CROSS-CURRENTS
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The Politics of Frontier Mining: Local Chieftains, Chinese Miners, and Upland Society in the Nông Văn Vân Uprising in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area (1833–1835)

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Abstract

This article, part of a longer study of the history of mining in Vietnam, argues that the Nông Văn Vân uprising (1833–1835) in the northern uplands of Vietnam brings into relief the importance of mining in the Vietnamese economy of the nineteenth century. It also highlights the consequences of Emperor Minh Mệnh's dual agenda of extracting more tax revenues from mining operations and expanding the reach of the state by replacing hereditary tribal chieftains with imperial bureaucrats. While the uprising was quelled, the imperial agenda could not be fully realized in the face of local opposition and declining revenue from mining. The uprising reflected the multiethnic nature of border society, composed as it was of Vietnamese, local minority populations, and a significant number of Chinese mine owners, workers, and providers of goods and services to the mining towns. In ordinary times, the border was regularly flouted as kinship relations, trading networks, and ethnic affinity transcended allegiance to either the Qing or the Nguyễn in this borderland. Although the uprising was formally contained within the Vietnamese territory, rebels were able to seek refuge and recruit new adherents in China. And while the Nguyễn court was eventually able to subdue the rebels, its centralizing policies and attempts at extracting more revenues from mining were ultimately unsuccessful in the face of reemerging local and transborder forces.

Keywords: Vietnam mining, Chinese miners, Tày, Zhuang, Nông Văn Vân uprising, border crossings, Sino-Vietnamese border

Introduction

In October 1833, a large force of more than eight thousand men converged from all directions to attack the provincial citadel of Thái Nguyên. The main group of attackers, composed of local minority people, was augmented by thousands of Chinese miners from neighboring mines (TBBK 2010 1:781). The leader was Nông Văn Vân, a tribal official (*thổ ty*) from a Tày (Thổ) lineage that, for many generations, had ruled over Bảo Lạc, an area of modern Cao Bằng that borders China (figure 1).



Figure 1. The Thổ (Tày) of Cao Bằng province. *Source*: Famin (1895, 23).

Earlier, in July of the same year, the authorities in Tuyên Quang province had attempted to strip Nông Văn Vân of his position. They claimed that, although he was "good at farming and had many followers, he secretly nourished different ambitions and gathered hoodlums around himself." Based on the pretext that "he was lax in discharging his duties and wasted his time, and failed to follow orders in a timely fashion," the authorities sent a representative to escort Nguyễn Quang Khải, the prefect of Đại Man, to Bảo Lạc. They were to denounce Nông Văn Vân's crimes, then sack him and replace him with Nguyễn Quang Khải as interim prefect. But Nông Văn Vân had entered into a secret deal with Nguyễn Quang Khải to capture the court's representative; the latter was branded on his face and then sent back.

With this act of defiance, Nông Văn Vân assumed a position of rebellion against the Nguyễn state. His uprising soon spread from Vân Trung, a small town near the China-Vietnam border, to many other localities. Between August and December 1833, rebels attacked garrisons in upland provinces of northern Vietnam such as Tuyên Quang, Thái Nguyên, Cao Bằng, and Lạng Sơn, fighting off troops sent by the Nguyễn court to subdue them. They managed to survive for a year and a half before being defeated by Nguyễn's superior military forces.

Despite its brevity, the Nông Văn Vân uprising was one of the more remarkable events of the first half of the nineteenth century in Vietnam. The uprising seems to have been provoked by Emperor Minh Mệnh's dual agenda of extracting more tax revenues from mining operations and expanding the reach of the state by replacing hereditary tribal chieftains with imperial bureaucrats. Beyond these immediate factors, the uprising also highlights a number of issues in the interpretation of Vietnamese history. Among these is the importance of mining in the economy of northern Vietnam (and of the country more generally) since the eighteenth century. This economy has often been viewed as being overwhelmingly agrarian. Yet, as both Chinese and Vietnamese sources suggest, revenues from mining at times eclipsed those derived from agriculture in the Red River Delta. A corollary is that, contrary to the depiction of the uprising by Marxist historians as a peasant rebellion, the rebels were miners, not peasants. A related issue is the role of border areas in national histories. The ethnic composition of the rebel forces and their movements across the China-Vietnam border underscore the diverse and fluid nature of society in this area. While the northern uplands were distant from centers of state power, they were by no means marginal in terms of their contribution to the state's coffers. Despite their remote location, local people, including Han Chinese, Vietnamese, and members of non-Han and non-Vietnamese communities, played an active role in the societies and economies of the Qing and the Nguyễn empires, and, indeed, in the global economy.

The Nông Văn Vân uprising appears to have occupied the same geographical space as the uprising of Nùng Trí Cao (Nung Zhigao) at the beginning of the eleventh century. Vietnamese historians believe that Nùng Trí Cao, a native of Ande, in Guangxi, China, rebelled in an attempt to affirm the autonomy of the Tai-speaking community of settlers as an independent political entity in the border area between the two empires of the Lý dynasty (1009–1225) in Vietnam and the Song dynasty (978–1279) in China (Anderson 2007). An examination of the eleventh-century economic arrangements in this area reveals that Nùng Trí Cao wanted to establish his autonomous state in order to control the important economic resources in the border area, including the commercial networks connecting the uplands to the coast through border markets, where mountain horses and sea salt were the primary trading commodities (LN 1999; Li 2006, 88–90).

The border between China and Vietnam was defined by the 1084 treaty between the Song and Lý, and subsequently through an extended struggle to demarcate the respective limits of the two empires from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century (Vũ 2010, 111–162) (figure 2). Yet kinship relations, shared ethnicity, and commercial connections continued to supersede national allegiances so that, for local populations, this border remained "fuzzy" (Baldanza 2010). Unlike Nùng Trí Cao's several rebellions, which were waged against both the Lý and the Song, the Nông Văn Vân uprising was formally contained within the Vietnamese border. As a result, the study of the Nông Văn Vân uprising has been limited by the perspective of national history. Yet, despite the refusal of the Qing court to cross the border in pursuit of Chinese participants in the uprising, or to allow Vietnamese officials to operate within Chinese territory, the uprising was a translocal affair, as well as a multiethnic one.

