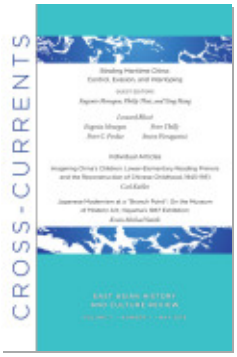
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Introduction

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BINDING MARITIME CHINA:
CONTROL, EVASION, AND INTERLOPING

Introduction

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Maritime Asia is a confusing morass of contested sovereignties and geopolitical rivalries. Yet the seaways of Asia have, in their history, also fostered cultural exchange and economic integration. The liminal maritime zone surrounding China remains a paradox between seas and ports teeming with legal and illegal exchange and governmental policies attempting to monopolize and restrict that exchange. Vast and fluid, maritime China has long hindered state control and fostered connections determined as much by bottom-up economic and cultural logic as by top-down official impositions. This issue of *Cross-Currents* proposes to reexamine the rich history of maritime China and adjacent areas by tracing the interactions of the three initiatives of control, evasion, and interloping.

This special issue stems from a conference the guest editors organized in Boston in 2015, with support from Boston University, Brandeis University, Northeastern University, and the Taiwan Ministry of Education.[1] We invited a distinguished group of scholars to explore the many facets of maritime China's history.[2] Our key postulation was that state control, evasion from that control, and interloping within the interstices of China's maritime

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world literally *bound* an array of actors and locales for distinct but interrelated goals, from the early modern era to the modern era. This concept is encapsulated in the title of the current issue, "Binding Maritime China." What "creates" and gives coherence to the concept of maritime China as a social, economic, political, and geographic space is, to a large extent, how human actors (Chinese and Western merchants and businessmen, navy officers, bureaucrats, fishermen, pirates, missionaries, and so on) productively interacted or experienced conflicts and resisted one another's control. They did so across oceanic and coastal spaces, administrative boundaries, class lines, bureaucratic institutions, commercial organizations, and competing imperial formations.

"Control" refers to the unceasing efforts by terrestrial polities—imperial, republican, and colonial—to extend jurisdiction over the seas for taxation, security, and sovereignty. The sea in the official imagination teemed with unseen threats, but also potential profit, and segmenting and monopolizing its use proved to be an important state imperative throughout history. As the burgeoning research on maritime worlds has reminded scholars, this territorialization was an ongoing project, a dialectic between control and freedom unfolding over centuries. In addition to violence, other weapons have been employed by states in their arsenal of coercion: technologies of surveillance that enhanced legibility, knowledge of science that demarcated claims, and frameworks of law that legitimated authority. Cartography, telecommunications, and laws all helped broadcast regulatory authority to maritime margins.

"Evasion" refers to people or groups that organize against the boundary setting and rationalization projects of state builders. They form connections and associations that straddle and connect across lines set by authorities with the intent of separating them. Or they evade and confound the instruments of surveillance aimed at penetrating their liminality. Smuggling, black markets, illegal immigration, and human trafficking all fall under this rubric. At times, however, the rationalizing impulse of the state comes into direct conflict with the evaders, creating armed conflict in the form of piracy. Evaders also have a tendency to become victims of their own success. Once they grow to a certain size, they begin to take on characteristics of interlopers or the very state authorities that they had once tried every means to oppose.

Finally, "interloping" brings together apparently disparate phenomena and actors, sharing the maritime space with states, para-states, and major commercial interests, and often overlapping with their networks in an ambiguous relationship of exploitation. In the context of maritime China, the exploitation was bidirectional: imperial and mercantile projects of various kinds used interlopers and the spaces they inhabited to open up new markets and territories, as they did with overseas Chinese within colonial contexts in Southeast Asia. From the point of view of the interlopers (truly "imperial stowaways"), however, the opposite was also true. Their own projects—be they dictated by private profit spiritual calling, as in the case of religious agents, or sheer survival, as with many in the mercantile and piratical worlds—took full advantage of the established structures of commerce and state control as their own vectors.

