

The following article is extracted from a larger piece (entitled "Asiatic "Colonial" Wargames") by Jack Scruby. As with Scruby's original article, we must thank Peter N. Kolosky for the information on the Philippine irregulars.

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The new listing of 15mm Bloodaxe Miniatures of troops, who fought in the Philippines War, opens up a field in war games, which may be unfamiliar to many war gamers. Overall, the period 1880 to 1900 saw many tough little actions that should make for interesting play.

THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS - 1898

THE FILIPINO INSURGENT

In general, the actions fought between European troops and the forces of Asiatic countries up for grabs were quite different than wars fought in Africa during the Colonial Expansion period of 1880 to 1900. The Asiatic were usually armed with fairly modern rifles, were better led, and fought guerilla actions rather than open battles. Except for the Boxer Rebellion, much of the fighting took place in jungles.

In the Philippine Islands, four "little" wars were actually fought. These were the Filipino Insurgents versus the Spanish, the U. S. and Insurgents versus Spain, The Insurgents versus the U. S. and the U. S. Army, with aid from the Philippine Constabulary against the Moro.

Due to the confined area of operations, lack of roads, jungle conditions, rugged terrain and the guerilla tactics of the insurgents, the maneuvering of large balanced forces of U. S. troops was impossible. War was waged in the pattern of the Indian wars of the past, with the infantryman playing the leading role, rather than the cavalry.

Because of the shortages of firearms, the Filipino resorted to guerilla war, rather than open battle. Surprise and ambush were easy and artillery and Gatling guns played only minor roles. The Insurgents, fought with bolo knives as much as with rifles and their attacks were met with small arms fire and the bayonet.

UNIFORMS OF THE INSURGENTS

The typical Filipino insurgent wore his plantation hat, which was usually straw or soft felt, of white or grey color with black band.

Both officers and enlisted men wore the loose fitting, long Spanish jacket, and long baggy trousers. Coat was usually white, while the pants could be blue, rust red, gray, green or white. About the only equipment worn was a leather haversack which contained personal items, rations and ammo. Some wore captured U. S. cartridge waist belts, and of course their bolo. This was razor sharp and was a deadly hand to hand weapon in the dense jungle.

THE MORO

The Moro were a Mohammedan people in Mindanao who had never been completely subjugated by the Spanish. When the U. S. Army occupied this island, trouble began. Over a three year period the Army dispatched expeditions into the interior to destroy Moro strongholds, and found the Moro warrior to be a tough antagonist.

MORO COSTUME

All Moro wore turbans, usually of solid colors: red, blue, green, yellow etc. A vest of colorful light material, beautifully embroidered was common, and most wore colored waist sashes into which their hand weapons were stuck.

All men were barefoot. Some wore loose, baggy long trousers of all colors, and lined and piped with checks and patterns. Some wore short tight pants, coming just below the knees, often striped.

At the beginning of the war, most Moro carried shields and spears, but these were discarded as they captured the American weapons. The Barong was the favorite hand weapon, and when wielded by a "juramentado" - a single warrior off to fight to the death in a trance - it was deadly and these fanatics often had as many as eight U. S. bullets in them before they were stopped in their final, suicidal charge to glory.

There were over 1000 engagements between the Moro and the U.S. Army- most of them deadly jungle actions in which the barong was very much, the equal of the American rifle.