Introduction

When we think about World War I, most of us picture the horrors of trench warfare in Western Europe. In our mind's eye, we might imagine the destroyed landscape of no-man's-land, rats and fetid water filling the trenches, and pointless, appalling casualties. When we think about empire and colonialism, most of us think of particular colonies – such as India, Algeria, or the Philippines – and their respective relationships to Britain, France, or the United States. For the most part, we operate under the assumption that colonies and their national metropoles functioned as more or less discreet units, and that the colonial/metropolitan relationship was more important than any other. Finally, when we think about world history, we tend to conceive of narratives that explore complex processes and large-scale connections over huge areas or long chronologies. For many of us, world history sacrifices minute, individual stories in order to tell big, abstract stories.

Yet in this book, the stories I tell about World War I occurred thousands of miles from the Western Front, in Southeast Asia. The stories I tell about empire and colonialism are about connections between colonies – and between colonies and independent states – rather than simply colonial connections with their various metropoles. And the stories I tell about world history begin with individuals in a small place and move outward, from the local to the regional and global. In the process, this book contributes to a growing historiography on World War I that seeks to understand it as a truly global conflict. More fundamentally, this book represents a contribution to a recent trend in which historians attempt to rethink the history of empire and colonialism as a global – rather than a national – phenomenon. Just as important, this book offers an approach to "doing" world history in a way that does not compromise archival research or individual stories.

World War I as Global War

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, historians of World War I have focused increasing interest on the global nature of the conflict.[1] Many of their works explore the contributions of the millions of non-European soldiers and laborers who directly contributed to the war effort in Europe, often in the context of imperial relationships. As a result, we now have a better understanding of the experiences of the many hundreds of thousands of colonial subjects who served on the Western Front during the war, although more work remains to be done.[2] Other histories have demonstrated that World War I was global not only in terms of the people it drew to its main theaters of battle but also in terms of battlefronts outside of Europe altogether – particularly in Africa and the Middle East.[3] Still others have focused on the heretofore neglected subject of the effects of the war on non-European belligerents, including the Ottomans and the Chinese.[4] A growing number of studies have

[1] For general histories with a self-consciously global focus, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); Michael S. Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War a Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War I: The Global Revolution* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); William Kelleher Storey, *The First World War: A Concise Global History*, 2nd edn., Exploring World History (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

[2] See, for example, Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard Standish Fogarty, *Empires in World War I: Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; Distributed in the U.S. and Canada exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, *Empires at War, 1911–1923* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). An early example concerning British India is DeWitt Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan, *India and World War I* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1978). For France, see Jacques Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre: Combats et Éprouves des Peuples d'Outre-Mer* (Paris: 14–18 Editions, 2006); Richard Standish Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Kimloan Hill, Nhung Tuyet Tran, and Anthony Reid, eds., "Strangers in a Foreign Land: Vietnamese Soldiers and Workers in France during World War I," in *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 256–89. For British India, see Andrew Jarboe, "Soldiers of Empire: Indian Sepoys in and Beyond the Imperial Metropole During the First World War, 1914–1919" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northeastern University, 2013); David E. Omissi, ed., *Indian Voices of the Great War: Solders' Letters, 1914–18* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 1999); DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan, eds., *India and World War 1* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1978).

[3] Strachan, *The First World War in Africa;* Anne Samson, *World War I in Africa: The Forgotten Conflict Among European Powers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); David R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[4] Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*, Cambridge Military Histories (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Guoqi Xu, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New*

explored the war as an opportunity for colonial dissidents to exploit the vulnerability of colonial powers by forming alliances with the Ottomans and the Germans, while others have focused on the global consequences of the peace.[5] Taken together, this recent scholarship has demonstrated in multiple ways and from many perspectives that World War I truly was a global war. This was so not only because it drew people and resources from around the world to the main theaters of battle, but also because the war's effects were felt by people and in places many thousands of miles from Europe.[6]

This book supports these recent developments in the field and extends their spatial limits to Southeast Asia. Very little has been written about Southeast Asia and the Great War, even in the historiography seeking to understand the war as a global phenomenon.[7] This is not difficult to understand: the region did not become a major theater of war, and of all the colonies in the area, only French Indochina sent soldiers and laborers to Europe.[8] In fact, much of the region – including the Dutch East Indies, Siam (until 1917), and the Philippines (until 1917) – remained officially neutral for all or most of the war.

