Biometric Statecraft, Policing, and Fingerprint Technology in Palestine/Israel, 1920-1948

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In 1917, near the end of the First World War, the British Army marched into the Russian Compound in Jerusalem in a conquest that ended four hundred years of Ottoman rule in Palestine (Figure 1). In 1920, the League of Nations designated Palestine as a British Mandate, which expanded the British Empire's footprint in the Middle East and placed the development of a government for Palestine under the purview of the British colonial office. Palestine became a new node in the network of civil servants, police officers, scientific experts, and bureaucracies that circulated within the British Empire and the UK in the 20th century's first half.

At least some of these included fingerprint experts, infrastructures, methodologies, and technologies. When British authorities formalized the Palestine Police in 1920, they created a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in one of the highly fortified buildings of the Russian Compound. The CID's Fingerprint Bureau was housed in the building's third floor until its infrastructures were transferred to the newly formed Israel Police at the termination of the Mandate, and in the midst of the Arab-Israeli War, in 1948.

In Mandate Palestine, the Fingerprint Bureau, and its associated experts, technologies, and methods, were not just technical tools of colonial police work. They were also essential to evolving forms of statecraft of three entities between 1920 and 1948: the British Mandate government; the Labor-Zionist paramilitary organization *Haganah*, which infiltrated the Fingerprint Bureau in the 1940s; and the nascent Israel Police founded in 1948.

For the British Mandate government, fingerprinting in Palestine was an imperial enterprise deeply interconnected with colonial governance and policing across the British Empire and the UK. The Palestine CID's Fingerprint Bureau comprised a conglomeration of methods,

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experts, and infrastructures from India, Kenya, Ceylon, South Africa, and Scotland Yard. Like other colonial fingerprint systems, Palestine's was underwritten with assumptions about the criminality of colonial subjects. By the 1930s, it also reflected British colonial governments' increasing commitments to the "civilian model" of colonial policing, an approach developed in Ceylon that demilitarized police forces, elevated fingerprinting and other scientific investigation techniques as a tool of colonial police power, and emphasized hiring colonial subjects to the police. In Palestine, this approach transformed the Palestine Police, and the Fingerprint Bureau, into a vehicle for longstanding British efforts to forge Jewish and Palestinian Arab cooperation, and a shared Palestinian civic national identity for an imagined post-Mandate state.

While it was a product of empire and British aspirations in Palestine, the Fingerprint Bureau also became a resource for the *Haganah* and its emerging statecraft in the 1940s. The *Haganah*'s political aims were originally limited to supporting Jewish settlement in Palestine, especially amidst the rise of the Nazis in Europe, and stopped short of supporting the creation of a Jewish state. When British authorities began limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine after the 1939 White Paper, the *Haganah* embraced a policy of state-building. The Palestine Police's emphasis on hiring Palestine's inhabitants allowed the *Haganah* to infiltrate the Fingerprint Bureau, where they conducted counterintelligence operations on the CID, and gained expertise in fingerprint identification, which they applied toward plans for a Police Department in a new Jewish state. *Haganah* members' work at the Fingerprint Bureau, however, sometimes put them in the cross-hairs of their longstanding conflicts with far-right nationalist and territorial maximalist Revisionist Zionist organizations, and rendered the fingerprint system a site of contestation over their disparate nationalist visions.

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In 1948, the Fingerprint Bureau became a resource for Israeli nation and state-building when *Haganah* members transferred its infrastructures to the nascent Israel Police Forensics Unit in Tel-Aviv. The Israel Police acquired a mostly-intact colonial fingerprint system, and reframed its catalog and methods as symbols of national progress and the trappings of a modern state. It also formed the basis of the first proposed national biometric system in Israel, when the Israel Police asked the government to collect fingerprints from all citizens during the 1948 census. Had this proposal been implemented, biometrics would have become a tool for delineating Israeli citizenship and belonging. It also would have entangled biometrics with the census's role in dispossessing upwards of 700,000 Palestinians of their property in Israel and barring them from citizenship, which paved the way for a Jewish demographic majority in the new state.

While Mandate Palestine features prominently in histories of British colonial policing, it also had a key role in circulations of biometrics in the British Empire. The Palestine Police was deeply engaged in exchange with Scotland Yard and the London Metropolitan Police, as well as colonial police departments whose fingerprint bureaus have received significant scholarly attention, such as India, South Africa, and Kenya. Conversely, much scholarship on Mandate Palestine tends to treat British policies, and violence perpetrated by Jewish nationalist movements and by Palestinian Arab nationalist movements, as the main explainers of British statecraft in Palestine, as well as the politics of Zionist organizations' and early Israeli state and nation-building. A more limited body of work moves away from this chronology in favor of investigating Mandate institutions, like the Palestine Police, as sources of insight into British policies in Palestine, Jewish and Palestinian nationalist movements, and their interactions with each other and British authorities – but these works stop short of considering the role of

technology in Mandate period politics.[1] At the same time, another stream of scholarship shows that technologies created by British authorities and Zionist movements themselves – ranging from electrical grids to agricultural technologies – both reflected, and shaped, Zionist political organizations in Palestine, and laid the groundwork for Israeli state formation.[2] While related scholarship has shown how the new Israeli state took up legal frameworks and built environments from the British Mandate in 1948, direct transfers of technology from the British Mandate to Israel have been much harder to identify.

This paper brings together all of these disparate literatures, and archival materials from British, Israeli, and Palestinian archives, to trace the history of the Fingerprint Bureau since its inception by the Palestine Police CID in 1920. This history shows that fingerprinting both reflected and shaped the Mandate government's, the *Haganah*'s, and Israel's emerging statecrafts between 1920 and 1948, as they each enrolled the very same fingerprint system into different state and nation-building projects. This history also demonstrates that Israeli biometric systems trace back to the Haganah's infiltration of the Fingerprint Bureau, and its transfer of the Bureau's infrastructures and expertise to the new Israel Police in 1948. Yet, as the Israel Police remade the Bureau's infrastructures into a cultural and technological resource for Israeli state and nation-building, they also recapitulated the colonial forms of statecraft of which those infrastructures were originally a part.

This paper offers the concept of "biometric statecraft" to describe how biometric systems both reflect, and create, varying and even conflicting forms of statecraft – and how these

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[1] Steven B. Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[2] Derek Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Hte Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Ronen Shamir, *Current Flow: The Electrification of Palestine* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013); Fredrik Meiton, *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019).

statecrafts can both change and persist as these systems move to new contexts and are repurposed for new political aims. Biometric statecraft also emphasizes how biometric systems are both technical tools of state-building, and political tools for constituting the nation. These technologies are governance apparatuses in which the goals of materially, infrastructurally, and bureaucratically building a state, meet the imaginations of the community that belongs, or ought to belong, in that state. The history of the Fingerprint Bureau in Mandate Palestine shows that this link between state-building and nation-building is expressed through the broader political goals that a biometric system is meant to advance; decisions about who will work as experts on the system; the practice of cultivating expertise; the development of biometric methods; and decisions about whose biometric data will be included or excluded from the system.

Circulations of Policing and Technology in the British Empire and Mandatory Palestine

Policing in Palestine and the Empire

In the British Empire, police departments functioned as a colony's primary line of defense and enforcer of law. The organization of several colonial police departments, notably India and Ceylon, were informed by British experiences of governing Ireland, technically part of the UK during this period, under "quasi-colonial subjugation."[3] The "Irish model" also influenced the Palestine Police's, especially in its early years. In the 1920s the Palestine Police recruited former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary,[4] and several of these "Black and Tans" went on to hold district commander positions well into the 1940s.[5] Along with this personnel transfer came

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[3] Georgina Sinclair, *At the end of the line: colonial policing and the imperial endgame, 1945-80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[4] Matthew Hughes, "Demobilised Soldiers and Colonial Control: The British Police in Mandate Palestine and After," *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 2 (2015): 268–84.

[5] Richard Cahill, "'Going Beserk': 'Black and Tans' in Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 38 (2009): 59–68.

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a transfer of violent techniques of "controlling by force,"[6] shaped by the belief that the Irish

context, and British experience in controlling Irish rebellion, would be applicable in Palestine.[7]

While much scholarship has demonstrated the influence of the Irish model on imperial

policing, colonial police departments were hardly carbon copies of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Distinct forms of policing emerged in different colonial contexts, and the transfer of police

personnel, tactics, and philosophies were not unidirectional. Rather, they flowed back and forth

through "horizontal circuits" between the Empire and the UK, and within the Empire itself.[8]

The Palestine Police was a key node in this network.[9] While its initial "militarized" framework

followed the Irish model, in subsequent decades the influence of police methods, personnel, and

approaches formulated at Scotland Yard and the London Metropolitan Police, as well as colonial

police departments in Ceylon, South Africa, Kenya, India, and Egypt shaped the Palestine

Police's organization and procedures. At the same time, Palestine Police also became a model for

departments in other colonies and the UK, and even informed British policing in Ireland. An

influential imperial policing handbook in the 20th century's first half used Palestine as its central

case study,[10] while Inspectors General of the Palestine Police framed Palestine as a training

ground for colonial police officers. Several members of the Palestine Police went on to serve in

high ranks in police departments in other parts of the Empire and the UK before and after 1948.[11]

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[6] Cahill; Matthew Hughes, "A British 'Foreign Legion'? The British Police in Mandate Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 5 (September 2013): 696–711.

[7] 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: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 13, no. 1 (March 2006): 49–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480600586734.

[8] Laleh Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 3 (August 2010): 413–33.

[9] For a brief historiography of the Palestine Police, see: Yoav Alon, "Bridging Imperial, National, and Local Historiographies: Britons, Arabs, and Jews in the Mandate Palestine Police," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 75 (n.d.): 62–77.

[10] Robert Johnson, "Command of the Army, Charles Gwynn and *Imperial Policing:* The British Doctrinal Approach to Internal Security in Palestine 1919–29," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 4 (August 8, 2015): 570–89.

[11] Sinclair, *At the end of the line: colonial policing and the imperial endgame, 1945-80.*

While the Palestine Police shaped, and was shaped by, networks of imperial exchange, it also relied upon, and was influenced by, Palestine's own inhabitants. This was especially apparent at Palestine's southern frontier, where, far from urban centers, police departments recruited Bedouin police officers, and relied on Bedouin leaders, knowledges, and practices.[12]

Science and Technology in the Empire, and their Uptake in New States

Science and technology also circulated in the British Empire. British scientific institutions, experts, and technologies played an early role in the expansion of the Empire by facilitating transfers of knowledge, energy, manpower, and capital.[13] Imperial expansion was also always a pursuit of knowledge for the sake of enhancing imperial security, power, and profit, and the colonial context was also key to the development of new science and technology in the 20th century, and vice versa – including biometrics.[14]

British anthropological research in biometry justified the expansion of empire by furnishing so-called scientific evidence of the racial inferiority of the Empire's inhabitants. In turn, the assumption that colonial subjects had innate criminal tendencies reinforced beliefs in the necessity of biometrics for policing and administration in the Empire.[15] But biometrics did not flow unidirectionally from the British mainland to the colonies – they themselves were products of Empire, whose traffic "could move in either direction."[16] The most consequential

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[12] Mansour Nasasra, "The Frontiers of Empire: Colonial Policing in Southern Palestine, Sinai, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 49, no. 5 (September 3, 2021): 899–939; 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 (October 2014): 32–38.

