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OLD BOYS AND BADMEN: PRIVATE SECURITY IN (POST)COLONIAL JAMAICA

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Jamaica
labour
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Racial profiling by the police is a common occurrence in many countries, and the racialized constructions of threats underlying such policing practices can often be traced to histories of colonialism and slavery. This essay seeks to draw attention to the role of private policing in relation to these legacies. Contemporary private security guards often identify suspicious or threatening persons based on racialized discourses similar to those prevalent among police officers. While the demographic make-up of private security professionals is not always the same as that of the police, they have similarly been implicated in profiling practices. How are the practices of private security companies related to colonial, racialized modes of policing? What colonial legacies and historical parallels can we recognize in contemporary private policing, and what are the most evident discontinuities? How do employees, managers, and guards grapple with these legacies? This essay focuses on the private security sector in Jamaica to address such questions. Drawing on interviews, focus groups and informal conversations with the owners and managers of private security companies, government officials, and security guards in the capital of

Kingston, we discuss how historical formations of class, race, and gender are reflected in, reinforced by, and contested within the industry.

Introduction

In many countries, specific racialized social groups are disproportionately the focus of everyday policing practices. Throughout the Americas, for instance, young men of African descent are an overrepresented group in police stops and arrests and are the victim of police brutality more than other groups (Cano 2010; Kalunta-Crumpton 2012). In explaining such inequalities, various authors point to the racialized constructions of threats that inform policing practices (Fassin 2013). Such present-day constructions can often be traced to histories of colonialism and slavery, in which policing served to enforce an unequal social and racial order. There is increasing academic interest in tracing how public police bodies are shaped by, and grapple with, such colonial legacies (Jauregui 2013; Owen 2016). Attempts to reform postcolonial police forces have included reorganizing the police as a “service” rather than a “force”, and in some cases have involved specific attention to processes of racialization (Marks 2005; Hornberger 2011).

Much less attention has been paid to the role of private policing agents in relation to these legacies. It is evident that contemporary private security guards often identify suspicious or threatening persons based on racialized discourses similar to those prevalent among police officers. While the demographic make-up of private security professionals does not always mirror that of the police, they have similarly been implicated in practices of racial profiling. How are the practices of private security companies related to colonial, racialized modes of policing? What colonial legacies and historical parallels can we recognize in contemporary private policing, and what are the most evident discontinuities? How do employees, managers, and guards grapple with these legacies?

In this essay, we focus on the private security sector in Jamaica in an attempt to address such questions. Kingston, the island’s capital, has over two hundred registered security companies, employing some twenty thousand guards, although the sector is dominated by around a dozen large companies. We draw on research conducted in Kingston, in the period 2014–2017, which included interviews, focus groups and informal conversations with the owners and managers of private security companies, government officials, and private security guards. We interviewed industry leaders and officials to understand their views on the role of the private sector in Kingston’s security landscape and spoke with guards to explore their experiences as part of the security labour force.

The essay starts with a section discussing genealogies of policing, connecting work on colonial police forces to postcolonial reform, and discussing the role of



“plural policing” in which public and private security forces coexist. The next section gives a general overview of Jamaican histories of policing, introducing colonial and postcolonial contexts of plural policing. This is followed by our main analysis of the colonial legacies evident in Jamaica’s contemporary private security industry, focusing on how historical formations of class, race, and gender are reflected in, reinforced by, and contested within the industry.

Genealogies of policing

Colonial policing

The modern institution of the public police is a relatively recent invention, and one that cannot be seen as separate from European colonialism (Williams 2003; Sinclair and Williams 2007). In Europe and North America, professional, centralized public police forces were formed largely in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These new institutions took shape not just simultaneously with, but in relation to, efforts to maintain order in colonial territories. Randall Williams (2003), for instance, traces the establishment of the London Metropolitan Police in 1829 to forms of control first modelled in colonial Ireland. While the Met’s formation gained legitimacy amongst the elites and middle classes as the result of discourses that criminalized London’s working poor, Williams suggests the “solution” of the Met cannot be seen separately from policing models developed in Ireland to repress the colony’s unruly subjects.

By emphasizing this relational development of police forces across the empire, such research troubles the popular division between “repressive colonial” and “consensual domestic” models of policing. In addition, colonial policing was highly differentiated across and within different European empires.¹ Notwithstanding, colonial policing cultures can be associated with a number of specific characteristics, notably the overtly political function of police forces; their tendency toward paramilitarism; their engagement in surveillance and intelligence-gathering; their use of excessive force against local populations; and their organization through centralization rather than as local forces (Bell 2013).