Yet despite the fact that Southeast Asia did not significantly shape the course or the outcome of the war, the war did in fact shape Southeast Asia in multiple and profound ways. First, as in India and North Africa, representatives of the Central Powers – sometimes working in concert

National Identity and Internationalization, Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

5 Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overtrhow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Hopkirk, *Like Hidden Fire: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (New York: Kodansha, 1997); Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster; London: LIT; Global [distributor], 2005). On the peace, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

6 Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela make a similar point in the introduction to *Empires at War: 1911–1923*, 3.

7 Exceptions include Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War 1914–1918*, Verhandelingen van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde 254 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007); Kimloan Vu-Hill, *Coolies into Rebels: Impact of World War I on French Indochina* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2011). There is no monograph on the Great War in British Malaya, but John Murfett does include a chapter on Singapore in *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004).

8 Kimloan Hill, Nhung Tuyet Tran, and Anthony Reid, eds., "Strangers in a Foreign Land: Vietnamese Soldiers and Workers in France during World War I," in *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 256–289.

with Indian or Vietnamese revolutionaries – worked actively throughout the region to undermine Allied authority wherever it was manifested, particularly in British Malaya and French Indochina. In this respect, the neutral countries surrounding both colonies were crucial, as Germans and, to a much lesser extent, Ottomans used Siam, the Dutch East Indies, or China as bases from which to coordinate anti-British and anti-French operations. In Indochina, this meant that French authorities – whose defenses were already stretched thin because of the war – were forced to divert already limited police and military units to the Chinese frontier to quell frequent rebellions financed with German money. In Burma, a combination of German promises, the Ottoman call to jihad, and the work of Indian revolutionaries led to an aborted mutiny by the Indian garrison stationed in the colony. Far more seriously, the same combination led to a full-fledged mutiny of half the regiment of the Indian 5th Light Infantry in Singapore in February 1915 – a situation that required the help of the French, Japanese, and Russian navies to quell.

Various locations in Southeast Asia were also convenient way-stations for combined Indian and German schemes to transport arms and propaganda from the United States to India prior to 1917. Indeed, the ill-fated *Henry S* and the *Maverick* – supposedly meant to carry weapons bound for India – were halted in transit in Southeast Asia from San Francisco, while Singapore authorities made critical arrests among their crews. At the same time, German consuls worked in concert with Vietnamese and Indian revolutionaries in Siam, the Dutch East Indies, and China in order to encourage revolution in Allied colonies. For a short time in 1914, Allied ships plying Southeast Asian waters were even the site of German naval attacks, at least until the German cruiser *Emden* was sunk on November 9 of that year.

The intrigue fomented by the enemies of the Allies led not only to increased cross-border coordination between anticolonial activists, but also to the introduction of colonial intelligence agencies designed to monitor and control such activity in British Malaya, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. Although these agencies were new and inexperienced during the war, in the 1920s and 1930s they grew increasingly efficient. Eventually, they became crucial in the fight to obliterate the communist threat from the region. World War I also provided the opportunity for Japan to play a more powerful role in Southeast Asia than ever before. As an Allied power, the Japanese navy took on the lion's share of the burden of patrolling the seas in East and Southeast Asia, while the British and the French diverted most of their naval resources

to the theaters of war.[9] In the process, the Japanese not only took the opportunity to expand in China but also to become more visible in the economic affairs in Southeast Asia – particularly in the ownership of land and businesses. This increased activity struck fear into the hearts of Dutch administrators in the Indies in particular, as they feared the Japanese ultimately aimed to conquer the whole colony.[10]

