

Bridging Imperial, National, and Local Historiographies

Britons, Arabs, and Jews in the Mandate Palestine Police

Yoav Alon

Throughout their vast empire, the British formed local police forces that were staffed by indigenous rank and file and commanded by British officers. This practice was dictated by the need to maintain an empire “on the cheap” and was underpinned by a philosophy of indirect rule, which dominated British colonial thinking between the two world wars. It was the police that enforced the law that upheld colonial authority, as “the colonial state’s first line of contact with the majority of the populace.”¹ As such, the police was the most visible public manifestation of colonial rule everywhere. It also manifested the British Empire’s heavy investment in maintaining the collaboration of specific indigenous elites and ethnic groups, often by integrating them as employees of various state apparatuses and institutions.² In this regard, the Palestine Police resembled other such police forces in the empire, though it evolved over time so that, by the end of British rule in 1948, mostly British policemen staffed the force.

In the context of British Mandate Palestine, the Palestine Police was a unique colonial institution that brought together British, Arab, and Jewish servicemen. It fulfilled mundane civil police duties, but also stood at the frontline of the colonial state’s efforts to secure its rule. In doing so, the Palestine Police played a crucial role in the history of the evolving conflict in Palestine. Palestine’s particular security challenges also led its police force to become one of the most important and influential colonial forces in the entire British Empire.

This article explores the historiography of the Palestine Police. Despite its multifaceted historical importance, for years the Palestine Police generated only marginal interest

among scholars. The main source of information about the force had long been a semiofficial account written by one of its veterans. The last decade or so, however, has seen renewed interest in the topic, with a number of studies published that enrich the academic understanding of the force. This reflects a number of academic trends, most significantly a closing of the gap between the two fields of knowledge production – colonial policing and the history of Palestine – in which most previous studies of the Palestine Police had been carried out. This new research remains in its budding phase – presently, not a single academic book devoted to the Palestine Police has been published and there is room for much more historical inquiry. This article will thus trace these two arenas of knowledge production on the Palestine Police, surveying and evaluating the available literature, and identify remaining lacunae while suggesting new lines of inquiry. Before doing so, a brief introduction of the police and its historical significance is in order.

The Palestine Police and Its Historical Significance

The Palestine Police in the Mandate era was a semimilitary force. Its chief duty was to preserve law and order, quell disturbances, and patrol the borders. It carried out daily police work such as crime prevention and detection and traffic regulation. Its Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was responsible for intelligence collection. Established in 1920 as a small force consisting mainly of Arabs and some Jews under British command, the police underwent several reforms in subsequent years. Following its failure to control incidents of intercommunal violence in 1920 and 1921, and due to the participation of several Arab policemen in the riots, the British formed a 500-strong locally-recruited gendarmerie and, in 1922, brought some 700 former policemen from Ireland to create a separate British section of the gendarmerie. In 1926, the gendarmerie was disbanded and some of its men were absorbed into the newly established “British section” of the police, which operated alongside the larger “Palestinian section.” The latter included local Jews and Arabs as well as small numbers of Armenians, Circassians, and other local groups who were neither Arab nor Jewish. Subsequent reforms following outbursts of violence such as the “Wailing Wall disturbances” (known in Arabic as *thawrat al-Buraq* and *Meoraot Tarpat* in Hebrew) led to the gradual reenlargement of the British component of the police. By the end of the Arab Revolt in 1939, the British made up 55 percent of the force, Arabs 35 percent, and Jews 10 percent – although the number of Jews and, to a lesser extent, Arabs were much higher if one includes the various auxiliary police bodies (Jewish Settlement Police, Temporary Additional Police, and Supernumerary Police). In the last years of the Mandate, it was Jewish insurgency that preoccupied the police and prompted the formation of special anti-insurgency units and further reinforcement from Britain: by 1947, the police’s strength reached nine thousand, of whom 62 percent were British.³

An examination of the police presents a unique opportunity to consider the interaction between Arabs, Jews, and Britons in Mandate Palestine. Against the background of the emerging national struggle in Palestine, the force allowed for cooperation between individuals from communities in conflict. But – like other police forces elsewhere in the British Empire – the Palestine Police did not develop in insulation from the surrounding political environment. Its activities were both affected by and shaped events: indigenous rank and file often trod a fine line between professional commitment and loyalty to their comrades, on the one hand, and communal and national allegiances, on the other.

The Palestine Police deserves scholarly attention for other reasons as well. First, after the withdrawal of British troops in 1921, it became the main mechanism of colonial control and remained so until the 1936–39 revolt. Therefore, no full examination of British rule in Palestine and its interaction with local society can ignore the police. Second, the study of the police can shed light on a number of interrelated issues, such as patterns and perceptions of crime and lawbreaking, prison administration and the experience of imprisonment, and the criminal justice system and legal structures of the Mandate in general – all understudied in the context of Palestine. Third, the Palestine Police had a major impact on police forces and counterinsurgency methods around the British Empire. From the mid-1930s, Palestine served as the training grounds for British policemen and officers who then were stationed in many corners of the British Empire. In fact, the “Palestine Model” of policing was implemented in diverse countries such as Cyprus, Kenya, Malaya, and to some extent even in the United Kingdom.⁴ Fourth, for the Jewish community of Palestine, the institution of the police force served as an important instrument in the preparations for statehood and fed the creation of the post-mandate Israel Police, whose nucleus in 1948 was formed by 700 former members of the Palestine Police. As such, the study of the Mandate’s police can contribute significantly to the understanding of Israel’s state-formation process.