Beyond these features, perhaps the most distinctive trait of colonial police forces was “the difference in kind between police and policed” (Owen 2016, 308). This difference involved a distinction between “expatriates” and “natives” in recruiting, but also a rotation system that sought to ensure that even native police officers had limited local ties to the populations they were policing. The difference between police and policed was also expressed more broadly in the imposition of foreign value systems and logics of justice. Colonial markings of difference were, of course, also enforced through institutionalized ethno-racial discrimination. This was evident

1 This mix of non-democratic practices and racialized criminalization was generally implemented differently in British settler colonies such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where nineteenth-century policing ideologies and practices developed a stronger emphasis on accountability and consent. Colonies without large-scale White settlement,

such as Jamaica, remained characterized by primarily coercive forms of policing that privileged internal security and European economic interests, far into the twentieth century. Within such “pacified” colonies, different modes of policing often developed for urban areas of European settlement than for majority non-White rural areas (Anderson and Killingray 1991, 9–11).

within the ranks of officers, where “loyal” local ethnic groups were targeted for recruitment, but where Whites occupied the highest positions while the opportunities for non-White officers to move through the ranks were limited. In addition, colonial police forces relied heavily on, and reproduced, the racialized construction of “suspect” or “problem” populations (Bell 2013; Owen 2016).

Generally speaking, then, colonial police forces were geared towards maintaining a political, social and economic order that favoured the interests of the European metropole and White settlers. Bankole A. Cole notes “the link between colonial policing and colonial political economy cannot ... be over-emphasized, for the fundamental basis of all colonialist ventures is economic imperialism” (1999, 92). This also meant that policing was often spatially concentrated in a colony’s administrative centres and economically valuable zones, such as the main sites of trade, mining or plantation agriculture (Owen 2016). Focusing on colonial Africa, for instance, Bruce Baker (2008, 56) describes the role of the police as “regime policing”, aimed solely at “policing the colonial economy and upholding the authority of colonial rule.”

Postcolonial continuities

As many former colonies achieved independence in the course of the twentieth century, their police forces were expected to serve a new purpose, serving the needs and interests of a newly independent people rather than enforcing a colonial political and economic order. In practice, many police forces did not experience an effective process of decolonization, and continued to operate along more or less the same lines as prior to independence, if under new masters.

In many postcolonies, the legacies of colonialism include a privileging of regime security and political stability and an emphasis on public order policing, with less priority given to citizen security and accountability to communities. This has also meant a continuation of the blurring between police and military functions and styles. Focusing on African states, for instance, Alice Hills (2000) has argued policing practices changed little from independence through political liberalization in the 1990s, remaining repressive and prioritizing internal security over crime prevention and detection. These authoritarian tendencies involve a continued reliance on more repressive styles of policing that often involve the spectacular use of excessive force (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006).

In addition to these repressive tendencies, the legacies of colonial policing also involve the persistent racialization of deviance and danger. Colonial constructions of threats along ethno-racial lines often remain evident in the

post-independence period, while socioeconomic inequalities in postcolonial states often also reflect colonial legacies, with specific racial or ethnic minorities continuing to occupy privileged positions. In these contexts, the police may continue to be seen by the majority population as maintaining an unjust social, political and economic order (Harriott 2000).

Attempts to reform postcolonial police forces have in general sought to democratize policing models, using officer training to discourage repressive styles and emphasizing the need to increase police legitimacy amongst policed populations. Such reform programmes are, however, complicated by the fact that they are often initiated and funded by European and North American development agencies. These external origins mean that police reform may often be oriented towards donor interests, and be implemented with limited awareness of the local contexts of policing (Uildriks 2009; Ellison and Pino 2012). The local specificities that complicate police reform may involve colonial histories, but also the presence of a range of non-state policing actors (Albrecht and Buur 2009; Dinnen and Peake 2015).

