquest involved the destruction of the buffalo, which in turn was facilitated by a railroad that linked buffalo hunters to eastern markets. In all these narratives, the army plays a role in the destruction of Native economies and societies, but usually by delivering the final blow; military defeat is premised on a weakening of Native societies brought about through other, non-military means. Yet the army contributed to the overall weakening of these societies in ways that cannot be captured by battlefield accounts. In places like the Llano Estacado, for example, the army scouted for Native American hideouts, but Shafter’s 1875 expedition yielded very few casualties in the short-term. Nevertheless, within a few years, the information Shafter and his troops gathered contributed more decisively to the end of Native raiding practices in western Texas than any single military maneuver. Likewise, although Sherman and others rightly recognized the importance of the railroads in limiting the space and resources available to Plains Indians, they downplayed the key role of the army in enabling the “iron horse” to run.

Outright violence, perpetuated by the U.S. army, played an obvious role in clearing western lands of their Native inhabitants. In turn, the decimation and dispossession of Native Americans was a key component of the march of white settlement and capitalism across the North American continent.²⁸⁹ But perhaps because historians of the military and of Native Americans have trained their eyes on violent

²⁸⁷ Utley, *Indian Frontier*, 170.

²⁸⁸ Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 339.

²⁸⁹ A few excellent studies of the army’s violent conquest of the West are Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009); Ostler, *Plains Sioux*.

confrontations – battlefields and massacres – they have been less likely to see the quieter ¹⁵¹ but insidious means by which the army helped subjugate indigenous people. In his study of the army’s role in the northwestern frontier prior to the Civil War, historian Francis Paul Prucha argued that soldiers did more than provide security for settlers. In fact, it was the relationship between the army’s traditional “military” endeavors, such as fighting Native Americans, and its more prosaic activities, such as building roads, that deserved attention. Prucha wrote, “The twin blessings which the army posts offered nearby communities – economic opportunity and security from Indian attack – cannot easily be differentiated in importance.”²⁹⁰ Prucha’s study concentrated on the “frontier period” in the upper-northwest in the five decades before the Civil War. Many of his insights about the importance of the army as an engine of economic development apply to the late-nineteenth century as well, but the context for the army’s activities changed after the Civil War. Although more and more production in the northeastern cities could be described as “capitalist” in the antebellum period, it was not until after the Civil War that serious investment capital poured into the trans-Mississippi West, largely for the development of railroads but also for the establishment of large ranching and mining operations in the 1880s. The army provided not only the requisite security, but also transportation and communications infrastructure, which made remote corners of the western U.S. attractive venues for capital. Without the protection, scouting, and map-making provided by soldiers, the western landscape would have looked very different by 1890. Private enterprises would have needed to pay for these services in the labor-scarce West, potentially delaying the establishment of cattle ranches, silver mines, and rail lines

²⁹⁰ Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet*, 150.

by years or even decades. It is impossible to know with certainty how the western economy would have developed without the army's dogged labors, but it is safe to assume that the capitalist transformation of places like the Llano Estacado would have taken longer and may have taken a different course entirely.

The next chapter explains how the army managed to create and maintain a regime of *unfree* labor at exactly the time it helped make such systems of bondage, slavery, and coercion illegal and illegitimate in the United States. In an extraordinary twist, it was the army – the appendage of the state credited with emancipating the slaves and demolishing the Confederacy – that perpetuated a form of coerced labor in the West. The following chapter investigates this phenomenon of unfree martial labor, the wide-scale protests it elicited, and its relationship to the great showdowns between capital and labor throughout the Gilded Age United States.

**“A slave in Uncle Sam’s service:”
The Army and the Problem of Labor in the Gilded Age**

Like many young men in 1881, William Bladen Jett was adrift and looking for work. Recalling the frustration of those aimless days, Jett wrote, “I walked the streets of Baltimore hunting for work till my mind was weary and my finances were gone.” The doctor’s son from the Northern Neck of Virginia continued his search until one day he saw a notice in the *Baltimore Sun*: “Wanted, 100 men for U.S. Cavalry service out on the plains.” The romance of the West – and the prospect of a square meal – beckoned. Jett visited a recruiting office and enlisted. Early the next day, he overheard an officer “cursing a man” and “threatening to put him in chains and take him to St. Louis.” His disposition toward the army changed almost immediately, but his revelation came a day too late. “I wished I was well out of the army,” Jett wrote. “I never got over that wish during the five years I was a slave in Uncle Sam’s service.”²⁹¹

Corporal Jett was not the only soldier to lament loss of freedom in the post-Civil War. A major cause of dissatisfaction among enlisted men was the army’s relentless labor regime. Although they performed the work of common laborers, soldier-laborers enjoyed fewer rights and privileges than their counterparts in civilian society. The soldier was paid less than the average worker and was subject to special disciplinary and judicial regulations. Most important, the terms of his contract meant that he was not free to leave his “employer,” the U.S. army, until he had served every day of his enlistment. As a result, desertion – the soldier’s equivalent of quitting – reached epidemic proportions

²⁹¹ Henry P. Walker, “The Reluctant Corporal: The Autobiography of William Bladen Jett: Part I,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 12, no. 1 (April 1, 1971): 4-5.

several times in the late-nineteenth century. As resistance to the army's labor demands mounted, the army scrambled to stem the tide of desertions without ever remedying the underlying causes of soldiers' dissatisfaction. 154

This chapter examines the conflicts generated by the U.S. army's labor regime. It argues that military labor constituted a form of coerced labor that was at once exceptional in the post-Civil War world of "free labor" and emblematic of new unfree labor relations, particularly in the South and West.²⁹² First, it explores soldiers' understanding of the army's labor regime and the ways they articulated their grievances. Some enlisted men simply made trouble at their barracks, others wrote petitions, and quite a few deserted. Desertion was an especially crucial form of soldiers' resistance, and the debates surrounding desertion reflect public and official perceptions of peacetime soldiers and their role in American society. Second, this chapter places soldiers' labor in the broader context of the political economy of the trans-Mississippi West after the Civil War. The region was home to a variety of coercive labor arrangements, including convict and contract labor. Military labor was yet another example of the not-quite-"free labor"

²⁹² While the majority of this chapter deals with unfree labor in the West – including but not limited to military labor – the persistence of unfree labor relations, including sharecropping and debt peonage, in the post-Civil War South is well-established. A small sample of the rich historiography on the South is below, note 102. In recent years, the historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction has begun to shift westward, and with it whatever attention remains on postbellum labor. For a recent study of unfree labor in California, see Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*. Although there are many excellent works on labor in the South and West, cited below, the field is waiting for a new assessment of how these regional historiographies fit together and challenge historians to develop a new national (or transnational) narrative about unfree labor in the wake of the Civil War. On the recent literature on the Civil War and Reconstruction West, see, for example, Adam Arenson, "Introduction," *Civil War Wests*, 1-12; Joshua Paddison, "Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction by Stacey L. Smith (review)," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 4 (2014): 620–22. For a recent work on the transnational character of unfree labor in the post-Civil War South, see Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

relations that dotted the western landscape. Ironically, while the U.S. army is rightly credited with helping destroy slavery in the South and enforcing the rights of ex-slaves during Reconstruction, it remained a vehicle for coercing the labor of soldiers. The army's "enlisted laborers" thus provide a new way of assessing the persistence of coercive labor relations during a period of rapid economic expansion. By highlighting the way the army became a purveyor and manager of coerced labor, this chapter challenges assumptions about the vaunted status of soldiers and the close relationship between military service and the rights of citizenship in the nineteenth-century United States.

Citizens, Workers, or "Loafers": Soldiers in the Gilded Age

Corporal William Jett was not the only young man to visit a recruiting office when his "finances were gone." The army depended on the desperation of poor men to fill its ranks. Colonel Richard I. Dodge remarked that "the large majority are driven to enlistment by absolute want."²⁹³ In fact, the army benefited from economic slowdowns and crises because more skilled men enlisted, explaining why national panics as well as "winter and hard times," in the words of General William T. Sherman, helped attract men to recruiting depots. Jett was unusual in that he was from Virginia and the son of a professional: the majority of soldiers in the peacetime army were laborers who enlisted in northern cities. Immigrants continued to make up a significant portion of the military; one-half of new recruits between 1865 and 1874 were foreign-born, mostly Irish or

²⁹³ Quoted in Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (Oxford University Press, 1986), 329.

German, and over a third between 1880 and 1897 were foreigners.²⁹⁴ Corporal Emil

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Bode of the 16th Infantry described his compatriots in all their diversity:

We found men without the least knowledge of the English language who had enlisted after unsuccessful attempts to obtain work. [One] said he wanted to join 'soldier boys,' a very dubious honor, another had to leave on account of a girl. We found men of intellect and stupidity, sons of congressmen and sons of farmers, rich and poor, men who are willing to work and can not find it in civil life, men who are looking for work and hope that they never may find any: gamblers, thieves, cutthroats, drunkards, men who were formerly commissioned officers.

If Bode was correct that the regular army included "sons of congressmen and sons of farmers," there were certainly more of the latter than the former. Still, he conveyed the great range of human emotions and motivations that brought men to the army. Himself a German immigrant, Bode described this colorful patchwork of humanity with uncommon sympathy. He believed that the "combination and variety of stock" in the American military "had produced some of the best soldiers on the frontier."²⁹⁵ Others were not so sure.

Most soldiers were accustomed to hard labor before they enlisted, and they soon discovered that soldiering also entailed a great deal of manual or common labor. This realization did not sit well with many enlistees. Jett recalled that he "had often dreamed both in my wakeful and in my sleeping moments of the great West and had a great desire to 'go west,' as Horace Greeley had advised young men to do." In contrast to that idealized West of opportunity, however, men like Jett encountered the reality of demanding labor under western skies. His declaration that he was "a slave in Uncle Sam's service" was an indictment of the army's harsh labor regime. Indeed, soldiers

²⁹⁴ Coffman, *Old Army*, 329-331; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 22.

²⁹⁵ Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*, 124.

spent much of their time building and repairing barracks, clearing land for roads, and digging ditches. When troops returned west after the Civil War, they encountered forts badly in need of repair. New threats from hostile Native Americans and Mexican cattle-thieves along the border also required the construction of entirely new posts. Soldiers became the construction workers of the West. Complaints about the military's labor regime were ubiquitous, and not only from deserters. "'Government workhouse,' as a descriptive term for an army post, was in common use among soldiers of the Indian Wars period," according to Don Rickey.²⁹⁶

The contrast between soldiers' expectations and the reality of military labor is readily apparent in the men's complaints about the army's labor regime. Although most soldiers expressed their dissatisfaction through small, individual acts – perhaps in letters home or by grumbling about a superior officer – others voiced their objections in more organized ways. For example, in 1878 a group of unnamed soldiers penned an extraordinary petition to Senator (and former Union Army general) Ambrose Burnside, who was then attempting to craft legislation that would thoroughly reorganize the army. They wrote, "The undersigned, enlisted soldiers, desire to represent that the Army is now much too small to perform the services required of it, that it is not a '*standing army*' but a *traveling, working, fighting, and suffering army*." Much of this "suffering" was due to the fact that soldiers had no idea what lay in store for them when they enlisted in the army. The petitioners sought to highlight the extreme contrast between expectations and reality. "We first enlisted with the usual ideas of the life of a soldier; willing and anxious to

²⁹⁶ Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, 94.

brave its dangers, hardships, and fatigues,” they insisted. They discovered, instead of
adventure,

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we are obliged to perform all kinds of labor, such as all the operations of building quarters, stables, storehouses, bridges, roads, and telegraph-lines; involving logging, lumbering, quarrying, adobe and brick making, lime-burning, mason-work, plastering, carpentering, painting, &c. We are also put at teaming, repairing wagons, harness, &c., blacksmithing, and sometimes wood-chopping and hay-making.

This “working” army stood in sharp contrast to the image of the brave frontier army facing “wild Indians.” In addition to such chores, soldiers also confronted additional perils above and beyond what ordinary laborers encountered. The petitioners continued, “Besides all this labor, we have to go on campaigns and long marches, and fight Indians, risking our lives and health from bullets, accidents, malaria, exposure, and fatigue.” Here were two sides of life as an enlisted man: They not only risked life and limb from hostile enemies, disease, and the elements, but they also endured a regime of arduous labor that had little to do with strictly military duties.²⁹⁷

The petitioners did not object necessarily to the work itself, but they wanted fair pay. They asserted, “the pay is now certainly no more than a reasonable compensation for a soldier, and much less than would command men to perform our duties if they knew beforehand what they would encounter.” The men insisted that the variety of work they carried out was done “all for wages much less than those current in the regions where we serve, for anything like the same labor.” Here the petitioners defined their service as soldiers as *labor*, drawing an explicit parallel between the work of soldiering and “the same labor” they might be expected to do in a variety of other occupations. Rejecting an

²⁹⁷ Senate Report No. 555, 45th Cong., 3d sess., Vol. 1, 1879, Serial 1837. Burnside report on reorganization of the army, 488. Italics in original.

understanding of martial labor as somehow exceptional, these enlisted men instead saw their work as comparable to many other jobs. Most soldiers were stationed in the West, where labor was scarce and wages famously high – a situation often credited with enticing soldiers from their posts and contributing to high rates of desertion. Even Sherman recognized that soldiers were not paid wages commensurate with civilians. In 1883, he “urged the army to adopt a flexible extra duty pay system which would raise or lower the amount according to a comparable workers’ wages in particular localities.” Congress rejected Sherman’s proposal, and soldiers continued to earn less than laborers in most sections of the country where they were stationed.²⁹⁸ As a result, the petitioners were not alone in protesting their inadequate pay. Don Rickey writes, “Soldiers were likely to...chant such songs as the one that went ‘A dollar a day is damn poor pay, but thirteen a month is less!’”²⁹⁹

Burnside commented on only one aspect of the petition he received: the topic of pay. “I know of no subject of discontent in the service felt to be so oppressive by the soldier, as the cutting off of extra duty pay,” wrote the senator. “The complaint that enlisted men are made to do everything (frequently) *but* military duty would be covered so far as their claims are concerned, by extra pay.” Burnside believed that most of soldiers’ grievances had to do with issues of compensation. They lamented their transformation into laborers, but might be more comfortable with their extra-duty assignments if their labor was acknowledged and appreciated with just wages. The fact that the army did issue extra pay for certain special services, such as blacksmithing,

²⁹⁸ Coffman, *Old Army*, 348.

²⁹⁹ Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, 96.

underlined the fact that they performed labor that could be sold on a market for higher wages than they received as soldiers. Burnside, however, overlooked the fact that only specific tasks were classified as “extra duty,” while soldiers felt like they deserved higher wages for all the labor they were expected to perform. 160

This unusual petition arrived on Senator Burnside’s desk at a particularly volatile moment in the history of global capitalism. The Panic of 1873 had led to a long depression in the United States and Europe, and conflicts between labor and capital grew more frequent and violent. When the soldiers wrote Burnside, the United States had just experienced one of the worst labor confrontations in memory. The Great Railroad Strike, which began in West Virginia, swept across the eastern seaboard and ultimately engulfed workers deep in the Midwest. Eighty-thousand railroad workers and up to half a million workers in other industries took part.³⁰⁰ In the summer and fall of 1877, army officers worked closely with railroad and mining executives to end the strike. They commanded federal troops stationed in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri who were ordered to intimidate strikers and protect strikebreakers. The involvement of federal troops ultimately helped end the strike.³⁰¹

The soldiers petitioning the government felt their own exploitation as workers and linked their experiences to that of the broader American working population. They wrote, “We desire to say that we are mostly laboring men, that we sympathize with them as a class.” This sympathy between soldiers and “laboring men” evidently raised some potential problems for the soldiers; they went on to reassure the senator that they would

³⁰⁰ Foner, *Great Labor Uprising*, 225.

³⁰¹ Cooper, “The Army as Strikebreaker,” 183-187.

perform the duties required of them. They promised Burnside they would “be always ready and willing to put them down and to keep the peace between contending parties until reason can resume its sway.” The soldiers insisted they were law-abiding men who “believe in the ballot-box for the righting of wrongs” and were “opposed to rioting and mob violence.”³⁰² Even so, in a further expression of solidarity with their civilian counterparts, they cautioned Burnside that they would not abuse their fellow workers. Because of their sympathy with workers “as a class,” they told Burnside, “there is no danger of our being used to oppress them.”

Writing in the late 1870s, these enlisted men wanted Burnside to feel confident they could be counted on to defend law and order, even against other workers. In the present climate this meant they would not hesitate to escort “scabs” into the coal mines or beat back strikers on the Baltimore & Ohio. But like their counterparts in the broader working class, the soldiers also wanted to improve their working lives. Like workers struggling in other industries, the soldiers noted, “there is no eight-hour law for us.” Here, referring to a demand for an eight-hour work day long sought by the Knights of Labor, the soldiers tied their own grievances to the larger world of labor organizing. Given recent events, the petitioners, despite their reassurances, may have given Burnside pause. After all, soldiers were even more exploited than the average worker: they labored under more difficult circumstances, away from family and friends; and they were often paid less than other workers for the same job. By invoking the recent labor uprisings in an appeal about soldiers’ labor, the petitioners reminded the senator of the potentially high costs of alienating the army’s labor force.

³⁰² Burnside report, 488.

Relatively few soldiers received a hearing for their grievances at such high levels.¹⁶²

But those who did, like the Burnside petitioners, provide an instructive example of soldiers' perception of their own rights and the army's response to these expectations. In their letter to Burnside, soldiers made sure to profess their allegiance to democratic principles. The senator, by contrast, questioned their right to make such an entreaty. His response reflects a broader attitude toward the army and its ambivalent relationship to the nation. Burnside remarked that the "'town-meeting' form" of their petition could set "a dangerous precedent in the service." He continued, "Besides [the petition] treats of matters that the soldier should not be the judge of."³⁰³ Soldiers, on the other hand, apparently thought they should be able to judge a great many issues. In "Desertion and Some of its Causes!!!", a letter sent to the *Army and Navy Journal*, a reader calling himself "Jones" explained one of the reasons new recruits became dissatisfied with army life. "Recruits, on first coming to their companies, are also imbued with the idea of 'being a free American citizen,' allowed to do and decide for himself, that he can hold an indignation meeting and by a resolve decide what shall and shall not be done." But the actual conditions of army life soon disabused him of these notions. Jones continued, "In this he finds his mistake, that such meeting having for its object praise or censure are detrimental to good order and military discipline; he also learns that the commanding officer also gives the orders."³⁰⁴ The right to free assembly, one cherished by the "free American citizens" that green recruits assumed themselves to be, was easily confused for mutinous behavior in the army.

³⁰³ Senate Report No. 555, 481.

³⁰⁴ "Desertion and Some of Its Causes!!!", *ANJ*, August 3, 1889.

The freedoms to petition and assemble were not the only rights soldiers surrendered when they enlisted. The military also instituted an entirely different system of laws and courts. Not a few soldiers found themselves subject to this alternate justice system; an estimated 48 percent of soldiers were court-martialed up until the 1890s, when the figure reached a staggering 60 percent.³⁰⁵ General Sherman defended the army's "totally different system of jurisprudence" on the basis of the distinctive aims of civilian and military law. In a letter to General W. S. Hancock, published along with lengthy remarks on military law in 1880, Sherman wrote, "The object of civil law is to secure to every human being in a community all the liberty, security and happiness possible, consistent with the safety of all. The object of military law is to govern armies composed of strong men, so as to be capable of exercising the largest measure of force at the will of the nation."³⁰⁶ The army was not a democracy, and its legal system aimed not at individual liberty or happiness but national defense. If soldiers wondered if they forfeited some of their rights as citizens when they enlisted, the short answer was yes – and that was the way Sherman and the military brass meant for it to stay.

Soldiers, however, claimed the mantle of citizens when they challenged the army's labor regime. In this they were like their civilian counterparts in the labor movements of the 1870s and 1880s. The Knights of Labor, agrarian radicals, and their allies were also criticizing the burgeoning capitalist order on both political and economic grounds. William Forbath argues that Gilded Age labor activists felt that the time was ripe for a complete reorientation of the American economy in favor of workers. Hadn't

³⁰⁵ Coffman, *Old Army*, 377.

³⁰⁶ William Tecumseh Sherman, *Military Law* (New York: W.C. & F.P. Church, 1880), 130.

the Civil War and Reconstruction overthrown the formidable planter class and empowered the southern working class – African-American slaves – at the same time? The Knights and fellow-travelers likewise believed it was possible to rethink and reorganize the nation’s political economy, creating wealth through “ownership of productive property,” not so-called “wage slavery.” They believed theirs was a vision grounded in Jeffersonian republicanism and Constitutional principles.³⁰⁷ When soldiers petitioned Burnside, organized meetings to express grievances, or even deserted, they were not seeking to overthrow the military or the nation – far from it. But they were asserting their rights in an era when the balance of power between workers and employers was constantly at issue, and their struggles, narrow as they may have been, were part of a larger terrain of conflict in the nineteenth century over work and its rewards.

The fact that soldiers appealed for the rights of citizens but were often denied them suggests the need to rethink some longstanding claims about the association between military service and citizenship. Without doubt, the U.S. has promised a set of rights to its soldiers, assuring them that their service would be rewarded with inclusion in the body politic. According to Linda Kerber, “Military service has infused the concept of citizenship since its origins,” reaching back at least as far as the Greek city-states.³⁰⁸ This association became even stronger during the Civil War when the “Sable Arm” of the black soldier was invoked in arguments for black male enfranchisement. Frederick

³⁰⁷ William E. Forbath, “The Ambiguities of Free Labor: Labor and the Law in the Gilded Age,” *Wisconsin Law Review* (July/August 1985): 813-815.

³⁰⁸ Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 236.

Douglass optimistically declared, “Once let the black man get upon his person the brass 165
 letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in
 his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to
 citizenship.”³⁰⁹ Gender historians have critically examined this twinning of military
 service and citizenship because women, denied the obligation to participate in the armed
 forces, were likewise denied many of the rights of citizenship.³¹⁰ The struggle for black
 men’s enfranchisement was successful in part due to their participation in the Union
 Army. During peacetime, however, black soldiers’ continued service in the regular army
 did not lead to further gains in terms of political or social inclusion, even in spite of their
 unusually low rates of desertion.³¹¹ In fact, soldiers, both black and white, were not
 regarded as particularly special members of the polity in the post-Civil War period.

³⁰⁹ Frederick Douglass, “Address for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments,” [Philadelphia, July 6, 1863] in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 536.

³¹⁰ On the gendered implications of military service, see Kerber, *No Constitutional Right*, especially 236-252. On the “martial” and “marital” routes to emancipation, see Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 9 and passim; McCurry, “War, Gender and Emancipation in the Civil War South,” in William Blair and Karen Younger, eds., *Lincoln’s Proclamation: Race, Place and the Paradoxes of Emancipation* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Some scholars have recently begun to question slaves’ embrace of martial political inclusion. For the argument that slaves avoided conscription and articulated their hopes for freedom in terms of family, religion, and communal rebuilding rather than citizenship, see Abigail Cooper, “‘Lord, Until I Reach My Home’: Inside the Refugee Camps of the American Civil War,” PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2014.

³¹¹ Rates of desertion for black regiments were consistently low. This was often attributed to the fact that African-Americans faced dimmer economic and social prospects in civilian life than their white counterparts. See, for example, William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips, *The Black Regulars, 1866-1898* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 62-64. In 1889, the secretary of war praised the black regiments saying, “their record of service is excellent. They are neat, orderly, and obedient, are seldom brought before courts-martial, and rarely desert.” U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1889. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 51st Cong., 1st session, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 5. Nonetheless, black soldiers faced criticism and discrimination within the army, from civilians in the communities where they were stationed, and from the general public. The literature on black soldiers, which includes discussion of the discrimination they faced, is extensive. Helpful studies include Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974); William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Arlen L. Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); Dobak and Phillips, *Black Regulars*.

Scholars have highlighted the ways this linking of citizenship and military service marginalized certain groups – women and slaves – but they have been less attuned to the ways actual military service seemed to undercut the promises of citizenship.

Soldiers themselves questioned whether they enjoyed the rights guaranteed to citizens by the Constitution. They asserted their status as citizens, invoking it to demand better treatment and respect, but at times they also felt their standing as citizens was threatened by the army's disciplinary and labor regime. Barred from joining together to protest unjust conditions, they were subject to a host of special regulations and tried by military tribunals made up of officers, not juries of their peers. At the same time labor activists charged that wage labor stood contrary to the values of a republic based on citizenship, enlisted men were likewise finding the demands of their work incompatible with democratic principles.

Rather than being seen as valiant heroes like their wartime counterparts in the Union Army, “regulars” were regarded with suspicion by respectable society, associated more with crowded cities, immigrant hordes, and worthless drifters than with the American flag. Most soldiers were drawn from the working class and were assumed to share the vices imputed to that class. The *New York Sun* proclaimed that the army was “composed of bummers, loafers, and foreign paupers.”³¹² Soldiers themselves sometimes echoed such negative appraisals, such as the man who wrote the *Army and Navy Journal* to say, “We still get drunkards, tramps and runaways, with sometimes a liberal sprinkling of good men who ‘weather the storm’ and are ‘faithful to the end.’”³¹³ But another writer

³¹² Quoted in Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 22.

³¹³ “What Causes?” *ANJ*, October 20, 1888, 153.

for the *New York Times* took issue with such prevailing characterizations of the rank and 167
file. “The soldiers of the regular army are constantly written and talked about as if they
were the scum of creation.” He disagreed, insisting that “the men who carry the rifles are
not the shiftless, drunken roughs they are so often represented to be.”³¹⁴ But his was an
unorthodox view, and even in his dissent the journalist confirmed the widespread
assumption: immoral chancers were the norm and honest soldiers the exception in the US
army.

The bourgeois public’s interest in desertion reflected widespread anxieties over
labor radicalism, immigrants, and vice-infested cities in the Gilded Age. As a result, the
issue of desertion colored the large public discourse about all soldiers, any of whom
might be potential deserters. Deserters, one writer believed, came from the “floating
population of our large cities.”³¹⁵ In this classic Jeffersonian rendering, cities were
hotbeds of immorality. Army officers repeatedly urged the recruiting service to
concentrate on enlisting more young, wholesome men from the countryside. Colonel
Benjamin Grierson, in his report on desertions in the Department of Arizona for 1889,
advised, “Recruiting parties should be sent to towns in the interior of states where men
free from city vices can be found.”³¹⁶ Northern cities, however, remained prime
recruiting grounds because that was where large concentrations of men without work –
those most likely to enlist – could be found. Perhaps more intriguing, soldiers and would-

³¹⁴ “As to the Rank and File: Unjust Popular Notions of Regular Soldiers. Many Brave and Worthy Men Found in the Ranks--Honors Won and Not Received,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1889. Accessed 14 February 2014.

³¹⁵ “The Subject of Desertions,” *ANJ*, March 30, 1878, 542.

³¹⁶ *Annual Report of Desertions, Department of Arizona, 1889*, 6. MS3039, Box 4, Folder 221, Benjamin Henry Grierson Papers, Newberry Library.

be deserters were frequently characterized as drifters, part of the rudderless mass of men 168 who wandered aimlessly across the countryside. One writer to the *Army and Navy Journal* asked, “is there a vagabond in the country that has not at some time or other entertained some idea of enlisting in the Army?” These degenerates were a menace in civil life as well. He continued, “As citizens they fill up the jails and workhouses, and as soldiers they are forever in the guard-houses, and disgrace the uniform they wear and cast opprobrium upon the better class of soldiers.”³¹⁷ According to this view, prisoners, soldiers, and “vagabonds” were drawn from the same population; one was likely to be or become another. Such accounts did little to differentiate the steadfast, trustworthy soldiers from the deserters who plagued both military and civil society.

A preoccupation with “bummers,” “tramps,” “vagabonds,” and the “floating population” runs throughout descriptions of enlisted men. This accords with pervasive worries in the late-nineteenth century about the increasing mobility of working people in general. As Jackson Lears writes, this was the era of “the ‘tramp problem,’ which respectable commentators discussed with increasingly fretful urgency as the lurching business cycle repeatedly threw masses of men out of work, adding them to the army of casual laborers that took to the roadways every spring and fall in search of seasonal employment.”³¹⁸ Indeed, the unprecedented movement of people across the globe was one of the defining aspects of this period: Eric Hobsbawm called the nineteenth century “a gigantic machine for uprooting countrymen.”³¹⁹ People were also on the move *within*

³¹⁷ “The Dog Days on the Plains,” *ANJ*, September 17, 1870, 73.

³¹⁸ T. J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 75.

³¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 215.

the borders of the United States. The growth of industrial capitalism in American cities 169 demanded more bodies for its factories, but it was not only urban areas that drew workers. Factory hands needed to be fed. The dispossession of Native Americans brought millions of acres under intensive agricultural cultivation across the American West in the 1870s and 1880s. The agricultural cycle thus dictated the movements of thousands of men and women who picked, harvested, and logged from California to the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and beyond.³²⁰

Military enlistment and desertion were among the ways some workers responded to the economic fluctuations and crises so prevalent in the late-nineteenth century. Many high-ranking officers, including General Sherman and Philip H. Sheridan, suspected that men enlisted for the sole purpose of arranging free transportation to the West, and then deserted upon their arrival. Such theories were borne out by experience. The Board of Survey at Fort Stanton, New Mexico, charged with investigating the causes of desertion at its post, saw economic opportunity as the reason John Graham, a new recruit in the Thirteenth Infantry, left the service in 1883. The report stated, “the Board is of the opinion that he enlisted for the purpose of getting transportation to the mining regions of the West, expecting to desert after his arrival here, as he has done.”³²¹ Soldiers also deserted in response to seasonal economic prospects, inspiring the term “snowbirds” for men who enlisted in the fall and deserted in the spring when they found better-paying

³²⁰ A fascinating account of seasonal wage labor across industries is Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

³²¹ Fort Stanton, New Mexico, Boards of Survey, Jan 20, 1883-June 4, 1883; Feb. 14, 1883. RG 393, NA.

work as civilians.³²² The relationship between desertion, enlistment, and economic change underlined the fact that soldiers were, fundamentally, workers.

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By equating them with “vagabonds” and “tramps,” both officers and the general public denied soldiers the respect of worthy, productive men. Grouped together, soldiers, strikers, and the mass of floating men in search of work garnered the condescension of bourgeois opinion-makers. Even as the nation celebrated its Civil War veterans, it diminished the service of soldiers associated with the regular, peacetime army. As one enlisted man lamented in a letter to his former officer, “Do you realize how little the men who wear the uniform of a ‘regular’ are appreciated?”³²³ Unlike the valiant heroes of the late war, enlisted men were more like workers who went on strike and the mass of floating men in search of work; all were described as lazy and unsavory. Furthermore, all soldiers were potential deserters, runaways from their contracts and menaces to civil society. The regular army was indeed an army of workers, and as a result they experienced much of the contempt and suspicion that respectable society felt toward the working classes.

Soldiers’ Resistance, Workers’ Resistance

³²² Coffman, *Old Army*, 372.

³²³ Quoted in Coffman, *The Old Army*, 400. Coffman attributes the different treatment of regulars to several factors, including the belief that volunteers and not regulars had won the Civil War; the perception that soldiers were lazy and drunken; the larger percentage of immigrants and African-Americans that made up the regular army; and the belief that the army was costly. For a discussion of negative public perceptions of regular soldiers, in contrast to the respect accorded Civil War (volunteer) veterans, see Coffman, *The Old Army*, 400-404.

The literature on Civil War veterans is large. For a recent collection, see Larry M. Logue and Michael Barton, eds., *The Civil War Veteran: A Historical Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2007). Although much has been written about the celebration of veterans and its part in the post-war “reconciliation,” this literature does not deal with differences in popular perceptions or depictions of Civil War veterans and regulars in the peacetime army.

The experience of soldiers and workers was linked by more than popular discourse or the perception of outsiders. Soldiers' behavior also resembled that of workers in other industries, especially in the ways enlisted men joined together *and* acted individually to resist the army's labor regime. This resistance has usually been seen through a military lens and termed insubordination or desertion. But when the veneer of martial language is stripped away, such incidents reveal the ways soldiers pushed back against what they saw as unfair demands from officers or the army at large. By threatening to stop work and, most acutely, by deserting, soldiers tried to set limits on the exploitation of their labor. The unique restrictions of military life circumscribed soldiers' ability to resist, but like other workers in coercive labor arrangements, soldiers also found opportunities to undermine their overseers.

One such opportunity came to soldiers working at the Fort Davis pinery in September 1883. Several pineries existed to support the incessant building and repairing undertaken by soldiers in and around the fort in western Texas; these lumber camps moved when the supply of timber ran out at a particular site.³²⁴ In addition to work in the lumber mill, troops were also assigned there to build roads that connected the pinery to Fort Davis. Lieutenant C. R. Ward, commanding the "Camp at the Pinery" near Fort Davis, Texas, received a dispatch from his superiors at the central post: "it is reported that the men of the Infantry at your camp have stated that they were not sent out to the pinery to work on roads and that they would not do so." This sounded like the makings of what, in civilian life, might be called a strike, but in military parlance it was a potential

³²⁴ Loyd Uglow, *Standing in the Gap: Army Outposts, Picket Stations, and the Pacification of the Texas Frontier, 1866-1886* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2001), 168-169.

mutiny. The missive continued, “The Comdg Officer directs that you require all the men 172 of both Cavalry and Infantry to do the work designated in your orders, and that if any of the men refuse to work, to work them under guard.”³²⁵

The report of the infantry’s insubordination came at a time of change and upheaval at the pinery. Troop D of the African-American 10th Cavalry had been stationed there since April 1, and a detachment of white soldiers from Companies I and K, 16th Infantry, was sent to relieve them on August 30.³²⁶ Cooper’s letter notes that “men of the Infantry” were refusing to work on the roads, based on their understanding that they were not sent to the pinery for road-work. Road building in that part of western Texas, through the Davis Mountains, was arduous – “difficult and extremely tiresome,” in the words of one historian.³²⁷ Yet infantry regiments were typically assigned to fatigue duties such as road-building more often than the cavalry. It is unclear from the official correspondence whether white soldiers objected to working alongside black soldiers or simply objected to the grueling road assignment. Companies I and K of the 16th Infantry had only recently arrived at Fort Davis in May 1882, so this would have been their first introduction to the regime of labor at the pinery.³²⁸

Not only was the guard changing at the pinery, but the 10th Cavalry soldiers were in the process of completely relocating the lumber mill due to “the scarcity of water and timber at the present location of the mill.” Cooper sent word on August 21 that the men

³²⁵ Charles S. Cooper to C.R. Ward, September 3, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA, Washington, D.C.

³²⁶ Fort Davis Post Returns, July 1883 and August 1883, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M617, Roll 298), Ancestry.com, accessed 17 July 2013.

³²⁷ Uglow, *Standing in the Gap*, 169.

³²⁸ Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, May 1882, RG 94, NA (Microfilm M665, Roll 176), Ancestry.com, accessed 17 July 2013.

of Troop D were instructed to move the mill and “property and material pertaining thereto to the vicinity of the permanent spring at the head of Limpia Creek.” The commanding officer was informed that the men should move all the material and quarters they presently occupied to the new mill site for the “construction of buildings &c at the new camp, and the remainder piled at a convenient point to this post hereafter.”³²⁹ Two days later Cooper wrote again clarifying his orders. “It is intended that you move the mill engine and everything pertaining thereto from your present camp to the sight [sic] designated in letter of instructions of the 21st inst,” he wrote. “It is not intended that your troop build [quarters] for Lieut Woodbury’s command, or make a new road from your permanent camp to the new one except what is necessary to get the mill into position if you have time to do so.”³³⁰ Colonel Benjamin Grierson, commander of Fort Davis, was anxious to get the lumber operation moving again, but he simply wanted the 10th Cavalry soldiers to move the mill engine and materials; he most likely already anticipated sending the infantry detachment to relieve the Troop D cavalry men who had been stationed at the pinery for close to five months.

This was not the last alarming news Grierson would hear about the pinery. On the same day he wrote Ward about the infantry’s recalcitrance, he also sent word to the commanding officer at the pinery, reminding him that the men were supposed to be constantly at work. “The Comdg Officer directs me to inform you that all the Officers and men of your command will be required to continue the work daily at the Pinery until

³²⁹ Charles L. Cooper to Commanding Officer, Camp at the Pinery, August 21, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

³³⁰ Charles L. Cooper to Commanding Officer, Camp at the Pinery, August 23, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

the mill is established, and a road completed thereto, and that neither officers, nor men of
your command, (except details of enlisted men sent in for supplies) will absent
themselves from camp or the work designated without authority from the Comdg Officer
of this Post.”³³¹ The new lumber mill and the road leading to it required soldiers’
undivided attention. But apparently men had been taking advantage of the pinery’s
distance from the main post and slipping away from their assignment. Grierson sent an
additional company of men under Lt. Woodberry to help speed along the work and
potentially to keep a closer eye on the command.

The infantrymen’s attempted strike could not have come at a worse time as far as
Grierson was concerned. In his early letter directing that the mill be moved, Lt. Cooper
wrote that Fort Davis was “greatly in need of lumber and material for the water tanks and
for building purposes.”³³² His tone became more dire in light of the soldiers’
insubordination. He reminded Lt. Ward that “the completion of the road, and
establishment of the mill as directed must be completed with the least possible delay” and
“nothing must interfere with the early completion of the work.”³³³ In fact the urgency of
the work demanded more men to stay at the pinery than anticipated, and Grierson ordered
the 10th Cavalry soldiers to remain at the subpost. On September 1, Cooper sent word
that the men of Troop D were to “remain a few days longer at the Pinery camp to
complete the work of removing the engine and repairing the road.”³³⁴ For the first week
of September, both African-American soldiers from the 10th Cavalry and two companies

³³¹ Charles L. Cooper to C.R. Ward, September 3, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

³³² Charles S. Cooper to Commanding Officer, Camp at the Pinery, August 23, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

³³³ Charles L. Cooper to C.R. Ward, September 3, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

³³⁴ Charles L. Cooper to T.R. Woodburry, September 1, 1883, Letters Sent, Fort Davis, Texas, RG 393, NA.

of white soldiers from the 16th Infantry occupied the pinery. Finally, after over five months of labor at the pinery, fifty-nine men and their commanding officer of 10th Cavalry returned to Fort Davis on September 10, but the 16th Infantry remained.

Court-martial records are filled with the testimony of soldiers who became resentful of the army's strict military and disciplinary measures. One deserter in 1883 explained his decision to run away by saying that "he had enlisted to be a soldier and not a slave."³³⁵ Edward Carbery, a private in the 8th Infantry stationed at Fort Brown, Texas, believed he was "imposed upon by being made to perform the duties of Company Blacksmith without in return receiving the pay of that grade." Moreover, "in matters pertaining to my work I was constantly interfered with by the 1st Sergeant." He was "Harassed to such a degree" that he took to drinking. Carbery was a skilled soldier and he felt entitled to "extra duty pay" for the special services he provided the government. The combination of harassment, the injustice of being denied the extra pay due him, and the influence of "intoxicating liquors" led him to desert on May 16, 1880. Five days later, he was arrested and placed in the guard-house. Carbery's trial was speedy. He pled guilty to desertion and received what was, by 1880, the standard sentence: dishonorable discharge; forfeiture of all pay due him; and confinement "at hard labor" for two years. On July 12, 1880, Fort Leavenworth Military Prison was designated as the place of Carbery's confinement, but he did not reach Leavenworth until December 20. Further correspondence related to Carbery's case reveals that he was held in a "dark cell" at Fort Brown for the intervening five months before his transfer to the military prison at

³³⁵ Quoted in Robert Wooster, "The Frontier Army and the Occupation of the West, 1865-1900," *Armed Diplomacy: Two Centuries of American Campaigning* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press,) 69.

Leavenworth. Mitigating circumstances – this confinement as well as the fact that the first-sergeant in question in the case had since been suspected of embezzlement – led to his early release, approximately a year before the expiration of his sentence.³³⁶

Soldiers unhappy with the army's labor demands had few alternatives. In some cases, they staged work stoppages or slow-downs, as in the case of the 11th Infantry men assigned to the Fort Davis pinery. In that case, soldiers joined together to protest a work assignment they believed was unjust. But Private Carbery's response was probably much more common: like other marginalized workers, soldiers usually expressed their unhappiness individually rather than collectively. The predominant expression of soldiers' dissatisfaction was quitting, or in the army's vocabulary, deserting. Between 1867 and 1891, one-third of new recruits and one in seven of all enlisted men deserted the army.³³⁷ The desertion epidemic reflected the intensity of discontent among regular soldiers. In this way, even though desertion was a fundamentally individual act, it registered at a high level, attracting the attention of top military commanders as well as the general public in the late-nineteenth century.

Desertion was attributed to a variety of factors. The boredom and monotony of army life, the poor character of recruits, and low pay and meager rations were often mentioned in discussions of the phenomenon. But another factor inevitability ranked high in explanations of desertion: the army's labor regime. The military brass agreed that manual labor was a leading cause of desertion among enlisted men. In 1870, Colonel J. J.

³³⁶ Court-martial of Private Edward Carbery, 8th Cavalry, QQ 1932, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General, Record Group (RG) 153, NA.

³³⁷ John Whiteclay Chambers, "Desertion," in *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford University Press, 2000). Accessed online, 14 August 2013.

Reynolds of the 25th Infantry, then commanding the Department of Texas, wrote in his 177 annual report, “In my opinion many desertions are caused by the varied calls made upon our soldiers for labor in getting out lumber, quarrying stone, marking adobes, running saw-mills, burning brick and lime, driving wagons, &c, &c, which are not in their engagement when they enlist, and which, in fact, unfit them for soldiers.”³³⁸ While not endorsing desertion, Reynolds made it clear that not only did such manual labor lead to desertions, but it was also bad military policy, detracting from drilling and training and weakening the nation’s military preparedness. In 1877, Major General John Pope wrote in his annual report to the Secretary of War about the heavy demands for labor placed on troops in the Department of the Missouri. He lamented the fact that soldiers spent so much of their time building, repairing, hauling, and chopping that posts were, essentially, “garrisoned by enlisted laborers rather than soldiers.” Pope believed this transformation of the soldier into a laborer was deleterious for the army as a whole. “It is impossible to combine the soldier and the laborer or mechanic with good results to either. The work is, of course, unsatisfactorily done, and the discipline and condition of the troops suffer in an even greater degree,” Pope wrote.³³⁹

Even General Sherman echoed such cautionary notes. He agreed that soldiers spent “a great part of their time as laborers on public buildings, roads, and other work which disqualifies them as soldiers, besides preventing them from scouting the frontier as much as would otherwise be the case.” Sherman acknowledged,

³³⁸ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1870. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 41st Cong., 3d session, Vol. 2, Pt. 1 (serial 1446), 41.

³³⁹ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1877. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 45th Cong., 2d session, Vol. 2, (serial 1794), 67.

as a matter of course, soldiers must labor in taking care of themselves and of their necessary supplies, but to build permanent works or roads in which they have but a partial interest, is a kind of labor that ought not to be imposed on our reduced establishment. I would advise the Secretary of War to prescribe some plain rule, drawing a clear distinction between these two kinds of labor, and to publish it to the Army in orders or regulations, so that it would enter into the contract of enlistment, and soldiers would not, as they frequently do, plead this cause in justification of desertion.³⁴⁰

Sherman admitted that a certain amount of manual labor had always fallen to soldiers throughout history; this included the cooking, cleaning, and chopping wood that must be done to sustain troops. But he also recognized that the labor now assigned to soldiers extended far beyond such chores. Building telegraph lines, guarding railroad crews, and other work “in which they [had] but a partial interest” caused particular discontent among soldiers. In the post-Civil War era, the army was engaged in major infrastructural projects, and their bearing upon national defense was not always clear, making it difficult for soldiers to understand why they spent more time using the proverbial picks and shovels rather than guns.

Desertion was such a persistent and serious problem that it attracted attention from the broader public. A rash of articles commenting on the causes of desertion appeared in major national newspapers between 1888 and 1890, leading up to the passage of “An Act to prevent desertions, and for other purposes” on June 16, 1890.³⁴¹ Several newspapers treated the causes of desertion as obvious, a reasonable response to the conditions of soldiers’ labor. A *New York Times* reporter remarked, “Of course, so long as men are detailed to build quarters, wagon roads, telegraph lines, and such work on a

³⁴⁰ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1870, 5.

³⁴¹ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1890. House Ex. Doc. 1, Pt. 2, 51st Cong., 2d session, Vol. 1, 9.

commissary ration discontent and desertion will be rife.”³⁴² Many newspapers claimed 179 the wisdom of army insiders in an effort to lend credibility to their diagnoses of the problem without naming specific individuals. In 1889, the *Los Angeles Times* printed a report from “a correspondent, who claims 20 years’ experience in the regular army.” This correspondent insisted that the “large amount of menial labor which soldiers are compelled to perform around officers’ quarters” explained the high rates of desertion. “Men do not enter the army to become laborers, but soldiers,” the informant explained.³⁴³ Another insider provided the *New York Times* with a rationalization for desertion grounded in the political economy of the West. In a piece entitled “Uncle Sam’s Deserters,” a writer claiming to be an army officer described the relative pay of soldiers stationed near mining districts “where labor commands extraordinary wages.” According to this writer, the soldier simply recognized the superior wages he could command as a civilian and made the rational economic calculation to desert. “A soldier often finds himself at the post working as a laborer, teamster, blacksmith, or carpenter, when a few miles distant men, no better workmen than he, are being similarly employed at from \$2 to \$4 per day,” the correspondent wrote. “It is strange that the soldier rebels?”³⁴⁴

Another sergeant, stationed at a recruiting depot, argued that the enlistment period needed to be shortened if soldiers were to be made into common laborers. He noted that “men who enlisted for soldiers object to being made mere day laborers, and next that the term of enlistment is too long...if he is put to making roads, digging ditches, and building

³⁴² “As to the Rank and File: Unjust Popular Notions of Regular Soldiers. Many Brave and Worthy Men Found in the Ranks--Honors Won and Not Received,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1889. Accessed 14 February 2014.

³⁴³ “The Cause of Desertion,” *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, August 16, 1889. Accessed 14 February 2014.

³⁴⁴ “Uncle Sam’s Deserters,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1888. Accessed 14 February 2014.

houses instead of soldiering, he would be willing to stand it three years, where five seems 180
more than he can endure.” Like others before him, this non-commissioned officer compared the plight of the soldier to that of a civilian worker and found it lacking. “There’s too much work besides soldiering in the Army. If men want to make roads and build houses and bridges, and work at shoe making and other trades they can stay in civil life and have more liberty,” he told the *Washington Post*.³⁴⁵ The idea of a shorter enlistment contract had been gaining traction within the army for some time, and the option to leave the army after three years was one of the recommendations finally incorporated into the 1890 legislation.

A cacophony of voices added their specific and sometimes eccentric two cents to the national conversation around desertion. “The causes of desertion” became a regular feature of articles, editorials, and letters in the *Army and Navy Journal*, the popular weekly periodical dedicated to all things military. One reader calling himself “Final” wrote the journal in 1875, “I have just been told that the subject has been completely exhausted, that ‘Desertion, its causes and its remedies,’ as material for speculation, has no more vitality than the average bean soup of the company mess; in short, that it has been literally written to death.” Apparently rumors of the topic’s death were greatly exaggerated because desertion, speculation about its causes, and prescriptions for its alleviation continued to pour into the journal, reflecting widespread preoccupation with the issue into the 1890s. As the “Indian Wars” drew to a close, one private wrote to the *Army and Navy Journal* in 1889, “I do not want to thrash old straw over about the manual

³⁴⁵ “Why Army Boys Desert: Charms and Drawbacks in the Life of an Enlisted Man...” *The Washington Post* (1877-1922). January 12, 1890, sec. General. Accessed 14 February 2014.

labor the soldier is compelled to perform, outside of his military duty.”³⁴⁶ “Old straw” or 181
not, the “labor problem” within the army remained severe.

Secretaries of war, generals, and judge-advocates were forced to reckon with the galling phenomenon of desertion. Yet despite the attention lavished on the subject, the army struggled to stem the tide of desertions throughout this period. Officers like Sherman, Pope, and Reynolds believed that reforming the army and lessening the amount of manual labor soldiers were forced to undertake would improve morale and reduce the number of desertions. The army, however, faced declining budget appropriations throughout the post-war period and was not in a position to make the type of structural changes necessary to reduce the labor demands on soldiers, such as hiring civilians. Still, the army attempted a variety of reforms to alleviate the problem, not always to great effect. When Congress slashed wages in 1871, rolling them back to the 1861 levels, desertions spiked. Approximately one-third of the army deserted that year and again in the next.³⁴⁷ In 1872, Congress responded by modifying the pay structure to encourage “longevity.” It passed legislation that increased soldiers’ pay by one dollar per month in the third year of enlistment, two dollars in the fourth year, and three dollars in the fifth year. The army retained the additional pay at four percent interest, which was due the soldier only if he completed his entire five-year enlistment and was discharged honorably.³⁴⁸ Desertion, however, continued to plague the army. Congressional action in 1890 gave soldiers the opportunity to purchase their discharge early for the first time. After serving three years, enlisted men could apply for a discharge, giving them “a legal

³⁴⁶ “A Private’s Idea,” *ANJ*, September 14, 1889.

³⁴⁷ Coffman, *Old Army*, 346.

³⁴⁸ Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, 127.

method of leaving the army two years prior to the expiration of an enlistment.”³⁴⁹ These 182 changes came slowly, but soldiers forced them on an intransigent military by the sheer number of desertions. While these changes may have helped some soldiers, they did not eliminate the problem. In 1905, the secretary of war called desertion a “most persistent evil.” He admitted that “so far no very effective results have been attained” in eradicating it, and he was not optimistic about the prospects for doing so in the future.³⁵⁰

The phenomenon of desertion points to two related aspects of the army’s labor regime that scholars have overlooked. First, desertion constituted enlisted men’s chief means of protest against the conditions of army life, especially its labor regime. Desertion, in this sense, represents a particular type of workers’ resistance. The grievances expressed by deserters as well as the response of army leaders allow us to sketch the contours of an ongoing negotiation between those who carried out the labor of soldiering and those who commanded them. Second, and more broadly, desertion highlights the coercive nature of military labor. When compared to evolving notions of “free labor” in the late-nineteenth century, soldiering more closely resembled other coercive labor arrangements such as convict and contract labor. The rest of the chapter explores the place of military labor in the larger context of debates over the meaning of free and unfree labor in the post-Civil War era.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, 144.

³⁵⁰ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Cong., 1st session, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, 11-12.

³⁵¹ Paul Foos acknowledges the ways military labor and “free labor” were diverging in the antebellum period. He is also attentive to the importance of desertion as a way soldiers registered their dissent with the army. I have come to many of the same conclusions about the significance of desertion in understanding the unfree nature of military labor independently of Foos, whose work I only encountered after writing this chapter. His contributions are particularly valuable for understanding the Mexican War and the regular

Comparing the terms of soldiers' labor to the expectations about "free labor" in civilian life reveals that military labor did not measure up to popular and legal understandings of "free labor," which had evolved to exclude specific performance, physical punishments, and imprisonment for breaches of contract.³⁵² Outside of the army, workers could not be held to jobs even if they agreed in a contract to a certain length of service. Furthermore, ordinary workers, unlike soldiers, could not be imprisoned if they quit their jobs. Legal historian Robert J. Steinfeld writes, "After the 1830s, penal sanctions played no role in the lives of adult white wage or contract workers in the United States. Indeed, in many circles, the idea of penal sanctions to enforce labor contracts became unimaginable because they were thought to transform ordinary labor contracts into contracts of slavery." The "significant exception" to this statement, according to Steinfeld, were merchant seamen, although he also noted that "People of color were subjected to penal sanctions for labor contract breaches."³⁵³ Yet there was another "significant exception" that Steinfeld overlooks: soldiers.

Non-pecuniary penalties – off-limits for the majority of civilian workers – continued to be used against soldiers. Deserters, after all, were simply those workers who exited the service prior to the end of their five-year enlistment contract. In the absence of the option to simply quit a job – an avenue available to all "free workers" by the end of

army in the antebellum period. See Paul Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict during the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁵² Specific performance is a court order to carry out the terms of a contract. See "Specific Performance," http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/specific_performance, accessed February 25, 2014. See Robert J. Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-2.

³⁵³ Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor*, 254.

the nineteenth century – soldiers were left with the alternative of desertion. When soldiers deserted, they were registering their opposition to the army’s demands on their labor in the way indentured servants and slaves had from time immemorial – by running away. If they did desert, the range of punishments available to the state to compel their labor extended far beyond those afforded to other employers after 1865. As Steinfeld explains, most American workers (and seemingly all white workers) would have faced, at most, wage forfeiture in the same situation. But soldiers were subject to prison terms (the standard sentence was two years throughout this period) and wage garnishment. The army abolished flogging in 1861, and branding – a typical military punishment – came under fire in the 1870s. In the course of debates over the establishment of a military prison, James Garfield, a representative from Ohio and future president, raised the issue of punishments within the army, and representative John Coburn of Indiana, a former Union Army officer, spoke of “the abominable cruelties occasionally inflicted upon soldiers by sentences of court-martial or by orders of Army officers.”³⁵⁴ The next month Congress made it “illegal to brand, mark, or tattoo on the body of any soldier by sentence of court-martial.”³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, other physical reprimands continued. Edward Coffman writes, “[Officers] strung up soldiers by their thumbs, forced them to carry logs or heavy weights and march about for hours, or spread-eagled them with hands and feet tied to the ground or to a caisson wheel.”³⁵⁶ Deserters also received sentences that included head

³⁵⁴ 42nd Congress 2nd Session *Cong. Globe*, 3165 (1872).

³⁵⁵ 42nd Congress 2nd Session *Cong. Globe* 775 (1872), appendix. Branding did not entirely fall out of favor, despite Congressional action. In 1884, the inspector-general of the army advocated reinstating branding as a powerful deterrent against desertion. See U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1884, 89.

³⁵⁶ Coffman, *Old Army*, 376.

shaving. Such penalties stand in sharp contrast to the contract remedies available to civilian employers.

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Soldiers were fully aware of the gulf separating the terms of their labor from their comrades in civil society. After all, the new recruit William Bladen Jett who enlisted in Baltimore in 1881 called himself “a slave in Uncle Sam’s service.”³⁵⁷ What did it mean to be a slave in post-Civil War America? The metaphor Jett reached for to describe his experience in the army – enslavement – was not accidental. While his situation differed from that of an enslaved person in fundamental ways, his word choice was part of a potent discourse about the ambiguity of “free labor” and the persistence of coercion in the nineteenth century. During the 1830s and 1840s, “white slavery” became a prevailing, though shifting and unstable, image for wage-earners to evoke their powerlessness within the emerging capitalist order.³⁵⁸ Even after the destruction of slavery in the South, labor activists continued to compare the plight of the wage-earner to that of the slave. In demonstrations throughout the 1870s and 1880s, workers embraced the term “wage slavery” as a badge and symbol of their degradation. Like the army corporal Jett, a member of the Knights of Labor testified before a Senate committee in 1884, “The working people feel they are under a system of forced slavery.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Walker, “Reluctant Corporal,” 4.

