

The Malay States Guides, 1896-1919

Introduction

My article [On Indian Units in East Africa, 1915-1918](#) mentions an incident in Singapore on 15 February 1915 where the bulk of the Indian battalion 5th Light Infantry, supported by 100 men from the Malay States Guides Mule Battery, mutinied when rumors know that the units were facing deployment to fight against Turkish units in the Middle East.

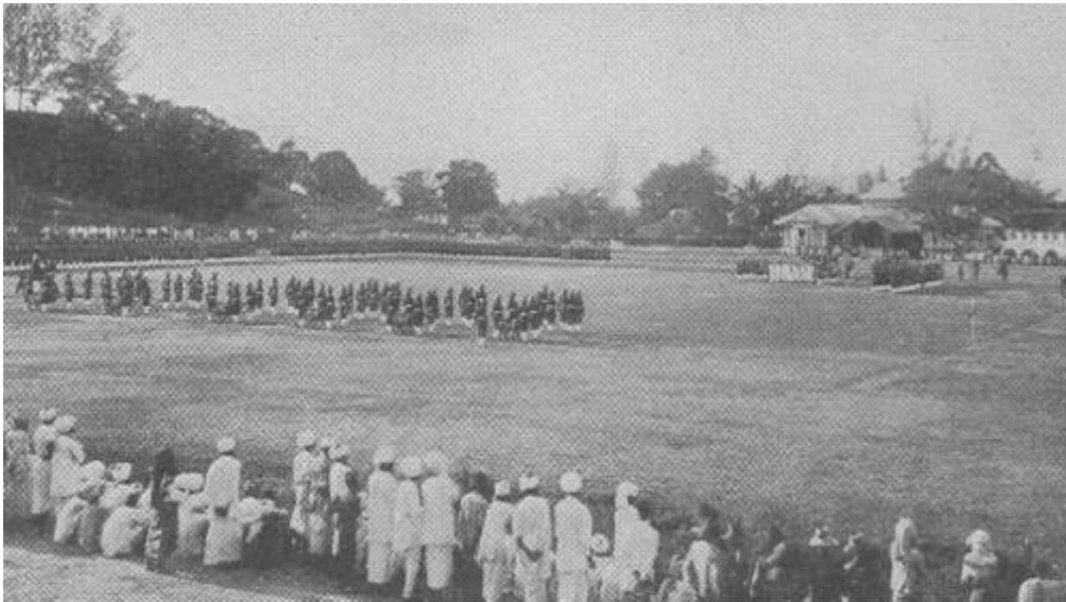
At the time in question, I searched in vain for information about this mountain battery. A recent acquisition of *the History of the Indian Mountain Artillery* (Source 1) and the discovery of additional sources now enable me to shed more light on this unit, whose official name is the *Malay States Guides Mountain Battery*, as well as other units of the Federation of Malaya States. Source 1, perhaps for reasons of courtesy, does not, however, mention the battery's part in the Mutiny in Singapore.

The Federation of Malaya States

The geographical starting point is the Malaysian Peninsula, north of the strategically important Singapore, see following map.

Here, in 1895, *the Federated Malay States* was formed as an English protectorate. The federation included the then sultanates of Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang [1\)](#).

Malay States Guides



Parade on the occasion of the presentation of the flag to the Malay States Guides, 12 February 1906.
From Source 2.

