



Modernity and Malaysia: Settling the Menraq Forest Nomads (The Modern Anthropology of Southeast Asia)

Alberto Gomes

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Bringing together over thirty years of detailed ethnographic research on the Menraq of Malaysia, this fascinating book analyzes and documents the experience of development and modernization in tribal communities.

Descendants of hunter-gatherers who have inhabited Southeast Asia for about 40,000 years, the Menraq (also known as Semang or Negritos) were nomadic foragers until they were resettled in a Malaysian government-mandated settlement in 1972. *Modernity and Malaysia* begins with the 'Jeli Incident' in which several Menraq were alleged to have killed three Malays, members of the dominant ethnic group in the country. Alberto Gomes links this uncharacteristic violence to Menraq experiences of Malaysian-style modernity that have left them displaced, depressed, discontented, and disillusioned. Tracing the transformation of the lives of Menraq resulting from resettlement, development, and various 'civilizing projects', this book examines how the encounter with modernity has led the subsistence-oriented, relatively autonomous Menraq into a life of dependence on the state and the market.

Challenging conventional social scientific understanding of concepts such as modernity and marginalization, and providing empirical material for comparison with the experience of modernity for indigenous peoples around the world, *Modernity and Malaysia* is a valuable resource for students and scholars of anthropology, development studies and indigenous studies, as well as those with a more general interest in asian studies.

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