³⁵⁸ David R. Roediger, in a thorough treatment of the use of the term “slavery” by white workers in the antebellum era, has emphasized its instability as a metaphor. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999), chapter 4. See also Gunther Peck, “Feminizing White Slavery in the United States: Marcus Braun and the Transnational Traffic in White Bodies, 1890-1910,” in *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233, for a brief, useful discussion of how the term “white slavery” was criticized by antislavery activists and leftists throughout the nineteenth century.

³⁵⁹ See Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 82-87, for use of “wage slavery” in labor discourse; Knight testimony quoted in Stanley, 84.

In the antebellum U.S., southern chattel slavery stood as the convenient opposite 186 to free labor. But in the wake of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, slavery no longer represented free labor's opposite, leaving an ideological and political void at exactly the time when conflicts between labor and capital were reaching a fever-pitch. As both Amy Dru Stanley and Gunther Peck have pointed out, the era of slave emancipation coincided with the expansion and intensification of industrial capitalism in the U.S. "The anxieties and dilemmas produced by North America's rapid industrial and urban growth were profound and enduring," Peck writes. "The Thirteenth Amendment may have officially ended all forms of slavery and coercive labor in the United States, but it did little to secure the precise meaning of wage labor for growing numbers of newly dependent wage earners."³⁶⁰

There was never a single, monolithic definition of free labor; instead, it was a dynamic and malleable ideology.³⁶¹ In practice, defining "free labor" meant setting limits on the means of coercion available to employers. In the decades after the Civil War, these efforts often sparked violent confrontations between those who bought and those who sold labor. Not only in the U.S., but around the world, workers and capitalists were waging war over questions of power and rights. The 1870s were marked by the fiercest of

³⁶⁰ Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 23. See also Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*.

³⁶¹ Here I follow Gunther Peck when he writes, "I use the term free labor to describe the ideologies that people used to make sense of the varied obligations and coercions of wage work." Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 7. Robert J. Steinfeld's work also makes clear that "free labor" ideology was mutually imbricated with the law; legal decisions informed popular understandings of what constituted free labor, while popular social movements in turn influenced the courts. See Robert J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

such confrontations to date.³⁶² In this context, the meaning of “contract” became an ideological battleground. Stanley writes, “In the age of slave emancipation contract became a dominant metaphor for social relations and the very symbol of freedom.”³⁶³

Workers, however, began to question whether contracts truly guaranteed them their liberty. Economists, jurists, and the clergy argued that contracts made labor “free,” while spokesmen for the growing labor movement charged that contracts transformed workers into “wage slaves.”³⁶⁴ Although Enlightenment-inspired thinkers presumed that two parties entered a contract on equal footing of their own volition, in practice contracts often masked vast asymmetries of power. The marriage contract, as Stanley’s work shows, symbolized the “fundamental freedom denied to slaves,” but it also perpetuated the continual subjugation of women to their husbands. Labor contracts did not necessarily grant workers the type of freedom they sought either. The commodification of labor and the absence of any sense of “mutuality” between labor and capital underscored the basic antagonism at the heart of the contract relation.

Military labor was both exceptional, diverging from accepted standards of “free labor” in the late-nineteenth century, and part of a broader landscape of coercive labor relations. Yet military labor is seldom compared to other types of unfree or coerced labor.

³⁶² For an account of European working classes, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (London: Abacus, 1987), 112-141. For a brief overview of the American situation, see Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 79-91. Classic studies of the labor movement in the U.S. in this period include David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Leon Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

³⁶³ Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, x.

³⁶⁴ Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, esp. 82-97. See also Forbath, “The Ambiguities of Free Labor”: 767-817.

The special respect accorded patriotic “service” has prevented a comparison between military labor and other forms of exploitation such as debt peonage or “coolieism,” both of which have attracted considerable attention from historians. The assumption that soldiering is unique – a patriotic vocation rather than a job, service to one’s country rather than servitude – was profoundly entrenched in popular and legal attitudes. It remains so today, explaining why contemporary scholars rarely acknowledge that soldiers were (and are) workers. The exception among historians is Peter Way, who has argued that soldiers in the eighteenth-century British army must be understood as “war workers.” Drawing on Robert J. Steinfeld’s insights about a spectrum of unfree labor, Way emphasizes the “unfreedom” enjoyed by British soldiers and asserts that soldiers had much in common with indentured servants. Way writes, “As workers in the war industry, [soldiers] were regimented and rendered unfree for the duration of their enlistment, subordinated as laborers, and subjected to a cruel work discipline, their alienated labor producing value by accumulating land and subordinating others.”³⁶⁵ In their own time, soldiers’ complaints that they were “slaves” or otherwise exploited were dismissed as the grumbles of the lazy and unpatriotic. By recognizing that soldiers were in fact workers, it becomes possible to see how the terms of their labor diverged from acceptable standards in civil society and to understand their grievances as more than the superficial complaints of unhappy young men.

³⁶⁵ Peter Way builds on the insight that soldiers were workers to explore the role of the military in both the expansion of capitalism and the construction of a British empire in the eighteenth century. See Way, “‘black service... white money’”, 74. Military historians, on the other hand, have long recognized the ubiquity of manual labor to the lives of enlisted men, but they have not related this labor to larger questions of political economy in the nineteenth century. For another non-military historian who concentrates on the army, see Lahti, *Cultural Construction of Empire*.

Soldiers, like their counterparts in the labor movement, tested the limits of common understandings of free labor. Given the centrality of contract to labor conflicts at this time, it is not surprising that the meaning of the enlistment contract – the basis for soldiers’ relationship with the state – was a prominent terrain of conflict. Edward Coffman notes that a “lack of understanding of the difference between the enlistment oath and an ordinary job contract” was often cited as a primary reason for desertion.³⁶⁶ A reporter for the *New York Times* wrote in 1888, “In many cases it is difficult to instill in the minds of recruits that the crime of desertion is anything more than a breach of contract. From a military point of view it is regarded as a heinous offense.”³⁶⁷ John W. Atherton, a private in the 5th Cavalry, claimed such confusion when he faced a military court. In April 1872, Atherton was tried for desertion and violation of the 22nd Article of War, which prohibited deserters from reenlisting in the army. At his court-martial at Camp McDowell, Arizona Territory, Atherton pled guilty to the charges leveled against him, but in a written statement he asked for leniency. He explained that “the cause of my act of desertion was the reduction of the pay of the army, by which I was led to believe, that the Government having broken their contract with me I was not forced to fulfill mine.”³⁶⁸ Atherton had agreed to contract his labor to the government for a certain amount of money, and when the government cut wages and failed to fulfill the terms of that agreement, he felt the contract was nullified, enabling him to leave the service. But if he thought the soldier’s contract was like any other labor contract, he was sorely mistaken. When he faced court-martial, Atherton implored the officers to show mercy to

³⁶⁶ Coffman, *Old Army*, 371.

³⁶⁷ “Uncle Sam’s Deserters,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1888. Accessed 14 February 2014.

³⁶⁸ Court-martial of John W. Atherton, 5th Cavalry, PP 2567, RG 153, NA.

someone unfamiliar with military law, saying, “I was then very ignorant of the rules which govern the army, it being my first enlistment, and had no idea that I was doing any actual wrong.” Atherton’s claims of ignorance did not count for much because he received what was a standard punishment for the time: dishonorable discharge, the “loss of all pay and allowances” except \$20 to be paid at the end of his sentence, and imprisonment “at hard labor in such Military prison as the Department Commander may designate for the period of two (2) years, wearing a twelve (12) pound ball attached to his left leg by a chain four and one-half (4 1/2) feet in length.”³⁶⁹

Atherton’s case highlights a divergence in understandings of what a “contract” meant in the army. The behavior of soldiers like Atherton suggests they did not accept there should be a meaningful distinction between a soldier’s contract and a worker’s contract; if there was no mutuality between the soldier and the army, why was it called a contract at all? High-ranking officers, however, insisted that the soldier’s contract was nothing like a regular labor contract. In his report to the secretary of war in 1882, General Sherman wrote, “The desertion of his comrades in danger is, and ever should be, construed as the basest and most heinous crime possible to a soldier, whereas of late years, under the benign influence of the Bureau of Military Justice, it has grown to be considered as of little more concern than for a laborer to quit his employer without notice.”³⁷⁰ Sherman insisted that a different standard applied to the soldier’s contract because war-making was a special kind of a labor: deserters left their “comrades in danger.” Sherman invoked the wartime setting for desertion, but were soldiers at war?

³⁶⁹ Court-martial of John W. Atherton, NA.

³⁷⁰ U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1882. House Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2, 47th Cong., 2d session, Vol. 1, (serial 2091), 8.

What dangers did they face? In reality, most desertions occurred far from any battleground. Nevertheless, it was essential for Sherman and the army at large to vilify desertion as a crime of the highest order. By asserting that desertion in peacetime was cowardice rather than simply a means of quitting a job, the military brass continued to deny that soldiering was labor.

Even within the military community, however, opinion-makers acknowledged the contractual relationship between soldiers and the army. Their remarks implied that enlisted men were not entirely amiss in protesting their treatment as manual laborers. In 1884, the *Army and Navy Journal* published a piece about the multitude of construction and maintenance duties undertaken by soldiers. In what became a common refrain, the editors argued that such duties “interfere[d] with the military duties and instruction” and hampered the enlisted man’s development into “a good soldier.” Moreover, echoing the claims of soldiers themselves, the editors continued: “It is hardly fair or just to him, as it is not laid down in his contract with the Government.”³⁷¹ Here the editors, although they condemned desertion in all its forms, suggested that soldiers’ contracts did not include the level of manual labor commonly demanded of them. In referring to contracts and slaves, soldiers took part in a broader conversation about the meaning of free labor in the post-Civil War era.

The Landscape of Coercion

While military labor did not fit contemporary standards of free labor, it was also not entirely exceptional in the late-nineteenth century. Rather, the unfreedom of soldiers brought their experience close to that of other workers, particularly in the South and

³⁷¹ “Soldier Labor,” *ANJ*, October 4, 1884.

West. When compared to other labor practices, such as Chinese “coolieism” and convict labor, it becomes clear that military labor was part of a broader landscape of coercion in the nineteenth century. Indeed, a range of coercive arrangements organized work in fields, mines, and homes in the post-Civil War era. Although the Thirteen Amendment clearly prohibited slavery and “involuntary servitude,” a great number of practices proliferated that did not neatly match contemporary understandings of “free labor.” Gunther Peck has emphasized the instability of the “free labor” ideology in the post-Civil War period, writing, “wage labor relations during this half century [1880 to 1930] were not truly free but comprised a spectrum of consensual and coercive elements.”³⁷² The diversity of coercive practices was nowhere on greater display than in the North American West, where, as Howard Lamar has argued, the availability of abundant free land exacerbated the challenge of securing a labor force.³⁷³

Competition between immigrants and white workers often sparked conflicts and led to allegations of enslavement and forced labor, adding to the confusion over what constituted free labor. Recently, historians have begun to question whether “coolies,” the name given to the supposedly unfree Chinese laborers, ever really existed in the form alleged by white workers and reformers. Moon-Ho Jung argues that “coolie” was never a legal term but rather “a conglomeration of racial imaginings that emerged worldwide in the era of slave emancipation.”³⁷⁴ Similarly, Stacey L. Smith sees both peons and coolies as “imagined” and “invented” by white workers in California who competed for mining

³⁷² Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 8.

³⁷³ Lamar, “From Bondage to Contract,” 295. Here Lamar builds on the work of Dutch scholar H.J. Nieboer. See H.J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1900).

³⁷⁴ Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, 5.

with jobs with recent immigrants. Even though “coolies” did not exist as “a real group of 193 people or a real legal category of workers,” according to Smith, the invention of these pathological figures served to galvanize white working-class solidarity and contributed to new legislation designed to curb the deleterious influence of these foreign workers.³⁷⁵ The heated discourse over “coolies” resembles in many ways the use of the term “wage slave” and “white slavery” by labor activists throughout the nineteenth century. Yet simply because white workers exaggerated the servility of Chinese workers for political ends does not mean that the methods used to transport and keep them at work in American mines were not coercive. Mae Ngai, while also skeptical of dominant portrayals of Chinese “coolieism,” has written that “the so-called coolie question needs to be analyzed both discursively and empirically.”³⁷⁶

The experience of other groups of workers in the West suggests that various forms of coercion were used liberally, especially with immigrants and non-English speakers, to compel their labor. Whereas planters in Central and South America imported contract workers from Asia to meet their needs, contracting faced special challenges in the West. Because of labor laws that allowed workers to quit their jobs at will, workers in the U.S. were not bound to their contracts and did not face the same criminal penalties as workers who broke their contracts in places like Brazil and Australia.³⁷⁷ Legislation passed in the 1880s, including the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Foran Act, also placed restrictions on contract laborers and undercut the influence of brokerage firms. Such

³⁷⁵ Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*, chapter 3; quotes p. 95 and p. 97.

³⁷⁶ Mae Ngai, “Western History and the Pacific World,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (October 2012): 286.

³⁷⁷ Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 50.

challenges impeded the emergence of a single or dominant model for securing workers for labor-hungry firms, but they did not mean that the West was a bastion of free labor. On the contrary, it meant that “a variety of recruitment systems sporadically flourished for unskilled immigrants after 1865, each of them compromising workers’ freedom with debts, contracts, and geographic isolation.”³⁷⁸ New methods of securing workers flourished after the Foran Act of 1885, which outlawed the importation of skilled contract workers into the U.S. In his study of *padrones*, Peck shows that immigrant labor brokers responded to new corporations’ need for labor and circumvented federal laws by facilitating the movement of skilled and unskilled workers from Europe and Mexico to their operations in places like Utah and Texas. *Padrones* reached the height of their influence around the turn of the century, but they were part of a much longer history of efforts to secure workers for the labor-scarce West. “With the discovery of each new commodity in the land – be it copper or sugar beets,” writes Peck, “the problem of the frontier was confronted anew: how should one assemble a labor force in a remote and relatively unpopulated countryside.”³⁷⁹ Political pressure from labor unions led to the passage of legislation, including but not limited to the Foran Act, aimed at excluding contract workers and certain immigrant groups. But while the federal officials spent time and money on enforcement of these laws well into the twentieth century, in other ways the government abetted unfree labor practices.

The use of soldiers to build roads, guard railroad crews, work in lumber yards, deliver mail, and perform a host of other duties should be seen as another means of

³⁷⁸ Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 56.

³⁷⁹ Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 48.

securing workers in the labor-scarce West. In the case of soldiers, the “recruitment system” was organized by the federal government, which effectively used “debts, contracts, and geographic isolation,” like Peck’s padrones, to tie soldiers to their labor contracts and guarantee a supply of workers for the army’s building and infrastructure projects. The fact that the federal government was the sole arbiter of the labor of soldiers distinguishes it from most other systems of unfree labor that the United States tried to limit or eradicate in the late-nineteenth century. But the state played supporting roles in abetting other types of unfree labor, particularly in its use of convict labor. For example, convict as well as contract labor was essential to the construction of the Texas state Capitol. In 1885, the state of Texas agreed that contractors could use the state’s convicts as a labor force, paying the state sixty-five cents per day for each convict’s labor, while the state provided the prisoners’ food and lodging. Between 1885 and 1887, nearly 500 white and Mexican convicts built the railroad connecting the building site to supply lines, constructed housing for the prisoners, and cut granite for the Capitol. The American National Granite Cutters’ Union (NGCU) boycotted the building project on account of the use of convict labor, but their efforts to protect their members from cheap and unfree labor were undermined by yet another source of exploitable labor. As Ethan Blue recounts, the stone cutters’ union joined with the Knights of Labor and enjoyed some success in blocking the supply of skilled workers for the project. Rather than pay union scale wages in Texas, the syndicate of investors and builders behind the Capitol project sought cheaper workers abroad. The contractors traveled to Aberdeen, Scotland, and recruited workers there. These actions seemed to violate the Foran Act, which “prohibit[ed] the importation and migration of foreigners and aliens under contract or

agreement to perform labor in the United States.”³⁸⁰ Union representatives and federal law enforcement officials met the group of Aberdeen workers at the port in New York and questioned them about the terms of their agreement with the Capitol Syndicate. They were unable to establish at that time that the Scotsmen had been brought to the U.S. under contract and therefore in clear violation of the Foran Act. While the officials persuaded some of them not to travel to Austin as strike-breakers, the majority of the workers, 64 of them, continued on to their destination in Texas. The U.S. Attorney finally brought a case against the Capitol Syndicate in 1889 – “the first real test of the Foran Act” – but the case was gutted of most of its significance by that point. Only the syndicate’s agent, Gustav Wilke, was tried and convicted, and he was fined just a fraction of what the law specified for violations of the Foran Act. Blue writes that the workers’ “legal victory came in name only.”³⁸¹

The Texas Capitol was not the only project that employed convict labor in the country or even in the state of Texas. Blue explains that while Mexican and white prisoners were assigned to construct rail lines and lodging and work in the granite pits in Austin, most black prisoners were leased out to private individuals, who put them to work on “malarial” cotton and sugar farms where they sometimes died from disease and overwork.³⁸² Beyond Texas, other states implemented various systems of prison labor in the post-war decades. In Georgia, Alex Lichtenstein shows, prisoners were put to work in

³⁸⁰ Quoted in Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 84. For more on the Foran Act, see Peck, 84-89, 94-106; Torrie Hester, “‘Protection, Not Punishment’: Legislative and Judicial Formation of U.S. Deportation Policy, 1882–1904,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30, no. 1 (October 1, 2010): 13-14; and Catherine Collomp, “Immigrants, Labor Markets, and the State, a Comparative Approach: France and the United States, 1880-1930,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1, 1999): 54-56.

³⁸¹ Ethan Blue, “A Parody on the Law: Organized Labor, the Convict Lease, and Immigration in the Making of the Texas State Capitol,” *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 4 (July 1, 2010): 1036.

³⁸² Blue, “Parody on the Law,” 1031.

industries that epitomized the modern, forward-looking “New South.” Laboring in southern coal-fields and iron furnaces, the predominately black convict-laborers contributed to the “modernization” of the region and the expansion of new economic enterprises in postbellum South.³⁸³ While the southern convict-lease system has attracted the most scholarly attention, western territories and states also established similar means of profiting from prisoners’ labor. The story of Arizona’s attempts to institute a labor regime at its territorial penitentiary accords with Lichtenstein’s portrayal of the convict-lease in the South. As in Georgia, prisoners in Arizona were also employed in modern infrastructure projects. In 1897, convicts were put to work digging ditches for the State of Arizona Improvement Co., one of several private companies engaged in constructing a large canal system near Yuma. (The Supreme Court later ruled that the prisoners were not allowed to be leased to this company.) In another parallel to the southern convict-lease system, Arizona’s prisoners were disproportionately Mexican and poor, more often listing “laborer” as their previous occupation than white prisoners. Because of its stratification along racial and class lines, Paul Knepper calls the Arizona territorial prison the “functional equivalent of a Southern prison.”³⁸⁴

More than any other system of labor, convict labor most closely resembled the army’s labor regime, apart from the fact that soldiers voluntarily enlisted. The use of prisoners as workers was part of California’s penal regime from the very beginning. San Quentin, the state’s first prison, was leased to private interests when it was built in 1851.

³⁸³ Alexander C. Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London; New York: Verso, 1996), xvii and passim.

³⁸⁴ Paul Knepper, “Southern-Style Punitive Repression: Ethnic Stratification, Economic Inequality, and Imprisonment in Territorial Arizona,” *Social Justice* 16, no. 4 (1989): 142.

Ward M. McAfee writes, “Under the terms of the contract, the state funded the construction of San Quentin prison, and the lessees staffed the facility with guards and fed, clothed and provided medical care for the prisoners. In exchange for these services, the lessees worked the convicts for their own profit.” A few years later, James Madison Estill leased San Quentin and convinced the authorities to pay him \$10,000 per month for the prisoners’ upkeep. He also kept all profits from their work.³⁸⁵ This scheme was unpopular with California’s burgeoning labor movement as well as the general public, and Estill lost his contract. In the 1870s, the Workingmen’s Party took aim at convict labor by comparing it to the despised Chinese “coolie” labor. McAfee writes, “Labor organizations petitioned the convention to ‘prohibit the employment of convict labor in any pursuit detrimental to the interest of free labor.’” Eventually labor activists persuaded the state to pass legislation prohibiting prisons from hiring out convicts to private interests, but this, too, would be a “Pyrrhic victory.”³⁸⁶ The state soon established a new “contract system” whereby all work was done within the penitentiary walls. California’s state prisons became manufacturing and industrial centers, with prisoners manufacturing jute in a factory at San Quentin and granite in quarries at Folsom.³⁸⁷ The location of work shifted in response to labor’s demands, but convict labor would continue to compete with civilian workers.

Although the Civil War settled the fate of slavery in the trans-Mississippi West, it did not instantly create a world of “free labor,” much to the chagrin of the Workingmen’s

³⁸⁵ Ward M. McAfee, “A History of Convict Labor in California,” *Southern California Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (April 1, 1990): 19.

³⁸⁶ McAfee, “A History of Convict Labor in California,” 22.

³⁸⁷ McAfee, “A History of Convict Labor in California,” 22-28, and *passim*.

Party and other workers. On the contrary, the histories of both convict and contract labor ¹⁹⁹ suggest that the late-nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence of *new* forms of coercion and unfreedom. Gunther Peck has argued that the *padrone* was not a fixture of the Old World but a creation of the new, modern, and industrial West: such immigrant labor brokers served the interests of large, multinational corporations like the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Utah copper mines. Alex Lichtenstein paints a similar picture in his account of prison labor in Georgia. He asserts that, “the convict lease was not the persistence of a ‘precapitalist’ form of labor coercion, but the extension and elaboration of a new forced-labor system wholly compatible with regional industrial development and the continuation of racial domination.”³⁸⁸ The use of convicts on the extensive canal project in Yuma, Arizona, and on Texas’ massive building project in Austin shows that prisoners were used to support the expansion of new settlements and industries in the southwest. Far from holdovers from an archaic past, the emergence of new industrial enterprises in the late-nineteenth century and the scarcity of labor combined to encourage new forms of bondage and obligation.

The U.S. army’s labor regime bears striking resemblance to these other coercive arrangements. As in the case of penal labor, soldiers had long been required to do a great deal of manual labor. Armies the world over were often tasked with building their own barracks, preparing their meals, and clearing land for military roads and supply lines. Likewise, other states had coerced their incarcerated populations to labor for their own support and for the enrichment of the state. Two important characteristics of the American military labor regime in the late-nineteenth century warrant note. First, as in

³⁸⁸ Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work*, 13.

the case of Georgia's convict lease and western contract workers, soldiers in the 1870s 200 and 1880s were put to work on behalf of new industries and enterprises that characterized the expansion of capitalist investment in the West. Soldiers' labor advanced the work of railroads, mining operations, and new ranches, all financed with eastern and European capital. While soldiers were not "leased" to companies like their convict counterparts, they were assigned as security details to private corporations, including railroads and mail delivery services. Second, soldiers in the decades after the Civil War vocally protested the conditions of their work in the language of rights, citizenship, and free labor. They resented the imposition of the army's demands as unsuited to their status as free men. For while Peck's miners and railroad workers were recruited from places like Italy, Greece, and Mexico, and Lichtenstein's convicts were predominantly African-American, a large number of the soldiers who complained that "they 'did not enlist to carry the hod,'" were white and native-born.³⁸⁹ In the army, soldiers – whether white and black, immigrant or native-born – were subject to the same labor demands. Yet many no doubt agreed with one enlisted man, tasked with transporting buckets of water for Lt. Ernest Howard Ruffner's 1876 Red River expedition into the Texas Panhandle, who complained the work he was forced to do was "regular convict labor."³⁹⁰ He was not so wrong: the military oversaw a vast army of workers who lacked the same rights as other free workers. Unable to quit or protest their working conditions, soldiers, like prisoners, were enmeshed in a state-sanctioned regime of coerced labor.

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³⁸⁹ Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, 96.

³⁹⁰ Quoted in William Thomas Hagan, *Charles Goodnight: Father of the Texas Panhandle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 35.

This chapter has argued that the army managed to retain a way of organizing labor that was increasingly problematic in civilian society after 1865. While other employers were barred from penal sanctions for contract breeches, the U.S. army continued to imprison soldiers for desertion and other infractions directly related to their role as laborers. Of course, the army was not the only pocket of “unfreedom” that survived the Civil War. Debt peonage and sharecropping developed as means of guaranteeing a supply of workers to southern plantations.³⁹¹ Looking beyond the former Confederacy, it becomes clear that employers continued to take advantage of a range of coercive measures for securing labor. Both Howard Lamar and Gunther Peck have argued that various forms of unfree labor relations were more characteristic of the West than the ideal of free labor. Contrary to Frederick Jackson Turner’s insistence that the availability of land in the West promoted freedom and democracy, employers sought to curtail workers’ ability to move in search of better opportunities, often using *padrones* or other labor brokers who “could traverse those spaces and regulate the geographic mobility of workers.”³⁹² The North American West, like other parts of the globe where land was readily abundant and labor was limited, seemed to demand such mechanisms for employers to bind their workers and prevent them from seeking greener pastures elsewhere.³⁹³ The Thirteenth Amendment outlawed slavery and peonage, but coercion persisted and even proliferated in new forms.

³⁹¹ The literature on labor in the postbellum South is rich. For some of the important works, see n97, above.

³⁹² Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 47. See also Lamar, “From Bondage to Contract.”

³⁹³ For the classic theoretical account of why slavery emerges in areas of labor scarcity and land abundance, see Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System*. Willemina Kloosterboer builds on Nieboer’s work and examines the persistence of coerced labor in post-emancipation societies: Kloosterboer, *Involuntary Labour since the Abolition of Slavery: A Survey of Compulsory Labour throughout the World* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960).

The U.S. army was adept at harnessing the labor of its soldiers for a range of ambitious building projects. Measured in terms of roads, telegraph wires, and railroads built, its model of coerced labor was a great success. At the same time, the challenges the army faced from its “enlisted laborers” attest to the way the labor movement was transforming the expectations of workers. The greatest challenge came in the form of desertion, but soldiers also articulated their grievances as citizens deserving of certain rights. Changes in the enlistment contract, pay, and rations policies stand as concessions to the demands of this special group of workers subject to a state-sanctioned labor regime.

Despite soldiers’ resistance, the U.S. army continued to exploit soldiers’ labor. Criticism from enlisted men was often dismissed in part because of the gulf separating soldiers’ perceptions from those of army officials and the wider public. Then as now, soldiers were not seen as workers: paradoxically, their special status – the fact that they were worked for the government rather than private employers – deprived them of the rights of ordinary citizens. Rather than enhancing their status, soldiers’ patriotic identity meant they were expected to endure greater deprivations and more severe limits on their ability to quit, organize, and petition than workers in other industries. While soldiers expressed solidarity with and often acted like regular workers by threatening work stoppages or running away, they did not enjoy even the rights of their compatriots in the growing labor movement. Their resistance was termed insubordination or desertion, and what their actions said about the army’s labor regime, then and since, has been overlooked.

The fact that soldiers constituted a coerced labor force, subject to the oversight of ²⁰³ the federal government, complicates our understanding of the central state's role in the late-nineteenth century. The same state – indeed, the same army – responsible for enforcing the rights of ex-slaves in the South during Reconstruction was simultaneously engaged in compelling the labor of soldiers for a variety of ends. At the same time, while the federal government passed legislation aimed at curbing the importation of contract workers, it saw no problem with coercing the labor of soldiers for building and infrastructure projects, particularly in remote corners of the West where labor was scarce and wages were high. Ignoring the fact that soldiers were workers, in peacetime as well as war, has allowed scholars to overlook their important role at the intersection of forced labor and state power. As Peter Way writes about eighteenth-century Britain, “Soldiers constituted both instruments and objects of imperial authority.”³⁹⁴ As instruments, they enabled the state to expand its reach across western lands and peoples, performing the work of “accumulation by dispossession” crucial to the advance of capitalism.³⁹⁵ As objects, they experienced the same type of exploitation as coerced workers in other industries. Soldiers’ labor on modern infrastructural projects that served to promote the expansion of capitalism challenges the assumption that capitalism and free labor are a natural, even necessary, combination. Soldiers, like the Greek miners who contracted their labor to *padrones*, submitted to binding labor contracts and a variety of other limitations on their labor and mobility. Even convicts, whose status was defined by unfreedom, contributed in key ways to the emergence of modern industries in the West

³⁹⁴ Way, ““black service,”” 74.

³⁹⁵ The concept of “accumulation by dispossession,” Marxist geographer David Harvey’s term for primitive accumulation, and its application to the U.S. army, is discussed in chapter 2.

and South. Furthermore, recognizing that soldiering was coerced labor challenges assumptions about the liberal state's role in the development of capitalism in the trans-Mississippi West. *Laissez-faire* may have been the ruling slogan back east, where capitalists wanted the government to stay well clear of their business practices, but further west, they relied on the strong arm of the state in the guise of the U.S. army and its legions of soldier-workers. This story, too long relegated to the backwaters of military history, opens up new avenues of inquiry about some of the key topics in the nineteenth century: capitalism, the state, and the fate of labor after the Civil War.

“A Despotic Machine:” Labor and the Imperial Project

In 1906, a few years after his troops built a major military road through the southern Philippines, Major General Robert L. Bullard reflected on the wider significance of that undertaking: “It was here for the Americans to open these ways: for here, as perhaps over all the earth, road-making was to be the first step, and to merge with government-making and civilization.”³⁹⁶ The road itself facilitated U.S. military operations in what became known as the Moro Province. Bullard, however, believed “road-making” – the construction of the road perhaps more than the road itself – did more: it enabled the extension of “civilization” among the “savages.” Key to “road-making” was the management of laboring populations, including indigenous people and the army’s own soldiers. This chapter examines ideas about labor and labor practices on army construction projects in the southern Philippines. It argues that labor was a crucial arena for the articulation of American power in the colony. Indeed, the process of creating and managing a workforce in this outpost of empire was constitutive of the imperial project itself.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ R.L. Bullard, “Preparing Our Moros for Government,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 97 (March 1906): 385. <http://www.UNZ.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1906mar-00385>. Accessed March 13, 2014.

³⁹⁷ Infrastructure-building in the U.S.’s conquest and occupation of the Philippines is treated obliquely in a number of works. Military historians acknowledge the importance of roads and railroads for the persecution of war, but they rarely go beyond the war years or explore the political or social aims of military construction projects. For example, Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 44-45; 201. Labor historians, of course, are attentive to the labor dimension of construction projects. Greg Bankoff argues that the U.S. colonial officials were eager to use construction projects as a way to introduce wage labor to the Filipino people, part of the process of introducing “civilization” among their colonial charges. See Bankoff, “Wants, Wages, And Workers,” *Pacific Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (2005): 59–86; and Bankoff, “‘These Brothers of Ours’: Poblete’s *Obreros* and the Road to Baguio, 1903-1905,” *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 4 (2005): 1047-1072. For a direct engagement with labor in a military context, see Justin Jackson, “The Work of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Making of American Colonialisms in Cuba and the Philippines, 1898-

The American colonial period in the southern Philippines has been largely neglected by U.S. historians. The U.S. army had been in the south since the outbreak of war with Spain, and in 1903, the Philippine Commission established the Moro Province, a special designation giving the army almost total control over the territory in civil as well as military matters. The single comprehensive monograph in English focusing on this time and place, while detailed and useful, is based largely on American army sources and written from the perspective of the military-colonial governors.³⁹⁸ Scholars working in the Philippines have been more attentive to the special circumstances of the south, but their accounts often focus on that country's internal dynamics, particularly the development of Filipino nationalism and the emergence of separatist ethnic and cultural identities in the south.³⁹⁹ Yet the southern Philippines presents an ideal context for

1913,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014). On the importance of infrastructure to the Philippine Commission's vision of economic development in the archipelago, see Glenn Anthony May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), chapter 8. See also Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 314-317.

Mary Renda's discussion of the “American Idea,” in the context of the U.S. military occupation of Haiti, provides a potentially useful point of comparison to the situation in the Philippines. Renda shows how policymakers and military officials believed the construction of infrastructure was essential to attracting capitalist investment and encouraging the development of wage labor, which they interpreted paternalistically as benefiting the Haitians rather than serving American interests. Her book offers a cultural history of the occupation and does not explore in depth the actual construction of infrastructure or the organization of labor under American military rule. See Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 117-119.

³⁹⁸ Peter G. Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899-1920* (Quezon City; Detroit, Mich.: New Day Publishers, 1983).

³⁹⁹ See Patricio N. Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2000). Abinales is interested in the colonial antecedents for the twentieth-century history of Muslims in the Philippines. While he devotes two rich chapters to the American colonial period in Davao and Cotabato, the real story for him is about rebellions launched by the Moro National Liberal Front and the Communist Part of the Philippines in Mindanao in the late-twentieth century. Michael Hawkins focuses on the American military period, but his central concern is how the American military period shaped Moros and their self-conceptions and cultural identity. His book is nonetheless valuable for its Moro-centric perspectives and stories. See Hawkins, *Making Moros*:

exploring some of the central issues in the study of American imperialism. It was there that the raw power of the army was most clearly on display and where, for the longest time, the U.S. committed its resources to remaking the political, economic, and social lives of its subjects. At the same time, the so-called Moros were long accustomed to repelling the designs of foreign powers; they had successfully resisted the Spanish and, before them, older expansionist states in the Pacific. Furthermore, the Moros became for the Americans “as archaic and colorful as the army’s former opponents, the American Indian,” reminding soldiers of that older frontier and the “romantic” battles in the continental U.S.⁴⁰⁰ Events in the southern Philippines, therefore, help us understand the longer narrative of American empire. Moreover, the army’s emphasis on economic development and its struggles to organize a labor force were taken straight from the playbook officers had long used to guide their operations in the continental U.S.

The army’s plan for extending American sovereignty in the Philippines relied on a specific vision of economic development and the establishment of new labor relations to support that vision. Refashioning the region’s political economy was key to its military objectives as well. As in remote corners of the trans-Mississippi West, parts of the Moro Province required extraordinary expenditures of labor, time, and money in order to make them accessible to soldiers. But in the army’s overseas empire, indigenous people were also forced, through taxation, incarceration, and brute military power, to provide labor for American construction projects. As in the continental U.S., military labor overseas was

Imperial Historicism and American Military Rule in the Philippines’ Muslim South (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012);

⁴⁰⁰ Linn, *Guardians*, 35. See chapter 6, this dissertation, for an extended discussion of how army officers compared Native Americans and Moros in their writings.

part of the army's broader efforts to reshape the political economy of the territory it occupied.

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This chapter focuses on the army's involvement in construction projects in the southern Philippines from their early days prosecuting a war in Mindanao and continuing through the army's administration of the Moro Province. The first part provides an overview of the U.S. presence in the region. It then looks at the construction of one important thoroughfare, the Iligan military road. Although portrayed by officers as a shining success of labor management, the Iligan road exacted steep concessions to both enlisted men and Moro workers from the army. The second part explores how problems of labor management continued to shape American governance after the establishment of the Moro Province. Army officers, charged with administering the province in addition to prosecuting a war, hoped to bring peace and prosperity to the region. Their efforts to foster free-labor practices met with resistance and exposed the limitations of the U.S. resolve to remake the political economy of the southern Philippines.

“Uncle Sam’s Soldiers, Road Builders”: The Iligan Military Road

American troops waged a ferocious war in the southern Philippines, but the U.S. was not the first colonial power to try to subjugate the region and its inhabitants. In 1565, Spanish conquistadors established their first imperial outpost in the Philippines. They encountered the fiercest resistance from the Muslim warriors in the southern islands of Mindanao and Sulu. They called these fighters “Moros” after their erstwhile enemies, the Moors. Americans continued to use the term. Islam had first come to the archipelago in the thirteenth century, brought by traders from the Arabian peninsula, and the process of “Islamization” continued over the next several centuries. In his study of the American

military period, historian Peter Gowing writes, “not in three and a third centuries of trying did [the Spanish] effectually subdue the Muslim sultanates in the south.” They tried nonetheless. As a result of their failure, however, Gowing argues that “the Moros developed their culture and society somewhat cut off from the rest of the Philippines.”⁴⁰¹ American authorities also treated the region differently from the rest of the archipelago. They determined the people of the south incapable of civilian government and instead imposed a military government on the region for over a decade. In 1903, the U.S. created a new designation, in addition to the Military Department of Mindanao, called the Moro Province, discussed below. Distinct from the civilian government established for most of the rest of the Philippines, the Moro Province was not, however, an insignificant corner of the American empire. Patricio Abinales, a leading historian of the southern Philippines, notes, “With over 38,888 of the 111,860 square miles within the total Philippine landmass, the Moro Province was the largest administrative unit in the entire colony.”⁴⁰² The population included Muslims, Christians, and animists (whom the Americans variously called “Pagans,” “tribal people,” and “hill peoples”). The largest group numerically were the Muslim “Moros,” themselves divided into several different cultural-linguistic groups, sultanates, and kinship networks. In addition, there were an estimated quarter-million animists. The smallest group included roughly 60,000 Christians, including Hispanicized Filipinos and emigrants, who were concentrated in the city of Zamboanga and a few other towns. In all, nearly half a million people, the

⁴⁰¹ Peter Gordon Gowing, “Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899-1920,” PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1968, 36 and 63.

⁴⁰² Patricio Abinales, “The U.S. Army as an Occupying Force,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, eds. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 413.

majority of them “non-Christian,” lived under a military government established by the U.S. army for over a decade.⁴⁰³ 210

The army’s efforts to militarily subdue the southern region cost hundreds of thousands of lives. Parts of Mindanao and Sulu remained in open hostility toward American rule until the Moro Province was declared “pacified” in 1913.⁴⁰⁴ The landscape itself presented a challenge to the troops: thick jungles, mountains, and the absence of good roads hindered military operations. Road-building was essential to extending American sovereignty over this difficult terrain, but the work was arduous. Brian Linn describes “the prodigious efforts necessary to maintain combat forces in the archipelago’s jungles, swamps, and mountains.”⁴⁰⁵ The Spanish, in their quest to subjugate the Moros, had tried to improve infrastructure by instituting a system of *corvée* labor. “Generations of nineteenth-century Filipinos served their forced-labor obligations building roads and bridges and repairing them,” Ken de Bevoise writes. Such infrastructure as they were able to build was already in decline by 1888, when Valeriano Weyler, governor-general of the Philippines, declared, “there is not a single kilometer of road that is in passable condition.”⁴⁰⁶ As soon as they arrived in Mindanao, the Americans went to work – and

⁴⁰³ The population of the Moro Province was a subject of some debate among American military officials. They rejected Spanish estimates as too high; see *Report of the Philippine Commission*, part 2, 1903, 788. In his 1903 report as commander of the Division of the Philippines, Major General George W. Davis reported that Christian inhabitants were estimated at 65,741; Moros at 250,000; and they reported no direct knowledge of the “Pagan inhabitants” or “wild tribes,” but noted that the Jesuits had thought they numbered 262,000. “Moro Affairs,” U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1903. House Doc. No. 2, 58th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 149-150.

⁴⁰⁴ For an account of the army’s ongoing military operations in the Moro Province, see Linn, *Guardians*, 34-49.

⁴⁰⁵ Linn, *Guardians*, 44.

⁴⁰⁶ Quoted in Ken De Bevoise, *Agents of Apocalypse: Epidemic Disease in the Colonial Philippines* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 34.

put others to work – improving and expanding this transportation system.⁴⁰⁷ Patricio 211 Abinales writes, “A network of roads, telegraph lines, military outposts, and naval patrols was set up to ‘pacify the Moros’ and bring the technology and ‘reach of the [modern] state’ to southern Mindanao.”⁴⁰⁸ By 1902, the army, using Moro workers, had established telegraph lines throughout much of the Cotabato River Valley, and had built almost 200 miles of roads in Davao province.⁴⁰⁹ “The infrastructure facilitated brutal military campaigns against resistant Moros, a limited campaign of disarmament against others, and the judicious use of ‘divide-and-rule’ tactics among disunified Muslim communities generally,” Abinales writes.

Roads, however, were more than means to achieving military goals. They were not only part of the physical infrastructure of military occupation and conquest, but part of the ideological edifice of U.S. imperialism. As early as 1901, the Taft Commission declared the construction of roads and railroads “of the first importance” throughout the Philippines. The commissioners touted not only their obvious military purpose but their value as “an educator of the people”: “It may be asserted as a truism that a people without roads are necessarily savage, because society is impossible; and just to the extent that roads are lacking or defective, real progress is retarded and prosperity hindered.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ Mindanao is one of the three major island groups in the Philippines. The Moro Province, the territory established by the United States in 1903, included part but not all of Mindanao. When the term “Mindanao” is used in this chapter, it refers to the southern Philippines.

⁴⁰⁸ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 19.

⁴⁰⁹ Gowing, *Mandate*, 58-59.

⁴¹⁰ Commission, United States Philippine, and William Howard Taft. *Reports of the Taft Philippine Commission: Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of War, Containing the Reports of the Taft Commission, Its Several Acts of Legislation, and Other Important Information Relating to the Condition and Immediate Wants of the Philippine Islands* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 71. Also quoted in May, *Social Engineering*, 139.

Officers in the southern Philippines also embraced this vision of prosperity through road-²¹² building.

In 1902, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Lee Bullard took charge of troops assigned to construct a major military road from Iligan to Marahui on the shores of Lake Lanao. Born in Alabama just months before the bombing of Fort Sumter, Bullard was a career army officer who led troops in New Mexico, Kansas, and Nevada before moving to the *far* West. When he arrived in the Philippines, the area surrounding Lake Lanao was one of the volatile regions in the archipelago. Since at least 1900, Lake Moros had violently opposed the presence of American soldiers. Ill-feeling had intensified, both between various Moro groups and between them and the Americans. In the spring of 1902, Moros attacked a group of soldiers on an exploring mission around the southern part of the lake, killing one enlisted man.⁴¹¹ Other attacks on soldiers persuaded military commanders in the region to undertake a broader campaign involving 1,200 soldiers in April and May 1902. In the Battle of Bayan, 300 to 400 Moros were killed, compared to seven American casualties. Following the engagement, the army established Camp Vicars, a post intended to help the U.S. extend its presence south of Lake Lanao.⁴¹² Bullard's road-building assignment was intended to support military operations in the region while keeping his men focused on construction rather than war-making.⁴¹³

Throughout the American administration of the Philippines, colonial officials emphasized the importance of roads to their civilizing mission. Of course roads answered

⁴¹¹ Gowing, *Mandate*, 66-67.

⁴¹² Gowing, *Mandate*, 83-88.

⁴¹³ For a reproduction of a map of the road as well as other photographs from the National Archives and Library of Congress, see http://www.morolandhistory.com/09.PG-Camp%20Vicars/camp_vicars_p1.htm.

ordinary, prosaic needs: to move men and materiel, to facilitate trade and stimulate capital investment. But even in the context of military operations, men like Bullard portrayed the work of empire in far more heroic terms. A few months after the completion of the road, Bullard wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* about the importance of this undertaking for the Lake Moros, the Malanaos, rather than in terms of the Americans' military interests in the islands. "The making of these [roads]," Bullard declared, "means the civilization of the Malanaos."⁴¹⁴ For Bullard, this project encapsulated one of the great transformations of a people anywhere on the globe. The Moros living around Lake Lanao were clearly "savages." Yet it was necessary for the Americans to civilize them. The reasons were self-evident for Bullard:

'Because civilization has better things for them.'...Because they are part of us, we must fetch them forward with us; we cannot leave them behind. Because savagery and civilization cannot exist side by side; either all Mindanao must be turned over to the savagery of the aggressive Moros, or all be taken over to civilization. Because, finally, as savages the Moros stand in the way of our destiny, and we cannot permit that.⁴¹⁵

Building this road meant more than transporting supplies or winning a series of battles against hostile, hold-out Moros. By casting the problem in terms of "destiny" and "civilization," Bullard imbued his task with significance, even righteousness. It was not simply that the road itself would facilitate American military expeditions, which would in turn introduce the Moros to "civilization." Instead, he believed that the process of building the road – recruiting Moros to labor on it and inculcating in them habits of work and thrift – would "fetch them forward." Like many of his contemporaries, he hoped to

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ R.L. Bullard "Road Building among the Moros," *The Atlantic Monthly* 92 (December 1903): 819. *UNZ.org*. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://www.UNZ.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1903dec-00818?View=PDFPages>.

change the habits and beliefs of the Moros while at the same time harnessing their labor- 214
power for the U.S. army. Yet Bullard underestimated the opposition he would face in
Mindanao. While officers loudly proclaimed the greatness of American imperialism in
the southern Philippines, the army faced steep resistance from both enlisted men and the
indigenous population.

In early days Bullard was full of optimism about the work before him. Aboard the
vessel transporting him and his men to Iligan, he noted the “lovely weather, smooth,
serene sea.” The mood of the soldiers matched their surroundings: although the ship was
crowded, the men were “not uncomfortable and certainly in high spirits and good humor
at the prospect of field service. Officers [sic] and men are at work informing themselves
about the Moro country and people. They are certainly full of enthusiasm.” The next day
Bullard, impressed with the “beautiful dark green jungles and mountains,” remarked on
the “high spirits, fine weather and enthusiastic command.”⁴¹⁶ When they finally arrived
in Iligan on October 13, 1902, Bullard discovered “deep green mountains and shore,
cocoanut groves and dense tropical forest, fine timber, trees ‘hard’ wood showing their
white trunks on mountain sides.” Despite auspicious beginnings, this captivating
environment soon presented Bullard and his men with a variety of challenges. When he
began investigating the territory around Iligan, Bullard found a foreboding landscape
rather than the tropical paradise he had seen from the boat. “Rode out six miles over trail
my battalion is to open to the hostile Moro country,” he wrote in his diary. “[V]ery
mountainous, very steep, difficult and dangerous if Moros but knew how to use it. It is a

⁴¹⁶ Bullard Diarybook 2, October 12, 1902, Bullard Papers, Library of Congress (LC).

tropical tangle, vines, briars, shrubs, trees and giant grass.”⁴¹⁷ But Bullard was skeptical 215
about the Moros’ ability to “use” the territory to their advantage. Days earlier he had
remarked that the Moros he had met “didn’t impress me as very formidable or dangerous.
I can hardly tell male from female.”⁴¹⁸ Having written the Moros off as effeminate, he
had already decided they would not factor into his plans for subduing the jungle. The
“serene” and beautiful backdrop he had observed on arrival had transformed into a more
challenging, “difficult” canvas for his labors. Bullard embraced the challenge, concluding
his diary entry with the optimism of a colonial officer: “I think there is work here for
good six months. It will be no easy job; it will be hard work but worth the doing.”

Labor became a source of concern almost immediately. Six officers and 344
enlisted men were assigned to the project.⁴¹⁹ When cholera broke out among the Moros
near Iligan, Bullard’s plans to recruit local labor were put on hold. The Moros believed
the white soldiers had brought the deadly disease with them, and for the most part they
avoided the soldiers. Army doctors had likewise counseled Bullard to “cut the
acquaintance and association of all natives.”⁴²⁰ He was forced to concentrate his efforts
on his soldier-workers. Concerned about poor morale among the troops, Bullard joined
with C. C. Bateman, the regimental chaplain and an “intelligence officer” with the Third
Battalion, to help raise spirits. Bateman’s job involved cheering on the road-workers and
publicizing the army’s achievements. He accomplished the latter by writing magazine
articles about the army’s activities in the Moro Province. Bullard, however, appreciated

⁴¹⁷ Bullard Diarybook 2, October 19, 1902.

⁴¹⁸ Bullard Diarybook 2, October 13, 1902.

⁴¹⁹ Allan Reed Millett, *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 169.

⁴²⁰ Bullard Diarybook 2, Oct 24, 1902.

Bateman for his efforts encouraging the men. The night before construction began, he remarked, "Regimental chaplain Bateman is doing good work with the men in preparing officers and men to face the work with manhood."⁴²¹ The next day when troops went to work on the road, Bullard said they were in "a fine humor for work. Chaplain C. C. Bateman's lecture last night on the soldier's work did great good. The Chaplain is a valuable man." Bateman was on the construction site at 6:30 a.m. when the soldiers began "with a photographer and had suitable pictures made of the beginning of the work."⁴²² Bateman, however, was one of the first to suffer from the heat. On October 28, just a few days after work began, Bateman fainted. Bullard confided to his diary, "I fear he will not hold out long. He is writing this work up in notes and I should hate to lose him also on account of his general value and influence for good humor and willingness among the men." Bateman stayed on long enough to observe the backbreaking labor required for the road project. In one of two articles he published in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Bateman wrote, "The work was necessarily laborious, but well done. The higher we got the more difficult the work became. After the timber was slashed away the steep mountain sides lay strewn with huge boulders of volcanic origin and extremely hard." The work was slow, too. "Months were required to finish a few hundred yards," Bateman recalled.⁴²³

The demands of the construction project soon tested everyone's resolve. By mid-November, just two weeks after the project began, the heat and hard work began to take a

⁴²¹ Bullard Diarybook 2, October 26, 1902.

⁴²² Bullard Diarybook 2, October 27, 1902.

⁴²³ C. C. Bateman, "Military Roadmaking in Mindanao," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 33 (1903): 190-193.

toll on the troops. Bullard fretted to his diary, “Sick report increasing; ordered one hour cut off of labor. heat great now every day and telling on men.”⁴²⁴ Bullard’s biographer writes, “As the work became harder – lumbering, digging, and dynamiting – the troops dwindled from illness and expired enlistments. In less than six weeks the construction force fell to two hundred and seventy-six men.”⁴²⁵ Although Bullard acknowledged the extreme heat, he also blamed the decline in productivity on the work ethic of the men and tended to attribute slow progress to deficiencies of character rather than the harsh conditions of work. He wrote, “On the road. 10th Inf. cos. are a little inclined to loaf and need to be watched. -- Road work is slow. Many men are sick, heat extreme, 85*-95°F in shade and 100*-115* in sun.”⁴²⁶ The infantrymen were “trifling,” on the 15th of the month, and “still not doing as much work as ought” on the 22nd. But despite these shortcomings, Bullard was not in a position to push the men harder. Instead, he tried to raise their spirits. “Work on road on hardest place on ascent of mountains. So difficult that men were plainly discouraged. To guard against this, have concentrated command in one work place for tomorrow so that progress made will be manifest to all, and encourage all.” He believed, briefly, that the demonstration had improved morale.⁴²⁷ This was short-lived, and Bullard continued to despair over the slow pace of progress. “The work on road is lagging. I shall have to take a new grip.” But nothing seemed to work, and Bullard became increasingly critical of the soldier-workers, men who were “loafers” and

⁴²⁴ Bullard Diarybook 2, November 12, 1902.

⁴²⁵ Millett, *General*, 170.

⁴²⁶ Bullard Diarybook 2, November 13, 1902.

⁴²⁷ Bullard Diarybook 2; Nov. 15; Nov. 22; Nov. 24; Nov. 25, 1902.

took up his time with their complaints. He wrote with exasperation, “Taken altogether I 218 believe this command of regulars is worse than any of volunteers I ever had.”⁴²⁸

The slow pace of progress forced Bullard to make accommodations to these disappointing workers. Early on, he had made adjustments – trimming an hour off the work day, concentrating men at one task so they could see their work take shape. But it was not enough. Initially, soldiers had worked in twenty-minute shifts. “The system,” Chaplain Bateman wrote, “was not easy to enforce. The willing workers did more than their share, the less willing still less. But the chief objection to it was that men were kept too long in the sun, and began to break down, not so much from the burden of toil as from the excessive heat.”⁴²⁹ In response to poor morale and even poorer results on the road, Bullard instituted a new work regimen. Beginning on January 2, 1903, the soldiers worked on the road only in the mornings, and they rested during the hottest part of the day. Bateman wrote sanguinely, “More and better work was done in the mornings than was accomplished during the entire day under the old system, which had been borrowed from somebody’s experience elsewhere.”⁴³⁰

Historians have followed the lead of Bullard and Bateman, portraying changes in the work schedule as progressive and intelligent responses on the part of army officers. Bullard’s biographer describes in glowing terms the results of the new regimen: “Sick call dropped, morale picked up, and progress on the road improved.”⁴³¹ But both contemporaries and historians have finessed the edges of this story – largely because they

⁴²⁸ Bullard Diarybook 2; Nov. 30; Dec. 1, 1902.

⁴²⁹ Bateman, “Military Roadmaking,” 194.

⁴³⁰ Bateman, “Military Roadmaking,” 193.

⁴³¹ Millett, *General*, 170.

fail to treat it as an episode in the labor history of the colonial Philippines. Military construction projects, like the Iligan road, were labor negotiations between the workers (enlisted men) and management (officers). Because Bullard needed these soldiers and had few alternative sources of labor, the regulars had the advantage. “Management” was forced to make accommodations. When Bullard changed to the daily routine, he was making concessions to the demands of his soldier-workers. Simple morale-building through the chaplain had failed to sufficiently motivate his troops to do backbreaking labor in extreme heat. Without other workers, such as Moros, to use as back-ups or as leverage to pressure the regulars to work to his standards, he was unable to “fire” or replace them, in spite of their subpar performance. Instead, Bullard devised a way to improve productivity by adjusting his demands.

Even these changes did not eliminate sickness and poor morale. While the overall health of the battalion may have improved, malaria, which accounted for a large number of soldiers on the sick list, continued to beleaguer the operation. Mosquito nets and quinine were distributed to the men, but Bullard remained concerned – and irritated – about the sick list, which he took as a personal affront. On January 14 he wrote, “Work slow but new scheme is proving satisfactory, but sick report is very heavy, about 13%. It seems that I’m always destined in these islands to be in places where my men fall sick.” Other illnesses also plagued the troops. On January 20, James C. Rutledge, an army surgeon stationed near Iligan with the road-building troops, sent an urgent letter to the 28th Infantry’s adjutant. He reported that the men were “surrounded by infections and contagious diseases,” and the camp was quarantined due to the presence of smallpox. In addition, he referred to “a considerable number of cases of Dysentery, Diarrhea, and

veneral [sic] diseases in the command.” Rutledge requested additional hospital staff, 220
arguing that “A lack of trained assistants will tend toward spread of these diseases.”⁴³²
Bullard changed the work schedule to keep the men out of the blazing sun during the
hottest part of the day, but he could not completely insulate them from the presence of so
many diseases, each of which cut into the battalion’s productivity and impeded progress
on the road.