Plural policing

Many postcolonial contexts are characterized by what has become known as “plural policing”, in which a range of non-state security forces collaborate and compete with the formal state police (Jones and Newburn 2006). These other policing actors include neighbourhood watches, armed vigilantes, gangs, and private security companies. While plural policing has only begun to receive significant scholarly attention over the last decade or two, it is neither a new nor an exclusively postcolonial phenomenon. The idea of a centralized public police, in which the state’s monopoly over the legitimate use of force is located, is itself a modern concept. Throughout the world, actors now labelled as non-state policing actors preceded the formation of a state police force.

Under colonial rule and continuing into the postcolonial era, a variety of policing actors persisted alongside colonial police forces. Colonial states rarely could be said to have a monopoly on policing; as David Anderson and David Killingray note, “In all colonies the colonial police were augmented by other uniformed bodies which also performed a policing role ... water police, district watchmen, ‘boss boys’ in the mines, company security guards, forest guards, cattle and sheep patrols, game guards and so on” (1991, 8). Indeed, the colonial state often actively encouraged such alternative agents of policing, “recognising that it did not have the resources or legitimacy to effectively control the territories they claimed” (Baker 2008, 66–67). In many cases, the line between public and private policing was blurred. The

entanglement of colonial policing with colonial business operations contributed to this blurring. On plantations or in mining enclaves, for instance, foremen might fulfil the role of colonial police personnel, controlling the local labour force, while many colonial police officials also worked for private companies (Thomas 2012).

In postcolonial contexts, most studies of plural policing have focused on informal or customary arrangements. Only recently have scholars begun to pay closer attention to the formal private security industry (Berg 2010; Diphorn 2016; Higate and Utas 2017). There is an emergent recognition, based primarily on work in post-Apartheid South Africa, that ethno-racial discrimination is widespread within the commercial security sector, mirroring racial profiling amongst public police forces (Kempa and Singh 2008; Diphorn 2017). These studies emphasize that ethno-racial profiling is not limited to state police forces, highlighting the various ways in which specific communities are policed by private security guards and examining the racialized recruitment policies used by private security companies. This essay seeks to extend this work by situating contemporary racial dynamics of private policing within a historical dimension. Specifically, we seek to assess colonial continuities and discontinuities both in economic relations of ownership and labour and in the discourses that naturalize these relations. To understand the present-day Jamaican private security industry through this historical lens, the next section discusses the development of policing in relation to colonialism in Jamaica.

Policing and colonialism in Jamaica

In the Caribbean, the history of policing is inseparable from the institution of plantation slavery and its aftermath. Before and after the abolition of slavery in Jamaica in 1838, both public and private policing actors were critical in maintaining a violently exploitative colonial order based on clear racial hierarchies. This hierarchy developed in broad terms as a tripartite structure, with economic and political power concentrated in a small population of European or European-descent “Whites”; the majority of enslaved Africans and their “Black” descendants occupying the lowest social strata; and a so-called “Coloured” or “Brown” population of ethnic minority and mixed descent assuming an intermediate position. This differentiation in terms of colour was never absolute, and incorporated both socioeconomic and phenotypical markers. As in other colonial contexts, security forces concentrated on maintaining a docile and productive labouring population and “pacifying” political threats. The different organizations and individuals responsible for policing were always pluralized, including a range of public and private, state and non-state actors, with the boundaries between these categories often unclear.

These various actors represented different interests and collaborated, competed and overlapped in different ways during different eras.

Before abolition, the majority of Jamaica's unfree labouring population lived and worked on sugar plantations, the dominant economic sector for much of the island's history. On the agricultural estates, the British colony's plantocracy could to some extent act as sovereigns, wielding extensive discretionary power over the lives of the enslaved. Slaveholders, helped by overseers and drivers, often combined the roles of police, judiciary, and penal system; they could define, detect and punish transgressions without much state intervention. This system of internal, private control, reflecting an "essentially passive relationship between imperial state, local state, and slaveholder" (Paton 2004, 23), was dominant until the late eighteenth century, when more centralized efforts emerged as part of broader processes of colonial state formation. Slaveholders also contributed to a more collective militia, organized into parish regiments, where the highest-ranking officers were members of the White planter elite, while the rank-and-file also included a large number of "free men of colour" (Petley 2015, 58–59). These various public–private arrangements were aimed both at controlling labour power and at preventing uprisings, serving to maintain slavery as an economic and political system.

