

# GOVERNANCE TRANSITION IN NGUYỄN DYNASTY'S LẠNG SƠN PROVINCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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## Abstract

Although previous studies have provided a general outline of the administrative policies of the Nguyễn Dynasty in the Northern Uplands, further research is needed on the Nguyễn court's governance in the region and its effort to maintain state integration during the mid-nineteenth century. This study examines the transitioning local governance of the Nguyễn Dynasty through official documents, by focusing on the revival of the native chieftain's post in the Northern Uplands. This analysis draws on terminology changes of "native chieftains" [*thổ ty* 土司] and "native officials" [*thổ quan* 土官] recorded in primary sources, which has not been considered by previous studies. Prior to the Minh Mạng reforms, "native chieftain" only referred to those recognized by the court-maintained list of native chieftains, whereas "native official" referred to local people holding positions beginning with the word "native." Subsequent to the suppression of Nông Văn Vân's revolt, the native chieftain's post was abolished. In Lạng Sơn Province, the usage of "native official" was discontinued in 1846, when Vi Thế Tuấn's post changed from native prefect to district magistrate. In the Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng Provinces, a series of attacks by Chinese bandits in the 1850s, caused the revival and recognition of the native chieftain's post as a category, exempt from labor and military services, without implying the revival of the pre-Minh Mạng governance system. In fact, the Nguyễn court nominally maintained an administrative system similar to that in the delta provinces, but viewed the native officials' revival as a retreat from the Minh Mạng reforms.

**Keywords:** *Native chieftain; Native official; Nineteenth-century Vietnam; Northern Uplands; Nguyễn Dynasty*

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## 1. Introduction

The Nguyễn Dynasty (1802–1945) governed the territory known presently as Vietnam. The dynasty's extensive territory posed challenges for the Nguyễn court's state integration efforts, with the Northern Uplands [*miền núi phía Bắc*] being one of the regions most difficult to govern. From the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, Vietnamese dynasties attempted to

extend its reach to the Northern Uplands - one of the most important regions for the state integration of Vietnamese dynasties.

In the Gia Long period (1802–1819), the court governed the Northern Uplands through local chieftains, who were granted the titles such as "native chief" [*thổ tù*], "assistant leader" [*phụ đạo*], or the "frontier subject" [*phiên thần*], similar to the *tusi* system prevalent in southwest China,

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during the Ming and Qing dynasties [1].<sup>1</sup> During the Minh Mạng period (1820–1841), the Nguyễn court initiated a series of reforms to curtail the power of the local chieftains, including changing the title “frontier subject” to “native chieftain” and abolishing their hereditary status. In response, these changes caused an uprising among the local chieftains of the Northern Uplands, led by Nông Văn Vân, a chieftain in Bảo Lạc District, Cao Bằng Province, which spread to surrounding provinces, such as Thái Nguyên, and Lạng Sơn [2]. After the suppression of Nông Văn Vân’s revolt, the Nguyễn court dispatched Vietnamese bureaucrats to manage these regions [3]. During the 1850s, Vietnam’s Northern Uplands were attacked by a mass of bandits arriving from China’s Guangxi Province [4]. This situation caused disorder in the Northern Uplands’ local governance, resulting in the revival of the native chieftain’s post. Thus, previous studies clarified the general outline of the administrative policies of the Nguyễn Dynasty in the Northern Uplands. However, certain aspects of the transitioning local governance of the Nguyễn Dynasty have not been adequately investigated such as the trajectory of the revival of the native chieftains. Recent research on the Nguyễn Dynasty has uncovered some details of its local governance in coastal areas [5]. Therefore, this study focuses on the situation in the Lạng Sơn Province to clarify the Nguyễn court’s effort to maintain state integration during the mid-nineteenth century.

