

Constituting governance: the US Army in the Philippines, 1898-1920s



Americans posing with Locals in Manila, 1908.
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This essay looks at the transformation of Manila and its periphery over two decades, beginning with the American occupation in 1898. The US Army's success in pacifying the provinces is frequently associated with its 'reconcentration' of the rural population, which cut off the insurgency's economic and material support. What is not recognised is that this was a spatial intervention and that it is equally important to examine how the state was constituted in order to understand how its technical or infrastructure programme worked. When the United States staged a theatre of war in the Philippines, the city was the initial site of operations. The official end of the Philippine-American War in 1903 transformed indigenous resistance into a guerrilla war with important implications for state superstructure and infrastructure. This study argues that the US military, represented by the Philippines Division, contributed to the early establishment of highly centralised state-initiated urban and regional reforms, including the initial conceptualisation of regional autonomy and the later integration of Mindanao.

Sources of authority

It is important to establish the depth of the Philippines Division's involvement in post war rebuilding efforts. The First Philippine Commission, appointed by US President William McKinley on January 20, 1899, came on an investigative mission. The Second Philippine Commission (September 1900-August 1902) had legislative and executive powers to begin organising a system for governing the archipelago. It was only in July 1902 that an insular government was established, headed by William Howard Taft as first Governor-General. That year, in General Order no. 152 (July 7), US President Roosevelt relieved the Commanding General of the Philippines Division as Military Governor and placed him in a subordinate position to the Governor-General. These instructions contained an assumption of peace, referring to the end of the Philippine insurrection and a new task of creating local governments, except in those areas held by 'Moro tribes'.

According to Resil Mojares, the Philippine Division allowed the Spanish influenced municipal and provincial structure of local government to continue functioning. Between August 1899 and March 1900 the Philippine Division issued the earliest regulations for municipal organisation.³ It was only in September 1900 that the first civil legislation was passed, which provided two million Mexican dollars for road and bridge building and a repair programme for the entire archipelago – another task that fell to military responsibility.

Two civil laws were enacted in 1901 reorganising municipal and provincial governments in pacified areas – Act no. 82 (January 31) and Act no. 83 (February 6) – but they could not be enforced everywhere. Act no. 100 (March 9) enabled the Military Governor to appoint an administrative body in places plagued by insurgent activities. Furthermore, military control of a province was restored if insurgent activity resumed, as was the case in the provinces of Cebu, Batangas and Bohol. The US military also continued to participate in civil affairs after the official end of the Philippine-American War in 1903, something that has not been well acknowledged. An examination of the legislation passed between 1901 and 1913 shows precisely what civil duties the military performed, including being detailed to various civil positions as bureau chiefs to clerks, and holding positions from chief engineers to draftsmen and from provincial governors to provincial police officers.⁴

From January 1901, General Order no. 141 series 1900 made possible the release of a majority of the clerks in the Adjutant General's Office so that they may accept civil positions; all except two were enlisted men. A few months later, the Military Governor was authorised by Act no. 100 (March 9) to organise the administrative body where the Provincial Government Act could not be enforced. Act no. 107 (March 28) gave the Military Governor the option of assigning military officers 'quasi-civil functions' in these provincial posts. In 1903, Act no. 787 (June 1) authorised the organisation of a government in the Moro Province, contained provisions enabling US Army officers to be appointed as Provincial Governor, Secretary, and Engineer. Shortly thereafter US Army officers were allowed to act as attorneys representing United States' interests in Philippine courts, by Act no. 856 (August 27). According to Frank H. Golay, by this time 20 US Volunteers had been accused of offences such as embezzlement of public funds.⁵ Despite this, the appointment of military officers to insular government positions continued, filling an important gap in the colonial service.