Conditions specific to the Moro Province – the heat, unfamiliar terrain, and
prevalence of disease – distinguished this road-building project as particularly arduous.
But in other ways, it exemplified the army’s longstanding practice of using its enlisted
men to do manual labor. The *Manila Times* captured the essence of their service as
laborers with the headline, “Uncle Sam’s Soldiers, Road Builders.” The paper explained
the special challenges faced by soldiers of the Tenth and Twenty-Eighth Infantry on the
road-building detail:

they are opening up the cuts, widening the trail into a road, laying the ballast and
grading the highway just as a force of street laborers would do in the United
States, the only difference in the conditions being that the street laborer in the
States has the benefit of a tolerable climate, good food and a comfortable place to
sleep, whereas the soldier road-builders in Mindanao must labor under a tropical
sun, supported by a ration, which, if accounts be reliable, is not the most
nourishing.⁴³³

Furthermore, soldiers were tired from “a long campaign against the Moros” and “racked
by disease and emaciated and weakened by a long season of duty under the broiling heat
of a relentless tropical sun.” The newspaper expressed sympathy with the troops for

⁴³² Jas. C. Rutledge to Adjutant, 28th Infantry, January 20, 1903, Posts and U.S. Forces Iligan, Mindanao, 1900-1904, Construction Force, Iligan-Lake Lanao Military Road, Letters Sent and Received, Jan-April 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, Record Group 395 (Records of United States Army Overseas Operations and Commands, 1898-1942), NA, Washington, D.C.

⁴³³ “Mindanao Troops may be relieved,” *Manila Times*, February 14, 1903, [transcription] in John J. Pershing Papers, LC.

presumably doing work far beyond their typical responsibilities as soldiers. It lamented 221
the fact that the infantrymen were “required to turn from their military status and perform
the labor that the government generally has done by men employed from civil life.” On
the one hand, the *Manila Times* recognized an important fact about the military’s duties
in the southern Philippines: troops were being used as laborers in building this
thoroughfare, and the work itself was challenging. However, this turn of events was
nowhere near as novel as the newspaper pretended. Instead, the infantrymen working on
the Iligan road were part of a long tradition of soldier-laborers. Like their predecessors in
the American West, they were assigned to cut trails, grade roads, and labor in extreme
weather. They did this work because it was essential to the army’s occupation of hostile
and unfriendly territory where alternative sources of labor were scarce. These troops in
Mindanao were indeed “Uncle Sam’s...Road Builders,” but they were far from the first
American soldiers to do the work of “street laborers.”

Most of the stories told about the Iligan road portrayed it in celebratory terms: the
Manila Times praised the herculean efforts of soldier-workers; Bateman told about
brilliant adaptations to the challenges of the tropics; and Bullard spoke of civilization’s
great rewards. In private, however, Bullard was deeply disappointed and frustrated in his
men. The contrast between the narratives produced for public consumption – for
newspapers and magazines – and the record Bullard left in his personal diary is striking.
But another record of the Iligan road also remains, one left by enlisted men. The song “In
Mindanao” tells the story of the soldiers transferred from Luzon to build the road. Dating
from 1902 or 1903 and preserved in a collection of reminiscences and songs published in
1914, the song highlights the travails of the work and the pleasures of drink. It also

communicates some of the issues of morale, loafing, and illness that so frustrated Bullard. Set to the tune of the “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” the singers announce, “We’re going up to the Lake Lanao, / To the town they call Marahui.” Of course, the soldiers who sang this song included colorful descriptions of the dangers they faced: “a kris... in your liver” and a “bolo fist” – but they also highlighted the bawdier dangers of too much fun. In the first stanza the soldiers explain, “for Mindanao we took our vow / In a glass of foaming booze.” This helps explain some of the more unpleasant experiences later on, such as the “jim-jams and the fever” mentioned in the third stanza. (Jim-jams, or jitters, were often due to “delirium tremens” caused by alcohol.)

“In Mindanao” was more than a drinking song, however. In it soldiers reflected on the rigors of their assignment.

We’re blasting stumps and grading bumps,
Our hands and backs are sore, oh!
We work all day just dreamin’ of our pay,
And damn the husky Moros!

Perhaps most revealing, given Bullard’s struggles to curb the sick list, the final stanza describes how soldiers dodged the hard work of road building and tried to recover from their “sore” bodies and aching heads. It concludes,

When you’re pulled from bed with a great big head,
And a weakness o’er you stealing;
The sick report is a fine resort,
To cure that tired feeling.

Whether the “great big head” was caused by too much “booze” or too much “blasting” and “grading,” the singers do not say. Regardless, this song provides a different perspective on the challenges Bullard faced from his position supervising the troops. The soldiers who arrived in Mindanao to work on the Iligan road found themselves “camped

in the sand of a foreign land” and surrounded by a dangerous enemy. They took refuge in drinking, “loafing,” and in song. This particular ballad shows how at least some of them felt about their assignment: “When the road is built and the Moros ‘kilt,’ / They’ll none of us be sorry.”⁴³⁴ While Bullard and his other officers hoped the road would be a monument to the U.S.’s civilizing mission in the Philippines, enlisted men were simply trying to get through days of hard work. As “In Mindanao” reminds us, their experience was that of ordinary laborers “dreamin’ of...pay.”

Beyond the Iligan Road, enlisted men constituted an essential source of labor in the southern Philippines. Soldiers cut lumber and built quarters, just as their predecessors had in Texas and Arizona.⁴³⁵ As in the American West, the maintenance of many small posts scattered across great distances became a drain on army personnel and resources. In its overseas territories, however, the army attempted to take advantage of a new population of workers: the indigenous people. In 1904, Leonard Wood, the first governor of the Moro Province, lamented the fact that American soldiers spent too much time on non-combat duties. “The men,” he wrote, “are largely occupied in duties other than military – in fact, the result from a standpoint of military excellence and economy is not desirable.” This had been a familiar refrain for the nineteenth-century “frontier army.” In the Philippines, however, the army had an alternative labor pool, which could relieve American soldiers from menial labor. Wood suggested using the native Philippine

⁴³⁴ For the song lyrics and a discussion of the historical context, see Thomas P. Walsh, *Tin Pan Alley and the Philippines: American Songs of War and Love, 1898-1946 : A Resource Guide* (Summit, Pa.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 168-169. The lyrics are recorded in *Historical sketch, constitution, and register of the Military order of the Carabao together with songs that have been sung at “wallows” in various places* (Washington, D.C: Press of W.F. Roberts co., 1914), 166, <https://archive.org/stream/historicalskech00mili#page/166/mode/2up>. Accessed 17 Feb. 2015.

⁴³⁵ For example, soldiers cut timber and built the barracks at the new Camp Vicars. See Adjutant General to Post Commander, 16 January 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

Constabulary for maintenance duties, freeing up American soldiers for the “performance 224 of their duties in war.” The implication of Wood’s argument was that Filipino constabulary soldiers were better suited for chores like boiling water for drinking. “It is believed that much of the work which has hitherto been performed by troops should be done by this police force and that troops should be used only for serious work,” Wood wrote. With the Filipino Constabulary available to boil drinking water, maintain the barracks, and deal with petty skirmishes and other “police work,” the regular army officers would be able to concentrate on “serious work.”⁴³⁶

Officers envisioned a hierarchy of laborers with American soldiers at the top. Enlisted soldiers were employed as “skilled laborers” on “public works of the Moro Province,” receiving “a daily or hourly wage” in addition to their regular monthly pay.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, in 1905 the Philippine Commission reported that soldiers were serving as foremen on road-building projects. They earned \$80 to \$100 per month for this work, dramatically more than both local laborers as well as enlisted men.⁴³⁸ Of course, because American foremen cost the government so dearly, the report emphasized that “as few...as possible” were employed on the public works.⁴³⁹

In addition to their “enlisted laborers,” the army also tried to employ indigenous

⁴³⁶ “Report Department of Mindanao,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1904. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 58th Congress, 3d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 271.

⁴³⁷ “Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” September 1, 1903 to August 31, 1904, Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 91. Enlisted men had long been entitled to extra pay when they provided specialized services, such as blacksmithing, bookkeeping, or teaching. On extra pay in the nineteenth century, see Coffman, *Old Army*, 347. On pay in the “new army” in the early twentieth century, see Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars the American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 115.

⁴³⁸ Report of the Philippine Commission, 1905, 336. Pay ranged from \$13 per month for privates to \$75 for top-paid master electricians; see Coffman, *Regulars*, 115.

⁴³⁹ Report of the Philippine Commission, 1905, 336.

people in Mindanao. In and of itself, this was routine; the army had employed locals, including Native Americans, in the trans-Mississippi West.⁴⁴⁰ The situation in the southern Philippines presented different challenges and opportunities. First, the army was at war in the Moro Province – at war against the same people, broadly speaking, it sought to recruit as workers. Hostilities were not declared over until 1909, and the military only turned over administration of the province to civilian authorities in 1913.⁴⁴¹ Second, the Americans saw the Moros as “savages” unfamiliar with the responsibilities of both capitalism and civilization. Yet they still hoped the Moros would be able to help them in their demanding construction projects. Ideally, the local population – Moros and animists as well as Filipinos and Japanese – would relieve American soldiers of some common labor, leaving the Americans to provide leadership and specialized skills. Although the army sought to take advantage of a readily available and less expensive labor force, they also portrayed the employment of Moros as part of the U.S.’s civilizing mission. In one report, for example, engineers in charge of provincial building projects “emphasized the fact that the large amount of military and civil public works in the province has been the best sort of an industrial school.”⁴⁴² Moros were pupils rather than workers, learning from their labor rather than surviving by it. In this image of colonial tutelage, American soldiers became valuable teachers as they “instructed” the local people in the arts of hard work. However, as events on the Iligan military road also make clear, this “industrial

⁴⁴⁰ On civilian employment in Texas, for example, see Smith, *The U.S. Army*, 131-135. The U.S. army also employed Native Americans, most notably as scouts, in the West, but these were drawn from tribes deemed friendly, not hostile. See Thomas W. Dunlay, *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860-90* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

⁴⁴¹ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 20, 23.

⁴⁴² “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 336. Hereafter Report, Moro Province, 1905.

“The Moros Will Not Labor”: Road-Building and Resistance

The army brass had expected Moros to do much of the work of carving a road through the mountains and dense forest from Iligan to Marahui. With \$20,000 ear-marked for their pay, Bullard hoped to recruit Moros early on, but an outbreak of cholera coincided with the battalion’s arrival, impeding those efforts.⁴⁴³ The *Manila Times* blamed the indolent Moros for the fact that American soldiers were performing such thankless work as road-building in the South. Under the headline, “The Moros will not labor,” the newspaper reported that despite offers of cash, “the Moros could not be prevailed upon to perform such menial labor as road construction.” As a result, “soldiers were impressed, and now they are performing the work that the Moros did not have the heart to attempt.”⁴⁴⁴

Convincing Moros to work on the road became one of Bullard’s chief occupations in 1903. He tried to curry the favor of the *datus* (the hereditary elite, discussed below) and make clear the superiority of the American military without directly coercing labor on the road. Not long after the project began, Bullard wrote in his journal: “Today first blows on mountain ascent of Agus river. Moros invited yesterday and today by men, witnessed impressive object lesson dynamiting stumps and trees.”⁴⁴⁵ This “object lesson” was supposed to display the full power of the American military – not in battle, but in remaking the natural world, blasting away rock and paving roads through mountains and building bridges across rivers.

⁴⁴³ Millett, *The General*, 171.

⁴⁴⁴ “Mindanao Troops,” Pershing Papers.

⁴⁴⁵ Bullard Diarybook 2, November 18, 1902.

Even this demonstration of superior firepower did not convince the Moros that they should join the Americans doing such work. Bateman wrote simply, "Native labor was not available because Moros were not pleased with the enterprise." Colonial officials had a variety of explanations for why the Moros "were not pleased." One obvious reason was that the Americans appeared to have brought a deadly disease with them. Others felt that the Moros were simply barbaric and opposed the Americans because they challenged their traditional ways of doing things. Whatever the reasons, Bullard needed to head off Moro opposition to the road and enlist their labor as well. He seemed generally surprised that the Moros were not more welcoming of the American road-building crews, even after cholera had begun to subside. "It appears that neighboring Moros are not as friendly as they were and this in spite of every effort to cultivate good relations," he wrote in his diary on November 20. "Almost all have disappeared from nearby town," and "they do not visit this camp as much as they formerly did." Bullard sounded hurt when he wrote, "today the Sultan of Momungan actually dodged, almost declined an invitation to stop in at camp to see me," especially since this was one of the Moro leaders who had specially come to see him earlier in October.⁴⁴⁶

Evasive datus soon became the least of Bullard's problems. By the first of the year, Moro resistance became more pronounced and began to genuinely interfere with the construction project. "Moro hostility," he wrote, had "been manifested" in fairly minor ways, but the signs of their unfriendliness were increasing: "in their general bearing, skulking about camp and work places on road, disappearance from vicinity on road, a readiness to give up social relations and their rumored blame of Americans for the

⁴⁴⁶ Bullard Diarybook 2, November 20, 1902.

appearance of cholera, dragging off road scraper, chase of my interpreter and shooting 228
two shots in camp Xmas day.” In early January, these hostilities escalated. Bullard
described “an attack by two Moros with Krises on soldier a few yds off road. Soldier
little hurt and Moros escaped.” A guard fired “two ineffectual shots” but the perpetrators
were not apprehended.

This account shows a progression of “Moro hostility” – escalating from what
might be called a “bad attitude” into theft, harassment, and outright violence in the camp.
What is worse, these attacks happened in the midst of Bullard attempting the new work
schedule for the regulars. It also coincided with the arrival of General Davis and Sumner.
With them came pressure to make friends and, more importantly, workers of the Moros.
Bullard noted that Davis “very expressly desired” him to secure Moros for road work.
But Bullard, who was fully aware of these progressively bold attacks, was pessimistic of
ever making the Moros into allies, much less willing workers. “I fear it is impossible.
They don’t want to work, though full of declarations to the contrary and all kinds of
promises to come,” he wrote.⁴⁴⁷ Yet the task of persuading Moros to join the Americans
became central to their understanding of the imperial mission. As Bullard wrote, “They
have no traditions of work. Among them labor is generally the part of slaves, women, and
children. It is accordingly looked upon with contempt by Moro freemen.”⁴⁴⁸ Changing
this cultural orientation and inculcating values of hard work in the Moros came to be seen
as one of the great gifts the Americans could give their less advanced brethren.

Recruiting Moro workers was an issue of ideological as well as practical

⁴⁴⁷ Bullard Diarybook 2, Jan. 28, 1903.

⁴⁴⁸ Bullard, “Road Building Among the Moros,” 822.

significance. Of course, the army wanted Moro labor because it would help complete the 229 project more quickly and cheaply than a road built entirely by enlisted men. But the army also sought the recognition and affirmation that Moro labor seemed to stamp on the American occupation writ large. Bullard was not alone in seeking this affirmation. A few years later in 1905, George T. Langhorne, an army officer serving as the provincial governor in place of Leonard Wood, reflected happily on the work performed by Moros on behalf of the U.S. army. "The Moros are being encouraged to get out timber needed by the military authorities in the construction of posts," he wrote. Langhorne pointed to Camp Keithley as an example of Moro industry. There they had built "over 70 barracks, quarters, and other buildings of grass and bamboo." They also "furnished logs for the quartermaster sawmill" and "corduroy for the roads and fuel for the Overton ice plant."⁴⁴⁹ When discussing Moros' enthusiasm for military labor, Captain Langhorne described a mutually beneficial relationship between the army and the local laborers. The army had "encouraged" them to supply timber, but they had responded energetically based on their own desire for work and money. "The natives have many prosperous looking settlements, and as they have a great desire to make money they are anxious to work and to trade," Langhorne wrote.⁴⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the same report, he likewise portrayed the Moros as overly eager to work on behalf of the army. "The Moros throughout the province have shown a great desire to work." Sometimes they even produced more than was necessary. Unfortunately for those industrious Moros, they "cut more wood for the quartermaster, put in more poles for corduroy on the Lanao road, and brought more coral rock to

⁴⁴⁹ Report, Moro Province, 1905, 345.

⁴⁵⁰ Report, Moro Province, 1905, 345.

Zamboanga from adjacent islands than has been called for.”⁴⁵¹

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Officers like Langhorne were careful not to overstate Moros’ qualifications as laborers. He remarked on the Moros’ enthusiasm for work without giving them credit for being industrious or steady laborers, instead attributing their hard work to the military men who supervised them. Their productivity at Camp Keithley, for example, “was due largely to the energy, tact, and fair dealings of Captain Davidson, quartermaster there.” Another officer, Major Hardie at Overton, was so popular among the indigenous leaders and labor brokers, at least, that they wrote to the department commander to “request his retention” when he left. He acknowledged that they “worked well...when handled with tact and fairness.”⁴⁵²

The issue of Moros’ suitability as workers was crucial to the American imperial project. In fact, as Paul Kramer explains, the question of Filipinos’ “capacity” for both work and self-government animated imperial politics throughout the U.S.’s administration of the Philippines. Colonial administrators were especially concerned with Filipinos’ capacity for labor given their interest in attracting capital investment to the archipelago. However, officials had to be careful not to exaggerate or understate their subjects’ ability to work well. “Attributions of Filipino laziness frightened away foreign capital, but claims of energetic Filipino labor – so closely tied to notions of thrift, prosperity, and self-restraint – could easily be mistaken for recognition of Filipino capacities, perhaps including those for nationality and self-rule,” Kramer writes.⁴⁵³ Most officers, including Leonard Wood, were not even entertaining the notion of Filipino

⁴⁵¹ Report, Moro Province, 1905, 338.

⁴⁵² Report, Moro Province, 1905, 345.

⁴⁵³ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 313.

independence, much less any type of self-rule for the Muslims and other non-Christians 231
in the south.⁴⁵⁴ All the same, officers like Langhorne were careful to note Moros' helpfulness, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of American management in handling these workers.

The willingness of Moros to work on army-led projects served as an endorsement of the Americans' presence. In this sense, the success of Moros as workers served less to bolster their own "capacity" for self-government or self-management, and more to validate the Americans' civilizational mission in the southern Philippines. In the case of the Iligan road, three thousand Moros did ultimately work for the army, despite inauspicious beginnings. Their eventual embrace of American work opportunities was touted beyond the military: Bullard and Bateman published celebratory accounts of Moro labor in popular outlets including the *Atlantic Monthly*. In private, however, Bullard divulged another story of the Iligan road – one far more frustrating and far less triumphant. Toward the end of January, a few Moros began coming into camp to work. "42 Moros went to work day before yesterday, 1/3 boys; yesterday about 30 worked, about half boys; today none worked," Bullard noted. Millett writes, "For such a hard task as the *datus* could clearly see American road-building was, they sent only slaves and boys."⁴⁵⁵ Despite these additional workers and the arrival of new companies of regulars, Bullard admitted that "work on road is now very slow."⁴⁵⁶ He felt increasing pressure from his superior to recruit Moro laborers and began to approach the task with the zeal of

⁴⁵⁴ Wood, for example, wrote his brother in 1906: "So far as the islands being ready for self-government is concerned, such talk is not only foolish but criminal. They are several generations away from any possible fitness for self-government as yet." Wood to his brother, 22 September 1906, Wood Papers, LC.

⁴⁵⁵ Millett, *General*, 172.

⁴⁵⁶ Bullard Diarybook 2, January 31, 1903.

a personal obsession. He wrote, “Now I am on the Moro proposition, trying to induce these savages to work on the road....I’m going to make it work too or bust.”⁴⁵⁷ A few days later, however, he confessed he was “Still struggling with the problem of securing Moros to work on road.” By that point he had 70 to 75 Moros at work. The effort was time-consuming, but it had the potential to pay significant dividends in savings to the army. Bullard wondered whether they could be persuaded to work for the wages offered. “It will be remarkable success,” he wrote, “if they can be secured at the present price which is about half what they received from the U.S. for like work a year or two ago cutting out brush on the old Spanish trail.”⁴⁵⁸

Recruiting a Moro workforce involved a good deal of political negotiation and diplomacy. Bullard found himself engaged in endless meetings with the Moro leadership, reaching out to various *datus* and trying to persuade them of the benefits of sending men to work on the road. He found these meetings frustrating. “A great many Moro chiefs are coming in to visit and talk with me about road work but they are ever ‘on the talk,’ rarely ‘on the work,’” he wrote with exasperation.⁴⁵⁹ The *datus’* penchant for talking and consuming Bullard’s time may have been more than a whim. Instead, by drawing out dialogue with Bullard, they may have been attempting to curry favorable treatment from him while they decided whether or not to work on the road. Even months later, after Bullard had succeeded in getting significant numbers of Moros to work on the road, his days were still consumed with such conferences. “I’ve lately had so much worry with Moros, that I’m tired,” he wrote in April. He found himself arbitrating between different

⁴⁵⁷ Bullard Diarybook 2, Feb. 4, 1903.

⁴⁵⁸ Bullard Diarybook 2, Feb. 8, 1903.

⁴⁵⁹ Bullard Diarybook 2, Feb. 8, 1903.

leaders competing for road work, and he admitted it was “hard to avoid becoming entangled in their quarrels.”⁴⁶⁰ In a typical entry he wrote, “A week of cracking stories and talking with dattos, things about equally tiresome.”⁴⁶¹ Even though Bullard was presumably in charge of the whole project, he still could not avoid such “tiresome” conversations. The employment of Moros was important to the army, and if entertaining and visiting with them was necessary to keep them at work, Bullard had to oblige them.

These efforts began to bear fruit in March. By that point Bullard had already been employing some Moros, and he found it somewhat easier to induce others to join the construction project as the troops progressed toward Lake Lanao. Bullard visited Pantar in advance of the construction crews in hopes of recruiting Moro laborers and preparing a camp for the troops. He had the good fortune to find a friendly welcome there. “I was visited within a few hours after my arrival by half a dozen Datoes of the neighborhood. I found them informed as to the good treatment and prompt pay of their fellow countrymen, who had been working with us at Camp #1. The Pantar Datoes showed themselves quite friendly and I had no trouble in inducing them to agree to clean up the Camp site, bring in the necessary wood and poles to start the camp and to cut all the grass and brush in the road between Pantar and Tiradores Hill, four miles back toward Camp #3.” Bullard was optimistic that he would soon “be able to secure all the Moro laborers that can be worked to advantage from that camp.”⁴⁶² He was beginning to feel satisfied with his own accomplishments regarding the Moro labor problem. “I’ve been able somehow to make a success in the employment of the Moros, which is the all important matter on this work,”

⁴⁶⁰ Bullard Diarybook 2, April 11, 1903.

⁴⁶¹ Bullard Diarybook 2, April 18, 1903.

⁴⁶² Bullard to Adjutant, March 4, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

he confided to his journal. But the work was far from over, and Bullard had ambitious 234 plans: "I hope to have at least 300 Moros at work on road here within 10 days."⁴⁶³ By the end of the month, Bullard declared optimistically, "Relations improving all the time with Moros."⁴⁶⁴

Improvement aside, the labor situation was far from ideal on the Iligan road. The Moros were never the steady, reliable workers the army hoped for, and the regular soldiers fell short of expectations as well. "The progress on this work done by the two companies during the past week is far from satisfactory," Bullard wrote the adjutant at one point. In the same letter he asked permission to keep two companies at Camp 1 to finish some work, including replacing two culverts, "a little rock work (in gutters), a slight amount of pick and shovel work, considerable slashing" and "grubbing out several stumps still left in the roadway and gutters." Bullard needed these additional troops to stay behind to complete these "finishing touches" because initial work had been inadequate. By this point Bullard had succeeded in recruiting quite a few Moros to join his construction crew, but they were of limited help. In no way was it possible to completely replace soldiers with Moro workers because the latter were "incapable" of doing certain types of work to Bullard's specifications. For example, he asked for two companies of regular soldiers from Camp 3 to relocate to Camp 4 because "the bridge is of such character that it will be very difficult to utilize natives to any great extent." Bullard also coordinated assignments between the regulars and the Moros, making sure that whatever work the "natives" did was then revisited by soldiers. "[A]lthough the work

⁴⁶³ Bullard Diarybook 2, March 11, 1903.

⁴⁶⁴ Bullard Diarybook 2, March 30, 1903.

done by them decreases by so much the work done by the soldiers yet each foot done by natives should be again gone over by soldiers hence the request to leave a portion of the Infty at each camp,” he wrote. The Moros reduced the overall workload but did not entirely replace soldier-laborers.⁴⁶⁵ 235

Bullard was often more eager to accommodate the Moros than they were keen to work on the road. His request for supplies for his workers at Pantar reflected the urgency of retaining the Moro workers. Bullard wanted 1,000 pesos and 2,000 pounds of rice “sent...as fast as possible” by pack train. “We are going to have lots of Moros and I do not want to let them loose for a minute. If money and rice be not on hand, they ought by all means to be got quick. If the money is in Manila, I urgently ask that you make a [?] call for it. If I ever have to let these Moros go now, I’ll never be able to get them back as before.”⁴⁶⁶ The next day, he wrote from the camp at Pantar assuring the adjutant that “the employment of Moro Labor is very promising.” Many “important” datus had committed their people to work on the road. Yet timing was of the essence. Bullard wanted to get started immediately before he lost them. “I consider it important to get settled and get hold of these Moros as quickly as possible while they are in the humor for work,” he wrote.⁴⁶⁷ Here was a top army officer in command of an extensive construction operation – but he was concerned about the Moros’ “humor for work.” Bullard was far from in control of the Moros; rather, he desperately requested supplies and transportation out of fear that men he called “savages” might change their minds about working for the army.

⁴⁶⁵ Bullard to Adjutant, March 20, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

⁴⁶⁶ Bullard to Col. C.A. Williams, March 12, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

⁴⁶⁷ Bullard to Adjutant, March 13, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

The challenges of managing this workforce were exacerbated by the fact the Americans were at war in Mindanao. As much as Bullard emphasized that his work was “pacification” rather than war-making, the potential for violence frequently threatened to derail his project. When they first began the road work, Bullard issued a general order about the “Moros and Natives” now employed by the army. Soldiers were “cautioned not to interfere in any way or attempt to give any Orders to these laborers unless they have been put in charge of them by proper authority.”⁴⁶⁸ The fact that Bullard wanted to protect his workers from harassment from other soldiers indicates the importance of their continued labor on the road. Despite such warnings, friction between soldiers and Moros threatened to upset the delicate relationship between Moros and the army. At the end of March, another officer arrived with 100 soldiers after Bullard held “a long conference” with the “Sultan of Marahui.” He believed that the arrival of the soldiers “startled all the Moros of the vicinity,” leading them to believe they might be under attack. Bullard took immediate action: “Feeling sure that his conduct was going to give the lie to all my peace talk I went out after him and found him.” The officer and his contingent were “hunting” a group of hostile Moros, but Bullard resented his alarming presence near the worksite. He wrote, “This whole undertaking, to build this road in peace was on the verge of being ruined by a man who did not know what he was about or what a complicated question he was tackling. I couldn’t permit it.”⁴⁶⁹ Another incident in August 1903, near the end of the project, further underlined Bullard’s precarious relationship with Moro workers. Yet again, he blamed American officers for not exercising sufficient restraint in dealing with

⁴⁶⁸ General Orders No 4, January 29, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

⁴⁶⁹ Bullard Diarybook 2, March 30, 1903.

the Moros. Bullard wrote from Camp Marahui about the colossal task of moving the camp “from the bottom to the hilltop.” Two-hundred and fifty Moros labored to move the camp in a task of strategic and symbolic moment. “Having reached the last stage of the work, I felt that we were now at last to test the Moros. If we had no difficulty ascending Marahui ridge, then we never would have any trouble,” Bullard wrote. Unfortunately, they had trouble. He noted that before the move, he had summoned his officers and enlisted men and “cautioned” them. The next day, however, “a fool officer...so nagged the sentinel” about allowing the Moros to stand while Bullard spoke to them – an apparent show of disrespect. The sentinel “struck” three of the Moros to discipline them for standing. This show of force was ill-timed and dangerous. “We came very near having a fight, and we did face the most serious situation we have ever had on this work.” Rather than being able to use the hundreds of Moros he had recruited for the work, he “had to call for wagons from Iligan” – where the road originated – “to move half a mile up the hill, most of the Moros refusing to work.” Again Bullard had to act the diplomat toward the Moro workers: “It has taken me two weeks to smoothe [sic] things over,” he wrote with exasperation. He recommended punishing the “bad” Moros and rewarding the others. He would “get the good will of Moros by gifts (in accordance with Moro customs) to heal the sore hearts of those who in our fights have lost friends.” Bullard did not elaborate on who these “lost friends” were, but his diary entry suggests that the American response to this particular labor disruption was severe.⁴⁷⁰

Bullard blamed these incidents on the incompetence and poor judgment of individual officers. But the potential for such discord was systemic rather than personal, a

⁴⁷⁰ Bullard Diarybook 2, August 24, 1903.

consequence of the fact that the army was enlisting the labor of Moro people at the same 238
time it was trying to subdue “hostility” among them. Bullard was not the only officer
attuned to this difficulty of balancing war-making and pacification. In a circular dated
November 16, 1902, Colonel Noble issued orders instructing commanding officers to
secure arms and ammunition from theft by Moros. But the circular went on to caution
officers about the treatment of Moros by their men. It cited a case of a Moro robbed by
two soldiers. “The policy of the United States is peace, not strife; this should be borne in
mind by all, and endeavors made to adhere strictly by acts, as well as words to this one
idea,” Noble declared. “The natives desire peace, and unless greatly provoked by lawless
acts on our part will not begin the strife. No interference will be permitted with natives
following their various avocations, nor going to, or returning from town.”⁴⁷¹

Violent episodes periodically undermined the assertion that “the natives desire
peace.” When Bullard first visited Pantar to scout a location for his camp and recruit the
locals to work on the road, he met “many Dattos, who expressed willingness to work
upon the road.” He was optimistic about the prospect that possibly 150 Moros could be
recruited. In the same report, however, he described a violent encounter between “a small
party” of engineers mapping the area and “a large party of Moros armed with knives and
lances.” The Moros told the engineers to turn back and return to Pantar. Later, Bullard
received a report from “two runners” of a neighboring, friendly datu, that the soldiers
should expect an attack from a group of 150 Moros. From Bullard’s report it seems the
attack never materialized, but he included an account of the incident because it indicated
to him the “strategic value” of Pantar, at least in the minds of the Moros. “Resistance, if

⁴⁷¹ Circular No. 5, November 16, 1902, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

made, will be the most serious here,” he wrote.⁴⁷² It was not the only time or place the road-builders encountered “resistance.” Over the coming weeks Bullard noted various incidents – one of Moro “prowlers” who snuck into camp, assaulted a guard, and stole some implements which they then resold at a nearby market.⁴⁷³ In another case, he blamed a “careless guard” who had his gun stolen from him by two Moros.⁴⁷⁴ These incidents, while minor, reminded Bullard and his troops that they were not merely building a road. Rather, they were attempting to construct a military thoroughfare in occupied territory, surrounded by people who opposed their very presence in the country. Bullard never succeeded in completing subduing the violent undercurrents of his Moro workforce; hostility remained latent, under the surface, ready to explode.

The story that emerges from Bullard’s diary and official reports reveals the difficult work of getting the Moros to work. After the work stoppage at Camp Marahui, he wrote, “The more I see of the world and especially of its unusual work,” he wrote, “the more I know that few men are fit to manage it, the more I am of the opinion that Gen Davis did right to help Pershing at work with these Moros instead of sending some fool who is ignorantly supposed that he could come in in an offhand manner and manage these savages.”⁴⁷⁵ Bullard believed that managing the Moros required extraordinary skill, even though Moros were “savages.” Certainly this was a bit of self-aggrandizement consistent with a colonial official’s sense of cultural and intellectual superiority. But Bullard’s actions show that he was forced to accommodate the Moros in a variety of

⁴⁷² Bullard to Adjutant, Construction Force, Feb. 22, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

⁴⁷³ Bullard to Adjutant-General, Dept. of Mindanao, March 15, 1903, Box 1, Entry 3908, RG 395.

⁴⁷⁴ Bullard Diarybook 2, March 22, 1903.

⁴⁷⁵ Bullard Diarybook 2, August 24, 1903.

ways because their labor was deemed essential to the military's success. To that end, he 240 talked with their leaders for hours – an activity he found personally exhausting. He worried about getting the necessary implements, equipment, and pay while they were in the “humor” for work. He tried to shield them from the war-making activities of his fellow officers because he worried they would be frightened away from the road. And he tried to “smooth things over” and diffuse tense situations. Despite his assumed superiority, Bullard – and the U.S. army – did not hold all the cards in this complex diplomatic game.

In contrast to Bullard's diary, a completely different narrative emerges from the official accounts written for the American public. In an essay titled “Road-Building among the Moros,” published in late 1903, Bullard described the laudable transformation of the Moros into steady workers. “The civilizing, educational effect was marked....Altogether it was a great stride for savages. They had become peaceful workers. They finished the road and opened the way to their own civilization.”⁴⁷⁶ Such declarations elided the difficulty of persuading Moros to offer their labor. The discourse of civilization, moreover, obscured the military purpose of the road. In another article, Bullard emphasized the fruits of civilization. The army wanted to share with the Moros “the advantages, the benefits, of peace, order, and government, -- things which they had not.”⁴⁷⁷ Nowhere in these accounts is any hint of the American need for Moro labor. Bullard left out of his public accounts the desperation with which he pursued these workers. Instead, he referred to his many meetings with datus as part of a larger work of

⁴⁷⁶ Bullard, “Road Building Among the Moros,” 824.

⁴⁷⁷ R.L. Bullard, “Preparing Our Moros for Government,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 97 (March 1906): 386. <http://www.UNZ.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1906mar-00385>. Accessed March 13, 2014.

diplomacy. Rather than trying to persuade them to act as labor brokers for the army, he 241
was merely attempting to demonstrate the U.S.'s beneficent intentions in Mindanao. "I
told them of the might, but assured them of the friendly intentions of the Americans; that
we had not come to fight, but to open roads, so that the Moros could come to buy, sell,
trade, work with the Americans and grow rich; that we had come to bring the Moros all
the valuable and useful things which they saw we had," Bullard wrote.⁴⁷⁸

Contact with civilized people would expose the Moros to goods they would want
to possess themselves; in turn, they would embrace labor as a means of satisfying their
new desires. This was how civilization was supposed to work, at any rate. In this
narrative, the Americans did not need the Moros, but the *opportunity* to labor was one of
the gifts of civilization the army brought these "savages." Pacification, as Bullard
envisioned it, meant economic opportunity – for the Moros. "Pay for work was sure, and
the burning desire for arms began to be forgotten in an awakened love of gain. A new
force was at work among Moros, and what, in civilized men, we rail at as low and vile,
became in these savages a saving virtue, making for peace and progress." By presenting
the Moros with the opportunity to work, the Americans exposed them to the notion of
earning money, persuading them to replace their love of firearms and war with a love of
"gain." And gain was synonymous with "peace and progress." For Bullard, this was the
heart of his road-building endeavor: the army was not exploiting the Moros' labor; the
Americans were not even the chief beneficiaries of the Moros' labor. Rather, by allowing
them to work on the road, earn money, and experience financial gain, Bullard and his
compatriots were bringing civilization, "peace and progress," to the jungles of Mindanao.

⁴⁷⁸ Bullard, "Preparing Our Moros," 387.

Even within the army, reports on the labor dimension of the project finessed the rough edges of Bullard's attempts to recruit Moro workers. In the official report to the Secretary of War, Brigadier-General Samuel S. Sumner, commander of the Department of Mindanao, wrote, "At first no native labor could be secured and the soldiers did all the work, but as we got into the country the Moros began to seek employment, and at the present time a large number are regularly employed."⁴⁷⁹ Likewise when Bateman narrated these events in *The Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, a magazine for American military personnel, he minimized the difficulties Bullard faced in trying to recruit Moro workers. He wrote simply, "An invitation was sent out far and wide. The response exceeded all expectations."⁴⁸⁰ Bateman converted months-long struggle into quick and simple episode. The chaplain and intelligence officer praised Bullard for learning the Moro language and easily winning over the "natives" who were eager to work for such a popular American; any sense of the Moros' significance in the relationship disappeared. Instead, the Americans obliged the Moros, deigning to employ them in order to introduce them to civilization. Bateman emphasized that the Moros were made to feel their support was not crucial to the Americans; they were relatively unimportant. "They were told by General Sumner that their services were desired at good wages, but their help was not essential to the completion of the task in hand," Bateman wrote.⁴⁸¹ In this rendition of events, the Americans merely demonstrated their superiority

⁴⁷⁹ "Report, Department of Mindanao," (Appendix III), in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1903. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 58th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 302. Hereafter Report, Department of Mindanao, 1903.

⁴⁸⁰ Bateman, "Military Roadmaking," 196.

⁴⁸¹ Bateman, "Military Roadmaking," 197. Bullard described his efforts to learn the Moro language while supervising the road-building project in his autobiography: "I...had already for some months been studying the Moro language hard, as well as I could from one or two little pamphlets that I had found...I had learned

– even to mastering the Moros’ own language – and the inferior people flocked to them 243
to offer their services.

A photograph published with the article reflects the pedagogical nature of the military project. The picture shows two army officers with several half-naked Moro adults and children standing in a clearing, evidently one of their own making. The Moros are holding picks and shovels, the implements of their labor. The caption reads: “Teaching Moros the ‘Arts of Peace.’” All indication of resistance to the American military presence or the demands of hard labor are erased from this scene. Instead, the infantilized Moros, grouped together without distinction of age, are willing students, learning the “arts of peace.” Like the magazine articles penned by Bullard and Bateman, this photo showed the U.S. army in the best light. The soldier pictured was the type of man Bullard would later call “a peace-maker and a peace-preserver.”⁴⁸²

In 1903, Samuel S. Sumner wrote about various road-building projects in the Department of Mindanao. Soldiers had recently built a 22-mile road from Malabang to Camp Vicars in the Lake Lanao region, “the theater of active military operations.” Sumner praised it as “a monument to the energy and skill of the American soldiers.” It represented, he said, “months of hard work and daily discomfort, which was borne without complaint.”⁴⁸³ He also acknowledged the construction of the Iligan road under Bullard’s leadership. We know that, whatever happened on the road to Camp Vicars, the work on the Iligan military road was not “borne without complaint.” But despite shirking

from living among the simple negroes of the South and among the Tagalogs in Luzon, that to speak the language of the people in their ways was the very best means of approaching them.” Bullard autobiography manuscript, chapter 10, 60 in Box 9, Bullard Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴⁸² Robert L. Bullard, “Military Pacification,” *Journal of the Military Service Institute of the United States* 46 (January–February 1910): 46.

⁴⁸³ Report, Department of Mindanao, 1903, 299.

and occasional outbreaks of violence, it too became a “monument” to U.S. imperialism 244
in the southern Philippines.

The construction of these roads, while not “conspicuous service,” in Sumner’s words, was nonetheless essential to the army’s larger mission, “making possible the holding and gradual extension of our authority in the lake country.”⁴⁸⁴ Roads, however, did more than enable the army to transport men and materiel. By laboring on the Iligan military road, Bullard believed the Moros had “opened the way to their own civilization.” While smoothing over the conflicts at the heart of the undertaking, Bullard and Bateman’s narratives of progress through labor, of American superiority finally triumphing over barbarism, fit with the officers’ larger understanding of its role in the Philippines. Labor, organized and managed by the U.S. army, would bring “civilization” to the “savages” of the south.

“The civilizing of the Moros”: Roads and Economic Development

Road-building continued to be central to the U.S. occupation of the southern Philippines for years after the Iligan military road was finished. In fact, military administrators became even more focused on the social and political dimensions of such infrastructure. In 1907, 2nd Lieutenant Roger G. Powell of the engineer corps reported on a proposed road in his district in Sulu. He did not describe the road’s value in terms of military necessity, but instead emphasized its potential to facilitate trade among the local people. “The construction of the Jolo-Maibun road will be of great benefit to the western end of the island as well as to the town of Jolo,” Powell wrote. The new road, he believed, “will encourage the natives to buy carts, and the people in Jolo will have better

⁴⁸⁴ Report, Department of Mindanao, 1903, 303.

chances to see and become acquainted with the natives of the interior. It will be a factor 245
in the civilizing of the Moros.”⁴⁸⁵ The road, in short, would “civilize” the Moros by
fostering economic and political development in the region. Powell and his fellow
officers believed the army should not only subdue “hostiles” but also “civilize” the
Philippines by remaking its political economy. The construction of modern infrastructure
– roads, bridges, and wharves – was central to their vision of this imperial mandate.

The army exercised an unusual degree of power in the southern Philippines. The
U.S. declared peace throughout much of the Christianized Philippines with General
Orders 152, dated July 7, 1902, but large parts of Mindanao and Sulu were excluded from
this directive.⁴⁸⁶ In the south, the population was majority “non-Christian,” and included
Muslims as well as “pagans” or animist groups. Civil and military officials argued that
these non-Christians were too backwards for any measure of self-government, even to the
extent such structures were put in place throughout the rest of the archipelago. As Charles
Burke Elliott, a jurist and one-time member of the Philippine Commission, wrote in his
history of the Philippines, “It was admitted that there was a racial and religious
antagonism between the Moros and the Filipinos which made it impossible to associate
them together for purposes of government. It was not pretended that the Moros were
sufficiently advanced in the ways of civilization to justify granting them any substantial
part in the work of operation a modern government.”⁴⁸⁷ Furthermore, the U.S. army
remained at war in Mindanao and Sulu, where various groups of Muslims and animists

⁴⁸⁵ Roger G. Powell to Tasker H. Bliss Papers, 26 March 1907, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴⁸⁶ Linn, *Guardians*, 29.

⁴⁸⁷ Elliott, *Philippines*, 92.

resisted the imposition of U.S. rule.⁴⁸⁸ On June 1, 1903, the Philippine Commission created a new political designation – the Moro Province – and placed the U.S. army in control of it. Coterminous with the boundaries of the army’s Department of Mindanao, the new Moro Province was ruled by a cadre of military officials who maintained largely autonomous control for over a decade after civilian government was established for the rest of the Philippines. Act No. 787, “An Act Providing for the Organization and Government of the Moro Province,” stipulated that the Civil Governor of the Philippines would appoint six officials, including a provincial governor, to administer the province. These six officials made up the Legislative Council, the law-making body of the Moro Province. The provincial governor was also a military officer who simultaneously commanded the Department of Mindanao. The first three provincial governors were General Leonard Wood (1903-1906), General Tasker H. Bliss (1906-1909), and General John J. Pershing (1909-1913). The other main positions were also usually staffed by military officers.⁴⁸⁹

The U.S. army dominated the political structure of the Moro Province. In his history of Mindanao in the American colonial period, Peter Gowing writes, “for the greater part of the period 1903 to 1913, there prevailed over Moroland what the Spaniards would indeed have called a ‘Politico-Military Province,’ that is, a province which had many of the same offices and functions of government of a civil province but

⁴⁸⁸ See Patricio N. Abinales, *Images of State Power: Essays on Philippine Politics from the Margins* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1998), 3-7, for an account of the perceptions of Moros and non-Christians that helped shape American policy in Mindanao and Sulu.

⁴⁸⁹ This discussion of the establishment of the Moro Province is based on Gowing, *Mandate*, 72-76. For an overview of the terms of Act 787, see also Charles Burke Elliott, *The Philippines: To the End of the Commission Government, a Study in Tropical Democracy* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1917), 92-94.

which was controlled and staffed by military personnel.”⁴⁹⁰ In a similar vein, Patricio 247 Abinales emphasizes the “unprecedented autonomy” army officials enjoyed in the South. “What emerged,” he writes, “was a small clique of *American* army men, insulated from social forces below them and given an almost-free rein by its superiors.”⁴⁹¹ Indeed, General Bliss, the second governor of the province, said it best in a 1907 letter to his predecessor, General Wood: “I do not think that the War Department realizes its responsibility in the government of the Moro Province. After all is said and done, it is a military government conducted by officers of the army.”⁴⁹² The extraordinary latitude exercised by military personnel in the Moro Province provides a striking view of the army’s efforts at state-building in the early twentieth century.

The extent of the army’s influence in the Moro Province was not wholly exceptional. Although the province’s administrative structure was specially designed to suit conditions in the southern Philippines, the army had prior experience occupying and administering territory in American South and West. Circumstances in the Philippines provided the army with new opportunities and challenges. The army used its position, authority, and resources in ways very similar to its previous occupational duties. Building infrastructure that would both enhance military operations and promote trade and commerce ranked high on its list of priorities. In all their duties, army officers deployed a discourse of “civilization” to justify their work of both construction and destruction. The “Old Army” also continued to rely on its experience as a manager of labor-power in carrying out its new mission to build a Pacific empire. Finally, in another similarity to the

⁴⁹⁰ Gowing, *Mandate*, 76.

⁴⁹¹ Abinales, *Images*, 12.

⁴⁹² Bliss to Wood, 19 April 1907, Bliss Papers, LC.

“frontier” army of the nineteenth century, the army’s troop strength frequently seemed 248 inadequate to the great expanse of terrain it was supposed to control. About 4,000 enlisted men and one- to two-hundred officers were stationed at a handful of posts spread out across Mindanao and Sulu, an expanse of 36,540 square-miles.⁴⁹³

As in these prior occupations, the army in the southern Philippines supported road-building because of its purported benefits for the economy. In this officers joined their civilian colonial counterparts in Manila, who had made the relationship between infrastructure and economic development clear from the earliest days of American occupation. Members of the Philippine Commission also touted railroads as essential to economic development. In 1900, the Commissioners wrote to Secretary of War Elihu Root, “Railroads will at once revolutionize life and business in these wonderfully rich, beautiful and healthful tropical Islands. Forty five miles of railroad under negotiation will give access to large provinces rich in valuable materials...Railroad construction will give employment to many and communication will furnish market to vast stretches of agricultural land.”⁴⁹⁴ They “called for extensive systems of railroads on Luzon and Mindanao, which, they claimed, would stimulate the production of tobacco, copra, sugar,

⁴⁹³ A sampling of troop strength is: 184 officers and 3,673 enlisted men (1904); 219 officers and 4,529 enlisted men (1906); 21 officers and 3,905 enlisted men (1907). In 1906, for example, troops were stationed at fourteen posts, but the majority were concentrated at six posts. The army was also augmented with additional Philippine Scouts. The total strength of the army in the Philippines was about 15,000 in this period. “Report Department of Mindanao,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1904. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 58th Congress, 3d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 28; “Report Department of Mindanao,” (Appendix III), in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1906. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 300-301; “Report Department of Mindanao,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1907. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), 287.

⁴⁹⁴ Quoted in May, *Social Engineering*, 135. Quotation from Philippine Commission to Elihu Root, August 21, 1900, WHT, series 3, box 63 [William Howard Taft Papers, Library of Congress].

and ‘other tropical products.’”⁴⁹⁵ Historian Glenn May points out that the Commission’s 249 advocacy of roads and railroads was “a typically American response to Philippine underdevelopment” since internal improvements had been so important to the U.S.’s own trajectory in the nineteenth century.

Army officers advocated railroad construction as part of their larger vision for the Moro Province as well. Officers, including Henry C. Corbin, adjutant-general of the army, and two provincial governors, Leonard Wood and Tasker H. Bliss, proposed building a railroad through the Lake Lanao region for several years. In 1904, Corbin wrote to the Secretary of War regarding the proposed railroad. He compared the initial cost of constructing a wagon road versus a railroad, as well as the annual savings accruing to the army from each. While a railroad would be more expensive to build, it would save the army more over time. But the railroad was also preferable because it would provide superior benefits to the local people. Corbin noted that the “development of the large area of fertile country” depended on access to Marahui, which a new road or railroad would provide. Moreover, “The construction of the railroad would save to the farmer the enormous time and expense which wagon transportation demands over railroad transportation. It would be by far a more potent factor than a good wagon road, in assisting the farmers of the lake region in getting their products to a sea-port, and hence in developing that country.” He recommended the railroad “because of the greater economy and of the increased advantages to the natives.”⁴⁹⁶ Leonard Wood’s letter to the adjutant general of the Philippines earlier that year echoed similar themes. He urged the

⁴⁹⁵ May, *Social Engineering*, 138.

⁴⁹⁶ H.C. Corbin to the Secretary of War, 30 December 1904, Leonard Wood Papers, Library of Congress.

construction of a railroad from Overton to Marahui. “Such a railroad,” Wood wrote, 250
“will do much to open up a very rich section of country now entirely undeveloped, and be
a potent factor in civilizing a large number of people.”⁴⁹⁷ In Wood’s telling, civilizing
natives and promoting economic development opportunities, presumably for white
settlers and investors, went hand in hand with the army’s infrastructural projects.

Over the next two years, officers in Mindanao continued to urge their superiors in
the War Department to authorize funds for the construction of the railroad in the Lake
Lanao region. Captain Langhorne, as acting governor of the province in Wood’s absence,
praised the region and its prospects: “The lake region furnishes a splendid resort, with a
cool climate.” The population was 40,000, “a number apt to increase,” and he was
confident that “a large garrison will undoubtedly occupy it as a hill station.” The military
roads, Langhorne added, had already facilitated increased trade in the region, with “the
Lake Moros bringing much produce to Iligan and Malabang.”⁴⁹⁸ The next year, touting
the railroad’s prospects for economic development, Bliss spoke of “open[ing] up a most
healthy and desirable section of country.” Not only would the railroad jumpstart the
region’s economy, but it would also benefit the local population. The railroad, Bliss
wrote, “will also give employment to many Moros, and put a considerable amount of
money in circulation among them, thereby accomplishing much for the betterment of the
Moros and the establishment of a permanent condition of good order in this region.”⁴⁹⁹ In
Bliss’s thinking, economic development would bring stability to the region, thereby

⁴⁹⁷ Leonard Wood to Adjutant General, Philippine Division, Manila, 27 February 1904, Box 34, Wood Papers.

⁴⁹⁸ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 336.

⁴⁹⁹ “Report Department of Mindanao,” 1906, 284.

complementing the army's work and promoting peace. Furthermore, the army's use of 251
local labor would actually be a boon for the Moros – "giv[ing]" them "employment."

The army's faith in the civilizing power of the railroads was not new or unique to their occupation of the southern Philippines. Instead, it harkened back to the days of the "Indian Wars" in the West. In 1908, Bliss wrote optimistically: "The construction of a railroad to the lake will bring about its immediate occupation by natives of all classes and will settle the Moro question forever."⁵⁰⁰ Bliss' language closely echoed the nineteenth-century assertion that the transcontinentals represented the "final solution" to the "Indian question."⁵⁰¹ The similarity in language reveals important parallels between these two imperial projects, separated by roughly forty years. The railroads were the "solution" in both cases because the army officers saw their adversaries in analogous terms. Sherman, Sheridan, and their subordinates in the officer class thought Native Americans were a doomed race of "savages" who were unsuited to the modern world. They believed the railroads, by linking the Atlantic and Pacific, would bring even more settlers to the Natives' territory and decisively change the political economy of the Plains. They looked forward to these developments, believing that the transcontinentals would assist them in eliminating the Native American "problem" from the West. Decades later, a different generation of army officers encountered what they understood to be a similar situation in the Philippines. Like the Native Americans, the Moros were a backward, uncivilized race. Either they would change and adapt to the modern world, or they too would be destined for the dustbins of history. Bliss, similar to his military forebears, believed that the

⁵⁰⁰ "Report Department of Mindanao," in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1908. Doc. No. 1042, 60th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 374.

⁵⁰¹ See chapter 2 of this dissertation.

railroads promoted economic development and would link the Lake Lanao region to a larger, dynamic economic universe – connecting its inhabitants to networks of trade and prosperity elsewhere in the archipelago and beyond. For both groups of army officers, the railroad symbolized modern economic development – anathema, they thought, to the savagery and backwardness of their enemies. For both, it made military sense to support the extension of these lines, which would help the army accomplish its mission with little bloodshed. Yet a key difference distinguished early-twentieth-century army officers in the Philippines from their predecessors: Bliss and his contemporaries did not tend to speak in terms of the Moros’ inevitable annihilation. Instead, they hoped that under their tutelage, the Moros would gradually “advance” and embrace the promises of American civilization in the modern era.⁵⁰²

Domestic observers also made the connection between the army’s work in the Philippines and its nineteenth-century antecedents. In 1903, *Outlook* magazine praised the military’s infrastructural duties, linking them to the greater work of spreading civilization. “The modern army is inspired with the ambition of construction, and is displaying remarkable ability in construction. On its banner it might well bear the double legend, ‘House-wreckers and house-builders.’” The watchword for *Outlook* magazine

⁵⁰² Kramer urges caution in examining how racial ideas and categories formed in the domestic context, such as notions about Native Americans, were marshaled in the Philippines. In contrast to other historians who have asserted the clear links between Native American and colonial policy, Kramer argues that colonial race-making took place within specific contexts that altered whatever ideas were “imported” from the U.S. see Paul Kramer, “Transits of Race: Empire and Difference in Philippine-American Colonial History,” in *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, eds. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 163-191. When army officials advocated for railroad construction as part of the civilizing process, they did not explicitly point to the West or Native Americans to bolster their case. Instead, I am drawing connections between these two contexts to suggest how army officers expressed a faith in the “civilizing” power of railroads – and infrastructure in general. For a more detailed discussion of comparisons between Native Americans and Moros or Filipinos, and the literature on the topic, see chapter 6 of this dissertation.

was “civilization:” “The army not only established the outposts of civilization, which gave security to the early settlements and cleared the way for the advancing tide of civilization, but it has staked out the paths civilization was to follow, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.” After a brief account of the army’s historic work surveying land, building transportation, and opening “nearly all great routes of internal communication in the interests of commerce,” the magazine moved to a closer examination of the army’s “more dramatic” labors in the U.S.’s new empire. The *Outlook* article concentrated on Puerto Rico, describing the military’s “constructive” work in building prisons and schools, setting up elections and instituting legal reform, combatting disease, and administering poor relief. The army, according to this account, had helped lay “the foundations of a modern, well-organized society” in its southern colony.⁵⁰³ Observers at home, such as the editors and readers of *Outlook* magazine, appreciated the “constructive” work of empire. The seemingly bloodless work of road-building was inherently more popular than reports of casualties. Moreover, by linking the army’s duties in the Philippines and Puerto Rico to the army’s historic contributions to the settlement of the American West, the magazine sanctioned the “new” imperialism by reference to a familiar domestic legacy.

Roads and railroads were physical manifestations of a reaching, growing American empire: proof of the U.S.’s ability to reshape the physical terrain. But the process of building this infrastructure also required a range of social and political interventions, primarily related to the deployment of labor. Managing labor became a key terrain for the articulation of American power in the Moro Province. Army officers also saw labor as a crucial site for the expression of American values and power. Leonard

⁵⁰³ “The American Army,” *Outlook* 74 (11 July 1903): 643-645.

Wood, in a private letter to William Cameron Forbes, portrayed labor as an opportunity 254 for the people of the Philippines: “We want to give the Filipino a chance to work and to make him an industrious person. This must be the foundation of everything in these islands.”⁵⁰⁴ But laying that foundation entailed destroying the local power relations the Americans encountered when they arrived in Mindanao. It involved army officers in collisions with indigenous elites as they sought to refashion Moro labor systems and remake them in an American image. In this way, roads and other infrastructure did not merely facilitate the extension and execution of American sovereignty; the very process of building these thoroughfares became a site of conflict between army officers, enlisted men, and various groups of indigenous Moros. The next section describes the political and social structure of the Moro societies and how Americans attempted to remake them through the imposition of new labor practices.

