

highest to lowest is Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyan (not as indicated in the caption on p. 42), and the chief prosecutor, Huang Huoqing, is listed incorrectly as one of the chief associates of Lin Biao in a caption on p. 55; the man in the photograph is Huang Yongsheng.

Despite these issues, this is a stimulating work. While historians and literary scholars have long known that literature is a fundamental way to understand some of the dynamics of Chinese society, it is a lesson that too few social scientists pay attention to. One hopes reading this book will help to change that.

Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China–Vietnam Borderlands. By BRADLEY CAMP DAVIS. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017. xiii, 267 pp. (Illustrations) US\$30.00 (paper).

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This book is an excellent study of the powerful armed groups inhabiting southern China and northern Vietnam during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unlike the newly fashionable studies of Zomia that, often inaccurately I believe, characterize pre-twentieth-century Eurasian borderlands regions as places where communities primarily avoided lowlands states, Davis provides a nuanced, erudite investigation into the strong connections between upland bandit networks and the major imperial states in the region: Nguyễn Vietnam, Qing China, and, later, the French protectorate. In a concise summary of this work, Davis writes, “This book tells the story of bandits, their official allies, and the communities that endured the culture of violence in the China–Vietnam borderlands” (17).

Bandits, of course, have long enjoyed scholarly attention, and, following the strands of scholarship that have revealed the important links between bandits and state power, Davis compellingly argues that bandits were recruited by the imperial states seeking to extend power into the China–Vietnam borderlands. In this way, each imperial state, including the French protectorate of Vietnam, bears responsibility for supporting and prolonging a culture of political violence that terrorized the diverse communities of the uplands. From this important perspective, French rule was not an imposition of rationality and civilization any more than was the Qing intervention, which began in the eighteenth century. In this way, Davis traces continuities in borderlands politics across the disruptive decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. State collaboration with bandit powerbrokers, he argues, provided an important continuity, even as French colonial officials imposed new ruling structures and new concepts of sovereign territoriality onto the region. This vital insight, I believe, provides much potential for all who are interested in the larger regional history of the Sino-Southeast Asian borderlands.

The first chapter introduces us to the Black Flags, one of the most important political and military organizations in the region. The founder was Liu Yongfu, a Hakka from Guangdong who had joined the Kingdom of Yanling, a Guangxi rebel organization that was a contemporary of Hong Xiuquan’s God Worshipping Society (Taiping

Kingdom). As the Kingdom of Yanling began to disintegrate, Liu created the Black Flags as a breakaway organization in 1865. The Black Flags moved into northern Vietnam, carving out territory for themselves (sometimes the carving was literal, by using blades to disfigure opponents and then taking their lands). The region into which the Black Flags moved was already an arena of bandit competition, and the Black Flags distinguished themselves by gaining control over Yunnan opium trafficking, by defeating a competing bandit group, and by gaining recognition from both the Qing and Vietnamese states. While the Black Flags are the primary focus of this chapter, Davis reveals, in extraordinary detail, northern Vietnam's larger culture of violence, in which multiple bandit groups competed for power by seeking to control commerce, by attacking highland villages for food, conscripts, and women, and by reaching out to imperial states for support.

When the French first made inroads into northern Vietnam in the person of arms dealer Jean Dupuis, they engaged with the Black Flags and the culture of violence in a number of ways. In chapter 2, we learn that Dupuis established contacts with the Black Flags' enemies, the Yellow Flags, an alliance that would last for decades. Dupuis also initiated an important French discourse that painted the Black Flags as uncivilized in the sense that they were violent and that they interfered with free trade. When Dupuis was arrested by the Nguyễn, and Francis Garnier, who was sent to negotiate for Dupuis's return, attacked Hanoi, it was the Black Flags who came down into the Red River delta, killed Garnier, and sold his head to the Nguyễn so that it could be displayed for all to see. For the French, these grisly actions only reinforced Dupuis's earlier descriptions of the Black Flags, and French consular officials would continue to emphasize Black Flag violence and the disorder that it brought to the Red River valley and northern Vietnam. Needless to say, the solution to such disorder and violence was understood by many Frenchmen to be the civilizing influences of French rule and commerce.