[13] Lucile H. Brockway, "Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens," *American Ethnologist* 6, no. 3 (August 1979): 449–65.

[14] Chandak Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj: How Fingerprinting Was Born in Colonial India* (London: Pan Books, 2004); Keith Breckenridge, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[15] Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*, 2nd print (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[16] Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj*, 5–6.

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fingerprinting developments took place in India, the Empire's largest colony, in the late 19th century. The Henry System, the fingerprint classification system adopted by much of the world in the 20th century and which still informs fingerprinting today, was developed in India in 1897 by a British official, Sir Edward Henry, and two Indian fingerprint experts, Chandra Bose and Azizul Haque.[17] This system's perceived success in India helped justify its adoption in British police departments a few years later. It subsequently became ubiquitous in Europe and the British Empire, as its technologies, experts, and methods circulated from India to the UK, Ceylon, Kenya, and South Africa. From there, the Henry System made its way to Palestine at the start of the British Mandate, where fingerprinting became an integral part of British policing.

Beyond circulating across the British Empire, biometric technologies – like other colonial technologies – featured prominently in newly independent states after British decolonization.[18] Scholars have shown that remnants of colonial power, and its expressions in capital, nation state formation, racial classification, and other social structures, persisted after decolonization.[19] Historians have also shown this to also be true for remnants of colonial scientific and technological infrastructures. In post-colonial states, new science and technology projects often retained technical features, cultural meanings, and social impacts of their colonial predecessors. Many were simply old British colonial systems repurposed in the service of these new states. Visvanathan observed that even when new states framed these projects as emblems of national progress and modernization, they nevertheless reproduced harms of the colonial enterprise.[20]

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[17] Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj*; Cole, *Suspect Identities*.

[18] Sandra G. Harding, ed., *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Warwick Anderson, "Introduction: Postcolonial Technoscience," *Social Studies of Science* 32, no. 5/6 (2002): 643–58.

[19] Anabel Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533–80.

[20] Shiv Visvanathan, "From the Annals of the Laboratory State," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 12, no. 1 (January 1987): 37–59.

Mitchell located the logics of the Egyptian national economy in the "program of calculability"

inherent in the former British colonial government's production of maps.[21] Von Schnitzler's

history of the pre-paid utility meter as it traveled from Victorian Britain, to Apartheid and then

post-Apartheid South Africa, shows how even when incorporated into a new democratic South

African government's efforts to expand services, the meters still held cultural meanings of

Apartheid-era disenfranchisement and effectively marginalized Africans.[22] Breckenridge's

history of biometrics in South Africa shows how British colonial biometric infrastructures laid

the groundwork for Apartheid bureaucracy, which later informed biometric systems for welfare

distribution. This history also suggests that the authoritarian and racist dimensions of centralized

biometric systems – explicitly foregrounded in British colonial rule and South Africa's Apartheid

government – can persist in new contexts in which states deploy biometric infrastructures.[23]

     In the context of Palestine, scholars have traced similar recapitulations of governance,

from the British Mandate's legal frameworks, bureaucracies, technical infrastructures, and built

environments to those deployed in Israel after 1948. Much of this work focuses on influences of

British colonial governance systems on relationships between Israeli bureaucracy and settler

colonialism, surveillance, and control in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.[24]

"Emergency laws" that Israel inherited from the British Mandate became the legal basis of a

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[21] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[22] Antina Von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes, and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (November 2013): 670–93.

[23] Breckenridge, *Biometric State*.

[24] Yehouda Shenhav and Yael Berda, "The Colonial Foundations of the State of Exception: Juxtaposing the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian Territories with Colonial Bureaucratic History," in *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 337–74; Yael Berda, *Colonial Bureaucracy and Contemporary Citizenship: Legacies of Race and Emergency in the Former British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

military government imposed on Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel between 1948 to 1966,[25] as well as Israel's military occupation of Palestinian Territories after 1967.[26] Similarly, statutory planning regulations adopted from the British Mandate shaped the control of land use in Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation.[27] Scholars note that the Israel police used the same buildings that the Palestine Police used after 1948, and suggest that Israel's early military and political leaders' prior experiences in British military and police influenced the Israeli policies toward Palestinians inside and outside of Israel's 1948 borders.[28]

While transfers of personnel, legal frameworks, and the built environment are well-documented in Palestine and Israel, technology transfer has been harder to trace. Scholars have gestured to it by highlighting "isomorphisms" and similarities between British Mandate "counterinsurgency" technologies and those used by the Israel police and military within Israel and in Occupied Palestinian Territories since 1948, including biometrics.[29] This paper demonstrates the direct transfer of biometric expertise, technologies, and methods from the British Mandate's Palestine Police to the Israel Police in 1948. This marked Israel's first biometric system, and all Israeli biometric systems created since 1948 trace back to it.

British Colonial Technologies meet Zionist Politics in the Yishuv

Science and technology were key resources for the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community of Palestine) and its emerging capabilities to create a "state within a state" in the Mandate.[30] The

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[25] Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Stifling Surveillance: Israel's Surveillance and Control of the Palestinians during the Military Government Era," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 68 (2016): 36–55.

[26] Yael Berda, *Living Emergency: Israel's Permit Regime in the Occupied West Bank* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[27] Rassem Khamaisi, "Israeli Use of the British Mandate Planning Legacy as a Tool for the Control of Palestinians in the West Bank," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 3 (January 1997): 321–40.

[28] Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies"; Hughes, "A British 'Foreign Legion'?"

[29] Khalili, "The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies."

[30] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, 1st ed (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007). Khalidi also discusses a range of factors that enhanced these capabilities in the Yishuv in contrast to the Palestinian population – including capital investment, urban vs. rural divides, political homogeneity, etc.

Mandate government's infrastructures and technological systems often included direct and indirect entanglements with the *Yishuv's* institutions.[31] For example, though British authorities believed the electrification of Palestine in 1923 would facilitate a transcendence of Jewish and Palestinian Arab nationalistic fault lines (an enduring aspiration for British colonial nation building there), British power grids strengthened the *Yishuv*'s institutions and their evolving "separatist" nationalist politics. This was largely an outcome of capital, as electrification benefitted the *Yishuv's* industries (in addition to being contracted to a *Yishuv*-based company) while remaining less influential on industries predominant among Palestinian Arabs.[32] Electrification, in turn, co-evolved with Zionist politics and statebuilding goals, and formed a literal and figurative infrastructure of power that facilitated both the creation of the state of Israel and Palestinian statelessness in 1948.[33] In addition to demarcating the borders of the British Mandate, the placement of its grids alongside prior Ottoman grids, also prefigured future borders in Israel and Palestine.[34]

Even during the Ottoman period, Penslar shows that Zionist political movements began adopting colonial technologies related to transportation, communications, and agriculture as they forged a "technocratic" elite in the service of settlement and Jewish nation-building in Palestine.[35] The *Yishuv* itself also cultivated their own technologies and scientific expertise to pursue state-like activities, which were taken up by Israel in its early years. For example, the

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[31] Matthew Kraig Kelly, *The Crime of Nationalism: Britain, Palestine, and Nation-Building on the Fringe of Empire* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).

[32] Shamir, *Current Flow*.

[33] Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*.

[34] Shamir notes that the British grid, which started in Jaffa in 1923 and expanded outward, never reached as far east as what became the Green Line. Municipalities in today's Occupied West Bank were connected to a different grid – Ramallah, for example, was connected to a Jerusalem-based grid that the Ottoman Empire originally contracted to a Greek Jerusalemite. The British-contracted Jaffa-based grid's edges ended up closely aligning to the UN's suggested partition line and later, was contained entirely within Israel's 1948 borders.

[35] Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Hte Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870-1918*.

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Italian Jewish demographer Roberto Bachi developed a statistics bureau that compared reproduction rates of Ashkenazi (Jews of Europe) and Mizrahi Jews (Jews from the Middle East and North Africa), and predicted demographic imbalances between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. After 1948, he founded Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, where his Mandate-period research influenced state policies on *Mizrahi* Jewish immigration to Israel and the embrace of policies, as expressed in the 1948 census, that would create a Jewish demographic majority.

British Policy, the Palestine Police CID, and Zionist Politics in Palestine

Until 1939, the British government held what it called a Jewish National Home policy for Palestine. Laid out in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, whose terms were also enshrined in the Mandate designated by the League of Nations in 1920, it promised to facilitate a "national home for the Jewish people" without "prejudice[ing] the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." Though this policy did not explicitly advocate for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, it formalized avenues for Jewish immigration to Palestine under British rule. While British officials developed their own varying individual sympathies about Palestine's inhabitants and their nationalisms, historians of this period generally agree that British policy strengthened the *Yishuv* and the nationalist aspirations of Zionist organizations, and held back Palestinian national aspirations.[36] Even the vague wording of the Balfour declaration recognized Jewish political rights for a national home in Palestine, while lending credence only to the "civil and religious" rights of Palestinian Arabs.[37]

Historians and popular discourse over the years offered many reasons why British policy favored Jewish settlement in Palestine in the early 20th century, ranging from the alleged influence of Zionist thinkers and Jewish elites in British politics, to British "philo-semitism" and

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[36] Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*, 3; Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*.
[37] Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*.

a sense that "Christian Civilization" owed a debt to the Jewish people given their long history of persecution in Europe,[38] and beliefs that would-be Jewish settlers would serve as useful proxies for British colonial expansion.[39] Others suggest that classical anti-Semitic assumptions about outsized Jewish global power also influenced British policies. Policymakers hoped to recruit global Jewry as allies against their WWI enemy, Germany, and believed that Jewish settlement in Palestine would be a buffer against the Ottoman Empire.[40] Jewish settlement in Palestine also aligned with eugenic thinking prevalent in the UK at the time, which singled out Jews as a "people apart".[41]

Enabling Jewish immigration to Palestine was a key point of agreement between British Authorities and mainstream Zionist movements. While Theodor Herzl, who coined Zionism in the 1890s to describe a Jewish nationalism based on concepts of Jewish nationhood and the creation of a "national home" in Palestine, envisioned a Jewish state in his writings, state creation was not a widely-held goal among Zionist political organizations in the 1920s and 30s. With a socialist leaning, an affiliation with the labor union *Histadrut*, and in close alignment with the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the influential Labor-Zionist Jewish Agency in Palestine worked with British authorities to enable Jewish immigration – especially as European Jews sought to flee the Nazi rise to power. However, they explicitly stopped short of calling for a Jewish state. The *Haganah*, the Jewish Agency's paramilitary arm created in the 1920s, which first formed as a "civil defense" organization meant to handle security in Palestine's Jewish

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[38] Mayir Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers," *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1970): 48–76.
[39] William M. Mathew, "The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate, 1917–1923: British Imperialist Imperatives," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3 (July 2013): 231–50.
[40] James Renton, "The Balfour Declaration: Its Origins and Consequences," *Jewish Quartlerly* 55, no. 1 (2008): 40–41.
[41] Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*, 24; Renton, "The Balfour Declaration: Its Origins and Consequences."

settlements, held onto a policy of *havlagah,* or non-violent "restraint," while cooperating with the Palestine Police CID, which often delegated security matters in the *Yishuv* to the *Haganah*.[42]

While the Jewish Agency and the *Haganah* anchored the Labor Zionist movement in Palestine, the movement's offshoots – including groups that embraced socialism, communism and anti-fascism as their political callings – took on different kinds of relationships to Jewish nationalism. At least one of these offshoots, the Communist Party, ultimately rejected nationalism altogether, while others, like Brit Shalom and the Ihud Party, advocated for the creation of a binational state in which Jews and Arabs would have equal rights.