The "continental turn" in Chinese history has shifted frontiers that once seemed marginal (Inner Asia, the Southwest, Tibet) to the center of academic inquiry. Meanwhile, a growing number of scholars working on the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the East Asian seas, have highlighted oceans as important sites of exchange and contestation in a global perspective. A fresh look at the history of maritime China, including relations with Northeast and Southeast Asia, is now overdue and increasingly crucial. Already, scholars are revisiting what was previously a neglected geographical arena. This new research is uncovering multidirectional avenues of exchange and interaction among China, the rest of Asia, and the world by considering a wider range of actors—not just states, but non-territorialized groups such as religious orders, ethnic diasporas, scientific communities, and mercantile organizations, among others. This issue of *Cross-Currents* aims at presenting some fresh perspectives and new case studies reflecting these recent historiographical developments.

Leonard Blussé's article (originally the keynote address for the conference)—"*Oceanus Resartus;* or, Is Chinese Maritime History Coming of Age?"—opens the issue and offers a synthetic and astute assessment of the historiography and recent political maneuvering surrounding China's relationship with the oceans. Blussé himself is one of the major scholars who have shaped the field of East Asian maritime studies since the 1980s. Here, he gives us a selective, yet perceptive and stimulating, overview of the intersection of scholarship, cultural sentiments, and policy decisions that have

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"re-tailored" (*resartus*)—that is, interpreted and manipulated—China's attitude to the maritime world since the 1970s. Today's interest in the ocean and nautical matters in China—fields of investigation traditionally neglected—is very much connected to the rise of the country as a major world power. The resuscitation or creation of historical "facts" about the Maritime Silk Road or the South China Sea supplies an aura of inevitability to new geopolitical and economic interests. Blussé warns us about the dangers of presentism, mourns the loss of seafaring ethnographic knowledge, and unmasks the recent superficial "re-tailoring" of Chinese maritime history. However, he also shows excitement for the new high-quality scholarship from China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and the West, and he encourages scholars to take advantage of the field's "coming of age" to explore, in particular, the formative early modern era. In East Asia, the period between the mid-fifteenth century and the early nineteenth century was a time of enhanced state control over, or outright prohibition of, maritime trade and emigration. Yet it also was a historical stage marked by flourishing piracy, smuggling, and illegal entrepreneurship (in other words, evasion and interloping), all areas in need of much more examination and elucidation.

The issue's other articles offer specific case studies on the intersection of control, evasion, and interloping from the early modern period to the modern period. The first two essays focus on the concept of interloping and its dialectical relationship to state control. "Interlopers at the Fringes of Empire: The Procurators of the Propaganda Fide Papal Congregation in Canton and Macao, 1700–1823," by Eugenio Menegon, explores a virtually unknown maritime actor in Southern China: the economic agent (in early modern parlance called a "procurator") of the papal missionary agency in East Asia. His interloping was of a special kind. Religious and spiritual reasons, rather than economic profit, were behind his presence on the fringes of the Portuguese and Qing Empires, and at the intersection of global maritime networks in the Pearl River Delta. He was an interloper in the broadest sense of the word, using the logistical infrastructure of global trade and of his host empires to further the religious goals of the Catholic Church, and to connect with and support the largely illegal mission stations in China and Southeast Asia. The article, based on mostly untapped archival materials preserved in Rome, opens a window onto a little-known aspect of Sino-Western relations. The procurators were nodes in the financial, material, and informational

networks both within China and connecting China to the rest of the world. This case study, moreover, clearly shows how interlopers could use imperial and commercial formations as vectors for their own ends, even when their organization's goals were subversive of existing laws—as was the case with Catholic activities, forbidden by the Qing government within its borders since 1724.

In "Interlopers, Rogues, or Cosmopolitans? Wu Jianzhang (ca. 1810–1865) and Early Modern Commercial Networks on the China Coast," Peter Perdue also considers the role of interlopers in coastal China, trying to see them not from the point of view of hostile observers (either Western diplomats and merchants, or Qing bureaucrats), but rather imagining how these "cosmopolitans"—his word—might have conceived of themselves "in their own terms." He focuses on the life of one individual, the Cantonese official and "social broker" Wu Jianzhang, who was transplanted to Shanghai during the delicate phase of transformation of the mid-nineteenth century rebellions. Perdue suggests that a biographical approach to the global history of China restores agency and flesh to what could otherwise merely become "a grand view of abstract processes." Wu's biography also connects the world of the Pearl River Delta to Shanghai, showing how Cantonese transplants (from officials to dockworkers) exported the practices of their native maritime commercial environment to their new adoptive city. Through a comparison of Wu with an earlier sixteenth-century example, the Fujianese "gentry pirate" Lin Xiyuan, and with the later Hong Kong native Wu Tingfang, an official and diplomat, Perdue suggests that transnational "interloping" persisted and evolved over time, and that the time has come to more carefully study these individuals and the local and transnational networks they helped shape.