In the post-emancipation period, one of the core functions of the colonial police was to ensure control over the now free labour force. As Howard Johnson notes, "the challenge of emancipation for the former slaveholding class was to retain dominance over the ex-slaves without the extensive coercive powers which slavery had allowed" (1991, 71). In the "apprenticeship" period leading up to full freedom, the Police Act of 1834 established a militarized police force, employing both police officers and Black "constables" to control the semi-free labour force (Paton 2004, 59–61). The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, an uprising against the social and economic conditions of the post-emancipation period, was suppressed violently by soldiers, police and volunteer militia, joined by Maroons (descendants of formerly enslaved Africans who had escaped the plantations and eventually signed peace treaties with the colonial state). In response to this violence, Britain implemented Crown Colony Rule, which involved a series of reforms including the establishment of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) in 1867. The JCF, modelled on the Royal Irish Constabulary rather than the London Met, was intended to be more effective but less coercive than its predecessor in maintaining public order (Harriott 2000, 123).

In the early twentieth century, concerns in Jamaica and Britain over anti-colonial agitators directed the attention of colonial police forces towards political threats. Again, political and economic interests intersected, as much anticolonial activism was rooted in the emergent trade union movement and the labour riots of the 1930s. The police were involved in the violent suppression of strikes and riots, beating Black protestors with clubs and batons,

opening fire and killing them in multiple instances, and intimidating and harassing Brown labour leaders such as Alexander Bustamante (Palmer 2014) – while colour categories became more fluid with increasing social mobility, Black protestors remained more vulnerable to state violence. In the period leading up to and directly following Jamaica’s independence in 1962, despite reforms intended to “Jamaicanize” the police leadership and to civilianize the force, the JCF retained many of its colonial, paramilitary features, including its “differential treatment of citizens on the principle of status congruence rather than equality before the law” (Harriott 2000, xvii).

In the 1970s, in the context of increasing crime rates, political violence and an influx of illegal firearms, insecurity became a key societal concern and widespread fear solidified social boundaries, especially in urban areas such as Kingston (Carnegie 2014). While the JCF ranks expanded in the decades that followed (reaching over eleven thousand members in 2016), a range of non-state policing agents also gained prominence during this period. Consolidating a more informal system of individual watchmen, the first major private security firms began to offer commercial forms of protection. Meanwhile, the ruling People’s National Party (PNP) encouraged a community security system of “home guards” as an anti-crime measure. However, these home guards, who were allowed to carry arms and to arrest suspected criminals, developed into a politically partisan form of civil defence guards, aimed at repelling supporters of the opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). During the 1980s and 1990s, they were replaced by a more neutral system of government-supported neighbourhood watches. In addition, armed and politically connected “area leaders” or criminal “dons” began to provide an extralegal form of private security and informal justice in low-income urban neighbourhoods (Jaffe 2012). As Terry Lacey notes of this process, “The problem of armed civilians was tackled by giving some recognition to vigilante groups in particular situations, but non-recognised vigilantes persisted and the attitude that it was legitimate for the public to ‘have a go’ at instant law enforcement presented further difficulties for the police” (1977, 102).

From the eighteenth to the late twentieth century, Jamaica’s policing and security arrangements have varied widely in terms of actors and emphases. However, a number of elements remain more or less constant. Policing has tended to take the shape of a pluralized system, connecting state security forces to privatized violence and vigilantism while blurring public–private boundaries. Notwithstanding changes after independence, Jamaican policing has tended to serve the interests of the state and of elites, with a focus on ensuring a cooperative and productive labour force. This tendency has coincided with a longstanding, broadly shared perception that both state and non-state policing agents serve particular racialized, classed and party-partisan interests, rather than contributing to security as a common good.

Contemporary private policing

How do these colonial features of policing manifest in twenty-first-century private policing? Based on our research with private security company owners, managers and guards, this section identifies a number of themes in which we recognize connections to colonial policing in terms of historical formations of class, race, and gender. While these colonial formations of difference have certainly lost some of their salience following independence, they continue to resurface in reconfigured form in the domain of policing. First, we discuss the demographic make-up of security company ownership and management. These positions are largely concentrated amongst light-skinned Jamaican elites, “old boys” who are connected across the industry and to the state security sector through military careers, elite social networks, and “traditional” high schools. Second, we suggest the socioeconomic and ethno-racial formation of the ownership and management structure is connected to broader labour hierarchies within the security industry. Echoing colonial labour relations, these hierarchies are characterized by management representations of employees as unreliable, criminal, and in need of discipline. However, the methods used to manage the labour force tend to rely on neoliberal technologies of the self rather than on coercion. Third, we analyse how private security employees’ everyday and professional practices and discourses both reproduce and contest deeply entrenched raced, classed and gendered constructions of security threats, including the archetypal figure of the “badman” from Kingston’s Downtown areas.

