



Culture and the Question of Rights: Forests, Coasts, and Seas in Southeast Asia

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This collection of ethnographic and interpretive essays fundamentally alters the debate over indigenous land claims in Southeast Asia and beyond. Based on fieldwork conducted in Malaysia and Indonesia during the 1980s and 1990s, these studies explore new terrain at the intersection of environmental justice, nature conservation, cultural performance, and the politics of making and interpreting claims.

Calling for radical redefinitions of development and ownership and for new understandings of the translation of culture and rights in politically dangerous contexts—natural resource frontiers—this volume links social injustice and the degradation of Southeast Asian environments. Charles Zerner and his colleagues show how geographical areas once viewed as wild and undeveloped are actually cultural artifacts shaped by complex interactions with human societies. Drawing on richly varied sources of evidence and interpretation—from trance dances, court proceedings, tree planting patterns, marine and forest rituals, erotic poems, and codifications of customary law, *Culture and the Question of Rights* reveals the ironies, complexities, and histories of contemporary communities' struggles to retain their gardens, forests, fishing territories, and graveyards. The contributors examine how these cultural activities work to both construct and to lay claim to nature. These essays open up new avenues for negotiating indigenous rights against a background of violence, proliferating markets, and global ideas of biodiversity and threatened habitat.

Contributors. Jane Atkinson, Don Brenneis, Stephanie Fried, Nancy Peluso, Marina Roseman, Anna Tsing, Charles Zerner

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