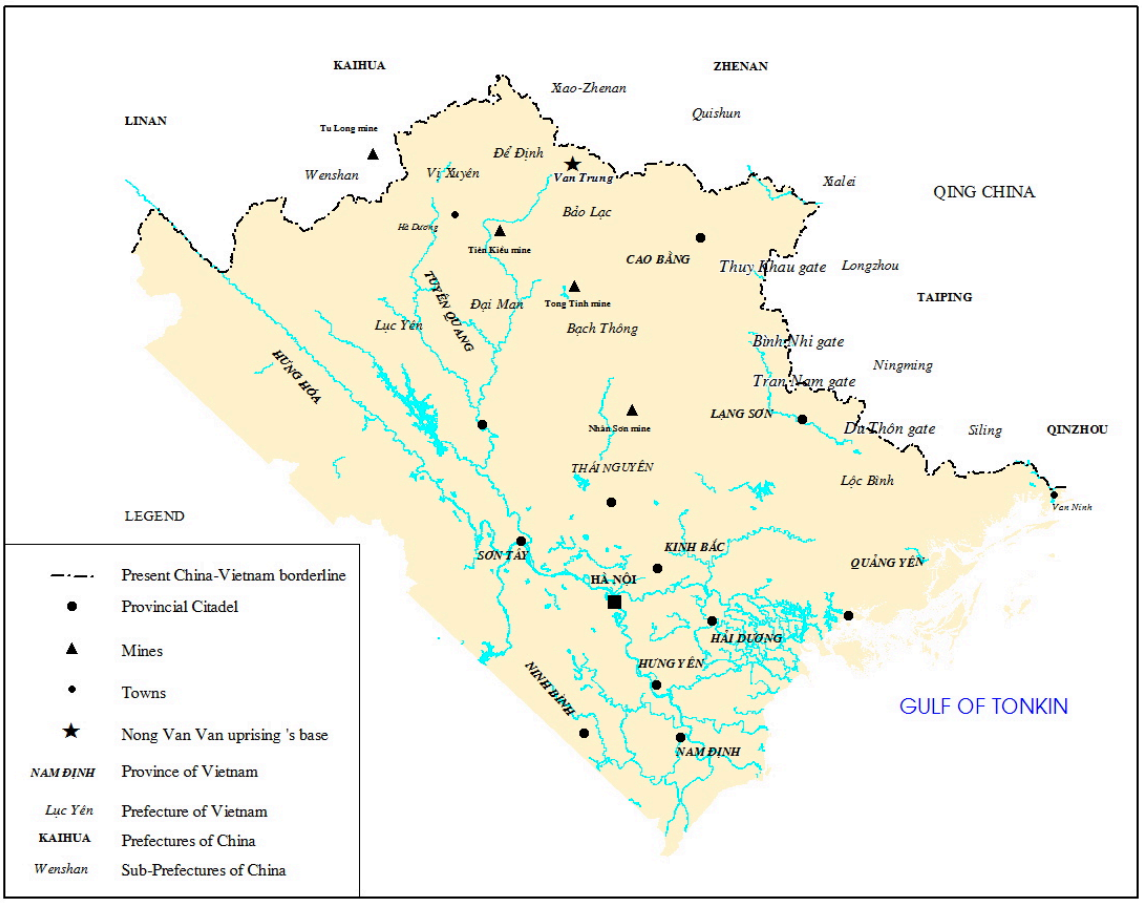


Figure 2. Early nineteenth-century China-Vietnam borderland. *Source*: Created by the author with the technical support of Nguyễn Đức Minh and Giang Văn Trọng, geographers from the Institute of Vietnamese Studies and Development Science (Vietnam National University, Hanoi).

Mining in the Economic and Social Structures of the Northern Vietnamese Upland in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

The exploitation of mineral resources in the northern Vietnamese upland along the border with China began long before the nineteenth century.[1] However, mining reached a new level in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, thanks partly to Chinese commercial activities (Reid 2011, 33–34). The explosion of large-scale mining activities in the late eighteenth century arose from the impact of mining development in Yunnan, close to Vietnamese centers of mining, and from the fairly open trade and mining policies of the Lê-Trịnh state. After the East India trading companies withdrew from Vietnam in the early eighteenth century, the Trịnh lords sought a new source of revenue to redress the financial shortfall that accompanied the end of trading relations with the West; mining thus became a significant supplement to the state coffers in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

In 1760, the court ordered high officials and local governors to take charge of a mine or two, using private capital, and to select tribal chieftains to gather laborers for the mines. Once the mines went into operation, the officials would submit reports and receive a tax waiver for the first five years; thereafter, the tax would be based on the annual production of the mine. Any officials who succeeded in opening up a productive mine would be allowed to retain control of it forever, as incentive for their hard work. This was a breakthrough comparable to the policies of "renovation" carried out in Vietnam in the 1990s (Li 2003).

According to Phan Huy Chú's *Classified Records of Regulations of Successive Dynasties* (*Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí*), during the late eighteenth century, there were dozens of mines in the northern upland; in the decade from 1750 to 1760 alone, more than ten new mines were brought into production. In reality, the number of mines was much higher because many had been in production for a long time. Nguyễn sources suggest that, of the more than one hundred active mines, over 55 percent had been productive and generated tax revenues before the nineteenth century (HĐ 1993, 4:205–244).

Of the 134 mines listed as being in operation in the early nineteenth century, 108 were located in the northern upland provinces of Thái Nguyên, Tuyên Quang, Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn, Hưng Hóa, and Sơn Tây. These mines produced gold (31), silver (13), copper (7), iron (25), zinc (5), lead (4), tin (1), pig iron (4), saltpeter (15), sulfur (2), and cinnabar (1) (Phan 1999, 698).

Although the productivity of the mines was average to low, the quality of their output was high. Moreover, since many had not been in production for long, according to contemporary observers, "the greatest profits came from mines in Tuyên Quang, Hưng Hoá, Thái Nguyên and Lạng Sơn. Mines in northern Vietnam were relatively productive, in particular mines of gold, silver, copper and tin, that were extremely valuable" (LT 1992, 263). In the late eighteenth century, the Tụ Long (or Dulong) mine along the border with China (in what would become Yunnan province once the Treaty of Border Delimitation was signed between the Qing Empire and France in 1887) had an annual production of 220–280 tons and was considered one of the most productive copper mines in Asia (Woodside 1997, 259–260) (figures 3 and 4).