Less dramatically but equally important, the Great War disrupted trade, travel, and communication across the region. Allied powers attempted to control shipping in order to prevent war materiel and food aid from reaching their enemies. Moreover, mail and telegraphic communications were subject to interception, monitoring, and confiscation. Finally, travel to Europe and to neutral countries in the vicinity was monitored in order to prevent German nationals from being transported to locations from which they could cause trouble for the Allies. These regulations were particularly harmful to the Dutch East Indies, which hosted a large population of German nationals and also carried on significant trade with Germany prior to the war. The resulting decline in revenues caused economic hardship in the archipelago, which in turn increased discontent among colonial populations.[11]

One of the contributions of this book, then, is that it demonstrates the global reach of World War I even beyond those who have sought to call attention to its effects outside Europe. In Southeast Asia, whose various states and colonies did not play much of a role in determining the outcome of the war, the Great War shaped the course of political, economic, and social developments not only for its duration, but for its aftermath as well. Indeed, it seems Hew Strachan's claim that "war for Europe meant war for the world" was true for even more of the world than we thought.[12]

Empire as a Global Phenomenon

Although this book is about World War I in Southeast Asia, it has two deeper methodological purposes. The first is to demonstrate the kinds of colonial histories that emerge when we complicate the metropole/colony relationships that have so dominated the historiography of empire. The

[9] Malcolm Murfett, *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from the First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2004), 156, 158.
[10] For a series of essays on this theme, see Elspeth Locher-Scholten, *Beelden van Japan in Het Vooroorlogse Nederlands Indië* (Leiden: Werkgroep Europese Expansie, 1987).
[11] This is a major theme in van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War 1914–1918*.
[12] Strachan, *The First World War*, 69.

focus on such relationships is an outgrowth of national history, in which the study of empire has overwhelmingly been conceived in national terms. Until very recently, one did not study "empire," but rather the British Empire, the French Empire, or the Spanish Empire, among others.[13] My own postgraduate training is a good example of this. My primary field was the British Empire, and my secondary fields were modern Britain and colonial India. Although I received excellent training in those fields, I was not encouraged to study the French, American, or Japanese Empires in tandem with the British, nor did I think to do so myself. This neglect was not out of hostility to the histories of other empires. Instead, we all seemed to operate under the assumption that colonies and their national metropoles functioned as more or less discreet units, and that colonial/metropolitan relationships were more important than any others.[14]

The problem with such an approach to the history of empire is that our enthusiasm for understanding the relationships between metropoles and colonies can obscure the many other structures, flows, and processes that were neither wholly defined by such bilateral relationships nor limited by national-colonial borders. In this book, I use the region of Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century to argue for a conceptualization of modern empires in a world that is messier, and more multilateral, than the colony/metropole model allows. On the one hand, I argue that both the colonies and the metropoles of all the modern empires were more connected to one another than is often imagined, particularly via

[13] Although I do not have hard figures, this pattern has clearly been changing in the twenty-first century. A variety of graduate programs now offer graduate fields in imperial or postcolonial history, broadly construed. Such configurations, no doubt, will continue to affect the histories of colonialism that scholars new to the field will tell.

[14] In fact, in the mid-1990s, it was cutting-edge to suggest that national histories and colonial histories were entwined and mutually constitutive. Prior to the mid-1980s, most national histories of the colonial metropoles were told as though the colonies did not exist. Historians of the British Empire led the way in reshaping mainstream perspectives about colonial/metropolitan relationships. The "New Imperial" history associated originally with John Mackenzie and his "Studies in Imperialism" series was devoted to demonstrating the impact of the colonies on the British metropole, beginning with his own *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). By the 1990s, both Antoinette Burton and Mrinalini Sinha, among others, argued not only that British colonial affairs had an impact on the metropole but also that metropolitan events and ideologies (beyond official colonial policy) also shaped colonial affairs, and in fact that the two could not be neatly divided. See Mrinalinia Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Their work helped to dramatically reshape the history of modern imperialism, and was critical for encouraging historians to think beyond the "box" of the nation-state.

consular and diplomatic networks as well as anticolonial networks. On the other hand, I argue that colonial peoples and administrators alike were connected to, influenced by, and participants in larger global movements and events that sometimes had origins outside the colonial world altogether. In so doing, my goal is to contribute to a growing historiography that explores modern empires as porous, interconnected, and frequently disrupted by transnational or global forces.[15]