Edward Horne’s *A Job Well Done* (1982), however, remains the only book exclusively dedicated to the Palestine Police.⁵ This quasi-official history records the force’s evolution, its structure, methods of training, recruitment, investigation, and intelligence-gathering abilities. Despite its admiring and somewhat nostalgic tone, this book remains a standard work of reference for the study of the Palestine Police. Horne himself contributed to the study of the police as the longtime chair of the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association. In 2002, Horne donated the entire archives of the association – a rich source that includes publications (primarily the association’s long-running newsletter) and internal correspondence – to the Middle East Center Archive (MECA) at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, where they are available to researchers. Academic studies on the Palestine Police force began in the mid-1970s, and were conducted within the frameworks of two separate fields: colonial policing on the one hand, and the history of Mandate Palestine, on the other. There was limited interface between these two areas of scholarship, and the respective developments within them shaped the study of the Palestine Police.

Imperial Policing

The literature on colonial policing developed from Charles Jeffries's pioneering attempt to examine British colonial policing as a whole.⁶ Jeffries, a former Colonial Office senior official, wrote his book when colonial policing was an ongoing reality and his own experience is clearly reflected in the book's narrative. With the end of empire, however, an academic field began to emerge and the late 1970s and 1980s saw the publication of histories of particular forces, exploring the colonial state's notions of crime and punishment and how it imposed them on indigenous populations to maintain social and political order.⁷

The early 1990s saw the evolution of colonial policing into a distinct field of scholarship. David Anderson and David Killingray's coedited volumes *Policing the Empire* (1991) and *Policing and Decolonisation* (1992) represent the first concentrated effort to critically reexamine assumptions about colonial police forces; in the second volume, the Palestine Police and its role suppressing the 1936–39 revolt constitute one of the case studies.⁸ By offering a comparative approach, the studies demonstrate how illuminating the investigation of colonial police forces can be to the understanding of colonialism and decolonization, ethnic conflict and racial relations, and state and society dynamics. Anderson and Killingray start off by casting doubt on Jeffries's influential thesis that the Irish police served as the model for British colonial policing elsewhere. A number of colonial police forces, they indicated, differed widely from this alleged model.

Instead of a common point of origin in Ireland, Anderson and Killingray define colonial policing according to several common patterns in its development. For one, colonial policing was characterized by the inherent tension between the semimilitary mission of the police and the aspiration toward civil policing. The failure to make the police more "civil" was partly the result of the poor standing of European policemen vis-à-vis local society. Qualified volunteers were hard to come by and personnel rarely reached the standards set by the Colonial Office. A particular problem was the recruitment of reliable local rank and file, as many colonized subjects opposed the colonial state and did not want to serve it. Many forces were demoralized, undisciplined, and suffered difficult conditions including low wages and the hostility of the societies they policed. Race, too, was a critical element in every aspect of policing. Officers were for the most part white and local rank and file had only limited prospects of advancement into the officer corps. The British tended to look down upon their indigenous recruits, and never fully trusted their loyalty to the force.

Of particular relevance to the study of the Palestine Police is this literature's emphasis on decolonization as a turning point in the history of the police. After World War II, colonial police forces were tasked with executing the process of decolonization, which was rarely peaceful. Emergency measures instituted to help "keep the peace" gave the police enhanced powers that some individuals exploited and abused. The emergence of anti-colonial movements further complicated the lives

of local policemen: servicemen often sympathized with the national struggle and were reluctant to act against their brethren; meanwhile, many anti-colonial movements deliberately targeted policemen, who were seen as collaborators. Colonial powers therefore had to evaluate the strength of their local policemen's loyalties and calculate how far indigenous forces could be trusted. Where they could not, colonial powers called in the military, though by doing so they further damaged the legitimacy of their rule. In Palestine, too, from the 1936 Arab Revolt through the Jewish insurgency of the 1940s, the police was caught in this uncertain colonial dynamic that oscillated between domination and retreat.⁹

Over the last decade or so, interest in the field of colonial policing has grown in ways that are reflected in more recent studies of the Palestine Police. Scholars have used the police as a lens to consider the imperial histories of specific colonies,¹⁰ while a more recent development, undoubtedly spurred by the type of transnational approach that is currently in vogue, examines colonial policing in a global context and offers a comparative look across empires. This literature has set out to reexamine or reevaluate global phenomena, such as decolonization and the Cold War, while other efforts in this vein have placed the legal and tactical aspects of the U.S.-led "global war on terror" in a longer genealogy of imperial counterinsurgency.¹¹ In the recent edited volume *Colonial Policing and the Transnational Legacy*, for example, scholars of policing in different empires join historians of the Portuguese Empire to offer comparative observations.¹²