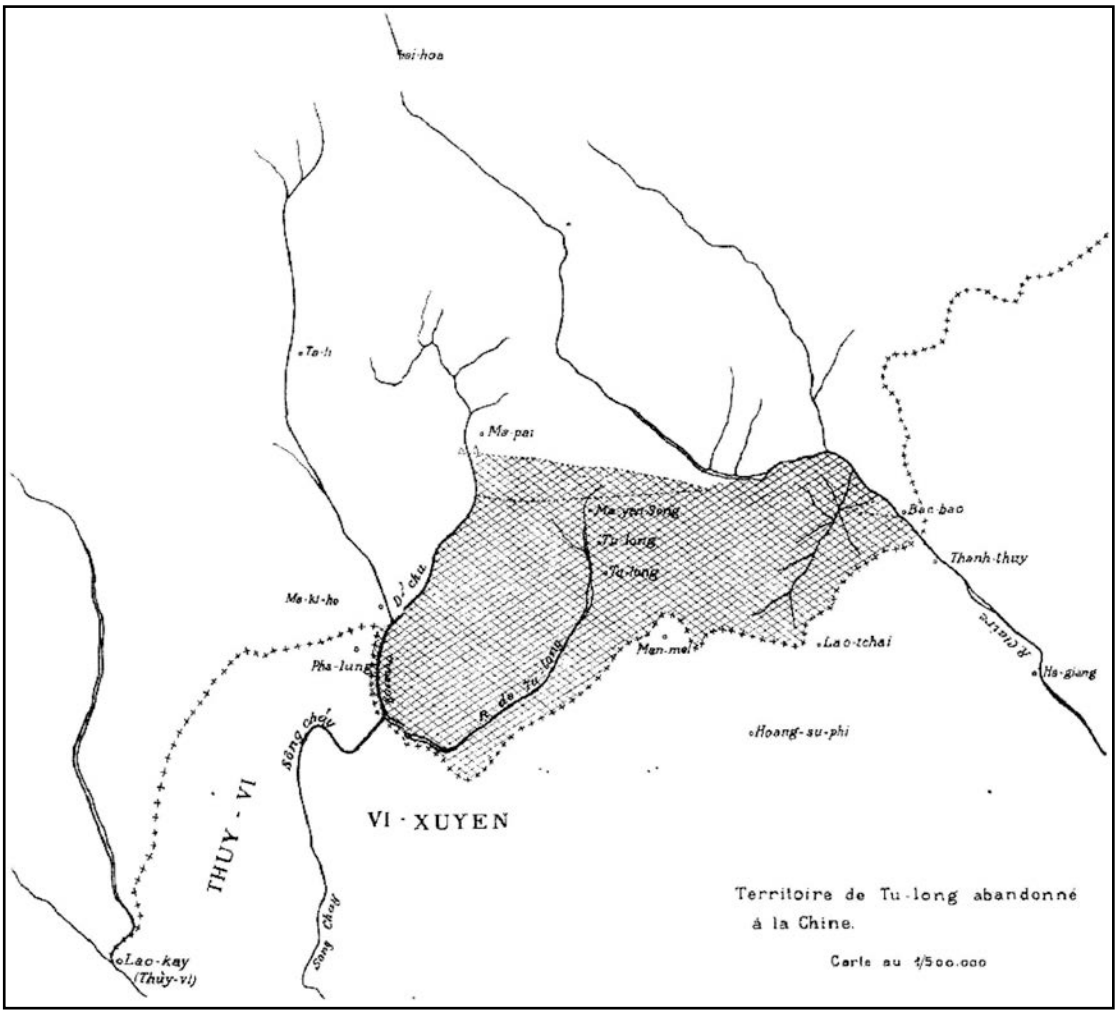


Figure 3. Location of Tụ Long mine "abandoned to China." *Source*: Deloustal (1924, 43).



Figure 4. The modern Tụ Long mine at Ma-guan district, Yunnan province, China. Photo taken by the author.

The expansion of mining in the eighteenth century led to significant changes in the political, economic, and social landscape of the area. The permanent workforce required to operate the mines in the northern uplands numbered in the tens of thousands. According to Lê Quý Đôn, a high-ranking mandarin of the court at the time, significant numbers of Chinese workers were added to the local workforce, with more than one hundred thousand Chinese miners employed in Tụ Long mine alone (KVTL 2009, 506). In 1767, the Trịnh lord sent a team to carry out investigations in the Tống Tinh silver mine in Thái Nguyên. They discovered that many mines had recently opened and that administrators were recruiting foreign workers to operate them so that they could collect more taxes. At the time, each mine employed up to ten thousand laborers (LT 1992, 263).

To support the workforce and others involved in mining, large amounts of food, medicine, and other supplies had to be brought in. Most of these commodities were not produced locally but were transported from the Red River Delta or from Chinese markets. The trade in essential commodities supplying the mines was highly profitable. Lê Quý Đôn, reporting on the area around the Tụ Long mine in the late eighteenth century, wrote:

> White processed rice is stored in hollow bamboo pipes that sell for 8–9 coppers [*đồng*]. The amount of rice in each bamboo pipe is sufficient for only one person. One hundred pipes constitute 1 *lâu* [1 lâu = 1,000 catties (*cân*)] which fetches 1 tael [*lạng*] and 2 *phân* [1 phân = 1/100 tael] of silver. One *lâu* of salt bought at the garrison at a price of 32 strings of cash [*quan*] [1 quan = 600 coppers], when brought to Hà Dương, brings in 50 strings; by the time it reaches Tụ Long, each catty is worth 2 coins [*tiền*] [1 *tiền* = 60 coppers], and 100 catties is worth 20 strings. Across the border, salt sold by officials is very expensive and has a bitter taste, so northerners [Chinese] often cross the Pingyi pass to exchange herbal medicine for salt surreptitiously and take it back to China, where they sell it at profit. Residents of this village do not have their own forest, so they have opened seven coal mines, at a distance of one to two days' journey from the copper mines. Oil is also brought from the northern country and is available in every market, so the tax revenues from the Tụ market are high. Cotton and silk are bought in garrison markets; people and soldiers tend to wear maroon-colored tunics. Horses are brought in from Kaihua prefecture in China. A good horse sells for 7–8 *dật* [1 *dật* = 20 taels] of silver; a mediocre one for 2–3 *dật*. Horses as big as elephants go for 40 *dật*. There is also a lively trade in water buffalo and donkeys. (KVTL 2009, 506)

This trade resulted in the establishment of a series of commodities exchange centers and a transportation network connecting markets that supplied goods to the mines. Lê Quang Định's *Geographical Gazetteer of Unified Imperial Vietnam* (*Hoàng Việt nhất thống dư địa chí*), the first official Nguyễn geography, mentions the existence of "trading posts" [*phố*] in the border area. These were the commercial and transportation nodes that supplied the majority of goods to local peoples. They were also ethnically diverse spaces, "where Chinese [Hoa], Vietnamese [Kinh], Nùng and Tày [Thổ] intermingled" (NTC 2007, 500). A number of trading posts were located near, or had close connections with, centers of mining activity. For instance, the Tụ Long mine, the iron processing plant Nghĩa Hoà, and the silver processing plant Phú Sơn were all located around the Na Mô and Nậm Xá trading posts (NTC 2007, 484). By fulfilling the needs of the mining centers, the trading posts in the border region also promoted commercial relations between northern Vietnam and Chinese markets (Li 2012, 68–71). Many types of Vietnamese currency have been discovered at different sites in China; 60 to 70 percent of the coins circulating in the late eighteenth century in Guangdong and Guangxi were minted in Vietnam (Li 2011, 131).

The mining industry in the uplands brought significant economic benefits to the court. According to Phan Huy Chú, "the reason why court revenues were abundant in the eighteenth century was because of the tax income from the mines" (LT 1992, 263). The annual tax revenue from gold and silver mines in the early nineteenth century was on the order of 2,000–3,000 silver taels. Ernest Millot, a French merchant and explorer, writing in the late nineteenth century, estimated that the Nguyễn court's yearly tax revenue from the mines must have reached 100,000 francs (Millot 1888, 172)

Besides the taxes levied directly on mines, the state derived another important source of income from customs transaction fees (*thuế tuần ty*). Beginning in 1720, the Lê-Trịnh government set up a scale of fees for transactions of metals, including copper. For each transaction, several steps were involved, each requiring payment of a fee or "thank you gift." According to data from 1723 and 1820, the customs transaction fees collected from checkpoints in the upland provinces amounted to more than 70 percent of the customs taxes from all northern provinces. In 1723 alone, the taxes collected from the northern uplands were over 13,000 strings and 123 silver ingots, about four times those of the Red River Delta and more than twice those of the central coastal areas.[2] In 1820, total customs taxes collected from the uplands were over 230,000 strings, about eight times the maritime commercial taxes of northern Vietnam at the time (ĐNTL 2004, 4:693–694).[3]

Additionally, taxes came from the transport and trade of commodities for daily use at passes along the Sino-Vietnamese border. In Vị Xuyên prefecture near the Tụ Long mine, the pass collected 36 coins per passenger; 10 liters (*đấu*) per picul (*tạ*) of rice or beans; 1 string per large pig, 6 coins per medium pig, or 4 coins per small pig; 4 coins per horse in herds of twenty or thirty; 1 coin per picul of salt and oil, in groups of fifty or sixty piculs; 1 coin each for cotton and silk; and 1 string per picul of black cardamom (*Amomum villosum*). On average, the taxes collected amounted to 5 or 6 strings a day, and up to hundreds of strings per market session (KVTL 2009, 507–508).

