

***Kinh* and Ethnic Minority Rule on the Sino-Vietnamese Frontier
from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century**

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In this paper, I explore Vietnamese and French rule on the border with China, covering the period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. What comes across clearly from the sources is that whether it is the Vietnamese Court or the French colonial authorities, *both* struggled to find enough Vietnamese (*kinh*) officials to work on the border and consequently relied heavily on a number of prominent ethnic *Tay* families (*tho ty*) for the border's defence and administration. The evidence represents a healthy corrective to the usual argument of assimilation of ethnic minority people by the *kinh*, suggesting that in fact the opposite process may have occurred. In the paper, I present material on three ethnic *Tay* families, the *Nong*, the *Ma Doan*, and the *Vi*, showing how their influence on the border persisted despite an assault on their power during the reign of Nguyen Emperor Minh Mang (1820-1840) and, some years later, the onset of French colonial rule.