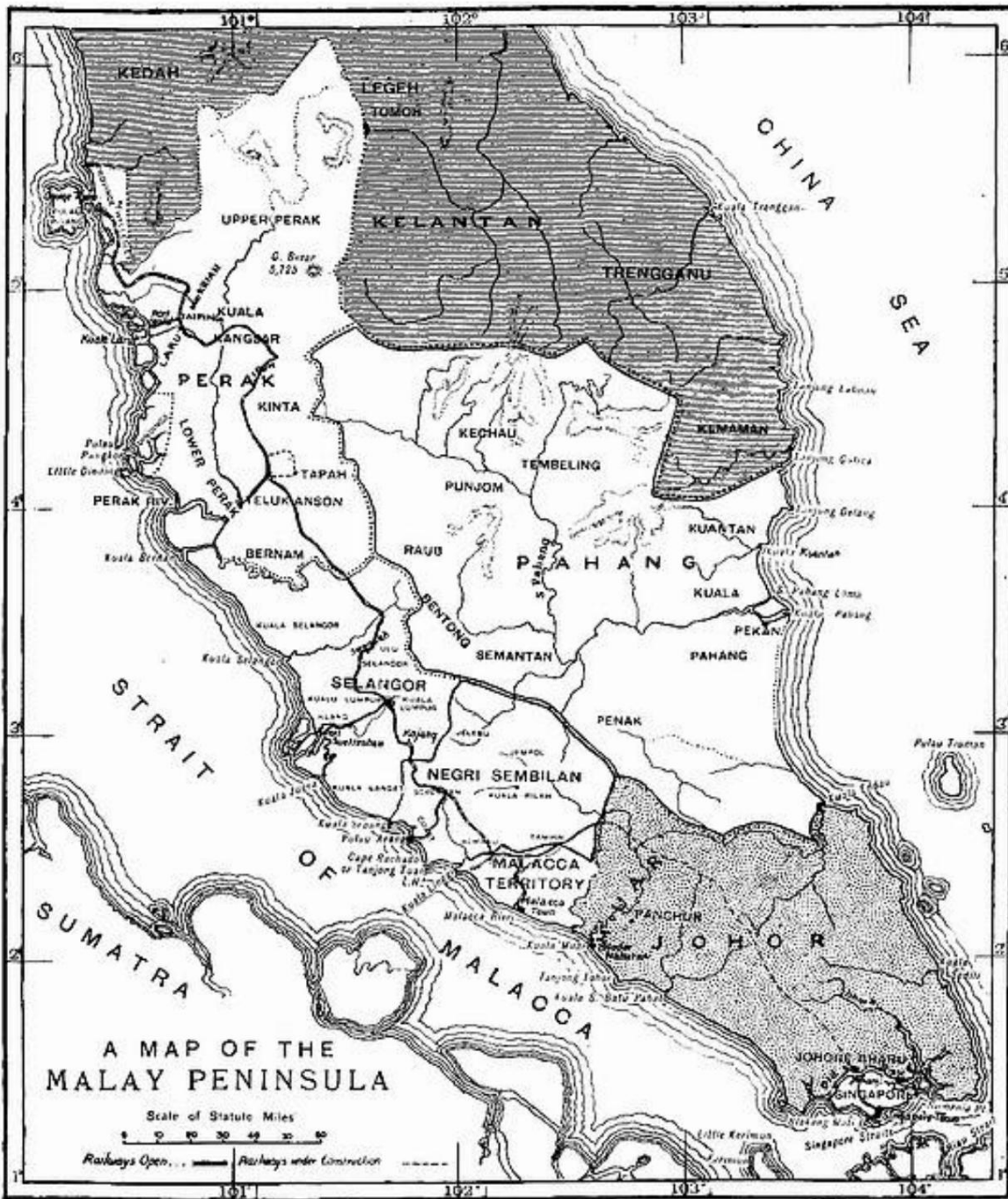
In 1896 [2\)](#) the Malay State Guides regiment is established by paramilitary police forces from Perak, Selangor and Pahang. The regiment was founded by Lieutenant-Colonel RS Frowd Walker, who from 1879 had been Chief of Police in Perak. In 1906 the lieutenant colonel still held the post of regimental commander, with Major Arthur Saunders Vanrenen as second in command.

The regiment included 6 infantry companies, a depot company that also included a battery of 15-pdr field guns, and a mountain battery. Each company included 2 Indian officers as well as 100 non-commissioned officers

and privates, under the command of a European officer, seconded from the English or Indian army.

The soldiers were recruited from among Indians in/from Punjab, and consisted mainly of *Jat Sikhs*. One company, however, consisted of *Punjabi Mahomedans* as well as a number of *Pathans*.

The Malay States Guides were from 1902 ³⁾ supplemented by the volunteer corps Malay States Volunteer Rifles, which consisted of European soldiers, established on the English pattern.



The Malay Peninsula.

From Source 2.



Regimental Badge
Malay States Guides.
Modeled after
Badges of the British
Commonwealth &
British Overseas
Territories
(HH Booker).