Emperor Minh Mệnh's Reforms and the Mining Crisis of the 1830s

In the early nineteenth century, during the reign of the first emperor of the new Nguyễn dynasty, Gia Long (1802–1820), and during the first decade of the reign of his successor, Minh

Mệnh (1820–1840) (figure 5), the court issued regulations tightening its control over the exploitation of mineral resources through specific policies such as the ban on private trade of metals including copper, zinc, tin, and leadon. However, the court was fully aware of the importance of mining to the national economy, and it sought to maintain a flexible management strategy in order to restore mining activities that had been disrupted by the Tây Sơn wars of the late eighteenth century, including a punitive Chinese invasion in 1789 that had laid waste to the border. In 1816, the court waived taxes for three mines that lacked exploiters: the Nam Hoắc iron mine in Thái Nguyên, with an annual tax of 200 catties; the Sư Khổng saltpeter mine in Sơn Tây, with an annual tax of 300 catties; and the Mai Sao saltpeter mine in Lạng Sơn, with an annual tax of 100 catties (ĐNTL 2004, 1:926). In 1821, as a result of the continued dispersal of mine owners and laborers, Emperor Minh Mệnh again ordered taxes to be waived for eight mines in the Northern Region (Bắc Thành) (ĐNTL 2004, 2:128). Two years later, in 1823, officials from the Northern Region petitioned the court to waive taxes for mines producing gold, zinc, copper, and saltpeter due to the lack of mine owners and laborers; the emperor consented to all (ĐNTL 2004, 2:310).

The Nguyễn court's policies of tax reduction and waivers in the first three decades of the nineteenth century helped to partially restore production at most old mines alongside the exploration and operation of some new mines. From 1808 to 1810, the number of mines reached its peak of sixty to sixty-five regularly exploited mines, even though this number could not be sustained for long. In the 1820s, the number of mines in production ranged between fifty and sixty a year. However, the early 1830s marked a significant change in the court's mining policies. In 1831 Emperor Minh Mệnh decreed:

> The gold mines in the garrisons within the Northern Region, such as the Phong Thường mine in Bắc Ninh; the five mines Tiên Kiều and Niêm Sơn of Mậu Duệ, Bạch Ngọc and Ngọc Liễn of Quan Quang, and Linh Hồ of Lương Cải Đạo Viện in Tuyên Quang; the three mines Yết Ong, Gia Nguyên, and Bản Lô in Hưng Hoá; the four mines Kim Hỉ, Thuần Mang, Sảng Mộc, and Bảo Nang in Thái Nguyên; the four mines Xuân Dương, Đồng Bộc, Suất Lễ, and Hữu Lân in Lạng Sơn; and the Vĩnh Giang mine in Cao Bằng each year pay insignificant amounts of tax, from 1 to 6 taels of gold. The Board of Finance is hereby ordered to inform the citadel officials to enjoin the mine owners that aside from the regulated tax in gold, each mine must sell an additional 50 taels of gold to the state, to be paid at 12 silver taels or 60 strings per gold tael. (ĐNTL 2004, 3:214)



Figure 5. Emperor Minh Mệnh. *Source*: Crawfurd (1828, 508).

The court's procurement price for gold was quite low; at the time, the market price was already around 100 strings for 24-karat gold, 80 strings for 20-karat gold, and 60–70 strings even for gold nuggets (Nguyễn Thế Anh 2008, 182). Setting the price so low caused the mine owners to refuse to sell and, consequently, the eighteen gold mines in the Northern Region immediately halted operations. Subsequently, another regulation requiring iron miners to pay taxes in processed rather than raw iron was promulgated, directly hitting their profits (ĐNTL 2004,

3:223). Even though the tax rate for processed iron was lower than for raw iron, this regulation still put pressure on mine exploiters. In 1832, the state decreed that provincial officials or court envoys should inspect the mines to reset the tax rates every one or three years (ĐNTL 2004, 3:314). Clearly, from the beginning, the new tax policy was not an incentive for mining—a complex, expensive, and high-risk activity—and the variable tax rate made it difficult for mine owners to have any peace of mind in their production.

In 1834, while the Nông Văn Vân uprising was raging, the state closed down saltpeter and sulfur mines in the Northern Region to cut supplies to rebel forces. The court declared: "It is hereby ordered that provincial officials strictly forbid the exploitation of the mines; violators will be punished with long-distance exile. It is forbidden for markets and the population from Hà Tĩnh northward to stock and trade more than a catty [of saltpeter and sulfur]; violators will be deemed law breakers and punished at another lever higher" (ĐNTL 2004, 4:119).

The court's repeated and drastic policy changes within a short period of time, mainly focused on state revenues from mining taxes, had two main causes. First, Emperor Minh Mệnh was suspicious about the truthfulness of production results reported by mine owners. In one of his edicts, he wrote:

> We think that in the provinces of Thái Nguyên, Lạng Sơn, Tuyên Quang, and Hưng Hoá in the Northern Citadel there are many gold and silver mines that have all been under receivership [*lĩnh trưng*] for exploitation by the Chinese. The court has not minded the amounts of taxes, and there has usually been a shortfall of tax revenues. To take just the Tống Tinh mine as an example, the old tax rate was 150 silver taels, which has been reduced to 100 taels as requested by citadel officials; this year it has mostly been in arrears even for such a light tax burden. As to the Tiên Kiều gold mine in Tuyên Quang, citadel officials memorialized that the quality of gold had deteriorated and requested closing the mine. Since then the provinces have hired laborers at will to produce gold nuggets worth no less than 30–40 taels per year. It is clear that the foot dragging and withholding of taxes are due solely to the wiliness and obfuscation of mine owners. (ĐNTL 2004, 4:274–275)

Second, the tightening of mining management was part of the larger framework of policies by Minh Mệnh aimed at excluding local forces and centralizing state power. Having disbanded local authorities in the south, the court next applied a series of political and economic measures to centralize power in the north. The tightening of the mining management would help the state

seize direct control of one of the main economic activities in the northern uplands. As a result of the new policies, the number of exploited mines declined rapidly. In 1831, after a series of gold mines were closed, the number of operating mines reached a nadir of only thirty-five.

The Nông Văn Vân Uprising and Local Tribal Chieftains

The Nông Văn Vân uprising was not the first conflict between the central government and local chieftains over mining and economic exploitation. In 1777, Hoàng Văn Đồng, a local chieftain, rose up against the Lê-Trịnh regime when the court forced him to remit his tax arrears. According to Lê Quý Đôn:

> Besides exploiting the Tụ Long copper mine with annual productivity in the hundreds of thousand catties, the father and son, Hoàng Văn Kỳ and Hoàng Văn Đồng, also exploited the Nam Đương silver mine. Even though he reported to the court that the silver mine was abandoned, in reality Hoàng Văn Đồng kept his own private profits from exploiting the mine while bribing local officials to cover up the deed. Using local minorities with dozens of mining furnaces, each year he collected no less than several hundred *hốt* [1 hốt = 50 taels] of silver. (KVTL 2009, 508–509)

The Hoàng Văn Đồng uprising against the central government may thus be attritubed to the tightening of mining controls by the Lê-Trịnh court in the late eighteenth century.[4] In 1808, another chieftain, Hoàng Phong Bút, rose up against the Nguyễn court, even though a few years earlier he had been charged with receivership of the Tụ Long copper mine, one of the most important cornerstones of the northern upland economy (ĐNTL 2004, 1:531,731).

