



The Banana Tree at the Gate: A History of Marginal Peoples and Global Markets in Borneo (Yale Agrarian Studies Series)

Michael R. Dove

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The “Hikayat Banjar,” a native court chronicle from Borneo, characterizes the irresistibility of natural resource wealth to outsiders as “the banana tree at the gate.” Michael R. Dove employs this phrase as a root metaphor to frame the history of resource relations between the indigenous peoples of Borneo and the world system. In analyzing production and trade in forest products, pepper, and especially natural rubber, Dove shows that the involvement of Borneo’s native peoples in commodity production for global markets is ancient and highly successful and that processes of globalization began millennia ago. Dove’s analysis replaces the image of the isolated tropical forest community that needs to be helped into the global system with the reality of communities that have been so successful and competitive that they have had to fight political elites to keep from being forced out.

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