Early twentieth-century colonial Southeast Asia is a particularly fruitful region for this approach to the history of empire. By the turn of the twentieth century a wide variety of imperial powers laid claim to portions of the region, including the British in Malaya and Burma, the French in Indochina, the Dutch in the Indonesian archipelago, the Americans in the Philippines, and the Portuguese in Timor. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, successive Chinese governments and Chinese political parties also had strong interests in Southeast Asia because of the large Chinese populations distributed around the region. By the first decade of the century both the German and the Japanese governments entertained designs of achieving commercial or political influence in the region. In Siam, which remained independent, all of the major colonial powers and other contenders for imperial power jostled for influence and jealously guarded their prerogatives. Representatives of the Ottoman Empire and Arab teachers and travelers had long-standing interests in the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya, and Southeast Asian Hajis formed ever stronger contacts with areas in and around the Hejaz. Meanwhile, Vietnamese revolutionaries sought refuge from persecution in Siam and

[15] Some of these works have used an oceans framework to do this, including Sugata Bose's, *A Hundred Horizons the Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006); Enseng Ho's *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Thomas R. Metcalf's, *Imperial Connections India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Historians of colonial India have also made important contributions to this historiography, including Harald Fischer-Tiné, "Indian Nationalism and the 'world Forces': Transnational and Diasporic Dimensions of the Indian Freedom Movement on the Eve of the First World War," *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 03 (2007); Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, "Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)," *Comparative Studies in Society in History* 54, no. 1 (January 2012); and Michele Louro, "Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communism Begins: The League Against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* (December 2013). Historians of Southeast Asia have also made critical contributions, including Eric Tagliacozzo, whose work includes *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), and Anne Foster, whose work includes *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

China, while Indian soldiers, merchants, and indentured laborers established communities in Burma, Malaya, Siam, China, and the East Indies.

As even this most cursory description indicates, Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century was a region composed not only of European and American colonies but was also criss-crossed by influences and movements connected to China, Japan, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire, to name only a few. Even decades before the First World War, colonized subjects and colonial administrators in the region had far more to think about than bilateral relations between colony and metropole. In fact, transnational and international flows and movements were defining features of colonial Southeast Asia in this period.[16] These flows and movements connected colonized subjects both with noncolonized travelers and with other colonized subjects in the region and beyond, and in many cases had the effect of strengthening international and national anticolonialisms. But they also began to connect colonial administrators, diplomats, and police with their counterparts in other locations, thus creating what would become an increasingly united front for combatting international anticolonialism.[17]

While the material for this book is largely drawn from the colonial archives of British Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and French Indochina, the action takes place in many locations in and outside Southeast Asia. This includes not only the colonies associated with these archives but also Siam, India, China, and Japan. Actors in the story hail from an even wider set of geographical locations, including Germany, Britain, France, the Netherlands, the Ottoman Empire, and the United States. As I hope to make clear, it is simply impossible to tell the story of Southeast Asia during the First World War without attention to the many connections linking Southeast Asian colonies and peoples to each other and to the rest of the world.

World History

The second methodological purpose of this book is to add to the small body of work demonstrating that it is possible to write world history without sacrificing small-scale stories. World history is commonly associated

[16] For some recent works about these flows, see Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang, *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Eric Tagliacozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Yen Ching-hwang, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia and Beyond: Socioeconomic and Political Dimensions* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2008); Gungwu Wang, "Greater China and the Chinese Overseas," *The China Quarterly*, no. 136 (1993), 926.

[17] Anne Foster, "Secret Police Cooperation and the Roots of Anti-Communism in Interwar Southeast Asia," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4, no. 4 (1995).

with works that focus, to borrow from Charles Tilly, on big structures, large processes, [and] huge comparisons.[18] Some of these works have had such an impact that they have reshaped the way historians across many fields understand the Columbian Exchange, the significance of global disease, the timing of western Europe's divergence from the rest of the world, or the global impact of human environmental damage in the twentieth century, to name only a few.[19] Because of the vast scale of their subjects, most world histories of this sort employ a panoramic view that allows readers to envision all (or most) of the moving parts at once. Like John McNeil's *Something New Under the Sun*, such world histories start big, at the level of the globe, and then move to more manageable sections, in this case to the hydrosphere, the lithosphere, and so on. But one of the drawbacks of such panoramic views is that the humans whose existence is implied in all of these works appear either as aggregates or abstractions. In other words, even while we know that people are presumed to be everywhere in these macro-level world histories, they often seem to be nowhere. Individual and local stories tend to disappear at the level of the bird's-eye view.