As Labor Zionist movements splintered along political and nationalist lines, the *Haganah* fought against their main rivals, the far-right nationalist and territorial maximalist Revisionist Zionist organizations, *Etzel* (*Irgun*) founded in 1931 and *Lechi* (Stern Gang) in 1940. In contrast to the mainstream "immigration-only" approach held by the Jewish Agency and the *Haganah*, Revisionists explicitly advocated for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine (and Transjordan) that would have a Jewish demographic majority. The *Etzel* even ended its affiliation with the World Zionist Congress in the mid-1930s because of the Congress's refusal to designate the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as a goal in its charter. In contrast to the *Haganah*'s policy of *havlagah* (nonviolent restraint), Revisionists also openly embraced kidnappings, assassinations, and revenge killings against British officials, Palestinian Arabs, and Jews who they deemed as collaborators, including *Haganah* members. They attacked the CID Headquarters in Jerusalem in 1944, while other high-profile attacks included the King David Hotel bombing in 1946 and the massacre of Palestinians at Deir Yassin in 1948.

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[42] John Knight, "Securing Zion? Policing in British Palestine, 1917–39," *European Review of History: Revue Europeenne d'histoire* 18, no. 4 (August 2011): 523–43; Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*.

This constellation of enemies, alliances, and Zionist ideologies shifted after the 1939 White Paper. This policy paper abandoned the Jewish National Home policy, and restricted Jewish immigration and land purchases in Palestine. The White Paper is widely considered to be a response to the Arab Revolt of 1936-39,[43] in which several Palestinian Arab political movements demanded independence and self-government, and opposed a 1937 British Peel Commission proposal for the partition of Palestine. The revolt also challenged British policy on Jewish immigration, which they had long feared would result in displacement from their homeland. In 1919, the Jewish population of Palestine numbered approximately 61,000 (or 10 percent of the population – a fair amount of which comprised Sephardic (Spanish) and Kurdish communities that had been present in Palestine since the late 1400s). By 1935, the population had grown to 355,000 (or 29 percent), with nearly 60,000 Jews arriving that year, primarily from Europe.[44]

In response to the 1939 White Paper, the *Haganah* ended its cooperation with the CID. Coming directly up against the CID's jurisdiction over immigration control, they worked to bring European Jews into Palestine illegally under the new restrictions – an effort that gained increasing urgency for them as Jews sought to flee Nazi Europe. They also shifted away from their non-statist approach, and began embracing state-building policies as they viewed themselves as the foundation for a "Jewish Army" for a potential future Jewish state. Originally, the *Haganah* envisioned that future state would maintain connections to the British Empire, as they believed Britain would remain the dominant power in the Middle East. However, as news of

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[43] However, just as the Jewish National Home policy was dictated by geopolitical interests, its abandonment in the White Paper of 1939 was also likely driven by a shift in British geopolitical interests away from WWI power struggles and toward courting newly independent Middle East states, like Saudi Arabia. Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*.

[44] Rafiq Husseini, *Exiled from Jerusalem: The Diaries of Hussein Fakhri al-Khalidi* (Bloomsbury, 2020); Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*.

the Nazi death camps in Europe reached Palestine in the mid-1940s, they began believing in the

inevitability of a war – which they thought would be against the British. By 1945, the *Haganah*

abandoned its policy of *havlagah*, or restraint, toward Mandate officials, and entered into a loose

alliance with their longtime rivals – the Revisionist Zionist *Etzel* and *Lechi* – to fight against

British rule.[45] These efforts that were enhanced by military experience that *Haganah* members

gained from serving in the British Army in WWII, and their prior cooperation with British

authorities to police Jewish settlements, which enabled them to collect weapons. By the late

1940s, they began setting plans in place for the creation of government institutions – which

ultimately formed the basis of the Israeli government, police, and military in 1948.

Biometric Statecraft

The Fingerprint Bureau, and its experts, methods, and technologies, reflected, and were

essential to the operationalization, of varying forms of statecraft in Palestine between 1920 and

1948. Biometrics, in this context, was not only a technical tool for building a state – it was also a

political tool for constituting a nation. For the British Mandate government, it was a technical

instrument of colonial policing and a political vehicle for implementing their vision of a shared

civic Palestinian national identity for all of Palestine's inhabitants. For the *Haganah*, it was a

technical mechanism through which they spied on the British, and as they moved away from

their non-statist politics, the Bureau also became an instrument for actualizing their efforts to

create a Jewish state in Palestine. And, for the Israel Police, the experts and materials they

acquired from the Fingerprint Bureau formed the technological trappings of a "modern" state.

Yet the Police also saw biometrics as a tool to address who, exactly, would belong in that state in

their failed attempted to attach fingerprinting to the 1948 census, whose bureaucratic

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[45] Steven Wagner, "British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement in the Palestine Mandate, 1945–46," *Intelligence and National Security* 23, no. 5 (October 2008): 629–57.

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mechanisms created a Jewish population majority in Israel by dispossessing Palestinians of their property and citizenship. While their new systems enrolled biometrics into new forms of state and nation-building, they also recapitulated the politics associated with their systems' colonial British Mandate predecessor.

Each of these developments were examples of "biometric statecraft." Drawing upon material studies of the state that view state power as constitutive of a state's infrastructures,[46] as well as historians' and Science and Technology Studies scholars' insights into how state technology projects shape, and are shaped by, national identity, nationalist ideologies, and national aspirations,[47] the concept captures biometrics' role in linking state-building and nation-building projects. It also builds on Breckenridge's identification of a new type of state – the "biometric state"[48] – by showing the processes through which biometrics became essential to state formation, and their attendant projects of nation-building, since the height of the British Empire. The history of the Fingerprint Bureau demonstrates the interpretive flexibility[49] of biometrics – as myriad groups can enroll a single system into varying, and even conflicting, state and nation-building projects. At the same time, the statecrafts associated with a biometric system can both change – and persist – as new actors imbue the system with new goals by new actors,

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[46] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Appraoches and Their Critics," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77–96; Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58–89.

[47] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London New York: Verso, 2016); Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity After World War II*, Inside Technology (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London: Zed Books, 1998); Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile*, First MIT Press paperback edition (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2014); Jon Agar, *The Government Machine: A Revolutionary History of the Computer*, History of Computing (Cambridge, Mass. London, England: The MIT Press, 2003).

[48] Breckenridge, *Biometric State*.

[49] Trevor J. Pinch and Wiebe E. Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other," *Social Studies of Science* 14, no. 3 (1984): 399–441.

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transfers the system to new political contexts.[50] Many works on biometric and other identification systems suggest that their capacity to influence nation-building relates to their ability to identify, and classify, populations into groups that do and do not belong. However, the history of the Fingerprint Bureau shows other technical features of biometric systems can also contribute to political designations of national belonging and citizenship. This includes the goals of the broader bureaucracy within which a biometric system is created; determinations of who, exactly, can be hired as fingerprint examiners; decisions about what kinds of biometric methods to deploy; the cultivation of biometric expertise and training; and, of course, designations of whose biometric data will be included or excluded from the system.

Notes on Studying Mandate Palestine

While centering biometric technology in the history of Mandatory Palestine brings emerging forms of statecraft into focus, it also foregrounds well-known limits of studying the Mandate period. The British colonial project for Palestine envisioned Jewish and Arab cooperation in a future Palestinian state, and the Palestine Police, like other Mandate institutions, was meant to be a tool for realizing this vision. In practice, the Police was a unique colonial institution that brought together British, Jewish, and Arab personnel.[51] Like the rest of the Mandate government, the Palestine Police effectively tried to create a shared Palestinian civic identity that referred to all the inhabitants of Palestine as Palestinians – including Jews, Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, Greeks, Armenians, Circassians, and other groups.[52] Palestine Police documents thus used the "Palestinian" designation in this way, and mostly referred to Fingerprint

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[50] Thomas P Hughes, "The Evolution of Large Technological Systems," in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, ed. Wiebe Bijker, Trevor Pinch, and Thomas P. Hughes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

[51] Alon, "Bridging Imperial, National, and Local Historiographies: Britons, Arabs, and Jews in the Mandate Palestine Police."

[52] Gad Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart: Revolutionary Change in the Colonial Police in Palestine during the 1930s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32, no. 2 (May 2004): 115–33.

Bureau personnel as "Palestinian" without including names or any other details. Sometimes, these documents differentiated between Jews and Arabs. In those cases, they only sometimes denoted whether or not a Jewish officer had immigrated to Palestine, when, and from where. Sometimes, but not always, they would distinguish Palestinian Arabs as either Christian or Muslim, grouping the two as monolithic entities while eliding factors like regional and family affiliations. These documents also overlooked distinctions between two Jewish communities in Palestine which both served in the Palestine Police in large numbers: the Ladino-speaking Sephardic community, who migrated to Palestine in the 1400s when the Ottoman Empire welcomed Jews exiled from Spain, along with Kurdish Jews and other Jewish communities from the Middle East; and Ashkenazi (European) Jews who mostly arrived after the 1880s.[53]

Given that the majority of sources on the Palestine Police come from the Palestine Police itself, there are limits to the extent they can be used to access perspectives beyond those of the Mandate government. Most Mandate government documents are located in British and Israeli archives, while a smaller number are held in Palestinian archives, such as the Palestinian Museum Digital Archive. The National Archives in London holds several Mandate-period sources, while the Middle East Studies Centre at Oxford holds the official archives of the Palestine Police. That said, a majority of documents from the Mandate government, and specifically the Palestine Police, are dispersed across three Israeli archives: the Israel Police Archives, the Haganah Archives, and the Central Zionist Archives. The Haganah Archives also contain documents related to the Haganah's counterespionage on the CID, and oral histories of

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[53] Yitzhak David Cohen, השוטר העברי בביתו הלאומי *The Hebrew Police Officer in His National Home* (Jerusalem: Winfeld Printing Press, 1939).

former *Haganah* members who served in the Palestine Police. To date there are few publicly-

held Arabic language records on Palestinian political organizations from this period.[54]

