

Policing: Introduction

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Whether or not we follow Weber in defining the state around the exercise of 'legitimate force', the activities of police clearly present us with an exemplary instantiation of modern state authority *per se*. As such, policing is a fruitful focus for comparative discussion of the diverse social and historical processes implicated within the distinctive forms of political association that have become characteristic of modern life in various times and places. This section of *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* brings together four such discussions. Their juxtaposition promises fresh insight into state-society dynamics and the nature of governmental control in our contemporary world. Taiwan's value as a comparator is, perhaps, nowhere more evident than in a situation like this, where it supplies a point of reference drawing a broad constellation of issues into a coherent discussion. Indeed, 'Policing Studies' itself, as a scholarly project, must constructively bridge a wide spectrum of empirical concerns. An adequate understanding of police can arise only when the erudition of historical and cultural scholarship achieves a constructive dialogue with the weighty practical and professional responsibilities involved in the organization and reform of actual police dispositions. We are presently in the midst of a fruitful expansion of this dialogue across national and disciplinary borders; this section of *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* provides a particular contribution to this emerging movement.

Like most contemporary social phenomena in Taiwan, her policing is a synthesis. Taiwanese policing fuses elements of indigenous tradition with lingering vestiges of the multiple historical forces that have absorbed the island into the modern World System. The institutional dimensions of this fusion manifest as a hybrid system that blends entrenched aspects of the Continental *Polizeiwissenschaft* which so powerfully informed the emergence of East Asian modernity, with elements of Anglo-American reform acquired during the Cold War and consolidated through the post-'86 transition to liberal democracy. In its practical dimensions, Taiwan's hybridized policing system functions embedded in an overarching cultural sensibility that orients and integrates its eclectic institutional mechanism within the categories of a collective ethos that is, quite self-consciously, centered around traditional ideals of community identity. One of the positive dividends of this Taiwanese aesthetic of fusion and hybridity is that it allows Taiwan to have something for everyone: not least, for scholars of police, an interesting counterpoint to the dynamics of policing described here as obtaining in China, Hong Kong and Great Britain.

The original modern municipal police department was, of course, London's Metropolitan Police. As Chris Williams describes the genealogy of UK policing, a central feature has been an enduring tension between law and order. The relationship between these two contrasting rationales was transformed in a 'watershed in practice' around 1960, which Williams explains in relation to wider processes of socioeconomic and cultural transformation. Williams' analysis of these dynamics in the UK resonates with Michael Palmer's account of ways in which China's current reforms have affected the police role. In particular, Chinese reform has opened up new potentials for law to serve as a restraint on state power. Palmer's discussion of contemporary policing foregrounds certain elements that have limited the realization of this potential, including an entrenched custom of campaign-style policing operations, and the persistence of administrative punishments outside the purview of judicial oversight. Structuring Palmer's detailed institutional account is a larger theoretical concern with the complex dynamics between legal accountability and social responsibility. Palmer's discussion shows us how the tensions of this relationship structure the role of police within China's difficult transformation from revolutionary governance to a status quo in which a social order based on economic inequality is to be granted political legitimacy. The contrast with both Britain and Taiwan – neither of which has ever been ruled under a mandate of communist equality – is illuminating.

At the core of questions about the legitimacy of political and economic arrangements are issues of interpretive processes and cultural values. The meaningful role of law in founding political legitimacy is the central concern of Carol Jones's discussion of Hong Kong. In Jones's words, 'The rule of law is to undemocratic Taiwan what democracy is to Taiwan', i.e., a defining figure of popular discourse, through which the legitimacy of political power is debated and understood. Jones takes the jurisdictional border separating Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region from China's Mainland as a revelatory site in which to examine the cultural bases of popular sensibilities about good governance in Hong Kong. The case of a helpless child who disappeared through the cracks of the system responsible for his guardianship serves as *entrée* to analysis of the cultural scheme defining what Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger* (1966), referred to as 'matter out of place'. Through exploring the complex narratives spinning out of this event, Jones shows how the meaning of governmental authority in Hong Kong has taken shape around the historical contrast between the former British colony and its un-colonized adjacent regions. Like Hong Kong, modern police first came to Taiwan as an instrument of colonial rule, and established jurisdictional boundaries that persist into the present day. Where the British colonized Hong Kong, however, Taiwan was colonized by Japan, and the consequences of this difference remain pronounced in contemporary police practice. Some of this is seen in Martin's paper, which examines the motivations driving a village police patrol organized by civilian volunteers. As he shows, the ways that the village is understood as a community and the way it is identified as a territorial jurisdiction are both structured by enduring legacies of the Japanese approach to policing as a mode of indirect rule intended to simultaneously foster and co-opt grass-root social dynamics.

Taken individually, each of these papers stands on its own as a rich case study. Taken as a set, they provide the basis for a comparative conversation that has

great potential to contribute to contemporary discussions of police and policing, in Taiwan and around the world.

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