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Good to produce, good to share: Food, hunger, and social values in a contemporary Mentawaiian community, Indonesia

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Citation

Darmanto, D. (2020, November 26). *Good to produce, good to share: Food, hunger, and social values in a contemporary Mentawaiian community, Indonesia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/138409>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Issue date: 2020-11-26

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Good to Produce, Good to Share

Food, Hunger, and Social Values

in a Contemporary Mentawaiian Community, Indonesia



Through producing and sharing food, the Mentawaians construct personhood, generate social values, and reproduce social institutions rather than merely producing material substances. This dissertation is an in-depth anthropological study that focuses on a contemporary Mentawai Community in the southeast of the island of Siberut (West Sumatra, Indonesia), teasing out the local notions of foodways, kinship, autonomy, and equality/egalitarianism. It analyses altogether the importance of food's materiality and the logic underlying food-related-activities (gardening, gathering, exchanging, feeding, cooking, distributing, eating, and sharing). Intrigued by the claim of 'being hungry' (*malaje*) in a land of food abundance, the dissertation adds a distinct case to discuss the dialectical production of social values and sheds new light onto the conventional anthropological themes of food, hunger, and the culture of relatedness in an egalitarian society.