Free-labor, Slavery and Power in the Moro Province

To American eyes, the people of Mindanao lacked any sort of government or recognizable political organization. General Wood remarked, “the Moros and other savage peoples have no laws – simply a few customs, which are nowhere general, varying from one valley to the next, from one island to another. Such laws as they have are many of them revolting and practically all of them utterly and absolutely undesirable from every standpoint of decency and good government. The Moros are, in a way, religious and moral degenerates.”⁵⁰⁵ Major General Bullard struck a more optimistic note. He believed the army could elevate the Moros by introducing them to the benefits of

⁵⁰⁴ Wood to Cameron Forbes, 20 March 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

⁵⁰⁵ “Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” September 1, 1903 to August 31, 1904, Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 8.

civilization. But like Wood, Bullard agreed that Moro society was basically *tabula rasa* 255 when it came to the basic precepts of government. He wrote, “There was no government....Manifestly here not only had the foundations of government and order yet to be laid, but the very places for them were to be made and prepared.”⁵⁰⁶ Both Wood and Bullard believed it was the U.S.’s responsibility to establish government among the Moros.

The Americans were not the first outsiders to try to impose their version of government on the various peoples of Mindanao. The Spanish arrived in the Muslim South in the sixteenth century, and they established a garrison in the city of Zamboanga in 1635. Spain continually tried to subjugate the Moros throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century with limited success.⁵⁰⁷ The difficulty of ruling the region was exacerbated by the diversity of peoples living there. According to one count, the Muslim population alone – not including the various animist tribes – was made up of ten different ethnolinguistic groups.⁵⁰⁸ The largest three were the Maguindanao occupying the Cotabato River Valley, the Maranao centered around Lake Lanao, and the Tausug of the Sulu archipelago.⁵⁰⁹

The political and social organization of Moro society also complicated American efforts to rule the territory. Army officers dismissed the idea that any type of government prevailed among the Moros due to the fact that power was widely dispersed and the

⁵⁰⁶ Bullard, “Preparing Our Moros,” 386.

⁵⁰⁷ See Gowing, *Mandate*; “Mindanao,” *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia, from Angkor Wat to East Timor*, ed. Keat Gin Ooi (ABC-CLIO, 2004), 891-892.

⁵⁰⁸ Melvin Mednick, “Some Problems of Moro History and Political Organization,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 5, no. 1 (1957): 40. The following account concerns only the Moro or Muslim population of Mindanao, rather than the various animist groups.

⁵⁰⁹ Keat Gin Ooi, “Moros,” *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia, from Angkor Wat to East Timor*. ABC-CLIO, 2004, 915.

various Moro principalities and domains were often in conflict. In fact, however, these 256 groups were organized in a similar way, despite differences in language, subsistence, and culture.⁵¹⁰ Anthropologists have described Moro societies as pyramids, with a sultan – the supreme political and ecclesiastical leader – nominally at the top. Below him were a large number of other chiefs and officials, members of the hereditary *datu* class, who attended to various political and religious duties. In fact, these *datus* held much of the power in Moro society, particularly outside of Sulu.⁵¹¹ The frustration Bullard expressed over his seemingly endless conferences with *datus* on the Iligan road reflects some of the challenges American officials faced in negotiating the Moro political structure.

Moro society was divided into three main classes: *datus* (the hereditary aristocracy), freemen, and slaves. Being born into the aristocratic *datu* class bestowed prestige, but in order to actually acquire political power, an individual had to amass wealth and followers. People, rather than land, were the meaningful political currency in Moro society. Melvin Mednick writes, “It is important to note that this structure operated primarily in terms of persons and groupings, and that territory was only of secondary importance. Authority was over people, rather than places, and a leader reckoned his power in terms of the number of his followers, rather than in terms of villages, per se.”⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Melvin Mednick posits the existence of “a single system of social and political organization for the Philippine Muslim world....In short, the Moros were a single society, though not a single culture.” Mednick, “Some Problems,” 42.

⁵¹¹ Anthropologists have called this a “segmentary state.” See James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), xlv. The Sulu Sultanate was the most centralized by the time the Americans arrived, explaining why the U.S. entered into a treaty with the Sultan of Sulu but not with the sultans of the two other major Muslim groupings.

⁵¹² Mednick, 44. See also William Henry Scott, “Class Structure in the Unhispanized Philippines,” *Philippine Studies* 27, no. 2 (1979): 155. Warren echoes this idea in his account of Sulu: “Power and wealth in Sulu were defined only secondarily in terms of territory. A leader’s power and status was based more on his control over personal dependents, either retainers or slaves, that he could mobilize at a given moment

Individuals were born into the *datu* class, but in order to gain real political power, they needed followers. “The datu’s power stems from the willingness of his followers to render him respect and material and moral support, to accept and implement his decisions, and to obey and enforce his orders, and is limited by the consensus of his peers,” W. H. Scott writes.⁵¹³ The relationship between *datus* and their retainers, followers, and slaves involved a variety of obligations. It was not only slaves who owed services to a *datu*: freemen also attached themselves to a *datu* for protection. “No person could exist in Moro society who was literally free,” Mednick writes. “Every individual had to place himself under one leader or another in order to protect his life and property.”⁵¹⁴ Followers, whether freemen or slaves, paid tribute to their *datu*. They also joined with their *datu* in military maneuvers and fought on his side at times of war. The *datu*, theoretically, protected his followers and provided other services. “The *datu* receives more or less material support from his community... [he], in turn, is expected to succor his followers in time of financial emergency, and to provide both material and military aid in time of danger.”⁵¹⁵

When American army officers began to govern the Moro Province, they identified the *datus* as one of the major obstacles to the imposition of American institutions and the extension of “civilization” into Mindanao. The very existence of the *datu* class presented a challenge to American ideas of government because the mass of Moros had no relation to a central state but only to their immediate *datu*. Furthermore, labor had long been one

for what was deemed to be commercially or politically expedient, than on the formal state structure.” See Warren, *Sulu Zone*, xlv.

⁵¹³ W.H. Scott, “Class Structure,” 151.

⁵¹⁴ Mednick, “Some Problems,” 47.

⁵¹⁵ Scott, “Class Structure,” 151-152. See also Mednick, “Some Problems,” 47, for an account of the obligations of *datus* and their retainers.

of the chief ways a *datu* exacted his price from his retainers, whether slaves or freemen. 258
The existence of slavery along with other forced labor obligations offended American sensibilities, smacking of barbarism and backwardness. Americans thought construction projects that employed Moros at wages, rather than *corvée* labor, presented opportunities for destabilizing the traditional power of the *datus*. Leonard Wood championed the payment of wages by the U.S. army as a promising instrument for undermining the power of the *datus* and winning the support of “the people.” In a letter to Secretary of War Taft in 1905, Wood explained how construction projects were facilitating the extension of American authority into Moro communities. He wrote:

The Moro people as a whole are rapidly coming to the side of the government. It was only the other day that one of the largest dattos in the Lake region told me that his people were down on the road at work, and requested authority to force them to return to him, or pay him a large portion of their wages, stating that unless he could do this there was no use in his being a datto. This statement really represents the core of the whole Moro trouble. Once the people understand the purpose of the government the petty ruler will disappear and trouble will end very largely.⁵¹⁶

Wood recognized that the *datu* class derived its power, in part, from control over the labor-power of followers. The *datu* in question was used to collecting the wages of his followers and then dispersing them as he saw fit. If the U.S. could detach the followers from the “petty ruler,” the advantages of American-style government would become clear to the Moros. Wood envisioned a new arrangement of power: the army would replace the savage *datus* with modern, civilized American managers in the form of the officer corps. By undercutting the power of these archaic leaders, the U.S. army could accomplish its political project of attracting Moros to the government while also introducing them to the

⁵¹⁶ Wood to William H. Taft, April 8, 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

virtues of wage labor. The wage relation, instituted through employment on army building projects, was central to Wood's vision of U.S. colonialism.

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Issues regarding labor and American sovereignty were inextricably connected from the earliest days of the American occupation. The existence of slavery, particularly in Sulu, encapsulates this relationship between labor practices and the type of colonial power the U.S. hoped to exercise in the southern Philippines. Initially, the U.S. patterned its administration of Sulu on the British model of indirect rule in the Malay states where slavery had been abolished gradually. In 1899, General John C. Bates concluded an agreement with the Sultan of Sulu, which "explicitly recognized U.S. sovereignty, called for the suppression of piracy," and maintained the "law of the sultanate," according to Michael Salman. In addition, the Bates Treaty provided for the self-purchase of slaves from their masters. This tacit recognition of slavery, incorporated into the treaty provisions, did not sit well with President McKinley or other American policymakers. Further correspondence sent to the sultan over the next several months sought to clarify the U.S.'s opposition to slavery. Yet the vagueness of the agreement and American ambivalence on the nature of Moro slavery complicated relations with the sultan. While they initially described Moro slavery as "mild" or familial, by mid-1902, Leonard Wood, General Davis, and others began to emphasize the harshness and barbarity of the institution. As colonial policymakers tired of working through the Sultan of Sulu, they became more forceful in their denunciations of slavery. In 1904, the U.S. officially abrogated the Bates Treaty.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ On the Bates Treaty, see Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 68-

American officials continued to work through the *datu*s, but they distinguished these relationships from those the British maintained under their version of “indirect rule.” General George W. Davis, commander of the Department of the Philippines, urged that ““no sultan or king over all the Moros...or over other datos be recognized,’ but that ‘hereditary datos be recognized as headmen.’”⁵¹⁸ Leonard Wood wrote his British friend, the newspaperman John Strachey:

You [the British] are quite content to maintain Rajahs and Sultans and other species of royalty, but we, with our plain ideas of doing things, find these gentlemen outside of our scheme of Government, and so have to start at this kind of proposition a little differently. Our policy is to develop individualism among these people and little by little, teach them to stand upon their own feet and independent of petty chieftains. In order to do this the chief of headmen has to be given some position of more or less authority under the Government, but he ceases to have any divine rights.⁵¹⁹

Styling himself a simple republican, Wood contrasted the Americans’ “plain ideas” to the “species of royalty” that the British were apparently comfortable with using to prop up in their colonial empire. The “policy” Wood referred to involved incorporating the *datu*s into the American government through the tribal ward system. The non-Christian or “uncivilized” population of the Moro Province was organized into five districts and then into 51 “tribal wards.” The provincial governor appointed district governors, who in turn chose “headmen” to govern the tribal wards. The wards theoretically encompassed, as far as possible, a single “tribe” or ethnic group, and the headman, typically a *datu*, was

70. On the larger history of slavery, antislavery discourse, and American colonialism in the southern Philippines, see Salman, *Embarrassment*, 59-199.

⁵¹⁸ Quoted in Donna Amoroso, “*Inheriting the Moro problem*: Muslim authority and colonial rule in British Malaya and the Philippines,” in Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 137.

⁵¹⁹ Wood to John Strachey, January 6, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

supposed to represent that group.⁵²⁰ The system, according to Abinales, was intended to 261
“assist provincial authorities in making possible the transition mainly by the Muslim
groups from the religious (i.e., Islamic) savagery to ‘western’ civilization.”⁵²¹ Not all
datus, of course, embraced incorporation into the American colonial government. As it
became clear that the U.S. meant to interfere with local political economies and cultural
practices premised on slavery, several *datus* – most prominently Datu Ali – intensified
their resistance to American rule, prompting increasingly violent military operations in
the region.

Labor policies went hand-in-hand with political and military efforts to subjugate
and “civilize” the Moros. Wood particularly believed the payment of wages could
become a major weapon in the Americans’ fight against hold-out *datus*. In the same letter
to his British associate, Wood wrote, “It is interesting to see how quickly the people show
a desire to get out of a condition of slavery; they want to be freemen and the question
always is, ‘are we going to be allowed to work’? and ‘shall we get the money for our
work, or shall we have to give it to our chiefs’? As soon as they ascertain that they are to
receive the money they earn, the power of the old slave holder is gone.”⁵²² With labor
relations structured around the payment of wages rather than the exaction of tribute, U.S.
officials could help modernize and civilize the Moros while meeting their own needs for
labor. In a letter marked “strictly personal” to Cameron Forbes, Wood reflected on the
prospects for turning Moros into valuable employees: “While these people are not as yet

⁵²⁰ On the tribal ward system and the creation of municipalities, see Gowing, *Mandate*, 112-117. See also Abinales, *Images*, 7-8.

⁵²¹ Abinales, *Images*, 8.

⁵²² Wood to J. St. Loe Strachey, 6 January 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

what we would call skilled laborers or even as good laborers, except in special cases, 262
they will, I believe, work with comparative steadiness and with fairly good results when
well handled and regularly paid.” Wood also emphasized that success with Moro workers
depended largely on the skill and tact of their supervisors; they needed to be managed
and supervised. More significant, his reference to “regularly paid” Moro laborers
underlined the ideological importance of the wage to American colonial efforts.

Free-labor ideology was central to the American conception of colonial rule in the
Moro Province, but in practice, the Americans fell far short of their goal of dismantling
the *datu* system and abolishing forced labor. Despite Wood’s faith that the U.S. army
could undermine archaic labor – and political – relations, the army continued to use *datus*
as labor brokers for its public works projects. The labor at Camp Keithley, for example,
had been procured “by contract with Moro chiefs and laborers.”⁵²³ Bullard believed that
the payment of wages on the Iligan military road contributed to the “waning” power of
the *datu*, but all the same, he admitted that “we employed, worked, and paid them always
through the *datu*.”⁵²⁴ Thomas McKenna, in his ethnography of Cotabato, shows how
“collaborating *datus* were often able, relying on traditional power relations, to call out
corvée labor in order to avail themselves of new opportunities to enrich themselves
during the early colonial period.” He relays the story, told by a surviving *datu* in
Cotabato, of how Datu Piang helped the Americans – and helped himself – by supplying
workers for a building project:

Datu Adil tells of a road that Datu Piang contracted to build for the Americans
across a swampy tract in the upper valley for twenty thousand pesos. ‘Piang called

⁵²³ Report, Moro Province, 1905, 345.

⁵²⁴ Bullard, “Road Building Among the Moros,” 824.

on his [client] *datus* to assist him. They arrived with their followers and enough food to feed them. The road took more than two months to build but Piang never shared any of the money received with his *datus*.⁵²⁵ 263

Working with the Americans could be profitable: Piang, “America’s Great Friend,” as well as other *datus* in the Cotabato Valley, were able to capitalize on their relationships with the Americans to accumulate significant wealth. Some profited from the expansion and intensification of rice production during the American occupation; such “intensification” depended on *datus*’ ability to exploit their laborers and the persistence of traditional power relations.⁵²⁶ *Datus* also kept their *banyaga* (or foreign and non-Muslim) slaves and gained additional local slaves through debt relations.⁵²⁷

Men like Wood wanted to eliminate the *datus*, but they also depended on them. The U.S., after all, was far from prepared to introduce direct political participation among the vast majority of the population. The policy of working through *datus* began during combat operations and continued once the Province was formally established. Donna Amoroso writes, “like the military commanders who preceded them, the governors of the Moro Province suffered a shortage of American personnel and needed the *datus* to keep the peace. Accordingly, *datus* were selected to represent U.S. authority to the people they already led. This recognition of leadership was a practical expediency, not a legitimization of indigenous authority.”⁵²⁸ Other *datus* welcomed opportunities to participate in the

⁵²⁵ Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 96.

⁵²⁶ The sobriquet is from Piang’s 1952 biography. See McKenna, *Muslim Rulers*, 93.

⁵²⁷ McKenna, *Muslim Rulers*, 102. *Bayaga* refers to non-Muslim foreigners. See Salman, *Embarrassment*, 63. Here, McKenna points to the persistence of both enslavement of non-Muslims “foreigners” and debt-bondage, which may have been a more local institution.

⁵²⁸ Amoroso, “Inheriting the Moro Problem,” 140.

colonial government when they thought such incorporation would benefit them.⁵²⁹

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Abinales notes, “The reception of these administrative measures [the tribal ward system and the “Moro Constabulary”] by many traditional chiefs was positive, and army officers reported enthusiastic support from Muslim communities.” Some of these leaders had seen their fortunes decline during the period of late Spanish colonialism, and they thought the U.S. might enhance their power and economic opportunities in the broader Southeast Asian world of maritime commerce of which they were a part.⁵³⁰

The official U.S. policy was antislavery. As Michael Salman has shown, the practice of slavery among the Moros was part of the ideological justification for continued military rule in Sulu.⁵³¹ In 1904 Wood declared, “The Moro chiefs do not like our occupation of their country, because it means the end of their disgustingly brutal exercise of authority which characterizes their conduct of affairs.”⁵³² Yet the contrast between Wood’s remarks and the actual exercise of military power highlights the distance between policy and practice in Mindanao. Anthropologist Jeremy Beckett writes, “At the outset it looked as though the American administration would break the power of the *datus*; instead it came to rely on them.”⁵³³ While army officers denounced slavery, they looked the other way when *datus* provided the requisite laborers for government building projects. Ultimately, the *datu* class adapted to and even profited from the

⁵²⁹ Amoroso argues that the tribal ward system only incorporated *datus* in a “structurally inferior position.” It is true that the highest government positions, such as province governor and district governor, were reserved for Americans and Europeans. See Amoroso, “Inheriting the Moro Problem.”

⁵³⁰ Patricio Abinales, “The Good Imperialists?”, in *Orthodoxy and History in the Muslim-Mindanao Narrative* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2010), 98-100.

⁵³¹ Salman, *Embarrassment*.

⁵³² “Report Department of Mindanao,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1904. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 58th Congress, 3d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 268.

⁵³³ Jeremy Beckett, “The *Datus* of the Rio Grande De Cotabato under Colonial Rule,” *Asian Studies* 15, no. 1974 (1977): 58.

changes brought about by U.S. occupation. “Despite the context of profound socioeconomic changes...the basic character of political relations between Magindanaon datus and subordinates changed hardly at all between 1890 and 1968,” McKenna writes. Allies of the U.S. “were able to maintain traditionally based followings and exercise control over followers in much the same way as they had in precolonial times.”⁵³⁴ Not only did coerced labor and slavery persist into the American period, but the colonial system actually extended the life of these traditional practices.

“Men of long term and bad character”: A Convict Workforce

American colonial officials spoke of the barbarity of Moro slavery, while using datus as labor brokers and relying on them to supply labor for their public works. Such labor was hardly “free.” At the same time, while speaking eloquently of the importance of wage labor, the army continued to make use of a fundamentally unfree labor force: prisoners. American-run prisons provided a supply of workers – a surplus population created, and then used, by the colonial state.⁵³⁵ When Leonard Wood attempted to persuade Secretary of War Taft that the army should build a railroad from Overton to Marahui, he pointed to convict labor as a cost-saving option.⁵³⁶ A year later, he was still making the case for such a railroad to Taft. The main expense, according to Wood, would be the “skilled labor” necessary to build the train itself. On the other hand, the islands’ prison population could supply the unskilled labor. Wood wrote, “The Civil Government

⁵³⁴ McKenna, *Muslim Rulers*, 87.

⁵³⁵ The literature on American prisoners and the “carceral state” in the twentieth century is growing. For recent perspectives, see Kelly Lytle Hernández, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, and Heather Ann Thompson, eds., “Constructing the Carceral State,” *Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (2015): 18-184. For recent work on prisons and policing in the U.S. empire, see the essays in part 2 of McCoy and Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible*.

⁵³⁶ Wood to William H. Taft, 8 April 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

has at least a thousand civil prisoners, probably more, whom they are anxious to place 266
outside of Manila. I have had 500 of them, and know that they can be used successfully.”
These 500 prisoners were already assigned to work on the Overton-Marahui road.⁵³⁷
Wood thought he could “get” at least 1,000 additional prisoners for the railroad project,
with minimal expense to the War Department. Prisoners would be used to “prepare and
grade the road-bed,” cut timber from the vicinity, and build bridges. “The Civil
Government will clothe and feed them,” Wood continued. “I can guard them with Scouts,
shelter them under tentage, of which we have considerable which has seen service and
can well be used for this purpose, and furnish them medical attendance at the hands of the
medical officers on duty with the Scouts guarding them.”⁵³⁸ Wood’s proposal made use
of multiple labor pools in the Moro Province, including Filipino scouts and the surplus
prison population in Manila.

Convict labor remained part of the army’s vision for constructing the line. In
1908, Bliss wrote Wood, now his superior as commander of the Philippines Division,
with an update on the proposed railroad. “From all that I can hear, it seems as though
preliminary work on the Overton-Keithley railroad may begin before very long. In that
case I assume that you will have Bilibid convicts sent there, and at least two companies
of Scouts will be needed to guard them and public property.”⁵³⁹ A railroad to Lake Lanao
was never built, but convict labor continued to be invoked by army officers as a potential
solution to chronic budget constraints. Like his predecessor, Bliss often touted the
advantages of convict labor. He argued for the use of prisoners to construct new buildings

⁵³⁷ Wood to Henry Corbin, 5 April 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

⁵³⁸ Wood to Taft, 10 August 1906, Wood Papers, LC.

⁵³⁹ Bliss to Wood, 27 Feb 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

at Camp Keithley, pointing to the fine work other convicts had done elsewhere in the province. Indeed, in his praise for convict labor, Bliss came very close to equating them with enlisted men. “The work does not require skilled labor except for direction and supervision,” he wrote. “It could be done by convict labor or even by labor of the troops.” Were American troops less skilled than Filipino convicts? Bliss did not elaborate, but he spoke with admiration of the public edifices built by prisoners. “All our concrete stone work in our new provincial building at Zamboanga has been done by Calarian convicts. They soon learned how to do the work with practically no supervision whatever.”⁵⁴⁰ Workers who labored at almost no cost to the government and required very little supervision: convicts appeared to be the ideal labor force.

Prisoners were forced to work on a variety of public works during the army’s occupation of the Moro Province. In most cases, their labor was unremarkable – that is, it did not attract much attention from army commanders. For example, Bliss only briefly noted in his diary on June 27, 1906, that “Convicts employed Iligan-Lake Lanao road left Camp Overton for Manila.”⁵⁴¹ In other cases, however, convict labor became problematic. First, prisoners were not always the docile and tractable workers that Bliss described. In 1905, Wood wrote to General Henry Corbin with concerns about his five hundred convicts working on the Overton-Marahui Road. Most were “men of long term and bad character.” Wood had only one company of scouts to guard the convicts, and he regretted that the convicted demanded “every moment of the time of the scout officers, so that neither one of them are able to assist in the road work.” Wood hoped Corbin would

⁵⁴⁰ Bliss to Wood, 14 May 1907, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁵⁴¹ Bliss Diary, 27 June 1906, Bliss Papers, LC.

not call away his officers to any “detail of any officers outside the Department.”⁵⁴² His 268
request underlines some of the basic problems of supervising convict labor in
construction projects. Prisoners also seemed particularly susceptible to disease. The
prevalence of illness at Bilibid Prison in Manila motivated Cameron Forbes,
commissioner of commerce and police, to place prisoners on public works projects
throughout the Philippines. “I am more eager than I can tell you to get the one thousand
men sent down to your work,” Forbes wrote Wood. In 1905 alone, at least one thousand
were working outside the walls in Manila, Albay, and at the penal colony in Puerto
Princesa. Despite these measures to reduce the prison population in Bilibid,
overcrowding and tuberculosis remained major problems.

Prisoners sent throughout the province to work did not always enjoy better
conditions than their counterparts who remained in Bilibid. The same year, an outbreak
of beri-beri among the prisoners threatened to sidetrack the construction of an important
road. Unprepared for the prisoners’ arrival, “much time and some money was expended
in constructing the proper shelter for them,” according to one report. Then after the
outbreak of the disease, “a large number” had to be returned to Manila. “A few died, but
the percentage was less than the death rate in other places,” the officer continued.⁵⁴³ Beri-
beri already had a tragic history in the Philippines before the U.S. army arrived. The first
major outbreak took place in 1882, the year of a severe cholera epidemic. Although
unrelated biologically, beri-beri often followed in the wake of cholera. The disease,

⁵⁴² Wood to Corbin, 5 April 1905. Wood Papers, LC.

⁵⁴³ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House
Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905),
337.

caused by a thiamine deficiency, was prevalent among people whose diet consisted primarily of polished rice. Times of epidemiological stress, such as during the cholera outbreak, limited people's food supply and contributed to the escalation of nutritional diseases such as beri-beri. As Ken de Bevoise explains in his history of public health in the colonial Philippines, the archipelago began importing polished rice in the nineteenth century. Reflecting the Philippines' accelerating incorporation into systems of global commerce, the islands' dependence on imported rice made more of the population susceptible to beri-beri, particularly at times of acute malnourishment. Both the cholera epidemic of 1882 and the war with Spain and then the U.S. produced conditions of instability and poverty, leading to more cases of beri-beri.⁵⁴⁴ Americans recognized the relationship between beri-beri and prisons, even though they did not necessarily understand what actually caused the disease. "Prison conditions in a tropical climate seem to be especially favorable for the development of this peculiar oriental disease," according to the 1903 census.⁵⁴⁵ Army officials were aggravated by the 1905 outbreak, which "demanded larger expenditures...to counteract the evil influences of the disease."⁵⁴⁶

Historians have suggested that the army helped usher in a new regime of wage-based labor relations. Greg Bankoff, for example, writes that officers initially adopted local labor practices – working through *datus*, who supplied the army with a workforce

⁵⁴⁴ This discussion of beri-beri is based on Bevoise, *Agents*, chapter 5.

⁵⁴⁵ *Census of the Philippine islands, taken under the direction of the Philippine commission in the year 1903*, United States Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 421. <https://archive.org/details/censusphilippin01ganngoog>.

⁵⁴⁶ "Report of the Governor of the Moro Province," in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 337.

for “large-scale enterprises.” But, he suggests, this practice of using intermediaries was 270 short-lived. In the case of building the Benguet Road, he writes, the army first used “impressed local Igorot tribesmen under U.S. foremen, but military authorities soon stopped such practices” and instead agents were sent to recruit laborers on their own. Although Bankoff acknowledges that U.S. officials reinstituted the Spanish *corvée* in order to recruit a sufficient labor force for their public works projects, he nonetheless argues that, due in part to “the creation of a wage-labor market,” “the Philippines was the first truly modern state in Southeast Asia, infused by the logic of capitalism and informed by market mechanisms.”⁵⁴⁷

This narrative suggests a much cleaner transition to wage-based “free labor” than actually took place in the southern Philippines. Although army leaders like Wood wanted to break the power of the *datus* by paying wages directly to the workers, they often found it more expedient to rely on *datus* to supply them with workers. Furthermore, American officials happily exploited the unfree population of their colonial prisons. Despite rhetoric touting the revolutionary potential of the wage relation, military officials – many of them heirs of an abolitionist generation – sustained traditional power relations and instituted new forced-labor practices in the Moro Province.

“A Despotic Machine”: Taxation, Labor, and the Colonial State

Under military auspices, the colonial state in the southern Philippines extended its reach over the labor-power of the population in other ways as well. Taxation became an especially crucial tool for leveraging labor in the service of colonial building projects. In 1901, the initial legislation setting up municipalities and provinces for the Philippines

⁵⁴⁷ Greg Bankoff, “Wants, Wages, And Workers,” 61; 86.

provided some funding for roads and maintenance, but it soon became clear that these provisions were inadequate to meet the Americans' ambitious plans for road construction and improvement.⁵⁴⁸ One of the Legislative Council's first steps was to pass legislation to finance public works. Act Number 5 of the Legislative Council stipulated that every male person between the ages of 18 and 55 would pay a *cedula* (or head- or registration-tax) of one peso per year. The act exempted U.S. soldiers and sailors, diplomats, and non-Christians other than Moros (in other words, members of animist or "pagan" tribes).⁵⁴⁹ Initially, American policymakers thought the *cedula*, or head-tax, would be another way the U.S. could undermine the *datus* by instituting a uniform, modern, and bureaucratic system of revenue-collection in place of the *datus*' antiquated tribute system. But in practice, officers continued to consider new ways of working through, rather than replacing, the *datus*. In August 1906, Bliss explained to Lt. L. J. Mygatt, Municipal President of Parang, that the Legislative Council had allowed the District Governor of Sulu to arrange with the "headmen," or *datus*, to provide labor in lieu of paying the *cedula*. He suggested a similar system might be developed with the indigenous leaders in Parang. The "headman" – or rather, those working under him – "would perform a certain amount of useful labor on public works which, in his judgment, would be fair equivalent to the value of the *cedula* tax. After the performance of the work the *datu* who did it was to receive a free *cedula* for all his people who, under the law, should take out one." Bliss underlined to Mygatt that the colonial government would issue the *cedula* to the *datu* rather than to each individual Moro. He explained,

⁵⁴⁸ May, *Social Engineering*, 143.

⁵⁴⁹ Gowing, *Mandate*, 123.

You will observe the scheme did not involve the taking of a census of the actual number of individuals engaged on the work and giving cedulas to them alone. 272
The arrangement was to be between the government and each headman who controlled a certain number of people. For example: A certain datu is known to control five hundred men. The District Governor figures out that the construction of a certain length of road would be a fair equivalent to the cedula tax paid by five hundred men. The Governor says to the datu 'as soon as you finish a certain section of road, which I stake out, and will agree to keep that road in order for one year, all of your people will receive a free cedula.'

Despite the U.S. government's official opposition to longstanding forms of slavery and peonage in Mindanao and Sulu, Bliss here notes with apparent approval that the construction work would be carried out by contract with the *datus*. The fact that "a certain datu is known to control five hundred men" was not regarded as a problem; on the contrary, it would expedite the work and the exaction of labor demanded in lieu of the *cedula*. Bliss noted that the "scheme" had not been attempted in Jolo "for the reason that they are beginning to pay the cedula tax in very satisfactory numbers." But he thought that Mygatt might be able to carry out a similar arrangement elsewhere in Sulu. Colonial officials, Bliss thought, needed to emphasize to the *datus* that the *cedula* was "not arbitrary tribute," but "an ordinary tax to be expended for the benefit of the people themselves." Bliss promised to bring it up with the Legislative Council at the next meeting. He encouraged Mygatt to explain this plan to the headmen at their monthly meeting and "report to [Bliss] by name those who are willing to construct roads and trails in lieu of the cedula tax."⁵⁵⁰ It is unclear whether such an arrangement was carried out in Sulu or elsewhere, but the "scheme" reflects the willingness of Bliss and other army leaders to work through *datus*.

⁵⁵⁰ Bliss to Lieut. L.J. Mygatt, 15 August 1906, Bliss Papers, LC.

Bliss may have been willing to work through the *datus* because of how poorly the²⁷³ implementation of these colonial taxes had been received by the inhabitants of the Moro Province. When army officials first proposed the *cedula*, they wrote glibly about how the Moros would come to accept it. Unlike the “arbitrary” tribute exacted by *datus*, the American system of revenue collection would be regular and predictable. Proceeds from the *cedula* would also be expended locally, in the tribal wards in which they were collected, so the people could see how the taxes were spent to benefit them. General Wood wrote optimistically in 1904, “It is believed that this system will be much appreciated by the Moros as soon as they thoroughly understand it.”⁵⁵¹ But opposition to the *cedula* was more virulent than the army anticipated. The *cedula* appeared just as arbitrary, if not more so, than traditional forms of tribute. Moreover, at least some Moros interpreted the imposition of the *cedula* as payment to a Christian state and saw it as a sign of their conquest by infidels.⁵⁵²

Such an interpretation was not wholly incorrect, as the *cedula* demonstrated the U.S.’s intentions of replacing its own sovereignty for that of the indigenous elite. Leonard Wood admitted as much in a letter to Secretary of War William H. Taft, updating him on conditions in the province: “The Moro leaders everywhere have, of course, objected to control; they have objected to the *cedula* tax and other little things, not because they had any real objection to these things, but because they saw in them the virtual end of their

⁵⁵¹ “Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” September 1, 1903 to August 31, 1904, Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 12.

⁵⁵² Charles Byler, “Pacifying the Moros: American Military Government in the Southern Philippines, 1899-1913” *Military Review* 85, no. 3 (May 1, 2005): 43. For a more extended discussion about the role of Islamic beliefs about taxation in the response to the *cedula*, see Omar Dphrepauzez, “‘The Right Sort of White Men’: General Leonard Wood and the U. S. Army in the Southern Philippines, 1898-1906,” PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 2013, 129-130.

arbitrary rule over their people.”⁵⁵³ Michael Salman argues that the *cedula* undermined 274 the traditional prerogatives of the *datus* while establishing new, unmediated connections between individuals and the colonial state. He writes, “The *cedula* tax individualized the population as common taxpayers in relation to the state. Its introduction was accompanied by colonial restrictions on the *datus*’ power to levy fines, which had frequently produced debt bondage and judicial enslavement.”⁵⁵⁴ While the *cedula* may have signified the U.S.’s intentions of undermining the *datus*’ traditional prerogative, in theory establishing a direct relationship between the colonial state and the individual Moros, in reality we have seen that the army continued to mediate their dealings with the local people through the *datus*. Bliss’ 1906 proposal (discussed above) to use the *datus* to harness Moro labor-power in place of the *cedula* suggests the limits of this process.

The army sought in other ways to use taxation to harness the labor-power of the Moros in the service of the colonial state. As early as 1905, Luke E. Wright, Governor-General of the Philippines, wrote about the “imperative” need for “a compulsory road-tax law.” The roads became “bogs during the rainy season,” and were impassable for much of the year. The Philippine Commission, of which Wright was a member, advocated a road-tax that would require “every able-bodied male inhabitant” to work five days per year on the roads, or pay the equivalent sum in cash. “It is but right,” the governor-general wrote, “that the people who are to enjoy the benefits which will inevitably be derived from new and improved highways should lend their aid to their building and

⁵⁵³ Wood to Taft, April 8, 1905, Wood Papers.

⁵⁵⁴ See Salman, *Embarrassment*, 116-117.

maintenance.”⁵⁵⁵ The proposed road-tax legislation was part of a larger initiative to promote economic development in the Philippines. In November 1905, the Philippine Commission passed the Reorganization Act, which changed the political structure of the islands, limiting the power of the provincial governments and strengthening central authority in Manila (except in the Moro Province). Moreover, according to Paul Kramer, “Its second element was what came to be called the policy of ‘material development’: regime priorities would focus on the construction of roads, bridges, harbors, and other infrastructure essential to opening the Philippine economy to export-oriented exploitation.”⁵⁵⁶ The road tax fit perfectly into these “regime priorities.” Similar in its basic outlines to the system of *corvée* labor instituted by the Spanish, the Commission’s road tax proposal aimed to improve and expand infrastructure, which would in turn support the U.S.’s goal of attracting capital investment to the islands.

Military officials in the Moro Province hoped the road tax would extend to the south as well. Leonard Wood wrote William Cameron Forbes, Secretary of Commerce and the Police – and architect of the policy of material development – with his endorsement of the law.⁵⁵⁷ “I do not think that the Moro Province should be excluded from the working of this act,” Wood wrote. He assured Forbes that the province’s legislative council had “a long time, been considering the passage of a similar act.” He continued, “I believe the act will be of great value in building up the system of public

⁵⁵⁵ Luke E. Wright, Governor General of the Philippines, *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1905, 86-87.

⁵⁵⁶ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 309.

⁵⁵⁷ On William Cameron Forbes, see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 309.

highways and trails, and it will be an easy way for people to pay their road tax.”⁵⁵⁸ At the 276
time of this writing this letter, Wood had already moved on to his next assignment as commander of the Philippines Division. But his successor, Tasker Bliss, also endorsed the road tax. “I do not see how the justice or desirability of such a [road tax] law can be disputed,” Bliss wrote in 1906.⁵⁵⁹

In all their enthusiasm for this legislation, both military and civilian leaders grossly underestimated opposition to the proposed road-tax. In a particularly upbeat assessment of Filipinos’ attitudes toward the idea, Governor-General Wright declared that in his travels throughout the islands he and his companions “found no intelligent opposition to the establishment of this tax in the provinces; indeed, on the contrary, many of them urged its adoption at once.” Reflecting the instability in the Moro Province, Leonard Wood admitted in his private correspondence to Forbes that, “There will, probably, be the usual amount of opposition, but, I believe, the act is a good one and one that should be adhered to.”⁵⁶⁰ Tasker Bliss described “a noticeable reluctance to enact laws of this character in view of the known opposition of the natives,” but he believed it was part of Americans’ responsibility in administering the islands to carry out such beneficial legislation regardless of native opposition.⁵⁶¹

The exaction of a road-tax turned out to be a protracted affair throughout the Philippines. In 1906, the Commission passed a road-tax law along the lines Wright described the previous year. Although the legislation stipulated the tax could be paid in

⁵⁵⁸ Wood to Cameron Forbes, April 27, 1906, Volume 37, Wood Papers.

⁵⁵⁹ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1906. House Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 7, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 368. Hereafter Report, Moro Province, 1906.

⁵⁶⁰ Wood to Cameron Forbes, April 27, 1906, Volume 37, Wood Papers.

⁵⁶¹ Report, Moro Province, 1906, 368.

labor or hard currency, in effect it established what Paul Kramer calls “a corvée labor system,” quite similar to those under Spanish colonial rule. Despite their hopeful pronouncements, the Commissioners actually “anticipated opposition,” according to Kramer. They “sought to make the law ‘less offensive to the Filipinos’ by putting it into effect only after it was endorsed by provincial boards, which would be elected the following year.”⁵⁶² None of the boards passed the law. Colonial policymakers eventually succeeded in their efforts to pass legislation aimed at financing road work – and this time they did not leave it up to the provincial boards to carry through the measure.

In the Moro Province, colonial officials did not even attempt to garner popular support for the law; it was simply passed by the Legislative Council. In his 1907 report Bliss wrote, “the law seems to have been accepted in the Moro Province in a public spirited way, and no trouble is anticipated in enforcing its provisions.”⁵⁶³ The following year the tax yielded “about 37,000 [Filipino pesos] in cash, as well as a fair amount of labor in kind” for road work. Bliss wrote optimistically that, “Several of the influential dattos of the province have shown considerable interest in the improvement of the trails leading into their country and have promised to use their influence toward the extension of the road work during the coming season... This year the provisions of the law will be applied to several other tribal wards, and a considerable addition to the mileage of improved trails in Moro country is confidently anticipated.”⁵⁶⁴ Similar to their portrayals

⁵⁶² Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 314.

⁵⁶³ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1907. House Doc. No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 380.

⁵⁶⁴ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1908. House Doc. No. 1042, 60th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 361.

of Moros as enthusiastic workers, U.S. officials like Bliss tried to downplay Moro opposition to the road-tax and other symbols of American rule. Peter Gowing, however, admits that this law “was found to be ineffectual and impractical in many parts of the Province.”⁵⁶⁵

Not all Moros submitted peacefully to these new incursions by the colonial state. In what became one of the bloodiest shows of resistance, 600 Moro men, women, and children occupied a volcanic crater at Bud Dajo in 1906. They were upset, in part, about the new *cedula*. General Wood responded by sending 800 soldiers and Constabulary to Bud Dajo. After intense shelling as well as an infantry assault on the crater, hundreds of Moros, including women and children, lay dead. The army, and most subsequent accounts of the event, called it the “Battle of Bud Dajo,” but many Moros still call it a massacre. Whatever the label, it was one of the deadliest encounters between the U.S. army and Moros during the entire occupation, attributable to Moro defiance in the face of new American taxes.⁵⁶⁶

During Pershing’s administration, the province passed a new law combining the *cedula* and the road-tax. In 1912, the Legislative Council also expanded the reach of the road law, requiring “non-Christian” men between 18 and 60 to pay a *cedula* of three pesos annually or provide ten days’ labor.⁵⁶⁷ Pershing wrote confidently of the new legislation, “Moros and other non-Christians have learned the benefits of good roads, as is shown by the decreasing difficulty of obtaining road labor. Hundreds of days of labor

⁵⁶⁵ Gowing, *Mandate*, 211.

⁵⁶⁶ Michael C. Hawkins, “Managing a Massacre: Savagery, Civility, and Gender in Moro Province in the Wake of Bud Dajo,” *Philippine Studies* 59, no. 1 (2011): 83–105; on the nomenclature of massacre versus battle, see Bobby M. Tuazon, *The Moro Reader: History and Contemporary Struggles of the Bangsamoro People* (Quezon City: CenPEGBooks, 2008), 177.

⁵⁶⁷ Gowing, *Mandate*, 211. See also Elliott, *Philippines*, 290.

have been given to the provinces during the year by Moros anxious to have roads through their part of the country.”⁵⁶⁸ Gowing, again, points out that the Moro embrace of these measures was not as wholehearted as American official reports suggested. He writes, “there may have been more trouble collecting the tax (it amounted to a mild form of forced labor) than Pershing’s reports indicated.” He notes, for example, that the Moros on Jolo “actually refused to pay the road tax.” They built cotas (earthen forts) on the side of Mount Talipao, setting up a situation similar to the one on Bud Dajo years before. Again, force of arms resolved the situation. “The Philippine Scouts fought two brief engagements with them in August and October 1913. Thereafter, no further trouble was encountered in Sulu regarding the payment of the tax,” Gowing writes.⁵⁶⁹ Yet again, the imposition of American authority in the Moro Province required direct military action.

While continuing to rely on the indigenous elite, the army also made some attempts to substitute the sovereignty of the American colonial state for the authority of the traditional *datu*. Resistance to those attempts forced army officials to baldly profess their aspirations for the American colonial project. A few short months after the Bud Dajo “battle” or “massacre,” Tasker H. Bliss wrote with resolve about the American mission in the southern Philippines. Speaking in reference to the proposed road-tax law, Bliss acknowledged the “reluctance” to pass laws which “the natives” opposed. He criticized such reluctance, pointing instead to Americans’ responsibility to carry through such important work, regardless of opposition. Bliss’ meditation is worth quoting at length:

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Elliott, *Philippines*, 290.

⁵⁶⁹ Gowing, *Mandate*, 212.

But no official of the American Government of the islands can deny that he is part of a despotic machine, that he is himself in greater or lesser degree a despot, 280 though we may hope that he will become known in history as one of that class of despots who have left a part of the world better than they found it. His only excuse – and that of the Government which has put him here – for playing this part is that he is ruling these people for their own good....If the Government is to do nothing against the will of the people in their present state it might as well abdicate at once.⁵⁷⁰

To embrace the role of a despot, to go against “the will of the people” in the name of bettering their condition – this was the mission Americans such as Bliss had embraced.

Although less poetic, he sounded much like another spokesperson for empire: “Take up the White Man’s burden-- / And reap his old reward / The blame of those ye better / The hate of those ye guard.”⁵⁷¹ Kipling had written these words only a few years earlier about the Philippines. Bliss and his fellow officers occasionally had to remind themselves of the virtues of despotism, as they continued to push through laws, taxes, and other measures designed to “better” the islands. In doing so, they reaped many of the same “rewards” Kipling had anticipated in 1899.

Conclusion

The U.S. army experimented with and exploited a variety of labor practices during its administration of the Moro Province. While touting the political and economic benefits of wage labor, officers also embraced the use of convict labor. Other policies such as the road-tax and *cedula* helped the military-colonial state extend its reach further into the southern Philippines. The labor provided by soldiers, convicts, and ordinary Moros working under *datus* was far from “free.” Nonetheless, spokespeople for

⁵⁷⁰ Report, Moro Province, 1906, 368.

⁵⁷¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine* 12 (1899): 290-1.

American imperialism, from Bullard to Bliss, justified this “despotism” in the name of civilization. 281

Officers believed roads and railroads would facilitate the extension of U.S. sovereignty into remote parts of Mindanao. Military infrastructure like new posts would also expand the American presence in difficult-to-access areas. But labor was not simply a resource that the colonial state used to carry out its infrastructural projects: the management of laboring populations was integral to the colonial project itself. Attempts to control laboring populations became a terrain for the exercise of U.S. power and the articulation of sovereignty. Sometimes Moros and American soldiers were sullen and recalcitrant workers; at other times officers emphasized their enthusiasm for work. In all cases, handling workers was a test and a sign of the army’s authority, both over its own enlisted men and over colonial subjects.

The army’s administration of its “far West” in the Philippines harkened back to its conquest of the trans-Mississippi West. Commerce and civilization went hand in hand in both “Wests.” The U.S. army’s vision of colonial rule in the Philippines involved stomping out resistance to the American occupation, but it also hinged on “develop[ing] the resources of the country,” as Colonel Benjamin Grierson had said about western Texas. Development took the form of constructing roads, bridges, wharves, and railroads – infrastructure with an economic purpose as well as military value. As Chaplain Bateman wrote about the Iligan military road, “the Moros rejoice in the new way to market...The military roads of Mindanao are worth more than they have cost as means to

coveted ends of peace.”⁵⁷² Both markets and roads were part of the American vision for 282 ruling the Philippines.

Yet roads did not always lead to peace, at least not immediately. In 1908, Tasker Bliss spoke of “an unusual and growing number of such acts of violence on the islands of Basilan, Jolo, Cagayan de Sulu, and other places in the southern part of the department.” As a solution he called for “an abundance of water transportation” that would allow regular patrols to various islands in the province. His diagnosis of the problem, however, went far beyond these specific incidents. “Neither the nature nor the disposition of the Moro has changed in an appreciable degree during the eight or nine years of American occupation,” Bliss wrote. “He is as ready to fight now as he ever was.” “Peace,” according to Bliss, was maintained by “letting him alone and at the same letting him see some of the evidences of the Government’s power.” Unfortunately, the army’s attempts to provide such evidence of its power had come up short. According to Patricio Abinales, the system of roads, telegraph and telephone lines built during the military occupation meant that the U.S.’s “‘reach of state’ was far more extensive and successful” than Spain’s.⁵⁷³ Nevertheless, the army’s control over the Moro Province was never complete. Bliss summed up the situation simply: “there are many Moros who have never seen an American soldier.”

Bliss did not say whether he thought it was possible to change the Moros’ “nature [or] disposition” – what army officers today might call “winning hearts and minds.” Instead, Bliss thought the Moros needed more constant reminders of the Americans’

⁵⁷² Bateman, “Military Roadmaking,” 199.

⁵⁷³ Abinales, *Images of State Power*, 16.

presence and authority. Yet again, the army looked to infrastructure for solutions: more vessels, more patrols, more inroads into the remote backwaters – literally – of the province. Bliss recommended more regular patrols “so that no Moro can feel that he is ever beyond the power of the Government.”⁵⁷⁴ It was a never-ending mission: one that called for ever more workers and ever-more work, all under the auspices of the U.S. army. In the early years of the twentieth century, soldiers had successfully extended the reach of the American state beyond continental boundaries, but they were finding, not for the last time, that the projection of American power required prodigious, endless labor. 283

⁵⁷⁴ “Report Department of Mindanao,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1908. Doc. No. 1042, 60th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 294.

**“Two million industrious laborers:”
Military Dreams of a Plantation Colony**

Shortly after his appointment as the province's first military governor, General Leonard Wood wrote to an associate about the challenges and opportunities Americans faced in the region. “We have here an extremely complex problem, and one which will require a good many years to settle,” Wood explained. “The inhabitants of Mindanao embrace races all the way from tree dwellers to fairly highly civilized Philippines. There is a large Mohammedan population, a large savage population and a comparatively [sic] small Christian population.” Wood believed this diverse assortment of “races” complicated efforts to “establish... a uniform government for all.” But the province also presented promising opportunities. The governor and military commander continued, “The country is healthy; the climate excellent and the land rich and productive. It is difficult to conceive of a better country for the growing of hemp, coconuts, and other tropical products. What we want here is money, and money will only come under the stimulus of proper inducement and a reasonable prospect of gain.”⁵⁷⁵ General Wood and the other military colonial officials believed it was their responsibility to provide such inducements. In his official report for 1905, Captain G. T. Langhorne, acting provincial governor, wrote: “As the success of the province depends on trade and the development of its natural resources, it has been the constant effort of the government to encourage

⁵⁷⁵ Wood to Mr. D.A. Wiley, Nov 29, 1903, Wood Papers, Library of Congress.

and assist all of the inhabitants agriculturally or commercially engaged.”⁵⁷⁶ Although the 285
army tried to help “all of the inhabitants” working in agriculture or commerce, they took
a special interest in supporting American planters. Officers like Wood and Langhorne
believed the region should focus its attention on “trade and the development of its natural
resources,” especially the production of “hemp, coconuts, and other tropical products” on
a large scale. In pursuing that vision, army officers helped advertise and promote the
Moro Province to potential investors; advocated for liberal land and immigration laws;
and directed the personnel and resources of the provincial government toward recruiting
plantation workers. As a result of these activities, the army became entangled in conflicts
over work, religion, and land. Indeed, as Wood had anticipated, officers found
themselves dealing with “extremely complex problem[s]” for “a good many years.”

This chapter examines the army’s attention to economic development, particularly
its involvement in labor arrangements, during its occupation of the Moro Province. It
argues that the U.S. army played a crucial and unappreciated role in its efforts to foster
the plantation economy. Officers tried to promote planter interests through marketing,
outreach, and political influence. Army officials also worked locally to recruit workers
for plantation labor, and they mediated on behalf of planters in dealing with the
indigenous population. At the same time, however, the army also had to confront growing
resistance to the plantation complex. Through religious demonstrations, political
organizing, and acts of assassination against the provincial government, the people of the
Moro Province threw obstacles in the way of American attempts to establish a planter

⁵⁷⁶ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House
Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905),
327.

colony in Mindanao. Ultimately, the U.S. army found itself at odds with the planters they²⁸⁶ had originally welcomed to the province and the indigenous people hostile to their presence. In all events, officers became involved in activities far removed from the traditional arts of war, yet central to the work of empire.

The first section of the chapter explores ideas about economic development that motivated army officers. It then looks at military initiatives intended to attract American capital investment, including fairs, markets, and publicity. The second section examines the development of plantation agriculture and the formation of a planter class in the district of Davao, the heart of hemp cultivation in the province. The third and final section focuses on the murder of the district governor and another official in Davao. Along with the emergence of new religious practices, these murders signified mounting resistance to the presence of both the U.S. army and the American planters in the Moro Province.

“The onward march of civilization” and the plantation economy

In 1902, General George W. Davis wrote confidently about the future prospects of the Moro Province: “If the Moros are handled properly...in a generation the existing million of fanatical Moro and pagan savages will be two million industrious laborers, as industrious and peaceable and contented as the subjects of Raja Brooke in Sarawak.”⁵⁷⁷ Brooke, sometimes called the “white rajah,” was an Englishman who was made governor of the province of Sarawak in Borneo in 1841. Such a romantic figure, often regarded as the real-life model for Conrad’s Lord Jim, no doubt inspired the military colonizers who

⁵⁷⁷ *Annual Report of the War Department...1902*, Vol. IX, 565, quoted in Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland*, 53.

hoped to turn Mindanao and Sulu into such an “industrious” kingdom.⁵⁷⁸ The generals who led the province shared Davis’ faith in the ability of the Moro people to become a colonial labor force. They also believed Mindanao could become a lush garden producing valuable commodities for export. Not long into his tenure as the first governor of the Moro Province, General Leonard Wood wrote about the great prospects for the economic development of the region: “The province has great natural resources, which are almost entirely undeveloped. There is an almost unlimited amount of valuable timber, a great deal of it easily accessible, and there is a very large amount of fine agricultural land, well adapted to coconut, hemp, rice, sugar – in short, most of the island products. Rubber plants and rubber trees exist in large numbers; also gutta trees, although a comparatively small amount of this is at present being brought out. Nearly all tropical fruits grow well in the province. All that is wanted is some one to develop and make use of its almost inexhaustible resources.”⁵⁷⁹ Military administrators had ambitious designs on these “resources.” They believed that with the proper support, the Moro Province would become a plantation paradise, yielding profits for investors and settlers and introducing its backward inhabitants to the charms of civilization. It was the responsibility of the U.S. colonial government to support such efforts. General Tasker H. Bliss, the second governor, declared, “The dominant idea of the [provincial] government has been and is economic progress – progress entirely of a material nature – as only in this way can a

⁵⁷⁸ On Brooke’s life, see John D. Gordan, “The Rajah Brooke and Joseph Conrad,” *Studies in Philology* 35, no. 4 (1938): 613–634. On Brooke as inspiration for *Lord Jim* and other Conrad works, see Robert D. Hamner, *Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1990), 25. The importance of Borneo and the British and Dutch colonial projects in the region generally is discussed in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁵⁷⁹ “Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” September 1, 1903 to August 31, 1904, Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 19. Hereafter Report, Moro Province, 1904.

sure foundation be laid for future advancement along social, moral, and intellectual lines.” In fact, the creed of “economic progress” became the army’s fundamental mission in governing the Moro Province, providing the answer to a range of ills including continued guerilla fighting and political resistance among the Moros and animist tribes.

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The army pursued efforts to promote “economic progress” at the same time as it waged an ongoing war in the southern Philippines. While peace was declared throughout most of the Philippines in 1902, the U.S. army remained at war in Mindanao, Sulu, and other parts of the archipelago. As military historian Brian McAllister Linn writes, “The official declaration of the end of the Philippine insurrection on July 4, 1902, did not end the violence. Indeed, in some areas, particularly in the predominantly Muslim Mindanao-Sulu region (referred to within the army as ‘Moroland’), armed resistance to American authority dramatically increased. This phase was even more diffuse and disconnected than had been the ‘war’ of 1899-1902.” Linn describes fighting in the Muslim South as “a series of sporadic and largely unconnected punitive campaigns against either charismatic leaders (Datu Ali), fortified *cotas* (Pandapatan and Bayan in 1902), or communities of believers (Bud Basak in 1913).” Resistance was not limited to Mindanao, and rebels fought U.S. forces in southern Luzon and Visayas for years. Fighting in Mindanao and Sulu was part of what Linn calls “a long war of attrition” in the Philippines after the U.S. declared the end of hostilities. Fighting was most intense in the South and resulted in the only major battles with large-scale casualties between 1900 and 1903.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁸⁰ Brian McAllister Linn, “The Impact of the Philippine Wars (1898-1913) on the U.S. Army,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, eds. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 462-463. For a concise summary of fighting in the Moro Province, see also Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the*

The officers in charge of the Moro Province believed that “economic progress” would complement their military operations, and that peace and prosperity would come to Moroland together through the expansion of plantation agriculture. They hoped that capitalist labor relations and a regular labor regime would ultimately lead the violent, warlike Moros to settle down and embrace peace and civilization. In his final report as governor of the province, General Wood emphasized that Mindanao’s economic potential could help solve its political problems. “I believe the greatest portion of unrest existing among these people to-day, which after all amounts only to petty disorders, is due to the depression in agriculture,” Wood wrote. “The people are not vicious or intractable. They are simply undeveloped.”⁵⁸¹ Wood believed large-scale agricultural production for the world market would “develop” the people. Embracing the agricultural metaphor, Wood told a group of Sulu datus in 1906: “During the three years I have been here we have had a large crop of fights, and in General Bliss’ time I want you to have a large crop of hemp, rice and coconuts.”⁵⁸² Bliss shared Wood’s confidence in the power of plantation agriculture to promote peace. He insisted that Moros who planted hemp – one of the tropical products for which the southern Philippines was particularly well-suited – would

Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 207-210. In contrast to the narrative of ongoing resistance and fighting presented here, Patricio Abinales argues that resistance to U.S. colonialism has been exaggerated by nationalist and pro-separatist forces. This chapter argues, however, that opposition to the American colonial project included resistance to the plantation complex as well as formal fighting and that we need to take a broader view of “resistance” itself than the definition Abinales adopts. This argument is discussed in greater length below. See Abinales, “The U.S. Army as an Occupying Force,” in *Colonial Crucible*, 410-420.