Despite this growing body of literature on colonial policing, the topic is still by and large confined to institutional and political histories that engage the perspectives of colonial authorities. Thus, British, French, or Portuguese designs, motivations, attitudes, limitations, actions, and impact constitute the focus of inquiry. As Robert Bickers asserts, though historians of colonialism have more recently turned their attention to non-elite colonialists, "we still have very few studies of the British or any other nation's 'servants of empire' . . . the other ranks of empire work are obscurer still."¹³ In studies of policing in the British Empire, senior officers rather than constables dominate. If locally recruited policemen earn attention at all, it is only through British eyes and based on British documents. With rare exceptions – Bickers's work prominent among them – what is still largely missing is an attempt to reconstruct the experience of the rank and file, both indigenous and European, in order to fully come to grips with the experience of serving in the colonial police.¹⁴

Until the 2000s, relatively few scholars interested in colonial policing took the Palestine Police as their case study – perhaps because it, like other Middle Eastern territories, was a relatively late addition to the British Empire, and then only as a League of Nations Mandate.¹⁵ Scholars such as Tom Bowden, David Clark, Charles Townshend, and Charles Smith focused on the political and military aspects of policing.¹⁶ Their main subjects of inquiry are the British policemen, and their commanders and superiors in Jerusalem and London. They based their research exclusively on British sources. In the early 2000s, Gad Kroizer drew attention to police

reforms that reshaped the Palestine Police in the 1930s, and in particular the system of fortified police stations – an effort recommended by and named after Charles Tegart, a British official with long experience in the colonial police in India.¹⁷

More recently, Georgina Sinclair’s work has contributed significantly to the field of colonial policing and decolonization, as well as to the study of the Palestine Police. Sinclair analyzes colonial policing as a general phenomenon, substantiating her arguments with reference to specific forces, and argues that from the mid-1940s on, the Palestine Police served as a model for other forces dealing with mounting colonial crises.¹⁸ Despite its many virtues, however, Sinclair’s study is limited to the British sector of the police and all her sources are in English; Arab and Jewish policemen remain largely absent from the analysis. What is also notable is that Sinclair adopts and adapts Jeffries’s “Irish thesis” – Palestine received the torch of colonial policing and became the new model after World War II.

Thus, despite challenges from Anderson and Killingray and more recently from Seán William Gannon,¹⁹ the “Irish model” thesis remains, in a modified form, in much of the literature on the Palestine Police.²⁰ This is in no small part due to the large Irish contingent in the Palestine Police, and especially the recruitment of former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and its auxiliary forces into the Palestine Gendarmerie, beginning in the early 1920s. Gannon and Richard Cahill, in particular, have examined the role and conduct of the Irish contingent in the force from its arrival in Palestine until the disbanding of the gendarmerie in 1926 (in the case of Gannon) or the end of the Mandate (in the case of Cahill).²¹

Matthew Hughes is among the most active and productive scholars in the broader field of colonial policing, including counterinsurgency operations. Significantly, he consults Arabic and Hebrew sources side by side with English ones, and draws on a number of oral and written testimonies from rank-and-file servicemen as well as those of Palestinians at the receiving end of British enforcement. In doing so, Hughes paints a revealing picture (and at times an unsettling and shocking one) of the day to day routine of colonial policing, with an emphasis on the human fallibility of the policemen – their heavy drinking habits, racist attitudes toward the locals, brutal behavior, and abuse of their positions.²² His work unveils cases of torture and killing, behavior partly facilitated and legitimized, sometimes even encouraged, by practices of collective punishment instituted by the British in the 1920s, draconian emergency regulations instituted in the late 1930s, and senior officials’ tendency to turn a blind eye throughout the Mandate period. These findings are in keeping with recent studies on British colonial policing, most notably in Kenya, that exposed hitherto unknown (or more accurately undocumented) British atrocities.²³ This conduct, Hughes claims, was also adopted by the Israeli state in its relations with its Arab population after 1948.²⁴ The continuity of British counterinsurgency in Palestine with its practices in other territories, as well as with Israeli methods, is a subject also elaborated by Laleh Khalili, who identifies Palestine as “a crucial node” in the networks that transmitted colonial policing practices across time and space.²⁵

History of the Mandate

Meanwhile, until recently, historians of British Mandate Palestine tended to overlook the role of the police. The literature on British Palestine or the Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine) refers to the police only in passing, usually when dealing with outbursts of violence in 1920, 1921, 1929, 1936–39, and 1946–48. Martin Kolinsky was the first historian of the Palestine Mandate to examine closely the role of the police in enforcing law and order. However, his book deals with only the first years of the Mandate, ending on the eve of the Arab Revolt, the main challenge for the force.²⁶ Muhsin Muhammad Salih's book is the only work in Arabic to explore the role of the police (as well as the military) in implementing and enforcing British policy in Palestine. Based on British archives compounded by press reports and memoirs in Arabic, Salih focuses mainly on operational aspects and especially on the suppression of the Arab Revolt.²⁷

A number of works address the role of the police during the Jewish insurgency pre-1948, whether in contributing to or attempting to suppress militant Zionist activities. In the twilight days of the Mandate, as both Jewish insurgency and British counterinsurgency intensified, David Cesarani describes how members of the newly established "special squads" abused their authority and murdered a member of the Lehi (Stern Gang), a case later covered up by the British authorities.²⁸ Similarly, Bruce Hofmann details the British authorities' struggle with the radical Jewish organizations Irgun and Lehi in the last decade of the Mandate, putting special emphasis on the counterinsurgency operations of the police as well as the army and the work of the CID in gathering intelligence on what the British saw as a terrorist movement.²⁹ Eldad Harouvi, having uncovered the CID's hitherto unknown files at the Haganah archive in Tel Aviv, uses these to detail the history of the CID, focusing especially on its pursuit of Jewish insurgents in the 1940s.³⁰ Yoav Gelber and Joshua Caspi, meanwhile, show how Jewish policemen collected intelligence for the Haganah and Caspi also examines the transformation from the Mandate police to Israel's police force.³¹