Old boys

A first theme that connects the private security industry to earlier eras of policing is a demographic distinction in terms of structures of discipline and profit. Interviewing the owners and managers of the country’s larger security companies, we found that the men in charge – we only met one woman in a management position, the daughter of the founder – were, perhaps unsurprisingly, part of the Jamaican business elite. While the historical correlation between class and skin colour has been challenged, the ethno-racial positioning of these owners and managers as “Brown” light-skinned Jamaicans reinforced their socioeconomic status.

The ties between business and political elites on this small island are close, and in terms of the commercial sector’s relations with the state security forces, it was often difficult to disentangle public and private forces. The security field is characterized by the type of revolving-door careers common to other sectors. One company we spoke to had been co-founded by a military officer who left the private sector to take up a high position in the Ministry

of Finance, returned to the company, then left again to become Minister of National Security. Similarly, the Commissioner of Customs previously ran one of the largest private security companies, while a number of politicians own security businesses on the side.

More broadly, almost all of the managers and owners we interviewed had a background in the Jamaica Defense Force, and this military experience and the contacts this facilitated were strong assets in developing their business career. A military background works as a type of social and cultural capital in the industry. As one company owner, himself a Major, explained: “We are trained in a certain way, we are brought up in a certain way.” As he went on to explain, “I eat lunch [at the army canteen] every day, it’s still the cheapest lunch round town, so I get to see them, I am privy to stuff that you can’t discuss. So I have maintained my links.” These “links” to the public sector and politics are especially useful when it comes to government tenders – an important part of commercial security activities, given that apparently about half of the market for guarding services consists of government contracts. (Government interviewees explained that contracting private companies for these services, ranging from guarding government properties such as ministries, hospitals, and universities to policing tourist areas, was cheaper than direct employment and made it easier to dismiss guards suspected of theft or other security breaches.)

The shared military background also ensured that, while the private security industry is characterized by fierce competition, at the top, relations were often friendly. Senior managers and owners collaborate in professional security associations to lobby the government and self-police the industry to keep out undesirable businesses. Beyond these professional interests, there is a level of social homogeneity that keeps relations pleasant. As one company owner explained:

Everybody in the industry knows everybody. All the persons that are senior persons in the industry, we know each other on first name basis, I would say we are friends. A lot of the persons in the industry are from the army. And they know each other from the JDF and the police force also. So I mean, most persons in the industry – like the owners and the shareholders and managers – know each other from elsewhere and there’s a good relationship other than the competitive nature of the job.

Our interlocutors would also mention having gone to school with each other and with politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats in the Ministry of Security, generally to what are known as “traditional high schools”, Jamaica’s more elite secondary schools that maintain strong alumni networks through what are known unironically as Old Boys events. Together, these shared backgrounds in education and training, and ongoing socializing in the island’s more elite social circles, reinforce the friendly but exclusive character of the

senior ranks of the security industry. The social distance between them and the majority of the population, and the blurring of military and commercial actors in security provision, echo colonial patterns, although the mid-twentieth-century shift from a White to a Brown elite is significant, and access to these circles is mediated as much by education, capital and urban location as by skin colour (Jaffe 2016). As Charles Carnegie (2017, 140) observes, “Differences of civility and worth, once coded in explicitly racialized color terms, have come more fully to be understood in terms of ‘class’... however, differences continue to be stubbornly shadowed by ‘race,’ that seemingly natural, biologically incontestable mark of otherness on which a profoundly unequal social order was so successfully erected across ‘plantation America.’”

Disciplining security labour

The elite Brown character of those in charge of running security companies also informs labour hierarchies within the industry. While maintaining that the level of their guards was higher than that of other companies, owners and managers tended to represent the general pool of low-education guarding labour in classed and arguably racialized terms. They often depicted these guards, generally from “volatile” Downtown neighbourhoods, as barely literate, unpunctual, unreliable, prone to crime, and, all in all, in need of discipline. Such portrayals reflect a broader antagonism between workers and management, and sometimes echo colonial depictions of an indolent African-Caribbean population in need of European disciplining (Carter 1997; Cowell 2004).