Fingerprinting at the Palestine Police: 1918-1930

In 1918, the British army entered Palestine from Egypt and governed Palestine with a

military administration for two years. Formally called the Occupied Enemy Territory

Administration (OETA), they cobbled together a small police force that operated at a local level

without a significant central command.[55] Criminal investigations were handled by public

prosecutors, as they had been under the Ottoman rule.[56] In summer of 1919, Lieutenant Colonel

P.B. Bramley, formerly the Deputy Inspector-General of Police in India, was put in charge of

formalizing a unified Palestine Police force. The new force comprised former Ottoman police

personnel, and personnel from India, Egypt, and the Royal Irish Constabulary, and had its own

emblem (Figure 2). After the League of Nations designated Palestine as a British Mandate in

1920, a civil administration headed by High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel replaced the

military administration, and introduced British court and criminal investigation systems.[57]

After the passage of the Palestine Police Ordinance in February 1921, Bramley became

the head of the police force, and supervised two assistant directors: one who handled general

administration, and another who handled criminal investigation – a nascent CID.[58] The CID's

office was located at the police headquarters at the Russian Compound in Jerusalem – thought to

be the most secure group of buildings in the city. Limited in scope, the CID had three British

Superintendents, who supervised a staff of Jewish and Palestinian Arab inspectors. They focused

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[54] Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: Secret Intelligence and British Rule in Palestine*; Kelly, *The Crime of Nationalism*.
[55] A. J. Kingsley Heath, "The Palestine Police Force under the Mandate," *The Police Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1928): 78–88.
[56] Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done: A History of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948* (Sussex: The Book Guild, Ltd, 2003).
[57] Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (London: Max Parrish, 1952), 153.
[58] Kingsley Heath, "The Palestine Police Force under the Mandate."

less on criminal investigation, and more on collecting political intelligence on Jewish

immigration, and the political and social affairs of Palestine's Arab communities.[59]

The CID also created a fingerprinting, photography, and criminal records department.

Bramley put Eugene Quigley in charge of the CID in 1920, whose first instructions were to

"install and equip a records system and a fingerprint branch capable of assisting with the

investigation of crime and surviving close questioning in the courts as to its procedures."[60]

Quigley put his assistant Edward Cosgrove – who had never learned fingerprinting – in charge of

creating a Fingerprint Bureau. As was often the case for British officials in other colonies,

Cosgrove relied heavily on local fingerprint experts – he learned fingerprinting on-the-job from

one of his Palestinian Arab assistants, Bahara Dabbah.[61]

The Fingerprint Bureau used the Henry System, and it had only two members. At first,

they used fingerprint forms sent from India. Finding them to be less useful for their context,

Cosgrove acquired the fingerprint forms used by the London Metropolitan Police, and revised

them for the Palestine Police. He made the forms trilingual – English, Arabic, and Hebrew – and

the CID used these forms until the end of the Mandate in 1948 (Figure 3).[62]

In December 1922, Arthur Mavrogordato succeeded Bramley as the new Inspector

General of the Palestine Police at the age of 35, after serving in the Cyprus Military Police and in

the Sierra Leone police. The Colonial Office appointed Joseph Broadhurst, who had been

Detective Inspector at Scotland Yard's CID for many years, to be the new head of the Palestine

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[59] Horne, *A Job Well Done: A History of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948*.

[60] Horne, 465.

[61] Horne, 465. Bahara Dabbah appears in Horne's account – this name does not appear in any primary source records (though further research might reveal otherwise). Horne's account does not indicate any further information about who Dabbah was, where they learned fingerprinting, or where they were from. Dabbah was likely Palestinian, but given that the Palestine Police hired personnel from the Egyptian Police at that time, which already had a Fingerprint Bureau, Dabbah also could transferred from there. A section of Harouvi's book *Palestine Investigated*, describes Dabbah as an assistant to Cosgrove, based on an interview he conducted with Horne.

[62] Horne, 479, fn 3.

Police CID. Having marched with General Allenby's regiment from Egypt to Jerusalem in 1917-18, Broadhurst welcomed his new appointment in Palestine as an "exciting chapter in my life" where "once more Romance was around the corner."[63]

According to his own account, when Broadhurst arrived at the Russian Compound in 1924, he found that the CID "existed in name only." It had an office, a few English-speaking Jewish and Palestinian Arab clerks, two detectives, stationary, and government forms. Broadhurst was expected to hire more staff, organize the Political Branch, Criminal Records Office, Finger-Print Bureau, Anti-Smuggling and Drugs Bureau, Film and Press Censorship departments, Photography, deportations, extraditions, and naturalizations. Self-admittedly inexperienced in managing "obscure" CID departments, much of these plans would not come to fruition during his tenure. Other accounts described him as "incompetent" and distrusted by his subordinates, noting that the departments he managed deliberately excluded him from their work.[64] Meanwhile, the Fingerprint Bureau maintained continuity with Cosgrove at the helm.

The Dowbiggin Report: Fingerprinting Becomes Central to Mandate Statecraft "Father" of Colonial Policing Visits Palestine

In 1929, disagreements over Jewish access to the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City escalated into riots in the city, and violence across Palestine. The Broadhurst CID, which was perennially understaffed and overworked, did not anticipate the outbreak of violence and lacked the capacity to respond. This perceived failure at the CID, as well as long-standing concerns that the Palestine Police lagged behind other colonial police departments, prompted the Colonial Office to send the Inspector General of the Ceylon Police and renowned "Father of Colonial Policing", Herbert Dowbiggin, to investigate the Force in 1930 and create a framework for its

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[63] Joseph F. Broadhurst, *From Vine Street to Jerusalem* (London: Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd, 1936), 165.
[64] Dowbiggin (from British National Archives)

reform. Dowbiggin suggested a number of organizational and procedural changes to the force –

including to the Fingerprint Bureau – that aligned with his model of "civilian" policing, which he

formulated and implemented in Ceylon. The "civilian" model, in Dowbiggin's view, would not

only improve the Force through its emphasis on science and technical training, but would

transform it into a vehicle for creating a shared civic identity amongst Palestine's inhabitants.

Fingerprinting would be a key part of this new nation-building and statecraft project in

Mandate Palestine. In his scathing several hundred-page report, Dowbiggin reserved special

concern for what he saw as the weakest part of the Palestine Police – the CID – and described the

Fingerprint Bureau as being "in arrears." His inspection revealed an overworked staff of two

Palestinian Arab fingerprint examiners in a poorly lit room, who would frequently get pulled

away to assist with Arabic-English translation. Dowbiggin told Cosgrove, who directed the

Fingerprint Bureau, that this practice "was rather like a railway officer taking an engine driver

off the foot plate, when he was short of a guard, and then discovering there was no one to drive

the engine."[65] He noted that this situation had caused the fingerprint work, "which no one else

could do," and the fingerprint examiners themselves, to suffer in an organization that was "not

policeman-like." He requested that the examiners be relieved from extraneous duties for one

week so that he could observe them. When left undisturbed, he found "both the fingerprint

experts were quite competent men at their work."[66]

Relatedly, Dowbiggin also found that officers at the CID failed to apply fingerprinting in

cases where they should have been part of the investigation. He was particularly vexed by a

break-in at the Hebrew University in December 1929, where thieves broke glass windows to

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[65] Herbert L. Dowbiggin, "Report on the Palestine Police Force," May 6, 1930, 196, 19/mishtar/59, Haganah Historical Archives.
[66] Dowbiggin, 196.

enter a building and stole money, clothing, and food. The officer who investigated the case, Ishak El Assali, made "no mention" in his report of "whether there were any traces of fingerprints on the broken glass" or whether investigators searched for fingerprints. Dowbiggin discovered the report had been signed by a British officer, and passed through three more officers' hands at Headquarters. No one noticed the omission of fingerprints, and Dowbiggin found that the lead investigator on the case had never even visited the scene of the crime.[67]

Dowbiggin chalked this up to the fact that the Palestine Police's training school had been defunct since its early years, and less than a third of the force had gone through formal police training. He also cited a lack of oversight by trained British officers on the force's primarily local untrained or under-trained personnel. "The investigation of crime in Palestine has been left too much to the Palestinian members of the force," he wrote, and "very little" is done by British officers.[68] What methods were under-trained personnel using to investigate crimes? Dowbiggin disparagingly hypothesized that they might be falling back on methods that the Police used under Ottoman rule. He regarded the situation as a major organizational failure that disadvantaged non-British members of the force, and believed it was unfair to place responsibility for criminal investigations onto untrained and/or unsupervised personnel – "I consider that the Palestinian police have rather been left 'in the air.'"[69]

To improve criminal investigation, Dowbiggin proposed the resurrection and reorganization of the training school, which would have a professionalized curriculum, along with a handbook in English, Hebrew and Arabic. Trainees would take courses on how to use a notebook, identify individuals, draw sketches of crime scenes, and present evidence in court.

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[67] Dowbiggin, 160.
[68] Dowbiggin, 151.
[69] Dowbiggin, 152.

Recruits at all ranks would learn the "science of identification by fingerprints," methods of fingerprint collection,"[70] how to handle evidence with potential fingerprints, as well as footprint identification.[71] Trainees would also hear lectures from experts on blood tests, handwriting analysis, counterfeit currency, and the identification of hair, paper, cloth, bullets, and poison.[72] They would read standard police textbooks and professional journals, and receive instruction in criminal investigation from the Palestine Government Analyst GW Baker, a chemist at the Central Laboratories of the Department of Health who consulted for the police.

As for the Fingerprint Bureau, Dowbiggin dictated that it should be in "a room with a good north light."[73] He called for the expansion of its catalogs through the addition of a separate catalog of fingerprints found at crime scenes. This catalog would be used to run comparisons with prints found at the scene of a crime, or with the fingerprints of a new offender arrested for a crime, to see if they matched those from prior crimes. He emphasized that the fingerprint experts employed at the CID should exclusively work on fingerprinting, and never be employed in "translation work."[74] He also recommended purchasing equipment, including an ultra violet-ray Hanovia Analytic Quartz Lamp for inspecting samples of paper, sealing wax, and glass.

On an organizational level, Dowbiggin used the Ceylon Police as a blueprint for the separation of the CID into two departments – a Political Department, for conducting political intelligence work, and a Criminal Department containing both the Criminal Records Office and the Fingerprint Bureau. Each would be headed by an Assistant Superintendent.[75] He also called

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[70] Dowbiggin, 73.
[71] Dowbiggin, 154.
[72] Dowbiggin, 73.
[73] Dowbiggin, 215.
[74] Dowbiggin, 211.
[75] Dowbiggin, 213.

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for the creation of district level CIDs, which could have their own fingerprint offices, that would answer to the CID at Police Headquarters in Jerusalem.