More recent histories of Mandate Palestine's police are also in keeping with a broader shift away from diplomatic history of the Mandate and its high politics, with its related emphasis on the geopolitics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and toward histories that examine specific institutions, groups, and individuals to shed light on broader social and cultural dynamics. These social and cultural histories have tended to do away with the "dual society" model that had for many years dominated the study of Palestine.³² This approach assumed limited interaction between Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine, mainly in the context of the national conflict, and regarded communal identities as natural and fixed, rather than constructed within a complex set of relations, forces, and circumstances. An alternative methodology borrows from Perry Anderson's concept of "relational history."³³ Questioning the somewhat simplistic Arab-Jewish binary juxtaposition, scholars used relational history to explore interactions between national communities, as well as within each group, taking into account factors such as religion, class, gender, and ethnic identity or country of origin in the formation of complex webs of identification.³⁴ The

relational model does not negate the centrality of a national conflict between Jews and Arabs, but it does not view these categories or the conflict as static, but as dynamic, reconfigured through interactions between and within these groups, as well as with other forces, such as the British. This approach has been influential even for works that do not explicitly employ the relational model, but nevertheless seek to move away from national narratives.³⁵ Study of the Palestine Police – an institution that allowed for a considerable degree of cooperation between British, Arabs, and Jews – is well suited to this growing tendency among historians of Palestine.

Perhaps the most significant development for those interested in studying the Palestine Police from a cultural or social history perspective came with the initiative of Eugene Rogan, director of the Middle East Center at St. Antony's College, to make MECA a major source of material on the subject. Shortly after receiving the records of the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association, MECA also negotiated access to thousands of personnel files of Palestine policemen that had previously been kept by the British National Archives in a remote warehouse. No less significant, Professor Rogan initiated and coordinated the Palestine Police Oral History Project carried out in Britain, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Israel.³⁶ Four research teams contacted and interviewed veterans – British, Arab, and Jewish – and the recordings of these interviews were placed with MECA. The preliminary findings were presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) in 2007 in a panel dedicated to the Palestine Police. Subsequently, a number of Palestine Police veterans donated their private papers to MECA. As a result, for the first time there is a central archive that hosts a vast array of sources relating to the Palestine Police.

Anthropologist Efrat Ben-Ze'ev was perhaps the first to publish material from the Oral History project. Studying memories of the 1948 war and the events leading up to it, she examines the testimonies of British policemen, which she then compares to those of Palestinian Arab villagers forced from their homes and Jewish-Israeli veterans who fought in the war.³⁷ In doing so, she puts a human face on the policemen, allowing them to explain the way they saw their service in Palestine – even if, by comparison with Hughes's research, for example, their views are largely nostalgic, omitting the violence that he documents. Hagit Krik also dedicates a large part of her recent doctoral dissertation to British policemen and their everyday experiences in Mandate Palestine. Her socio-cultural analysis focuses on the rank and file and emphasizes class and race to expose the policemen's low position in the British colonial hierarchy, their habits and routines, the conditions of their accommodation, and attitude toward the communities they policed. These works' attention to the (British) rank and file is a welcome development.³⁸

Also drawing on the MECA collection, as well as other newly available British sources, John L. Knight offers a fresh look at the police, its development during the Mandate, and its performance. He takes issue with earlier literature that stressed the police's failure to protect the Jewish community in Palestine, emphasizing (though perhaps pushing the argument too far and downplaying other considerations) that the security policy was

consistent with the government's facilitation of the Jewish National Home policy and protecting the Jewish community.³⁹ He convincingly demonstrates the contribution of this policy to the Zionist state-building project, especially during the Arab Revolt. More recently, Knight used police charge registers from Haifa and Petah Tikvah to examine the interactions of Jewish and Arab communities with Jewish and Arab policemen. In doing so, he shows that post-1929 police reforms, though they may not have resulted in lasting improvement in the force's legitimacy, had a real impact on perceptions of the police with regard to the resolution of quotidian issues.⁴⁰

A number of recent works address the role of Jewish policemen in particular. Rivka Itzhak-Harel explores the connection between the Jewish Agency and the police following the Arab Revolt, offering a social analysis of Jewish policemen in the force.⁴¹ Lior Yohanani, meanwhile, examines relations between Jewish and British members of the force based on oral testimonies of Israeli veterans together with documents from the Israel archives. As he rightly acknowledges, his portrayal of the nature of British-Zionist collaboration in the police awaits substantiation through comparing his evidence with that gleaned from British and Arab sources.⁴²