In 1905, Act no. 1391 (September 8) allowed US Army officers to be detailed to civil districts as Governor and Secretary; and by Act no. 1416 (December 1) to the constabulary force (civil police) in positions ranging from director, military district chiefs to all ranks of officer (field, line, executive, supply and quartermaster, medical and ordinance). The following year, legislation enabled US Army officers to execute non-combatant roles: as justices of peace enforcing liquor traffic prohibitions. Act no. 1502 (June 26), made them 'peace officers', with powers to arrest and deliver to authorities those perceived as violators of sanitary

History provides a window for understanding the postcolonial condition, and the region known as Asia cannot be separated from its colonial past. What distinguishes the Philippines from other Asian nations is that it was colonised twice: by Spain from the 16th century, then in the early 20th century by the United States, creating a second overlay of change in urban space. Estela Duque's investigation into the history of Manila as early 20th century primate city and the impact of the military on civic space shows how the study of cities inevitably involves its peripheries, because human movement was indispensable for colonialism.

Estela Duque

There are many places from Cotabato and Davao south to and including Sarangain (sic) where illicit trade, including the capture or purchase of women and children, is easily carried on. These places cannot be occupied by troops, but may easily be controlled if a sufficient number of sea-going steam tugs are supplied to the principal posts. The highways of these islands are by water, and by water only, and it will be impossible to escape the expense of providing abundant water transportation if effective rule is to be maintained. Brigadier General W. A. Kobbé, Zamboanga, May 10, 1901.¹

THE ABOVE REPORT BY KOBEE, commanding officer of the Department of Mindanao and Jolo, reflects the discomfort the American military felt regarding perceived differences with the Muslim inhabitants of this region of the colonial Philippines. Here, talk of illicit trade or slavery, which was soon to become part of the North American abolition discourse,² is entwined with Kobbé's perception of space: highways, through which persons are spirited away, are literally and metaphorically fluid and unstable. When the department was reorganised two years later, the geographic reference to Mindanao and the island of Jolo in the Sulu archipelago were dropped and it was renamed Moro Province, highlighting the hardening of racialised conceptions within official discourse.

and municipal health ordinances by Act no. 1505 (June 29). These 'peace officers' were later given more encompassing powers by Act no. 1797 (October 12, 1907), and duties now included guarding civil prisoners assigned to labour gangs working on the civil government's infrastructure projects; ensuring the observance of sanitary and municipal health regulations; and making arrests in relation to the disruption of public peace. Furthermore, in order to facilitate their detail to the Constabulary (civil police), Act no. 1698 (August 26, 1907) exempted army officers from civil service examination requirements.

The US military's roles in pacified and non-pacified areas changed after the end of the Philippine-American War in 1903. The US military played a greater administrative role in non-pacified areas, especially Visayas, Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. Five military officers served as governors of Moro Province, reporting directly to the US military commander of the Philippines and not to the Governor-General. In 1913, with the prospect of the appointment of the first civilian provincial governor of Moro Province, army officers were nevertheless asked to fill other administrative posts. Act no. 2299 (November 25) made the appointment of army officers to provincial and district office positions possible; Act no. 2408 (July 23, 1914) widened the scope of appointments to the province's administrative council. In just over 15 years, US Volunteers and US Army officers had been detailed in a variety of positions such as draftsmen, site supervisors, chief engineers and even chief of the Forestry Bureau.⁶

Tracing the pacification trail

Given these roles of the US military, it is useful to compare what was occurring in the United States at the same time. Historians have pointed out that city planning in the US was initially driven by aesthetic concerns, only later shifting to more technical goals emphasising economy and efficiency achieved through more systematic 'land use' and transportation systems.⁷ These new concerns came to be known as the City Scientific approach to city planning and came to dominate only in the 1920s. Richard E. Foglesong, who prefers the term 'City Practical', argues that the key to understanding planning in the United States is the role of the state and the social classes that backed this movement.⁸

