

Administering the City/Policing Commerce

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Abstract:

The late 19th and early 20th c. promotion of foreign models of modern policing was part of a turn by maverick state officials, industrial entrepreneurs, and political-economic writers, to focus on urban structure and reform as a means for stimulating economic expansion and ordering society for advantage in the Social Darwinist military, economic, and political competition against imperialist powers. This paper examines the contestation over the aims and effectiveness of a modernized police force in Suzhou during the last decade of the Qing. Far from redressing popular anxieties about the regarding an ostensible reign of lawlessness throughout Jiangnan during the late 1890s and early naughts, the police themselves became the focus of criticism as they endeavored to develop their role and methods in a new regime of social control. Elites and common people alike questioned the role that the police should play in the protection and facilitation of urban commerce.