I believe macro-level world histories are important, but they do not represent the only way to write world history. In 1997, Donald Wright demonstrated that it is possible to write compelling world history by beginning at the micro-level and then tracing outward the threads that connect the local to the global.[20] My own fascination with world history comes from exploring the relationship between local events and individual agency on the one hand, and complex, global processes on the other. Like Wright, I believe it is worth remembering that the currents of world history have always involved individual people engaged in their own stories of survival, tragedy, or victory, even when their grasp of their connectedness to others was only partial. And for those of us who revel in a good story, exploring the interconnections of the global and the local allows us to explore world history via "the human dramas that make history come alive," as Tonio Andrade puts it.[21]

[18] This is the title of Tilly's 2006 book, published with Russell Sage Foundation Publications.

[19] I am thinking here of Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973); William Hardy McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); John Robert McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

[20] Donald Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa: A History of Globalization in Niumi, the Gambia*, 2nd edn. (M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

[21] Tonio Andrade, "A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (December 2010), 574.

In this book, I am interested in the ways global and trans-regional forces such as the alliance system, pan-Islam, revolutionary nationalism, and international diplomacy shaped the choices, actions, and fortunes of both anticolonial activists and colonial administrators in Southeast Asia. The drama of wartime – and the threat of subversion – encouraged colonial and foreign offices to keep copious records of activity in the region. In their efforts to track the many (real and perceived) threats to colonial rule both from within particular colonies and from without, they preserved an enormous amount of information about their participants. Because of this, the colonial archives in London, Aix-en-Provence, and the Hague are chock-full of reports generated by minor European officials and are peppered with testimony collected in the course of official inquiries, intercepted and translated correspondence, intercepted newspapers and propaganda in both European and non-European languages, photographs, and reports from paid informants. And although the circumstances under which such information was collected and preserved must be examined critically, taken together they allow us to get a glimpse of some of the individuals who chose to take part in anticolonial activities, the personal and political motivations behind such choices, and the networks within which they were imbricated.[22] In this sense, I read the sources created by the colonial governments "against the grain" in an effort to capture the lives and experiences of some of the people who sought to resist colonial rule in and around the region.[23]

These diverse sources shed light on the links that connected Southeast Asian colonies to one another, and also on the links that connected the region to forces and interests that literally spanned the globe. The individuals who feature most frequently in these pages came primarily from two anticolonial organizations: the Indian group that called itself Ghadar, and the Vietnamese group that called itself the Viet Nam Restoration Association. These groups were by their very nature international and intercolonial in outlook – a fact that was not lost on colonial

[22] Archives, of course, are not neutral repositories awaiting discovery, but instead have been imagined, ordered, and preserved as a result of a variety of political, social, and economic pressures. See Antoinette Burton, "Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 6.

[23] Although this project is different in many ways from Clare Anderson's *Subaltern Lives*, like her I agree that colonial archives can in fact tell us something about marginalized peoples. See her *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For an evaluation of recent approaches to writing imperial history, including those that seek to write against the grain, see Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?" *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 1, 2012), 772–93, doi:10.1086/ahr.117.3.772.

administrators. And while there were many other anticolonial activists in French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and British Malaya, during World War I it was Ghadar and the Viet Nam Restoration Association that haunted both the British and the French out of proportion to other threats. As such, it should be clear that I am not trying to write a definitive history about the many and complex anticolonial movements in all of the Southeast Asian colonies. Rather, I seek to expose the ways in which certain anticolonial groups used multiple places within Southeast Asia and beyond to achieve their goals of violent revolution. I also seek to show how Southeast Asian colonial administrators responded to these groups by activating their own intercolonial and international networks in order to obtain information and to thwart their plans.