Dowbiggin's recommendations for technical improvements to the CID, and especially its Fingerprint Bureau, aligned with his "civilian model" of colonial policing. Developed under his directorship in Ceylon, the model moved away from militarized colonial policing in favor of a "civilian" force that relied on scientific criminal investigation techniques, state of the art training, and, importantly, hiring colonial subjects at all ranks. In addition to technically and organizationally improving the Palestine Police, this approach would also transform the force into a key apparatus of a nation-building project that sought to offer an alternative to incompatible Jewish and Palestinian Arab nationalist visions – an approach that coincided with a longer standing British Mandate government policy that sought to create a shared Palestinian civic identity that did not differentiate between Arabs, Jews, and other communities there. The force, therefore, would be a transformative vehicle for broader cooperation in a future independent Palestine.[76] Dowbiggin wrote:

> "The best Police Force in the world would find great difficulty in doing efficient police work in a country divided into two factions intent on having nothing to do with each other. I would respectfully submit that the first and most important step necessary to ensure an efficient Police Force in Palestine is to remove, so far as is possible, or, at any rate, reduce, the acuteness of the cause of this ill-feeling… I am convinced… that not only the people of the country, but Jew and Arab in the Police Force, can work and live together."[77]

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[76] Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart."
[77] Dowbiggin, "Report on the Palestine Police Force," 8.

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In addition to technical improvements, Dowbiggin's report offered reforms, based on tried and true measures implemented in Ceylon, that would bring this vision into a reality in Palestine. They included creating a "house" system for shared living quarters at the training school, and organizing sports leagues and extracurricular activities to foster unity. He recommended hiring more local police officers and in proportions that reflected the population they were policing, so that the force would be "of the people."[78] Following Dowbiggin's prescriptions, the Palestine Police became one of the few places where Jews, Palestinian Arabs, and British personnel worked together – even if not in as uncomplicated a way as Dowbiggin hoped.

After Dowbiggin: Expansion of Fingerprinting at the CID 1930-1938

Per Dowbiggin's recommendations, Joseph Broadhurst was ousted from his position as head of the CID, and replaced with Eugene Quigley, who was at the time was Superintendent of the Force but previously served as CID head until 1922. Dowbiggin also tapped Arthur John Kingsley-Heath, who had been working at the CID for many years, to lead the resurrection of the Police Training School at Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem. Dowbiggin also recommended that the Inspector General of the Police Arthur Mavrogordato – who he saw as woefully inexperienced and underqualified – be replaced by Roy Spicer, Dowbiggin's protégé from the Ceylon Police. Spicer previously worked at the South Africa Police and was Inspector General of the Kenya Police at the time, where he oversaw implementations of fingerprinting. Spicer entered his new role in Palestine in 1931, and set out to implement Dowbiggin's recommendations. Under his

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[78] In Palestine, an emphasis on hiring Palestine's inhabitants also sat uneasily with a general distrust of them. Even an idealist like Dowbiggin was not immune to this. For example, even though the head of the Political Branch Bishara Saig, a Christian Palestinian Arab, received numerous awards for his service and was an expert in the politics in Palestine – Dowbiggin believed he required oversight by a British officer because, as Dowbigging wrote, "By birth, upbringing, and training, Mr. Saig is very much handicapped in taking a broad view of the situation in Palestine. In a country in which the main political issue is the relations between Arabs and Jews, it seems hardly fair to call upon a Christian-Arab to be the officer responsible for giving Government an intelligent resume of the general situation…". Dowbiggin, 198.

tenure, the CID as a whole expanded its personnel and investigative capabilities. The Fingerprint

Bureau gained greater prestige across the Empire, while also marking its place within broader

imperial networks of biometric exchange between Scotland Yard and colonial police

departments – both as a recipient and a creator of new fingerprint methods.

Reorganizing the Palestine Police according to Dowbiggin's vision was neither easy nor

immediate. Morale at the Palestine Police was low. The personnel were disillusioned and

depressed about the changes underway. Plans to reorganize the CID hit a number of obstacles.

Quigley agreed to head the CID for the second time in his career, but faced health issues that

forced him to retire less than a year later. Spicer planned to appoint a "specially well-trained

officer" from England as the new Deputy Commandant of the CID. That plan, however, was

abandoned, probably for budgetary reasons. The instruction relayed to Spicer, instead, was to

pick someone from within the Palestine Police.[79] Spicer managed to evade these parameters, and

hired his close friend and former colleague, Harold Rice, who previously served with him in

South Africa and in Kenya.[80]

Spicer and Rice began implementing Dowbiggin's proposals to expand and reorganize

the CID. By the end of 1931, they organized the CID into three branches, each of which were

supervised by an Assistant Superintendent. The Political Branch, responsible for political

intelligence, spied on Jewish and Palestinian Arab political movements, repressed sedition,

studied newspapers, evaluated naturalization applications, arranged deportations, and liaised with

corresponding departments in the UK and Egypt, India, Syria, and Iraq. The General Branch

investigated serious crimes, and handled general enquiries and matters that surpassed district

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[79] POL/584/32, Letter to Selig Brodetsky (29 May 1932). S254831-19. Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.
[80] Horne, *A Job Well Done: A History of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948*; Eldad Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated: The Criminal Investigation Department of the Palestine Police Force, 1920-1948* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).

jurisdictions. The Criminal Branch contained the Fingerprint Bureau, the Criminal Records Office, and Photographic Section. The Criminal Branch was headed by Edward Cosgrove, who until then led the Fingerprint Bureau,[81] while John Reid took over as Fingerprint Bureau director.

The Criminal Branch expanded significantly under Spicer's and Rice's tenures (which ended in 1937 and 1938, respectively). Before Spicer arrived in 1930, the Criminal Records Office held 16,067 records – a number that increased three-fold by 1938 to 52,147 dossiers. Shortly after Rice's arrival, the CID at Police Headquarters grew from 30 to 52 personnel (35 of whom were local to Palestine), plus an additional 50 personnel to the new District and Divisional Offices of the CID, as more Jews and Palestinian Arabs were recruited for investigative positions. By 1938, the total workforce of the CID numbered 473, and the vast majority of inspectors were Jewish and Palestinian Arab.[82]

By 1931, the Palestine Police created a formal handbook containing instruction related to criminal investigation.[83] At CID Headquarters, personnel traveled to the UK for forensics coursework, and in 1932, the CID established a laboratory for ballistics, which included experts and equipment that could investigate forged documents, counterfeit currency, drugs, blood stains, hair, and fibers.[84] The Criminal Branch incorporated footprint identification by using plaster of Paris[85] – a technique Spicer encountered during his service in Ceylon. Spicer also sent two British police officers to train in police dog work at the South Africa Police – something he

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[81] Roy G.B. Spicer (1932). *The Palestine Police and Prisons Annual Administrative Report 1931*. Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archives.

[82] Alan Saunders, "The Palestine Police Force Annual Administrative Report 1938" (Jerusalem: Government of Palestine, 1939), Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.

[83] "The Palestine Police Manual", by A.J. Kingsley Heath, 27 July 1931. Al-Mintar Collection, Palestinian Museum Digital Archive.

[84] This was an early development for a colonial police department – the London Metropolitan Police first established a similar laboratory in the same year.

[85] Roy G.B. Spicer (1932). The Palestine Police and Prisons Annual Administrative Report 1931. Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archives.

encountered in 1927 while visiting South Africa from his post at the Kenya Police. In 1935 he

oversaw the introduction of police dogs from the South African Police Dog School to the

Palestine Police.[86]

The Police Training School became another key point in the pipeline for changes at the

CID. By 1932 it had an organized curriculum that included special courses at the CID

headquarters – two for British personnel, and one for personnel from Palestine, which was also

attended by members of the Trans-Jordan Arab Legion. The three-week-long courses covered

fingerprints, footprints, and blood tests. Participants visited the Government Laboratories, and

received instruction from medical officers and chemists, including the Government Analyst.

Sixteen British personnel and 22 personnel drawing from Palestine's inhabitants participated in

the course. Noting that the "Criminal Investigation Department staff are selected for their

specialist knowledge, ability, and industry," Spicer concluded in 1933 that "I have every

confidence in the future of the CID."[87]

The Addition of the ZIMOX System

The Palestine Police linked up with the circulation of new fingerprint systems from

London, South Africa and Kenya, as Spicer's first-ever Palestine Police Administrative Report in

1931 singled out the Fingerprint Bureau as requiring "considerable expansion." By the following

year, the Bureau began adapting its fingerprint catalog to the ZIMOX system. Developed in

South Africa and implemented in the Kenya Police in the 1920s while Spicer was its Inspector

General, ZIMOX added subdivisions to the Henry System that allowed fingerprints to be

subclassified into 625 subgroups (in contrast to the Henry system alone, which has 16

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[86] Roy G.B. Spicer, "The New Detective," *Police Journal* 9 (1936): 245–51.
[87] Roy G.B. Spicer, "The Palestine Police and Prisons Annual Administrative Report 1932" (Jerusalem: Government of Palestine, 1933), 22, Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.

subgroups). In Kenya, ZIMOX was applied to primary classifications (fingerprint types, such as

whorls and arches) within the Henry System in which a large number of files were held (Figure

4). The subdivisions were denoted by the letters Z, I, M, O, X, Y, S, each of which designated a

different range of ridge counts. Because it allowed for further subdivision of larger

accumulations and, in turn, more efficient searching and matching in the catalog, the head of

Kenya's Fingerprint Bureau in the deemed it especially useful for colonial police departments'

large fingerprint collections. The Kenya Police's fingerprint bureau held half a million prints,

and the ZIMOX system enabled one-to-many searches to be completed within three minutes.[88]

At the Palestine CID's Fingerprint Bureau, some larger groups of fingerprints had

become unwieldy and difficult to handle. Starting in 1932, the Bureau reclassified these groups

according to the ZIMOX system, as well as all new Fingerprint Record Slips. Other existing

records were reclassified on a more ad hoc basis. "In this manner," Spicer wrote, "the whole

collection of fingerprints is being gradually transformed and filed under the ZIMOX system."[89]

The Addition of the Battley System

In 1934, the Fingerprint Bureau created a new separate fingerprint catalog based on the

Battley System of single digit classification.[90] Created by Henry Battley, the head of Scotland

Yard's Fingerprint Bureau in the 1920s and 1930s, the system was meant to enable the

identification of fingerprints left at crime scenes. It classifies *single* fingerprints, in contrast to

the Henry/Zimox system, whose classifications are based on measuring all *ten* fingerprints.

Entire sets of ten fingerprints are rarely left behind at crime scenes. At best, investigators may

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[88] Walter Burgess, "Identification Problems in Kenya Colony" 6, no. 11 (May 1925): 16–17, 31–32.
[89] Spicer, "The Palestine Police and Prisons Annual Administrative Report 1932," 20.
[90] Roy G.B. Spicer, "The Palestine Police Force Annual Administrative Report 1934" (Jerusalem: Government of Palestine, 1935), Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.

find only one print, making it difficult to perform a search in a Henry-Zimox catalog. Battley

sought to create a system for one-to-many searches with any fingerprint from a crime scene.[91]

The intended scope of the system, according to Battley, was not to include "every class of

criminal," like the Henry System. Rather, it required Fingerprint Bureau personnel to classify

and distinguish between types of crimes, *and* types of past or anticipated criminal behavior. The

system Battley created at Scotland Yard, for example, was restricted to the fingerprints of people

convicted for "breaking and entering," or who might be considered likely to be in this category.[92]

When the Fingerprint Bureau created a Battley catalog in 1934 along the same logic, they added

classifications for all ten fingerprints of fifty "habitual breakers."[93] By 1937, the system had over

2000 prints in it – but no identification had been made solely based on that collection. Even so,

the annual Palestine Police reports remained optimistic about the system as a useful investment.

