



The Orang Suku Laut of Riau, Indonesia: The inalienable gift of territory (The Modern Anthropology of Southeast Asia)

By Cynthia Chou

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Land reform has been an indisputable part of Indonesian revolution. The consequent execution of development programmes for nation-building have provoked intense hostility over territorial rights. Global market forces in Indonesia have seen increasing flows of transnational investments, technology and resources that have resulted in great demand on sea and land spaces. In this momentum of change, several aspects of rural culture including indigenous populations, like the Orang Suku Laut (people of the sea) of Riau have been deemed by the state architects of development programmes to hinder progress.

For generations, the sea and coastal places have been the life and living spaces of the Orang Suku Laut and they claim ownership to these territories based upon customary laws. The developmental pressure thus generated has led to intense struggles over territorial rights. It has also raised issues concerning the social assimilation of indigenous peoples as citizens, religious conversion and cultural identity. Cynthia Chou discusses how Indonesian nation-building development programmes have generated intense struggles over issues pertaining to territorial rights, social assimilation of indigenous peoples as citizens, religious conversion and cultural identity

This book is a stimulating read for those interested in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Development Studies and Southeast Asian Studies.

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Editorial Review

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Cynthia Chou is Associate Professor and Head of the Southeast Asian Studies programme at the University of Copenhagen. Her research interests focus on centre-periphery relations, indigenous communities and the relationship between movement and identity constructions in the Malay world.

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