Malay States Guides Mountain Battery

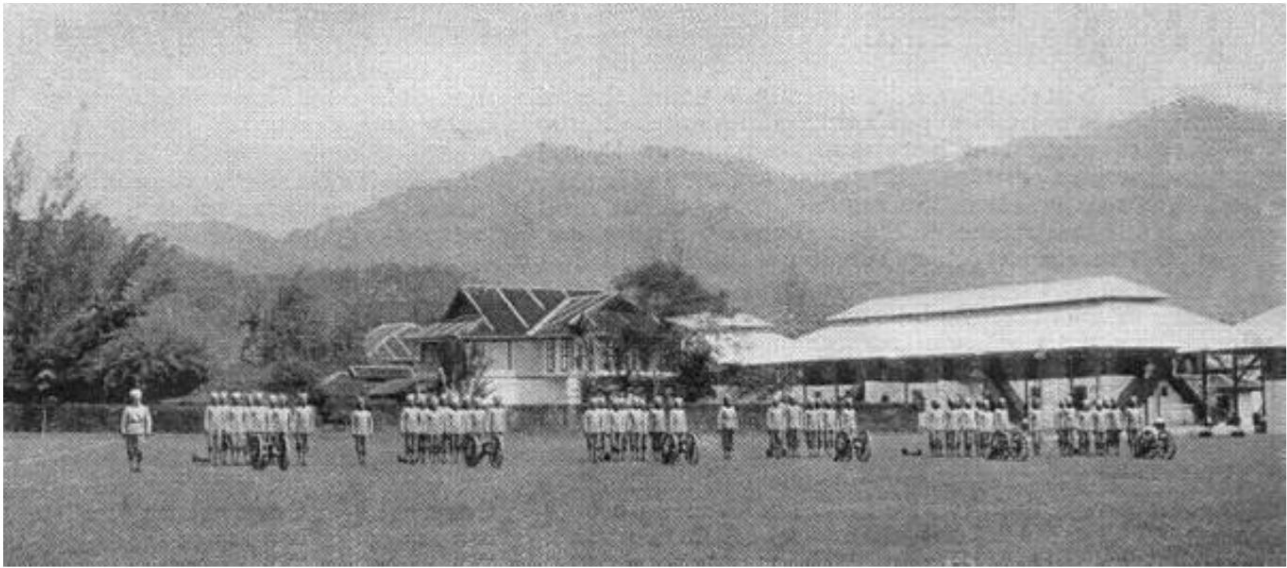
Historical summary

1896 The mountain battery was equipped with six 7-pdr pamphlets, but no means of transport

1911 The obsolete pamphlets (Model 1865) are replaced with four 10-pdr mountain guns, but the allocation of mules only allowed one half-battery to move at a time.

1915 The battery is sent to Aden in October 1915 and forms part of the British and Indian forces that are fighting the Turks there as part of the Aden Defense Force.

1919 The regiment, including the mountain battery, is disbanded.



Malay States Guides Mountain Battery, c. 1906.
From Source 2.



No. 4 (Hazara) Mountain Battery, 1895 4). —

The mules, which from 1911 transported the guns, were supplemented by camels for the transport of ammunition.

The pamphlet is a 7-pdr mountain gun of the same type, which until 1911 was part of the Malay States Mountain Battery.

Source 1 refers to the soldiers as *Punjabis* as well as a limited number of Pathans, but whether these *Punjabis* were Sikhs or Muslims is not clear; the mountain battery can also be the aforementioned company. Given their participation in the Mutiny in Singapore, however, it is most likely that they were Muslims. Like the infantry companies, the mountain battery was assigned to an English officer.

Table 1:

**Malay States Guides Mountain Battery,
Aden, October 1915**

English officers

Indian officers	3
Cannon Constable	54
Training Constable	50
Helpers	5
Total	113
10-pdr mountain guns	4
Riding horses	2
Mule	47

In October 1915 the battery arrived in Aden, where it formed part of the Aden Defense Force.

The battery commander was Captain W. Leslie, Royal Artillery, who was killed in action in January 1916. The post was subsequently held by other Royal Artillery officers.

Information about the campaign in Aden can be found e.g. in Mark Connelly's article *The British Campaign in Aden, 1914-1918* (Source 3). From this, with regard to the mountain battery, only the information appears that immediately after the arrival in Aden, the personnel were seriously taken by, among other things, dysentery.

The mountain battery was made available to the British government under an Imperial Service arrangement, similarly Indian regents could also make local military units available.



*Malay States Guides Mountain Battery, at Steamer Point, in Aden, photographed 19 August 1918.
From Source 6.*

Source 1 also states that an infantry battalion, which must be the Malay States Guides in general, was covered by this scheme. However, I am not aware whether the battalion was used in this connection.

The climate of Aden was, on the whole, quite unhealthy, and losses from disease far exceeded losses from actual hostilities.

The pamphlet is one of the battery's 10-pdr mountain guns.

It was not equipped with a recoil brake and therefore had to be adjusted manually after each shot.