Like Hoàng Văn Đồng and Hoàng Phong Bút, Nông Văn Vân was a member of a minority community spread across the China-Vietnam border. In his case, the community was Tày rather than Nùng (both are classified as Zhuang in China). Nông Văn Vân belonged to a lineage that had for generations served as tribal chieftains of Bảo Lạc prefecture in Tuyên Quang. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Bảo Lạc was, in the words of Lê Quý Đôn, an expansive area, "dense with mountains and jungles; it lies rather far from the provincial seat of Tuyên Quang at a travel distance of fourteen or fifteen days; it adjoins the Tongmeng copper mine in China; among its local products are cotton and golden wax; its fields spread to three thousand *mou* [*mẫu*]; its people are rich; it produces a lot of rice" (KVTL 2009, 471). Bảo Lạc was also rich in minerals, with silver mines at Thường Ấm and Lạc Thổ, a

saltpeter mine at Phú Yên, a sulfur mine at Lạc Nông, and a lead mine at Tùng Bách. According to Lê Quý Đôn, he heard from Tày community members that Bảo Lạc prefecture had a sulfur mine at Phú Yên, which remained closed and could bring much wealth from exploitation (KVTL 2009, 481). In addition, Bảo Lạc was close to Đại Man and Vị Xuyên prefectures, major mining centers of the northern upland adjoining the border, which facilitated trade with China. For this reason, Vân Trung—the center of Bảo Lạc prefecture—had become a thriving market town, and Chinese merchants lined both sides of the main thoroughfare with shops that sold many commodities and inns that provided food and rest to travelers (NTC 2007, 497). Vân Trung was also synonymous with Nông Văn Vân's economic power. In 1820, his position was such that Emperor Minh Mệnh appointed him tribal prefect as representative of the state for Bảo Lạc prefecture (ĐNTL 2004, 2:164).

The rift between Nông Văn Vân and the state emerged in the late 1820s, when Minh Mệnh's administrative reforms threatened the position of local chieftains in the border areas. At first, this change occurred only at the level of transition from autonomous to administrative governance, with frontier vassals renamed tribal officials (*thổ ty*) (ĐNTL 2004, 2:717). However, in 1829, the court abolished the system of hereditary tribal officialdom in the Northern Region and replaced it with the appointment of such official titles as tribal prefect and tribal district magistrate. The court subsequently implemented the Qing-style policy of "replacing tribal with circulating officials" (C. *gaitu guiliu*; V. *cải thổ quy lưu*), whereby local chieftains were replaced by circulating officials and envoys appointed by the court (HĐ 1993, 1:211). All this had a direct impact on and posed a real threat to the position of Nông Văn Vân in Bảo Lạc, and he seems to have reacted strongly to this policy. However, his opinions were all dismissed by Minh Mệnh (ĐNTL 2004, 2:862).

Nông Văn Vân was not alone in his predicament. Most local tribal chieftains who partook in the uprising had previously received favorable treatment from the Nguyễn court (ĐNTL 2004, 2:164).[5] In the early nineteenth century, many tribal chieftains held direct control of important mining sites in the state. For example, in 1802, Ma Doãn Điền held the right to exploit the Kim Tương lead mine; Hoàng Phong Bút the Tụ Long copper mine, the Nam Đương silver mine, and the Tú Sơn gold mine; and Cầm Nhân Nguyên the Mẫn Tuyền gold mine and the Tú Dung lead mine (ĐNTL 2004, 1:531). After Hoàng Phong Bút rose up against the court in 1808, tribal

chieftains in Tuyên Quang, such as Nguyễn Thế Nga and Hoàng Kim Đĩnh, gained the right to exploit the Tụ Long copper mine. Even if they did not receive the right of direct exploitation, these chieftains could all reap benefits from the mines in the areas under their control.

However, the policy of tightening the management of mining activity had a direct impact on their interests. In 1829, Nguyễn Thế Nga and Hoàng Kim Đĩnh, who held receivership of Tụ Long mine, were indicted and and an order was issued for their arrest because of unpaid taxes (HĐ 1993, 4:245). The following year, when Tụ Long's tax arrears continued to be over 2,000 catties, the emperor ordered the succeeding mine receivership holders and Chinese foremen, some twenty-eight people altogether, to be questioned and to have their properties sealed as guarantee; the burden of tax shortfall would be borne by the responsible supervising officials (HĐ 1993, 4:247).

When the Nông Văn Vân uprising broke out in 1833, Nguyễn Văn Quyền and Trần Hữu Án, commanders of government troops stationed at Phúc Nghi fort in Đại Man prefecture in Tuyên Quang, issued a proclamation summoning tribal chieftains and militia, but it was in vain. All of a sudden they found themselves besieged from all directions on land and water by rebels over a thousand strong led by Ma Sĩ Huỳnh, a former tribal official in Bảo Lạc prefecture who had been dismissed along with Nông Văn Vân for laziness and insolence (ĐNTL 2004, 3:699). According to reports by local Nguyễn officials,

> Tuyên Quang province has five prefectures and one district. Tribal officials and chieftains, such as Ma Sĩ Huỳnh and Ma Doãn Cao in Bảo Lạc; Ma Trọng Đại, Nguyễn Thế Nga, and Ma Tường Thường in Vị Xuyên; Lưu Trọng Chương and Hoàng Trinh Tuyên in Lục Yên; Nguyễn Quang Khải, Hà Đức Thái, and Ma Doãn Dưỡng in Đại Man all followed and received titles from Nông Văn Vân. Therefore the rebel forces numbered five or six thousand strong. (ĐNTL 2004, 3:774)

Local tribal chieftains Nông Văn Sĩ and Nông Văn Nghiệt in Thái Nguyên, Bế Văn Cẩn and Bế Văn Huyền in Cao Bằng, and Nguyễn Khắc Hoà and Nguyễn Khắc Thước in Lạng Sơn all rose up as accomplices. They besieged provincial citadels, resisted government troops, devastated the population, and spread havoc to the authorities, commiting the crime of rebellion (ĐNTL 2004, 4:741).

The widespread participation of tribal chieftains in the Nông Văn Vân uprising caused Emperor Minh Mệnh to exclaim:

> The tribal officials of the Northern Region have long received bountiful favors from the court for their hereditary titles and custody of the land. And yet steeped in their hyena-like nature, they want to bite back. The rebel [Nông Văn] Vân has assembled his cohorts to spread his wings like an eagle; the tribal officials also joined up to huddle together like a bevy of ants! Those rebels seem only to take advantage of being far away in strategic locations to gang up for criminal deeds; they have no talent whatsoever! Besides, they fear our majesty but don't love our grace; such is the heart of the tribal barbarians! Therefore, in the past, many tribal officials from Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn joined up with the rebels. They even blocked the way to capture the provincial governor, laying siege to the provincial citadel! How loathsome! If we don't punish them severely for once and for all then we will never get over this matter. (ĐNTL 2004, 3:848)

Participation of Chinese Miners and Relations across the Border

While tribal chieftains were concerned about their loss of both political power and economic resources, Chinese miners were also affected by the new regulations governing mining. Since the eighteenth century, the Chinese had held an irreplaceable position in most mining sites in the northern uplands as the main labor force in both state-run and chieftain-run mines. According to Lê Quý Đôn, the Chinese community in the northern uplands during the late eighteenth century came mainly from areas in Hunan, Guangxi, and Guangdong provinces:

> They are Huochang people from Huguang, who know metalcrafting for gold and silver, copper, and iron. Wherever they go they come together to open up towns, digging furnaces to fire the ore; they work hard year round. They wear their clothes and hair in the style of the people of the north [Qing Chinese]. . . . Usually they return home after having earned some money or goods. These people number around three or four thousand at the Tụ Long copper mine. They can also be found in some areas of Thái Nguyên, Lạng Sơn, and Hưng Hoá.
>
> Another group of miners are Chaozhou people. Even though they are also good at mining, their temperament is aggressive; they often engage in fighting and robbery, resulting in animosity and killing amongst themselves. These people are most populous in Thái Nguyên and are not present in Tuyên Quang and Hưng Hoá. (KVTL 2009, 472–474)

