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*Nine-Tenths of the Law: Enduring Dispossession in Indonesia.* By Christian Lund. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. xxii+238 pp.

This book is excellent on at least two counts. First, it provides an empirically rich and compelling account of land disputes in Indonesia. Such disputes are an enduring feature of Indonesia's sociopolitical landscape and have proven to be remarkably resilient to regime change. During authoritarian and democratic periods alike, poor people occupying land in rural, urban and urbanizing settings have routinely been pushed aside to make way for plantations, housing estates, industrial zones, infrastructure projects and other purposes—often through violently coercive processes of dispossession. At the same time, some poor people, despite the legal and political obstacles they confront, have acquired broadly recognized rights to the land they occupy—often through processes that take generations. *Nine-Tenths of the Law* examines both dispossession and legalization, with the bulk of the book comprising six chapters that draw on deep case studies across three Indonesian provinces (Aceh, North Sumatra and West Java).

Second, the book provides an illuminating account of what often appears to be the perplexing role of legality in these disputes. Legal claims often count for little in the actual acquisition of control over land: as the title of the book implies, possession—often forcibly acquired—tends to settle most of the issues most of the time. Certainly, the case studies provide ample evidence for the prominent role played by coercion—forced evictions, intimidation and thuggery by land grabbers and their agents, and mobilizations of gangsters, police and military—in Indonesian land disputes. Readers even casually aware of Indonesia's land politics will not be surprised by this part of the story.

The book also describes, however, how claimants to land are assiduous at presenting often bewildering (and conflicting) forms of evidence “to produce an air of legality” for their claims (p. 175). The book's major contribution lies here. While producing evidence

of a right (or something that resembles a right) to a particular piece of land is typically easy for the materially endowed and politically connected actors seeking to acquire land on a large scale, one of the signature achievements of *Nine-Tenths of the Law* is to show how poor people, too, are remarkably resilient and creative when staking legal, or quasi-legal, claims to land. The ability of the poor to stake claims is despite much of Indonesian territory, as the book explains, being officially designated as state land (a legacy of the colonial period), with citizens thus often lacking evidence of secure legal title for lands their families have occupied for generations. Even so, people are creative: “Old government and court documents, annotating the past like flies caught in amber, have been dug from family chests, and policies that mention land reform have been loudly rehearsed” (p. 177). Some communities seek to acquire legal possession by staking claims indirectly; for example, by presenting themselves as *adat* (customary) communities. Others make themselves and their occupancy legible to the state by paying property taxes or rent, or by acquiring access to government services and official recognition of their communities within Indonesia’s system of neighbourhood-level governance. (Chapter 6, on the gradual creation of an urban residential area along a disused railway track in Bandung, is illuminating in this regard.) In doing so, they take advantage of the fragmented nature of the state—and hence of multiple potential sources of evidence for recognition of possession.

The result of such processes is an “interdigitating of legality and illegality” that is “mesmerizing” (p. 172). Even so, the process Lund calls *legalization*, defined as “persuasion that the possession is legal” (p. 175), is ever present. The book is a testament to the sheer complexity, variability and fungibility of legalization processes (the remaining one-tenth of securing stable possession implied by Lund’s title). People use a bewilderingly diverse set of pathways to stake legal-sounding claims to land and to seek—and sometimes gain—recognition of those claims by multiple actors. In doing so, they build rights to land from the bottom up. As Lund puts it, “People refer to the law as if it was fixed and they were somewhat

well versed in it, but by doing so they effectively make (up) the law, fragment by fragment, constructing what they believe to be already there” (p. 178). (Lund, though, is careful not to romanticize this process, and to point out the severe structural disadvantages that poor Indonesians confront in disputes over land.)

This book is a major achievement. Lund brings to it a comparative eye (much of his previous work was focused on Africa) and a participatory research approach (he cooperated with many of Indonesia’s leading scholar-activists on land conflict and acknowledges his debt for their insights and guidance). This combination enables an effortless melding of rich case studies with theoretical reflection, the latter emerging naturally from the former. The book is also beautifully written, sympathetic not only to its subjects but also to its readers. As a result, *Nine-Tenths of the Law* presents a compelling account of one of the most persistent forms of sociopolitical conflict in contemporary Indonesia. It also makes an important contribution to global literature on land grabbing and conflict, and addresses profound questions about what law is and where rights come from.

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*Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Threats and Opportunities for Democracy*. Edited by Chiara Formichi. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. 276 pp.

In post-Soeharto Indonesia, religion should be an uncomplicated matter. Since the second of four constitutional amendments, which was made on 18 August 2000, Indonesia’s 1945 Constitution has guaranteed a raft of liberal democratic rights, including the rights to freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. In practice, however, Indonesia’s authorities and judiciary typically