

1. Record Nr.	UNISA996210411403316
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Titolo	A world of water [[electronic resource]] : rain, rivers and seas in Southeast Asian histories // edited by Peter Boomgaard
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Leiden, : KITLV Press, 2007
ISBN	90-04-25401-3
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (368 pages) : illustrations, charts
Collana	Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde ; ; 240
Altri autori (Persone)	BoomgaardP. <1946-2017.>
Disciplina	304.20959
Soggetti	Ecohydrology - Southeast Asia - History Water - Social aspects - Southeast Asia Water in agriculture - Southeast Asia Water - Pollution - Southeast Asia
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	; Preface, In a state of flux : water as a deadly and a life-giving force in Southeast Asia / Peter Boombaard -- Geography as destiny? : the role of water in Southeast Asian history / Heather Sutherland -- Of gods and monsters : indigenous sea cosmologies, promiscuous geographies and the depths of local sovereignty / Sandra Pannell -- Toothy tale : a short history of shark fisheries and trade in shark products in twentieth-century Indonesia / Manon Osseweijer -- Tale of two centuries : the globalization of maritime raiding and piracy in Southeast Asia at the end of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries / James F. Warren -- Storms of history : water, hazard and society in the Philippines, 1565-1930 / Greg Bankoff -- Communal irrigation : a comparative perspective / Robert C. Hunt -- Geographical explanations for the distribution of irrigation institutions : cases from Southeast Asia / Willem Wolters -- Water and rice in early Java and Bali / Jan Wisseman Christie -- Contestation over a life-giving force : water rights and conflicts, with special reference to Indonesia / Franz von Benda-Beckmann -- Role of waterborne diseases in Malaysia / Foong Kin -- Privatizing water : the Jakarta concession and the limits of contract / Okke Braadbaart -- Politics of environmental and water pollution in East Java / Anton Lucas and Arief W. Djati.

Water, in its many guises, has always played a powerful role in shaping Southeast Asian histories, cultures, societies and economies. This volume, the rewritten results of an international workshop, with participants from eight countries, contains thirteen essays, representing a broad range of approaches to the study of Southeast Asia with water as the central theme. As it was exposed to the sea, the region was more accessible to outside political, economic and cultural influences than many landlocked areas. Easy access through sea routes also stimulated trade from an early age. However, the same easy access made Southeast Asia vulnerable to political control by strong outsiders. The sea is, moreover, a source of food, but also of many hazards. At the same time, Southeast Asian societies and cultures are confronted with and permeated by 'water from heaven' in the form of rain, flash floods, irrigation water, water in rivers, brooks and swamps, water-driven power plants, and pumped or piped water, in addition to water as a carrier of sewage and pollution. Finally, the volume deals with the role of water in classification systems, beliefs, myths, illness and healing.

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