

# **Mosquitoes and the Making of the Annamite Hill Country: A Parasitical Speculative History**

**Jonathan Padwe**

Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology  
University of Hawaii, Manoa

The distinction between upland and lowland society in mainland Southeast Asia is an enduring social divide and one of the constitutive features of the region. In the lowlands, peasant production of "paddy" rice in inundated fields has given rise to stratified societies practicing so-called world religions. In contrast the uplands are home to myriad small groups of hill-rice farmers whose animist religious beliefs and diverse linguistic and cultural practices set them apart from their lowland neighbors. The political, economic and ecological dimensions of the upland-lowland divide have been explored in detail by scholars of the region.

Although some attention has been given to the role of disease in structuring the human geography of the highlands, new research suggests that forest ecology and the ecology of vector mosquitoes has contributed to the emergence of acquired immunity to malaria among highland people there. This talk explores the science of acquired immunity in the context of the upland-lowland divide in mainland Southeast Asia. The possibility that highland people may become asymptomatic carriers of malaria during much of their adult lives has important implications for how social scientists and historians interpret the history of social relations between upland and lowland societies.

**Jonathan Padwe** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His book *Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories: Jarai and Other Lives in the Cambodian Highlands* (forthcoming in early 2020 from University of Washington Press) is an examination of the environmental and social effects of war and political violence in Cambodia's northeast hills.

**Wednesday, November 20**

**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**