⁵⁸¹ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1906. House Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 7, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 355.

⁵⁸² Quoted Gowing, *Mandate*, 167.

“have neither time nor inclination for insurrection.”⁵⁸³ He believed the army could help 290
the Moros beat their swords into ploughshares. Speaking about a native leader Bliss said,
“If we are going to make a datu out of him, I would rather that, instead of having a couple
of crossed lantakas on his coat-of-arms, he should have a couple of hoes supporting a disc
harrow imposed upon a plow and the whole superimposed on a field of rice.”⁵⁸⁴

Army personnel played a crucial role in shaping and carrying out policies
intended to promote economic gain, focusing on the expansion of the plantation sector.
Historian Peter Gowing writes, “General Wood and his Legislative Council well
understood that the success and viability of the Moro Province depended on the
development of natural resources and the promotion of trade. The provincial government
sought to give whatever encouragement and assistance it could to those engaged in
agricultural and commercial activities.”⁵⁸⁵ This work led Wood, Bliss, and Pershing to
focus their efforts on two fronts: attracting capital and recruiting labor for the plantations.
Throughout his tenure as provincial governor, Wood advocated for policies to promote
the production of lucrative tropical goods. In a letter to Day Allen Willey, a writer and
editor based in Baltimore, he expressed his convictions about the great need for capital:
“What we want here is money, and money will only come under the stimulus of proper
inducement and a reasonable prospect of gain. The further from home one gets, the
greater must be these inducements.”⁵⁸⁶ In a letter marked “economic matters” to

Philippine Governor Luke E. Wright, Wood further outlined what these “inducements”

⁵⁸³ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1907. House Doc. No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 387. Hereafter Report, Moro Province, 1907.

⁵⁸⁴ Bliss to Wood, June 3, 1906, Vol. 43, Bliss Papers, LC. Quoted in Gowing, *Mandate*, 181.

⁵⁸⁵ Gowing, *Mandate*, 125.

⁵⁸⁶ Wood to Mr. D.A. Wiley, Nov 29, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

should be. He recommended investments and improvements in shipping lines and transportation; greater funding for the government-run experimental farm at San Ramon; reduced taxes on native lumber; and the liberalization of land laws. Wood advocated in no uncertain terms that the U.S. foster export agriculture in the southern Philippines. He wrote that the superintendent at San Ramon should be “instructed to devote himself especially to the production of hemp and coconut plants for sale to planters, especially hemp plants.” The plants should “be sold cheap, in order to promote the establishment of hemp plantations in the Southern Islands.” Regarding land laws, one of Wood’s chief concerns, he wanted settlers allowed “at least 200 acres. 300 acres would be better.” He thought the present allotment of forty acres had been tried for long enough: “A sufficient time has already elapsed to show the desirable settlers are not coming.” The only alternative was to expand the allotment in order “to tempt the only class of men capable of establishing these industries.”

Despite constant pressure from the Philippine Commission and military administrators of the Moro Province, land laws were not liberalized to attract more foreign investment and settlement. Shinzo Hayase explains this was mostly due to pressure from U.S. agricultural interests, particularly the beet sugar lobby, which feared competition from Philippine sugar imports. American anti-imperialists also opposed increasing the cap on landholdings.⁵⁸⁷ Other scholars, however, have emphasized the way American colonial laws nevertheless helped dispossess Moros of their “ancestral lands.” In 1904, for example, the Philippine Commission passed Act No. 718 “an act making

⁵⁸⁷ Shinzo Hayase, “American Colonial Policy and the Japanese Abaca Industry in Davao, 1898-1941,” *Philippine Studies* 33, no. 4 (1985): 509–11.

void land grants from Moro sultans or dattos or from chiefs of non-Christian tribes when²⁹² made without governmental authority or consent.” The act extinguished any claims based on grants to Moro or tribal leaders under the Spanish or American colonial governments.⁵⁸⁸ In 1905, certain parts of the Public Land Act were extended, under certain circumstances, to the Moro Province. This act opened up the possibility that some squatters could have their land claims verified by the Land Registration Office, but there were exceptions and the bureaucracy involved was labyrinthine. The Philippine Commission’s resolution in extending the Public Land Act to the Moro Province included the provision that “That the legislative council of the Moro Province is directed to make known throughout the province the foregoing resolution and particularly the limitations imposed by the Public Land Act as to the time within which native settlers may obtain free patents by virtue of Chapter IV of the Public Land Act.” Of course, as military administrators freely admitted, the provincial government did not have contact with a vast number of the province’s people. Distance, inadequate transportation, language barriers, and general hostility prevented the legislative council from communicating the stipulations of this and other land laws with the province’s Moro and tribal populations. Historian Samuel Tan argues that the U.S. “further accelerated the acquisition of lands by individuals, groups, or corporations” by “democratiz[ing] the process.” He writes, “for the indigenous people including the Moros, who were ignorant of the legal process and had nil access to legal remedies in a highly competitive and expensive democratic system, the alienation of their ancestral land continued and, if they coopted to apply for

⁵⁸⁸ *Eighth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission to the Secretary of War, 1907, Appendix: Public Land Laws, Notes on Agriculture, Notes on Labor* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 482-483.

homestead, the individual application was eventually limited to only four hectares with 293
no prospect or security guaranteeing their hold on the piece of their ancestral lands.”⁵⁸⁹

In addition to the challenges presented by the limitations on land purchase, colonial administrators also worried about the quality of the labor force available in the Moro Province. “Capable” white American men could serve as plantation owners and managers, but they needed indigenous people to provide the labor. Unfortunately, Wood believed the “present inhabitants of these islands” did not show any “inclination to take up and improve the land.” “They have had several centuries of opportunity to show capacity for this sort of thing, but have not as yet given any general indication of a very strong tendency in this direction,” Wood wrote.⁵⁹⁰ Despite their lack of “inclination” and “capacity,” he thought the people of the Moro Province would eventually become useful workers. In a letter to William Cameron Forbes, Secretary of Commerce and Police, Wood explained his assessment of their prospects as plantation laborers. While the

⁵⁸⁹ Samuel K. Tan, *The Muslim South and Beyond* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 2010) 77-78. One of the most complete summaries of the confusing and ever-changing land policies in the Moro Province, up until 1906, is actually an article in the boosterish *Far Eastern Review*, intended to help acquaint potential settlers and investors with recent changes in Moro Province land laws. See “Land Laws and Titles in the Moro Province Explained,” *Far Eastern Review* 2, no 13 (May 1906): 380-381. In 1913, the U.S. began a new program of resettling Filipinos from elsewhere in the archipelago on “homesteads” in the Moro Province. These are not discussed here because they took place after the end of military rule in the region, but they are an important part of the debate over the present-day implications of colonial land policies. Indeed, the entire history of land policy during the Spanish and American colonial periods is tied up in contemporary debates and political struggles over separatist movements and ethnic claims in the southern Philippines. See, for example, Myrthena Fianza, “Contesting Land and Identity in the Periphery: The Moro Indigenous People of Southern Philippines,” in *Commons in an Age of Global Transition: Challenges, Risks and Opportunities, the Tenth Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Oaxaca, Mexico*, August 9-13, 2004, <http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/handle/10535/949>; Faina C. Abaya-Ulindang, “Land Resettlement Policies in Colonial and PostColonial Philippines: Key to Current Insurgencies and Climate Disasters in its Southern Mindanao Island,” Conference Paper, Land grabbing, conflict and agrarian-environmental transformations: perspectives from East and Southeast Asia, June 5-6, 2015, Chiang Mai University. http://www.iss.nl/fileadmin/ASSETS/iss/Research_and_projects/Research_networks/LDPI/CMCP_54-Abaya-Ulindang.pdf, accessed 18 February 2016.

⁵⁹⁰ Wood to Governor Luke E. Wright, July 24, 1904, Wood Papers, LC.

people of the islands were not yet “skilled” or “good laborers,” they had potential. “We 294
want to give the Filipino a chance to work and to make him an industrious person. This
must be the foundation of everything in these islands, and in order to do it we have got to
bring the people here who have the ‘wherewithal’ to hire labor on a large scale and
continuously. A class to develop plantations, timber, industries, etc.” Portraying
plantation work as a “chance” or opportunity, Wood suggested that plantations would
serve as schools for American values. In fact, plantations would teach the Filipinos (and
Moros) more than the provincial government could offer. “There is nothing that we have
done that is going to promptly transform the Filipino into an active and energetic laboring
man, nor will a few government experimental farms scattered about the islands be of any
great practicable advantage to him,” Wood wrote. “He has got to see with his own eyes
and have in his own vicinity examples of intelligently and economically conducted
plantations and business concerns[.] Each one of these on which he labors will be an
education to him in the use of improved methods, improved machinery, and incidentally
will increase his taste for luxuries and his desire to better his condition.”⁵⁹¹ Years later,
historian U. B. Phillips would argue that antebellum plantations in the U.S. South served
as schools for black enslaved laborers. Here, writing in the context of the American
imperial mission abroad, Wood anticipated this argument, likewise describing plantation
work as a type of education, capable of transforming backwards, “undeveloped people”
into “industrious” workers. Rather than businesses organized for the purpose of enriching
their investors, plantations would educate the natives and contribute to the Americans’
civilizational project in the islands.

⁵⁹¹ Wood to William Cameron Forbes, March 20, 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

Army administrators believed that the plantation-as-school would help resolve social and political problems while also enhancing the economic prospects of the Moro Province. “Idleness,” Wood believed, was the source of the “petty disorder” which characterized the province. Moros lacked the motivation to work because they were uncivilized. White settlers committed to plantation agriculture would teach the Moros both how to *work* and how to *want*. “We cannot expect great industry on their part until their wants increase,” Wood explained to an associate in Boston. “They are, at present, a largely undeveloped people, but the building up of good plantations and agricultural industries in the Islands and the possession by the owners of these estates, of those things needed and usually had by civilized people, will do much towards waking up in these people an appreciation of what educated and civilized people need to make life attractive.”⁵⁹² In his last report as the governor of the Moro Province, Wood reiterated this belief that the Moros would develop more advanced consumer tastes through the example of white settlers. “People forget, in discussing the development of the Philippines, that the great bulk of the people here are quite satisfied with what they have; that their wants are few and simple because they know little of the needs which go to make up the sum total of a cultured and highly civilized people.”⁵⁹³ Wood insisted that American and European settlers would provide a valuable “example” for the indigenous people, introducing them to the “needs” of “a cultured and highly civilized people.”

The army’s most public efforts – those they showcased to the wider world – were directed toward attracting white settlers to the Moro Province. They hoped to entice men

⁵⁹² Leonard Wood to Major Henry L. Higginson, July 6, 1906, LC.

⁵⁹³ 1906 Moro Province Report, 357.

of capital, those who had the “‘wherewithal’ to hire labor on a large scale,” in Wood’s words. The army worked with local newspapers, chiefly the planter-oriented *Mindanao Herald*, to advertise the islands’ advantages for tropical agriculture. Officers also organized fairs and expositions designed to showcase the province’s natural resources and healthy climate. These activities, undertaken as part of the civil administration of the province, helped the army become a valuable partner for private interests in the islands.

The Jolo Agricultural and Industrial Fair, held in the fall of 1906, exemplifies the type of event organized by military officers to promote their districts and the province as a whole. The Jolo fair featured both exhibits and sports intended to educate and entertain. The military nature of the colonial government was front and center during the festivities. Beginning with a “Grand Procession” and “Review of Troops by the Governor,” the fair continued with an address by E. Z. Steever, colonel of the 4th Cavalry and governor of the District of Sulu. But the fair also showcased “native” arts and performances, and included “Moro Music” and “Magtung-tung (A Moro Game).” The following days brought more Moro demonstrations, including “Maksipah (a kind of a Moro Foot Ball with Moro Music),” “Moro Dances and Spear Dance” and “Moro Races,” and Moro boat races. American soldiers also took part in the festivities, with the 4th Cavalry leading “Horse Gymnastics.” Although Colonel Steever was disappointed the provincial governor had been unable to attend, he assured Bliss that the fair had been “a pronounced success.” Revealing how tenuous the army’s hold over the region remained, Steever noted with apparent pride that there had not been “a single breach of the peace” during the six days of the exposition.

These were years of great interest in such fairs. In 1906, a committee of the province's leading political figures began to organize a fair to take place in the provincial capital, Zamboanga, the following year. John P. Finley, a captain in the 27th Infantry and the governor of the District of Zamboanga, began to draw up materials and draft an agenda. Finley made clear the fair's dual mandate – to attract foreign capital and entice the local people to work on American plantations. He wrote that the event “will certainly tend to promote a wholesome and progressive industrial spirit among the natives and to draw the attention of desirable colonists and working capital to the rich resources and golden opportunities of the Moro Province.”⁵⁹⁴ Exhibits focused on livestock and plants indigenous to the region, showcasing the resources and opportunities of Mindanao. “Exhibits must show the best possible development in manufacture and cultivation, and in the preparation of the raw products for market,” Finley wrote.⁵⁹⁵

The fair's agenda reflected the organizers' intention of showcasing “native” arts along with American power. The military band would open the festivities by playing the United States national anthem. A “special drill” by the Constabulary would display cooperation between the Filipino troops under their white American officers. The violence of the American occupation and the ongoing war against recalcitrant Moros was transformed by the fair's agenda into entertainment: a Moro Spear Dance was followed later in the day by a “Bayonet Exercise contest” with three entries by American soldiers. The goal of the fair, however, was to advertise the province's agricultural strengths. Following the pattern set by county and state agricultural fairs in the United States, the

⁵⁹⁴ John P. Finley to Bliss, Sept. 22, 1906, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁵⁹⁵ “Zamboanga Fair, List of Exhibits, Agricultural Implements,” Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

Zamboanga Fair would exhibit the finest examples of various “native” livestock, including cattle, carabaos, ponies, goats, sheep, pigs, and hogs, including a “presentation of foreign stock.” In keeping with the prescriptive, educational mission of these fairs, there would be a “Display of Agricultural Implements and demonstration of their use for the benefit of the natives.” Contestants engaged in competitive hemp-stripping, coconut tree-climbing, and several activities devoted to “throwing and tying” caraboes and native cattle. In another indication of the export-orientation of the province’s agriculture, contestants were expected to catch, tie, and “place[] hogs in shipping baskets.”

The executive committee of the Zamboanga Fair sought to represent the diversity of peoples living in the Moro Province within prescribed limits. The second day of events opened with a performance of music by a “Native Band.” Attendees could witness the “Riding of Native ponies by natives” followed by the “Riding of American horses by Americans.” A “Tug of War, Filipinos and Moros” would show these inveterate enemies engaging in a playful contest of strength. There was a Moro running race and a Filipino running race, “competitive bamboo weaving,” and “Fancy Dancing by Filipinos.” Reflecting the organizers’ efforts to attract Hispanic Filipinos, Moros and Americans to the fair, the advertisements for the 1907 Zamboanga Fair were printed in three parallel columns with writing in Spanish, Arabic, and English. Unfortunately, we do not know how these activities were received by participants and spectators. Army officers, however, hoped these performances would communicate the virtues of peace, prosperity, and plantation agriculture to the Moros, Filipinos, and members of other tribes who attended the Zamboanga Fair.

Army officers took other steps to try to involve the indigenous people in the type 299 of agriculture and trade they believed would “develop” the Moro Province. Captain Finley was also one of the leading proponents of another program – the Moro Exchanges – designed to incorporate the Moros and animists into American development efforts. These exchanges, or markets, were established throughout the province as places where members of the animist tribes and Moros could meet to buy and sell goods. Army officers believed that the non-Muslims, or “pagans,” had long been abused and even enslaved by stronger and better organized Moro groups, and that this history of fear prevented the development of market relations among the “backwards” people. In a celebratory 1913 article, “The Commercial Awakening of the Moro and Pagan,” Finley wrote that these “natural and long-time enemies” had “found a common ground on which they can get together, and profit more by friendly association and business ventures than by the process of slavery and extermination.” The Moro Exchanges, according to Finley, had introduced slaves to “the first thrills of freedom and the quickening impulse of self-control,” helping them throw off the shackles of their owners. He expressed the confidence, shared by his fellow military administrators, that trade was a crucial tool in the imperial mission. Like Wood and Bliss, he believed that by “awakening the commercial spirit of the uncivilized tribes,” the Americans could promote “peace and unity” at the same time as they made money.⁵⁹⁶

Fairs, expositions, and exchanges encouraged trade and business within a local orbit. These events were an important part of the army’s program of outreach to Moros,

⁵⁹⁶ John P. Finley, “The Commercial Awakening of the Moro and Pagan,” *The North American Review* (1913): 331-332.

animists, and European and American planters. But their scope was limited. To attract settlers from abroad – men from the U.S. who might uproot their lives and start over in the remote corners of Mindanao – the army joined forces with English-language newspapers and journals. Two publications demonstrate the central role played by army officers in seeking to advertise the province. In 1906, the *Far Eastern Review*, a journal edited by an American, George Bronson Rea, published a “Special Edition Devoted to the Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Development of the Moro Province, under the American System of Colonial Government.” The cover of this special issue featured a photograph of Leonard Wood, with the caption “Major General Leonard Wood, U.S. Army, First American Governor of the Moro Province, Philippine Islands, whose Progressive Administration of Civil Affairs has Opened up that Country to Immigration, and Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Development.” Inside, the general’s essay, entitled “The Policy of the Government of the Moro Province,” appeared first. As the leading piece in the journal, Wood’s article described the many ways the military provincial government supported planters and investors. The general made clear the army’s commitment to expanding the plantation sector in the Moro Province: “One of the principal objects of the provincial government has been, and is, to build up the agriculture of the province, realizing that the entire question of prosperity and development depends upon this. The undeveloped wealth of the province is very great, especially in timber and jungle produce, the former including most of the best woods in the Philippine Islands, in large quantities.” Rubber, hemp, cacao, coconuts, rice, coal, mango, and pearls were just some of the products waiting to enrich investors in Mindanao. “This whole section of the Philippines presents a field of great and almost untouched natural wealth, which needs

only the energy of the settler to develop it.” “Undeveloped” and “untouched,” the riches 301 of the Moro Province were just “waiting” for the intervention of Americans. Yet Wood did not portray the region as virgin or empty territory. Instead, he acknowledged the indigenous population but assured readers that these people would play a positive, helpful role in the transformation of the province. “The wild people are, as a rule, willing workers, and when properly handled give good results,” Wood wrote. The labor problem was almost entirely absent from Wood’s account: “The Moro is a ready worker, anxious always to make money, and strong and energetic. He is, perhaps, the best laborer found in the Philippines.”⁵⁹⁷ A far cry from popular images of the Moros as fierce, violent warriors, Wood portrayed them as “willing workers,” “a ready worker,” and “the best laborer.” They were simply “waiting” for the guidance and “handl[ing]” of American investors.

The army’s presence in the Moro Province was reflected throughout this celebratory edition of the *Far Eastern Review*. A map of Mindanao, prepared by the provincial engineer, appeared, as did an article entitled, “Unique Provincial Government,” by Captain George Langhorne, U.S. Army. The editors took particular interest in Davao, which they touted as “the first and only American settlement in the Philippines.” A headline proclaimed “District of Davao: Magnificent Section of the Moro Province where Hemp is King and Coconut Crown Prince, and where the White Man is Playing an Important Part in Agricultural Development.”⁵⁹⁸ Pitching the region to would-be investors in the U.S., the journal assured readers that “The District of Davao is the

⁵⁹⁷ Leonard Wood, “The Moro Province,” *Far Eastern Review* 2, no 13 (May 1906): 370.

⁵⁹⁸ “District of Davao,” *Far Eastern Review* 2, no. 13 (May 1906): 392.

land of promise for the white settler.” It told the story of one of the earliest settlers, Captain J. L. Burchfield, who came to Mindanao as an officer with the volunteers. A native of Kentucky, Burchfield was “of the pioneer stock that reclaimed from jungle and savage the Great West,” and he “believes in the civilization of the American plow and sawmill.” The magazine noted that there were 35 American-owned plantations in Davao. These “hardy Americans” were not merely enriching themselves but doing magnificent work on behalf of humanity. “Incidentally they are carrying civilization into the mountain fastnesses of the savage tribes of Midnanao, teaching these simple people the use of the hoe and ax, and the value of industry. Thousands of these mountain people are now living in good houses, eating good food, and adapting civilized dress. They are laying aside their spears and kris, engaging in agriculture, and, in some cases, sending their children to school.” While *The Far Eastern Review* highlighted the importance of native labor and portrayed Moros and other tribespeople as peaceful, they also assured readers that the Americans were truly in power in Mindanao. As Leonard Wood wrote in his opening essay, “The controlling influence of the Moro Province is, in every sense, American...In comparison with other countries in the Far East, it is believed that the Philippines, and especially the Southern Philippines, as represented by the Moro Province, offers the best field for white settlers, at present, in the East.”

In 1909, Mindanao’s leading newspaper published a special edition intended to attract settlers to the province. Celebrating ten years of U.S. occupation of the southern Philippines, the *Mindanao Herald Decennium* combined boosterism, history, and ethnography in an expansive paean to the American presence in Mindanao. The *Herald* had long been devoted to the interests of planters. This special edition also highlighted

the prominent role of the army in promoting exactly those interests. After the editor's introduction, General Bliss' piece, "The Government of the Moro Province and Its Problems," emphasized the responsibility and duty of Americans to the islands. He gestured toward the latent wealth of the province: the islands were "rich in gifts of nature" and "splendid returns await the pioneers who have the courage to venture in these fields." He urged settlers to come to Mindanao to take their part in the "onward march of civilization." "The uplifting of these savage races requires the best energies that a strong nation has to give," Bliss wrote.⁵⁹⁹ The *Decennium* included other pieces prepared by army officers, including "interesting articles on Jolo Moro traditions, commerce, music and dancing...taken from the compendium of First Lieutenant Edwin D. Smith, 4th Field Artillery." The editors explained that these articles were part of "a very exhaustive report repaired under the direction of Captain Chas. B. Hagdorn, Secretary of the Moro Province, for use in the Military Information Bureau."⁶⁰⁰ The pages of the *Decennium* were littered with photographs of and articles written by officers of the regular army and the Philippine Constabulary. Indeed, the publication demonstrated visually the overlap between the commercial interests and military government of the province. The extensive section devoted to Davao, for example, began with a profile of District Governor Allen Walker, captain in the Philippine Scouts. Next to a photograph of Governor Walker in uniform, the *Decennium* described the governor's unwavering commitment to the advancement of the plantation economy in Davao. In an oblique but unapologetic

⁵⁹⁹ Tasker H. Bliss, "The Government of the Moro Province and It Problems," *The Mindanao herald: historical and industrial number, commemorating a decennium of American occupation of the land of the farthest east and nearest west*, February 3, 1909, 6. Hereafter *Mindanao Herald Decennium*.

⁶⁰⁰ "Traditions, Customs and Commerce of the Sulu Moros," *Mindanao Herald Decennium*, 21.

reference to the coercions employed in harnessing the labor of indigenous people for plantation labor, the editors wrote of Walker: “He happens to know the name of every man in his district and pursues a most embarrassing course of finding out what he is doing. He says that so long as there is plenty of rich land to plant he means to make agriculture look good to the residents who are not employed in other useful pursuits.”⁶⁰¹ Tellingly, the *Decennium* concluded with a “Station List of the Army in Mindanao,” listing each station, troops, and officers assigned to the Department of Mindanao. The army’s presence in the Moro Province was clear from beginning to end in what was essentially a 90-page booster pamphlet advertising the commercial possibilities of the islands.

Army officers tried to attract private investors to the province as part of their daily administrative duties. Publications like the *Far Eastern Review* and the *Decennium* were instrumental to this work. In 1910, John J. Pershing, the third and final military governor of the Moro Province, wrote General Clarence R. Edwards, the newly installed chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs. “Dear Clarence,” he wrote, “I am taking the liberty of sending you by express two hundred copies of the *Mindanao Herald*, a periodical published in Zamboanga something over a year ago, ‘commemorating a decennium of American Occupation of the Land of the Farthest East and the Nearest West.’” Pershing hoped that his friend might have “an opportunity of distributing these publications where they will do some good. You will no doubt have many opportunities for placing them in the hands of investors or of mailing them to persons making inquiry regarding the Philippines.” Pershing himself had already sent copies of the *Mindanao Herald*

⁶⁰¹ “Governor Allen Walker,” *Mindanao Herald Decennium*, 69.

Decennium to various trade journals and chambers of commerce in the U.S., but he 305
thought Edwards, through his position in the insular government, might be able to spread
the message even further. For Pershing, as for his predecessors Wood and Bliss, there
was no conflict of interest between the role of provincial governor and business booster.
On the contrary, these men believed it was their duty to attract settlers and capital
investment to Mindanao. Pershing told Edwards, "This Province certainly has a great
future and we are very anxious to do all that is possible to encourage American capital to
come here for investment. As you know, there stands the great, rich Cotabato Valley
ready to make millionaires out of men who have the courage to judiciously invest a few
dollars. Besides this, we have great opportunities for the cultivation of rubber, hemp,
tapioca and rice, to say nothing of our forests and grazing lands." Pershing expressed
optimism about the prospects for continued economic growth led by U.S. investors:
"There is considerable new capital coming into the Province, and I look for an era of
prosperity hitherto unknown in the Islands."⁶⁰² Edwards responded by telling Pershing he
would be more than happy to receive the materials and would "make the best possible
distribution" of them. He assured Pershing that, "The Bureau of Insular Affairs never
loses an opportunity to put in a good word for the Moro country, because we believe in it,
as you do."⁶⁰³

Army officers took seriously their work attracting white settlers to the province.
They believed the expansion of the plantation sector, under American ownership and

⁶⁰² John J. Pershing to Clarence Edwards, February 9, 1910, RG 350, Bureau of Insular Affairs, Entry I-3 5-A: General Classified Files, 1898-1945; 1898-1913, Container 822, File 19022, National Archives, College Park, Md.

⁶⁰³ Clarence Edwards to John J. Pershing, March 24, 1910, Ibid.

leadership, was necessary for the political stabilization of Mindanao and key to the economic future of the province. By organizing fairs and markets, publicizing the province abroad, and writing to friends and associates in the U.S. about the islands' commercial potential, men like Wood, Bliss, and Pershing contributed what resources and influences they could to promoting the plantation economy. But the army went beyond pamphlets and marketing in order to promote the province's plantation economy. Events in Davao, the heart of provincial hemp production, demonstrate how army officers used their authority to leverage labor for nascent American plantations. Planters, however, did not always get the unqualified support they would have liked from their allies. Instead, officers found themselves mediating between local laborers and American planters and pursuing a line of policy all their own.

Turning "Cutlasses into Scythes": Creating a Labor Force

"What the military and missionary forces for centuries have failed to accomplish bids fair now to respond to the efforts of the planter," declared the *Mindanao Herald*. "Thousands of wild men who three years ago were living in trees and palm leaf booths, who on sight of the white man would take to the brush like wild deer, are now comfortably settled on hemp and coconut plantations where they daily learn the art of living useful lives." The heroes who were rescuing these "wild men" and introducing them to the comforts of civilization were planters in Davao in southeastern Mindanao. One of five districts established as part of the Moro Province, Davao in 1909 was undergoing a particularly rapid and extraordinary transformation as Americans began to arrive and establish *abaca*, or hemp, plantations. Hemp was an important component for

making rope, and it quickly became the major export from the Philippines to the U.S.⁶⁰⁴ 307
The potential for making huge profits from hemp, as well as other cash crops like rubber and coconuts, attracted investors and would-be planters to settle around the Gulf of Davao. According to historian Patricio Abinales, 1906 to 1909 were years of the “abaca boom.”⁶⁰⁵ The army only deemed the district ready for settlement in 1905, but it did not take long for Americans to arrive. Abinales explains, “From virtually nothing in 1900, the [abaca] industry grew to forty-two plantations by 1911, covering 16,410 hectares. Hemp production rose from 308 tons (1902) to 8,592 tons (1910) to become the province’s top export.”⁶⁰⁶ An enormous demographic shift accompanied the expansion of hemp production. In 1901, American officials estimated Davao’s population, made up of Muslim as well as “pagan” or animist peoples, at between four and six thousand. Davao was also “the most isolated district of the Moro Province and one of the farthest from Manila.”⁶⁰⁷ In less than a decade, the population essentially doubled in size with the emigration of 5,000 Americans into the district by 1909.⁶⁰⁸

These new American and European settlers soon began to express the self-consciousness of a planter elite. In 1905, fifteen American and Spanish planters formed the Davao Planters Association; by 1909, the organization had grown to 60 members.⁶⁰⁹ The members were politically active. The *Decennium* editors wrote proudly, “The Association has been instrumental in securing much needed legislation for the District.

⁶⁰⁴ Shinzo Hayase, “Tribes on the Davao Frontier, 1899-1941,” *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 33, no. 2 (1985): 139-140.

⁶⁰⁵ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 76.

⁶⁰⁶ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 21.

⁶⁰⁷ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 69-70.

⁶⁰⁸ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 75.

⁶⁰⁹ Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, 75.

Their recommendations are always given a thoughtful hearing by the Provincial and Insular governments, and in nearly every case their requests granted.” They met regularly to discuss issues of interest, and the association had bought land near the docks for “a bodega and weighing scales.” They also hoped to contract with buyers in England and the U.S. for Davao hemp, thereby cutting out middlemen brokers. Promotional materials took pains to portray these planters as altruistic as well. Echoing the claims of other representatives of the American colonial establishment, the *Mindanao Herald* insisted that the Davao Planters were committed as much to “developing the social and material interests of the District,” as they were to their own financial gain.

The Davao Planters’ Association was also inflected with a military flavor. In addition to Captain Burchfield, other planters had also come to Mindanao as soldiers during the war. William Henry Gohn, who managed and operated a plantation under his own name, had served two terms of service with the 17th Infantry in the southern Philippines; Corporal Gohn was discharged in Zamboanga in 1904, after which he established a plantation in Santa Cruz.⁶¹⁰ Loren Day, the manager of the Tagum Plantation Company, was a member of the Davao Planters’ Association. Before settling in Davao, however, he had also served as a musician and “bandmaster” in the 11th U.S. Volunteer Cavalry.⁶¹¹ The successful transformation of one enlisted man even attracted the attention of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines. In 1926 the

⁶¹⁰ “William Henry Gohn,” *Spanish American War Veteran’s Compensation File*. Department of Military and Veteran’s Affairs, Record Group 19. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Ancestry.com, accessed 26 February 2015.

⁶¹¹ “Loren Day,” *General Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers who Served During the War with Spain*. Microfilm publication M871, 126 rolls. ARC ID: 654543. Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s–1917, RG 94, NA. See also “Loren Day,” *General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. T288, 546 rolls. Both records from Ancestry.com, accessed 26 February 2015.

chamber ran a story in its journal under the headline “From Army Clerk to Plantation 309
Owner: One Man’s Winnings from Davao Jungle.” The subject of the story was Henry S.
Peabody, who had come to the Philippines in 1898 as a clerk with 7th California
volunteers. After the war, he returned to the islands as a stenographer with the Bureau of
Science. With a few other partners, Peabody established the Lais Traiding &
Development Company devoted to hemp production.⁶¹² Many of these planters were also
connected to the military government in the province. Orval Hughes managed the
Malalag Bay Plantation Company, but before that he had served in the 17th Infantry with
Edward C. Bolton, the district governor.⁶¹³ The provincial government was encouraged
by the number of military personnel who chose to stay in Mindanao after their terms of
service, believing that it promoted good relations between planters and the government.
“The attitude of [American] settlers toward the local government has built up mutual
respect and confidence,” wrote Captain G. T. Langhorne, acting provincial governor, in
his 1905 annual report. “Their wants are frequently anticipated by the government; when
made known they receive prompt consideration and action. Many former soldiers who
have saved a small capital during their army life, upon discharge have settled and are
doing well, either as planters or as merchants along special lines.”⁶¹⁴ Other officers
invested in plantations at the same time they served as colonial officials. Military

⁶¹² “From Army Clerk to Plantation Owner: One Man’s Winnings from Davao Jungle,” *The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Journal* (January 1926). “The United States and Its Territories,” University of Michigan. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/philamer/AJ0523.1926.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

⁶¹³ “Orval Hughes,” Spanish American War Veteran's Compensation File. Department of Military and Veteran’s Affairs, Record Group 19. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Ancestry.com, accessed 26 February 2015.

⁶¹⁴ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 329.

governors disagreed about whether this involvement was beneficial or detrimental to the 310 successful administration of the region.⁶¹⁵ But even in this, officials in Mindanao were part of a longer tradition of army officers investing in the regions they were assigned to govern; the “empire-builder” Colonel Benjamin Grierson in Texas was only one such example in the trans-Mississippi West.

Despite their growing numbers, influence, and connections to the military establishment, Davao planters struggled to attract reliable workers to the district. European and American settlers provided capital and some expertise, but they had no intention of performing the manual labor necessary for the operation of a tropical agricultural enterprise. U.S. laws barred the importation of Chinese laborers, so planters looked to local populations, as well as Filipinos from elsewhere in the archipelago, for their workforce.⁶¹⁶ In Davao, planters tried to recruit “hillpeople,” or members of the mountain-dwelling animist tribes, to work on their hemp farms. But as Shinzo Hayase writes, they faced severe challenges in adapting these people to the rigors of plantation work. “[I]t was difficult to persuade hill people to come down to the coast for any length of time. They were timid and not used to disciplined hard work measured by the clock. They knew nothing about the value of time as money. Even when they had worked on a

⁶¹⁵ See discussion below regarding Wood and Bliss’s contrasting arguments for district officials working as planters.

⁶¹⁶ The first American effort to exclude Chinese workers from the Philippines came in 1898, when General Otis attempted to “block” the entrance of Chinese except former residents and members of the elite. The debate over Chinese labor continued, however, because many American and European employers supported the importation of Chinese workers for industrial and plantation interests. Their lobbying was defeated in 1902, when Congress extended the scope of the Chinese Exclusion Act and applied its provisions to its territories, including the Philippines. See Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 398-400. The significance of Chinese labor to various commercial interests in Manila and the growing competition between Chinese and Filipino laborers is usefully described in Bankoff, “Wants, Wages, And Workers,” 68-72.

plantation for quite some time, the majority of them would occasionally take a week or a month off without prior notice to hunt in the mountains or trade with neighboring tribes.”⁶¹⁷ 311

The labor problem even drew the attention of observers in the U.S. In 1911, the *Washington Post* ran an extensive feature on plantation agriculture in Mindanao entitled “Persuading the Bloody Moro Pirates to Convert Cutlasses into Scythes.” Significant changes had taken place in the islands, and the article singled out Davao for special mention as the place where “the largest colony of Americans” and “the finest hemp grown in the islands” could be found. Yet labor remained a hindrance to the successful development of the region. The *Post* reported, “The labor problem is at present the most serious with which the Mindanao planter has to deal...The planters have organized [the Davao Planters’ Association], whose chief object is to corral sufficient labor to develop their plantations. To accomplish this result they have scoured the islands, and failing to induce the Moros to lay down their spears and carving knives, have brought down what laborers they have from the northern islands.”⁶¹⁸ Despite their best efforts, the Americans struggled to persuade the Moros and “pagans” to beat their *bolos* into ploughshares.

Planters found a valuable ally in the U.S. army as they sought labor for their nascent operations. Army officers shared planters’ goal of recruiting locals for plantation work. The military administration believed that regular labor and clock discipline would acquaint indigenous people with the benefits of civilization while helping the army accomplish its goal of pacifying the Moro Province. In 1904, Governor Wood boasted

⁶¹⁷ Hayase, “Tribes,” 511.

⁶¹⁸ “Persuading the Bloody Moro Pirates to Convert Cutlasses into Scythes,” *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1911, SM4. Proquest Historical Newspapers, accessed 12 December 2013.

that over a million hemp plants and a thousand coconut trees had been planted in the district. However, a dearth of workers retarded progress. “At the present time the amount of hemp growing in this district is greater than can be harvested with the laborers available,” Wood explained. “There are comparatively few Moros in the district.”⁶¹⁹ While the problem was widespread throughout the Moro Province, the labor shortage was particularly acute in Davao. The district had “received the largest investment of labor and capital for agricultural development” by 1907, but it was historically one of the least populated areas of Mindanao.⁶²⁰ The next year Governor Bliss noted that Moros in Zamboanga would not work for the planters, preferring to labor for the government even when planters paid higher wages, raising uncomfortable questions about why Moros avoided plantation labor.⁶²¹ Expressing the desperation of colonial officials as well as planters, he wrote, “The crying need of the Moro Province to-day is for workers.”⁶²²

The military administration tried to help planters more directly by suppressing wages on public works projects in order to make plantation labor more attractive. In 1904, Leonard Wood reported with a mixture of alarm and anger at the rising wages earned by workers. “There has been a great increase in the cost of living and in wages in this as in other provinces, an increase which has not been accompanied either by improved methods or increased production,” he wrote. “The cause of this increase can be traced in most cases to the foolishly high prices paid by army officials for labor.” Farmers

⁶¹⁹ Report, Moro Province, 1904, 18.

⁶²⁰ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1907. House Doc. No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 386.

⁶²¹ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1908. House Doc. No. 1042, 60th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 376.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 364.

were unable to afford the higher wages demanded by workers, leading to a “trying” state 313 of affairs for “the farmer and producer,” according to Wood. He anticipated a return to “normal conditions” – that is, lower wages – because the army would soon employ fewer workers and pay them less.⁶²³ Wood, however, blamed the army for putting private employers, namely planters, at a disadvantage. Rather than seeing the influx of cash into the economy as beneficial for the local people, he believed the army’s higher wages put an unfair burden on other employers. The next year the army took steps to reduce the wages it paid. In 1905 it set a “uniform wage....on all government work, both civil and military.” Most workers – “ordinary labor” – received 75 centavos for a nine-hour work day. Native carpenters earned one and half Filipino pesos while Japanese carpenters received two. These wages represented a “reduction” over the previous year, and officials believed they would continue to decrease. The army hoped its wages would soon “conform to what can be afforded by the planters, which, except in Davao, is not to exceed 150 centavos.”⁶²⁴

Army officers also shared planters’ desire to relocate people from the mountains to the coast. In 1907 General Bliss wrote, “The district officials, acting under instructions from the Government of the Province, have been making every effort to get the wild tribes to come down from the mountains and settle along the coast, where we can more easily bring them under civilising influences.”⁶²⁵ These influences included living in

⁶²³ Report, Moro Province, 1904, 24.

⁶²⁴ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1905. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 10, Pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 336.

⁶²⁵ Bliss to General Wood, 14 Jan. 1907, Vol. 59, Bliss Papers, LC.

settled communities, attending schools, and learning the benefits of private property.⁶²⁶

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Bliss and his contemporaries argued that permanent settlements, preferably near plantations, would foster stronger community ties and introduce the people to the benefits of civilization and modernity. “The one great aim of the American planters and of the government,” according to Bliss, “has been to induce [the Moros] by just treatment to settle in fixed communities along the coast, where their labor will be of equal value to them and to the planters, where schools can be established among them, and where the spread of the merest rudimentary notions of sanitation will result in a rapid increase in their numbers.”⁶²⁷ Coastal settlement would seem to benefit everyone: planters would have access to labor, the Moros would be less prone to wage war against the American government, and the hill people would enjoy greater material and physical security.

General John J. Pershing was more direct about the necessity of relocating laborers:

“These wild people are timid, suspicious, irresponsible and untrained,” he wrote in 1910.

“So long as the laborer lives in the mountains an employer cannot control him.”⁶²⁸

Employment on American-owned plantations apparently held little appeal for most indigenous peoples, as the grumblings of planters and officers reflected. The mountain-dwelling people resisted American efforts to relocate them to the gulf region. According to one plantation manager, it took him “over a year to get the natives to come down from their mountain resorts and work,” and he finally succeeded in persuading 50

⁶²⁶ Report, Moro Province, 1907, 378.

⁶²⁷ Report, Moro Province, 1907, 386.

⁶²⁸ *Annual report of Brigadier General John J. Pershing, U.S. Army, Governor of the Moro Province, for the Year Ending June 30, 1911* (Zamboanga: The Mindanao Herald Publishing Company, 1911), 11. Unlike the annual reports for other years, the 1911 report does not appear to have been included in the annual report of the Secretary of War. A digital version is available through the University of Michigan: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/philamer/aaf7627.1911.001/1?rgn=full+text;view=image;q1=moro+province>

families to settle on the plantation he managed.⁶²⁹ For those that did attempt plantation work, a common complaint was that the natives would not labor steadily. Planters and army officials alike remarked on their “disinclination to steady labor” and the “unreliable character” of their work.⁶³⁰ General Wood recognized the fundamental problem: the Americans needed the indigenous workers more than they needed the Americans. He wrote, “People forget, in discussing the development of the Philippines, that the great bulk of the people here are quite satisfied with what they have; that their wants are few and simple because they know little of the needs which go to make up the sum total of a cultured and highly civilized people.”⁶³¹ Certainly this problem was not isolated to the southern Philippines: colonial masters in plantation societies elsewhere in the world faced similar challenges in maintaining a regular labor force in the absence of slavery or some other form of coerced labor. Following slave emancipation in Jamaica, for example, planters struggled to regain the type of social as well as economic control over their workers they had enjoyed under slavery. Former slaves tried to establish freeholdings and become market gardeners with only occasional forays into the export economy.⁶³² In the Moro Province, where the native population had never been accustomed to plantation work, the challenges were perhaps greater. General Wood and his contemporaries believed the problem could be solved by simply inculcating new desires and habits in the Moros and “wild people,” but American military officials would end up adopting many

⁶²⁹ Hubbell report, undated, [1906], in Charles E. Wheeler to Leonard Wood, Dec. 1, 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶³⁰ “Editorial Comment,” *Mindanao Herald*, 21 October 1905, 4; Report, Moro Province, 1906, 384.

⁶³¹ Report, Moro Province, 1906, 357.

⁶³² On the withdrawal of workers from plantation labor in Jamaica after emancipation, see Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 143-176. On the “reconstituted peasantries” in the wider Caribbean, see Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 131-156.

of the same coercive strategies for securing a steady plantation labor force that colonial officials in the Caribbean had also used. 316

The animist peoples living in mountain recesses of the Moro Province largely existed beyond the reach of the colonial state. In helping persuade them to resettle along the coast, military administrators helped support planter priorities. At the same time, army officers had reasons of their own for pursuing this course: they wanted to make the indigenous population more accessible, or “legible,” to the colonial state. James C. Scott’s study of the so-called “stateless peoples” of southeast Asia illuminates the processes at work in American colonial policies in Mindanao. Scott argues that many of the demographic patterns of southeast Asia reflect the fact that large numbers of people have sought, over centuries, to evade the reach of the state and its coercive policies. “Living within the state meant, virtually by definition, taxes, conscription, corvée labor, and, for most, a condition of servitude; these conditions were at the core of the state’s strategic and military advantages,”⁶³³ Scott writes. Throughout southeast Asia, stateless people were often hill-people; they fled to remote, inaccessible, and mountainous regions where it was difficult for the “lowland” states to reach them. Highlighting the state’s coercive policies makes it easier to see why many populations have preferred nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles. Instead of seeing such groups as uncivilized or barbaric, Scott argues, we should see their evasion of state living as a “political choice.”⁶³⁴

In the Moro Province, the increased reach of the state meant additional burdens on the Moro and animist peoples. The colonial government imposed new taxes, helping

⁶³³ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 7.

⁶³⁴ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 8.

press colonial subjects into wage labor. Those who tried to evade the tax could find themselves forced to labor regardless. Shinzo Hayase points out that the imposition of the road tax under the American military government complemented planters' efforts to attract workers: "Those who would not work were tried before magistrates and sentenced to labour on public works. The introduction of taxes among tribal societies in Mindanao created the need for money, which in turn forced an 'uncivilized' people to seek employment."⁶³⁵ Furthermore, the establishment of the tribal ward system, touted as a means of civilizing the "wild" peoples, was also a means of collecting tax revenue. According to Macario Tiu, "The principal function of the tribal ward was to collect the annual *cedula* or head tax amounting to P12.50 for every able-bodied male aged 18-50 years. If a resident was unable to pay, he could be sentenced to work on the public roads for which he received fifty centavos per day to pay off his *cedula*."⁶³⁶ Essential to all these activities is what Scott calls *legibility*. Appropriating the resources of a subject population, whether through cash, crops or labor, required legibility. "The policy of encouraging or imposing legible, agrarian landscapes of appropriation seems hard-wired to state-making. It was only such landscapes that were directly beneficial and accessible."⁶³⁷ Hill-people's swidden agriculture and roving lifestyle posed a challenge to the American colonial government's efforts to make the Moro Province legible for extraction and governance purposes. Even census-taking, one of the most fundamental

⁶³⁵ Hayase, "Tribes," 140-141. See Willemina Kloosterboer, *Involuntary Labour since the Abolition of Slavery: A Survey of Compulsory Labour throughout the World* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), for a comparative study of the methods used by various colonial states to coerce labor after the abolition of slavery. Taxation is one of the primary tools colonial states have used to coerce workers to participate in the cash economy after emancipation.

⁶³⁶ Macario D. Tiu, *Davao 1890-1910: Conquest and Resistance in the Garden of the Gods* (Quezon City: UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2003), 68.

⁶³⁷ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 76.

activities of the state, proved difficult among people living in the mountains. The first U.S. census of the Moro Province in 1903 estimated there were about a quarter-million people living in the province, far fewer than the Spanish figure of 700,000 to a million. Historian Peter Gowing suggests that the Americans underestimated the population while the Spanish had overestimated it. The discrepancy over the census numbers reflects the difficulty of counting and registering such a dispersed – and possibly evasive – population. Furthermore, the Moros responded poorly to the census-taking. “The rumor spread rapidly that the Americans were going to tax the people and take their land,” Gowing writes.⁶³⁸ Such fears were not completely irrational, as the census formed the basis of future government efforts to make the Moro Province accessible to colonial efforts like taxation.⁶³⁹

Plantation agriculture contributed to the overall goal of legibility, at least from the perspective of the American colonial government. Scott points out that monoculture farming, with its settled population of cultivators, makes appropriation by the state, in the form of taxation and labor, much easier than the slash-and-burn agriculture practiced by many of the hill-people in the Moro Province. Although it was not the official policy of the province, some army officers issued edicts requiring the people under their jurisdiction to plant cash crops. Before going on a temporary leave, Captain R. O. Van Horn of the Seventeenth Infantry made sure to tell his superior, provincial governor Leonard Wood, of his orders in this regard. “The verbal order of mine given to all Moros

⁶³⁸ Gowing, *Mandate*, 81.

⁶³⁹ For an argument about the centrality of the *Census of the Philippine Islands* as an instrument of and reflection of the U.S. colonial policy of “benevolence,” see Vicente L. Rafael, “White Love: Census and Melodrama in the United States Colonization of the Philippines,” in *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2000), 19-39.

to plant, each and every one of them, a few coconuts and hemp once a month should be 319 enforced,” he told Wood. “It will show results in time.”⁶⁴⁰ Army officers believed export agriculture would bring economic development and prosperity, but they also wanted the “natives” to take up sedentary living because it accorded with their goals for governing the province and exacting tribute from the colonial subjects. For the most part, the goals of the colonial government and the goals of the planters overlapped.

The colonial government’s efforts to resettle the population and support the plantation economy placed military officers in frequent contact with the diverse peoples of the province. As Bliss wrote, “The governor and his subordinates in their ceaseless journeys through the tribal wards constantly preach the doctrine of work.”⁶⁴¹ The people proved poor converts; most were either indifferent or plainly hostile to these Weberian sermons. Yet thanks in part to the indefatigable work of army officers, the plantation sector began to make inroads into the province, particularly in Davao. The result, however, was not a more peaceful, pacified province. On the contrary, just as planters were beginning to enjoy some success in recruiting workers, a conflagration erupted in the heart of hemp country.

“What Men Will Do on a Remote Frontier”: Regulating the Plantation Sector

In the spring of 1906, Lieutenant Edward C. Bolton, governor of the Davao district, began hearing whispers about a new religious movement among some of the Muslims and “wild tribes” in his region. He received word that members of several tribes were taking part in a new religious dance and even paying admission in order to

⁶⁴⁰ R.O. Van Horn to Leonard Wood, Dec 26, 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

⁶⁴¹ Report, Moro Province, 1907, 386-387.

participate. There were also reports about a witch, Simbanan, who distributed charms among the Tagacaolos, one of the major indigenous groups in Davao. Such rumors about unknown religious leaders and practices were common enough, but American planters in the area were becoming nervous about these large gatherings. Governor Bolton, as the military and civil authority in the district, felt obliged to respond to their concerns. He investigated and arrested two of the *datus*, or leaders, involved, but he found no basis for alarm.⁶⁴² Nevertheless, in June he decided to make a tour of the area in question in order to personally reassure the planters who had written him “urgent letters.” The night before he departed, Bolton wrote a friend, “The American at Malalag thinks his village is going to be attacked by Tagacaolos and Manobos, several neighboring planters and the District Secretary have gone there but I do not put much stock in this scare rumor. These planters pay too much attention to the talk of their irresponsible and imaginative laborers and get rather morbid and inclined to look for misfortune.”⁶⁴³ In a show of confidence, Bolton decided to travel unarmed, and he even stayed two nights with Mungalayan, a deputy tribal headman who had told several people he wanted to kill Bolton. A few days into the journey, Bolton set out with another planter, Benjamin Christian, Mungalayan, and Mungalayan’s brother to visit plantations in the area. That afternoon, while Bolton and Christian took a nap on the beach, they were killed. Officials who saw the aftermath described a brutal scene: “each of them were almost decapitated by a single blow from a

⁶⁴² Hayase, “Tribes”: 141-144; Bliss to General Wood, 25 July 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁴³ E.C. Bolton to Arthur Poillon, 31 May 1906, Vol. 47, Bliss Papers, LC.

Bolo or other large knife,” and Bolton’s body was “horribly mutilated.”⁶⁴⁴ A few days 321
later, the army launched a full-scale manhunt for Mungalayan and the witch Simbanan.

These murders were not random acts of violence. The assassination of Bolton, both a representative of the colonial government and a planter, and Christian, a planter, were acts of political resistance. They formed part of a religiously-inflected protest movement aimed at eliminating the American presence in the Moro Province. Events surrounding the murders, including the army’s response, reveal mounting tensions in Davao as the plantation sector and U.S. influence in the region expanded. They also expose the deepening fault lines between the colonial state, American emigrants, and the indigenous population of the Moro Province.⁶⁴⁵

In the days and weeks following the murders, Bliss along with other district officials and constabulary officers tried to reconstruct the events and understand what triggered the outbreak of violence. As Bolton wrote to a friend right before he left headquarters, he had received “urgent letters” from American planters concerned about a new religious movement in their area. The district secretary, Orville V. Wood, had received similar reports from the planters, and he also traveled to Malalag at the same time as Bolton to investigate. On June 9, three days after the murders, Wood reported to Bliss that, “This killing was the result of a disturbance existing among these people for

⁶⁴⁴ Waldo B. Williams to Bliss, 10 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC; Bliss to Gen. Wood, 16 June 1906, Vol. 43, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁴⁵ When I first began to follow up on brief mentions of Bolton’s murder in Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland*, I believed there was no full-length study of these incidents. Toward the end of my writing, I discovered that a scholar in the Philippines had in fact written about them. See Tiu, *Davao 1890-1910*. Independently of each other, Tiu and I developed the argument that the murder of Bolton and the emergence of several religious dances in Davao at this time must be understood in the context of the expansion of the plantation sector and increased American political and economic intrusions in the Davao gulf between 1905 and 1910. Tiu’s book relies on about 200 interviews with “informants” in Mindanao, from which I have gratefully quoted in this chapter.

the past three or four weeks... Mungalayon and Balawag, the heads of the tribal organization, had joined forces and were going to kill all Americans on the coast and rob their stores.”⁶⁴⁶ Panic spread throughout the planter community as news reached them about this plot targeting foreigners. Captain Waldo B. Williams, senior inspector of the Constabulary, wrote, “reports had reached Malalag, that Mungalayan had threatened to kill the Governor and other americans or all the americans [sic] on the south-west coast of the Gulf, and had caused some unrest among the planters nearest to him.”⁶⁴⁷ Bolton himself was warned early on that Mungalayan had bragged he was going to kill him and Max McCullough, the assistant district governor and a fellow planter. “Governor Bolton was convinced that there was no danger, and laughed at the idea of caution,” Wood, the district secretary, recounted to Bliss. Wood also “became sure that there was not much truth” in the rumors about a murder plot and returned to Davao, while Bolton set off for Malalag, planning to travel unarmed through Mungalayan’s ward.⁶⁴⁸ Bliss blamed Bolton in part for exposing himself to such danger. “Bolton’s death seems to have been due to over-confidence,” he wrote General Leonard Wood. “It seems to be difficult for officers in such situations to show all outward signs of confidence and at the same time be carefully on their guard.”⁶⁴⁹ Mungalayan, meanwhile, might have regained his self-confidence through the murder of Bolton. Reports came in that “he boasted afterwards, ‘Now that I have killed the American Governor I am a man again.’”⁶⁵⁰ Other reports said

⁶⁴⁶ O. V. Wood to Bliss, 9 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁴⁷ Waldo B. Williams to Bliss, 10 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁴⁸ O. V. Wood to Bliss, 9 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁴⁹ Bliss to General Wood, 16 June 1906, Vol. 43, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁵⁰ Bliss to General Wood, 16 June 1906, Vol. 43, Bliss Papers, LC.

that Mungalayan and his brothers told another native named Lumbanan that “they had killed the two Americans and were again brave men.”⁶⁵¹

Tensions within the colonial power structure had contributed to the murder plot. The province’s Legislative Council had created a “tribal ward system” as a way to incorporate the indigenous people into the colonial government. The council crafted two different political structures: “municipalities” for the more urbanized and “civilized” inhabitants and “tribal wards” for the supposedly less civilized people, namely Muslims and members of animist or “pagan” tribes. Thus approximately 65,000 “civilized” people, including Christian Filipinos, Americans, and other expatriates, lived in municipalities. The majority of the population, however, was organized into 51 tribal wards throughout Moro Province. A district governor presided over all the tribal wards in his district, and he appointed a “headman to be his representative or deputy.” Each headman was then authorized to appoint deputies who “constituted the police force of the respective wards.”⁶⁵² The wards theoretically encompassed, as far as possible, a single “tribe” or ethnic group, and the headman was supposed to represent that group. For example, the Bagobos, one of the so-called “wild tribes,” in a district were assigned into one ward, and the Moros to another. The stated purpose of the tribal-ward system was to introduce *limited* opportunities for self-government among the Moro people. General Bliss noted, “In the appointment of the headman preference is given, unless there are strong reasons for the contrary, to that member of the race or tribe within the ward who is recognized by

⁶⁵¹ O. V. Wood to Bliss, 9 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁵² Gowing, *Mandate*, 114.

the people as their chief.”⁶⁵³ Headmen and their deputies received a salary from the American government, and they enjoyed influence and latitude over the tribespeople in their ward. Patricio Abinales writes, “These wards, together with the tribal courts, were also envisioned to assist provincial authorities in making possible the transition mainly by the Muslim groups from the religious (i.e., Islamic) savagery to ‘western’ civilization.”⁶⁵⁴ The tribal ward system also supported planters’ goal of securing a dependable labor force. As Hayase writes, “The machinery of the tribal ward was seen as a handy device for recruiting and organizing a plantation labour force.”⁶⁵⁵

Bolton was in the process of establishing the tribal wards in Davao before his death. According to Colonel W. S. Scott, director of the fifth district of the constabulary, Bolton had set up the Tagacolo tribal ward in February 1906. He appointed Balawag as the headman and made Mangalayan his deputy. Furthermore, he “placed him, a Tagacolo, in charge of a settlement of Manobos.” In the coming months planters in the vicinity began to hear rumors from their workers about plots to assassinate both Bolton and Max McCullough, a planter who also served as the assistant district governor under Bolton. McCullough was in charge of the Tagacolo ward, even though Balawag and Mangalayan had been made headmen and deputy headmen, respectively. Scott wrote in his report, “The mutterings grew louder and extended to the proposed killing and robbing of all Americans from Digos to Kibulan. The planters became alarmed and reported these

⁶⁵³ Report, Moro Province, 1906, 369.