Furthermore, terminology changes between *thổ ty* [native chieftain] and *thổ quan* [native official] in historical sources have not been considered. In Chinese sources, *tusi* [土司, Vietnamese *thổ ty*] and *tuguan* [土官, Vietnamese *thổ quan*] were usually used interchangeably during the Ming and Qing periods. Both terms indicate chieftains holding particular positions; however, *tuguan* was originally associated with the Ministry of Personnel, and implied chieftains who were granted civil positions, whereas *tusi* was associated with the Ministry of War, and implied chieftains who were granted military

positions [6]. Although Vietnamese sources from the Nguyễn period differ in the usage of *thổ ty* and *thổ quan*, previous studies have not yet investigated this. Because of this problem, some existing studies misunderstood the governance transition of the Nguyễn court during the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> As I mention below, in primary historical sources, the term *thổ ty* has been used: (1) before the post of *thổ ty* was abolished during the Minh Mạng period to refer to those listed as *thổ ty* by the Nguyễn court; and (2) after the revival of the *thổ ty*’s post in the 1850s as a category exempt from labor and military services [*miễn đao hạng*] per records of the court register [*đinh bạ*]. Meanwhile, the term *thổ quan*, was used to mainly refer to the local population who were granted positions beginning with the word “native” [*thổ*]. Acknowledging these nuances, in this paper, I have translated *thổ ty* as “native chieftain” and *thổ quan* as “native official.”

Addressing these changes in terminology is critical to understanding the transition of the Nguyễn court’s local governance. Therefore, in this paper I first discuss this topic by clarifying the usage of *thổ ty* and *thổ quan* in primary sources during the first half of the nineteenth century, especially during the Minh Mạng period. Second, I investigate the changes in the Nguyễn court’s local governance and the revival of the native chieftains in the mid-nineteenth century. The main sources of this study are official documents such as *Châu bản Triều Nguyễn* [阮朝硃本, Vermilion Records of the Nguyễn Dynasty] preserved at Vietnam National Archives 1 [*Trung tâm lưu trữ Quốc gia một*].

The Nguyễn court’s local governance and the transition between the posts of native chieftain and native official, were likely to vary between provinces, especially between Vietnam’s northwestern [*vùng Tây Bắc*] and northeastern areas [*vùng Việt Bắc*].<sup>3</sup> For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, when a mass of bandits from Guangxi Province disturbed Vietnam’s Northern Uplands, northeastern areas, such

as the Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn Provinces, were the first to be affected, owing to their proximity to Guangxi Province. Consequently, within the Northern Uplands, native chieftains were first revived in Lạng Sơn Province, followed by Cao Bằng Province. Therefore, this study covers the developments made to investigate the revival process of native chieftains, in Lạng Sơn Province.

## 2. Governance in Lạng Sơn Province in the first half of the nineteenth century

In the early Nguyễn period, the court governed in the Northern Uplands through local chieftains holding the titles of “native chief,” “assistant leader,” or “frontier subject.” According to *Đại Nam thực lục* [大南寔錄, *Veritable Record on Đại Nam*], in 1828, the court updated “the list of native chiefs” [*thổ tù ngạch tịch*] and changed the title of “frontier subject” to “native chieftain” [12]. In other words, Emperor Minh Mạng unified the statuses of “frontier subjects,” “native chiefs,” and “assistant leaders,” into “native chieftains” in 1828, which is supported by the fact that these titles are not mentioned in primary sources of subsequent periods.

In 1810, the Nguyễn court prepared a “list of frontier subjects and assistant leaders” [*phiên thần, phụ đạo danh sách*] in six northern frontier provinces, including upland provinces [13]. Although its details are unclear, this list most likely contained the names of the local chieftains, and the 1828 list of native chieftains, was likely to have been made based on the 1810 list. By the end of the Minh Mạng period, the court had not compiled new registers in the uplands; it only controlled chieftains through this type of list. The local chieftains from the entire Northern Uplands subsequently started being called the “native chieftains.”

This altered terminology was a part of the drastic reforms during the Minh Mạng rule. In 1827, the Nguyễn court applied the *tusi* system of the Qing Dynasty, and changed the name of the positions occupied by the local chieftains, under the native district magistrate [*thổ tri huyện, thổ*

*tri châu*] [14]. In 1829, the court abolished the hereditary status of the native chieftains in the uplands [15], which led to changing the name of the province from *trấn* to *tỉnh*, in 1831 [16]. Such drastic reforms caused an uprising among the Northern Uplands’ local chieftains, led by Nông Văn Vân [17].