As was the case on the Vietnamese side of the border, many of the people involved in mining and associated trade from the Chinese side were members of minority communities, including some labeled as "Hoa" (figure 6). Again, according to Lê Quý Đôn,

> There are the Zao people who are tribal minorities from Kaihua and Fuzhou prefectures in Guangxi. Every September and October they come in groups to the villages of Tụ Long to buy cotton in bulk to bring home in December. People from China come here sometimes in groups of fifty or sixty, sometimes over a hundred. . . . In addition, there are the Wu'an people from Tianzhou in Guangxi. The men cut their hair and wear short tunics with round collars; the women wear short tunics and shave their hair. They come in the largest numbers to Vị Xuyên, Bảo Lạc, and Đại Man prefectures; they are also present in Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn, and Hưng Hoá. They engage in farming and trade, and perform corvée labor where they live. (KVTL 2009, 472–474)



Figure 6. Chinese miners on the Sino-Vietnamese border, late nineteenth century. *Source*: Leclère (1902, appendix, ix).

In the early nineteenth century, even though the Chinese no longer enjoyed the receivership of large-scale mines such as the Tụ Long copper mine or the Tiên Kiều gold mine, many silver and gold mines in Thái Nguyên, Tuyên Quang, Lạng Sơn, and Hưng Hoá were still under Chinese receivership. In 1802, the Chinese merchants Tan Qizhen and Wei Zhuanpa requested receivership of a silver mine in Tuyên Quang with an annual tax of 80 taels (ĐNTL 2004, 1:545).

Because most mining activities took place in mountainous areas, the main locus of tribal minority people, relations between the Chinese community and local residents became extremely intimate in various ways. Everyday life in commercial centers in the northern uplands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected a multiethnic community in which the Chinese lived together with other minority peoples. While the Chinese who held receivership of the mines depended mainly on local chieftains for political protection with respect to the central government, the Chinese miners and merchant communities formed relations with local people through trade and marriage. Nông Văn Vân himself, though a Nguyễn local official, had a second wife from across the border. Concern over cross-border marriages between Chinese men and minority women was reflected in the *Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qingshilu*), which noted that even after their return to China, many people continued to consider Vietnam their homeland. Furthermore, studies of networks of commodity exchange in the northern Vietnamese uplands have shown that most of the essential goods in this area were supplied by the Chinese market. The precious metals remaining after tax were surreptitiously purchased by Chinese merchants. Though both Qing and Nguyễn laws strictly forbade free exit abroad, in reality, control of these activities was beyond the ability of either state (Edwards 1987, 53).[6] These various factors may explain the high level of Chinese participation in the Nông Văn Vân uprising.

In August 1833, according to the report of Nguyễn Đình Phổ, the governor-general of Tuyên Quang and Thái Nguyên, a subordinate of Nông Văn Vân named Nông Hồng Nhân led his cohorts to Bạch Thông prefecture to induce the people to follow them. As a result, an additional two thousand Han Chinese, Tày, and Nùng people joined them (TBBK 2010, 1:619). Around the same time, Hoàng Văn Quyền, the governor of Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng, petitioned the court: "Officials from Cao Bằng reported that, according to spies, the Tuyên Quang rebels had set up five consecutive camps in the regions of Mật Lũng, Du Lũng, and Bế Lãnh, adjoining Zhen'an prefecture in China, with over two thousand men, among whom were more than two hundred Shaozhou people led by Huang Alian" (ĐNTL 2004, 3:746).

After the fall of the Cao Bằng provincial citadel, the commander of Cao Bằng troops, Hoàng Văn Tú, retreated from La Lãnh to Lạc Dương fort at the Thất Toàn district seat and reported the situation in a communication pleading for punishment:

> When the rebels first invaded Nhượng Bạn, they numbered six thousand. The government troops fought bravely. As they appeared to weaken the rebel forces, suddenly a band of more than one thousand Shazhou men appeared from behind a mountain and ambushed them. Our soldiers retreated in disorder, leaving many dead and wounded. The rebels then advanced to Thạch Lâm, burned down the district seat, and then spread out in hot pursuit of our troops. (ĐNTL 2004, 4: 260)

In mid-October and early November 1833, a large rebel force numbering in the thousands pressed hard on the provincial citadel of Thái Nguyên, colluding with Chinese miners at Linh Nham mine, which ran straight through behind the citadel. Chinese miners from elsewhere joined their cohort (TBBK 2010, 1:781). On three sides, the rebel forces set up consecutive camps in the mining villages of Chợ Chu, Giang Tiên, Quan Hoà, Cù Vân, and Quán Triều, totaling twenty camps with six thousand to seven thousand men; the camp at Linh Nham mine alone numbered about one thousand men (TBBK 2010, 1:837).

At the same time, in Lạng Sơn, Lê Văn Khoa, the younger brother of Lê Văn Khôi (the adopted son of the Viceroy of the South, Marshall Lê Văn Duyệt) mobilized over three thousand Chinese miners to collude with an indicted regiment commander there to incite minority people to rise up in rebellion: "They were up in arms everywhere, some lying in ambush on the edge of the forest, some laying siege to the provincial citadel, while putting up resistance on the road to and from the provincial citadel" (TBBK 2010, 1:794).

In late 1833, after government forces gradually regained control of the situation and advanced in direct attack on the rebel headquarters in Vân Trung, Nông Văn Vân cut his hair in the Manchu style and escaped across the border. He subsequently mobilized some seven to eight hundred Chinese from Chaozhou to return to Ngọc Mạo and reassemble in Vân Trung. They lay in ambush at strategic locations in Mật Lũng and Lũng Lâu (TBBK 2010, 1:998).

Nguyễn Công Trứ, one of the officials directly involved in the campaign against the uprising, pointed out in a memorial to the capital in March 1834: "Chinese miners gathered in numbers of seven or eight hundred to a place to make a living; they are all ruffians in hiding [from the law]. They dug trenches to carve up the soil, harassing local people, often resulting in friction. When the rebel [Nông Văn] Vân rose up to inflict mindless carnage wherever he went, these people were all his accomplices in villainy" (ĐNTL 2004, 4:93).

Many Chinese became high-ranking leaders in the uprising. For example, Liu Huishan, a native of Lianzhou, served as Consultant Senior Strategist to Pacify the Seas (Bình hải Tả quân sư Tham tán) in the forces of Nguyễn Khắc Thước in Lạng Sơn (ĐNTL 2004, 4:71). Another was Zhao Wenzhao, a Chinese originally from Taiping prefecture in Guangxi, who had come to reside in Bạch Thông prefecture in Thái Nguyên. He became Commanding General in Charge of Military Affairs in Thái Nguyên (Thống lĩnh Tướng quân quản lĩnh Thái Nguyên quân vụ). Having taken part in the attack on the Thái Nguyên provincial citadel, he later retreated to Để Định district in Tuyên Quang to resist government troops, and was subsequently captured and killed in December 1834 (TBBK 2010, 2:781–782).

