

## Travel in Zomia: Making Contrasts, Comparisons and Complementary Reflections

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Following many scholars' persistent efforts, borderlands studies in so-called Zomia, an area approximately covering the mountainous regions of southwestern China, northeastern South Asia and mainland Southeast Asia, have drawn recognition from international academics and sparked diverse debates. Many works on this area (e.g., by Patterson Giersch, Jean Michaud, James Scott, Willem van Schendel and Andrew Walker) have pointed out the significance of human travel for the sake of economic, social, cultural and military purposes, despite its treacherous topography and recurrence of political unrest. The movement has been multi-directional, involving circulations of people, goods, capital and information among numerous ethnic communities. These works have also challenged state-centered historiography predicated by asymmetric political and economic relations and by neglect in acknowledging borderlanders' dynamism and mutual exchanges in various aspects of everyday life. While drawing on precedents' insights, this panel aims at moving a step further by engaging in dialogues about established concepts, theories or mainstream histories and to draw contrasts, comparisons or complementary reflections between its findings and these earlier perspectives. Specifically, the panel looks into the following issues: How does travel initiate reformation of community life and identification? How does the process involve contacts, negotiations, and flows of different types of objects? What travel patterns can be drawn? What beliefs or ideologies are embedded in the travel? By focusing on these questions and by engaging in dialogues, we hope to raise new understandings pertaining to travel in Zomia.