After suppressing the uprising in 1835, the Nguyễn court appointed Vietnamese bureaucrats [*lưu quan*] as district magistrates [*tri huyện, tri châu*] in the upland provinces and dispatched them to manage these regions [18]. Since 1835, the *Đại Nam thực lục* predominantly used the term “native official” [*thổ quan*] to refer to positions beginning with the word “native” [*thổ*], such as native district magistrate. Furthermore, as mentioned below, during the same period, the post of native chieftains was abolished and incorporated into the category of “common people” [*dân*] in the Nguyễn court’s official register [*đinh bạ*] and began to bear corvée like common people. In 1840, the Nguyễn court ordered provincial officials in the northern upland to compile new registers, which was completed in 1842 [19, 20].

## 3. Appointment of former native chieftains in Lạng Sơn Province after the Minh Mạng reforms

In 1835, when the Nguyễn court dispatched Vietnamese bureaucrats to manage the uplands, it ordered provincial officials to allow those holding the native official’s post, to continue in their role [21]. However, official sources from this period contain little information about the local chieftains from Lạng Sơn Province after the reforms. Therefore, one can infer that, with the exception of Nguyễn Đình Tây and Vi Thế Tuân, almost all chieftains most likely lost their official positions and statuses after the reforms.

Nguyễn Đình Tây was a member of the Nguyễn Đình family at Văn Uyên District’s Uyên Cốt Commune. In 1830, he held the position of squad commander [*đội trưởng*] defending the Trấn Nam pass [*Nam Quan*]. Additionally, he

was responsible for forwarding Qing empire's diplomatic documents to the Nguyễn court [22], implying that he had inherited this role from the Nguyễn Đình family, in the eighteenth century [23]. During Nông Văn Vân's 1833 revolt, Nguyễn Đình Tây was a squad commander defending the Văn Uyên pass [*Văn Uyên tấn khẩu*], that is, the Trấn Nam pass [24]. After the suppression of Nông Văn Vân's revolt and the aforementioned replacement of local chieftains with Vietnamese bureaucrats in 1835, Nguyễn Đình Tây still held the position of squad commander, defending the Văn Uyên pass, and was responsible for forwarding Qing empire's diplomatic documents to Lạng Sơn provincial officials in 1838 and 1841 [25, 26]. In 1851, a provincial office ordered Nguyễn Đình Tây to defend the Văn Uyên pass, because he was familiar with the Chinese language [27].

Vi Thế Tuân belonged to the Vi family of Khuất Xá Commune in Lộc Bình District, which is currently renowned as the native district of Vi Văn Định, a famous Governor-General of Hà Đông Province in colonial era.<sup>4</sup> During Nông Văn Vân's revolt, when his group had surrounded the provincial castle, Vi Thế Tuân was ordered by the provincial officials to defend the castle, with whom he consistently cooperated to suppress the uprising. According to the epitaph erected at his tomb in Khuất Xá Commune (Lộc Bình District, Lạng Sơn Province),<sup>5</sup> he was appointed as the Native District Magistrate of Lộc Bình District in 1831, in addition to holding the rank of native prefect [*thổ tri phủ*].<sup>6</sup> Notably, in 1846, he was appointed as the District Magistrate of Văn Quan District [31], because it was not his hometown. Therefore, the provincial officials seemed to have treated Vi Thế Tuân as they did Vietnamese bureaucrats, who were usually transferred after a few years to other posts in Lạng Sơn Province, where no large-scale uprising broke out after the suppression of Nông Văn Vân's revolt. Further, as no sources have recorded the existence of positions beginning with the word "native" [*thổ*] in Lạng Sơn Province, Vi Thế Tuân's

appointment as Văn Quan's district magistrate was most likely a part of the gradual transition in governance, dependent on the local chieftains to an administrative system similar to that of the Red River delta provinces. Additionally, the fact that provincial officials merely transferred Vi Thế Tuân to a post in the neighboring district, rather than removing him, indicates that they still could not ignore the influence of local chieftains.

Thus, after Minh Mạng period's drastic reforms, some chieftains who cooperated with the provincial officials' suppression of Nông Văn Vân's revolt or played distinct roles, such as forwarding Qing diplomatic documents to provincial officials, were still granted some positions. Based on available evidence, it was found that no other chieftains were granted any positions during this period, indicating that almost all chieftains lost their positions in the Minh Mạng period's drastic reforms. However, many members of chieftain families, such as the Nguyễn Đình family from Thoát Lãng District, were granted titles and positions during the eighteenth century. [32] Meanwhile, members of the Vi family at Khuất Xá Commune in Lộc Bình District, such as Vi Thế Tuân, his son Vi Văn Lý, and his grandson Vi Văn Định, were thereafter promoted within the Nguyễn Dynasty's administrative system. These examples indicate that the 1830–1840s was a watershed period for local chieftains in terms of their statuses.