In contrast, centralised management of post war Manila in the early 20th century Philippines began with the Philippines Division's attempts. It is here that the Foucauldian notion of governmentality is useful: the emphasis is not on an institution's political influence but its ability to dictate the 'conduct' of its urban and rural subjects. In this sense, it is the interaction of military and insular authorities that provides a key for theorising the role of the colonial state in the non-western setting. This also locates the tensions in the state's disciplinary regimes. Initial 'stabilising operations' defined as 'routine humanitarian, governmental, economic, social, judicial, penal and security tasks' were undertaken by various offices of the Philippines Division; in the provinces they were carried out by the Department of Northern Luzon, Department of Southern Luzon, Department of Visayas, and Department of Mindanao and Jolo.⁹ The US military's contribution to civil affairs began with the work undertaken by the Manila-based offices of the Quartermaster General, Quartermaster Depot, Army Transport Service and Commissary. Then, after 1903, the US military's efforts shifted to the southern Philippines where it contributed not only to infrastructure building but, more importantly, the military position informed an evolving regional policy towards Mindanao and Sulu.

Manila's emergence as the Philippines' primate city, which began under Spanish administration, continued throughout the 20th century but the US military's contributions to this process has not yet been examined. This is because the appearance of a distinct spatial typology – the US military defence complex – in later decades conceals the link between the military and urban change. However it is possible to trace how the military reinforced the primacy of Manila in two ways: first, by detailing how the Office of the Quartermaster General was responsible in the first few years for both military and civil construction and real estate contracts; and second, how various sections of this office established Manila as the storage and distribution centre for the entire Division of the Philippines.

First, the Chief Quartermaster handled military and civil government leases on buildings and land including barracks, warehouses, corrals, schools, observatories, markets, quarantine stations and hospital buildings.¹⁰ Carpenters and other workers were directly employed to build 31 warehouses of 223 square metres; two new medical supply depots; officers quarters at Santa Mesa (outside Manila); Santa Mesa Hospital water closets; new barracks and repairs to old buildings at Corregidor Island; a new military prison at Olongapo, Zambales province; and a water supply system at Mariveles quarantine station, Bataan province.¹¹ This office supervised work by private contractors equivalent to 120,000 Mexican dollars at Engineer Cuartel, Intendencia, Estado Mayor, Ayuntamiento, Santa Mesa Hospital, Exposition

Grounds barracks, the Quartermaster Depot corral and the Governor-General's residence. It also handled the contracts for cleaning dry earth closets and cesspools at barracks, prisons, civil police stations, hospitals and civil government buildings.

Second, by May 1901, the Office of Land Transportation already had space for 182 mules and 64 horses for both military and civil government use in Manila. The Quartermaster Depot enclosure sheltered teams drawing the ambulances, metal sanitary carts, water carts and 'dead wagons' for medical purposes; dump carts for coal and wood distribution; excavators and sprinklers; farm, escort (heavy farm work), light spring, Dougherty (passenger), California stake wagons, as well as lumber, hay and other utility trucks. It handled all forage, coal, wood, and oil requirements of the civil and military transport system.¹² The Army Transport Service office was responsible for all chartered and government vessels in service throughout the archipelago: nine steamers, eight steam lighters, 55 launches and tugs, 24 lorchas and lighters, 131 cascos, and 72 row-boats.¹³ These pioneering efforts in Manila are indicative of the kind of logistics and centralised planning efforts to provide troops with sufficient food, water, shelter, clothing, medical supplies, equipage, weapons, forage and fuel that the US War Department would later undertake, with greater regional military involvement, in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. For example the Chief of the Commissary office responsible for feeding the troops, attempted to procure 15 tons of fresh meat, constituting 70 percent of the daily requirements of 34,000 troops. Frozen beef was shipped in from Australia and the transport chain included iceboxes in coastal steamers and refrigerator cars pulled inland by pack mules for 20 miles or carabaos for 60 miles until it reached an army post. Fresh vegetables came from the United States, Japan, China, India and Australia.¹⁴