The final two essays tackle the issue of coastal smuggling, highlighting the extent and limits of state projects to extend official jurisdiction over the seas from different perspectives. In "The Fujitsuru Mystery: Translocal Xiamen, Japanese Expansionism, and the Asian Cocaine Trade, 1900–1937," Peter Thilly employs the illegal narcotics trade in the early twentieth century as a case study to explore the dialectical relationship between control and evasion. Focusing on the Fujianese diasporic community centered in Xiamen but extending to far-flung metropoles and colonial outposts, Thilly retraces the flow of cocaine from production to distribution to sale. Marginal though

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they were as colonial subjects scattered across different empires, Fujianese traffickers nonetheless emerged dominant as redoubtable managers of the illicit trade. They adroitly exploited overlapping jurisdictions, confounded nascent international regulations, and leveraged tight native-place ties to not only survive but prosper. Skillfully employing the concept of translocalism and marshaling a diverse array of sources, Thilly writes an impressively expansive study with a transnational perspective critical to our understanding of maritime history.

Steven Pieragastini's "State and Smuggling in Modern China: The Case of Guangzhouwan/Zhanjiang" zooms in on a trafficking hotbed to trace the ebbs and flows of illicit maritime commerce from the late imperial era to today. An otherwise undistinguished port on the South China coast, Zhanjiang had long been tenuously governed by successive Chinese dynasties. But it emerged as a notorious "fiefdom of smugglers, pimps, and pirates" with the creation of Guangzhouwan, a French-leased territory established in 1899 and retroceded to Chinese sovereignty in 1945. Its creators envisioned a French entrepôt that would rival British Hong Kong, but Guangzhouwan proved a disappointment, as it remained an insignificant colonial outpost. Yet if it frustrated imperial aspirations, Guangzhouwan more than satisfied local needs. Chinese merchants, in collaboration with indifferent French officials, plied many businesses unambiguously illegal but spectacularly profitable: smuggling, prostitution, and gambling. After a brief interlude in the early People's Republic, smuggling in Zhanjiang rebounded with a vengeance in the post-Mao period, even in the face of concerted crackdowns by the Chinese government. Indeed, Pieragastini's *longue durée* perspective reveals surprising continuities in the operation, logic, and geography of smuggling that survived dramatic ruptures across different epochs.

This special issue offers only a small sample of possible research on the history of maritime China. An interrogation into the dialectical, even symbiotic, relationship among control, evasion, and interloping can yield other findings, uncovering phenomena that may have existed on the margins of history but have actually proven far from marginal in their consequences. Moreover, retracing the flows of people, commodities, and ideas crisscrossing political and geographical boundaries helps scholars break out of the nation-state or imperial straitjackets that sometimes restrict the scope of inquiry. Further developing such transnational perspectives, in turn, helps scholars

to better explore the comparative and connective dimensions of history. In sum, the editors hope that this special issue of *Cross-Currents* will stimulate others to ask provocative questions and generate novel, productive research. Chinese maritime history might truly be coming of age, and we invite you to seize the moment.

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NOTES

1. The conference "Binding Maritime China: Control, Evasion, and Interloping" was held from May 30 to June 2, 2015, at the Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University.
2. The presenters and discussants, with their affiliations at the time, included: Leonard Blussé (Leiden University); Caroline Frank (Brown University); Jonathan Gebhardt (Yale University); Frederic D. Grant Jr. (Boston, MA); Xing Hang (Brandeis University); Hui Kian Kwee (University of Toronto, Missis-

sauga); Matthew Linton (Brandeis University); Andrew Liu (Villanova University); Melissa Macauley (Northwestern University); Eugenio Menegon (Boston University); Matthew Mosca (University of Washington); Lincoln Paine (Portland, ME); Peter Perdue (Yale University); Steven Pieragastini (Brandeis University); Michael Szonyi (Harvard University); Heather Streets-Salter (Northeastern University); Philip Thai (Northeastern University); Peter Thilly (Northwestern University); Kären Wigen (Stanford University); John Wills Jr. (University of Southern California); Shirley Ye (University of Birmingham); and Gang Zhao (University of Akron).