Although relatively few works shed light on the Arab members of the Palestine Police compared to scholarship on the British and even Jewish components of the force, even in this respect one can see positive developments. The late Adel Yahya, who oversaw the collection of oral histories with policemen in the West Bank, published initial findings from these accounts.⁴³ Mansour Nasasra, in a chapter of his book about the relations between state and tribe in the Naqab/Negev in addition to several articles, analyzes how the police operated in the desert of Palestine. Nasasra compares oral history he collected among former Bedouin police with the testimony of the British assistant district officer who served there, in addition to written evidence held in state archives. These different perspectives allow him to stress the limitation of British control and the large degree of tribal autonomy in Palestine's periphery.⁴⁴

Alex Winder's recent doctoral dissertation fills a major lacuna in the literature on the Palestine Police given its detailed analysis of Arab servicemen, not to mention several other neglected aspects.⁴⁵ His study explores the police's role in enforcing law and order among Arab communities of Palestine, focusing on the daily interaction between the police and colonized society not only during the Arab Revolt, as in most previous literature, but throughout the Mandate years. He examines British understandings and misunderstandings of local Arab society and the way these translated into policies and practices on the ground. His pioneering close examination of Arab recruits, a much neglected topic, is especially welcome. By tracing the career paths of several policemen who served in the Ottoman police, Winder succeeds in establishing certain continuities with the Ottoman period, something that has not been done before in the context of the Palestine Police. He shows that beyond personnel, the structures and practices of informal justice – based on shari'a and tribal customary law – common under the Ottomans continued well into the Mandate, though often in modified forms.

The paucity of research on the Arab policemen is not surprising and corresponds neatly

to a more general problem pertinent to the study of the Mandate period. Whereas English and Hebrew sources are abundant and readily available, Arabic sources are generally limited to the press, memoirs, private family collections, and oral histories. The absence of an Arab state in some part of historic Palestine means that there is hardly any archival material preserved by a central institution. Ongoing Palestinian statelessness also means limited institutional support for local Palestinian researchers. Although serious attempts to study Palestinian history and to find new methodologies that overcome the lack of official archives have increased significantly since the mid-1990s, these have not thus far chosen to investigate the Palestine Police or its Arab policemen.

Toward a Fuller Investigation of the Palestine Police

The study of the Palestine Police has advanced considerably in the last decade or so, especially as those working within the colonial policing paradigm and those working in the history of Mandate Palestine have increasingly converged. The accumulation of literature allows us to begin talking about an emerging field of knowledge, with its own particular discourse. Scholars are now engaged with others working in the same field in debates on, for example, the validity of the Irish model of policing in the case of Palestine, the level of brutality of British forces, the contribution of the police as compared to the military to the system of British colonial control, or the police's contribution to escalating communal conflict and the outcome of this conflict. Scholars of the Palestine Police can and do engage with historians of colonial policing in general and British colonial policing in particular, in addition to those working on various aspects of Mandate Palestine.

That said, many interesting aspects of the Palestine Police remain underdeveloped or ignored. A number of lacunae and potential lines of inquiry present themselves. We know very little about the police in Palestine during late Ottoman times.⁴⁶ The Palestine Police inherited much of the late Ottoman police personnel, functions, and methods. It was also tasked with enforcing many aspects of Ottoman law that continued into the Mandate period – the Ottoman Penal Code, with modifications, remained in effect until the promulgation of the 1937 Criminal Code Ordinance. This leads to the conclusion that it is essential to learn more about the Ottoman law enforcement apparatus that preceded the British police force in the Mandate. Only then will it be possible to assess the level of continuity between the two forces and the extent to which the British adopted Ottoman methods of policing or introduced new concepts and practices. On the other side of the Mandate period, the Palestine Police's legacy also awaits further scholarly inquiry. Only Caspi has examined continuities between the Mandatory force and the Israel Police. And although Ilana Feldman has written on policing in Gaza under Egyptian rule, the West Bank under Jordanian rule is still *terra incognita* in this respect.⁴⁷

As far as Palestine Police *per se* is concerned, much more inquiry into the non-Britons in the force is required. Most urgently, we need more research on the Arab policemen: their social makeup, status among their compatriots, relations with the British superiors

and Jewish colleagues, attitudes toward the communities they policed and vice versa. We would also benefit from studies on policemen's contribution to the Palestinian national cause, as well as the reasons why some kept local nationalism at a distance. At the same time, though Jewish policemen have served as the subject of some scholarly inquiries, the available literature leaves much to be accomplished. In particular, recent Hebrew-language investigations of Jewish policemen would be of greater use if they could reach a wider English-speaking audience. Whatever their ethnic or national background, it would be valuable to learn more about individual servicemen in general. Individual, social, or collective biographies of policemen, officers and rank and file alike can help disaggregate the abstract notion of "police" into human actors with specific interests, motivations, aspirations, and constraints. Bickers has offered an appropriate model for this line of research.

Integrative studies, however, are particularly essential for a better understanding of the Palestine Police, being that its composition was multiethnic in character. British-Jewish-Arab relations should be at the heart of such inquiry and race, class, ethnicity, and national identity should be important components of analyzing the interaction and working relationships of the various groups. The tension between professionalism and comradeship, on the one hand, and national or communal allegiance, on the other, might prove an interesting theme. At the same time, and in line with the understanding of the "relational history," national identity should not be the exclusive focus of inquiry. Nor should the British, Arab, and Jewish components of the police be presented as unified and monolithic. By definition, this kind of inquiry requires facility in English, Arabic, and Hebrew sources.

