Occupying Syria under the French Mandate

What role does military force play during a colonial occupation? The answer seems obvious: coercion crushes local resistance, quashes political dissent and consolidates the dominance of the occupying power. Yet violence can also have more subtle and more ambiguous consequences. This discerning and theoretically rigorous study focuses on Syria during the French Mandate from 1920 to 1946, a turbulent period in which conflict between armed Syrian insurgents and French military forces not only determined the strategic objectives of the colonial state, but also transformed how the colonial state organised, controlled and understood Syrian society, geography and population. The book shows how, in addition to the coercive techniques of air power, collective punishment and colonial policing, civilian technologies such as urban planning and engineering were commandeered in the effort to undermine rebel advances. In this way colonial violence had a lasting effect in Syria, shaping a peculiar form of social order that endured well after the French occupation. As the conclusion surmises, the interplay between violence, spatial colonisation and pacification continues to resonate with recent developments in the region.

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Occupying Syria under the French Mandate

Insurgency, Space and State Formation

DANIEL NEEP
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Note on Translation and Transliteration

I adopt the system of Arabic transliteration from the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*: the initial hamza is unmarked; the خ is represented by ‘; and the تاءّ marbuta is represented by ‘-a’ or by ‘-at’ (in an idafa).

Some Syrian places have well-known English names (Damascus, Aleppo, etc.); others I have transliterated according to their standard Arabic spellings (e.g. Dayr al-Zur). However, the names of city quarters, villages, and so on in the region of Damascus have been rendered to approximate their colloquial pronunciation (e.g. ‘al-Marjeh’ for ‘al-Marjah’, ‘al-Mlayha’ for ‘al-Maliha’).

All translations from Arabic and French are my own unless specifically noted. My translations err on the side of naturalness, readability and fidelity to the overall meaning of the passage. I provide the original term in square brackets at points where my translation might conceivably be accused of undue exuberance.