

Highlanders' Network in the Early Modern Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands:
New Aspects of Southeast Asian Upland History

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For the past few decades, Southeast Asian historians have turned their eyes from lowlands to upland areas, especially James Scott who focused on *zomi* (uplanders)'s strategies against lowlands state-making processes and argued history of Southeast Asian upland area (called *Zomia*) with an extension into southern China and Assam in India as sociocultural evolution through the development of "the art of not being governed" by states. However, some specialists on this area questioned Scott's idea which underestimated the connectivity between upland and lowland economic/cultural spheres. On the other hand, some early modern historians emphasized the expansion of Chinese merchants and immigrants network which linked zomian communities to Chinese and global transformations and influenced local cultural and political changes but their studies still treated zomi people as static objects.

This paper will reveal networking activities of zomi people themselves in Sino-Vietnamese borderlands and their role in connecting China with Southeast Asian upland in early modern period, especially in the 18th century. For example, they took crucial role in transferring technique and usage of firearms from south China to northern Vietnamese mountains and installed political powers interlocked with Chinese networks. Furthermore, they also functioned as coordinators of Chinese labors in mining extraction which accelerated economic linkage between the Chinese market and the Vietnamese upland. Their activities might reverse Scott's image of zomi people. These facts will illustrate the more dynamic history in interfaces between China and Southeast Asia as well as at different altitudes.