Whereas almost all studies on the Palestine Police have treated it as a semimilitary force upholding British colonial control, its civil role has hardly been examined. Police methods of investigation and crime detection, daily enforcement of law and order, and service provision to those in need are all unexplored aspects of policing in Mandate Palestine. The police also regulated traffic as cars became commonplace in Palestine and dealt with smugglers – a modern phenomenon shaped by the establishment of new borders and new legal and economic regimes in the Middle East.⁴⁸ All these mundane functions might be interesting in and of themselves, but they can also shed light on more general themes such as state-society relations, the strength of the colonial state, the acceptance or enforcement of social norms and values, and questions of modernity, science, and technology.

Prisons and imprisonment in Mandate Palestine have also received scant scholarly attention. The Palestine Police ran prisons and internment camps in times of crisis, and recent scholarship has demonstrated the potential of such research.⁴⁹ Historians, sociologists, and criminologists have explored different aspects of imprisonment from the moment of arrest, through daily life in prison and relations between prisoners and staff, to the moment of release, the return home, the process of reintegration into society, and the lasting effects of imprisonment.⁵⁰ Historians of colonialism have also examined prison as a colonial control tool as well as a breeding ground for anti-colonial movements.⁵¹ All

these themes are relevant to Mandate Palestine and promise to generate much interest.

The Palestine Police constitutes a promising subject of scholarly investigation, both with regard to the broader field of colonial policing and with regard to the social and cultural history of Palestine under the British Mandate. It is hoped that the present interest in the topic will continue and new studies will enrich our understanding of this unique force. Perhaps this article will be a modest contribution to this budding tendency.

Yoav Alon is a professor of Middle Eastern history at Tel Aviv University. He is author, most recently, of The Shaykh of Shaykhs: Mithqal al-Fayiz and Tribal Leadership in Modern Jordan (Stanford University Press, 2016).

Endnotes

- 1 David M. Anderson and David Killingray, "Consent, Coercion and Colonial Control: Policing the Empire, 1830–1940," in *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830–1940*, ed. David M. Anderson and David Killingray (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 2.
- 2 Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundation of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, ed. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), 117–142.
- 3 Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done (Being a History of the Palestine Police Force 1920–1948)* (Eastwood, Essex: Palestine Police Old Comrades Benevolent Association, 1982); Joshua Caspi, "ha-Ma'avar mi-mishteret hamandat le-mishteret Yisra'el" [From Mandate Police to Israel Police], in *ha-Ma'avar mi-yishuv li-medinah, 1947–1949: retsifut u-temurot* [From Yishuv to a State, 1947–1949: Continuity and Change], ed. Varda Pilowsky (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1990); Charles Smith, "Communal Conflict and Insurrection in Palestine, 1936–48," in *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917–65*, ed. David Anderson and David Killingray (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 62–83; Jacob Reuveny, *Mimshal ha-Mandat be-E.Y., 1920–1948: nituah histori-medini* [The Mandate Government in Palestine, 1920–1948: A Historical-Political Analysis] (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1993).
- 4 Georgina Sinclair, *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame, 1945–80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 115–16; Georgina Sinclair, "'Get into a Crack Force and Earn £20 a Month and All Found . . .': The Influence of the Palestine Police upon Colonial Policing, 1922–1948," *European Review of History* 13, no. 1 (2006): 49–65; Georgina Sinclair and Chris A. Williams, "'Home and Away': The Cross-Fertilisation between 'Colonial' and 'British' Policing, 1921–85," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35 no. 2 (2007): 221–238.
- 5 Horne, *A Job Well Done*.
- 6 Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (London: Max Parrish, 1952).
- 7 Anandswarup Gupta, *The Police in British India, 1861–1947* (New Delhi: Concept, 1979); David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras, 1859–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); John McCracken, "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspects of the History of a Colonial Police Force," *Journal of African History* 27, no. 1 (1986): 127–147; Angela S. Burger, "Policing a Communal Society: The Case of Sri Lanka," *Asian Survey* 27, no. 7 (1987): 822–833.
- 8 Smith, "Communal Conflict."
- 9 Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Charles Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986); Charles Townshend, "The Defence of Palestine: Insurrection and Public Security, 1936–1939," *English Historical Review* 103, no. 409 (1988): 917–949; Charles Smith, "Communal Conflict."
- 10 For instance, F. Wakeman Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); David