#### 4. "Native chieftain" and "native official"

As mentioned above, before abolishing the native chieftain's post during the Minh Mạng period, the Nguyễn court used the term "native chieftain" to recognize and address native chieftains, based on a list that they had compiled. In contrast, the term "native official" was used to refer to positions beginning with the word "native," such as native district magistrate. Although the term "native chieftain" was discontinued after the suppression of Nông Văn Vân's revolt, "native official" continued to be used in official records. For example, regarding

the appointment and salary of Vi Thế Tuân, as the District Magistrate of Văn Quan District in 1846, provincial official Trần Ngọc Lâm reported the following:

Native Prefect and magistrate of Lộc Bình District, Vi Thế Tuân was appointed as the District Magistrate of Văn Quan District in the tenth month of last year. As I researched, every year native officials [*thổ quan*] were determined to be paid five taels of “local silver” [*thổ ngân*].<sup>7</sup> The position that this official [Vi Thế Tuân] was appointed in has the same rank [as native prefect]. However, [his new position] did not contain the word “native” [*thổ*] and [it] is different from “native official.” Therefore, we should pay salary in accordance with precedents of “Vietnamese officials” [*lưu quan*]. Now, Lạng Sơn provincial officials have not yet dealt with this matter. [Lạng Sơn provincial officials] have already sent a document to the Ministry of Revenue [*Bộ hộ*] but have not yet received its reply. Therefore, from the first month of this year, this official [Vi Thế Tuân] has not received salary... Should his salary be paid in accordance with precedents of “native official” or those of “Vietnamese officials?” We now wait for the order [*chỉ*].<sup>8</sup>

In this report by Trần Ngọc Lâm, “native official” [*thổ quan*] implies those holding positions containing the title “native,” whereas “Vietnamese officials” [*lưu quan*] implies positions without the word “native,” such as the district magistrate [*tri huyện, tri châu*]. As Vi Thế Tuân was appointed a district magistrate, which did not contain the title “native,” Trần Ngọc Lâm asked the court whether Vi Thế Tuân’s salary “should be paid in accordance with precedents of ‘native official’ or those of ‘Vietnamese officials’ [*lưu quan*].” The Ministry of Revenue replied as follows:

Vi Thế Tuân was originally a native prefect with a rank of 6b. Last year he was appointed as the District Magistrate of Văn Quan District. Further, he is a native [*thổ nhân*],

and the position of this district should be appointed to a native. Therefore, this case is not any different from the precedents of native prefect and native district magistrate. We should pay five taels of “local silver” to him every year in accordance with precedents of “native official” [*thổ quan*].<sup>9</sup>

In this reply, the Ministry of Revenue proposed that Vi Thế Tuân be paid a salary in accordance with the precedents set for “native officials” because he was a native. Thereafter, the Cabinet [*nội các*] agreed with the Ministry of Revenue’s opinion. Hence, according to the Ministry of Revenue, “native official” [*thổ quan*] meant a native who held a position. Vi Thế Tuân’s case seems to indicate a difference of interpretation between the Nguyễn officials on the definition of “native official.” For instance, this case was perhaps the first case that did not follow the precedent of appointing natives to positions titled “native” (e.g., native district magistrate) Vietnamese bureaucrats to positions not titled “native,” (e.g., district magistrate).

In short, in the 1840s, the term “native official” was used to refer to those with positions titled “native,” who were usually the members of the local population. This case indicates a difference in interpretation regarding the usage of “native official” soon after Emperor Minh Mạng’s reforms.

Since the 1850s, when the court started appointing local population to military positions, no such difference of interpretation can be found in the usage of “native official.” Additionally, one can also not find local population appointed to military positions and referred to as “native officials” in official sources. Therefore, at least since the 1850s, the term “native official” was primarily used to refer to those who were granted positions titled “native.”