The participation of a large number of Chinese miners in the military forces reveals all the more clearly the dilapidated state of mining in the northern uplands. In July 1833, a tribal official in Thái Nguyên named Đinh Quang Tiến reported that,

> while being sent on a mission to the Nhân Sơn mine in Cảm Hoá district to purchase lead for the state, [he] kept seeing people coming from the trading post of Chợ Dã along with Chinese from the Bằng Thành gold mine. They were taking their families and domesticated animals to the Nhân Sơn mine, because a subordinate of Nông Văn Vân named Hồng Nhân had led troops to occupy their localities. (TBBK 2010, 2:612)

In January 1834, a provincial official in Thái Nguyên named Nguyễn Mưu reported that in the mining town of Long Lũng, which adjoined Thái Nguyên and Tuyên Quang provinces, a Chinese contingent numbering about a thousand was jointly led by Zhang Fuwen, the ethnic chief at the Nhân Sơn mine; Zhang Changzhi, the mining chief of Tống Tinh mine; and Zhang Changsheng, the mining chief of Vụ Nông mine. From what these Chinese told the Nguyễn officials, the rebel forces of Nông Văn Vân had come frequently to the mining town to demand supplies and laborers and later forced them to go along (TBBK 2010, 1:1151). However, the testimonies of the ethnic chiefs and mining chiefs from Thái Nguyên might not accurately reflect their attitudes before the attack on the provincial citadel. After the failure of the attack, except for Li Guangzhu, the owner of Linh Nham mine who was beheaded, the Chinese and villagers from those mines "repented on their own accord" upon the advance of government troops (TBBK 2010, 1:868).

Border Crossings

As it unfolded broadly along the Sino-Vietnamese border, the Nông Văn Vân uprising went beyond the scope of a single country. In fact, Chinese miners participated substantially, and rebel forces on both sides of the border worked closely together. According to reports by Nguyễn officials, in September 1834, the tribal official of Lộc Bình discovered in the area adjoining the Chinese border two Nùng men carrying a letter that Dương Ba An, the leader of the rebel force in Yên Quảng garrison, sent to Wu Jinxian, a man from Siling prefecture in China. Some years before, Wu Jinxian had been put in charge of the Xa Lý gold mine in Lục Ngạn district and had joined in the uprising. However, when government troops advanced, Wu Jinxian fled home to China. Now he was coordinating with Dương Ba An to rise up in rebellion again (TBBK 2010, 2:600). Another case was that of Liang Wengui, from Guishun prefecture, who had joined the attack on the provincial citadel of Cao Bằng. After the attack failed, he fled to Zhen'an prefecture and was later captured at the border upon returning for reconnaissance (TBBK 2010, 2:790). In December 1834, Nguyễn troops captured two rebel Chinese named Nong Yagao and Zhao Wenchao. The two men confessed that they were originally from Chaozhou and had worked as laborers at Thiên Tốc mine. They had been cajoled into joining the uprising and had taken part in the attack on the provincial citadel of Cao Bằng. In November 1833, after being defeated by government troops, the rebels retreated pell-mell. Zhao Wenchao went into hiding at the home of Sầm Văn Quyền in Cạnh Lịch ward, an area adjoining the border, and Nong Yagao fled to China. In July 1834, Nong Yagao returned to Vietnam and joined Zhao Wenchao and Sầm Văn Quyền until their arrest (TBBK 2010, 2:868).

Many rebels thus fled across the border to seek support and to rebuild their forces. In November 1833, on his tour of inspection to Shuikou pass, Qingji, the prefect of Taiping, discovered more than one hundred men from Vietnam climbing along the wall of the pass to sneak into China. They were led by Nguyễn Khắc Hoà, the tribal prefect of Thất Tuyền in Lạng Sơn, who was under hot pursuit by Nguyễn troops. He had lied about being Chinese in order to gain admission through the pass (QSL 1988, 36, 738). In April 1834, Huiji, the governor of Guangxi, informed the Qing court that the province had captured a band of Vietnamese rebels led by Nguyễn Khắc Thước, and that they had been repatriated to be punished by the king of Vietnam (QSL 1988, 36, 810). Meanwhile, throughout 1834 and 1835, Nông Văn Vân himself,

pursued by Nguyễn troops, fled to the home of his second wife in Zhen'an prefecture. From there he would return to the Vân Trung–Ngọc Mạo stronghold to mobilize forces against the court (TBBK 2010, 2:610). At the same time, in Tuyên Quang, the rebel leaders Nông Văn Sĩ and Nông Văn Thạc, having fled to the Napo trading post in Zhen'an prefecture in China, reassembled their forces with more than five hundred Nùng and Chinese from the upper reaches of Vân Trung to come down to pillage Vĩnh Điện district. The beleaguered district magistrate had to appeal for reinforcement from the court (ĐNTL 2004, 4:804).

The above examples probably reflect only a small part of the varied and complex military-political relations that existed on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border in the early nineteenth century. The significant role of forces from areas under Chinese control challenges the traditional localized approach, which views the Nông Văn Vân uprising solely within the bounds of Vietnamese political history during the Nguyễn period. The participation of communities from both sides of the border in the economy, society, and politics in this area created a transnational space, one of the important conditions for the existence and development of the uprising.

At the same time, the spread and impact of the uprising also resulted from differences in the viewpoints and approaches of the Qing and Nguyễn courts regarding border events. Even though the Nông Văn Vân uprising was noted by local officials as a matter of concern in reports to the Qing court, the Chinese authorities seemed to treat it rather cautiously, deeming it an issue for the Nguyễn court alone. According to one of Emperor Daoguang's edicts, the most important objective of Qing policy was to prevent the collusion of Han traitors from inside and (foreign) bandits from outside (QSL 1988, 36, 850). To achieve this objective, the Qing court ordered its officials and troops in the border areas to increase vigilance (QSL 1988, 36, 690); however, it refused to intervene militarily into areas under Nguyễn control on the grounds that Chinese troops were not familiar with their foreign climate and terrain (QSL 1988, 36, 691). At the same time, the Qing court prevented Nguyễn troops from coming into Chinese territory, even for the sole purpose of pursuing rebel forces (QSL 1988, 37, 32).

As a result, throughout the course of the uprising, even though the Nguyễn court often sent dispatches to Qing local officials to propose military coordination and sent spies into China to reconnoiter in order to capture Nông Văn Vân, this goal could not be accomplished. The

protection and support by minority people and Chinese miners from across the border through familial and economic relations, along with the lack of cooperation from Qing local government in border areas, probably helped Nông Văn Vân escape until he returned to Vietnam and was killed in a casual attack by Nguyễn troops in March 1835, in Ân Quang village of Để Định prefecture in Tuyên Quang (ĐNTL 2004, 5:570).

Mining and Local Politics in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area after the Nông Văn Vân Uprising

The death of Nông Văn Vân brought to a close the widespread uprising launched under his leadership and that of other tribal chieftains and Chinese miners. Nominally, the failure of this uprising was a victory for the Nguyễn court's twinned policies of controlling the economic resources in the northern uplands and limiting the power of local chieftains. In reality, the court's victory over local forces was short-lived. Through the rest of the 1830s, the total number of operative mines remained around thirty to forty. According to a report in 1840, out of twenty-seven gold mine sites in northern Vietnam, only nine were still in operation; the remaining eighteen sites had been sealed shut. Out of ten silver mine sites, only seven were still active, with three having been abandoned (HĐ 1993, 4:273).

