

**JAPANESE-  
TRAINED  
ARMIES**  
IN  
SOUTHEAST ASIA

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**Joyce C. Lebra**



**INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES  
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## Contents

Preface to Reprint Edition	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
1. Japanese Initiative — Southeast Asian Response	1
2. The Indian National Army	19
3. The Burma Independence Army	39
4. Peta	75
5. Volunteer Armies in Malaya, Sumatra, Indochina, Borneo and the Philippines	113
6. Revolt of the Independence Armies	146
7. The Significance of the Japanese Military Model for Southeast Asia	167
Appendices	185
Bibliography	191
Bibliographical Note	203
Glossary	207
Index	210

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## **Preface to Reprint Edition**

Many years ago I was researching the Indian National Army and its cooperation with the Imperial Japanese Army during its struggle for independence from Britain during World War II. In the process I learned that not only had the Japanese Army supported the Indian National Army but it had also fostered a far-flung series of volunteer armies in various nations of Southeast Asia, some of these units fighting for independence from colonial control. Japanese military training was thus introduced in several national armies of Southeast Asia, in a few cases superseding colonial military training. I embarked then on a study of these forces during the period 1970–72. At the same time I considered the more general framework within which these armies were fostered, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

While some Western scholars had devised typologies for the role of the military in developing nations, considering for example the transference of military skills to civilian administration in new nations, little scholarly attention in these studies was directed to Southeast Asia. I therefore turned my attention to these Japanese-trained armies in Southeast Asian nations, units which in some cases formed the nuclei of officers corps and also political elites in postwar years. Japanese military training coupled with explosive nationalism provided a potent resource for leadership in many parts of Southeast Asia. In all Japanese-occupied areas where independence and volunteer forces were trained, an officer corps was also politicized during the war, whether as a direct or indirect result of the Japanese impact. The revolt against Japanese trainers by some leaders of these armies demonstrated the effectiveness of these forces in fostering aspirations for independence. Sukarno, Suharto, Zulkifli Lubis, Ne Win, and Aung San, among others, were products of Japanese wartime military training.

Since this study has been out of print and not superceded by later research, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies has decided to reprint it.

*Joyce Lebra, Professor Emerita  
Boulder, Colorado  
2009*

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