To make matters more complex, the story is not just about intercolonial or international links between anticolonial activists or administrators in different colonies. In fact, competing states sought to extend their influence in the region by aiding anticolonial activists or subverting the power of the colonial states. During the period covered by this book, Ottoman and German diplomats and activists sought to undermine colonial rule in Southeast Asian colonies by providing aid or support to pan-Islamists, the Ghadar party, or Indochinese nationalists, depending on the time and place. This story, then, is dotted with conspiracies to subvert colonial rule with help from allies near and far. It is also punctuated by opposing networks of colonial police, diplomats, and statesmen who sought to keep such conspiracies from reaching a successful conclusion. In short, it is a book about people whose strategies transcended colonial and national borders and who acted as members of organizations larger than the colony or the nation-state.

Structure

The structure of this book mirrors my own extended intellectual journey around this subject. I was originally attracted to looking more deeply into the effects of World War I on Southeast Asia when I accidentally came across archives associated with the 1915 mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry in Singapore. As an historian of the British Empire with deep interests in the Indian army, I was intrigued by an event I had never before heard of. As I dug into the research, I was struck by increasing evidence that suggested the mutiny could not be understood outside of its connection to global events and movements. But that was only the beginning. The more I pulled on the global strands connected to the mutiny, the more I realized that Singapore was just a microcosm of the ways the war affected the whole region of Southeast Asia. Indeed, I found that the

issues of pan-Islam, Ghadar revolutionaries, and German collaboration were also important in the Dutch East Indies, Siam, and China, where Germans and Indian revolutionaries used neutral states to undermine British colonial possessions in the region. Further research revealed that this was not just a British problem, since Vietnamese revolutionaries also collaborated with Germans in Siam and China to undermine French rule in Indochina. What had started as a brief research side-trip into a local mutiny in Singapore, then, turned into a project that drew in most of Southeast Asia and parts of East and South Asia.

This book begins with a mutiny of the 5th Indian infantry regiment on the island of Singapore in February 1915, which is the subject of Chapters 1 and 2. Although the mutiny was a relatively minor affair in terms of world historical events, it perfectly encapsulated the ways in which larger forces associated with World War I came together to produce a violent, albeit short-lived, rebellion in a particular location in Southeast Asia. Two of its primary causes – anti-Allied propaganda and pro-German activists – played important roles in the region for the duration of the war. Chapter 1 focuses on the mutiny and its causes from the point of view of the rebels themselves and argues that pre-existing grievances in the 5th and the encouragement by pro-German, pan-Islamic print and people combined to produce the mutiny. Fortunately for us, the mutiny's rich documentary base allows us to glimpse the motivations of the sepoys as well as the influences acting on them – which can be traced as far afield as the Ottoman Empire, the United States, India, and Germany. When viewed in its wider global context, then, the mutiny allows us to see the influence of wartime global forces on individual actions, even when those individual actions did not affect the course of world history.

Just as the causes of the mutiny demonstrate the global webs that brought the war to Southeast Asia, so too did official and civil responses to it. Chapter 2 begins by setting the narrative framework for the coordinated response to the mutiny, which included actors from Britain, France, Russia, Japan, the Netherlands, China, India, and the Arab world. As a result of wartime alliances – which included military support from French, Japanese, and Russian troops – the mutiny ended in swift victory for the British and kept key civil populations quiet. The chapter then turns to look in more detail at the official and civil responses of three sets of actors: the British, French, Russian, and Japanese members of the Allies; the Dutch and Chinese neutrals; and the Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Arab Muslim civil populations. In so doing, it aims to show the many different ways various actors perceived the mutiny itself, and also the variety of ways they understood wartime obligations. During the war in general and the mutiny in particular, wartime alliances

determined how these actors interacted, which connections between them would grow stronger, and which would be closed off.