A photograph of a 10-pdr mountain gun can be found in my article *The Indian Army - On mountain batteries, 1890-1940*.



Soldiers of the Malay States Volunteer Rifles, 1907.
From Source 2.

Malay States Volunteer Rifles

The Malay States Volunteer Rifles in 1907 were organized into 4 infantry divisions, 1 mounted infantry division and 1 machine gun division.

In 1907 the corps numbered 105 men. The corps was from 1907 under the command of Major Arthur Benison Hubback.

Both regular and volunteer forces worked closely with the area's other military units, primarily stationed in Singapore.

The marksmanship among the volunteers was quite high and the Malay States Volunteer Rifles had won several distinctions in the years 1903-1905 and 1907.

Cadet Corps

There were also a number of cadet corps, i.a. Victoria Institution Cadet Corps, established in 1901.



Victoria Institution Cadet Corps.
From A History of the Victoria Institution Cadet Corps, 1901-1941 (Victoria Institution).



Singapore Volunteer Corps.
Card No. 50

in Player's cigarette card
series Military
Uniforms of the British
Empire Overseas, 1938.

Closing

While the area, apart from the Mutiny in Singapore, was not directly involved in the First World War, descendants of the soldiers in the units from the Malay Peninsula got to experience the war in earnest during the Second World War with the Japanese advance against and the battles for Singapore.

The following appears from the back of the card:

The Settlement of Singapore is included in the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements. Although Singapore is but a small island of some 220 square miles, it is of immense strategic importance, and a strongly fortified British naval base has been established there. The Singapore Volunteer Corps, of which we show a Regimental Sergeant-Major, is part of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force and comprises units of Artillery, Royal Engineers, Signals, Infantry, Armored Car section, Field Ambulance, etc. The Municipal Building, Singapore, is shown in the background.

A brief description of the local units can be found i.a. in *The Malayan Volunteer Forces* by Rosemary Fell (*The Children (& Families) of the Far East Prisoners of War*) as well as in Source 5.

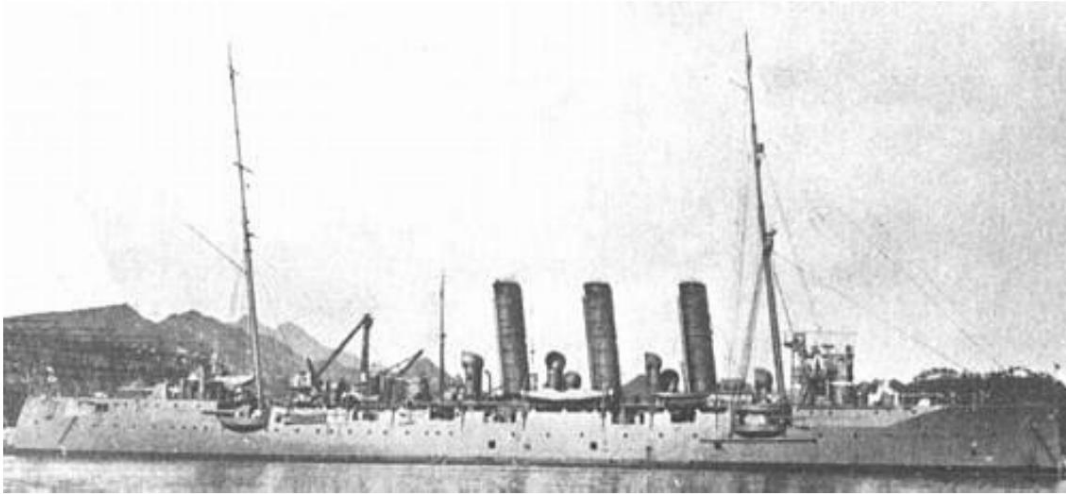
Sources

1. *History of the Indian Mountain Artillery* by Brigadier-General CAL Graham, Gale & Polden, Aldershot, 1957.
2. *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya* by Arnold Wright (ed.), Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company Ltd, London 1908. Especially Chapter 37: Military is used. The book is available online through South Asia Visions (Cornell University, New York), and contains a very exciting image material.

3. The British Campaign in Aden, 1914-1918 by Mark Connelly, Journal of the Center for First World War Studies Volume 2, No. 1 (March 2005).
4. Regiments and Corps of Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei (Land forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth).
5. Far Eastern Volunteers Site (Paul Riches).
6. *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery - Forgotten Fronts and Home Base, 1914-18* by Sir Martin Farndale, Royal Artillery Institution, London 1988, ISBN 1-870114-05-1.

