



SEMINAR

Topic: Zomia, Scott and Tribal Peoples: A Critical Consideration of the 'History as Choice' Argument

Speaker: Nicholas Tapp, Ph.D.

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Professor Emeritus, Australian National University**

Time: 13:00-14:00, 28 February 2014

Venue: Room 255, Geography Building, 3663 Zhongshan Road North, Shanghai (华东师范大学中山北路校区, 地理楼255室)

ABSTRACT OF THE TALK

This talk considers some of the recent work of James Scott, Yale political scientist well known for his work on peasant societies. Scott argues that statelessness was the normal condition for most people in history, and that such statelessness was often a conscious choice by people who sought to escape the reach of the state. Raising questions about the analysis of the state, agency, borders and how areas of the world are defined, the argument pertains to a region the Dutch geographer Van Schendel called 'Zomia', encompassing large parts of China, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas. The idea that most ethnic minorities and hill-dwelling people in the region formed complex social organisations and shifting modes of agriculture as a means of evading state control has proved a controversial one, and this talk presents the main contours of the argument and considers some of the criticisms of it which have been made and the influences on Scott.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Under a Chiang Ching-kuo Research Project, 'Communal Diasporic Voluntary Public Cultures', Professor Tapp has examined the impact of returns of overseas migrants to their Asian homelands, in collaboration with Dr Gary Lee. They were working in China, Thailand, Laos and Australia and included Hmong communities in France and the USA. Currently based in Shanghai, Professor Tapp is examining the impact of ethnic minority rural migrants in the city and their source locations. He has also recently completed projects on the self, consumerism and romanticism in China and among the diasporic Hmong community.