Chapters 3 through 6 zoom out from the very specific story of the mutiny in Singapore to consider a wider swathe of the region. In so doing, they demonstrate that the Singapore mutiny was not an anomaly but rather was just one of the more dramatic events in which the War made itself felt around the region. Moreover, these chapters argue that the war affected the neutral powers in the region as much as the belligerents, and especially that the neutral powers were crucial – wittingly or not – to furthering German, Indian, Ottoman, and Vietnamese conspiracies against the Allies. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the Dutch East Indies, whose neutrality provided a convenient haven for pan-Islamic, Indian, and hostile German operatives to harass British Malaya, Burma, and India with incendiary propaganda and agents. Such schemes – both real and exaggerated – exercised British colonial and diplomatic officials from Batavia, Singapore, India, Siam, Burma, Hong Kong, Manila, San Francisco, New York, the Hague, and London. Their main concern was less the safety of British Malaya or Burma (though that was in fact a factor) than the safety of India, since British authorities were rightly convinced that their enemies were using the Dutch East Indies as a staging point for German-funded, Ottoman-inspired Indian revolutionaries from the United States to send arms and people to India. Dutch authorities were also concerned about these activities, mostly because they feared they would be dragged into the war on one side or another, and also because they worried about the effects of pan-Islamic propaganda on the Muslim population in the East Indies. Chapter 3 explores the massive impact of the war on the East Indies and outlines the various schemes of Germans and Indians to use the islands as both a base and way-station for carrying out anti-Allied schemes. Chapter 4 deepens the exploration of these schemes by focusing on the detention of two ships in Dutch waters during the war – the *Maverick* and the *Henry S* – and what they and their crews revealed about the global nature of these schemes.

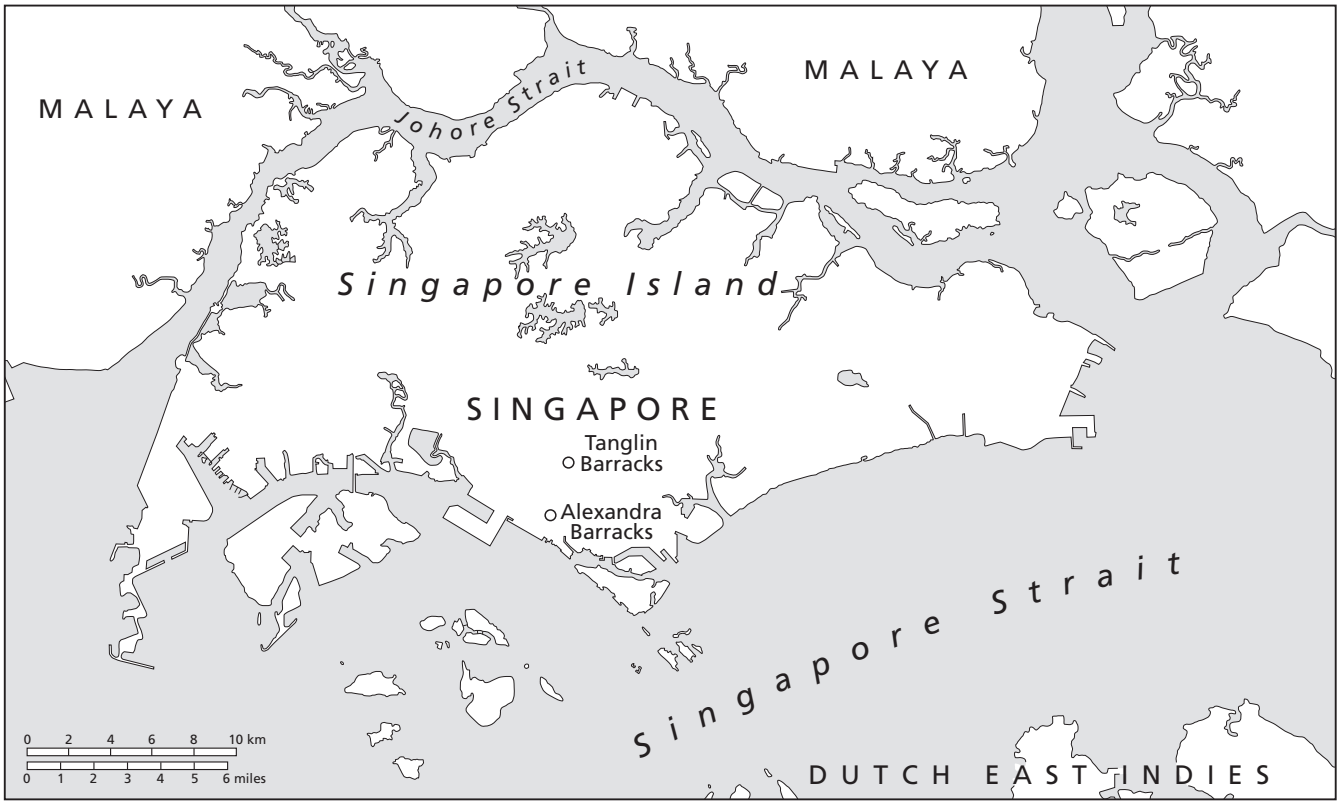
Chapter 5 explores the role of neutral Siam in facilitating German attempts to foment unrest in Indochina, Burma, and India. In Siam, which remained neutral until 1917, German consuls collaborated with Indian and Vietnamese revolutionaries to facilitate and encourage armed insurrections in Burma and India on the one hand, and in French Indochina on the other. Since Siam was strategically located between British and French colonial interests, it – like the Dutch East Indies – became a convenient way station, safe haven, and training ground for anti-Allied activity in the region. Yet unlike the Dutch East Indies government, the Siamese government was under no illusions about which