⁶⁵⁴ Abinales, *Images of State Power*, 8.

⁶⁵⁵ Hayase, “Tribes,” 142.

things to the authorities in Davao.”⁶⁵⁶ These were the rumors that Bolton thought were 325
exaggerated, but he was investigating them at the time he was killed.

American military officials believed that Mungayalan, unhappy about his loss of power and prestige under this new tribal ward organization, killed Bolton and Christian out of jealousy. Yet there are conflicting reports regarding Mungayalan’s specific governmental position. Scott, the constabulary director, reported that he was a deputy headman of the Tagacola ward but in charge, under McCullough, of the Manobos. Shinzo Hayase writes that “traditional tribal social organization was swept aside and replaced with a single headman -- a European planter.”⁶⁵⁷ Constabulary inspector Williams wrote, “Mungalayan is ‘headman’ of the Tagacaola Tribal Ward, and lives near Malalag, he has for some time past had a dislike for Governor Bolton, and, Mr. McCullough, who is assistant to the Provincial Governor, and whose territory is the Tagacaola Tribal Ward.” Yet most reports state that Mungalayan resented the diminution of his stature under the Americans. Even if local tribespeople were placed in positions of nominal authority within the tribal ward system, they may well have felt that American planters such as Bolton, McCullough, and Christian actually held the reins of power. Bliss reported to his superior, Leonard Wood, now commander of the army’s Philippines Division, “Bolton’s body was horribly mutilated while that of Christian was not touched except by the blow that killed him, this gives some countenance to the story the that Mungalayan had a personal feeling against Bolton. The reports all agree in saying that Mungalayan had

⁶⁵⁶ W.S. Scott, “Report of District Director, Fifth District, Bureau of Constabulary,” Appendix 5, August 1, 1906, in *Seventh Annual Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1906, part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907). Hereafter Constabulary Report, 1906.

⁶⁵⁷ Hayase, “Tribes,” 142.

repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction with his position, apparently thinking that he was³²⁶ losing his influence and becoming degraded in the eyes of his people.”⁶⁵⁸ Bliss noted in a private letter to his wife that Mungalayan was “jealous of [Bolton’s] influence,” and that is why he killed him.⁶⁵⁹

Bolton’s death raised questions about whether white officials, particularly planters, should serve as headmen. Bliss initially justified the decision to appoint foreigners as tribal headmen in Davao. The people of Davao, he said, were not ready for the responsibility of appointing an indigenous headman. “This organization of the wild tribes into tribal wards is a delicate matter, and is effective only when the people so organized have become somewhat acquainted with the white man and understanding something of his methods of government,” Bliss wrote. “There are 14 tribes within the district of Davao, and in them all there is not one datto whose influence extends over any large area, nor is there any tribe which acknowledges any one man as its head. They seem to have perfect confidence in a white man and are well content to take his orders, but their tribal customs make them unwilling to have one of their own people over them.” In light of Bolton’s recent murder, Bliss’ remark that the tribespeople had “perfect confidence in a white man” seems far-fetched. At the same time, the general also acknowledged that appointing planters as district officials also heightened jealousies and sparked conflicts, and years after Bolton’s murder he took steps to limit this practice (discussed below).

⁶⁵⁸ Bliss to General Wood, 16 June 1906, Vol. 43, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁵⁹ Bliss to his wife, 9 July 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

As reports came in regarding Bolton's death, an official narrative vindicating the 327 American military project in the Moro Province began to take shape. Stories about Mungalayan's vendetta against Bolton made the event appear isolated, the result of personal jealousy rather than widespread opposition to the presence of Americans in the Davao region. In the 1906 military report, submitted to the secretary of war, Bolton's murder was characterized as an exceptional incident – one that actually reflected the army's accomplishments in the Moro Province rather than any underlying hostility toward the American military project. Bliss, writing this time in his role as brigadier-general commanding the Department of Mindanao rather than as the governor of the Moro Province, portrayed the murders as the result of Bolton's success rather than the weakness of his position: "Certain headmen became jealous of Lieutenant Bolton's growing prestige and influence among their people. They feared, naturally enough, the ultimate loss of all their power, sapped away not by military force, but by the patient and tactful methods of a man born to be the leader of such people out of barbarism." Bliss described Bolton as a "man of rare genius," and he praised him for his ability to convince tribespeople to come down from the "mountain jungles" and settle along the coast where they "were beginning to learn the value of labor."⁶⁶⁰ Bolton, he argued, was killed because he was becoming *too* popular among the people of his district. For Bliss, anxious to vindicate the army's mission in Mindanao, it was essential that the Bolton incident be attributed to the jealousy of one man and his influence among a small group, rather than indicative of any larger movement among the indigenous people. General Wood agreed.

⁶⁶⁰ "Report Department of Mindanao," (Appendix III), in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1906. House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 59th Congress, 2d session, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 312. Hereafter Report, Department of Mindanao, 1906.

He summed up the matter simply in a letter to Bliss: “I look at the killing of poor Bolton 328 as simply a case of murder, and do not attach any special significance to it as indicating an uprising on the part of the people around the Gulf.”⁶⁶¹

Despite such vehement denials of an “uprising,” the army took vigorous steps to squash what, in the days following the deaths of Bolton and Benjamin, began to look like exactly that. In his initial report of June 9, the plantation manager and district official O. V. Wood estimated Mungalayan’s supporters at between seventy and one-hundred and twenty. The next day, however, he wrote again to Bliss with new information: “I underestimated the strength of Mungalayon in my report of yesterday... Each day he is getting more recruits and the longer this is allowed to run the more trouble there will be in suppressing it.” Wood had gone with Max McCullough, another planter as well as the assistant district governor, four Americans (most likely planters), and a small contingent of constabulary to McCullough’s plantation, the Davao Trading and Development Company in Kibulan. There they found the plantation store “sacked.” The day before Mungalayan and the “witch” Simbanan arrived with two hundred men who “in about 2 hours got together about P1500 worth of cloth and rice which they carried back to the hills.” McCullough had been mentioned along with Bolton as a potential target, so it was unsurprising that they would go to his plantation for supplies and reinforcements. The murders had bolstered Mungalayan’s support among the people. According to Wood, “All the bad men along the coast were waiting to see whether the ‘medicine’ was going to

⁶⁶¹ Wood to Bliss, 22 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

work against the Americans. When Governor Bolton, and Mr. Christian were killed all these men went to Mungalayan. Thus, he is well supported.”⁶⁶² 329

As the army and constabulary forces pursued Mungalayan and his cohort, evidence of a larger conspiracy – one with a religious flavor – emerged. O. V. Wood telegraphed to Bliss early on, “No motives for killing except incitement of Simbanan, a witch.”⁶⁶³ Later, following the robbery at McCullough’s plantation, he reported, “Simbanan is furnishing them all with charms to enable them to kill Americans.” These charms were likely the “medicine” that, apparently, had worked against Bolton and Christian. But the movement was not isolated to Simbanan and his associates. Captain Williams of the constabulary reported that “Religious fanatics have been working all around the Gulf, during the last month; dancing and other demonstrations have been held in many places.”⁶⁶⁴ Likewise, Wood telegraphed Bliss that a “religious craze has extended all over the gulf.” He requested a launch, one thousand rounds of ammunition for .38 revolvers and ten Krag carbines as “absolutely necessary to meet emergencies.”⁶⁶⁵ The extent of the religious activity in the gulf became more apparent to officials as the pursuit of Mungalayan lagged. Two weeks after the murders, George T. Langhorne, captain of the U.S. Eleventh Cavalry and secretary of the Moro Province, was investigating the rumors about this new dance “craze.” He wrote, “Have been to Davao and have visited several places, where Anitos are said to have been exciting the people and selling them charms, etc.” Now it was not only Simbanan, but other *anitos*, or

⁶⁶² O. V. Wood to Bliss, 10 June 1906 [letter], Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁶³ O. V. Wood to Bliss, 10 June 1906 [telegram], Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁶⁴ Waldo B. Williams to Bliss, 10 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁶⁵ O. V. Wood to Bliss, 11 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

spiritualists, all over the gulf who were disseminating the talismans of this new religion. 330
Langhorne assured Bliss that they had “the worst agitators in jail at Davao,” but several
datus continued to host these dancing rituals at their homes. He commented ruefully,
“Bolton did not realize the influence of Simbanan, and the degree to which the credulity
of the people could be worked upon. He was warned by everyone but laughed at them
all.” It was clear to Langhorne, at least, that Bolton had underestimated the threat that
Simbanan and his followers posed to American interests in Davao.⁶⁶⁶

The army, with support from the constabulary, launched an offensive that resulted
in the death of Mungalayan in early August as well as the arrest and interrogation of
many others. This investigation, relying on a network of “spies,” uncovered a growing
movement aimed at expelling not only Americans but all foreigners from Davao. Bliss
described “a combination, which was getting more and more widespread” well before
Bolton’s murder; the movement apparently included not only Moros (Muslims) but “the
wild tribes,” too, although officials had not been able to establish a concrete link between
the two groups. As part of the investigation, officers had rounded up a number of datos
from the region and put them “under surveillance,” although not under arrest. Eventually
one confessed to being part of a conspiracy, “the ultimate object of [which] was to kill or
drive out all the Americans and Spaniards and then to enslave the Filipinos and the wild
tribes. He said that the first step, when everything was right for the movement, would be
the death of Governor Bolton.” After the initial confession, another 25 or 30 datos

⁶⁶⁶ George T. Langhorne to Bliss, 22 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

confessed to the same account.⁶⁶⁷ This movement centered around a spiritual dance in which participants worshipped a god named “Lavi” or “Labi.” W. S. Scott, the constabulary director, reported that this god “would also bring good crops and plenty of fish; bolos and axes would do their work while the Moros sat by; fishing even with a short rod would be productive of plenty of fish; sickness would disappear, etc.” Participants made donations in order to curry the favor of Lavi, and a school had been established to train practitioners.⁶⁶⁸ It was not entirely clear to the Americans that this dance movement, which Bolton had also been investigating on his last journey, was directly related to Mungalayan and Simbanan, the healer. Scott wrote, “it is possible that these two schemes were connected...but we have so far absolutely failed to establish such connection.” In recent years, a scholar in the Philippines researching these events through interviews with present-day inhabitants of the Davao region and descendants of those involved in these religious practices has concluded that they were indeed related movements.⁶⁶⁹

Bliss’s account of the movement reveals the seriousness with which officials regarded the religious practices of the natives as well as limitations in officials’ understanding of the people they governed. Bolton knew about “the spread of a dancing craze among the Moros,” and before his death he arrested two datos believed to be involved. Nevertheless, he failed to understand the networks of people involved or the purpose of the movement. Bliss wrote, “The strictest inquiry which he could make

⁶⁶⁷ Alfred C. McCoy argues that the U.S. created a vast “surveillance state” in the Philippines, including a network of spies and informants. See Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

⁶⁶⁸ Constabulary Report 1906, 299.

⁶⁶⁹ Tiu, *Davao*, 290-291.

developed nothing beyond the declaration that it was purely a religious movement.

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[Bolton] believed that there was something underneath it, because with these people the sudden development of a fanatical religious spirit always has some political object.”

Certainly in this case there was a “political object” involved. Strangely, however, when Bolton heard about “the spread of unrest among the wild tribes, he did not connect it in any way with the religious craze among the Moros.”⁶⁷⁰ Failing to guess that both the Tagacaolos and the Moros might find solidarity in their animosity toward the Americans, Bolton proceeded recklessly, meeting his death. American officials took steps to squash the movement quickly. Bliss believed that the movement had spread over a wide geographic area, from Davao down the coast to Padada, a community nearly fifty miles south of Davao. Even more disturbing, the conspirators were well supplied with arms. “Everywhere that we have been we have found the natives in possession of bamboo tubes full of ammunition which they have purchased from [American planters] Cook and Watson.”⁶⁷¹ Their plot had proceeded from the planning stage to stockpiling firepower.

For army officers like Bliss and Bolton, the ghost-dance movement among the Sioux and the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890 came quickly to mind when trying to make sense of these religious movements in the Philippines. In his annual report to the secretary of war, Bliss drew on an analogy that would have been all too familiar to his military contemporaries: “By ways not unlike in principle the ghost-dance craze among the American Indians, [Mungalayan and his supporters] fomented among some of their people, but by no means among all, a feeling of hostility against the American and

⁶⁷⁰ Bliss to General Wood, 25 July 1906, Bliss Papers, Vol. 44, LC.

⁶⁷¹ Bliss to General Wood, 25 July 1906, Bliss Papers, Vol. 44, LC. See below on planters (actually Cook and Watkins) who were smuggling arms and ammunition and selling it to the indigenous people.

foreign planters.”⁶⁷² Bliss referenced the Sioux Ghost Dance, knowing that his audience 333 would understand the importance of his command’s strong response to the potential threat posed by the religious movement fomenting in Davao.⁶⁷³ It was not the first time military or colonial officials had emphasized the Moros’ religious fervor or linked it to the Sioux uprising. Earlier the same year, after the horrific slaughter of Moros at Bud Dajo, Dean Worcester, secretary of the interior, declared, “It was no more possible to avoid killing women and children here than it was to avoid killing them in the Wounded Knee fight in the United States.” General Wood believed all the Moros at Bud Dajo, including the women and children, were “religious fanatics,” which is why they were also killed along with the male fighters.⁶⁷⁴ Likewise, Bliss and his contemporaries began to understand the uprising in Davao in terms of a “religious craze.”

The relationship between the army’s perception of the Moros and Native Americans remains a murky subject for historians. It can be easy to put too much emphasis on the parallels contemporaries drew between colonial subjects like the Moros and the army’s erstwhile enemies in the American West. Historian Paul Kramer advises caution in this area. Too often, Kramer argues, scholars have assumed that ideas formed in the domestic context – in relation to Native Americans, African-Americans, or Chinese, for example – were applied wholesale to colonial peoples. “Transfer, export, projection – the Philippines as seen through Indian territory – were not reflexive or default responses, but strategies in particular contests whose terrain, combatants, and

⁶⁷² Report, Department of Mindanao, 1906, 312.

⁶⁷³ Report, Department of Mindanao, 1906, 312.

⁶⁷⁴ Wood and Worcester quoted in McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire*, 209.

stakes merit historical inquiry.”⁶⁷⁵ Kramer is rightly skeptical of attempts to explain U.S. 334 policy and actions in the Moro Province entirely in terms of precedents learned in battle against Native Americans, but here Bliss’ invocation of the Sioux Ghost Dance points in a valuable direction. Bliss and Bolton were alarmed by the Davao dance movement not simply because they assumed its practitioners were dangerous savages, but because they recognized the political portent of the movement. Army officers remembered the Sioux Ghost Dance as a time when a religious response to American military policy had ended in violence and bloodshed. In making this comparison, Bliss acknowledged that the protest embodied in the Davao dance was similar to that expressed by the ghost dancers at Wounded Knee.

Like the dance movement in Davao, the Sioux Ghost Dance represents a particular type of religious and political expression in a distinctly colonial setting. Jeffrey Ostler, in his study of Wounded Knee, argues that the Sioux Ghost Dance must be understood in the context of the U.S. army’s colonial project in the American West. Furthermore, he relates it to other religious movements in comparable settings worldwide. The ghost dancers’ “project of cultural revival resisted government policies of assimilation and imagined nothing less than the end of colonial relations,” Ostler writes. “Like many similar movements throughout the world, then, the Ghost Dance is best understood as an anticolonial movement.”⁶⁷⁶ While perhaps the best known by U.S. scholars, the Sioux Ghost Dance was far from the only such movement. Joel W. Martin has advocated moving “before and beyond” the Sioux Ghost Dance to consider other

⁶⁷⁵ Kramer, “Transits of Race,” 167.

⁶⁷⁶ Ostler, *Plains Sioux*, 262.

“prophetic” and “millenarian” movements. Surveying a variety of Native American movements, he finds that these prophetic religions “emerged most often within the kind of unequal and exploitative relations that characterized full-fledged colonialism.” At the same time, Martin stresses that while these movements often arise out of difficult and violent periods, they reflect native people’s resilience and creativity.⁶⁷⁷

The dance movement in Davao in 1906, while arising out of specific local conditions, also shares many similarities with other “messianic movements” across the world in the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁶⁷⁸ It was not even the only such event in Davao during the American occupation. A brief account of a similar disturbance further underlines the relationship between religious expression and anticolonial politics in the Moro Province. In 1908, a plot was uncovered in Mati, another town in Davao, that centered around a religious dance also called the “Labi.” Some two hundred Moros gathered regularly for months to dance and worship a new deity, “a ‘True God’ who would help them to destroy their enemies, [and] raise good crops without manual labor.” Further investigations revealed that animists as well as Moros were attending these dances. To the considerable alarm of American officials, the adherents testified that “they had organized a company of soldiers of forty-four (44) men...for the purpose of killing

⁶⁷⁷ Joel W. Martin, “Before and beyond the Sioux Ghost Dance: Native American Prophetic Movements and the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 4 (1991): 684-685. For an excellent study of how a political movement and a “prophetic,” revivalist religion intersected in a very different setting – twentieth-century Missouri – see Jarod Roll, *Spirit of Rebellion: Labor and Religion in the New Cotton South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁶⁷⁸ For a helpful early article defining messianic movements, see Gottfried Oosterwal, “Messianic Movements,” *Philippine Sociological Review* 16, no. 1/2 (1968): 40–50. Oosterwal notes that messianic movements often arise from “crisis situations,” include “a charismatic leader” and “frequently ecstatic tendencies can be observed,” including “cultic dances,” 40-41. By these measures, the religious movement in Davao would be the messianic movement *par excellence*. The literature on these movements is extensive. A good starting place is Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order. Studies in Comparative World History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979). See also Ostler, *Plains Sioux*, chapter 11, notes 16 and 52.

the Municipal officials and an American planter, Mr. Henry Hubbell, of Nayo; after which it was thought it would be an easy matter, under the protection of their God, to set up a government and administer affairs as they saw it.”⁶⁷⁹ Yet again, the issue of work was central: the new god promised to relieve its acolytes of the burdens of manual labor. The end goal of this religious movement was political revolution, the expulsion of Americans, and the establishment of a new, indigenous government.

While small-scale local events, these “dances” and “plots” connect Davao to a larger constellation of anticolonial politics globally. They show how people in Mindanao shared in the common experiences of personal and communal dislocation, political and economic disruption, and the social upheaval that accompanied both the spread of European and U.S. colonialism and capitalism around the globe. While we know far less about these events in rural Mindanao than we do about more famous events like the Sioux Ghost Dance, it is clear from army officers’ accounts – and the anxiety and apprehension they felt – that even these minor gatherings threatened to unleash a deep reserve of anticolonial and anti-American feeling. These movements were dangerous because they helped organize adherents for particular political ends: the murders of Bolton and Christian on the one hand, but also the unfulfilled plot to kill planters and officials and establish a new government in 1908. It is not difficult to discern the “political object” of these religions: they aimed at the violent overthrow of the American planter-military establishment and the empowerment of the religious movements’ adherents. Army officials recognized the political nature of the dance movement, but they also discounted the political understanding of the indigenous people who took part in it.

⁶⁷⁹ Allen Walker, District Governor, to Bliss, 18 June 1908, Bliss Papers, Vol. 92, LC.

By classifying it as a “craze” and portraying the Moros as “fanatics,” like the Sioux in 337 their own American West, men like Bliss were able to discount the political legitimacy of the movement. Yet even in their official reports, American officials connected these uprisings to the social and political changes they were instituting. Scott, the constabulary officer, noted that among the reasons Mungalayan may have killed Bolton was that he “resented the discipline which was being placed on him and his people by restricting their roving from place to place and being required to settle down in a particular locality. This seems probable from the fact that the resentment extended to Mr. McCullough, the official directly in charge of the Tagacolo tribal ward.”⁶⁸⁰ Indeed, the political restructuring of the tribal wards, intended to supply American planters with labor by “settling” the population near the plantations, had inflamed tensions and led to the assassination of two people responsible for the economic and political changes taking place in the gulf region.

In the short term, the army responded to the murders of Bolton and Christian by containing whatever threat the perpetrators posed. They moved first to track down Mungalayan and Simbanan, and then began rounding up suspected *datus* and extracting intelligence from them about potential conspiracies. Yet even before U.S. forces reported Mungalayan killed by soldiers of the 6th Infantry on August 3, the army began to consider the possibility that relations between planters and the local population deserved their attention.⁶⁸¹ Bolton himself, after all, was aware of allegations of planter abuse in

⁶⁸⁰ Constabulary Report 1906, 301.

⁶⁸¹ Macario D. Tiu argues that Mungalayan was not killed by the Americans. From field research in the Davao region and interviews with informants, he posits that other tribespeople staged his death so that U.S. forces would cease their *huwes de kutsilyo* or “scorched earth policy” “bordering on ethnocide,” according

his district. In a letter to a friend written just days before his murder, the district governor³³⁸ alluded to a volatile situation in Digos. There, an American was said to be “threatening and abusing his laborers” and had “threatened to kill some of them.” The threats were linked to a larger, nefarious plot: the plantation foreman, O. B. Watkins, was attempting to intimidate the workers “for the evidence they [gave] concerning the sale of gun powder and firearms.”⁶⁸² Apparently a group of American planters, including the president of the esteemed Davao Planters Association, had been importing arms and powder and selling it to the indigenous people. The plot was exposed a few months later, after Bolton’s murder, and the ringleaders deported from the province.⁶⁸³ Bolton, however, was aware of the general outlines of the plot by late May, and he told his friend he planned to investigate and “hope[d] to heavens sake the District can be gotten rid of Cook and his gang” (the arms-dealers).⁶⁸⁴

Tensions between planters and natives were not isolated to this one incident, however. W. S. Scott was the first to suggest that the mistreatment of indigenous workers by Americans was widespread and may have contributed to the outbreak of violence in Davao. “There are rumors of fanatical preachers elsewhere but our investigation does not prove that they have exercised any influence on the situation,” Scott wrote to Bliss on June 22. Whereas other reports stressed the “incitement” of Simbanan and the deleterious influence of new religious ideas on the people, Scott saw more earthly factors at work. “I believe that further investigation will prove that other influences have been at work to

to Tiu. See Tiu, *Davao*, 206-213; on potential ethnocide, see Tiu, *Davao*, 237. I am unable to verify these accounts, so I make clear that the U.S. *reported* Mungalayan killed.

⁶⁸² E.C. Bolton to Arthur Poillon, May 31, 1906, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁸³ See G. T. Langhorne to Leonard Wood, August 7, 1906, Wood Papers.

⁶⁸⁴ E. C. Bolton to Arthur Poillon, May 31, 1906, Bliss Papers, LC.

cause trouble, namely; abuses of the people by the planters, regarding land for one thing 339
and maltreating them in other cases.” Scott wanted to investigate, but quietly: “I state this
to you confidentially as [these rumors] have not yet been substantiated and may not be.”
He suggested a “careful investigation” and counseled discretion in looking into the
matter.⁶⁸⁵

Something about Scott’s letter struck a chord with Bliss. By mid-June, he had
read the letter from Bolton to Poillon – “probably the last letter that Bolton wrote” –
describing the events in Digos and he was aware of threats and intimidation used against
indigenous workers.⁶⁸⁶ Even while the search for Mungalayan was ongoing, Bliss asked
Scott to “carefully and quietly investigate” relations between the planters and their
laborers. He agreed that it was “very probable” that the planters’ “harsh treatment of
natives” was part of the reason the natives resented and disliked Americans. In light of
recent events, it was clear to Bliss as well as Scott that the way planters treated their labor
force had repercussions for the success of the army’s colonial project in the Moro
Province. Bliss admitted that he would not be surprised to learn that the planters
mistreated their workers. “We all know what men will do on a remote frontier, where
they are removed from the immediate operation of law and from observation and
criticism, and whose only object is to make money as rapidly as possible,” Bliss wrote.
“The universal experience has been that they will oppress the native to the extent that
their opportunities make possible.” Bliss’s admission that planters – *American* planters –
would be likely to abuse their workers presents a sharp contrast from the official

⁶⁸⁵ W. S. Scott to Bliss, 22 June 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

⁶⁸⁶ Bliss to Wood, June 16, 1906, Bliss Papers, LC.

discourse of military officers concerning the plantation economy. Instead of making boosterish claims about the benefits of labor to the progress of civilization, Bliss admitted that there was a real danger of plunging the natives into misery on the new plantations. He continued, "I am very much afraid that if close attention is not paid to this we will find that we have permitted a system of peonage or slavery to grow up under American auspices, although that is one of the very things that we are here to prevent." The army retained control of the Moro Province on the pretext of ending slavery, but American planters, left to their own devices, may have been perpetuating similar systems of bound labor.⁶⁸⁷

The quiet inquiry launched by Bliss highlights a fault line dividing the province's military administrators and the planter class. He instructed Scott to find out

the extent to which native laborers are held under contract, and whether native laborers are held under contract, and whether attempts on their part to break such contract leads to threats or actual ill treatment from the planters. Do the planters pay money wages? Do they expect the natives to spend their money at plantation stores? Do they work for their chow and such supplies as the planters give them?⁶⁸⁸

Bliss and Scott were not the first army officers to find themselves as arbiters between capital and labor in a plantation setting. A similar range of questions might have occurred to a Freedmen's Bureau agent investigating conditions of peonage on a southern cotton plantation in the 1870s. Information did trickle back to Bliss from various sources. He received a memo, for example, from A. R. Decker, a stenographer working for the provincial government. Decker had heard about Bliss's inquiry, and he wrote the general with some information he had come across while copying financial statements of the

⁶⁸⁷ Bliss to W.S. Scott, 3 July 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁸⁸ Bliss to W.S. Scott, 3 July 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC.

Culamen Company, a plantation located in Davao. Under the company's "assets,"

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Decker had found an item "Credit sales to workmen, P801.38." Decker wrote Bliss, "The above mentioned item of sales to workmen would seem to indicate that these natives were in debt to their employers, and as you know, there is little chance of their ever getting out. This, I presume, might be called a sort of 'peonage' system."⁶⁸⁹ It is unknown whether or how Bliss responded to this discovery, but he continued to mull over the problem of planter-native relations.

Bliss's investigation led him to a broad critique of economic conditions in Davao. In late July, he wrote General Wood to report his firm conviction that labor troubles were at the root of the Davao disturbance. He told Wood that just a few days after Bolton's murder, he began to hear reports that "confirmed a growing suspicion that...some of the planters (of all nationalities) were responsible for some part of the evident feeling of hostility of the native tribes." Bliss again referred to a type of "universal" behavior that might explain the planter-native relations. "Knowing a little of human nature, anyone could reason out pretty accurately the kind of relations that in some cases had grown up between the planters and their native laborers." The problem, according to Bliss, arose from the economic imperatives at work on the Davao plantations.

The planters are absolutely dependent on the uncertain labor of the natives for their financial success. As you know, they cannot keep these natives at work unless the latter are perpetually in debt. For some strange reason, the native will stick at his job so long as he is in debt; otherwise he will work for a few days and then at a critical period of the crop will go off into the mountains for a month, leaving the planter in the lurch, and there is no doubt that even while working off his debt (which he never succeeds in doing) he frequently attempts to desert the

⁶⁸⁹ AR Decker to Bliss, undated, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

planter and take to the hills, a movement which the latter prevents only by threats, and possibly in some cases, by ill-treatment.⁶⁹⁰

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In short, the planters needed workers more than the natives needed the planters. While the army had enjoyed some limited success in getting the tribespeople to settle in the coastal areas in closer proximity to the plantations, such movements did not always ensure that the workers would stay at work throughout the season. Agricultural work, which depends so much on labor at certain critical moments of the season, required a reliable labor force. The indigenous people of Davao, who had sustained themselves quite independently from plantation agriculture for centuries, did not need the wages or support of planters, accounting for their propensity to “take to the hills” when it suited them. The mountainous terrain in Mindanao presented many potential hideaways where indigenous people could find cover from the planters – maroon communities beyond the reach of the Americans. Bliss recognized that planters would resort to “ill treatment” in order to keep their workers; many, after all, had strong financial motives for doing so. Bliss noted that “very few of them have any capital. They must begin to earn money at the earliest possible moment or they lose money.” He also acknowledged that “some of the planters are rather rough characters,” which combined with the profit motive led to “native ill-feeling.”⁶⁹¹

Oral histories recorded in the Davao region confirm that many indigenous people did not want to work on the plantations. In 2000, a descendant of a Spanish planter told an interviewer, “They (planters) needed people to work, but they could not make the natives work. The natives would not work....The natives did not like to work because

⁶⁹⁰ Bliss to General Wood, 25 July 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁹¹ Bliss to General Wood, 25 July 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC. Emphasis in original.

they had everything in the forest. Plenty of fish in the river, and in the sea.”⁶⁹² Literature scholar Macario Tiu points out the labor required would have been extremely arduous. 343

The Americans were endeavoring to establish plantations in the forests, ordering their workers to fell ancient trees and then pull them out of the soil. Another informant described the suffering of his grandfather, a member of one of the so-called pagan tribes: “Anybody they met, they arrested and then made to work. They were supplied with food. Rice, dried fish. But if you ask them, they did not like that kind of work because it was very hard.” Punishments were swift. “And then if it took too long to uproot the tree, the American would get angry. And then he would remove two men, and then whip them with the *ikog sa pagi* (tail of the manta ray).” Workers ran away, but if they were apprehended they were put in prison. According to this informant, runaways who were captured were “tied up and put in the cage with the chickens. With the chicken shit.”⁶⁹³

The 1906 murders alerted Bliss to the potential for abuse inherent in the planter-native relationship. He saw that planters exercised considerable influence over their workers and recognized that such influence could lead to resentment and, ultimately, violence. In time, Bliss became even more outspoken in his condemnation of planters who attempted to coerce and intimidate their workers. In early 1907, he wrote Wood with concerns that planters were discouraging the indigenous people from having freeholdings, believing that any attempt on their part to work their own land would detract from the labor pool available on the plantations. The planters, according to Bliss,

⁶⁹² Quoted in Tiu, *Davao*, 138.

⁶⁹³ Tiu, *Davao*, 140-141. Neither the informant nor Tiu specify whether it was planters rounding up and arresting the natives or if they were assisted by army or constabulary officers. Certainly officers tried to help the planters in their efforts to “relocate” the natives and “encourage” them to work on the plantations.

“make a protest against any effort to have the natives take up land and cultivate it for themselves. Of course the Government cannot sustain them in that view, and if it were believed in the United States that that is the attitude of American settlers towards the natives, it would not be tolerated for a moment. It would mean that the only chance of success here is to keep the natives in a state of peonage.” Bliss told the Davao Planters Association at one of their meetings that it would be to their advantage to encourage the natives to settle near the plantations and to pay them in cash. He also explained to Wood that improved hemp-stripping machines would eventually alter the relationship between planters and workers. In time, Bliss believed, Mindanao would resemble sugar-growing regions of Cuba where the “Central” bought sugar from “the Colono.” In the Moro Province, the planters with the machinery would buy hemp grown by natives on their small plots. The planters “would then find how much to their interest it will have been to have encouraged the native in the habit of working his own land,” Bliss wrote.⁶⁹⁴

Despite Bliss’s inquiries, allegations of abuse continued to reach his desk. In the fall of 1908, a few Davao planters, including Fred Lewis and I. H. Rogers, inquired about legislation that would enable them to enforce their labor contracts with locals. Bliss wrote that Lewis and Rogers “plainly expressed desire to have legislation enacted or present legislation so construed as to practically bring about a condition of peonage or debt slavery in the District of Davao.”⁶⁹⁵ Provincial officials reacted strongly against these petitions. The provincial attorney, Richard Campbell, provided the legal argument against such legislation, writing simply that “no right of action exists against these men [the

⁶⁹⁴ Bliss to Wood, January 14, 1907, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁶⁹⁵ Bliss to Walker, October 1, 1908, Vol. 96, Bliss Papers, LC.

workers] other than the ordinary civil suit for breach of contract.” But Campbell did not 345
leave the matter at that: he explained that even the suggestion of such legislation flew in
the face of the U.S. Constitution. The attorney perceived in the request some idea that
labor contracts in the islands, or among non-white people, might be treated differently –
an idea he roundly condemned.

There is no provision of existing law in the Philippine Islands or in the United States, or in any other civilized country, by which one man can be compelled against his will to work for another. The law makes no distinction in this respect between white men, brown men, wild men, Christians or non-Christians. Neither is there any law permitting imprisonment for debt. Imprisonment for debt is prohibited in express terms by the constitution of the United States, and this provision of the Constitution is specifically applied to the Philippine Islands by the Act of congress of July 1, 1902. No native there fore, can be compelled to work for a white man or for any other employer of labor unless said white man or employer can convince the native that it is to his advantage to do so.

Here Campbell went further than merely stating the law as it applied to this case; he expressed his own sense of outrage over the potential for abuse inherent in the inquiry. “Americans ought not to ask for more than this. To penalize the class of cases set forth in the attached letter would be simply to restore the old system of Datu debt slavery, the eradication and suppression of which has been the principal and underlying cause of half the blood shed in the Moro Province since American occupation.”⁶⁹⁶

The issue of slavery remained uppermost in colonial officials’ understanding of the province and their role in administering it, even in 1908. Any suggestion that such relations were being reinstated under American auspices would embarrass the colonial authorities and threaten the imperial project itself. Bliss, writing the district governor of Davao, Allen Walker, declared that the planters’ letters “would be a disgrace to a Georgia

⁶⁹⁶ Richard Campbell, September 23, 1908, “Inquiry of F.F. Lewis, Davao, as to enforcement of labor contract. Copy,” Vol. 96, Bliss Papers, LC.

slave-driver seventy-five years ago. They indicate the exact spirit of a slave-driver.”

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Bliss did not believe that such feelings and ideas were widespread, but he thought their publication would play into the hands of “certain unscrupulous agitators” who would like to get the district – or possibly the province – “turned over to the Philippine Assembly.” Such agitators had used “this very question of maltreatment of natives, whether Filipinos or wild people” and the issue of “debt slavery” as evidence of the need to place the Moro Province under the control of the Philippine Assembly. Bliss urged Walker to talk to the other planters and point out that their best interests would be served by rooting out bad planters. He thought there might be “one or two isolated cases” – perhaps men like Rogers and Lewis – who indeed wanted to reestablish such a system of peonage, but these men could tarnish the reputation of all the planters. He suggested that Walker “in conversation with planters individually, and when you meet them collectively at their Association meetings” should “constantly impress upon them the danger which threatens their entire body by the actions of one or two people.” Beyond this, Bliss himself threatened to take action against abusive planters. “If such a thing should again be brought to my attention as the deliberate statement of a planter that he has whipped a native, the Government of the Moro Province will direct his arrest and punishment, not by a fine in a tribal ward court, but by prosecution before a Court of First Instance.”⁶⁹⁷

Bliss promised to use judicial authority against erring planters because he believed the integrity of the political system should be prioritized above the short-term interests of planters. He asserted that the U.S. army, as both the military and political authority in the province, needed to stand apart from both planters and natives,

⁶⁹⁷ Bliss to Allen Walker, October 1, 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

representing a neutral bureaucratic power. Yet Bliss found, much to his chagrin, that 347
other military officials – namely his superior, Leonard Wood – did not share his vision of
a clean divide between planters and officialdom. Not long after Bolton’s murder, Bliss
began to express misgivings about planters serving in political office. In January 1907,
the governor communicated with Wood about complaints made by planters about their
workers being enticed away. It turned out that the planters had exaggerated their concerns
and misrepresented what the constabulary officer had told the natives. “The whole
trouble grows out of the fact that public officials engage in business within the limits of
their districts.” Bliss told Wood, “I know that your view has been that this should be
encouraged, and I admit the arguments in favor of it. But it does not work out well in
practice, – at least in these places where there is keen competition. As you know, the
burning question in the Davao District is the want of labor.” Bliss went on to explain that
the district officials had been “making every effort to get the wild tribes to come down
from the mountains and settle along the coast.” This was in keeping with the goals of the
province. But officials who were also planters themselves may have been using their
influence to persuade the indigenous people to settle near their own properties. “If that
official happens to have a hemp plantation in that locality it is immediately charged by all
the other planters (and with tolerably good reason) that he is using his official influence
to secure labor for his own plantation,” Bliss wrote. “This has been the cause of the
charges and counter-charges that have been made in the Davao District for the last two
years. It was the sole cause of poor Bolton’s trouble.” He went on to name several
officials who had been accused of using their political positions in order to harness labor
for their own operations. Bliss wrote pragmatically, “It makes no difference whether an

official uses his power wrongfully or not. All the other planters believe that he does do so.” The appearance of a conflict of interest was enough to undermine the neutrality of the government, and Bliss badly wanted the provincial government to appear law-abiding and disinterested. Despite Bliss’s forceful arguments, Wood remained unconvinced. In fact, he insisted on the contrary that officials who were also engaged in business would be more committed to doing beneficial work there. “We want to get men who are interested in the country and who will grow up with it,” Wood wrote. Besides, the overlap between business and politics was certainly not unique to the Moro Province. “They do the same thing all over the United States; in fact, many of the important public offices are held by men whose real occupation is outside,” Wood wrote. “I have found, as a rule, that a man who goes into agriculture in the Moro Province strongly advocates good order, the building up of business, and improvement of conditions in his vicinity.” Wood said nothing of whether such men also advocated coercing their workers through debt and intimidation. Instead he said simply, “I am not inclined to think that any of our officials have abused their authority.”⁶⁹⁸

Bliss did not succeed in changing Wood’s mind, and Wood continued to insist that planters made good district officials. Bliss, however, exercised considerable influence over the appointment of officials to positions within the provincial government. In a letter marked “confidential,” Bliss instructed the district governor of Davao that planters would not be appointed as tribal ward headmen. Again deploying arguments about the appearance of impropriety, Bliss insisted that headmen should be members of the tribes they were intended to represent. It was not that he believed natives were

⁶⁹⁸ Leonard Wood to Bliss, January 26, 1907, Bliss Papers, LC.

superior in ability to American planters; on the contrary, he admitted that it would be 349
better from the standpoint of government if white men dominated positions of political
authority. "If you ask me the question 'Is it not better to appoint well qualified Americans
or Europeans to these positions than to appoint ignorant natives?' my answer is 'From the
theoretical point of view that course is undoubtedly the wisest.' But we have to consider
the question from the point of view of practical politics." Practical politics dictated that
the provincial government had to avoid the appearance that planters enjoyed unseemly
power. Again Bliss worried about pressure to place the Moro Province under the control
of authorities in Manila. "If, as is understood, the Speaker of the Philippine Assembly
accompanies the Governor-General on his proposed visit in the near future to the Moro
Province, and if his attention should be called to the fact that the immediate control of the
natives in your District is entrusted to various planters there, it will give color to all sorts
of charges (some of which are even now being made in the native papers in Manila) and
which it will be difficult to refute," Bliss wrote. He was also worried about such a
situation reaching the newspapers. Referring to the letters from planters Lewis and
Rogers suggesting that native workers be required to complete contracts, Bliss cautioned
Walker: "You can imagine the effect upon the public opinion should these letters ever be
published in a Manila or American newspaper. It would be impossible then to say that
some planters are good and others are bad and that the good should not be condemned
along with the bad. There is absolutely no safety except in the absolute separation of the
planters from any direct or indirect official connection with the Government."⁶⁹⁹

Apparently the subordinate officer did not completely understand the strength of Bliss'

⁶⁹⁹ Bliss to Allen Walker, October 10, 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

conviction on this matter. He responded to Bliss explaining why it was necessary to appoint such white men as headmen, but the provincial governor was unmoved. “As I stated to you in my previous letter, I have personally no doubt whatever as to the wisdom of your appointments, provided all the politicians in the world were dead,” Bliss told Walker. But they were part of a political world, and Bliss remained convinced that “hostile politicians” and “disgruntled planters” could bring “malicious attention” to the fact that the headmen in Davao were also planters. Such a scandal could “wreck the District Government.” Bliss, more than many of his contemporaries, expressed a hard-nosed but nuanced view of power and its workings on this colonial frontier. He solemnly told Walker, “I think that it is wise to remember that people will always believe that a man will do that which he has the power to do, provided it redounds to his own interest.”⁷⁰⁰

The expansion of the plantation sector in the Moro Province presented the military government with difficult challenges. Bliss firmly believed that export agriculture would improve the social and material well-being of the islands and the indigenous people. He also agreed with his fellow officers that white men had superior abilities and should govern over the natives. They could shepherd the province forward and introduce their workers to the charms and responsibilities of civilization. But the colonial government also needed to preserve the appearance of impartiality; it needed to protect itself from criticism so it could continue to develop the islands’ resources. “I know that it seems hard not to be permitted to utilize the services of intelligent and just-minded planters to hasten the work of redeeming the wild natives from their savagery,”

⁷⁰⁰ Bliss to Allen Walker, October 30, 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

Bliss told Walker. But he took the longer view of events in Davao. In order to preserve 351
the colonial government, Bliss was willing to take some power away from the planters.
He looked forward to a day when the “good” planters would be rewarded for their
patience and kindness toward the less advanced Moros. His vision of the future was
informed by the past, by a historical narrative about another western “frontier” where
labor relations between white and brown people had played out differently. “It is to the
interest of the planter in Mindanao to preserve the native and not to destroy him as was
the case with the North American Indian,” Bliss wrote. “The latter would not work in the
fields, while the settlers could so work. It was therefore to the interests of the latter to get
rid of the Indian. In Mindanao where the white settler cannot take off his coat and work
from dawn until dark in the fields, generation after generation, as he can do in the States,
it is a matter of obvious self-interest to him to preserve the native who can, and who,
under just treatment and proper inducement, is ready to work for him.”⁷⁰¹

The story of Native Americans provided a cautionary tale for those interested in
the future of Mindanao. Bliss hoped that the indigenous population of the Philippines
could be preserved not because American planters were more altruistic; he understood,
after all, “what men will do on a remote frontier.” Rather, he was optimistic that, with the
help of the army and the colonial government, they would simply recognize what was in
their “obvious self-interest.” In such a way the Moro Province and all its people could
move forward – at least that was Bliss’s goal. In the event that planters did not recognize
their “self-interest” in treating the indigenous people well, Bliss was ready to use the
power of the U.S. to enforce the laws and ensure their proper treatment. Paradoxically,

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

his suspicions about the planters reinforced his faith in the army's benevolent purpose. 352 Believing that all men, given a certain combination of opportunity and necessity, would exploit their workers, Bliss insisted that the army was essential to ruling the territory. He invoked "law...observation and criticism" as the qualities that would allow the colonial experiment to succeed. The army would be the watchdog of the plantation system, ensuring that planters cared for their workers and the system yielded beneficial results for everyone. At no point did Bliss call into question the army's vision of economic development through export agriculture or wage labor. The planters simply required some oversight, which the army would provide.

The deaths of Bolton and Christian heightened Bliss's apprehension about the plantation economy in Davao. Nevertheless, basic colonial policy in the Moro Province remained unchanged: the road to civilization for the indigenous people was paved with hemp and lined with rubber and coconut trees. American-financed plantations were the bedrock of the army's developmental vision for the southern Philippines, and the military presence shielded the natives from the rapacious greed of planters. All the more reason, then, that the U.S. army should remain in control of this lush paradise – to make it profitable while protecting the interests of the natives. If anything, the potential abuses of planters only vindicated the army's presence and underscored its benevolence.

Despite Bliss's faith in the advantages of military government, the army's days as the ultimate authority in the Moro Province were numbered. In the U.S., the election of a Democratic president, Woodrow Wilson, and continued political agitation in the Philippines created pressure for a transfer of power from the military to civilian authorities in the South. General John J. Pershing was the last military governor of the

Moro Province. In the latter years of his administration, he took steps to replace military 353 officials with civilian administrators, largely because he believed the frequent transfer of army officers caused too many disruptions. In 1913, Pershing was succeeded by a civilian governor, Frank Carpenter. From 1913 to 1920, Carpenter oversaw the continued integration of the Moro Province into the greater Philippines, with more American officials replaced by Christian Filipinos and some Moros and tribal representatives. Yet the transition to civilian rule was by no means a move toward independence or an endorsement of the population's political advancement. In one of his last reports as governor, General Pershing wrote about the province's political backwardness: "Eighty-five percent of the population of the Province are non-Christians who are savage or semi-civilized, and who are entirely ignorant of the principles of popular government." He likewise disparaged the Filipinos' capacity for government, declaring that "a large majority of the Filipinos themselves have no conception of the right of suffrage." As a result, Pershing was unequivocal in belief that the province required a colonial government. "These Moros and other non-Christians have never known any other than purely autocratic rule and must remain subjects of a strong centralized government for many generations to come."⁷⁰² Indeed, "generations to come" would reckon with the implications of that decade of U.S. military government and the "purely autocratic rule" it had brought to the southern Philippines.⁷⁰³

Conclusion

⁷⁰² *Annual report of Brigadier General John J. Pershing...1911*, 20-21.

⁷⁰³ Patricio Abinales, a specialist on the southern Philippines, argues that U.S. colonial rule helped shape in important ways the Filipino state and its relationship with Muslims in the region, helping explain present-day conflicts and challenges. See, Abinales, *Making Mindanao*.

A few weeks after Bolton's murder, Leonard Wood wrote sanguinely to the Boston philanthropist Henry L. Higginson: "The Moros are going to make an industrious and hard-working people...I do not think that we shall have much more to fear in the way of organized resistance on their part, certainly not resistance of any consequence."⁷⁰⁴ Some scholars have echoed Wood in portraying the relative peacefulness of the province under American rule. Historian Patricio Abinales, for example, argues that the extent of Muslim resistance to the American occupation has been exaggerated for contemporary political purposes. Pointing to one list of anti-American military engagements that included just nineteen incidents, he writes, "Contrary to nationalist and pro-Muslim separatist arguments, these incidents of 'struggle against the Americans' were really feeble and few...In effect, there was no consistent opposition to American rule."⁷⁰⁵ Events in the Davao province, however, suggest the need to take a wider view of both "resistance" and "opposition." While it is true that there were only periodic outbreaks of large-scale violence, the Moros and animist peoples opposed the American occupation of the South in various ways. In addition to the murders of Bolton and Christian, other conspiracies, such as the one associated with the Labi dance of 1908, were uncovered before they could lead to American deaths. Furthermore, the persistent labor shortages in the plantation sector point to another type of resistance to the U.S. colonial project. In 1910, John J. Pershing, the third and final governor of the Moro Province, was still writing about the need for planters to treat their workers well so more natives would

⁷⁰⁴ Leonard Wood to Major Henry L. Higginson, July 6, 1906, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷⁰⁵ Abinales, "The U.S. Army as an Occupying Force," in *Colonial Crucible*, 415.

relocate from the mountains to the plantation region.⁷⁰⁶ The labor problem remained so acute in Davao that most American planters were forced to abandon their ventures; by 1918, the Japanese dominated hemp production in the province.⁷⁰⁷ Although tribal and Muslim peoples did not succeed in expelling all foreigners from their communities, they did severely test the commitment of many Americans to the colonial enterprise by withholding their labor from the plantation sector.⁷⁰⁸

This chapter has told the story of army efforts that did not come to fruition. Hamstrung by restrictions on immigration and unfavorable land laws, and stymied by indigenous resistance, the U.S. army failed to establish a plantation colony in the Moro Province. In their efforts to do so, however, army officers drew on decades of experience managing the labor of their own soldiers and other subject populations. Just as they had in the American South and West, the army made labor relations central to its military occupation of the Moro Province. In Philippines, however, officers believed they could improve on those previous experiments by sparing the indigenous people and cultivating a local workforce. If they were less successful than they had hoped, officials nevertheless succeeded in demonstrating the U.S.'s commitment to using the military as a flexible, wide-ranging administrative force. The army did more than scout territory and fight insurgents. Soldiers organized fairs and carried on public relations campaigns; they learned foreign languages and studied Islam; they negotiated with *datus* and entertained American settlers; they canvassed the mountains recesses and lowland jungles in order to

⁷⁰⁶ Gowing, *Mandate*, 226.

⁷⁰⁷ Hayase, "Tribes," 144.

⁷⁰⁸ Macario Tiu, in contrast to Patricio Abinales, emphasizes the extent of indigenous resistance to American colonialism by pointing to events in Davao. "In a way, the Americans were defeated since their aim of transforming Davao and the Moro Province into a white man's country never materialized." See Tiu, *Davao*, 310.

establish relations with “wild peoples;” they built roads and laid telegraph lines. Yet again, behind this exercise of “soft power” was the ever-present threat of violence.

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The army’s occupation of the Moro Province cast in it in some unfamiliar roles, but in other ways, officers and enlisted men continued the work their predecessors had undertaken for decades on the North American continent: expanding the reach of the American state and furthering the interests of American capitalists. Moreover, this was far from the last time the army would embrace such a role; it has continued its global work of remaking labor arrangements and promoting new economic relations well into the twenty-first century.

**“Our Indian wards in the southern Philippines:”
Colonial Rule and the Labor of Ideas**

Leonard Wood had been at his post as governor of the Moro Province for about six weeks when he wrote his friend, President Theodore Roosevelt. Wood explained to the president that his “impressions of the islands and the people are just beginning to take definite shape.” As Wood began to build his staff and organization, making plans for the military subjugation of the region and its civil administration, he looked for precedents and experiences that would guide his work in the southern Philippines. He informed Roosevelt that he had already visited North Borneo and met with British officials there. Wood was also convinced that the army’s experience with Native Americans would prove valuable in Mindanao. He told Roosevelt he hoped Hugh Lennox Scott, an old Indian fighter, would succeed him as governor. Wood believed him “splendidly fitted by his experience with the Indians” to manage the Moros in their “semi-savage state.”⁷⁰⁹

In this one letter, Wood laid out that universe of comparisons and references that guided American military officials as they sought to govern the region and its people. Army officers looked both to their European counterparts – to British and Dutch colonial projects in the Pacific – and to their own experience with Native Americans in the trans-Mississippi West as they undertook new imperial responsibilities. Drawing on examples from the U.S.’s own expansionist past and looking to Europe for inspiration, army officers believed they were positioned to build a different kind of empire in the twentieth century.

⁷⁰⁹ Wood to Theodore Roosevelt, September 20, 1903, Box 32, Wood Papers, LC.

This chapter explores the ways army officers tried to make sense of their colonial 358
role in the southern Philippines. It examines the comparisons they made and the distinctions they drew. By looking at the way officers thought and wrote about the Moros and their mission in Mindanao, this chapter also highlights another dimension of military labor: the labor of ideas. When officers wrote one another, penned official reports and policy, or authored pieces for military or popular publications, they articulated and defined a new, expansive role for the army beyond the continental borders of North America. Just as roads and telegraph lines helped the U.S. expand its reach and power across new peoples and territories, so too did ideological labor help strengthen the U.S.'s continental and global empire.

The first part of the chapter examines officials' reports and correspondence to understand how army officers thought about the U.S.'s role in the region, the Philippines, and the world. It focuses particularly on the comparison officers drew between Mindanao and the American West. The second section looks carefully at the intellectual production of two army officers who wrote for popular and academic audiences. Taken together, these efforts at understanding and comparison highlight how U.S. army officers desperately tried to make sense of their mission and their country's place in the world at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Countless Comparisons: Understanding the Moros

In the summer of 1902, after President Theodore Roosevelt declared the war over in most of the archipelago, U.S. forces continued to fight in Mindanao and Sulu. President Roosevelt's proclamation of "pardon" explicitly did not apply to the southern

region.⁷¹⁰ The Moros, who fought among themselves and vied for territory, slaves, and 359
other resources, were just one of many groups living in the vast areas known as
Mindanao and Sulu. In addition to the notoriously war-like pirate Moros who had
terrorized Spanish and other European fleets for centuries, a variety of animist groups
lived in the mountains and along the coasts. Some made their living as fishermen or
pearl-divers; others practiced forms of swidden or slash-and-burn agriculture. The
province also included some Christian Filipinos and Chinese merchants who mostly lived
in towns and larger settlements. The diversity of peoples and the difficult terrain
presented grave challenges to American military leaders in the region.

At the helm in Mindanao was Major-General George W. Davis, a Civil War
veteran who had served as the military governor of Cuba before his transfer to the
Philippines. He later continued his career in imperial administration as the first military
governor of the Panama Canal Zone.⁷¹¹ While in the Philippines, however, Davis found
time to write extensively about the U.S. mission among the Moros. In October 1901, he
submitted a “report on Moro Affairs” to the Adjutant General, Division of the
Philippines, included as an appendix to the War Department annual report. The next year,
after his promotion to commander of the Division of the Philippines, he wrote “Notes on
the Government of the Country Inhabited by Nonchristians in Mindanao and the
Neighboring Islands,” also included as an appendix to the War Department annual report.

⁷¹⁰ “Proclamation on U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt’s Pardon of the People of Philippine Archipelago, S. 1902 | GOVPH.” *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*. Accessed January 28, 2016. <http://www.gov.ph/1902/07/04/proclamation-on-u-s-president-theodore-roosevelts-pardon-of-the-people-of-philippine-archipelago/>.

