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Peoples, Place and Performing Arts of the Riau Islands

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Abstract

Dispersed from the Straits of Malacca across the South China Sea, from Sumatra, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore to west Kalimantan, the 2,408 Riau Islands or Kepri (Kepulauan Riau) comprise Indonesia's largest province. For a millennia, these islands have formed linkages in trade routes between the Sumatra, Java, south western Borneo, Singapore, Malaya and beyond. The Riau Islands have a long and complex political history going back to at least the Srivijaya Empire (7th to 14th centuries). After Indonesia attained Independence in 1949, Riau experienced various national governments, each with their own policies of development and the arts. Following the end of Suharto's authoritarian New Order era, which promoted the Javanisation of cultures throughout this vast nation, the Reformasi era saw communities and provinces looking back to their older traditions for inspiration in contemporary times. Riau was granted provincial autonomy in 2004. This book investigates today's cultural situation in Riau, through focussing on the state of the performing arts of the main indigenous inhabitants of the Riau Islands—the Malays and the Orang Suku Laut ("sea peoples").

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Refbacs

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