side it should support when push came to shove. The British influence on the Siamese government and economy, not to mention the proximity of the vast Indian army to the borders of Siam, led the Siamese king to cooperate fully with British requests for the arrest and extradition of suspected revolutionaries long before he formally joined his country with the Allies in 1917. As a result of the arrests made in Siam and the interrogations that followed, the British were able to learn a great deal about the larger regional and global plot to undermine the Allies through their colonies.

Chapter 6 explores the ways in which Vietnamese, Germans, and – to a lesser extent – Indians sought to export and finance revolution from the unstable but strategically located state of China. From China (until it entered the war on the side of the Allies in August 1917), German consuls provided money and arms for bands of Chinese "pirates" willing to occupy frontier zones in Indochina, for Vietnamese anti-French activists such as Phan Bội Châu, and for Indian revolutionaries seeking funds for revolutionary activities in India. While these efforts did not successfully lead to widespread armed resistance in Indochina or India, in Indochina they did encourage sustained violence along the colony's frontier with China, which proved costly to the Indochinese government. At the same time, German schemes to foment unrest from China existed in tension with the Chinese government's desire to enter the war on the side of the Allies in order to have a voice at the bargaining table when the war was over. Yet the instability caused by the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and its aftermath meant that the Chinese government could do little to halt the activities of anti-Allied revolutionaries within its borders, even when it had the will to do so. The instability in China and elsewhere in the region also prompted the Allied powers to invest in the creation of fledgling intelligence networks designed to expose and root out the kinds of transnational, anticolonial subversive movements prompted by the war. The creation of these networks was in fact one of the more important long-term consequences of the war, for during the interwar period they would be employed with far greater efficiency in the fight against international communism throughout the region – although that is the story of another book.

A century has passed since World War I began. We are still learning about the ways the war was waged in the colonial world and also about the costs of the war to colonial subjects. I hope this book will add yet another layer of nuance to our understanding of the profound global consequences of the war, even in locations thousands of miles from the trenches on the Western Front. I also hope this book will provide a convincing argument that colonial administrators, colonial subjects, and

anticolonial activists understood their actions not solely or even most importantly within binary colonial/metropolitan relationships but also within a variety of trans-regional networks that blurred the neat boundaries of national-colonial territories. My goal is to show that it is we who have tended to miss these larger connections, not they. Finally, I hope this book will demonstrate that it is possible to write meaningful world history by beginning with the micro-level and then tracing connections outward to multiple locations around the globe. Through the links between small-scale stories and large forces, we can see the many ways the global, the regional, and the local were mutually interdependent.



Map 2 The Singapore Mutiny.