The Development of New Fingerprint Methods

As fingerprinting became a more routine investigation method at the Palestine Police,

complex cases offered opportunities for the Fingerprint Bureau to create new fingerprint

identification methods. In 1936, the Government Analyst GW Baker consulted on a case in

which the Fingerprint Bureau came into possession of an alarm clock that had been converted

into a time-fuse for a bomb. No fingerprints were on the clock itself, and its nickel case was

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[91] The Henry system classified fingerprints by assigning numerical values to particular ridge counts and characteristics. Battley's system, however, could not rely on this as the primarily variable for classification, because the ridge characteristics of a fingerprint left at a crime scene could vary depending on pressure, substrates, and materials. Another difference was the filing system and organization: the Battley System required a cabinet with 11 drawers – one containing an index for the collection, and the other ten grouped on the basis of fingers (right thumb, left thumb, etc.). In each drawer, the fingerprints were first classified, like Henry, on the basis of fingerprint type (whorls, arches, etc.). Then, using a magnifying instrument with a round visual field that imposes concentric circles over the print, the print was subclassified based on the features of its "core" and on its deltas (which Henry/Zimox did not consider). After that, ridge counts and characteristics were considered. Battley, *Single Finger Prints*, 1931.

[92] Harry Battley, *Single Finger Prints; a New and Practical Method of Classifying and Filing Single Finger Prints and Fragmentary Impressions* (New York: Bureau of Social Hygiene, 1931), 42.

[93] Spicer, "The Palestine Police Force Annual Administrative Report 1934," 32.

painted with a coat of bitumen – which the Fingerprint Bureau concluded was likely painted on
to obliterate fingerprints. But one part of the bitumen coating inside the clock cover had
undisturbed, but barely discernable, fingerprints on it. The fingerprint officers could only see
them in light at a certain angle. Because bitumen is sticky, they could not develop the latent
prints with their usual method of brushing on powder. Applying different kinds of liquids also
proved to be useless. By chance, a fingerprint officer examining the prints under magnification
breathed on the bitumen, and noted that the resultant condensation made the prints more visible –
they showed up gray on a black background. Baker helped the Fingerprint Bureau create a "cold
stage" – a metal box with a freezing substance that would create a temperature difference
between the clock's bitumen surface and the air around it. When they placed the clock on the
cold stage, moisture condensed on the surface for several minutes. They photographed the visible
prints, classified them, and filed them for future reference (Figure 3). Two years later, someone
was arrested in Jaffa in connection with the creation of explosives. When police collected his
fingerprints, the Fingerprint Bureau found that they matched the ones lifted from the alarm clock
bomb.[94] John Reid, the head of the Fingerprint Bureau, published the incident and their new
methods in *Police Journal* (Figure 5).

The Fingerprint Bureau under the Return of a Militarized Model: 1939-1948

While the Fingerprint Bureau at the Palestine CID was praised as "second to none"[95] and
among the best in the empire in the 1930s, memoirs of a Jewish police officer recollected that
despite the CID's reforms and its recruitment of the best and the brightest from every sector in

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[94] John M. Reid, "The Identification of Fingerprints in a Bomb Outrage," *Police Journal* 12, no. 4 (1939): 442–44;
G.W. Baker, "Palestine: Annual Report of the Government Analyst for the Year 1936," *Analyst* 63, no. 743 (1938):
114–15.
[95] Henry H. Marsh, "Police Work in Palestine," *Police Journal* 13, no. 3 (1940): 342–48.

Palestine, much of their staff were young, inexperienced, and undertrained. [96] Public trust in

Spicer's CID was low, with one local newspaper describing the mood:

> A total of a hundred arrests are not made within 48 hours when an Arab is found dead in
>
> his car on the open road; when a Jew is shot dead in Balfouria; when death creeps up into
>
> Kfar Ezekial; or when murder is done in Kfar Hassidan. A sum of £50 is given for the
>
> discovery of a Jew's murderer; Mr. Spicer [the Commissioner] offers £500 for a Britisher,
>
> and he does not have to wait long before offering this unheard-of sum. Nor, to quote Arab
>
> and Jewish critics, is he called to the scene immediately after an Arab or Jew is killed in
>
> the Haifa district, nor are all the roads leading from the scene of the crime patrolled by
>
> the Police. The thoroughness with which the present affair is being investigated does not,
>
> to the layman, appear to be present when a native is murdered.[97]

The Arab Revolt in 1936-1939 also revealed the limits of the CID's ability to anticipate

political movements and respond to violence. In April of that year, several Palestinian Arab

nationalist movements organized a campaign against British rule and called for independence.

As the pace and number of Jewish arrivals in Palestine increased, the movements also called for

legislative control over Jewish immigration. A ceasefire took place for about one year from late

1936 to 1937, but the revolt resumed after a British royal commission led by Lord Peel

recommended the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish States – a proposal that most

Palestinian political organizations rejected.[98] The resumed revolt lasted until 1939.

Counterintelligence experts Charles Tegart, who served as Commissioner of Police in

Calcutta, and David Petrie were sent to evaluate the Palestine Police's performance in the

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[96] Cohen, *השוטר העברי בביתו הלאומי* *The Hebrew Police Officer in His National Home*.
[97] Marsh, "Police Work in Palestine."
[98] 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 (January 1, 2010): 6–22.

context of the uprising, and cited deficiencies in the CID's investigative and intelligence

activities. Stepping away from Dowbiggin's "civilian" approach, Tegart emphasized security,

and a "flexible" force that would respond during periods of unrest and handle crime during

periods of calm. Following their report, the Palestine Police was re-militarized, as it combined

civilian branches with military-like forces.[99] Spicer vacated his position as the Inspector General,

and was replaced by Alan Saunders, the Inspector General of the Nigeria Police at the time.[100]

The Head of the CID Harold Rice had already left in 1938. Gerald Foley became interim head of

the CID until Arthur Giles, who was the Assistant Commandant of the Egyptian Police in Port

Said, took the position a few months later. The Fingerprint Bureau maintained continuity with

John Reid at the helm.[101]

By the mid-1940s, the Fingerprint Bureau was still part of the same Branch as the

Criminal Records Office, with which it worked closely.[102] The Branch handled higher-than-ever

workloads; by 1946, the CRO had grown to 118,665 files and the Fingerprint Bureau performed

26,739 searches, which resulted in 9,527 matches that year. Following examinations of 277

fingerprints taken from crime scenes, 32 people were convicted of crimes that year based on

fingerprint evidence.[103] The Bureau's labor was divided into classifying, filing, and searching

fingerprints in the CRO catalog, and handling fingerprints found at crime scenes as distinct from

prints taken from persons in custody.[104] There were two professional roles for fingerprinting at

the Bureau, which corresponded to two stages of the fingerprint identification process.

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[99] Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart."
[100] While some accounts note that Spicer left in 1937 due to ill health, Tegart and Petrie's report actually recommended his ouster.
[101] Roy G.B. Spicer, "The Palestine Police Force Annual Administrative Report 1936" (Jerusalem: Government of Palestine, 1937), Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.
[102] J.M. Rymer-Jones, "The Palestine Police Force. Annual Administrative Report 1945" (Jerusalem, 1946), co 733 475 3 1945, Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.
[103] W.N. Gray, "The Palestine Police Annual Administrative Report 1946" (Jerusalem, 1947).
[104] Gray.

"Searchers" determined the presence of fingerprints on evidence from crime scenes, and classified them. "Testers" checked the Searcher's classification. If necessary, they would revise the classification, and then the fingerprint form would undergo a final check.[105]

The CRO catalog included cards with names, details of criminal background and past convictions, and fingerprints. After an arrest, the Fingerprint Bureau would use fingerprints to check the CRO in order to see if the arrested person had a record on file. If not, they would create a new file. Meanwhile, the Fingerprint Bureau would process fingerprints left at the crime scene. District CIDs also had their own fingerprint bureaus, and the one in Tel-Aviv had a catalog organized such that examiners could search for a match on a fingerprint from a crime scene within a subset of individuals who committed similar crimes in the same region. Even with the ability to tailor the search, the work was as "sensitive" as it was "tedious".[106]

Outside of fingerprinting, the CID mostly focused on Palestinian Arab nationalist movements, political parties, and social matters until the early 1940s. Following Tegart and Petries' recommendations, they continued to do so as police cracked down on Palestinian Arab nationalist activities following the 1936-37 revolt. Surveillance and intelligence gathering on these groups increased, and the leaders of Palestinian Arab political parties – even ones with close relationships to the CID – were exiled to the Seychelles.[107]However, the long focus on Palestinian nationalist movements left the CID unprepared for the growth in Zionist paramilitary groups and their increase in subversive and violent activities following the White Paper in 1939.

The Haganah's Emerging Statecraft: 1939-1948

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[105] Zvi Lieber (1967 January 25). Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv, p. 4.

[106] Zvi Lieber (1967 January 25). Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv, p. 4.

[107] Husseini, *Exiled from Jerusalem*.

The 1939 White Paper marked a sea change in British policy on Palestine. It abandoned the Jewish National Home policy, limited Jewish immigration, and restricted private land sales to Jews to five percent of Palestine's territory. Jewish immigration to Palestine had been the socialist-leaning Labor Zionist Jewish Agency and the *Haganah*'s primary policy mission. But the 1939 White Paper, transformed the *Haganah*'s relationship to the Mandate government, and the *Haganah*'s view of its own role in Palestine. The *Haganah* began focusing on facilitating illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine – a goal that took on increasing urgency for them as the Holocaust unfolded in Europe. The CID transformed from a source of strategic collaboration for the *Haganah* into an enemy that needed to be surveilled and subverted – especially as the CID was responsible for immigration control. The *Haganah's* counterintelligence on the CID supported their goals of facilitating illegal Jewish immigration. For example, David Wilk, a *Haganah* member and Jewish police officer who transferred to the CID's drugs section in 1939, provided the *Haganah* with information about planned searches of ships that the *Haganah* had enlisted to clandestinely bring Jewish passengers from Europe to Palestine.[108]

While the *Haganah*, and the associated Jewish Agency, had long rejected Jewish state creation, after the 1939 White Paper a growing number of *Haganah* factions also began to see themselves as the foundation for an army and a police department in a potential future Jewish state. Their counterintelligence work at the CID – including their infiltration of CID departments like the Fingerprint Bureau – also became a resource for their state-building efforts, as they used the expertise they learned there to begin formulating plans for a Jewish state in Palestine. At the same time, their work in the Bureau put them in the crosshairs of their longstanding conflicts

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[108] David Wilk (1967) Oral history, Shula Arlozorov (interviewer). 19/mishtar/10. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

with the Revisionist Zionist organizations, *Etzel* and *Lechi*, which reacted to the 1939 White

Paper through increaesd violent attacks in an official declared rebellion through the mid-1940s.

