

## Policing the Southern Chinese seaboard

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For scholars of crime, law and social change, one of the more interesting aspects of globalization is the way it produces new regulatory regimes. Markets, it seems, are not natural forces; they must be created. And the creation of a new market depends, in no small part, on the formation of a governing system capable of securing its new forms of property, rationalizing its new relations of domination, and organizing its new system of exchange. The emergence of a new regulatory regime is fascinating to watch anywhere, but perhaps the most intriguing place in which to explore the process is one of the sort that Mary Louise Pratt called “contact zones” [1], i.e. sites in which radically different economies of meaning encounter one another, find a footing for engagement across their differences, and set about exploiting the new possibilities afforded by combination and hybridity.

The Southern Chinese Seaboard is such a contact zone. It has been for a very long time and, as such, holds a position of core significance in the history of modern Chinese policing. This special issue is a first step towards telling the story of policing in this region, and reflecting on how that story matters for our understanding of policing in China and, indeed, the world. It is a story that began more than five centuries ago, when a newly expansive European imperialism began to engage what was then a still insular Chinese imperium. The first permanent European trading post in China was established by the Portuguese in Macau, in 1557. The Dutch East Indies Company came hot on their heels, trying and failing to take the Portuguese position by force before establishing their own outpost in Southern Taiwan. The story takes its first decisive turn towards “policing” on 14 March 1691, when the Portuguese governor of Macau established a standing night patrol, a date now celebrated as the founding moment of China’s oldest modern police force [2]. The

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