⁷¹¹ On Davis in the Canal Zone, particularly his contention that the military nature of American power in the Canal Zone justified the use of deportation against American workers, see Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 88.

In both these pieces, Davis reflected on the future of American rule in the southern Philippines. His reports reveal how a top military commander thought about the next global phase of U.S. imperialism among “Nonchristians,” highlighting in particular the special role the army would play in promoting U.S. objectives and the spread of “civilization” among less advanced peoples.

In his first extensive report, published before the war officially ended in Luzon and while hostilities were ongoing in the South, Davis attempted to place the situation in Mindanao in a comparative, historical framework. He began with a brief discussion of the relations between the Spanish and the Moros since the sixteenth century, and then noted the existence of the Bates Agreement between the U.S. and the Sultan of Sulu in 1899. Overall, Davis found that relations between the various Moro groups and the U.S. remained unsettled. He hoped his “general observations” on the subject would help guide American policy toward the people of Mindanao. Indeed, it is remarkable that this document, about five pages in length, dealt almost entirely with the people of the southern Philippines, chiefly the Moros, of Muslim population – and only indirectly with the resources or strategic value of the islands they inhabited. In his first attempt to frame the population, Davis turned to the example of Native Americans. “So far as I can judge,” he wrote, “our treatment of the Mindanao Moros and the pagan tribes is based on the same general rules that have always governed our actions in intercourse with the Indian tribes on our Western frontiers.” He found similarities in what might be termed a “hands-off” policy. The United States, according to Davis, allowed Native Americans to “regulate their own interior tribal affairs according to their native rules and customs.” The U.S. had left them to practice their own religions and to resolve conflicts in their own

ways. Furthermore, “The Indians paid no taxes, and if individuals and bands passed and 361
repassed our frontiers with dutiable goods we ignored the transaction.” The other side of
this *laissez faire* policy was that Native Americans were prohibited from reaping any of
the benefits of representative government. They were barred from participating in
elections, and Davis continued, “We would never recognize as valid the titles to lands
which reservation or wild Indians might attempt to convey.” In this version of events,
which strangely omitted any mention of decades of ongoing warfare between the U.S.
and Native peoples, the Indians lived out their lives in relative autonomy. Unlike other
military officials, Davis neglected to mention the Indians’ reputation for ferocity in battle
or their hostility to American society. In the version of Native history Davis told, the
chief feature of Native American life in the midst of the United States was separateness
and autonomy. In the southern Philippines, the U.S. found itself with a similar
opportunity to govern another indigenous people. “The Army has encountered in
Mindanao aboriginal and nomadic races not materially different from those with which
our troops have long been familiar,” Davis wrote. “There are many natives of the great
island of Mindanao who, although grown to manhood, have never seen a white man.” He
called them “land nomads” living in a vast, largely unpopulated region. With this
understanding of the Moros and their similarity to the American Indians, Davis turned to
how the U.S. should govern them.

Davis’ reflections speak to the burden military commanders felt to shape national
policy on questions of governance. They also reflect early-twentieth century thinking
about civilization, scientific racism, and the development of “backward” peoples.
Military commanders like Davis imbued the current thinking of the time, and his analysis

of the Moros took him far from battlefield science, tactics, or any other training he may have received at West Point. Instead, he gestured toward history in order to justify his views on what the U.S. government and the army should do in the southern Philippines. “The question has been asked, ‘What form of government should take the place of this one we see in operation?’” For Davis the answer involved both knowing something about the Moros but even more about the longer history of human “races.” He continued,

The student of history knows that the transition from patriarchal forms and medieval feudalism to a government of law was slow in the extreme even with the Caucasian race. How many of us have seen the failure of attempts to make self-governing citizens quickly out of the breech-clouted, named savages. It seems to me the worst misfortune that could befall a Moro community, and the nation responsible for good order among the Moros, would be to upset and destroy the patriarchal despotism of their chiefs, for it is all they have and all they are capable of understanding.

Davis was not alone in believing that progress would come slowly, inferior as the Moros were to “the Caucasian race.” William H. Taft believed Filipinos, who were felt to be more advanced than the Moros, would “need the training of fifty or a hundred years before they shall even realize what Anglo-Saxon liberty is.”⁷¹² Davis and his fellow colonial administrators drew on decades of academic and common-sense understandings that non-white peoples were intellectually and physically inferior to “Caucasians” and “Anglo-Saxons.” Davis, however, believed that his understanding of Moro inferiority would ultimately lead to more humane treatment. By expecting less from the Moros, Americans could shape policies that would take into consideration their particular

⁷¹² Quoted in Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 199. For a helpful discussion of “narratives” that kept Filipinos at a subordinate position to Americans while keeping the door open to their eventual advance, see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 198-208. In his recent history of the Moro Province, Michael Hawkins argues that army officials relied on the latest scientific theories, particularly ethnology, to provide “imperial taxonomies” to help guide their colonial project. Hawkins shows how army officers developed these theories about Moro backwardness and civilizational attainment while trying to govern the province. See. Hawkins, *Making Moros*, especially chapter 1.

“racial” characteristics.⁷¹³ For Davis, any attempt to convert these “savages” to Christianity would likewise end in disappointment. “Christian missionaries have utterly failed to make converts anywhere among the Mohammedans,” he wrote. Expressing a grudging respect for the intransigence of their faith, he compared Muslims to “the Medes and Persians” in their “adherence” to “their laws.” Pragmatically Davis admitted that even if the Americans “refuse[d] to recognize their rules,” they would still never “eradicate a deep-seated religious conviction.” The U.S. could avoid “failure” and “misfortune” by learning from past mistakes. Rather than trying to convert the Moros or to “civilize” them in a few years, he thought Americans should continue to use the *datus*, relying on the “patriarchal despotism of their chiefs.” Later military officials, such as Leonard Wood, would harshly criticize just such despotism as fundamentally un-American and inimical to democratic principles. Davis, however, drawing on European examples, wanted to turn their inherent despotism to American purposes. “It seems to be our duty to respect this conservatism and deeply rooted prejudice, to utilize it and to use these *datos* in our efforts to lead these people away from slavery, polygamy, piracy, and despotic rule, just as the Dutch have in Java and the English in India.”

Davis was fascinated by other colonial powers, particularly by the Dutch in Java. He saw two potential paths open to the Americans in governing the Moros. His first set of recommendations did not build on the Dutch example. Instead, he suggested first that the

⁷¹³ For an excellent history of “race” and science, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), especially for this period, see chapter 6, “The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology.” The literature of U.S. imperialism and racism is vast. A good introduction to the historiography is Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (2002), notes. See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

U.S. abrogate the Bates Treaty. Rather than working through the sultan, the U.S. should 364 strip him of his power. The U.S. could continue to work through minor *datus* as “headmen,” but they should not be paid a “pension or subsidy.” In a further move intended to disempower the sultan, Davis suggested the trade within the Philippines be exempt from taxation or duty – a free trade policy for the Moros within the archipelago. Next, he urged that the region remain under military government. The army should invest in infrastructure including wagon roads, military roads, and railroads in order to open the region, particularly around Lake Lanao, to commerce. These were ambitious plans, but Davis believed they were one set of solutions to the challenges the U.S. faced. “This would take some years to accomplish, and would cost two or three million dollars, but it will solve the Moro problem in Mindanao, and lead ultimately to the commercial development of this great island, of which one-half is now dominated by savages who are much more savage and intractable than the Igorrotes and Mandayans,” he wrote.

The U.S. closely followed the plan laid out by Davis in this 1901 document. In 1904, the U.S. abrogated the Bates Agreement. A military government remained in place in the southern Philippines for over a decade, and the army continued to work through the lesser *datus*. As previous chapters show, the army followed Davis’ recommendations by building infrastructure, including a major military road to Lake Lanao, for both military and commercial ends. The development of commerce remained a cornerstone of U.S. policy and its plans to civilize the people of the Moro Province. Yet Davis’ 1901 piece is remarkable, too, for the alternative vision it espoused. After listing the aforementioned recommendations, Davis admitted that the U.S. could go in a completely different direction with the Moros. “There is an alternative method of procedure, and this is to

profit by the example set by England and Holland, especially the latter power – for the Dutch govern more Malays in Java than the aggregate of all the rest in the world, and among them are a million Mohammedans.” This “alternative” meant embracing the model of indirect rule practiced by the Dutch. “The Dutch did not, and do not, overturn the native rulers, nor do the English in India and in the Straits Settlements; neither do they make treaties with them.” Davis proceeded to describe with admiration a “successful” plan instituted in 1834 whereby the Dutch appointed a “resident” to advise the local kings and rajahs. While maintaining the native rulers, “this Dutch adviser was the real power behind the native throne, and the rajah knew it.” Meanwhile, the Dutch avoided military intervention in Java while vastly increasing trade revenues and the population of their colony.

A third possibility was the establishment of a settler colony in Mindanao. While Davis believed this would be ideal, he did not think it was possible given the climate of the Philippines. “If Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Italians, Germans, Danes, and Swedes could be induced to emigrate to the Moro country in tens and hundreds of thousands, and take up and possess the earth as these people have done in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and the Argentine Republic, the Moro problem would soon be solved, but there can never be such invasion of these tropical jungles by white men.” For better or for worse, Davis believed the “native races” would continue to make up the vast majority of the residents in that part of the globe, “probably for ever and ever.” Davis’ language evoked the image of the eternal tropics, a lush and productive place insulated from the movement of time. “They will be fishermen and pearl divers as long as the sea yields its support. They will gather wax and jungle products as long as the forests remain, and sail

the seas in their *vintas* as long as they can find trunks of trees out of which to fashion them,” he mused. “They” – the many peoples of the south – might be “taught rice and coffee and sugar cultivation.” But their progress would be slow. Even the Chinese could not be persuaded to emigrate to Borneo, and the Christianized Filipinos did not want to come either. As a result, Davis saw two remaining options: the course he recommended was to militarily subjugate the Moros. The Americans could work through the *datus* and hereditary elite to slowly change backwards practices (such as a polygamy and slavery), while avoiding any direct attempts to convert the Moros to Christianity. The other option, the road not taken, would be to follow the Dutch and British example and establish a system of indirect rule.

The next year Davis issued a second report, entitled “Notes on the Government of the Country Inhabited by Nonchristians in Mindanao and the Neighboring Islands.” Far longer than his first report, in this 1902 effort Davis further developed his ideas about the Moros and the proper way for the U.S. to administer the province. At this point the war was officially over in the rest of the archipelago. But in Mindanao, hostilities continued and the army remained in power. Davis’ “notes” may be seen as a response to this unusual situation – an explanation and justification for the perpetuation, indefinitely, of military rule. For these reasons, Davis’ comparison of the Moros to Native Americans becomes more frequent and more crucial to his analysis. The Moros were like “our Indians,” except they were “more intelligent.” Logically, then, the army’s role in Mindanao should resemble its duties in the American West. “Martial law prevails in all this country and the writ of habeas corpus is unheard or unthought of” in most of the region. He explained that “the region in question may be regarded as we formally

regarded an Indian reservation whose inhabitants were hostile or unruly, and where the President was obliged to call in the Army to discipline and govern hostile or unfriendly savage inhabitants.” Here the equivalence between Mindanao – a region of approximately 40,000 square miles – and an Indian reservation helped normalize the persistence of martial law. Extending the metaphor, Davis declared, “The authority of the local military commander over this vast non-Christian reserve is the same as is that of the present commanding officer at Fort Sill, who now has under his control on the military reservation at that post some hundreds of Apaches – men, women, and children – all of whom are restrained of their liberty, i.e., they are nominally prisoners.” Davis described that authority as allowing an officer to imprison and punish “bad and intractable” Moros, just as the C.O. at Fort Sill might do to a “bad” Apache.⁷¹⁴

Such similarities between the Moros and the Indians provided a way for the Americans to build on their experience in the American West to develop appropriate policies for governing the Moros in the long-term. Davis, however, believed the army could go further and improve on its past relations with Native Americans. He referred to “those of us who have spent the best part of a lifetime in observing the failure of Americans to civilize and make American self-governing citizens of ‘our Indian wards’” who believed that “a mistaken policy and treatment of these nomads” had caused that failure.

We have seen an attempt to establish and maintain a dual government – a military one up to a certain point, then a civil one, but with frequent recurrence to the stern

⁷¹⁴ George Davis, “Notes on the Government of the Country Inhabited by Nonchristians in Mindanao and the Neighboring Islands,” in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1902*, volume 9, 57th Congress, 2d session, House of Representatives Document No. 2, Appendix 9, 560-561.

rigors of military rule; and this went on for a century as the Indians died off or were slaughtered. The result has been disastrous to the aborigines. White men, it is true, have secured the Indian lands, and cities have been built over the ashes of burned tepees; settlements have grown into countries and States, and there is wealth and luxury where these people roamed; but there can scarcely be found an intelligent and well-informed human being who knows the real characteristics of our Indian policy in this century of dishonor who will not acknowledge that the crusade has been as heartless and cruel as any recorded in history. 368

Davis joined a chorus of observers in the early-twentieth century who criticized U.S.

Indian policy and mourned the passing of the “noble savage.”⁷¹⁵ But in no way did he disparage the actions of the U.S. army in the present moment; instead, he saw an important, ongoing role for the army in helping protect the Moros from the fate suffered by the American Indians. Echoing claims made in a previous generation by officers from Benjamin Grierson to William T. Sherman, Davis proudly asserted a world-historical mission for the army. Like his post-Civil War predecessors, the commander of the Philippines Division believed soldiers should promote white settlement and a specific type of economic development. But the army’s role had to be different in the so-called “tropics.”

The army, according to Davis, would both protect the Moros *and* promote the “development or exploitation of the vast territories inhabited by non-Christians” over time. In the same way the “military character of government of California, and what is now Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, and Idaho did not prevent or retard the occupation of those countries by home seekers,” so would the army in Mindanao not stand in the

⁷¹⁵ The literature on images and perceptions of Native Americans is extensive and brings history, anthropology, and literary and media studies. A helpful historiographic essay is Brian W. Dippie, “American Indians: The Image of the Indian,” *Nature Transformed*, TeacherServe®. National Humanities Center. Accessed 27 January 2015.
<<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/ntecoindian/essays/indimage.htm>>

way of development. “In those regions, as everywhere in the United States Indian country, the Army has supplied the advance guard of civilization and all required protection until the people were able to protect themselves and to form these settlements into Territories and States.” Davis allowed that in time places like Lanao and Cotabato may be ready for civilian rule, but he believed that the process would be considerably slower than in North America and require a longer period of military government than places like California had experienced. On the other hand, however, in his mention of Arizona and New Mexico, which remained territories until 1912, Davis referenced the long periods of territorial government even in North America, which deprived the citizens of those regions of full political participation.

In order to avoid the same mistakes that had hindered the progress of Native Americans, Davis urged the U.S. to capitalize on the circumstances that distinguished Mindanao from the American West and Moros from Native Americans. The chief difference, Davis concluded, was the Moros’ value as laborers. The Moros and other native peoples represented labor-power – essential, in Davis’ view, to the successful exploitation of these islands by Americans or any other group of civilized people. “Anglo-Saxons and others of the Caucasian race can not make their homes in these jungles as they did in the North American prairies and mountain valleys,” Davis wrote. “Those tropical lands can not be exploited without labor, and the white race can not or will not supply it. This condition of affairs is a protection to the Moros and the pagans, and is all that saves them from invasion otherwise sure to come.” According to this view, which Tasker H. Bliss would subsequently adopt, the army became a savior, the “advance guard of civilization” but also a protector for the native peoples who would otherwise be

destroyed by more developed peoples. Davis continued, “It is therefore not surprising 370
that a military man should prefer to pursue a course in the cause of civilization that would
in his belief spare the Moros from the besetments and influence that have worked the
destruction of the savage aborigines elsewhere.” Even as U.S. troops continued to fight
guerrillas who opposed their presence in Mindanao, Davis asserted a benevolent role for
“the military man” in championing a merciful, protective policy for the Moros.

Davis, like subsequent governors of the Moro Province, argued that labor and
economic development, rather than political rights, should be the central concern of U.S.
policymakers in the southern Philippines. “If the Moro and pagan lands are ever to
become productive, the native inhabitants must supply the laborers,” he insisted. “They
must be taught that labor is honorable and its remuneration certain.” Army personnel
needed to instruct the Moros in how to labor. He urged that “every effort should be used
to restrain the savage and bloody impulses of these people, to encourage industry.” In an
auspicious sign, he noted that Moros had done good work supplying telegraph poles for
an army project. “Hundreds” had worked on roads and trails in the lake country, and they
had sold fuel and forage for the troops. But these gestures, while promising, were largely
a result of the power that the leading *datus* had exerted over their subjects; they were
forced to perform such labor under threat of violence, Davis readily acknowledged.

While Davis wanted to gradually move the Moros away from their reliance on the
datus, he did not expect them to join in any form of representative government in the
foreseeable future. Instead, Davis emphasized the necessity for ongoing military rule in
Mindanao. “There is no other force available for governing these savage people save the
Regular Army of the United States, and its action should be regulated in much the same

manner as it was in respect to Indian affairs when and where the Indians were hostile or 371 unfriendly or intractable,” Davis asserted. He believed that “no form of self-government is possible in the country of non-Christians.” It would be “useless to quote the bill of rights” [sic] or engage in “voting, a word as meaningless to them as the act would be absurd.” Relying on a shared understanding of the Moros as thoroughly “savage,” Davis mocked any pretensions to democracy in Mindanao. Over time, the Americans would “teach and convince these people that all men are born free and equal,” but that process could easily take generations. The *datus* themselves would, of course, oppose any efforts to undermine their privileges. Yet while asserting their inferiority, Davis also emphasized their capacity. This confidence in their potential legitimated the army’s ongoing role; officers and soldiers were serving not only national interests but humanity in helping the Moros achieve better things for themselves. “There is reasonable basis for a hope that the Moros may some time become industrious producers and valuable members of the community. They are as cruel and bloodthirsty as our plains Indians, but they have more intelligence, more acuteness, and already have made more progress in industrial life,” Davis remarked. Indeed, the record of colonial governments around the world provided “hope” for the Moros. In British Borneo and Dutch Java lived groups of “devout Mohammedans.” These workers were “industrious, frugal, hard-working, and honest people.” The example of these European colonies should inspire the United States. “If the Moros are handled properly they can be started in the same path, and in a generation the existing million of fanatical Moro and pagan savages will be two million industrious laborers, as industrious and peaceable and contented as the subjects of Raja Brooke in Sarawak. Over them, as over the Dyacks, Javanese, and Straits Malays, must be a just

rule that is full of vigor, and as they develop a talent and capacity for participation in the 372 government they should have the opportunity.” Davis left unanswered the question of when the Moros would have such an “opportunity.”

In his varied attempts to make sense of the Moros and the prospects for American rule in Mindanao, Davis drew on several arguments that had informed military thinking for several decades. He asserted the army’s role as a builder of infrastructure, both for military and civilian purposes. He argued that the promotion of economic activity and commerce would also help solve security problems, making economic development a military objective. He insisted on a long, open-ended role for the army. But writing at the turn of the century, as the threat from hostile Native Americans receded and the U.S. embarked on new military ventures overseas, Davis also drew on a reserve of comparisons, metaphors, and examples. Chief among these was the analogy of Moros to Indians. This analogy allowed Davis to make some critical claims about the prospects for U.S. rule in Mindanao. First, the comparison provided legitimacy for the persistence of military rule in the southern Philippines when the rest of the archipelago would soon be turned over to civilian rule. Equating Mindanao to an enormous Indian reservation, Davis made it seem as if military government was not a foreign concept but something the U.S. had been practicing for a hundred years. (The reference to Arizona and New Mexico further familiarized such long periods of political apprenticeship.) Second, Davis linked the Moros and Indians while at the same time condemning U.S. policy toward Native Americans. This move allowed Davis to chart a different course for military rule over the Moros. The U.S., he argued, had failed to protect its indigenous people, but it had the opportunity to do better in the Philippines. By helping make the Moros into “industrious”

laborers, like the Muslims who were prospering under British rule and Dutch rule elsewhere in Asia, Davis argued that the U.S. could avoid the “slaughter” and misfortune that had befallen Native Americans.

Davis’ remarks are especially noteworthy because he offered a relatively mild analysis of the Moros. Because he dismissed the prospect of a large settler colony, Davis placed great value on the Moro as a worker. Drawing on the example of the British and Dutch colonies, he was optimistic that Moros could become useful workers and help make Mindanao a valuable U.S. colony. By comparison, subsequent officers were less sanguine about the prospects for civilizing the Moro. Brigadier-general Samuel S. Sumner, a veteran of the Civil War and the Indian Wars who served in Cuba before the Philippines, believed the Moros were “an essentially different people from us in thought, word, and action.” They would continue to attack, kill, and steal – if not in “open warfare” then in secret. “So long as Mohammedanism prevails, Anglo-Saxon civilization will make slow headway,” he wrote in his 1903 report.⁷¹⁶ Leonard Wood largely agreed. In 1903, he wrote William Howard Taft, governor-general of the Philippines, that “there are practically no native laws worthy of the name.” The situation, he assured Taft, was “intolerable from our standpoint.” “The Moros especially have been maintaining a state of affairs marked by licentiousness, murder, robbery, slavery, piracy and kidnapping, a condition far exceeding in its crimes any which has before come under American control.” In his official report as governor of the Moro Province in 1904, Wood reiterated this claim that the Moros lacked laws, necessitating the wholesale creation of new

⁷¹⁶ *Annual Reports of the War Department for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1903*, Vol. 3, 58th Congress, 2d session, House of Representatives Doc. No. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 302.

After a year of diligent investigation and study of this question it has been found that the Moros and other savage peoples have no laws – simply a few customs, which are nowhere general, varying from one valley to the next, from one island to another. Such laws as they have are many of them revolting and practically all of them utterly and absolutely undesirable from every standpoint of decency and good government. The Moros are, in a way, religious and moral degenerates.⁷¹⁷

As far as Islam providing any basis for their government, Wood believed they had neglected most of the essential tenets of the religion. He told Roosevelt, “These Mohammedans have forgotten most of their religion, and very little, if any, of the old Mosaic law which is so largely embodied in the Koran is found in their practices or their laws.”⁷¹⁸ Unlike Davis, Wood was not encouraged by their profession of Islam and felt it did not elevate them much above the other “savage” non-Christians in Mindanao.

Wood also disagreed with Davis about the Mindanao’s potential as a settler colony. Davis believed it would have been ideal for “Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Italians, Germans, Danes, and Swedes” to emigrate to the islands, but he thought it unlikely that they would. As a result, his proposals centered on turning Moros into the workers necessary to develop the islands’ resources along more profitable lines. Leonard Wood, on the other hand, lobbied heavily for more liberal immigration laws, optimistic that the southern Philippines presented excellent opportunities for white settlers. In the same report in which he mocked the absence of Moro laws, Wood, as the new governor of the Moro Province, called for large-scale immigration. “What is needed to develop this portion of the world is a suitable class of settlers, bringing with them knowledge of

⁷¹⁷ Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” September 1, 1903 to August 31, 1904, Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 8. Hereafter Report, Moro Province, 1904.

⁷¹⁸ Wood to Theodore Roosevelt, September 20, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

modern agricultural methods, enterprises, and some capital.” Wood believed that “such a 375
class of settlers” would set a positive example for the Moros and introduce them to more
advanced methods. He continued, “What is needed here is an influx of such people as
built up the West.” Like Davis, Wood summoned the image of the American West, but
for him the metaphor was positive. Instead of the destruction of the Native American,
Wood thought of the white pioneer who would bring advanced methods to Mindanao.
“The natives,” he wrote, “would be stimulated by their example and educated by their
work, and the possibilities of these islands would soon be apparent.”⁷¹⁹ While Davis took
some comfort in the fact that the absence of a large settler class might protect the Moros
from “rapacity,” Wood welcomed those very settlers with open arms. “Such people as
built up the West” would more rapidly and successfully transform the islands and reap its
produce than the savage and backwards natives.

Years later, the second provincial governor, Tasker H. Bliss, expressed fears
about the long-term consequences of plantation agriculture for the Moro people. By this
point, the U.S. had succeeded in attracting some white settlers who had invested capital
into plantations growing hemp, rubber, coconuts, and other tropical products for export
on the world market. Bliss, more philosophically inclined and considerably more
skeptical about the good intentions of American settlers than his predecessor Leonard
Wood, agreed with Davis that the Moros would always dominate the population of the
region. “I am one of those who believe that the Moro Province will continue indefinitely
to be the home of the people who now inhabit it,” Bliss wrote. He did not believe white
people would ever “oust the native from his occupation of the soil.” Nevertheless, Bliss

⁷¹⁹ Report, Moro Province, 1904, 20.

worried that the Moro might be “robbed of all his patrimony” if settlers were not held in 376
check by a strong government. “If we destroy [the native’s] gum-producing trees, we
should have taught him to cultivate new ones and not leave him to look over a fence at
the only existing trees in the private plantation of a company which will have destroyed
all his own trees,” he wrote.⁷²⁰ Bliss discussed conservation methods, and he wanted to
make sure the islands’ valuable natural resources – particularly its gum and gutta-percha
– were preserved. He did not only have the Moros’ best interests in mind. “The whole
civilized world has an interest in these products, and neither native nor white man should
be permitted to destroy the source of supply,” Bliss reminded his superiors. Gutta-percha,
for example, was widely used for insulating underwater telegraph cables, and rubber
served several commercial purposes, which were only multiplying as industrialization
advanced.⁷²¹ Bliss believed that the U.S. would not directly control these islands forever,
and his interest in the “patrimony” of the “natives” distinguished him from other military
governors of the province. At the same time, however, these same concerns only
strengthened his conviction that the army had to remain in power for the foreseeable
future, in order to protect the Moro and the region’s natural resources for the “whole
civilized world.”

Military personnel like Davis and Wood invoked the image and example of the
American West and Native Americans for different reasons. For Davis, the trans-
Mississippi West represented the failure of the U.S. government to protect American

⁷²⁰ “Report of the Governor of the Moro Province,” in U.S. Secretary of War. *Annual Report*, 1907. House Doc. No. 2, 60th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 7, Report of the Philippine Commission, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 389.

⁷²¹ For a sense of the importance of both rubber and gutta-percha to the late-nineteenth century imperial projects, see John Tully, “A Victorian Ecological Disaster: Imperialism, the Telegraph, and Gutta-Percha,” *Journal of World History* 20, no. 4 (2009): 559–79.

Indians while developing its land and resources. For Wood, the West presented a laudable goal, a place policymakers and administrators in the Moro Province would do well to replicate. These leading officers were not alone in associating Mindanao with the West. In 1906, an organization of American veterans located in the Moro Province received certain items belonging to Lt. Edward C. Bolton, the slain governor of the district of Davao. Among these items was Bolton's own revolver as well as the knife allegedly used to kill him. The organization had renamed itself the Bolton Post of the Veterans' Army of the Philippines (V.A.P.) after the martyred official, so it was only fitting they would receive what they called "relics" of his life. On this solemn occasion, the V.A.P. issued a resolution honoring the slain officer. Here, the veterans declared, were "sacred remembrances" and "mementos of a brave, simple, and able officer and man" who had devoted himself to building up "that splendid pioneer colony established on the furthermore outposts of American territory." Their words harkened back to another frontier, so recently "closed." Concluding the resolution, members of the V.A.P. promised to honor Bolton, "a faithful public servant, a brave soldier, and a pioneer of civilization whose name shall be forever linked with the development of the District of Davao, as are the names of Louis [sic] and Clark and Daniel Boone with the civilization of the great west."⁷²² Members of the Bolton V.A.P. proudly asserted a connection between the U.S.'s colonial project at the turn of the twentieth century and the imperial trailblazers of one hundred years before. By invoking the names of Lewis, Clark, and Boone, these veterans placed Bolton in a pantheon of American folk heroes who had contributed to the great, long work of "civilizing" the backwards parts of the globe. For

⁷²² Bolton memorial, 9 August 1906, Vol. 44, Bliss Papers, LC.

them, places like Davao were the new “West.”

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Civilians also summoned the image of the American West to describe their work in the southern Philippines. Members of the Iligan Chamber of Commerce called themselves “tax-payers, law-abiding citizens and pioneers in the opening up, of until recently, a wild and uncultivated territory.”⁷²³ Another group of boosters went even further in stressing the importance of western symbols to their work in the Moro Province. “The story of the Davao Planters’ Association reads like a chapter in President Roosevelt’s ‘Winning of the West,’” they declared in 1909. “Like the early settlers on the frontier of our Great West” and “like the pioneer of the Western plains the Davao planters” had “brought the spirit of law and order with them.”⁷²⁴ Not everyone agreed that the western spirit had brought “law and order” to the southern Philippines. Colonel Alfred C. Sharpe, for example, commander at the post of Parang in Mindanao, wrote in a personal letter to General Bliss about an attack on a village. According to Sharpe, “the entire country [was] laid west; the whole settlement then stampeded.” The colonel continued, “Kali was probably a bad hombre, but the ‘shooting up’ of the whole village seems, from all I can learn, to have been utterly wanton.” He was equally distressed about an incident later when “at least one poor wretch” was killed unnecessarily when troops went in pursuit of “mutineers.” For Sharpe such misfortunes were part of the larger context of American activities in Mindanao. He wrote Bliss, “Like all frontier life, there is a disposition to be a ‘little too quick on the trigger,’ and until this is wisely controlled,

⁷²³ Letter from the Office of the Iligan Chamber of Commerce, Iligan, Moro, P.I., Oct. 26, 1908, Bliss Papers, LC.

⁷²⁴ “The Davao’s Planters Association,” *Mindanao Herald and Industrial Number, Commemorating A Decennium of American Occupation of the Land of the Farthest East and the Nearest West* 6, no. 11 (February 3, 1909), 69.

these people will find it difficult to realize the benevolent purposes of the government 379
towards them.” Like his friend Bliss, the provincial governor, Sharpe believed the army’s
role was to keep such wanton excesses in check so that the Moros would be able to
appreciate the Americans’ “benevolent purposes.” Despite these regrettable events,
however, Sharpe was optimistic about the U.S.’s long-term role in the southern
Philippines. “I am thoroly [sic] convinced with you that the Moro is ‘the best fellow’ in
the whole archipelago,” he told Bliss. “[W]ith judicious management he will some day
arrive.”⁷²⁵ He probably found a receptive listener in Bliss, who on occasion worried about
“what men will do on a remote frontier.” Isolated and cut off from “civilizing”
influences, Bliss feared that American civilians adopted some of the more frightening,
lawless habits associated with what he called the “wild West.” More than the other Moro
Province governors, Bliss expressed misgivings about the behavior of the planter class in
Mindanao, leading him to champion a continued role for the military.

For many officers, the army’s work in the Pacific was personally related to their
earlier assignments in the West. Leonard Wood received the Medal of Honor for his
leadership in some of the final battles with the Apaches, and he played his part in the
capture of Geronimo. John J. Pershing, the third and final governor of the Moro province,
also served in the southwest fighting the Apaches, and then fought the Sioux in the
Dakotas. Hugh Lennox Scott, military governor of the Sulu Province and a high-ranking
army official, fought against Sioux, Nez Perce, and Cheyenne Indians in the 1870s. He

⁷²⁵ AC Sharpe to Bliss, 14 August 1909, Bliss Papers, LC.

later helped suppress hostilities associated with the Lakota Ghost Dance.⁷²⁶ Legions of 380
enlisted men who had served in the West later faced Moros and Filipinos in combat.
These regulars also drew on their experiences or ideas about the West when trying to
understand the U.S.'s role in the Philippines. One soldier told a reporter after the Battle of
Bud Dajo in 1906 that the massacre "was merely a piece of public work such as the Army
has had to do many times in our own West."⁷²⁷ With the word "merely," the soldier
dismissed the massacre of six hundred men, women, and children by invoking the
comparison to the West.

Several historians of U.S. imperialism have noted the frequent allusions army
officers made to Native Americans when describing Filipinos and Moros, but they do not
agree about what these comparisons mean. In an early, widely cited piece, Walter
Williams insisted that the United States' experience with Native Americans directly
shaped policies undertaken in the Philippines. He argued that the ideas and experiences of
"governing" indigenous peoples in the continental U.S. influenced the way American
policymakers thought about taking up the white man's burden in the Philippines. For
evidence, Williams quoted Roosevelt, the influential historian Albert Bushnell Hart, and
Native American policy advocates. Turning toward the army, he claimed that 87 percent
of generals serving in the Philippines "had experience with Indians in the West."
Williams saw the acquisition of the Philippines as part of a much longer history of
imperial expansion. "Instead of seeing 1898 as a new departure, historians might view

⁷²⁶ For brief biographies of Moro Province officials who had prior experience with Native Americans, see Peter G. Gowing, "Moros and Indians: Commonalities of Purpose, Policy and Practice in American Government of Two Hostile Subject Peoples," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 8, no. 2/3 (1980): 125-128.

⁷²⁷ See Gowing, "Moros and Indians," 141, fn. 32.

Philippine annexation as the last episode of a nineteenth-century pattern of territorial acquisition and direct political rule of subject peoples...for the expansionists of 1898, the precedents to govern colonial subjects were clear and exact, based on the long road from independence to wardship for American Indians.”⁷²⁸ 381

Williams was concerned with speeches and policy proposals emanating from civilian sources, but other historians have focused specifically on the comparisons army officers drew between Moros and Native Americans. Peter Gowing, who authored the only full-length treatment of the Moro Province in English, argued that “the Moro policy and administrative methods of the White Americans were influenced as well by their experience in governing the Indian peoples of North America.” Gowing also based his conclusion on the fact that a preponderance of officials, both military and civilian, in the Moro Province had experience with Native Americans in North America. “It is not surprising,” Gowing writes, “to find that they believed the problems they faced in governing a hostile, non-Christian people of a different race and culture in the southern Philippines to be similar to those they had encountered in governing the Indians – and that these similar problems required similar solutions.”⁷²⁹ More recently, military historian Brian McAllister Linn called the Moros “a truly romantic opponent, America’s equivalent of the fierce Pathans of British India’s Northwest Frontier.” For “the Progressive Era Americans still coming to terms with the end of their own Wild West,” the Moros were “exotic” and “as archaic and colorful as the army’s former opponents, the

⁷²⁸ Walter L. Williams, “United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism,” *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 4 (1980): 831.

⁷²⁹ Gowing, “Moros and Indians,” 125.

American Indian.” According to Linn, “Service against the Moros allowed the new imperial army to maintain, however symbolically, its tie to the old frontier army and to march with the ghosts of Custer, Mackenzie, and Crook.”⁷³⁰

Despite these resonances, scholars – including Linn himself – have expressed skepticism about drawing too clear a line from the frontier west to the “new West” in the Pacific. In his piece, “The Long Twilight of the Frontier Army,” Linn devotes most of his discussion to comparing “the old western frontier army and the new army of empire” as institutional and operational forces, noting that the army continued to be as inefficient, understaffed, demoralized, and dissolute in its Pacific postings as in the American West.⁷³¹ But Linn also distances himself from historians who posit a “psychological identity” between the two conflicts. Linn doubts that officers in the Pacific saw the army’s work in the Philippines or Hawaii in the terms of their experience in the American West. He points out that among “distinguished” fighters in the Philippines, “there were some who had extensive western frontier service and some with none at all.” Paul Kramer likewise urges caution in examining how racial ideas and categories formed in the domestic context, such as notions about Native Americans, were marshaled in the Philippines. In contrast to other historians like Williams who have asserted clear links between Native American and colonial policy, Kramer argues that colonial race-making took place within specific contexts that altered whatever ideas were “imported” from the U.S. “Transfer, export, and projection – the Philippines as seen through Indian territory – were not reflexive or default responses, but strategies in particular contexts whose terrain,

⁷³⁰ Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 35.

⁷³¹ Brian McAllister Linn, “The Long Twilight of the Frontier Army,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1996): 142; 144-158 and passim.

combatants, and stakes merit historical inquiry,” Kramer writes.⁷³²

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Army personnel frequently referred to the West, Native Americans, and frontier service when discussing the southern Philippines; that much is undeniable. But what did these references mean? Rather than asking whether the lessons of the American West and Native American relations influenced policy at the turn of the century, historians might follow the suggestion of Ann Stoler and think more about the act of comparison itself. In her call to “historicize the *politics of comparison*” nearly fifteen years ago, Stoler asked, “What did agents of empire think to compare and what political projects made them do so? What did comparison as a state project entail?” Stoler pointed out that colonial governments “invested in selected comparison with other polities: with highlighting their similarities to some and difference from others.”⁷³³ The prominence of comparisons to the West and Native Americans demonstrate how important it was for army officers to place their work in the Pacific in a longer history of the army’s accomplishments and responsibilities. In their writings and reports, they helped create a specifically American narrative that linked the settlement of the West to its imperial exploits since 1898. These comparisons allowed officers to place the army’s work in the Philippines in a broader context. Reaching back to the American West, army officers reckoned with some decidedly new experiences by making them seem familiar, natural, and just – in keeping with the United States’ history of continental expansion. Whatever purposes they served for the individual writer or thinker, the frequent allusions to the West highlight the connections army personnel were themselves making between these projects. In this way,

⁷³² Kramer, “Transits of Race,” 167.

⁷³³ Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 55-56.

they help illuminate the longer narrative of American empire and military power that army officers were themselves crafting.⁷³⁴

Brian Linn writes, “It might be well to ask whether the western military frontier ended with the Battle of Wounded Knee or continued for another two decades in the Pacific.”⁷³⁵ Indeed, many officers saw the army standing again between settlers and indigenous people, trying yet again to lead the way to “civilization” under the American flag. The army’s experiences in the American West and the Philippines became for them part of a single history of U.S. expansion and imperial governance.

An Imperial World

Army personnel did not limit their stock of comparisons to the American past. They also looked to Europe for models of colonial governance and for a language with which to describe their twentieth-century mission.⁷³⁶ For Leonard Wood, his initial impressions of Mindanao were framed by his journey to the islands. On his way to his posting as the first governor of the Moro Province, Wood stopped in India, Singapore, Java, and Hong Kong before his arrival in Manila. Wood admired the imperial administration of both the British and the Dutch in these colonies. To a British associate he wrote that, “Lord Cromer has done wonderful work in Egypt, all the more wonderful when one considers the mixture of antagonistic and inharmonious sects and races which inhabit the

⁷³⁴ Donna J. Amoroso shows how American colonial officials and military administrators drew on several comparative frameworks to understand the Moros, including Spanish and British imperial methods and the experience of Native Americans. She argues that the comparisons they drew influenced the direction of U.S. army rule, leading army personnel to disparage the authority of the sultan while relying on lesser datus in creating a colonial government for the Moro Province. Amoroso is particularly interested in how the army helped develop a “minority” status and identity for the Muslim South. See Amoroso, “Inheriting the Moro Problem,” 131-141.

⁷³⁵ Linn, “Long Twilight,” 142.

⁷³⁶ For references to Filipino enemies as “‘dervishes,’ ‘fuzzy-wuzzies,’ or “‘Mahdi fanatics,” see Linn, “Long Twilight,” 160 and 162.

country.”⁷³⁷ He thought “the work in Java done by the Dutch was interesting” and found 385
the Javanese to be “peaceful, contented and industrious people” and remarked on their
“cheerfulness.” Wood’s praise of the British and the Dutch was not limited to letters to
English friends. Around the same time, a few weeks after his arrival in Mindanao, Wood
wrote Senator Russell Alexander Alger, a Republican from Michigan, a Civil War
veteran and former secretary of war under McKinley. He told Alger about his “most
interesting trip.” He saw “the Egyptian and English troops, as well as a good deal of the
colonial administration” in Egypt. In Java he also inspected the troops and studied their
“colonial system.” “The Dutch have done a powerful work in Java,” he wrote with
admiration.⁷³⁸ To his wife Lou, with whom he carried on an active correspondence, he
told about a dinner he had enjoyed with Lord and Lady Cromer in Cairo. They had been
joined by other “principal men...all exceedingly well bred, able interesting people.” In
Cairo he also met with Count Edward Gleichen, the Sudan Agent and a military man as
well. From Gleichen, who happened to be the son of Queen Victoria’s half-nephew,
Wood heard “about the method of control in the Soudan and the methods gradually being
put in force.” He told his wife, “The Soudanese are all Mahommedans and there are some
sides of the question not unlike what we shall have in Mindinao [sic].”⁷³⁹ While he often
acknowledged that the American colonial system would have to be different from the
British – particularly their willingness to work through local leaders in a system of
“indirect rule” – Wood clearly hoped to learn something from the British example in
Egypt and Asia.

⁷³⁷ Wood to John Strachey, January 6, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷³⁸ Wood to Senator Russell Alexander Alger, September 22, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷³⁹ Leonard Wood to Lou Wood, May 15, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

Wood was part of a larger orbit of imperial administrators that included not only 386 other Americans, but also British and European counterparts living and ruling colonial peoples throughout the world. Through travel and correspondence, he joined in a much broader, transnational conversation about colonial governance. Paul Kramer has shown how “Anglo-Saxon” racist ideology became a “self-conscious bond connecting Britons and Americans.” Kramer’s observation that this bond “solidif[ied] at points of elite Anglo-American social and intellectual contact” is borne out by Wood’s experience. Kramer argues that the “bond” between Britons and Americans weakened after 1902 as Americans began setting up their own colonial state in the Philippines. British observers criticized the American mode of governance, while American colonial functionaries defended *their* brand of empire-building on nationalist terms. But American colonial officials still continued to study European colonies “in search of practical models of colonial state building.” Kramer writes, “American colonial officials took their place in a network of imperial policy tours and exchanges with colonial officials from the American Philippines, Dutch Java and the East Indies, and the British Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States.”⁷⁴⁰

During Wood’s tour through Egypt and Asia, foreign officials entertained him, showing off their armies, their colonial bureaucracies, and their proudest colonial accomplishments. Along the way, his ideas about the inferiority of non-white, non-Christian peoples were further confirmed in myriad ways. He found their customs, smells, food, and appearance abhorrent. Furthermore, other American officials traveled frequently in the region in an effort to learn from the example of their British neighbors.

⁷⁴⁰ Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons”: 1318; 1351.

North Borneo, considered a British protectorate since 1882, was a favorite location and 387 point of reference. The 1905 report for the Moro Province, for example, noted that in ten years it was hoped that the province would be earning the same revenues as “Sarawak, Rajah Brooke’s country [in Borneo], which is run for the benefit of the natives.”⁷⁴¹ In order to make such aspirations reality, Americans had traveled to observe and learn from their neighbors. “A number of the provincial and district officials have visited some of the colonies of foreign powers, and at present, due to the courtesy of General Buchanan, four of the district governors are on a visit to British North Borneo, the Celebes, and the Moluccas,” the report stated.⁷⁴²

As his initial journey to Mindanao progressed, Wood shared with his wife more of his misgivings about the long-term implications of British rule in Egypt and Asia. He believed “no real progress” could come to India without “a change in religion and customs.” He condemned the caste system and the treatment of women – a product of religious custom – for the lack of progress. “The people are being safely handled and kept as well as possible but take England away and the results of her work will vanish as they will in Egypt.”⁷⁴³ Over time, as Wood spent more time at sea and en route to Singapore and then China, his letters to his wife grew more irritable and critical of “the East” in general. Aboard the S.S. “Arratoon Apar” on the Ganges, he described the heat to his wife. “You have to feel this Indian heat to understand it,” he assured her. The climate was enervating, “imparting neither life nor energy.” In keeping with some of the latest

⁷⁴¹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1905*, Vol. X, Report of the Philippine Commission, Part 1, 59th Congress, 1st session, House of Representatives Document No. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 327.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 330.

⁷⁴³ Wood to Lou, May 31, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

scientific theories of the day, Wood believed the climate was responsible for some of the 388
evident backwardness of the people in India and Asia.⁷⁴⁴ He sympathized with the white
people who staffed the colonial governments, telling his wife of their “wretched struggle”
to educate their children and maintain their own health. Unfortunately, he believed their
sacrifices were largely in vain. Such challenges would “prevent the development of an
English colony in the true sense of the term,” Wood believed. “As a place to hold for
trade, to govern, to come to, to get rich, India is all right but to live in, never....”⁷⁴⁵

Wood’s early positive observations degenerated as he spent more time among “the
natives.” While he enjoyed the natural splendors of the regions they toured, he found the
people repulsive. Months later he wrote a friend that “the view of the Himalayas
from Darjeeling is worth a trip around the world” and was “the grandest sight I ever
saw.”⁷⁴⁶ But during the trip, he expressed decidedly hostile opinions. “The East, by the
way, is a most distinct disappointment,” he wrote his wife while en route to Sumatra.
“Everything is dirt and ignorance...Seen once is enough unless for a trip to some special
portions of the world at the proper season of year.” Wood did not hold back in his
condemnation of the people they encountered. “Every native quarter is dirty. The people
are half naked, densely ignorant and little mud idols in silk frocks, etc. or more
commonly with none crop out in the dirtiest little modern temples...in short, life at home
mounts higher and higher the more one sees of this sort of thing.”⁷⁴⁷ Weeks before he

⁷⁴⁴ Climate had been central to racist thinking for centuries prior to the U.S. occupation of the
Philippines. On the challenges to white people of living in a tropical climate, specifically the Philippines,
see Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the
Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 76-81, and passim.

⁷⁴⁵ Wood to Lou, June 7, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷⁴⁶ Wood to John Strachey, January 6, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷⁴⁷ Wood to Lou, June 18, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

reached Mindanao he had made up his mind about Asia, already homesick for the United States. He told Lou, “You can be quite sure of one thing and that is that you would never want to live in this part of the world any length of time. One does get so thoroughly sick of the native and his ways and longs for our own country.”⁷⁴⁸ Wood would spend the next several years of his life working in the Philippines, and return there as governor-general in 1921. Before his arrival in Mindanao, however, his travels had already convinced him of the superiority of the U.S. and its people. 389

American military officials expressed few misgivings about following the example of their European neighbors. In certain instances, officers referenced both their own American past and their European counterparts when diagnosing a situation concerning the “natives.” In 1905, George Langhorne, an army officer and Moro Province official, wrote Wood, then in the United States, with a report on the situation with Datu Ali, one of the U.S.’s fiercest enemies in their attempts to put down resistance in Mindanao. “From experience with our own Indians and the English and Dutch in their various colonies, it would seem better to get entirely rid of a disturbing element like Ali. It is better for the country that he should cease to exist than to be in a position to create further trouble in the future, whenever he might happen to be displeased,” Langhorne wrote. “Every concession to an Asiatic, as a general rule, is a mistake. It is only when they beg for mercy that they should get, not more than they beg for, if anything, less.”⁷⁴⁹ The latter part of the quotation is most often cited as evidence of the U.S.’s harsh policy toward Moro militants. But the basis of Langhorne’s argument – his reasoning for an

⁷⁴⁸ Wood to Lou, July 12, 1903, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷⁴⁹ Langhorne to Wood, August 23, 1905, Wood Papers, LC.

exterminationist policy toward those hostile to U.S. rule – was based on both American 390
and European precedent. Langhorne had authored a report based on his travels to Java,
Borneo, Singapore, and the Malay States the year before. He was one of several military
officers interested in what their European counterparts were doing in the neighboring
islands.⁷⁵⁰

Some Americans believed the U.S. should attempt to emulate their European
neighbors more closely in governing the Moro Province. John McA. Palmer, a captain in
the 15th Infantry and governor of the Lanao district from 1906 to 1908, sent Bliss a long
proposal recommending the creation of government colonies modeled on the Dutch
methods employed in Java. Under his plan, the Moros would farm forty-acre plots under
the close supervision of American soldiers. Palmer's colonization scheme was detailed:
he specified the money to be loaned to the Moros and the labor due to the government in
return. The Moros would be required to grow subsistence crops along with a certain
number of export products. In introducing the plan to Bliss, he acknowledged that certain
aspects of it may cause American officials to bristle. "While the idea of enforced labor is
rather startling to Americans, its necessity in dealing with people like the Moros must be
apparent to anyone who has had occasion to study them or similar peoples in Malaysia,"
he wrote. By this time Mindanao had been under military rule for several years, and the
province had reported some progress in attracting settlers and increasing export
production, but the islands were not nearly as profitable as Dutch colonies in Java or the
British colonies in Borneo. American officials had also been less successful than hoped in
eradicating bound and slave labor. Palmer continued, "The only industrial system they

⁷⁵⁰ On the Langhorne report, see Amoroso, "Inheriting the Moro Problem," 118.

[the Moros] know is the slave system which implies protection and dependence and they ³⁹¹ are not prepared for independent activity. But under the conditions suggested for these industrial settlements, the entrance to the colony would be voluntary, and it is believed that the people would embrace the opportunity and that they would consider the demands of the government just and liberal in view of the substantial benefits conferred.”⁷⁵¹ The Moro Province never put such a system of forty-acre plots into place. Nonetheless, the proposal is one example of how Americans used the study of other colonial populations in order to craft governance schemes for their new possessions in the Philippines.

Several years later, Captain Chauncey B. Humphrey, detailed as an intelligence officer, reported back to the third provincial governor, John J. Pershing, on what he had found in touring part of the province for over two months. The people he had found in the mountains were “not civilized to any degree, 90% being as wild as timber wolves, but as savage as a cayote.” Humphrey’s memorandum reflected his sense that the Americans were doing nothing but emulating their European predecessors; they simply needed to decide which colonial model they would follow. As a result, he told Pershing that there were two options open to the Americans in attempting to rule such wild people. In the first place, the U.S. could authorize the importation of “coolie class Chinese as laborers.” He estimated that between 2,500 and 3,000 Chinese would be necessary under this plan. The second option relied on infrastructure, that perennial feature of military labor and tool of colonial control. Humphrey argued that by building “excellent roads,” the U.S. would make “accessible once and for always” the valuable mountain region. With some modesty he told Pershing, “These two methods I name are nothing new as you know, one

⁷⁵¹ John McA. Palmer to Bliss, 18 January 1908, Bliss Papers, Library of Congress.

being an English method and the other being a Dutch method for the corresponding difficulty.”⁷⁵² Following the precedent established in its own West, the U.S. army continued to pursue the second course in dealing with the southern Philippines. It prioritized the construction of roads and telegraphs, believing that better transportation, communication, and consequently commerce would “open” the wild parts of the Moro Province to the benefits of civilization. Whether or not Humphrey’s rather obscure report influenced this policy direction, he gave voice to the persistent importance of European models and comparisons in Mindanao as late as 1911.

To the disappointment of many officers, the army was not able to establish a profitable colony in the Moro Province on par with Borneo or Dutch Java. However, leading officers traveled around the region and the world in an effort to acquaint themselves with colonial methods employed by other European powers. They looked to Native Americans and the history of the North American West in order to glean some lessons about the new “frontier” in the southern Philippines. As fighting subsided and the army turned its attention to establishing a government in the Moro Province, they tried to understand the people they governed and the challenges they faced. The importance of comparative frameworks for army personnel attempting to make sense of their mission in the Muslim South makes it clear that they did not think of their work as “exceptional.” While Leonard Wood commented on the inapplicability of certain British methods for an American colony, he also tried to learn as much as he could about British colonial rule, hoping to replicate the older empire’s successes in the Middle East and Asia. Although

⁷⁵² Captain [Chauncey B.] Humphrey, “Memorandum for General Pershing,” January 14, 1911, Box 278, Pershing Papers, LC.

different officers used such comparisons to make contrasting arguments about the American mission in Mindanao, they always emphasized the importance of labor. Some believed, with Captain Humphrey and General Leonard Wood, that immigration was necessary. Others proposed schemes for getting the indigenous people to work on American-run plantations. Still others believed that Mindanao would flourish because its natives were more industrious than the Native Americans had been. In all these discussions and debates, army officers helped craft American imperial policies, performing the intellectual labor necessary to govern the U.S. colony in Mindanao.

Voices of Empire: Writing the Imperial Experience

Army officers, particularly those with positions in the colonial government of the Moro Province, wrote extensively. In private correspondence and official reports, they expressed their views on matters ranging from army doctrine to the weather to how to find a good cook in the tropics.⁷⁵³ These writings illuminate the inner workings of the U.S. military-colonial bureaucracy. But officers also engaged in another type of intellectual labor: writing for the public. In doing so, they added their perspectives to a chorus of voices reflecting on the U.S.'s expanding global empire in the pages of newspapers, popular periodicals, and even academic journals. Paul Kramer explains how the "publishing revolution" of the late-nineteenth century contributed to the exchange of ideas between Americans and Britons, particularly around issues of "race" and imperialism. Among the "genteel Anglo-American literary-political magazines" Kramer names are the titles of several where army officers from Mindanao published. "The new

⁷⁵³ On the trouble of finding a good cook, see entry for June 1, 1909, Charles D. Rhodes diary, typescript, Rhodes Papers, USAHEC. On colonizers' preoccupations with domestic staff, see. Rafael, *White Love*, ch. 2.

publishing circuits helped create an ‘imagined community’ of literate, English-speaking 394 Americans and Britons with common affiliations and reference points, even among the less traveled,” Kramer writes.⁷⁵⁴ Military personnel also joined in creating this “imagined community” through their publications, adding their voices and perspectives to the public discourse on U.S. imperial expansion. This section examines the published writings of two army officers associated with the southern Philippines: Robert L. Bullard and John P. Finley. While both men reached high rank and earned acclaim in the military establishment, they were by no means the region’s most famous officers.⁷⁵⁵ Moving beyond the top brass, the writings of Bullard and Finley demonstrate how less well-known officers gained a voice in popular and academic outlets. Their experiences in certain corners of Moro Province administration gave them a platform that they used to present their ideas and perspectives to a broader, non-military public.

Army officers often appeared in print in the nineteenth century. Long before the army traveled to Cuba, Hawaii, or the Philippines, army officers and their families wrote

⁷⁵⁴ Kramer, “Exceptions,” 1326.