The problems of theft and pilfering encountered by of the Quartermaster Depot in 1900 were symptomatic of the enormous task of connecting all posts to the capital. The duties of the Quartermaster Depot included 'receiving, issuing and manufacturing supplies for the entire Archipelago' and one of the complaints was of US Army property being stolen, unintentionally damaged, or mislaid. Among the reasons given by the Assistant Quartermaster for this were the lack of storage space at the Manila depot, and the difficulty of making an accurate inventory because of non-uniform packaging and box weight, and a lack of an accounting system for US Army property in transit. This problem was great because 'nearly all islands in the Archipelago had been occupied by troops and posts established at places never heard of, a great number of which had to be reached by sea'. It was impossible to pinpoint precisely at what point and whose responsibility it was when the thefts and pilfering occurred.¹⁵

Conclusions

Paul Rabinow describes urbanism as the union of 'historical' and 'natural' elements of the city in the management of society and how reforms were undertaken both in terms of the superstructure and the infrastructure. The former represented the state's 'technical programme'; the latter, the state's 'social response' implemented by agencies responsible for education, culture, religion, commerce, sanitation, etc.¹⁶

American military administrators in Mindanao and Sulu archipelago used religious, historical, cultural, and social differences to argue for a policy of administrative autonomy from the Luzon-based insular government. The Filipino heirs of the insular government later used the argument to make the case for a policy of integration, this time aligning sympathies with Christian Filipinos as 'kin'. Roads, telephones and the telegraph were central to the region's pacification: road networks in Davao, Lanao; and a telegraph line connecting the military headquarters in Zamboanga to most of Cotabato.¹⁷ This is significant because in Mindanao and Sulu, Rabinow's notion of urbanism finds a more diffuse regional application.

This interpretation contrasts with the history of city planning in the United States that began in the 1900s as privately initiated urban reforms by civic and professional groups and the 'city scientific' approach that became dominant only in later decades. This study contends that the civic spaces established by the insular government were concurrently underpinned and undermined by war, in contrast to urban change in United States, which was tied primarily to market forces (*laissez-faire*). This means that civil government and the infrastructure associated with it were established only by eliminating the insurgent threat. However, because the anti-colonial movement continued to change (conventional war, guerrilla war, Pulahan, Hukbalahap rebellion, etc) in response to the current political and social climate, civil space to this day continually faces the threat of being overrun by the war's new incarnation.

This analysis of the US military role in Philippine affairs uses the notion of Foucauldian governmentality. The US military's participation in civil affairs constituted a distinction between

colonial and imperial cities that was played out in two ways. First, it provided the management, professional skills and security requirements for the insular government's road- and bridge-building programme. In addition, it strengthened Manila's link to Mindanao and the rest of archipelago by land and water and organised a storage and distribution network to meet its pacification campaign. Second, the authors of military strategy in the Philippines were part of an evolving technocracy, where the influence of government specialists would find fuller expression in appointments by subsequent colonial and nationalist administrators. The rate at which both military operations and appointments proceeded ran contrary to the US War Department's claims of peace. This is emphasised because the military would reprise this central role again seven decades later, in nation building efforts during Martial Law under the Marcos administration.¹⁸ Such military practices continue in some form in post-colonial cities and in the Philippines today it comes in the guise of the Joint Special Operations Task Force at Edwin Andrews Air Base and Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City, Mindanao.

The productive and the destructive aspects of war are dichotomies that should be carefully unpacked in order to understand the effect of conflict on colonial and postcolonial spaces, both urban and its non-urban correlates. War's productivity is tied to the creation of new subjects, spaces, and connections. The Philippine-American War's colonial subjects included governor-generals and military commanders, soldiers and thieves, prisoners and *camineros* (road builders). They built and toiled at the nondescript spaces that fell in the shadow of the insular government's proposed civic space: quarries and construction sites, ports and harbour developments, barracks and warehouses, roads and bridges, launches and ferries.

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Notes

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- Appendix D, Exhibit C. Office Land Transportation, *ibid*: 29-33, 34-7, 42.
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