## 5. Revival of native chieftains in Lạng Sơn Province in the 1850s

### 5.1 Bandits from China

In the 1850s, a mass of bandits from China’s

Guangxi Province entered northeastern Vietnam. Because of their proximity to the Guangxi Province, the Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn, and Quảng Yên Provinces were the first to be affected. Đại Nam thực lục recorded the first emergence of bandits from the Qing, in the eighth month of the third year of Tự Đức (1850) [36].

In the fourth year of Tự Đức (1851), bandit groups from the Qing, comprising thousands of people, frequently disturbed the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. For example, in the second month of Tự Đức, bandits disturbed the Yên Khoái and Khuất Xá Communes in Lộc Bình District [37]. On the fourth day of the third month, six thousand bandits from the Qing disturbed Lộc Bình District, and on the fifth day of same month, bandits from the Qing disturbed the Tĩnh Gia, Tam Lộng, Cẩm Hoa, and Lô Giang Communes in Lộc Bình District and the Sần Viên, Bán Giang, and Bán Thẳng Communes in Yên Bái District [38]. On the sixteenth day of the third month, bandits from the Qing attacked Đồng Bộc Market, but they were defeated by the Nguyễn army, making them flee. On the twenty-fifth day, Phan Kim Giảm, the District Magistrate of Lộc Bình District, reported that over one thousand bandits intended to attack Cẩm Đoạn Commune. These bandits came to Khuất Xá Canton and plundered twenty cattle and two women. On the twenty-sixth day, Nguyễn Đình Tây, who defended the Văn Uyên pass, reported that on the previous day, two thousand bandits from Shandshi and Xiashi, in Qing's Guangxi Province, had entered Pingxiang, which is close to the Văn Uyên pass. On the twenty-eighth day, twenty thousand bandits arrived from Sần Viên Commune in Yên Bái District and plundered the Tĩnh Gia and Tam Lộng Communes in Lộc Bình District. The next day, Nguyễn Đình Phú, who defended the Du Thôn pass, reported that over two thousand bandits had come from Pingxiang, to Shandshi and Xiashi, which were close to the Du Thôn pass. Nguyễn Huy Bích, the Representative District Magistrate of Thất Khê District, reported that over two thousand bandits had assembled in

Pingxiang, and intended to attack the Cửu Phong market town in Thất Khê District and the Đồng Nhân market town in Thoát Lãng District [39]. In the fourth month, the Nguyễn army was defeated by five thousand "Qing bandits" at Bảo Lâm Commune, Văn Uyên District [40]. In the same month, Huangwan's bandit group, comprising thousands of people, disturbed the Lộc Bình, Yên Bái, and Thoát Lãng Districts [41]. In the eighth month, bandits from the Qing, called "three halls" [*santang/tam đường*], disturbed Hữu Sản Commune in Yên Bái District [42]. Therefore, that year in Lạng Sơn Province, bandits from the Qing significantly disturbed regions south of the provincial castle, such as the Lộc Bình and Yên Bái Districts.

It is no wonder that these bandits' disturbances harmed the indigenous society in Lạng Sơn Province. According to a Ministry of Revenue report, dated fifteenth day of the seventh month of the fourth year of Tự Đức, 966 households were severely damaged and 214 households were moderately damaged in the Lộc Bình and Yên Bái Districts and the Vân Ủy and Hiệp Hạ Communes in Ôn District [43]. Further, Lạng Sơn Province's number of soldiers to protect the people from the bandits' attacks decreased. In the tenth month of the fourth year of Tự Đức, the province's original 639 regulated soldiers lost 105 soldiers, owing to disease and the bandit's disturbance [44].

Under these circumstances, reinforcements were dispatched from the Hà Nội and Bắc Ninh Provinces to Lạng Sơn Province, where local influential men [*thổ hào*] and local vigilantes [*thổ dũng*] were also recruited. However, because their salaries of two ligatures per capita per month, amounted to six to seven hundred ligatures per month overall, the Nguyễn court ceased paying salaries to the local vigilantes, as "their homes are there; therefore, they can provide necessities and provisions by themselves." [45]

Thus, in early 1850s, Lạng Sơn Province experienced serious disturbances by bandits from Qing, amid a shortage of soldiers. This

situation caused the Nguyễn court to discuss the revival of the native chieftains.