A group of three managers we spoke to referred to the pilfering habits of working-class employees among the companies they supplied with guarding services, emphasizing that only their own level, that of management, could be trusted: “Remember most of our clients are hiring people from the same cadre that we are, from the same workforce in Jamaica, so you know that there’ll be problems ... But the real answer to their problems is right here with the three of us.”

When asked what the main challenge was for his company, one owner explained it was human relations within the company: “That’s your main challenge, keeping persons in line, hands trustworthy, properly trained, customer service, that stuff, deportment.” The main labour pool from which security guards are recruited is low-income inner-city residents – the “cadre” of workers who would accept the long hours and low pay offered by the industry are also those who are seen as most susceptible to crime themselves, because of their milieu. They are seen as easily swayed into bad habits, such that one manager explained their inclination to recruit at a younger age: “Sometimes

we go a year or two below our required age if they are presentable and look mature, and we train them, because that way they are not exposed to bad habits.” On the whole, guards’ involvement in theft is taken as a given, and suspicion is the basis for many interactions between guards and management. One security consultant asserted “they need an internal affairs department in most of these companies to just look at their own guards and see what’s going on.”

In fact, many companies do have some type of internal affairs component. Various companies use polygraph tests to filter out lying employees, and some have internal disciplinary hearings on a weekly basis to “deal with matters of discipline”, which include absence and lateness, but prominently theft and other crimes. As one company owner explained, “if it is alleged that a guard stole something, he would be suspended from duty, the relevant information would be collected by the zone manager and his supervisor’s statements would be written, and he would come here and answer to it and when he comes a decision is made then. If he’s guilty he’s dismissed, so he has an opportunity to defend himself.”

While these problems may not be unique to Jamaica, the framing of the labouring population and some of the solutions developed have historical resonances. The senior manager at another company explained how he solved a range of labour issues by instituting a system of barracks for security guards:

I established a network of barracks and what that did, it enabled me to recruit from all fourteen parishes of Jamaica. I wasn’t beholden to the labor force in the immediate environs ... if you came to me seeking employment for Ocho Rios the understanding was that once you completed the training, one thing I can guarantee is that you weren’t going to work in Ocho Rios, so I would send you to Montego Bay or Negril, so where you were far removed from local influences ... But what happens is that once I have you relocated at my camp facility, couple of things work for me, I can supervise you off the job as well as on the job, that’s a big plus. If you’re working at night, one of the big problems with people that work at night, they don’t get adequate rest during the day. Some of them are actually working, they may be running a taxi, they may be doing some gardening work, so then come with them tired body to go on the client, to go fall asleep and nobody wants to pay for a sleeping security guard ... so the camp help to mitigate ... I had greater control, transport, punctuality is an issue ... If he’s going to steal then he has to wonder ... how is he going to get the loot back home, he can’t carry it to the camp ... One of the rules, you can’t carry no women. Any woman that you can carry to the camp is not a good woman, that woman doesn’t mean you well.

The manager presented this as a model adopted from his military experience, but the barracks system also resonates directly with colonial forms of labour surveillance and control, such as those found on the sugar plantations.

His justification of the barracks system is rooted in a perception of workers as prone to tardiness and crime, and distracted by women and other negative local influences. This censorious tone is tempered, however, by the recognition that guards' multiple jobs are an additional source of their lack of sleep.

Another CEO discussed a comparable practice of removing security guards from their surroundings, explaining that he recruited people from other parts of Jamaica "to police particular townships, because at the end of the day they are coming in contact with their neighbours, they are coming in contact with people from the same community, so we do have to bring people from other communities to deal with security issues, especially in the public spaces." This emphasis on distancing policing agents from "local influences" echoes colonial and postcolonial practices of rotating police officers to avoid social proximity to policed populations.