The Haganah's Infiltration of the Fingerprint Bureau

      The Fingerprint Bureau director John Reid's 1944 decision to hire, for the first time in

many years, a Jewish fingerprint examiner, Zvi Zandberg, paved the way for the *Haganah*'s

successful infiltration of the Bureau. Zandberg first started working as a secretary at the Police in

Jerusalem in 1938, and was also a member of the *Haganah*. When he saw an advertisement for a

position at the CID on his office's bulletin board, Zandberg's British supervisor suggested that

he apply. At first, Zandberg brushed off the suggestion, believing that there was no chance the

CID would hire a Jewish applicant for new positions. His supervisor found out that the position

was in fingerprinting, and that Zandberg was eligible for the position.[109]

      When Zandberg told his *Haganah* handler about the opportunity, he strongly encouraged

Zandberg to pursue it. It had been a long time since any Jews worked in the Fingerprint Bureau,

and the *Haganah* were eager to get one of their people inside. Out of 250 applicants, Zandberg

got the job, and began his fingerprinting career – which lasted through the end of the British

Mandate and well into the early years of the Israel Police, where he would found and lead the

Forensics Department's fingerprint office in 1948.

      After his first year at the Fingerprint Bureau, Zandberg was promoted to the role of

"tester" – and according to his own account, he became the only non-British "tester" in the entire

Empire. He developed a positive relationship with the head of the Fingerprint Office, John Reid.

After about two years, a new fingerprinting position opened up, and Reid gave Zandberg

permission to hire another Jewish police officer, Monish Korpal, another member of the

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[109] Zvi Zandberg (1966 September 25) Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

Haganah. Eventually, Zandberg earned enough of Reid's trust to receive a key to the office, the reason being that Zandberg needed access on Sundays – one of his designated work days since he did not work on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath) and most British personnel took Sundays off.

Often alone in the office on Sundays, Zandberg and Korpal conducted espionage on behalf of the *Haganah*. The *Haganah* would give a list of names to Zandberg. He and Korpal checked the names in the CRO (in the same branch as the Fingerprint Bureau), and collected information about their criminal records. They recorded this information on pieces of paper, and snuck them out of the building. Zandberg often wrote the notes in Greek in case they were inspected on the way out – though Zandberg knew the building's guards so well that no one ever questioned him. Later, they would hand a Hebrew translation to their handlers at *Shai*, the *Haganah*'s intelligence branch. Zandberg never knew exactly how the *Haganah* used this information, but believed that his access to the CRO helped the *Haganah* learn why their own members, or perhaps members of rival Jewish paramilitary organizations, were arrested.

In the past, *Haganah* members in the Palestine Police utilized knowledge of the CRO's contents – and fingerprints – to protect their members from prosecution for crimes they committed. As early as the 1930s, Yehuda Arazi, a high-ranking Jewish police officer, prevented two *Haganah* members who were swept up in a mass arrest from being potentially implicated in a crime they participated in two years earlier via their fingerprints – the revenge killing of a Palestinian Arab in Jerusalem's Valley of the Cross. Arazi removed those two *Haganah* members' CRO files, and forged new files with someone else's fingerprints.[110]

Fingerprinting as a Site of Conflict between the Haganah and Revisionist Zionist Organizations

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[110] Yehuda Arazi (1949 July 28) Oral history, Chaya Ironi (interviewer). 6.3. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

Meanwhile, the CID became a site of the *Haganah*'s growing conflicts with the far right nationalist and territorial maximalist Revisionist Zionist paramilitary organizations *Etzel* and *Lehi*. At certain points through the 1930s and 40s, the *Etzel* informed to the CID on the *Haganah*'s activities, while *Haganah* members who infiltrated the CID – including the Fingerprint Bureau – navigated their own roles in CID investigations of and operations against the *Haganah*, *Etzel*, and *Lehi*.

Conflict between the *Haganah* and revisionist organizations bubbled to the surface over fingerprinting at the CID office at the Tel-Aviv District Police in the 1940s, where another *Haganah* member, Zvi Leiber, worked as a photographer in the Photography Section and an examiner in its Fingerprint Bureau. Like Zandberg, the *Haganah* considered Lieber an asset to the *Haganah* because of his position as a fingerprint examiner. However, his work placed him in risky situations As the sole photographer in the Tel Aviv district, Lieber sometimes photographed members of the *Haganah* – including his own handler, Ephraim. Throughout the 1940s, better pay in other industries contributed to a decline of Jewish recruitment to the Palestine Police[111] – which made it harder for the *Haganah* to place and retain informants there. During this period, Lieber planned to quit the police in order to pursue more lucrative work elsewhere, but threats from the *Haganah* forced Lieber to change course.

In another instance, fingerprints themselves became a source of tension between the *Haganah* and the *Etzel* and *Lechi.* Following the high-profile kidnapping of a British judge in the 1940s, Lieber received a beer bottle from the crime scene for fingerprint analysis. He found fingerprints on the bottle that matched a member of the Etzel, and the abductors – all members of the *Etzel* and *Lechi* – were tried in court. Lieber was summoned to testify on the fingerprint

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[111] Rymer-Jones, "The Palestine Police Force. Annual Administrative Report 1945."

evidence in court, and at first he refused. In Mandate Palestine, people who committed a crime of that nature could receive the death penalty. If the *Etzel*/*Lechi* members were sentenced to death, Lieber feared the organizations – knowing he was a member of the *Haganah* who was involved in the conviction – would assassinate him. He explained the risk to one of his superiors, a Palestinian Arab legal advisor, who promised to protect him by ensuring the death penalty would be off the table. In the end, the fingerprints lifted from the bottle were decisive enough and Lieber's testimony was not needed. The *Etzel*/*Lechi* members were not sentenced to death.[112]

Biometric Technology Transfer to the Israel Police at the End of the Mandate

The British Mandate for Palestine ended at midnight on 14 May 1948. Hours earlier, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency who would become Israel's first prime minister, declared the establishment of Israel in a ceremony in Tel-Aviv. British personnel evacuated Jerusalem and abandoned the CID offices. British officers in the Political Branch had already departed with their documents and equipment, while CID laboratory personnel destroyed much of what they could not take with them.[113] The Fingerprint Bureau, however, did not plan as far in advance. When the fingerprint "tester" Zvi Zandberg entered the Russian Compound on May 14th with two other *Haganah* members – Ezrach Mor and David Wilk from the CID drugs section – they found the Fingerprint Bureau frozen in time. No one had collected anything from the office. The director John Reid had left his glasses on his desk as though he would return at any moment.[114]

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[112] Zvi Lieber (1967 January 25). Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

[113] "1948 דין וחשבון שנתי תש"ח-תש"ט" (Tel-Aviv: Israel Police, 1949), 17–18, 2.1. משטרת.1948.1949 דין וחשבון שנתי ישראל, Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.

[114] Zvi Zandberg (1966 September 25) Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

Zandberg had long prepared for this moment. Months earlier, the *Haganah* already had plans in place for the creation of a new police force in the anticipated Israeli state.[115] Zandberg was put in charge of handling the Palestine Police CID's Fingerprint Bureau whenever the Mandate would end, and tasked him with establishing a new one for the Israel Police based on the expertise he gained in his work at the Bureau. Zandberg's charge took on extra urgency after the Lake Success declaration in November 1947, where the United States declared support for the United Nations' proposal for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. This move prompted the Arab Delegation to the UN – comprising newly independent states adjacent to Palestine – to begin preparing to stop the partition. Their efforts would culminate in the Arab-Israeli War after the Mandate's termination in May 1948.

Within days of the 1947 Lake Success declaration, Zandberg organized a detailed budget for the future Israel Police Fingerprint Department together with Aryeh Ragolsky (who later Hebraicized his surname to Naftali) – another *Haganah* member who worked as a handwriting expert at the CID, who later founded and lead the Israel Police Forensic Identification Department.[116] By then, British officials knew that many Jewish members of the Palestine Police were *Haganah* members,[117] though in many instances this did not attract much attention,[118] while

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[115] For example, records show that up to two days before the end of the Mandate, the highly decorated Jewish veteran of the Palestine Police, Shlomo Sofer, who also collaborated with the *Haganah* and went on to become the head of the Crime Division in the Israel Police after 1948, submitted a detailed proposal for the consolidation of a "modern" Jerusalem-area District Police force in a new state. Shlomo Sofer (12 May 1948). Proposal for the Organization of the Hebrew Police in the Jewish Area of Jerusalem to Head of the Security Committee R. Shreivman. 80/107P/4. Haganah Historical Archives. Tel-Aviv.

[116] "אודות". נפתלי המכון לזיהוי כתב יד. https://www.naftali-ltd.com/אודות-נפתלי-לזיהוי-כתב-יד/מכון-אודות

[117] Geoffrey Morton, *Just the Job: Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957).

[118] An oral history testimony provided by Yaakov Kanner, a *Haganah* member who also worked in the Palestine Police, recounted an interaction with the head of the Tel-Aviv District Police CID, Morton Geoffrey, that highlights the open-secret atmosphere of Jewish police officers' external collaborations. When Kanner ran into Geoffrey in the stairwell one day, Geoffrey stopped him and asked, "Tell me, are you a member of the Haganah or Etzel?" Kanner responded slyly: "Guess!" Geoffrey laughed and declared his response to be "funny." Yaakov Kanner (1966). Oral history, Shulamit (interviewer). 19/Mishtar/10. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv.

some might have tacitly approved.[119] But as the end of the Mandate loomed and war became

imminent, British staff in the CID started to distance themselves from Jewish staff. The

Fingerprint Bureau, however, continued business as usual. Zandberg continued to participate in

office affairs and maintained a good relationship with the head of the Bureau, John Reid.

Zandberg never knew whether Reid was aware of his membership in the *Haganah*, but Reid

nevertheless might have had a sense of what was to come. Right after the Lake Success

declaration in 1947, Reid told Zandberg unprompted: "I know there is going to be a Jewish state

and I am convinced that you are going to be the boss [of the new fingerprint bureau]."[120]

War began in the morning of 15 May 1948, a day after the Mandate's termination, when

military forces from Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, and Iraq entered Palestine. The *Haganah* merged

with other Zionist paramilitary organizations, including their longtime foes, the *Etzel* and *Lechi*

under the umbrella of the newly formed Israel Defense Forces, which was largely dominated by

Haganah leadership. As explosions rocked Jerusalem, Zandberg, with the *Haganah's* approval,

returned to the Fingerprint Bureau in the Russian Compound every day that summer to keep

watch of the fingerprint collection. He tried to organize things in the office, in anticipation of

using the materials left behind to establish a Fingerprint Bureau in the Israel Police. The other

Jewish fingerprint expert and Haganah member, Monish Korpal, as well as Aryeh Ragolsky,

joined him. Concerned about the security of the building, Zandberg requested permission to

relocate all of the Fingerprint Bureau's materials, including the furniture, to the Jewish Agency's

storage units across from the Jewish Agency's offices on King George Street in Jerusalem.

