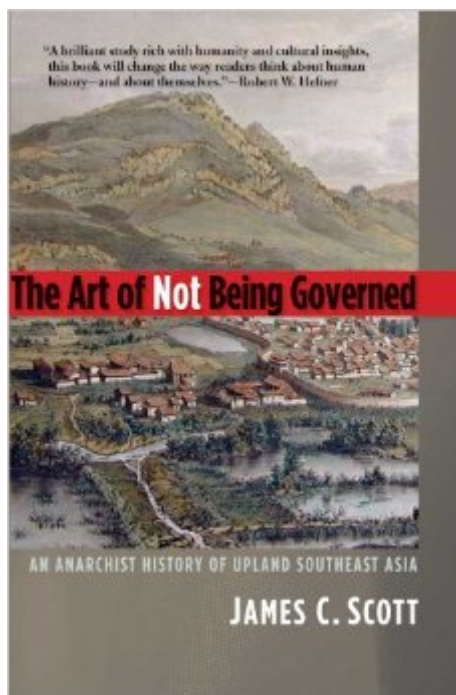


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The Art Of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History Of Upland Southeast Asia (Yale Agrarian Studies Series)



Synopsis

For two thousand years the disparate groups that now reside in Zomia (a mountainous region the size of Europe that consists of portions of seven Asian countries) have fled the projects of the organized state societies that surround them—slavery, conscription, taxes, corvée labor, epidemics, and warfare. This book, essentially an anarchist history, is the first-ever examination of the huge literature on state-making whose author evaluates why people would deliberately and reactively remain stateless. Among the strategies employed by the people of Zomia to remain stateless are physical dispersion in rugged terrain; agricultural practices that enhance mobility; pliable ethnic identities; devotion to prophetic, millenarian leaders; and maintenance of a largely oral culture that allows them to reinvent their histories and genealogies as they move between and around states. In accessible language, James Scott, recognized worldwide as an eminent authority in Southeast Asian, peasant, and agrarian studies, tells the story of the peoples of Zomia and their unlikely odyssey in search of self-determination. He redefines our views on Asian politics, history, demographics, and even our fundamental ideas about what constitutes civilization, and challenges us with a radically different approach to history that presents events from the perspective of stateless peoples and redefines state-making as a form of internal colonialism. This new perspective requires a radical reevaluation of the civilizational narratives of the lowland states. Scott's work on Zomia represents a new way to think of area studies that will be applicable to other runaway, fugitive, and marooned communities, be they Gypsies, Cossacks, tribes fleeing slave raiders, Marsh Arabs, or San-Bushmen.

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Customer Reviews

A ReviewThe Art of Not Being GovernedModern Society in the 21st Century has adopted the perception that anarchist principles are beliefs that can only exist outside the concepts of civilization. Hence, it is customary to equate such conditions to those peoples that embrace the freedom and liberties that exist outside of a defined Nation-State. Peoples that fall within that category are generally considered to be untamed barbarians, savages, anti-state or otherwise classified in similar derogatory terms which translate into being outside the norm. Conventional wisdom, at least in the minds-eye of 21st Century adherents is that those living outside State control are primitive, backward societies existing in the backwaters of ever advancing civilizations.In this book, author James C. Scott dispels many of these myths and suggests strongly that those people living outside the confines of statehood do so of their own conscious, deliberate actions to avoid the onerous dictates of those who would seek to enslave them. Obviously, his expertise is in the examination of societies in that portion of the world that he terms Zomia, i.e. those regions comprised of Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, Siam, Burma, Southern China and portions of India and Afghanistan. Obviously, as an anthropologist and political scientist, he is well qualified to comment with some authority on the subject. He does not however neglect to comment on similar conditions amongst other societies that have shunned civilization to avoid the onerous effects of confiscatory taxation, forced corvette labor, military conscription and enforced religious edicts.In the cited example of Zambia, he classifies the two groups simultaneously dwelling in the region as Valley people and Hill people.

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