### 5.2 Revival of the native chieftains

In a memorial, dated the seventh day of the twelfth month of the fifth year of Tự Đức (1852), Nguyễn Đăng Giai, the Imperial Commissioner of the Northern region [*Khâm sai Bắc Kỳ kinh lược*] and the Governor general of the Hà Ninh, Ninh Thái, and Lạng Bình Provinces, requested the revival of the “native chieftains.”<sup>10</sup> According to this memorial, after the suppression of Nông Văn Vân’s revolt, the Nguyễn court registered local chieftains as common people [*dân*] and forced them to perform labor and military services. The local chieftains were exempt from these services, until a series of reforms changed the status quo during the Minh Mạng period. In this memorial, Nguyễn Đăng Giai mentioned, “according to frequent reports [*bẩm*] of prefectures and districts under my jurisdiction in Lạng Sơn Province, this province is proximate to Qing in the north. Therefore, inhabitants in the borderlands are frequently disturbed by bandits, and the borderlands require continuous defense because these bandits come again and again.”<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Nguyễn Đăng Giai requested the court to register the descendants of these chieftains in a category exempt from labor and military services [*miễn đao hạng*] and to designate them as “native chieftains” on the register of each commune and hamlet, indicating that “native chieftain” was a distinct category in the register during the Nguyễn period. Thus, although the native chieftain’s post was abolished during the Minh Mạng period, in 1852, this position was revived because of serious disturbances caused by bandits from Qing.

Further, Nguyễn Đăng Giai requested “the court to order provincial officials to carefully select the most capable person [for the position] of ‘native chieftains,’ appoint the person as Trial battalion [*thí sai thiên hộ*] by issuing a certificate [*bằng*] and order him to command [the chieftains].” Similarly, Vi Văn Lý, Vi Thế Tuân’s

son, was appointed to provisional battalion in 1853 [47]. Vi Văn Lý was selected among the various chieftains, probably because he was the son of Vi Thế Tuân—the most influential chieftain in this period, who was also granted the highest-ranking position among the chieftains of Lạng Sơn Province. These policies were also found in Cao Bằng Province. Here, in the fifth month of the seventh year of Tự Đức (1854), the court revived “native chieftains” by applying the same policy as in Lạng Sơn Province [48].

Thereafter, in the seventh month of seventh year of Tự Đức (1854), the court ordered the selection of one company [*bách hộ*] and one battalion [*thiên hộ*] from the local population at every canton [*tổng*] in the Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng Provinces [49]. In Cao Bằng Province, provincial officials selected two indigenous people and appointed one as provisional company [*quyền sung bách hộ*] and the other as provisional battalion [*quyền sung thiên hộ*] at every one or two cantons [50]. Thus, in the 1850s, the court established policies to grant military positions, such as companies and battalions, to local population in the Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng Provinces.

However, these policies do not mean that the system used prior to the Minh Mạng period was revived. For example, in the 1850s, in Lạng Sơn Province, positions beginning with the term “native,” such as native district magistrate, were not revived. Further, there is little evidence of local populations being granted military positions, such as companies and battalions being called “native officials’ in official sources. Therefore, one can infer that at least since 1850s, the term “native official” was only used to refer to those who were granted positions titled “native,” and not whole local populations who were granted various positions. Further, in the first half of the 1850s, the position of the “native chieftain” was only revived in the Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng Provinces, which suffered serious damaged from the bandits from Qing.<sup>12</sup> In other words, during this period, the court nominally maintained an

administrative system in these provinces that was similar to the one in the delta provinces and incorporated local chieftains in their military division. For this reason, the revival of native chieftains was more easily permitted by the court, compared to the revival of “native official,” which had not been permitted by 1869.