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[119] Knight, "Securing Zion?"
[120] Zvi Zandberg (1966 September 25) Oral history, Shulamit Arlozorov (interviewer). 177.29. Haganah Historical Archives, Tel-Aviv, p. 8.

By July 8, Zandberg moved the materials – including the criminal fingerprint registry – to the Israel Police Headquarters in Tel-Aviv. Fingerprint experts who had served in the Palestine Police CID founded, grew, and led the nascent Israel Police's Fingerprint and Photography department, which was headed by Zandberg.[121] The new fingerprint office kept the same exact setup, methods, and classification system as the British Mandate Fingerprint Bureau. It was, after all, based on the materials that Zandberg had taken from the CID offices. By January 1949, the Israel Police held its first fingerprint course to train new recruits in the Henry System.[122] Zandberg's department maintained all of the same subclassifications from the Palestine Police fingerprint catalogs, and Hebrew versions of the Fingerprint Bureau's fingerprint forms (Figure 6). In its new context, the colonial fingerprint system was already taking on new meanings as a tool of state and nation-building in the newly-formed Israel Police.

Epilogue: Fingerprinting and its 1948 Legacy

When Minister of Interior Meir Sheetrit proposed a national biometric database and ID for all Israeli citizens in 2008, critics and supporters alike claimed that this effort to collect fingerprints and facial data of the entire citizenry was unprecedented in Israeli history. However, the first proposal for the collection of all citizens' biometric data did not take place in 2008. It occurred sixty years earlier, in 1948 by a nascent Israel Police led by officers who, just months prior, were serving in the British Mandate Palestine Police.

In 1948, the Israel Police petitioned the Ministry of Interior to collect fingerprints from all Israeli citizens. They proposed recording their fingerprints onto special forms as part of Israel's first census, which would be conducted during November of that year. The Inspector

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[121] "State of the Art Improvements at Israel Police Headquarters," *HaBoker*, December 30, 1948, S71.523, Central Zionist Archives.
[122] "State of the Art Improvements at Israel Police Headquarters."

General of the Israel Police, Yehezkiel Sahar explained that collecting fingerprints and incorporating them into passports or other identification documents would be beneficial and efficacious for the state and the police.[123] The Minister of Interior rejected the idea outright – which newspapers attributed to his past experiences in Eastern Europe. Police officials attributed the intense backlash to people of the country not yet having fostered trust in the government that was characteristic of democratic countries, where they believed there would be fewer concerns about possible harms of a national fingerprint system.[124]

This proposal took what Sengoopta called an "imperial path" of expanding a colonial technology to an entire population.[125] Additionally, if it had been implemented, it would have enrolled biometrics into a nation-building project of determining who, exactly, would be included in a Jewish state in Palestine. The 1948 census was unique in that it had the purpose of not only enumerating the population, but also determining who would comprise the citizenry of Israel by designating people present on their properties as citizens of the new state. Yet, it was conducted while the 1948 Arab-Israeli war was still ongoing, and after upwards of 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their properties on land that would fall within Israel's borders. Administered door-to-door, the census formalized their "absence" from their homes, and became a basis for bureaucratic and legal frameworks that dispossessed them of their property, prevented them from returning to it, and excluded them from Israeli citizenship –which is commemorated by Palestinians as the *Nakba*. This also effectively paved the way for a Jewish

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[123] "The Government Rejected the Police's Appeal to Collect All Citizens' Fingerprints.," *HaTzor*, December 30, 1948, S71.523, Central Zionist Archives.

[124] Ze'ev Altgar, "Somewhere in the Israeli 'Scotland Yard,'" *Hemshekh*, December 29, 1948, S71.523, Central Zionist Archives.

[125] It is not clear whether the Police Department's ideas of collecting fingerprints from the entire population had origins in their work in the colonial police. While British colonial governments in South Africa and India used fingerprinting in civilian contexts, in Palestine fingerprinting remained exclusively in the purview of the Palestine Police.

demographic majority in Israel, bringing into reality what had originally started in the as a

controversial Revisionist Zionist state and nation-building goals in Palestine.[126]

Amidst their failed attempt to add fingerprinting to the 1948 census, that same year the

Israel Police oriented its Forensics Unit in the service of new Israeli state-building. In newspaper

interviews, Inspector General Sahar proclaimed that a "modern, scientific system of crime

investigation will be introduced in Israel."[127] In 1949, the Israel Police held its first training

course for fingerprint experts, and by 1950, the Investigation Department was divided into

Criminal, General, and Economic departments. The Criminal Department hosted the

Identification and Forensics Branch. Within that branch, the Fingerprint Division was divided,

like the Palestine Police's Fingerprint Bureau, into a "Fingerprint Office" for classifying

fingerprints and clarifying previous convictions (which used the Henry System), and an "Office

for Checking Single Fingerprints" for identifying single fingerprints left at crime scene (which

likely used the Battley System, which they would have inherited from the British). Inspector

General Sahar lauded it as a system used "in countries where the science of fingerprinting is at a

high level."[128] By 1950, the Fingerprint Office's catalog had close to 350,000 files.[129] By 1952,

the prestigious forensics personnel, including in the Fingerprint offices, were colloquially

referred to in the police as "The Professors."[130]

Meanwhile, many of the British officers who had worked at the Palestine Police CID

moved to police positions in the UK, and approximately 1400 Palestine Police officers received

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[126] Anat Leibler and Daniel Breslau, "The Uncounted: Citizenship and Exclusion in the Israeli Census of 1948," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 5 (n.d.): 880–902.

[127] Palestine Post (24 August 1948). "Modern Methods in Israel Police". S71.523 משטרת ישראל. Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

[128] "19", 1948 דין וחשבון שנתי תש"ח-תש"ט.

[129] "1950" דין וחשבון שנתי תש"י-תשי"א" (Tel-Aviv: Israel Police, 1951), 40–41, 2.3.1950- דין וחשבון שנתי משטרת ישראל.1956.1950, Israel Police Heritage Center and Museum Archive.

[130] Yoram Geva 22.8.52. 200 criminals are discovered each month by science: the Israeli Fingerprint Department at Work. Yedioth Ahronoth. CZA S71.1346.

new postings in other parts of the Empire after 1948.[131] The former Inspector General of the Palestine Police Roy Spicer, who reformed the Palestine Police Fingerprint Bureau, returned to the UK and was Chief Constable of the Isle of Wight from 1938 to 1946. Geoffrey Morton, who headed the Tel-Aviv District CID, transferred to Trinidad in 1948. AJ Kingsley-Heath, who held numerous roles in the Palestine Police CID, went on to become Police Commissioner of Kenya in the 1940s. Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in London, Sir Kenneth Newman, used his training in the Palestine Police in the 1940s to devise a police response to anti-Vietnam demonstrations in London in the 1960s, and later in his career, to respond to the Troubles in Northern Ireland as Chief Constable of the RUC.[132]

Former British fingerprint examiners at the Palestine Police also moved on to other parts of the Empire, or returned to the UK. At least two examiners them transferred to the CID headquarters in Nairobi, where they continued working in fingerprinting and criminal investigation. John Reid, who directed the Fingerprint Bureau from the 1930s until the end of the Mandate, remained in Jerusalem well into the 1960s, where he took up residence at the St. Andrews Church. Edward Cosgrove, the prior director of the Bureau, returned to the UK, where he pursued a private sector career and then took on the full-time role of General Secretary of the Palestine Police veteran's association until his death.[133] Further research is required to determine where Palestinian Arab fingerprint examiners went after 1948, but records show that several other Palestinian officers in the CID continued their policing and investigation careers in police departments in Jordan and Lebanon.[134]

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[131] Sinclair, *At the end of the line: colonial policing and the imperial endgame, 1945-80*, 116–17.
[132] Sinclair, "'Get into a Crack Force and Earn £20 a Month and All Found….'"
[133] PPOCA Newsletters. Middle East Center Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford.
[134] PPOCA Newsletters. Middle East Center Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

The consolidation of the Israel Police's Fingerprint Office, largely based on colonial infrastructures, technologies, and expertise from the CID in Palestine, also laid key groundwork for future Israeli biometric systems, which further linked biometrics with new forms of nation and state-building, while also recapitulating the colonial statecrafts that characterized their British Mandate predecessors. In 1949, Zvi Zandberg, still in charge of fingerprinting at the Israel Police, published procedures – much of which he learned while working at the Palestine Police – for using fingerprints to identify the dead in a yearly Israel Police magazine.[135] Twelve years later, the Israel Police would share these methods with the Military Rabbinate, the Israeli military's Jewish religious authority, who would later create a fingerprint system as a religious and technical tool for identifying conscripted Israeli soldiers who die during mandatory service.

Decades later, fingerprinting would reprise its role in surveilling Palestinians and establishing control in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, when the Israel Police lent its expertise to the development and management of the Basel System. First proposed within the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s as a tool for facilitating the movement of Palestinian workers between anticipated Israeli and Palestinian states, after the collapse of the accords the system became part and parcel of the checkpoints and permits that characterize Israel's military occupation of Palestinian Territories. Today it tracks Palestinians from the Occupied Territories who hold permits, primarily work permits, to enter Israel. And sixty years after the failed 1948 attempt to create a national fingerprint system for Israeli citizens, the "imperial path"[136] of expanding a colonial technology to an entire population was ultimately realized in Israel. Informed by the Basel System's methods, in 2008 Israel's Ministry of Interior proposed the creation of a mandatory national biometric ID card and database containing the fingerprint and

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[135] Police Magazine 1949, p. 19-20
[136] Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj*.

facial data of all Israeli citizens. After a lengthy trial period, the system was ratified by the

Knesset in 2017.

Conclusions

The Fingerprint Bureau's experts, technologies, and methods were not just technical tools of

colonial police work that were informed by practices in police departments across the British

Empire. They also reflected, and were essential to the implementation of the British Mandate

government's, the *Haganah's*, and the nascent Israel Police's emerging forms of statecraft in

Palestine and Israel between 1920 and 1948. As instruments of biometric statecraft, the

Fingerprint Bureau was not only a technical tool for creating the material foundations of a state.

It was also a political tool for constituting the nation, as its experts, methods, technologies, and

designations of whose biometric data would be included in the system, linked up with

designations of citizenship and belonging.

While the Fingerprint Bureau's same biometric systems were enrolled into vastly

different, and at times conflicting, state-building and nation-building goals, some of the

statecrafts associated with its prior iterations still projected into future ones. While the Haganah's

transfer of the Fingerprint Bureau's infrastructures to the Israel Police enabled the Police to

reframe it as a resource for new state and nation-building aims, they also recapitulated the

colonial statecrafts that characterized their British Mandate predecessor. Even as biometric

systems' political and technical orientations change as they move to new contexts, the history of

the Fingerprint Bureau shows that these systems nevertheless continue to intervene in projects of

national inclusion and exclusion.

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