Under colonial rule, a general distrust of labour often translated into punitive, coercive measures, enabled by the *de facto* sovereignty plantation owners wielded on their estates. Postcolonial security company owners and managers, operating in a country with relatively strict labour laws, rely on very different strategies in seeking to render their workers productive. While barracks and internal disciplinary hearings were on the harsher end of the spectrum, security companies rely more on specific contractual arrangements to control guards' labour. Many guards are not employed directly by a security company. While they tend to work exclusively for one (larger) company, guards' official status is that of independent contractors. This means that, in comparison to formally recognized employees who do enjoy the protection of labour laws, contracted security guards can be fired easily and can work longer shifts and more hours per week. As one manager explained,

Almost everything that happens, it has an inside person, the inside person is the employee and apart from the pilferage, the everyday stealing by the employees, the employees are always involved in whatever happens on the streets, the holdups and so on. The information comes from inside and that is what cause a lot of the businesses to not employ their own security guards because the benefit of having contracted security guards is that you can have them removed immediately ... When you employ guards, you have this long process before you can get rid of them even if you suspect that they are involved in something, you have to prove it.

An added advantage of this contractor system is that guards more willingly accept low pay and double or triple shifts. Various guards we spoke to did not see such shifts (of up to thirty-six hours), which would be illegal for employment regulated by Jamaica's labour laws, as exploitative but rather as an opportunity to earn higher wages by working longer hours. Their interpretation means that harsh labour conditions are partially self-imposed, as workers may connect a low income to a reluctance to work hard, rather than to

structural relations. This also enables a non-coercive, neoliberal mode of labour control that works through self-disciplining and the responsabilization of workers for their own conditions. These methods, which connect to globally prevalent neoliberal mechanisms disciplining of precarious non-employed labour, are obviously very different from the violence of slavery. Yet certain parallels might be drawn with the post-Emancipation methods of inducing the formerly enslaved to keep working on the plantations. These legal and fiscal measures, developed in the context of nineteenth-century liberalism, sought to instill virtues of individual autonomy and responsibility in the Black labouring population, shaping a particular type of self-interested, self-improving post-Emancipation subject (Holt 1992; Scott 2001).

The threat of the badman

Beyond internal hierarchies and labour relations, a third important connection of contemporary private policing to colonial policing relates to the construction of security threats. Despite significant post-Independence social mobility and the growth of a Black bourgeoisie (Robotham 2000), colonial formations of skin colour, class, and urban location still intersect in profiling practices that differentiate between dangerous and endangered subjects. The archetypal security threat in Kingston is the so-called “badman”, an (implicitly Black and poor) gunman from Downtown Kingston. In contrast, the vulnerable citizen is framed as a light-skinned Uptown resident (see Figure 1). In their discussions during interviews about how they recognized threats, security guards partially reproduced this stereotypical categorization by describing a swaggering would-be criminal, who moves around on foot and speaks Patois (the Creole vernacular) rather than standard English. Walking itself – at least in Kingston’s wealthier Uptown areas – was seen as



Figure 1 Security company advertising in Kingston: racially differentiated protectors and protected.

suspicious. One guard explained: “Up Jacks Hill [a wealthy area] now, and me see somebody a run, me apprehend them.” His colleague chimed in: “Cause nobody up a Jacks Hill no normally run, unless they’re jogging.”

However, these guards – themselves Black and from inner-city areas – also contested this type of profiling. One female guard explained that clothes did not make the thief: “Sorry, but to be honest, you have some person come in tie, well dressed, looking good. ‘Cause I remember when I was working at the bank, one come there ...”, and she proceeded to describe how a well-dressed man was identified as a would-be bank robber. Other guards were more explicitly reflective on the social structure of crime and associated ethno-racial profiling. One security officer, for instance, made specific links between the status of guards themselves and their tendency towards stereotyping, indicating the symbolic violence of those who internalize stigma:

I think what happen in Jamaica is that, because most of the security guards are normally poor people, then we tend to look towards poor people or stereotype poor people as being criminal ... Most of the security guards come from the minimum-wage pool, the less educated pool and we tend to look towards the criminal them who come from ... Most of the people [who] actually go out and commit the physical crime are lower-class, minimum-wage people. But significant crime have to do with the people them that really plan it, the ones who really control the little man. Because the little man who will probably come to your gate, come shoot somebody; somebody send him, him probably not even know who him come to. So you probably let through the person through the gate to come look for the person him see him need to come do action to, or send somebody to come trouble, and allow him to go through. Because him White, him Brown – him does not fit a certain criteria.

This security officer had moved from guarding to installing security technology, and he presented technology as a race-neutral, class-neutral solution: “an access control wouldn’t see you as being a White person or a Black; is just either a valid or a non-valid person. So we put systems in place to try to help the people on the ground to try to make proper decisions.”