⁷⁵⁵ Wood, Bliss, and Pershing came to even greater prominence after their service in the Moro Province. Their most noteworthy writings deal with World War I and other topics. Leonard Wood became a public advocate for “preparedness,” and he entered Republican politics as a candidate for the party’s presidential nomination in 1920. Tasker H. Bliss served as Chief of Staff during the first world war, and later was a member of the Supreme War Council and a representative to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. After the war, Bliss remained an active voice in national and international affairs; he published several articles in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, where he was also a member of the editorial advisory board.⁷⁵⁵ Perhaps most well-known of all former Mindanao officers was John J. Pershing. The third and last military governor of the Moro Province, General “Black Jack” Pershing commanded the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I. Pershing remains the only living person to hold the rank of General of the Armies of the United States, the highest rank in the U.S. army. Biographies of the generals cover their time in the Moro Province, but their most glorious achievements were won elsewhere. See Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood: A Biography* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1931); Jack McCallum, *Leonard Wood: Rough Rider, Surgeon, Architect of American Imperialism* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), Frederick Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934); Frank Everson Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977); John J. Pershing, *My Life before the World War, 1860-1917: A Memoir* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

prolifically about their experiences on the western “frontier.” Despite their unusually large literary output, most historians have not regarded military personnel as particularly important writers.⁷⁵⁶ Yet their diaries, letters, and published articles provide a trove of insights about their experiences and perceptions. Army officers were employees and representatives of the federal government in the West and overseas, and along with their families they certainly gained experiences far different from their civilian counterparts. Yet in other ways they were typical of the American bourgeoisie in the late-nineteenth century. In his influential article arguing against the “isolationism” attributed to the post-Civil War army by Samuel Huntington, John M. Gates insisted that the army’s leadership was enmeshed in the larger American society in many ways, including in the class position of its officers. Gates wrote that “officers actually had more in common with the ruling elite than with any other societal group in the nation.” The peculiarities of the West Point selection process meant that “the vast majority of officers [came] from families with better than average incomes, connections, or both.”⁷⁵⁷ Citing a number of historical and sociological studies, Gates concluded that the officer corps shared the same politics and general beliefs as civilians.⁷⁵⁸ That is not to say that army officers were a monolithic group or that they always agreed with one another.⁷⁵⁹ Still, they came from and tended to

⁷⁵⁶ One exception is Sherry Smith who closely analyzed officers’ writings for their view of Native Americans and federal Indian policy. Sherry L. Smith, *The View from Officers’ Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

⁷⁵⁷ John M. Gates, “The Alleged Isolation of US Army Officers in the Late 19th Century,” *Parameters* 10 (1980): 36.

⁷⁵⁸ Gates, “Alleged Isolation,” 38.

⁷⁵⁹ One of the more notable ongoing rivalries in the nineteenth-century army was between Nelson A. Miles and George Crook. See Robert M. Utley, “Crook and Miles: Fighting and Feuding on the Indian Frontier,” *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 2 (Autumn 1989): 81-91; Jerome A. Greene, “George Crook,” in *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*, ed. Paul Andrew Hutton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 246-271.

represent a narrow slice of the American bourgeoisie, one that was particularly well-educated and well-read.⁷⁶⁰ Like their predecessors who fought in the Indian Wars, officers who governed the southern Philippines “were largely the product of a vibrant turn-of-the-century socially conscious segment of American society,” according to historian Michael Hawkins. Influenced by “the powerful social currents of progressivism, race theory, and the Social Gospel,” the U.S. military leadership was “highly representative of a small but critically important slice of America’s ruling class; a class that initiated, shaped, and later textually recalled the imperial experience.”⁷⁶¹ As Hawkins notes, the same class identity and privilege that led men like Bullard and Finley to the top ranks of the military also positioned them to write and publish their ideas and experience – to “textually recall...the imperial experience.”

Army officers were further connected to civilian society through their contributions to the media. In his study of the “frontier army,” Michael Tate describes military personnel who were frequently in touch with local, regional, and national news outlets. Posts often published their own one-page sheets, but they also received subscriptions to national newspapers. Military personnel served as correspondents and submitted reports on major battles as well as anecdotes and commentary for larger

⁷⁶⁰ Officers also read widely. Kevin Adams has found dozens of casual references to officers’ reading habits, leading him to conclude that officers were “well-read members of the Gilded Age gentry.” See Adams, *Class and Race*, 34. Although a few enlisted men left journals or wrote memoirs, officers were responsible for the bulk of literary production. Examples of enlisted men’s journals include Sherry L. Smith, *Sagebrush Soldier: Private William Earl Smith’s View of the Sioux War of 1876* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), and Bode, *Dose of Frontier Soldiering*. See also Tate, *Frontier Army*, 260-281, for a discussion of post newspapers, military correspondents, memoirs, and other ways army personnel left records of the “Old Army.” Historians have not yet produced a comprehensive study of the army officers’ literary output for the popular press, although scholars of the army all draw on such publications in piecemeal ways.

⁷⁶¹ Hawkins, *Making Moros*, 11.

publications. While few officers experienced the fame and renown of Charles King, a wildly successful novelist, or the artist Frederic Remington, who also worked as a correspondent for *Harper's Weekly*, many lesser-known officers published articles in the popular press. The *Army and Navy Journal* wrote in 1877 that military personnel “almost form a distinct and literary class, and in periodical literature, for instance, they are a recognized and indisputable force.” Kevin Adams writes, “During the 1870s, one-quarter of West Point graduates published books and articles on military topics, while others wrote on other subjects, gave lyceum addresses, or contributed to newspapers.”⁷⁶² Through these publications, officers and their wives helped create enduring images and narratives about the West, Native Americans, and the expansion of American power across the continent.

Scholars interested in the writings of military officers have tended to focus on the so-called “frontier” period in search of officers’ views and ideas about Native Americans. Yet the *closing* of the frontier stimulated even greater interest in the experiences of military personnel. During this period, many retired officers penned memoirs and published their papers. “The end of the nineteenth century produced a wave of nostalgia about the alleged passing of the frontier, and this newly awakened interest continued into the next century,” Michael Tate writes. “Because officers and their wives effectively provided fond remembrances of the old army, with its code of personal honor, esprit, and regimental loyalty, post-frontier generations came to admire a lifestyle that had otherwise disappeared in the bloody excesses of World War I.”⁷⁶³ The frontier period was not only

⁷⁶² Quoted in Adams, *Class and Race*, 34.

⁷⁶³ Tate, *Frontier Army*, 280-281.

a popular topic for memoirists; it also became a reference point for active military personnel engaged in fighting on new “frontiers” in the U.S.’s expanding overseas empire. Although Tate does not mention the Spanish-American War, frontier nostalgia served a specific purpose when the United States was fighting its first sustained imperial wars in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Colonel Robert Lee Bullard, for example, looked back not only to the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West, but also to Reconstruction in order to provide context for the army’s non-combat role among non-white and often hostile local populations in Mindanao.

Bullard was one of the officers who frequently “recalled” his “imperial experience” in the popular and military press. In the first decade of the twentieth century, he published more than two dozen articles in various magazines and journals. He cast a wide net in terms of topic and publication. For military audiences, he wrote about weapons, small maneuvers, and field training. In keeping with an era epitomized by Teddy Roosevelt, he penned pieces on antelope, deer, and boar hunting for popular outdoorsmen’s magazines. Bullard’s background as a well-traveled army officer informed even his lighter pieces. In *Field and Stream*, for example, he wrote about his experience “boar hunting in Mindanao.” But Bullard did not limit himself to musings, reminiscences, or entertaining accounts of big-game hunting. In contributions to popular magazines such as the *Atlantic* and *Metropolitan Magazine*, Bullard helped shape a narrative about what the United States – particularly the army – was doing in Cuba and the Philippines. Several articles by Bullard about Cuba appeared in both military and civilian publications, including the *Educational Review* and the *North American Review*. In a number of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, discussed in chapter 4, Bullard detailed

his experience building a military road in the southern Philippines.⁷⁶⁴ At the same time, 399
he also used his platform to speak on domestic issues, writing about black soldiers and
race issues in the context of American rule in Cuba. In this way, Bullard, like other army
officers in the early twentieth century, leveraged his experiences in order to reach to
reach a larger public with his ideas about U.S.'s role as an imperial power.

Bullard traced common themes in his articles, even when writing on different
topics. In 1901, he wrote a piece entitled "The Negro Volunteer: Some Characteristics"
for the *Journal of the Military Service Institute*. While this publication had a largely
military readership, Bullard's article was reprinted, with excerpts appearing in *The
Nation*.⁷⁶⁵ It was also included in a bibliography compiled by the Library of Congress and
published by the Government Printing Office on "The Negro Question." In "The Negro
Volunteer," Bullard offered his estimation of black soldiers, informed by his experience
commanding the African-American 3rd Alabama Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish-
American War. Bullard asserted that black men made outstanding soldiers, concluding
that the "negro volunteer" would make a "soldier par excellence." But Bullard was far
from a progressive on race. His positive assessment of black soldiers rested not on a
belief that African-Americans were equal to whites, but on his confidence that they were
quite different from their white brothers-in-arms. It was the sharp differences between

⁷⁶⁴ Bullard "Road Building among the Moros": 818-826; Bullard, "Preparing Our Moros for Government,"
See also R.L. Bullard, "Education in Cuba," *Educational Review*, 39 (April 1910): 378-384. Bullard
published at least a dozen articles on military issues not discussed here. For a list of his writings, see Allan
Reed Millett, *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925*
(Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1975), 191-194, and "Brief of the Life of Robert L. Bullard,"
Alabama Department of Archives and History,
http://www.archives.alabama.gov/goldstar/images/Bullard_Robert_L/biosketch.pdf, accessed 28 January
2016.

⁷⁶⁵ "The Negro as Soldier and Officer," *The Nation* 73, no. 1883 (August 1, 1901): 85-86.

white and black men that accounted for the latter's success in the army. For Bullard, the 400 differences between black and white men were "so great that they almost require the naturalist and do require the military commander to treat the negro as a different species." Urging officers to "fit his methods of instruction and rules of discipline to the characteristics of the race," Bullard described those racial characteristics in greater detail. In the process, he also revealed what he considers the most important aspects of military service.

Bullard began by describing the men he commanded in the 3rd Alabama Volunteers. "The enlisted men were negroes. Men with a larger proportion of white blood were rejected. True average negroes were gathered, Americans from the towns and plantations of Alabama, and Cuba, Jamaican, Mexican, English and African negroes from the seaport towns of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana – laborers, loafers, tramps, teachers, preachers, educated and illiterate – a great variety of the same article." He noted that he spent nine months with these 1,200 African-American soldiers, closely observing their behavior and characteristics. Bullard invoked several well-worn clichés about the southern "negro," insisting they had "the lightest hearts and best humor" of all Americans, while rejecting others, such as their laziness. He admitted that as individual workers, blacks were liable to "trifle," but when assigned to work in groups, they worked well. In this he emphasized their "most social natures." And while Bullard acknowledged certain weaknesses typical of black soldiers, including their "lack of honor," he spent more time describing the particular strengths they brought to the uniform. He encouraged commanders of black troops to appeal to their racial pride and to continually remind them of what their service meant to other black Americans. He would tell them, he wrote,

“your service is a privilege, an opportunity to show the gratitude, manhood, and worth of
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the negro, an opportunity to raise your race higher and faster in the world’s estimation by
a few acts in a few months than by all the agitating, talking and voting your whole race
can do in ten years.” With these words, Bullard left no doubt about his disdain for black
politics. But he also revealed key aspects of army life. For black soldiers, military service
was “a privilege” meriting their “gratitude.” At the same time, however, Bullard fully
admitted the hardships of army life. He wrote, “Bravery is no uncommon quality.
Soldiers, white and black, are brave enough, however untrained.” Instead of bravery, the
essential attributes for new soldiers were “respect for authority, obedience, willing and
loyal subordination to the will of the commander.” Black soldiers possessed such
qualities in abundance, according to Bullard. He continued,

By character more submissive to discipline, by nature more good-humored and
happy, from social position more subordinate, from previous habit of life more
accustomed to yield respect to superiors, from poverty more used to plain food,
fewer clothes and comforts, the average negro volunteer comes to the colors with
more of the first urgently needed qualities of the soldier and readier for service
than the white.

Bullard meant to praise black men as exemplars of the rank and file – not officers, of
course, but solid, necessary enlisted men. But in doing so, he also highlighted the
perennial complaints of the soldiers about the army’s labor regime: its strict discipline,
low pay, and inadequate food. Rather than calling for improvements in these areas,
Bullard believed that black men would be more willing to accept the privations of army
life. Black men’s social and economic marginalization, Bullard argued, made them better
soldiers than white men who had been raised with more. In his paean to the ideal of a
docile black soldier, Bullard revealed an unflattering conception of soldiering: a lifetime

of hard work, which paid its laborer back with poverty, meager food, and “fewer... comforts” than he would find in civilian life.⁷⁶⁶ Rather than condemn the poverty and want that characterized the lives of many African-Americans, Bullard believed these poor experiences made them better soldiers.

Bullard’s experience commanding black troops gave him a platform for writing about the supposedly racial characteristics of African-Americans. His article on the “Negro Volunteer” was not his only exploration of racial difference, however. In fact, Bullard found outlets for essays on Cubans and Moros in a number of different publications, and in these pieces he made an understanding of racial differences central to his portrayal of the American imperial project. In 1907, his piece entitled “How Cubans Differ From Us” appeared in the *North American Review*. Here again he drew on his alleged familiarity with black Americans. “In the wretched mess which we have made in handling our negro problem, we have warning against the policy of proceeding in ignorance, though we do it with intentions that would honor the angels,” Bullard wrote. Again, too, Bullard insisted on the importance of racial distinctions. Remarking that “all men are not even such as we are,” he went on to detail the ways in which Cubans differed in essential respects from Americans. Understanding those differences was especially important as the United States sought to manage its new colonial responsibilities. “America is face to face with a still unsolved Cuban problem. To know Cubans, therefore, and how they differ from us is now a thing of moment.” The first crucial difference, according to Bullard, was the superior relations between blacks and whites in

⁷⁶⁶ R.L. Bullard, “The Negro Volunteer: Some Characteristics,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution* 29 (July 1901): 29-39.

Cuban society. Unfortunately, the U.S. could not model Cuba in this regard, since those 403
better relations came at the unacceptable price of racial mixing, of a “negroid race.”
Bullard also discussed the influence of Spanish colonialism, Roman Catholicism, and the
proliferation of government functions in Cuba. Of all the myriad differences, the
fundamental attribute of the Cuban character, and what distinguished Cubans from
Americans, was their lack of discipline. This lack of discipline made Cubans unable to
control themselves and their passions; in effect, it made them children. Thus Bullard
concluded his essay with a strong endorsement of the colonial relationship: The lack of
discipline, he wrote, “keeps them children. It makes it necessary for a neighbor to take
them in hand, control, direct and manage their government and public polity. It makes the
Cuban a Cuban.”⁷⁶⁷

Bullard continued to offer his views of white superiority and the benevolence of
U.S. imperial rule in a series of articles dealing with the southern Philippines. Mindanao
and the Moros were topics brimming with romance, adventure, and suspense, making his
essays on these subjects even more appealing for a wide audience. Bullard published his
first piece on the topic in 1903, when “Road Building Among the Moros” appeared in the
Atlantic Monthly. Three years later, he followed this with another essay in the *Atlantic*.
The second piece, like the first, drew heavily on his experience leading the massive
construction project near Lake Lanao. But “Preparing Our Moros for Government” was
also a broader reflection on the imperial project and the best way for the U.S. to foster
“civilization” in the region. The same year, in 1906, the popular *Metropolitan Magazine*
published “Among the Savage Moros.” Finally, in 1909, several years after Bullard had

⁷⁶⁷ R.L. Bullard, “How Cubans Differ From Us,” *North American Review* 186 (November 1907): 416-421.

left the Philippines, he published the lengthy essay “The Caliph’s Writing” in *Army and Navy Life*. These reflections on the Moro people, appearing in both the military and popular press, reached a wide and diverse reading public. 404

Bullard’s writings responded to the American public’s interest in “The Moro Problem.” When “Among the Savage Moros” appeared in *Metropolitan*, the editors referenced recent events at Bud Dajo, where General Leonard Wood had ordered an assault on a crater where Moros were resisting U.S. authority. American soldiers killed six hundred men, women, and children. The editors promised that Bullard’s article would help readers attain “a sound understanding of the causes leading to this now famous engagement and a clear idea of Moro character.” The character that Bullard sketched in both the *Metropolitan* article and in his 1909 piece, “The Caliph’s Writing,” elaborated on the image of Moros as thoroughly savage, inscrutable, and fascinating. Most importantly, his assessment of Moro character and society served to justify both hostility and war against the Moros. Stressing the savagery of Moros, in 1906 he wrote, “An inordinate military conceit is also a dominant quality of the Moro. To him there is but one measure of defeat, to wit: annihilation.” He continued, “Herein lies the dilemma of the American Government in dealing with them; to subdue Moros it is necessary almost to exterminate them.” Coming on the heels of the massacre, Bullard’s remarks provided credence to U.S. claims that its troops had no choice but to kill large numbers of Moros, both women and men. A few years later, he made a similar assertion, speaking specifically to the issue of female casualties. Speaking of Moro laws and traditions, he wrote,

[The Moro] is cautioned not to fight women, but all Moros are enjoined that

‘During a battle both women and children are to be killed.’ Such is the custom, such the law of war. When, therefore, women and children join in battle, they are not simply taking the chances of death, but, as Moros, expect and prefer, even seek, death before capture. ⁴⁰⁵

Thus explaining the Moro “custom,” Bullard provided a rationale for why women and children, generally considered non-combatants, were killed at Bud Dajo and in other altercations with the Moros.⁷⁶⁸

Bullard’s writings built a case for ongoing U.S. rule in the southern Philippines without explicitly addressing that question. He did so through his characterization of Moro society and government. In 1906, he emphasized merely the personal nature of that government; in a 1909 essay directed toward a military readership, Bullard described the Moros’ social organization as nothing short of chaotic. “Of the mental abstractions, government and policy, as separate from persons, they have no conception. It is beyond them,” he wrote in *Metropolitan*. “The words of Louis XIV, “l’Etat c’est moi,” may be repeated proudly by all Moro dattos to-day, and there are thousands of them, equal, sovereign, independent states, a dozen often within a radius of a mile.” Such a state of affairs, along with the Moros’ natural predispositions, led Bullard to conclude by 1909 that “Moroland is a chaos of personal independence and personal irresponsibility. The whole spirit of the people is license, unfettered liberty to do and to live each as he pleases.” For Bullard, that lack of government was the defining feature of the Moros. “Notwithstanding they have a written language and some knowledge of arts, this lack of order and government effectually proclaims them savages.” Whereas the Cubans lacked self-discipline and were children, the Moros were violent as well as chaotic, requiring far

⁷⁶⁸ R.L. Bullard, “Among the Savage Moros,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, 24, no. 3 (June 1906): 263-279.

more than simple tutelage. By making violence and chaos the central features of his depiction of Moro society, Bullard effectively offered a rationalization for continued U.S. military rule in the region.⁷⁶⁹ 406

The Moros, Bullard declared, were “the most primitive and remote of American subjects.” Their traditions were derived from the “Arabian Nights’ tales” and full of “mythical lore and romantic tales.” But their cultural sophistication, even for “natives,” disappointed Bullard. He insisted nevertheless that the Moros could eventually move up the civilizational ladder, and he made sure to end his 1906 essay with an affirmation of their potential:

We may not, as many thought-less and impatient people do, expect of them, as savages, the progressiveness, faith, and honor of civilized men, but we know that any man or race of men that will work is not beyond hope of redemption, and the Moros, be they what they will, are still a race not wholly averse to work. Savages they are indeed to-day; industrials they may as a people become to-morrow.⁷⁷⁰

It was essential that Bullard assert some latent capacity for civilizational attainment in the Moro people. How else to justify the continuation of American rule in this “remote” region? It was also no surprise that his vision for Moro progress relied on labor. Bullard, who had commanded Moros on the extensive road-building project in the Lanao region, returned again to the civilizational powers of labor. Since Moros were “not wholly adverse to work,” there remained some hope that they could one day progress beyond their current state of barbarity. Bullard’s – and the army’s – abiding faith in work made it possible for him to envision the savage Moros, at some indeterminate future time, as “industrials.”

⁷⁶⁹ R.L. Bullard, “The Caliph’s Writing,” *Army and Navy Life*, 14, no. 4 (April 1909): 349-355.

⁷⁷⁰ Bullard, “Among the Savage Moros,” 279.

Bullard appealed to the public's appetite for romantic, stirring portrayals of the Moro people. His essays also spoke to real policy concerns, such as the persistence of conflict between Moros and Americans, the Moros' capacity for advancement, and the length of time they would require American rule. Overall, however, Bullard approached the Moros in much the same way he wrote about Cuba and the army in general: he spoke from personal experience while appealing to general and military readers. Other army officers, however, shared their perspectives and experiences with more specialized audiences. Another exemplar of the army officer as public intellectual is Major John P. Finley, a district governor in the Moro Province. Finley offered his assessments of the Moro people in the pages of academic publications, speaking to growing interest among intellectuals in the course of U.S. imperialism.

The early years of the twentieth century were a time of tremendous intellectual production in the field of colonial administration. Scholars have shown how the disciplines of political science and international affairs developed in the context of growing interest in the U.S.'s emergent role as an imperial power.⁷⁷¹ Leading intellectuals, many of them starting to identify themselves as "political scientists," engaged with the question of how the U.S. should best govern its empire and its new "dependencies." The army also took part in the academic world's growing interest in the

⁷⁷¹ See Robert Vitalis, "The Noble American Science of Imperial Relations and Its Laws of Race Development," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 4 (2010): 909-938. On how universities and academic and professional societies became incubators for imperial ideology and policy, see Frank Ng, "Knowledge for Empire: Academics and Universities in the Service of Imperialism," in *On Cultural Ground: Essays in International History*, ed. Robert David Johnson, (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1994), 123-146. For an earlier piece focusing specifically on the role of American "learned societies," see Gary Marotta, "The Academic Mind and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism: Historians and Economists as Publicists for Ideas of Colonial Expansion," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 42, no. 2 (1983): 217-234.

tropics, “race development,” and imperial administration. Officers serving as the colonial⁴⁰⁸ bureaucracy in the Moro Province were valuable sources of information. In late 1904, for example, Leonard Wood wrote his friend Alleyne Ireland, of Boston, to encourage him in his work on comparative colonialism. “I think the report which you are going to write on comparative colonial methods is going to be most interesting and it will give me a great deal of pleasure to put it on the list of our provincial subscriptions. I also want a copy for myself.”⁷⁷² Ireland was a world-traveler and author on colonial governance. As a lecturer and professor, he was part of this burgeoning movement to analyze, understand, and chart the course of empire for Americans and Europeans. According to political scientist Robert Vitalis, “Ireland earned his reputation as a pioneer in what he called the ‘science of imperial administration’ after publishing *Tropical Colonization: An Introduction to the Study of the Subject* in 1899. In 1902, Ireland was appointed “Colonial Commissioner for the University” at the University of Chicago. Frank Ng explains, “While the university never created a ‘department of colonial study,’ [as Ireland had suggested] it employed him as a professional lecturer on colonial subjects and even sponsored his research and travel on colonial administration and policy.”⁷⁷³ In his letter, Wood expressed interest in reading one of Ireland’s publications, most likely Ireland’s “ambitious eight-volume study, never completed, on colonialism in all the Asian possessions of the United States, France, Britain, and the Netherlands.”⁷⁷⁴

Army officers also played host to researchers interested in U.S. colonial efforts among the Moros and other “native” peoples. During General Tasker Bliss’s

⁷⁷² Wood to Mr. Alleyne Ireland, Nov. 4, 1904, Wood Papers, LC.

⁷⁷³ Ng, “Knowledge for Empire”: 141.

⁷⁷⁴ Vitalis, “Noble American Science”: 912.

administration, Frederick Starr, a professor of anthropology at University of Chicago, 409 visited Mindanao as part of a longer tour through the archipelago. When he returned home, Starr sent a handwritten note to Bliss, thanking him for his hospitality while he visited the Moro Province. He remarked, “what a fine field for study all of the peoples in your charge present. Twenty workers could be studying the people of Davao alone.” Starr then referred to a conversation he and Bliss had regarding the possibility of appointing “special agents” that would conduct research among the native peoples, describing a potential partnership between the university and the provincial government. Inquiring as to salary and responsibilities, Starr wrote, “I could probably send some young men, whose training would enable them to do scientific investigation upon wild tribes at the same time that they were doing exactly the work you need done.” It is not clear if such a partnership came to fruition, or what “work” Bliss expected from these researchers, but Starr promised to send Bliss copies of any future articles he published on the Philippines.⁷⁷⁵

In addition to scholars visiting the Philippines, army personnel also reached out to broader academic audiences through their written work. In the early twentieth century, certain professional associations, universities, and publications emerged as incubators for the study of the U.S. empire and its new subject populations. One was the *Journal of Race Development* (JRD), founded in 1910. The journal boasted some of the leading minds of its day among its editors and contributors. G. Stanley Hall, one of the founders of the new discipline of psychology, was a co-editor; other writers included Ellsworth

⁷⁷⁵ Frederick Starr to Tasker H. Bliss, January 17, 1909, Bliss Papers, LC. On Starr, see also Ng, “Knowledge for Empire,” 146, n104.

Huntington, a geographer at Yale and a leading proponent of the view that climate helped determine the course of development of various “races.”⁷⁷⁶ Along with the journal’s focus on race development was a strong interest in the problems of governing racially inferior people. It also had a global scope; early issues, for example, included pieces on China, Korea, India, and the Philippines. As Jessica Blatt explains, the journal’s “high-powered cohort of writers generally expounded an expansive vision of America’s role in the new century and the possibilities for worldwide progress and peaceful coexistence.”⁷⁷⁷ John P. Finley, a career military officer and then colonial official in the Moro Province, may not have been as “high-powered” in academic circles as many of the journal’s contributors. Nonetheless, between 1913 and 1916, Finley published four articles on the Moros in the *JRD*. He offered his military perspective and insights, writing chiefly about his experience as the governor of the district of Zamboanga. His writings represent another variant of the military officers’ intellectual labor: their contributions to national and global conversations about the science of imperial administration and colonial peoples.

Finley spent over a decade representing the U.S. army and the American colonial state in the Moro Province. In 1913, he wrote his first piece for the *JRD*, “Race Development by Industrial Means among the Moro and Pagans of the Southern Philippines.” Coming on the eve of the military’s rule in the region, Finley trumpeted his work as governor of Zamboanga, the district that included the capital city of the same

⁷⁷⁶ On Hall, and for an excellent history of scientific racism, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 116-118.

⁷⁷⁷ Jessica Blatt, “‘To Bring out the Best That Is in Their Blood’: Race, Reform, and Civilization in the *Journal of Race Development* (1910–1919),” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 5 (2004): 693.

name and one of the most urbanized regions in Mindanao. He focused on his administration's grandest accomplishment, the Moro Exchanges – markets where the entire population of the district, Muslims and animists alike, assembled to trade, barter, and sell their produce and wares. The provincial government funded the program with fees it collected from the merchants. Finley himself was not new to self-promotion; he wrote about the virtues of this program, which he thought could be emulated elsewhere in the province, in the pages of the *Mindanao Herald Decennium* in 1909.⁷⁷⁸ But in the *JRD*, Finley went beyond boasting and argued that trade and economic development should form the basis of any benevolent colonial policy among such inferior peoples. “It was of vast importance to both the coast people and the hill people that their trade relations be organized and adjusted on a business basis that would permit of healthy and progressive development,” he wrote. Like his military counterparts who supervised road-building or other labor projects, Finley characterized his program as a “school of instruction.” Exchange was the counterpart of labor, providing an outlet for the wares and products the people produced. Finley's exchange system, he argued, would “promote agriculture, commerce and friendly relations” and replace differences between the Moros and the animists, people living along the coast and in the hills, with the common bond of trade. “These longtime enemies have grown to be more tolerant of each other, and the more warlike coast dwellers have found that there is more profit in friendly association and mutual cooperation, in conducting trade relations than by following the old methods of slavery, piracy and extermination.” Given the policies pursued by the Moro Province

⁷⁷⁸ For later examples of Finley's self-promotion and “scheming” for position and recognition, see Vandiver, *Black Jack*, 521-523.

since its inception, this was the ideal outcome. War and conflict would be replaced by trade and economic development. Since military leaders agreed that the violent subjugation of the entire province was unappealing, men like Tasker H. Bliss had hoped that they could promote peace in the province through economic means, showing the Moros and animists that agriculture and peaceful trading were better than war-making. At the same time, of course, military leaders sought to raise revenue – something the exchanges also helped accomplish. As Finley notes, the exchanges put more currency in circulation, giving the participants no excuse to avoid paying the *cedula* and road taxes.

The Moro Exchanges demonstrated the subject people's capacity for "development," but Americans were necessary to facilitate this progress. "Left to their own ingenuity they would have continued to wallow in the morass of conflict, oppression and despair for an indefinite period of time," Finley wrote. Portraying the Moros and animists as truly dependent peoples, he emphasized the need for a strong but considerate colonial policy. Echoing perhaps the work of G. Stanley Hall, who argued that racially inferior people were like children, Finley also stressed the paternal relationship between the U.S. and the people it governed in the southern Philippines. "These people are wards of the government and as such children of the state they should receive paternal care, more especially as they ask for it." Here was a view of American benevolence that may well have appealed to a readership concerned with the long-term implications for U.S. colonial governance. But the work was far from over. Finley urged the U.S. to embrace its world-historical role as an imperial power. By joining the ranks of other great powers in the East, Finley expected that Americans would be able to accomplish a great deal in Mindanao and in the Pacific more generally. "Italy in Tripoli, Spain in Morocco, France

in Algeria, Austria in Herzegovina and Bosnia, England in Egypt, India, Borneo and the 413
Straits Settlements, and the Dutch in the East Indies are in contact with the Mohammedan
problem of government, in varying degrees of success,” he wrote, laying the groundwork
for future essays in the journal on the “Mohammedan problem.” He had opened the essay
by asserting that “Providence in His omniscient wisdom” had “allotted to the American
people this new and vastly important task.” He concluded the essay with an even more
rousing invocation for the country to embrace its God-given responsibilities:

The United States has made its advent in the East as a new power for good, not
alone for the island races that come under her care, but also in that great settlement
of European spheres of influence in Asia, where exists the greatest world problems
of our day. We must accept the responsibilities of the new situation as a
providentially imposed task upon a progressive and powerful nation. We can not
shirk the trust imposed whether for the present or for posterity. From national birth
to the present time our development has been westward. It is our destiny. Our
industrial and commercial future is indissolubly linked with the destinies of the
thousand millions of souls occupying today the oldest empires of the earth.⁷⁷⁹

The U.S. was not in the Philippines only to promote the “development” of subject
peoples, but also to advance its own westward development. Employing the
transcendental language of manifest destiny, Finley proclaimed it the United States’
“destiny.”⁷⁸⁰

The U.S. faced unique problems in the southern Philippines that went beyond
questions of labor and trade. Finley, therefore, devoted his next two articles for the *JRD*

⁷⁷⁹ John P. Finley, “Race Development by Industrial Means among the Moro and Pagans of the Southern
Philippines,” *The Journal of Race Development* 3, no. 3 (January 1913): 343-368.

⁷⁸⁰ For a helpful and concise history of the idea of manifest destiny, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest
Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996). Historians of the
“Wisconsin School” argued that the same ideology of “manifest destiny” that animated western expansion
in North America also drove American imperialists overseas. See in particular William Appleman
Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America’s Present
Predicament, along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).
For an elaboration of Williams’ argument about the domestic forces that drove a shift from continental to
overseas empire, see Williams, *Roots of the Modern American Empire*.

to explorations of “Mohammedan Problem in the Philippines.” In these he described the 414
history of the Muslim inhabitants of the Moro Province and offered his assessment of
how the U.S. should proceed to govern them and their neighbors. Here Finley’s writing
epitomized that combination of Progressive idealism and racial arrogance that led Jessica
Blatt to write, “while the *JRD* generally affirmed the superiority of Anglo-Saxon
civilization, it rejected some of the more vicious forms of white supremacist thought that
were widely acceptable at the time.”⁷⁸¹ Finley began by explaining the “wonderful
advance” of Islam from the Middle East into Asia. In keeping with the best scholarship of
the day and the general thrust of the *JRD*, he described the racial mixing that took place
between the Hindus and the Arabs and the influence on the subsequent “stocks.” Overall,
his assessment of the Moros was positive. True, the Moros were ruthless, conquering
people, but for Finley those were admirable qualities. “It is told of the Moro, that he was
a pirate and ravaged the coasts of the other islands; probably he did. If so his name and
‘praos’ should go down in history beside those of Drake, Raleigh, Cortez and the navies
of Napoleon and George the Fourth.”⁷⁸² This bit of cultural relativism notwithstanding,
Finley did not believe the Moros were equal to Anglo-Saxons – only that the U.S. should
appreciate the laws, customs, and religion that the Moros possessed. Islam, indeed, could
be an enormous asset toward helping the Moros achieve a higher level of civilization.

The Muslim teachers who came to the southern Philippines had brought a system of
learning and an appreciation for written texts. Finley praised the Islamic teachers for
introducing “a written language and methods of industry,” as well as teaching their

⁷⁸¹ Blatt, “To Bring out the Best”: 694.

⁷⁸² John P. Finley, “The Mohammedan Problem in the Philippines,” *The Journal of Race Development* 5,
no. 4 (April 1915): 354.

charges “a systematic cultivation of the soil” and encouraging them “to respect the property and family rights of others; to instruct their children in a knowledge of the Koran, and how to read and write its characters; to respect all forms of life and to surround women and children with many safeguards against vice and physical dangers.” Rather than seeing Islam as a savage religion, Finley respected its values and teachings and credited its teachers with getting the “natives” to “for[sake] pagan ways and habits.” Unfortunately, the Spanish missionaries had ruthlessly tried to suppress this learning – going so far as to destroy the sacred texts, a travesty in Finley’s eyes. They had mistakenly labeled all Moros “savages,” and the Americans had unwisely accepted the Spanish characterization of the Moros, missing early opportunities to form peaceful, productive relationships with their leaders. He writes, “we were given to understand by the Christians generally that the Moros were savages and we treated them accordingly. We were told that a good Moro was a dead one and that they could not be trusted with the smallest responsibility; that they were incorrigible pirates.”⁷⁸³ Furthermore, by insisting that the Muslim religion was not an impediment to civilization – and by suggesting it could be a means of civilization – Finley distanced American colonial government from the Spanish precursor. In contrast to the Spaniards, the Americans were not interested in conversion. Instead, Finley suggested, the U.S. should foster cordial relations with the Moros by respecting their religion. The road toward civilization was a long one, but it was not impossible for the Moros. “We are prepared to advance with the Moros along the line of his own culture, religion and customary laws, carrying them all without neglect,

⁷⁸³ John P. Finley, “The Mohammedan Problem in the Philippines II,” *The Journal of Race Development* 7, no. 1 (July 1916): 41-42.

ridicule, contempt or violence, while continually pointing the way to higher ideals and better results in his own system.”⁷⁸⁴ 416

Finley’s remarks show that he, like his fellow officers in the Philippines, frequently drew on the precedents set by Native American policy in the U.S. in order to understand the problems besetting the Moro Province. Here he referenced the aphorism attributed to General Philip H. Sheridan that the “only good Indian is a dead Indian,” this time rejecting the claim that “a good Moro was a dead one.” This was not the first time Finley made such a connection. In his 1913 article, he explained that the Moro Exchange System would provide the type of instruction in trade and cooperation that Native Americans never received. “The lack of true appreciation by the science and art of cooperation, influenced by the adverse elements of speculation, has greatly retarded the industrial and commercial development of our Indian wards in the states, and under similar conditions is experienced as an unreasonable restraint upon a like development of our Indian wards in the Philippines.”⁷⁸⁵ Finley’s statement reflected the common-sense acceptance that the Moros were the “Indian wards” of the Philippines. He believed, however, that the U.S. could improve on its past records with Native Americans. The mistakes of the past, unfortunate as they were, could help guide American policymakers and colonial administrators toward better results with the Moros. Finley was optimistic. “In the pros and cons of this situation we are beginning to cultivate a resemblance to the peculiarities that have developed in connection with the solution of our Indian problems in the West,” he wrote. Expressing his Progressive-era faith in the potential of “facts,” he continued,

⁷⁸⁴ Finley, “Mohammedan Problem,” 362.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., 354.

“With an immense accumulation of relevant and convincing facts filed away in our Indian Bureau, and in the operation of our public societies for the protection of dependent Indians, it would seem as though serious errors could be avoided in conducting the regeneration of our Indian wards in the Southern Philippines.”⁷⁸⁶

Finley’s writing spoke to exactly those issues that interested the readership of the *JRD*: how differences in racial development influenced colonial administration. He argued that “successful control of a dependent subject people of Malayan birth” required “a policy of administration” based on “the ideals of such people, as exhibited by the best of their native leaders.” Despite the cultural and racial superiority of the colonial peoples, policymakers needed to understand the people they governed. He cautioned “that the ideas, methods, practices and aspirations of the *governing* people, however suited to their needs and expectations, may be wholly impracticable for the people to be *governed*.” Such understanding was essential if Americans were going to successfully rule people so thoroughly different from themselves. Again, Blatt’s observation that the *JRD* was less “vicious” in its white supremacist thought bears repeating. Although Finley’s characterization of Moro inferiority may not have been “vicious,” he was still convinced that the Moros and similar people were meant to be “subjects” and “governed” rather than governors. Ruling them required understanding them, and understanding required men like Finley: experts who filled the pages of the *JRD*. They would study, observe, analyze, and understand the “dependent subject people.” Finley continued, “Their governors must thoroughly and conscientiously study their habits and aspirations and acquire familiarity and sympathy with them.” He argued that policymakers should be

⁷⁸⁶ Finley, “Race Development”: 360.

“more deliberate in our conclusions and methods” and should “carefully measure the probable progress of the dependent people.” Here was the work of scientific imperial administration. Still, Finley admitted that “progress is a question largely of evolution and less of legislative enactment and judicial process.” Nonetheless, by studying the habits, customs, and mores of the “governed,” the “governing” people – that is, Americans and Europeans – could more sympathetically and effectively rule the world.

In addition to his articles on the Philippines, Finley also penned a fourth piece for the *JRD* on “reasonable preparedness.” Published in 1916, Finley quoted George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, and Emory Upton to substantiate his claim that the U.S. needed a robust national defense and a strong military establishment. Here, too, he referenced both the perils of racial degeneration and the responsibilities attendant on the U.S. as a world power. “Unadulterated peace leads to slothfulness, over-feeding, dry rot, goutiness, heart failure, luxury, race suicide, vice, agitation, discontent, weakness, and many other evils which undermine and destroy nations,” he wrote. Furthermore, in contrast to other thinkers who heralded 1898 as a sharp turning-point, marking the country’s entrance into global affairs, Finley saw continuity rather than change. “We have always been one of the ‘world powers’ in spite of our imagined seclusion.” If the U.S. chose not to embrace its “obligations” toward “the family of nations,” he predicted ruin. The alternative to world leadership was for the U.S. to “become a subject people too weak to hold the reins of an independent government and therefore subject to partition and absorption by those people who are equal to the responsibilities of a virile and progressive government. We must either advance to the dignity of a governing nation, or fall back to the subordinate position of a governed one.” In this competition for global

rank, the U.S. did not have the option of self-imposed isolation; if it shirked its duty and 419
failed to develop a strong national defense, it risked becoming a “subject people”
governed by another, stronger power.⁷⁸⁷

Finley’s burst of publishing came during the twilight of his military career. In 1913, his piece, “The Commercial Awakening of the Moro and Pagan,” appeared in the more popular *North American Review*. The same year, he published a book-length scholarly account of one tribal group in the southern Philippines, *The Subanu: Studies of a Sub-Visayan Folk of Mindanao*, through the Carnegie Institution. Most of his articles, including those on the “Mohammedan problem,” were published after U.S. military rule in the southern Philippines had ended. The last military governor of the Moro Province, John J. Pershing, turned over control of the province to a civilian, Frank Carpenter, in December 1913. The following year, the province as an administrative unit was dissolved, replaced by the military Department of Mindanao and Sulu. By then Finley had already left the Philippines and was serving stateside. In 1918, he retired from active reserve due to his age. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Columbia, where he was made head of the new Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) at the university.⁷⁸⁸ By this point, Finley’s writing career seems to have

⁷⁸⁷ John P. Finley, “The Necessity and Wisdom of Reasonable Preparedness against War by the United States,” *The Journal of Race Development* 6, no. 3 (January 1916): 300-314.

⁷⁸⁸ “Government Names Unit Commandant,” *Columbia Daily Spectator* 41, no. 129, April 29, 1918. Finley is still waiting for his biographer; a study of his life could illuminate many features of the growth of the U.S. army and its varied responsibilities in the late-nineteenth century. Before ever traveling to the Philippines, he distinguished himself as one of the first storm forecasters, publishing dozens of articles on tornadoes and weather matters for academic and government audiences. See Joseph G. Galway, “J.P. Finley: The First Severe Storms Forecaster,” *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 66, no. 11 (1985): 1389–95. His interest in tornadoes continued, and he published articles on severe weather in the Philippines during his time in the Moro Province. See Joseph G. Galway, “J.P. Finley: The First Severe Storms Forecaster - Part II,” *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 66, no. 12 (1985): 1505-1510.

come to a close.

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Although the army's military rule in the South was over, the U.S. still had to grapple with the Moros and the particular challenges they presented. Finley did not foresee the end of American colonial rule in the Philippines any time soon. From his vantage point, the "problems" the Americans faced in the Moro Province were part of a larger constellation of challenges it would confront so long as its imperial responsibilities grew. His publications were intended to help shape not public opinion but *expert* opinion on the proper way to govern colonial peoples. In the pages of the *Journal of Race Development*, Finley's name and opinions appeared alongside some of the most noted and respected intellectuals of the early twentieth century. Certainly less well-known than G. Stanley Hall, W.E.B. duBois, or Franz Boas, who all served on the journal's original editorial board, Finley nonetheless published his opinions alongside other eminent intellectuals. As a military man, he was able to use his experience and position in order to gain entrée to that academic rarefied world, at least in print.

Conclusion

Both Bullard and Finley wrote and published while they were serving in Mindanao; both men also continued to do so after they left the islands. From their publication records, it is clear that these two army officers were conscious of their position at the forefront of the U.S. empire. They considered this position carefully, reflecting on the meaning of their work for the United States and its place in the world. Their experience also suggests there is a larger history to tell. How many other officers published their views of American imperialism at this time? How did their military backgrounds shape their arguments? Although there are many questions still unanswered, the examples of

Bullard and Finley help illuminate the public intellectual labor that army officers performed. Their publications spread word of the army's activities in the Pacific, introducing civilians to the varied tasks soldiers undertook as part of the U.S.'s imperial expansion. The way they told that story, the way they publicized the army's work in the Philippines, was indelibly shaped by what they considered the mistakes of U.S. Indian policy and the lack of credit the army had received for its accomplishments in the American West. But their literary output also reflected broader intellectual and political currents at the time, reinforcing the fact that military officers were part of a larger milieu that included intellectuals and policymakers.

The work of empire was difficult and multifaceted. The majority of American soldiers built roads, went on scouts, and searched for the enemy; that was their day's work. Another type of assignment fell to officers: the intellectual labor of describing, explaining, justifying, and publicizing the army's work in the Philippines. In letters home, official reports, and academic articles, army officers addressed the fundamental question: Why was the U.S. in the southern Philippines? They answered with zeal, invoking "destiny" and "civilization." Robert L. Bullard did not hesitate to endorse the American imperial project, but he also acknowledged the potential risks inherent in this national missionary work. He wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "To reach our civilization they [the Moros] must pass a great gulf. In its crossing they may, like the Indian, be lost." But Bullard believed the undertaking was worth the risk. "Because they are part of us, we must fetch them forward with us; we cannot leave them behind. Because savagery and civilization cannot exist side by side...Because, finally, as savages the Moros stand in the

way of our destiny, and we cannot permit that,” Bullard declared.⁷⁸⁹

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Many officers in charge of the army’s occupation of the southern Philippines worried, like Bullard, that the Moros would indeed end up “like the Indian.” They found many similarities, both good and bad, between the natives of North America and the “Indian wards in the southern Philippines.” Striving to make sense of their mission in the tropics, they recognized both the foreign and familiar aspects of their work among *these* wards. Their writings and publications highlight the connection between the army’s imperial work in the American West and in the Philippines that men like Wood, Bliss, Finley, and Bullard observed. Historians are only just beginning to rediscover and reassert the association that the army officers had long recognized between these military projects.

The army’s intellectual work took many forms. Ideas traveled far and wide, in letters to well-placed friends – even presidents – to wives, journalists, and senators. Officers continued to assert their opinions even after their military careers were over. In doing so, they helped create enduring narratives about the United States’ place in the world and its and civilizational mission in the southern Philippines.

⁷⁸⁹ Bullard, “Road Building Among the Moros,” 893.

The Savage Wars of Peace

“Today our soldier, the war-maker, has become also a peace-maker and a peace-preserver,” wrote Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Bullard in 1910. Gesturing toward the army’s recent activities, he spoke of “the work upon which the Army has been mainly occupied in the last half a century – reconstruction in the South, the settlement of the Indian question in the West, our intervention in Cuba, the pacification of the Philippines, Cuba again and the Moros to date....One-half at least of all our soldiers’ business since 1865 has been pacification; its flood since ’98 has been continuous.”⁷⁹⁰

In a few short years, that trend towards peace-making would be shattered. Bullard himself would see his share of bloodshed as commander of the First Infantry Division from 1917 to 1918. Yet the United States’ preoccupation with “pacification” did not end. Bullard defined pacification as “all means, short of actual war, used by the dominating power in the operation of bringing back to a state of peace and order the inhabitants of a district lately in hostilities. It is not conquest, though it may be the last stage of conquest.” He believed it was, essentially, “military government.”⁷⁹¹ Based on his own experiences, Bullard anticipated that the army’s work would continue to center on pacification as the United States extended its influence over “hostile” peoples and new territories around the globe. Indeed, military thinkers and strategists have referred to Bullard’s writings to understand conflicts from Vietnam to Iraq.

⁷⁹⁰ Bullard, “Military Pacification,” 1.

⁷⁹¹ Bullard, “Military Pacification,” 4.

The concept of pacification helped Bullard and his contemporaries capture the broad scope of the military's activities. Yet the term itself was problematic. While Bullard hailed the modern soldier as "a peace-maker and a peace-preserver," much of what he described was far from peaceful: Reconstruction, the subjugation of Native Americans, and the Spanish-American War and Moro conflicts were bloody, protracted affairs. Years later, George Orwell used the same word to show how language was mutilated and manipulated for political ends. "Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*," Orwell wrote in 1946.⁷⁹² Even poets struggled to characterize this work of making peace through violence. Rudyard Kipling talked about the "savage wars of peace."⁷⁹³ The British later spoke of "small wars" and Americans of "counterinsurgency."⁷⁹⁴

Whatever the name, soldiers faced ongoing, violent opposition to the growing power of the United States. None of this was particularly new when Kipling wrote his famous ode to imperialism in 1899, inspired by the U.S. conquest of the Philippines. American soldiers had been doing the work of pacification long before they marched through the jungles of Luzon or stalked Moro *juramentos* around Lake Lanao. As Bullard

⁷⁹² George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," *Horizon*, April 1946.

<http://journalism.nyu.edu/publishing/archives/portfolio/books/book51.html>. A major part of the U.S.'s strategy in South Vietnam was referred to as "pacification." The "semi-official" history of pacification in Vietnam, and a good place to start, is Richard A Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1998).

⁷⁹³ Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *McClure's Magazine* 12 (1899): 290-1. The phrase is from the third stanza: "Take up the White Man's burden-- / The savage wars of peace-- / Fill full the mouth of Famine / And bid the sickness cease." Available online at <http://www.pitt.edu/~syd/wmb.html>.

⁷⁹⁴ For a historical treatment of U.S. counterinsurgency operations, see Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2009).

observed, the army's duties in Reconstruction resembled their work in the Philippines, as 425 soldiers instituted new types of labor arrangements, oversaw elections, rebuilt infrastructure, and pursued guerrillas in the South. Years earlier they had also worked to establish U.S. sovereignty and put down insurrection in pre-statehood California. They faced guerrilla resistance from Native adversaries in the trans-Mississippi West. All this work supported the overall goal of conquest, but these were not the traditional battles that officers studied at West Point and later glorified in their memoirs. Over a century after the sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine*, American troops continued to do many of these same tasks in Iraq and Afghanistan. By then, the work had acquired a new name: "nation-building."⁷⁹⁵

When Kipling wrote of "the savage wars of peace," he was troubling the distinction between war and peace. This study also troubles that distinction. Much of the labor described here took place off the battlefield; it was "non-combat" labor. Yet it all contributed to the larger goal of advancing U.S. power, of extending the nation's sovereignty through force over new peoples, land, and resources. Empire-builders like Colonel Bullard believed that violence and bloodshed were justified by the higher calling of civilization. Yet the price of peace was indeed savagery: the United States' imperial

⁷⁹⁵ The U.S. Army War College is an important center for research and thinking on the American military. Its publications, symposiums, and research center provide information for and about the military on topics such as nation-building, counterinsurgency strategy, civil-military governance, and "winning hearts and minds." Frequently updated bibliographies give a sense of the scope of the research on these topics. See Jeanette M. Moyer, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Selected Bibliography" (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College Library, 2007), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/library/bibs/postcon07.pdf>; Lenore K. Garder, "Irregular Warfare: A Selected Bibliography," (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College Library, November 2009), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/library/bibs/iwnov09.pdf>; Greta H. Andrusyszyn, "Civil-Military Relations: A Selected Bibliography" (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College Library, May 2011), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/library/bibs/civilmilitary11.pdf>. These bibliographies contain hundreds of books, articles, working papers, and strategy recommendations.

wars resulted in staggering violence against indigenous peoples, the environment, and American soldiers themselves. The architects of those policies worried about the toll the work was taking on them. After all, planning and administering an empire was difficult work, too. In 1906, Colonel Hugh Lenox Scott wrote his friend, General Tasker H. Bliss, governor of the Moro Province. Before becoming the military governor of Sulu, Scott had enjoyed a storied career on the North American continent: he cleaned up after Custer's Last Stand, suppressed the Lakota Ghost Dance, and compiled Indian sign languages for the Smithsonian. He would later serve as the superintendent of West Point. But when he wrote Bliss, he addressed him tenderly. "My dear Bliss," he wrote, "I hope the white man's burden will not prove very heavy for you...I have the interest of the Sultan and all the Moros very much at heart and hope that they will continue to advance on the road on which they have started and that your personal success will be duly recognized."⁷⁹⁶

Building an American empire required a prodigious amount of labor from its military establishment. Soldiers worked – and they worked at a variety of jobs. In order to subdue their opponents, soldiers built roads, escorted mail trains and construction crews, monitored elections, mediated disputes, patrolled the countryside and city streets, and commanded work details. These war workers – the people who picked at rocks and carted them away in order to build the road an officer deemed strategically important – have largely been invisible, overshadowed by the more dramatic confrontations typically celebrated in military history. But overlooking the army's "enlisted laborers" also means

⁷⁹⁶ H. L. Scott to Tasker Bliss, October 30, 1906, Bliss Papers, USAHEC.

forgetting the struggles at the heart of the U.S. imperial project. The army's labor regime⁴²⁷ was riven with conflict: soldiers protested, dragged their feet, and deserted. Decades later, the army found itself even less able to control the labor of the nonwhite workers they were supposed to manage in the southern Philippines. Commanders like Bullard despaired of their ability to ever remake Moro society in their own image. Other officers, including Bliss and General Leonard Wood, hoped to transform Moro and tribal people into successful plantation workers. These colonial subjects – or perhaps the officers themselves – disappointed the army's expectations.

The U.S. army's labor regime, the resistance it engendered, and its contributions to the creation of an American empire resonate loudly today. The soldiers who told Senator Ambrose Burnside in 1879 that the army "is not a '*standing army*' but a *traveling, working, fighting, and suffering army*," would surely recognize the contemporary U.S. military.⁷⁹⁷ "Enlisted laborers" are currently stationed around the world, working as electricians, janitors, linguists, and computer scientists.⁷⁹⁸ Furthermore, there is growing public recognition that the distinction between combat and non-combat labor is meaningless. In December 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter

⁷⁹⁷ Senate Report No. 555, 45th Cong., 3d sess., Vol. 1, 1879, Serial 1837. Burnside report on reorganization of the army, 488. Italics in original.

⁷⁹⁸ Newspapers often run stories about military personnel, particularly local soldiers, deployed to do non-combat jobs in Iraq and Afghanistan. See Matthew D. LaPlante, "Utah soldiers in Iraq wear variety of hats - and helmets," May 11, 2006, *Salt Lake Tribune*. For a recent piece highlighting the risks of "noncombat" roles, see Dan Lamothe, "In Afghanistan, a Series of Attacks on Americans during 'non-Combat' Operations," *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/11/18/in-afghanistan-a-series-of-attacks-on-americans-during-non-combat-operations>. Accessed November 21, 2015. The enormous cost of infrastructure-building in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as allegations of fraud and waste, have received substantial attention. For an overview of recent stories that highlights the role of private contractors in military infrastructure projects, see Tom Engelhardt, "How Much Does It Cost to Liberate a Country?," *The Nation*, November 12, 2015, <http://www.thenation.com/article/how-much-does-it-cost-to-liberate-a-country>. Accessed November 17, 2015.

announced that all military roles would be open to women. Hailed as a “historic decision” and a “milestone,” the change reflected an admission that contemporary wars were wide-ranging and diffuse. Women, already working in a variety of military roles, were exposed to combat situations even if they were not deployed in infantry units. The *New York Times* explained that despite the ban on women in combat, “women have often found themselves in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 14 years.”⁷⁹⁹ Dexter Filkins wrote in the *New Yorker*, “Notions of equality aside, the real factor that rendered the ‘non-combat’ distinction meaningless was the changing nature of the wars.” Characterizing World War II as “an old-style conflict,” Filkins argued that contemporary conflicts exposed all military personnel to potential combat situations: “But in Iraq and Afghanistan,” he wrote, “there are no front lines. Or, as the troops on the ground say, the front line is where you are.”⁸⁰⁰

This civil rights victory for women reflects an important truth about military labor. All military work results in violence for someone. While American soldiers in the nineteenth century occasionally lamented the fact that they were building roads rather than killing Natives, their labor nonetheless advanced state power and resulted in the destruction of their enemies. In today’s imperial wars, all soldiers are in combat.

⁷⁹⁹ Matthew Rosenberg and Dave Philipps, “All Combat Roles Now Open to Women, Defense Secretary Says,” *The New York Times*, December 3, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/04/us/politics/combat-military-women-ash-carter.html>. See also Dan Lamothe, “In Historic Decision, Pentagon Chief Opens All Jobs in Combat Units to Women,” *The Washington Post*, December 3, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/12/03/pentagon-chief-to-announce-how-womens-roles-in-the-military-will-expand/>; “Gender equality in the military” (Editorial), *Baltimore Sun*, December 6, 2015, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-women-military-20151206-story.html>. All accessed March 3, 2016.

⁸⁰⁰ Dexter Filkins, “Women with Guns,” *The New Yorker*, January 24, 2013. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/women-with-guns>. Accessed March 3, 2016.

Pacification, occupation, military government, and nation-building involve soldiers in all 429 kinds of labor, but the lines between combat and non-combat work are more blurred than ever. Most of all, the Defense Department's recent decision underlines another continuity with the nineteenth-century military: although the nature of warfare has changed in significant ways, armies still make heavy demands of their workers. With the inclusion of women in combat units, the U.S. military can cast a wider net for those workers. The savage wars of peace still rage.

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