



Water Politics and Spiritual Ecology: Custom, environmental governance and development (Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies)

Lisa Palmer

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As water resources diminish with increasing population and economic pressures as well as global climate change, this book addresses a subject of ever increasing local and global importance. In many areas water is not only a vital resource but is also endowed with an agency and power that connects people, spirit beings, place and space.

The culmination of a decade of ethnographic research in Timor Leste, this book gives a critical account of the complex social and ecological specificities of a water-focused society in one of the world's newest nations. Comparatively framed by international examples from Asia, South America and Africa that reveal the need to incorporate and foreground cultural diversity in water governance, it provides deep insight into the global challenge of combining customary and modern water governance regimes. In doing so it addresses a need for sustained critical ecological inquiry into the social issues of water governance.

Focusing on the eastern region of Timor Leste, the book explores local uses, beliefs and rituals associated with water. It identifies the ritual ecological practices, contexts and scales through which the use, negotiation over and sharing of water occurs and its influence on the entire sociocultural system. Building on these findings, the book proposes effective conceptual and methodological tools for advancing community engagement and draws out lessons for more integrated and sustainable water governance approaches that can be applied elsewhere.

This book will be of great interest to students and researchers in environmental studies, environmental policy and governance.

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