In the war of 1883–1885, the French sought to impose a civilized colonial order on northern Vietnam. While previous scholarship has labeled the conflict as the Sino-French war and has focused on its role in the demise of the Qing regional order, Davis focuses on the borderlands and northern Vietnam, where the war involved the armies of the French, Nguyễn, Qing, and imperial bandits allied with the Nguyễn and Qing (the Black Flags) and with the French (the Yellow Flags). The fact that bandit groups were involved provided important continuities with the past. The Yellow Flags had long been opponents of Liu Yongfu in the northern borderlands. In seeking to implement the colonial modernity of a protectorate, the French were forced to turn to the Yellow Flags, who were very like the imperial bandits who not only had served the Qing and Nguyễn imperial formations but had been the target of French consular discourse about disorder.

In the fourth and final chapter, Davis follows the story of imperial bandits into the period of the protectorate after 1885, noting how the networks of banditry continued to influence the region. Even though the Black Flags were largely repatriated to China, their networks and their culture of violence lingered. Anti-French movements, some with ties to the Black Flags, continued to employ the tactics of violence and to seek the revenue of opium trafficking that had sustained the Black Flags. The French, in turn, continued to recognize and seek to empower former bandit leaders, including those with links to the Yellow Flags. Although the French protectorate claimed to impose a modern rational administration, Davis argues that bandit networks adapted to

and exploited the new technologies, including the formally demarcated borderlines and even the telegraph lines, which were to empower the forces of order. In this section, Davis probably reaches a bit too far in his efforts to demonstrate continuity in the face of change—linking the older world of bandit networks to anti-Qing revolutionary activity in the first decade of the twentieth century, for example; the evidence as presented is not yet fully contextualized or explained. But Davis’s larger point is worth considering carefully: the technologies of so-called civilization and modern state-building, including the borderline, census, and telegraph, do not necessarily bring order when introduced to borderlands communities; nor do they eradicate the perceived need for states to participate in and seek to justify cultures of violence against borderland inhabitants. In my own reading, I found this insight particularly pertinent to developments in China today.

This book is a welcome study because of its focus on the late nineteenth-century Sino-Southeast Asian borderlands, a time period and region that deserves more good studies like this one. Davis brings to bear a wealth of knowledge about Qing, Nguyễn, and French politics while also providing a humane and detailed analysis of northern Vietnam’s diverse upland and lowland communities. The book is difficult to follow at times (the introduction could use an explanation of each chapter’s contributions), and Davis relies, in my opinion, a bit too much on a particular interpretation of Qing frontier policies. Nevertheless, this is a study that should be read widely by those interested in East and Southeast Asia, particularly because the key dynamics—armed non-state actors, state-promoted violence, and the suffering of upland communities—have resonated for decades throughout the Sino-Southeast Asian borderlands.

Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China. By HILDE DE WEERDT. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016. xxiv + 512 pp. \$59.95, £47.95, €54.00 (cloth).

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As Hilde De Weerdts recounts in her “Introduction,” Sima Guang 司馬光, the great Song historian, noted in his memorial of 1061 that from the eighth century BCE until the establishment of the Song dynasty in 960 CE, China had been unified as one polity only for a total of some five centuries—less than half of the entire seventeen hundred years (6). By 1126–27, about seventy years after Sima’s observation, the Song state lost its northern territories to the conquering Jurchens, and it would struggle for more than a century with this traumatic partition of its empire. This was the last time that China would be split up, however. De Weerdts argues that this had much to do with the new educated elite that evolved in the Song—basically a managerial elite that based its political power on service in the state bureaucracy and its economic wealth largely on landholding. In the three centuries of the Song dynasty (960–1279), the interests of this elite and the nature of its commitment to the state and to the country on the national, regional, and local scale would change. These developments have been amply examined in the last half century, with many studies highlighting the turn from a national to a local focus in the Song elite’s interests. De Weerdts examines how the literati elite read and responded to