This racialized framing of the threat and its contestation also surfaced in our interviews with private security company managers and owners about the tourism industry. In 2008, the Ministry of Tourism established the Tourism Courtesy Corps (TCC) in response to complaints about tourist harassment. This task was outsourced to a private security company and the officers were granted the title of Special District Constables (SDCs) to not only patrol the areas, but also provide general courtesy services and assist tourists in a range of matters. These SDCs received additional legal powers similar to police officers, such as the power to arrest, within designated tourist areas. This move indicates the blurred public–private character of policing, with private actors gaining public policing powers in ways that might be read in

relation to colonial arrangements distributing legal powers. A clear colonial legacy, however, lies in the racialized distinction between potential victims and potential threats, which emerged clearly as a theme during our interviews. As one government official explained:

One of the things that happen is that, how do you know someone is a tourist, how do you recognize a tourist? Because the general feel is that a tourist is a White person, and more and more tourists are not necessarily that, so that's something we could feed back to the company and say: hey guys, you need to look at this. You need to train your people to not think that non-White person is [a security threat].

Such entrenched distinctions between threatening and threatened bodies, even amongst low-income, dark-skinned security guards, are hard to understand as separate from longer colonial histories of constructing danger in terms of race, class, gender, and nation. Yet the legitimacy of these distinctions is increasingly questioned, as more critical security guards critique these assumptions, and as the demographic diversification of the tourist population means that racial profiling may threaten Jamaica's reputation amongst non-White tourists. In addition, as the security worker quoted above indicated, the increased use of security technology – access passes, digital thumbprints, etc. – can potentially play a role in minimizing racial profiling.

Conclusion

As Randall Williams (2003, 324) argues, an engagement with the early historical development of the police “can enrich our understanding of contemporary neo-colonial forms of control and discipline in which the police, the criminal and the ‘dangerous classes’ have been largely naturalized beyond historical recognition.” By historicizing the development of Jamaica's private security from the colonial period to the present, we hope to have demonstrated the importance of tracing trajectories for non-state policing agents that are not only similar but also intimately connected to those of the formal state police. As the Jamaican case illustrates, an exclusive focus on state actors – which has been the norm in most of the work on colonial policing – obscures the plural character of colonial policing, and the imprecise boundaries between public and private security agents.

We have concentrated here on tracing continuities and discontinuities between colonial plural policing and the twenty-first-century private security industry. Coinciding with Williams' analysis, a clear legacy is, unsurprisingly, the continued criminalization of specific segments of the population, in not

only classed but also clearly raced and gendered terms. In addition, relations between ownership, management, and workers within the security industry not only display parallels to colonial social hierarchies. These relations also indicate the persistence of models of controlling the labouring population that were developed in the context of colonial economies based on slavery. Although colonially derived racial criteria of differentiation have been complicated and nuanced, the domain of policing both reveals how binary social divisions persist and may itself contribute to the entrenchment of social distance. As Carnegie (2017, 139–140) notes, Jamaica’s colonial boundary-maintaining practices are “recoded” but have remarkable durability, despite significant social mobility and a sustained cultural–political project of Black nationalism: “Paradoxically, even as many of the symbolic sociocultural markers of difference have been demonstrably transformed over the postcolonial decades, difference itself has at the same time been reimagined and renaturalized ... the boundary can be firmly maintained – narrated now not explicitly in racial terms but more indirectly and less self-consciously in terms of Uptown/Downtown and cognate spatial signifiers.”

Yet a closer engagement with the perceptions of differently positioned individuals within the industry also highlights the extent to which such historically shaped inequalities are being challenged. Post-independence changes have resulted in a shift in the formation of Jamaica’s business and political elites, while the demographic diversity of foreign tourists also necessitates a change in assumptions about what a body in need of protection looks like. The Brown category of economic elites includes increasing numbers of darker-skinned Jamaicans, while racial constructions of threat are co-constituted through socioeconomic and spatial markers, working more through class and urban geography than through skin colour *per se*. Some security guards may have internalized stereotypical images of the criminal, or are relatively uncritical of the structural factors impacting their labour situation, but others explicitly question the legitimacy of classed and racial profiling and make connections between these practices and their own positioning within Jamaica’s social structure. While centuries of colonial rule and associated inequalities have clearly shaped the contemporary private security industry, such shifts reflect a move – if tentative – towards the decolonizing of policing, beyond formal police reform.

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