## 6. Conclusion

In the Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng Provinces, the post of “native chieftain” was revived in the 1850s, and thereafter included in the register as a category exempt from labor and military services. Meanwhile, the term “native official” was used to mainly refer to the local population, who were granted positions beginning with the title “native.” In the 1850s, some provincial officials in the Northern Uplands, requested the court to revive the post of “native official,” but the court did not permit this. For example, in 1851, Nguyễn Khắc Tuân, the Governor general of the Sơn Tây, Hưng Hóa, and Tuyên Quang Provinces requested the court to revive the post of “native official” because the Vietnamese bureaucrats did not stay at their posts; however, the Emperor Tự Đức, rejected this request [52]. Although Hưng Hóa Province saw a partial revival of “native officials” by the 1860s [53, 54], in 1869 the court revived the post of “native official” in its frontier provinces [55]. These instances indicate that the court considered the revival of “native official” as a retreat from Emperor Minh Mạng’s reforms, different from the revival of “native chieftain,” and it was not until the end of 1860s that the court changed policies of state integration since the Minh Mạng period. Thus, during the mid-nineteenth century, the Nguyễn court, faced with the difficulty of governing the upland regions, made various efforts to maintain state integration.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In this study, “local chieftains” implies those who held these titles or were called “native chieftains.”

<sup>2</sup> For example, Takeuchi Fusaji referred to the revival of native officials in 1869 as the revival of the native chieftain’s post [7].

<sup>3</sup> In regards to the difference between these two areas, generally, the northwestern local chieftains historically maintained a comparatively high degree of political autonomy from Vietnamese dynasties, whereas the northeastern local chieftains had comparatively less autonomy, indicating a regional difference in the highlands [8–11].

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Vi family, see [28, 29].

<sup>5</sup> This epitaph was titled “Tomb epitaph of Vi family at Lộc Mã Hamlet, Khuất Xá Canton, Lộc Bình District, Lạng Sơn Province” [*Lạng Sơn tỉnh Lộc Bình châu Khuất Xá tổng Lộc Mã thôn Vi gia mộ chí*].

<sup>6</sup> [30] also records that in 1834, the court granted the rank of native prefect to Vi Thế Tuân.

<sup>7</sup> “Local silver” was low-grade silver that circulated in the Northern Uplands of Vietnam during the Nguyễn period [33].

<sup>8</sup> The original text, written in classical Chinese, is as follows: “該轄土知府領祿平州韋世鉤，去年拾月日蒙調補文關縣知縣。竊照例定土官歲給土銀五兩。茲該員調補亦係同品。惟無冠以土字，想視與土官有間，似應從流官例支給。第在省未有辨過。業咨戶部，未接覆到，致自本年正月至茲，該員未有俸例。若俟覆到，又恐需延而該員俸例終於停給。其該俸例應從流官，抑照從土官之例。候旨。” [34].

<sup>9</sup> The original text, written in classical Chinese, is as follows: “該部奉照韋世鉤原土知府秩從陸品。去年蒙得改補文關縣知縣，且該既係土人，該縣又應用土着，則視與土知府·知州，何異。似應照土官之例，全年給土銀五兩，庶為允當。” [35].

<sup>10</sup> This memorial was recorded in the following two genealogies. The first is that of the Nguyễn Khắc family from Hoa Sơn Commune, Thất Khê District, which was titled *Nguyễn tộc gia phả* [Genealogy of Nguyễn family] and compiled in 1911. It was written in classical Chinese, and is today owned by Mr. Nguyễn Khắc Hiền, who originally lives in Bản Chu Hamlet, Hùng Sơn Commune, Tràng Định District, Lạng Sơn Province (I took photos on December 29, 2017). The second is that of the Nguyễn Đình family from Uyên Cốt Commune, Văn Uyên District,



titled *Nguyễn tộc gia phả* [Genealogy of Nguyễn family]. It was compiled in 1919 and written in classical Chinese. Today, it is owned by Mr. Nguyễn Đình Han, living in Tà Lại Hamlet, Tân Mỹ Commune, Văn Lãng District (I took photos on October 14, 2015). For a translation of this memorial in Vietnamese, see [46].

<sup>11</sup> The original text, written in classical Chinese, is as follows: “節據屬轄各府縣州員稟稱：該地勢北鄰清國，沿邊之民，屢被土匪侵軼，乍去乍來，邊防無有了日。”

<sup>12</sup> In *Đại Nam thực lục* I found no description of the revival of the native chieftains in other provinces after 1850s; however, some descriptions indicate their presence in other provinces in Northern Uplands. For example, in 1878, the court bestowed gold and silver coins on native prefects, native district magistrates, and native chieftains of the provinces of Quảng Trị, Nghệ An, Thanh Hóa, Ninh Bình, Hưng Hóa, Tuyên Quang, Lạng Sơn, Cao Bằng, and Thái Nguyên [51].

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