Having suppressed the uprising, Emperor Minh Mệnh tried to implement measures to stimulate mining activities through direct management by the state. Specifically, the state provided the capital, while sending officials to the mines to hire and supervise laborers. However, the results went almost completely against Minh Mệnh's hopes. After two attempts, the total amount of silver produced by the state-operated mines was only 8 taels, 7 coppers (1 *đồng cân* = 1/10 tael) at the Tống Tinh mine and 10 taels, 5 coppers (*đồng cân*) at the Nhân Sơn mine; the state had thus incurred a loss of over 100 strings in a short time. Faced with such wretched results, Emperor Minh Mệnh ordered work to be stopped at both mines and returned them to receivership by private individuals (HĐ 1993 4:283). At the Tiên Kiều gold mine, after more than four months of meager extraction (about 5 taels of gold nuggets) and heavy treasury expenditure, the court envoy Mai Viết Trang was dismissed, and the state allowed provincial officials to hire gold miners to do the work (ĐNTL 2004, 3:1021). In the end, Minh Mệnh was forced to resume the old management model of receivership for tax collection.

The decline of state control over economic resources adversely affected the administrative structure established by Minh Mệnh in the northern uplands that centered on "replacing tribal with circulating officials." In 1851, Emperor Tự Đức (1847–1883) accepted the proposal of Nguyễn Đăng Giai, the imperial legate for the Northern Region (Bắc Kỳ kinh lược sứ), to reestablish the system of tribal officials. Nguyễn Đăng Giai explained that

> ever since the implementation of circulating officials, the dismissal of tribal officials and chieftains caused a difference in language and customs between the officials and population. In normal times the officials considered the barbarians to be mendacious, and used the law to threaten them; corrupt and draconian, they stopped at nothing. The local tribal people were angry but dared not air it out; when there was need to summon them, they would cause obstacles at every step. (ĐNTL 2004, 4:219)

Therefore, he proposed that the emperor "issue edicts to Hưng Hoá, Thái Nguyên, and Tuyên Quang provinces to order the old tribal chieftains and strongmen to govern and exhort their own people, to show solidarity in preventing future incidents and keeping peace at the border" (ĐNTL 2004, 7:220).

This was only one of many reports about the inability of circulating officials to grasp the reality on the ground, which led to incidents in areas under their control (ĐNTL 2004, 6:637). In 1866, Phạm Phú Thứ even requested that the hereditary system of local chieftains be restored for the purpose of increasing revenue from taxes in the minority communities (ĐNTL 2004, 7:1007–1008). This proposal was not implemented, as the court worried about the possibility of collusion among tribal chieftains to rise up in rebellion, like Nông Văn Vân previously. Nonetheless, it shows a significantly weakened role for the Nguyễn administrative system. Thus, despite the apparent failure of the Nông Văn Vân uprising, two cornerstone elements in Emperor Minh Mệnh's management policy of the northern uplands—direct control of mining and the regime of circulating officials—were seriously undermined, and local forces succeeded in neutralizing the centralizing policies of the state.

Conclusion

Previous explanations for the Nông Văn Vân uprising have almost all been based on official sources or folklore. Vietnamese Marxist scholars who studied nineteenth-century rural

society and peasant uprisings in the 1970s and 1980s tended to train their focus on political contradictions, in particular on the oppressive policies of the Nguyễn court as the crucial catalyst for peasant rebellions (Nguyễn Phan Quang 1988, 10–32). However, such a limited perspective cannot answer all the questions raised by events such as the Nông Văn Vân uprising.

From the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, the expansion of border mining spurred by Chinese activities made a significant impact on the societies and economies of Vietnam and Southeast Asia. In addition to contributing to the formation of a globalized network of exchange and the development of an infrastructure, mining also left behind some unexpected consequences (Reid 2011, 33–34). One was the cultivation of sentiments that were at once highly local and transnational. Although the Qing court decided to scrupulously observe the border between China and Vietnam and to treat the uprising as a wholly Vietnamese affair, participants in the Nông Văn Vân rebellion did not share the same perspective. The exploitation of mineral resources in the uplands had involved local populations and Chinese miners and traders. Not only did the Chinese regularly cross the border either to return to their home villages or to engage in trade, so did the Man, Tày, and Nùng (C. Zhuang), whose communities were situated on both sides of the border drawn by the Vietnamese and Chinese states. The ethnic identity of those whom the Qing state considered its subjects was equally uncertain, despite their description as "Hoa." The participation of so many diverse populations contributed significantly to the spatial scope of the uprising, turning it into an event that transcended territorial and ethnic boundaries through transregional and transnational socioeconomic linkages.

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Notes

1 From the eleventh to fourteenth century, the annals of Đại Việt, such as *Việt sử lược* [Abridged history of Đại Việt] and *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [Complete book of historical records of Đại Việt], often recorded the presentation by tribal chieftains from upland prefectures of precious metals to the court to display their fealty. In the fifteenth century,

along with the seizure of control of Đại Việt from Hồ Quý Ly, the Ming dynasty made several attempts to establish mining agencies for precious metals, such as the gold mining agencies in Thái Nguyên, Gia Hưng, and Quảng Oai prefectures. In 1416, the Ming colonial administration once again established gold mining agencies in Vọng Giang garrison of Diễn Châu province and Lâm An garrison of Nghệ An prefecture.

2 The tax revenue of the coastal area of Central Vietnam came from two customs checkpoints, totaling over 6,697 strings; that of the Red River Delta came from a single customs checkpoint in the amount of 4,551 strings (LT 1992, 269).

3 In 1825, total tax revenue from the twenty-two Chinese trading boats that came to the Northern Region amounted to 18,848 strings, of which the boat tax was 16,969 strings, 6 coins and the goods tax was 1,879 strings, 1 coin, 41 coppers. In 1830, the tax revenue from the twenty-six Chinese trading boats amounted to 27,362 strings, 4 mạch, 26 cash, of which the boat tax was 17,950 strings, 8 mạch and the goods tax was 9,456 strings, 6 mạch, 26 cash (CB book 14, 105 and book 44, 216).

4 In 1761, the Lê-Trịnh government dismissed Bùi Thế Khanh, the civil governor of Thái Nguyên, for having exploited gold and zinc mines without permission from the court.

5 When the tribal chieftains came for an imperial audience, official court dress was bestowed upon seven of them: the Pacification Commissioner *cum* Associate Governor of Tuyên Quang, Nguyễn Thế Nga; the Defense Commissioner of Sơn Tây Đinh, Công Lương; the Defense Commissioner of Hưng Hoá Điêu, Quốc Thuyên; the Bandit Suppression Commissioner promoted to Pacification Commissioner, Đinh Công Kiêm; the Commander of the "Heroic Courageous Regiment" of Cao Bằng garrison, Nguyễn Hựu Bằng; the Pacification Commissioner of Vạn Ninh prefecture of Yên Quảng garrison, Phan Phương Khách; and the Pacification Commissioner of Hưng Hoá Đinh, Công Vượng. The others were all bestowed silver and clothing according to their various ranks. On that occasion, they were asked to draw up border maps and list their ruling pedigrees to submit to the court. Thereupon the court appointed a total of fifty-three tribal officials, such as Nguyễn Quang Khải and Nông Văn Vân from Tuyên Quang; Điêu Chính Hâm and Cầm Nhân Trân from Hưng Hoá; Hoàng Đình Đạt and Trần Hữu Quyền from Thái Nguyên; and Phan Đình Sự and Phan Thiên Thạch from Yên Quảng to serve as tribal prefects and tribal district magistrates to administer the land and pay tax to the state.

6 Nguyễn laws regulated that the crime of private exit abroad be punished very heavily, often with jail or execution (see HVLL 1993,4:796–797).

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