- A. Campion, "Authority, Accountability, and Representation: The United Provinces Police and the Dilemmas of the Colonial Policeman in British India, 1902–39," *Historical Research* 76, no. 192 (2003): 217–237.
- 11 David M. Anderson and Daniel Branch, "Allies at the End of Empire: Loyalists, Nationalists, and the Cold War, 1945–76," *International History Review* 39, no. 1 (2016): 1–13; Emmanuel Blanchard, Marieke Bloembergen, and Amandine Lauro, eds., *Policing in Colonial Empires: Cases, Connections, Boundaries (ca. 1850–1970)* (New York: P. I. E. Peter Lang, 2017); Laleh Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and Their Roads from Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
 - 12 Conor O'Reilly, ed., *Colonial Policing and the Transnational Legacy: The Global Dynamics of Policing Across the Lusophone Community* (London: Routledge, 2018).
 - 13 Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 11.
 - 14 For other examples that address this issue, see Melissa L. Anderson, "Race, Violence, and White Crime: French Assimilationism and Its Limits in the Saigon Colonial Police," in *Policing in Colonial Empires*, ed. Blanchard, Bloembergen, and Lauro, 105–18; August Ibrum K. Kituai, *My Gun, My Brother: The World of the Papua New Guinea Colonial Police, 1920–1960* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).
 - 15 Several works address police forces in the Middle East. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars* dedicates one chapter to a broad survey of police and military actions to control anti-colonial movements, with special emphasis on Palestine and Iraq. The Arab Legion, performing both police and military tasks, has drawn the attention of scholars of Transjordan: Ricardo Bocco and Tariq M. M. Tell, "Pax Britannica in the Steppe: British Policy and the Transjordan Bedouin," in *Village, Steppe, and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan*, ed. Eugene L. Rogan and Tariq M. M. Tell (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 108–27; Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism, and the Modern State* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007); Robert S. G. Fletcher, *British Imperialism and the "Tribal Question": Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Colonial policing in Egypt and Syria have also prompted several works. See: Harold Tollefson, *Policing Islam: The British Occupation of Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Struggle over Control of the Police, 1882–1914* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); Dan Neep, "Policing the Desert: Coercion, Consent, and the Colonial Order in Syria," in *Policing and Prisons in the Middle East: Formation of Coercion*, ed. Laleh Khalili and Jillian Schwedler (London: Hurst, 2010), 41–56.
 - 16 Tom Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland, 1916–1921, and Palestine, 1936–1939* (London, 1977); Tom Bowden, "Policing Palestine 1920–1936: Some Problems of Public Security under the Mandate," in *Police Force in History*, ed. G. L. Mosse (London: Sage Publications, 1975), 115–129; David John Clark, "The Colonial Police and Anti-Terrorism: Bengal 1930–1936, Palestine 1937–1947, and Cyprus 1955–1959" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1978); Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*; Smith, "Communal Conflict."
 - 17 Gad Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart: Revolutionary Change in the Colonial Police in Palestine during the 1930s," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 115–133; Gad Kroizer, *Ha-Tegartim: hakamat metsudot ha-mishtarah ha-Britit be-Eretz Yisra'el, 1938–1943* [The Tegarts: The Establishment of the British Police Fortifications in Palestine, 1938–1943] (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Yehuda Dekel, 2011).
 - 18 Sinclair, *End of the Line*; Sinclair, "'Get into a Crack'."
 - 19 Seán William Gannon, "The Formation, Composition, and Conduct of the British Section of the Palestine Gendarmerie, 1922–1926," *Historical Journal* 56, no. 4 (Dec. 2013): 1001–4.
 - 20 Sinclair, *End of the Line*; Sinclair, "'Get into a Crack'"; Matthew Hughes, "A British 'Foreign Legion'? The British Police in Mandate Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (2013): 697.
 - 21 Gannon, "Formation"; Richard Andrew Cahill, "'Going Berserk': 'Black and Tans' in Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 38 (Summer 2009): 59–68.
 - 22 Hughes, "British 'Foreign Legion'?"; See also Matthew Hughes, "From Law and Order

- to Pacification: Britain's Suppression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 6–22; Matthew Hughes, "A History of Violence: The Shooting of British Assistant Police Superintendent Alan Sigris, 12 June 1936," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 4 (Oct. 2010): 725–743.
- 23 Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); David M. Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of the Empire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005); Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Huw Bennett, "'A Very Salutory Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 415–444; Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Simon Innes-Robbins, *Dirty Wars: A Century of Counterinsurgency* (Stroud, UK: History Press, 2016).
 - 24 Hughes, "British 'Foreign Legion'?" See also Hughes, "From Law and Order"; Hughes, "History of Violence."
 - 25 Laleh Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 413–433.
 - 26 Martin Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots in Mandatory Palestine, 1928–1935* (London: St Martin's Press, 1993); Martin Kolinsky, "Reorganization of the Palestine Police after the Riots of 1929," *Studies in Zionism* 10, no. 2 (1989): 155–173.
 - 27 Muhsin Muhammad Salih, *al-Quwwat al-'askariyya wa al-shurta fi Filastin wa-dawruha fi tanfidh al-siyasa al-Baritaniyya, 1918–1939* [Military Forces and Police in Palestine and their Role in Implementing the British Policy, 1918] (Amman: Dar al-Nafa'is, 1996).
 - 28 David Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat: Murder, Scandal, and Britain's War against Jewish Terrorism, 1945–1948* (London: Da Capo Press, 2009).
 - 29 Bruce Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015).
 - 30 Eldad Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated: The Criminal Investigation Department of the Palestine Police Force, 1920–1948* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).
 - 31 Yoav Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet: ha-modi'in ba-yishuv, 1918–1947* [The Lily's Roots: Intelligence in the Yishuv, 1918–1947] (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-bitahon, 1992), 152, 501, 564; Caspi, "ha-Ma'avar," 282–83; Joshua Caspi, "Policing the Holy Land, 1918–1957: The Transition from a Colonial to a National Model of Policing and Changing Conceptions of Police Accountability" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1991).
 - 32 See: Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Aviva Haramish, "Eretz Yisra'el ha-mandatorit: hevrah dualit o metsi'ut koloniyalit?" [Mandatory Palestine: A Dual Society or a Colonial Reality?] *Zmanim* 92 (2005): 16–25.
 - 33 Perry Anderson, "Agendas for Radical History," *Radical History Review* 36 (1986): 32–37.
 - 34 Zachary Lockman was among the first scholars to employ and further articulate this methodology in his examination of Arab and Jewish railway workers and their struggles to transcend communal loyalties and cooperate on labor issues. See: Zachary Lockman, "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 35, no. 3 (1993): 601–627; Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). See also: Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Deborah S. Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Dan Rabinowitz and Daniel Monterescu, eds., *Mixed Towns, Trapped Communities: Historical Narratives, Spatial Dynamics, Gender Relations and Cultural Encounters in Palestinian-Israeli Towns* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg, "Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in Palestine and Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (2004): 5–20; Mark

- LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press); and Suzanne Schneider, *Mandatory Separation: Religion, Education, and Mass Politics in Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).
- 35 See, for example: May Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society, 1918–1939* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995); Ronen Shamir, *The Colonies of Law: Colonialism, Zionism, and Law in Early Mandate Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); David De Vries, “Cross-National Collective Action in Palestine’s Mixed Towns: The 1946 Civil Servants Strike,” in *Mixed Towns*, ed., Rabinowitz and Montereescu, 85–112; Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009); Andrea L. Stanton, “*This is Jerusalem Calling*”: *State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); and Yoni Furas, “In Need of a New Story: Writing, Teaching, and Learning History in Mandatory Palestine” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2015). For a recent study more critical of the relational approach, see, for example: Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).
- 36 Eugene Rogan, “The Palestine Police Oral History Project,” *Council of British Research in the Levant Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (2007): 35–40.
- 37 Efrat Ben-Ze’ev, *Remembering Palestine in 1948: Beyond National Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- 38 Hagit Krik, “Hayim koloniyaliyim be-Palestina-E.Y.: hevrah ve-tarbut Britiyim be-shetah mandat” [Colonial Lives in Palestine, 1920–1948: British Society and Culture in a Mandate Territory] (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2018).
- 39 John L. Knight, “Policing in British Palestine, 1917–1939” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2008); John L. Knight, “Securing Zion? Policing in British Palestine, 1917–39,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 18, no. 4 (2011): 531–32.
- 40 John L. Knight, “The Successful Failure of Reform: Police Legitimacy in British Palestine,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, ed. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 198–211.
- 41 Rivka Itzhaki-Harel, “Ba-derekh li-mdina: hamimshal ha-briti, ha-mimsad ha-yishuvi, hamishtara veva-notrut, 1918–1948” [Toward a State: British Rule, the Yishuv Leadership, the Police Force, and the Supernumerary Police, 1918–1948] (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 2004).
- 42 Lior Yohanani, “Partners and Adversaries: Jewish and British Relations in the Palestine Police Force, 1936–1945,” *Israelis* 8 (2017): 188–213.
- 43 Adel Yahya, “Quwat al-shurta al-Filastiniyya fi fatrat al-intidab al-Baritani” [The Palestine Police Force in the British Mandate Period], in *Awraq ‘a’iliyya: dirasat fi al-tarikh al-ijtima’i al-mu’asir li-Filastin* [Family Papers: Studies in the Contemporary Social History of Palestine], ed. Zakaria Muhammad, Khaled Farraj, Salim Tamari, and Issam Nassar, rev. Saleh Abdel Jawad (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2011), 209–220.
- 44 Mansour Nasasra, *The Naqab Bedouins: A Century of Politics and Resistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). See also Mansour Nasasra, “Memories from Beersheba: The Bedouin Palestine Police and the Frontiers of the Empire,” *Bulletin for the Council for British Research in the Levant* 9, no. 1 (2014): 32–38; Mansour Nasasra, “Ruling the Desert: Ottoman and British Policies towards the Bedouin of the Naqab and Transjordan Region, 1900–1948,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2015): 261–283.
- 45 Alex Winder, “Policing and Crime in Mandate Palestine: Indigenous Policemen, British Colonial Control, and Palestinian Society, 1920–1948” (PhD diss., New York University, 2017).
- 46 The two and probably only relevant studies, neither of which is dedicated to the Ottoman police in Palestine, are: Nadir Özbek, “Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late 19th-Century Ottoman Empire (1876–1908),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 2008): 47–67; Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

- 47 Ilana Feldman, *Police Encounters: Security and Surveillance in Gaza under Egyptian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).
- 48 See, for example: Cyrus Schayegh, "The Many Worlds of 'Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (April 2011): 273–306; Haggai Ram, "Travelling Substances and Their Human Carriers: Hashish-Trafficking in Mandatory Palestine," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality, and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, ed. Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 201–228.
- 49 See, for example: Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Matthew Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914–1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Brian K. Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
- 50 There is a vast literature on these subjects, much of it influenced by Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).
- 51 See, for example: Jocelyn Alexander, "Rethinking the State and Political Opposition through the Prism of the Prison," *Critical African Studies* 4, no. 6 (2011): 69–83; David Arnold, "The Self and the Cell: Indian Prison Narratives as Life Histories," in *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History*, ed. David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown, eds., *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).