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*Police matters: The everyday state and caste politics in South India, 1900–1975.* By Radha Kumar. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. 225 pp. \$19.95 paperback.

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*Police Matters* is a rich and tremendously insightful analysis of policing in colonial and post-colonial India. An examination of the presence of police in rural Tamil Nadu, the book illuminates the precise techniques through which police drew upon and upheld caste dominance. In doing so it shows that contrary to the common perception that caste politics in rural areas proliferate due to the absence of the State, not only is the State a close presence in the countryside but one that is actively informed by the caste system. While *Police Matters* contributes to a vital body of research on policing in India, it will surely also be of interest to audiences with interests in discipline, the maintenance of social control, and the co-construction of subject, society, and State in everyday life. The book's primary source material, that is, narrative station records maintained by the police from 1922 onwards, is one of its greatest strengths. Indeed, the survival of such granular records, created by and for police from lower ranks, is fortuitous, as records of quotidian life are rarely considered important enough to warrant special care or preservation.

*Police Matters* opens with an examination of the boundaries and constraints of policing. Kumar skillfully exposes how the allocation of policing resources, particularly in terms of the delineation of station jurisdiction and surveillance time, was rationalized based on predetermined “knowledge” of caste and community. The following chapter extends scholarship on documentation and the State and examines malicious filings of spurious complaints, an issue that is a source of much bureaucratic and public anxiety. Highlighting the conceptual difficulties of delineating false complaints and parsing the number of complaints that police refused to register, Kumar argues that creating police documentation as well as calling them into question reflects the “value of police documents in the shifting relationship of power” (p. 69). The findings discussed in the second chapter also underscore how caste positions are constantly if incrementally, being negotiated through attempts to direct the power of the State.

Chapter Three takes a deep dive into the issue of police coercion and violence. Unsurprisingly, it contains very concerning accounts that describe or allude to the torture of detainees. Through these, Kumar shows how casteism violently intersects with police violence to such an extensive degree that it becomes impossible for victims to escape torture without endangering their families. She also focuses on the aspects of such cases that were considered to be unexceptional, making the vital argument that incidents of custodial violence are not outliers that occur due to the failings of individual police personnel; rather, they are “one end of a continuum of excess violence” that the modern state enacted on marginalized populations—in colonial and postcolonial India alike” (p. 16). While it is not the primary focus of the book, this argument can be developed further by considering the impact of custodial violence from the perspective of the victims’ families and communities in greater detail. For example, Kumar reads the lack of involvement of female family members in investigations of custodial death as a lack of access to public spaces. A more detailed articulation of this silence examines it in the context of the shameful history of upper caste men’s perpetration of brutal violence upon Dalit women who sought justice.

The second part of the book concerns the policing of political movements. Consequently, the chapters in this section are more sharply focused on the specific period they examine. Together, the chapters present an incisive analysis of the continuities and disjunctures between the colonial and post-colonial periods. Chapter Four traces the ability of colonial administration to hinder popular protests by deploying armed police and troops, as well as levying punitive police taxes on dissenting populations. It also notes that the misrepresentation of public protests over long-standing concerns

as riots that were irrational, spontaneous, and violent was a critical sleight of hand that was necessary to justify the use of armed violence against public assemblies. Chapter Five builds on this, showing how the use of such practices reduced in frequency after Independence as their occurrence eroded the legitimacy of the State. Kumar cautions that this decline did not indicate a radical departure from colonial policing and underscores the post-colonial Indian State's continued use of exceptional provisions to suspend rights, and placement of opposition leaders under preventive detention.

Throughout the book, Kumar emphasizes the attempts by different caste groups to channel the power of the State as means to establish dominance. Policing is thus revealed to be a site of contestation, rather than one characterized by stasis. Arguably, the most valuable contributions in *Police Matters*, however, are its insights into the manufacture of "knowledge" of individuals, communities, and society and the subsequent rationalization of unjust unevenness in police procedures. This not only provides the basis for Kumar's searing indictment of the nature of policing in India, but also opens the possibility of making an abolitionist critique of the policing system itself in the light of the evidence that its fundamental purpose is to uphold grossly inequitable social structures.

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*Problematizing law, childhood and rights in Israel/Palestine*. By Hedi Viterbo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 370 pp. \$110.00 hardback.

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Violation and protection of Palestinian children's rights is one of the most controversial sites of human rights activism and legal change in the crowded legal scene of Israel/Palestine. While critics argue for egregious violations of children's rights, mostly during arbitrary detention, Israel prides itself in introducing unprecedented protections for detained juveniles. Hedi Viterbo's book does not join any choir. Faithful to its title, the book problematizes almost every tune that is sung in this highly emotional debate. It explores the unique interplay of human and children's rights; conflict and state violence; international, national and military law; juvenile justice and incarceration. The book offers both breadth and depth of context and analysis, it is highly original, insightful, and thought-provoking in its deconstruction and critique of law, rights, and childhood.

The basic arguments of the book are that Israeli legal authorities use the ostensibly protective law on children's rights as a means of control and oppression against young and adult Palestinians, and that international law and local human rights agencies and NGOs fail to protect them because they paradoxically uphold many of the assumptions that make the law both indeterminate and inadequate. A perfect example of that is how in response to pressures by human rights advocates, Israeli military authorities established the world's first and only juvenile military court, thereby proclaiming to uphold the rights of children. This court, however, did nothing to change the actual mistreatment of Palestinian youth by the military and the discourse that portrays them as born terrorists. Furthermore, Viterbo shows how the protective childhood discourse is used to privilege settler youth and portray Israeli soldiers as children, thereby dismissing their accountability for violence by expressing nurture and care. Analyzing various textual sources by the Israeli government and legislature, unpublished decisions of Israeli military courts, NGO reports, and visual sources, the book provides a rich account of this contested discursive site.

In a brilliant critical analysis of law and human rights, the book makes some of its crucial contributions to critical childhood and conflict studies. Through the examination of children's rights discourse, it articulates how childhood is socially constructed in various ways for different purposes. Combining critiques on the international and local levels, it scrutinizes both universalist discourses of childhood, victimhood, and trauma, and localized ideologies of nationalism and nativism, with