Per Finsted

Postscript - The Japanese Navy's participation in the suppression of the Rebellion in Singapore

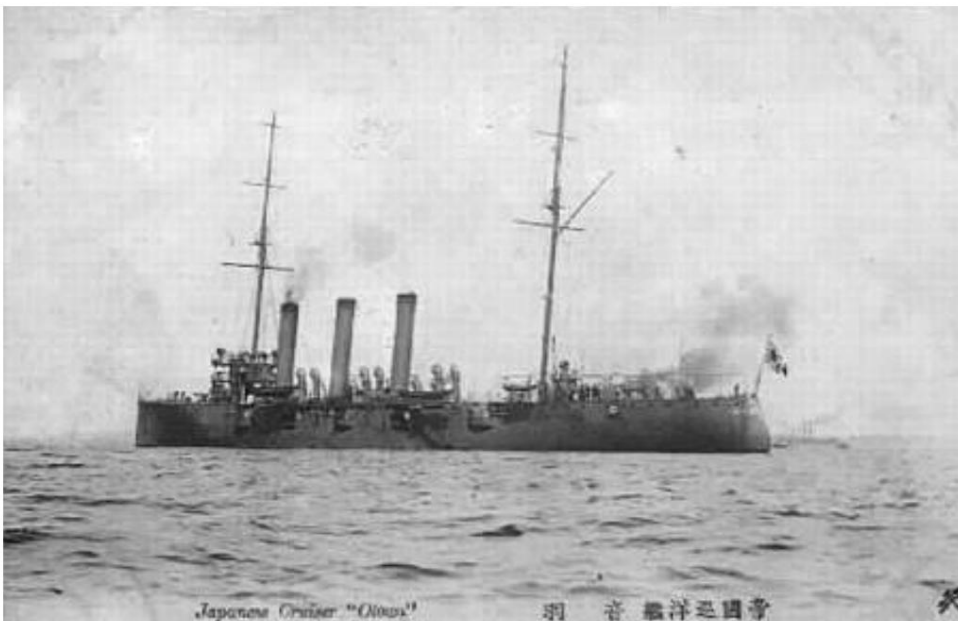


The cruiser Tsushima.

From Source 3.

The rebellion in Singapore was, among other things, fought with the help of British, French, Russian and Japanese marines and marines.

Source 7 states that the Japanese Navy's contribution was the cruisers Tsushima and Otowa.



The cruiser Otowa.

From Source 4.

The cruisers were formed into a squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Tsuchiya Mitsukane. Both cruisers and admiral were veterans of the Russo-Japanese War.

It is not currently known how many marines and marines participated in the operations.

Data	Tsushima	Otowa
In service	1904-1944	1904-1917
Main armament	6 x 15 cm guns 10 x 7.6 cm guns 4 x 4.2 cm guns	2 x 15 cm guns 6 x 12 cm guns 4 x 7.6 cm guns
Length (at the waterline)	102 m	98 m
Width	13.4 m	12.6 m
Draft	4.9 m	4.8 m
Speed	20 knots	21 knots
Crew	320	312



The Japanese war flag.

The cruiser Tsushima was laid down in 1909, and sank during an American air attack in 1944.

The cruiser Otowa was lost during a storm on July 25 or August 1, 1917, when she ran aground; the hull broke over.

Supplementary sources

7. Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation, 1914-1918 by Timothy D. Saxon, Naval War College Review, Winter 2000, Vol. LIII, No. 1
8. Japanese cruiser Tsushima (Wikipedia).
9. "Niitaka" Class Protected Cruisers (Warship Photo Gallery).

10. Japanese cruiser Otowa (Wikipedia).

11. "Otowa" Class Protected Cruiser (Warship Photo Gallery).

Per Finsted

Notes:

1) From Federated Malay States (Wikipedia).

2) Source 4 states 1873 as the year of the regiment's establishment. Based on Polis Diraja Malaysia (the official website of the Malaysian police), however, this is the year of the establishment of the paramilitary police units in Perak, which formed part of the foundation of the regiment.

3) The year 1902 comes from Source 2. Other sources, e.g. Source 4, states the year 1915 as the year of establishment, but this is apparently a mix-up with the unit *Malayan Volunteer Infantry*, to which the present-day Malayan Army attributes its origin.

4) From Indian Raj Photography 1845-1947. The photographer is Fred Bremner, who worked in India from 1883 to 1923.