

effects—to tie Penang more tightly than before to economic activity in the Malayan interior and to link it to distant markets in the industrial West. Each of these effects would shape Penang’s subsequent history; the island continues to grapple with each of them even today.

*Through Turbulent Terrain* incorporates long quotations from the primary sources on which it draws; its appendices include further primary material. Both the text and the appendices of the book present numerous tables of trade figures, serving to demonstrate the arguments advanced. In addition to an extensive and valuable bibliography, the book includes twenty-four colour plates. These plates bring vividness to the volume’s narrative of the trade history of Penang.

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*Bangladeshi Migration to Singapore: A Process-Oriented Approach*. By Md Mizanur Rahman. Singapore: Springer Nature, 2017. xx+198 pp.

In this book, Mizanur Rahman examines the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore, how they live, and what consequences this migration has for them and their families in Bangladesh. Using sociocultural aspects, he addresses two important

questions; why and how people migrate for work, and what impacts this migration has on them and their families (p. vii). Rahman addresses mainly six key areas to understand Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore; namely, migration policy, migration decision-making, recruitment, the social worlds of migrants, the remittances and family development dynamics (p. 9).

The first chapter introduces labour migration in the Global South as a social process built on two powerful notions—“migration process” and “becoming a migrant” (p. 9)—and provides useful insights of Bangladeshi migration research. This chapter briefly discusses the aims and contributions of this book to migration scholarship, along with the theoretical issues pertaining to labour migration. Rahman also describes his extensive fieldwork conducted since early 2000 until 2015, both with Bangladeshi migrants and their families in Singapore and Bangladesh.

In chapter 2, Rahman details the various migration policies used in Singapore, with a focus on skilled and professional immigration policy, migrant labour policy and migrant integration policy. To meet its growing economic needs, Singapore hires a substantial number of migrant workers for relatively long periods without granting permanent abode. Rahman argues that the transparency of migration policy and the proactive stance of the state to ensure migrant well-being within its control regime has made migration to Singapore appealing for Bangladeshi migrants.

Chapter 3 highlights the social imperatives for migration by focusing on changes in the traditional tools of social status claims, geographical imaginations, the cultural notion of work, the diminishing role of education, and the concept of relative social status (p. 53). Rahman argues that “the act of migration” happens because families and “bari” (p. 53) send members overseas to improve their social position relative to other families in the community.

Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate migrants’ journeys, from setting up the migrant network in Bangladesh to travelling and settling down in Singapore. Rahman explains how migrants join the international labour market with the assistance of “migrant networks” and “migrant

institutions” (p. 79). “Recruiting agencies” and “brokers”, acting as middlemen, facilitate the recruitment of migrant workers in Singapore (p. 79). In addition, this book gives accounts of their working and living conditions, their access to medical care, the spaces offered for religious practices, the opportunity for creative exercises like migrant poems and notes, and the organizational support for well-being, justice and empowerment.

Chapters 6 and 7 provide a new conceptual framework for the study of migrant remittances as a social process (p. 123) and highlight four spheres of remittances—transfer, receipt, control, and use (p. 139). Rahman notes that remittances induce changes within migrant families. There are marked economic improvements in these families through better healthcare, food consumption and higher school enrolment for children. Women are empowered when migrant wives and daughters engage in new economic activities. Thus, international migration has been identified as “a status symbol” (p. 159) and creates “a myriad of social and relational changes” (ibid.).

Finally, chapter 8 summarizes the main findings and identifies the areas where more research is needed. This book intends to make conceptual and methodological contributions to the theory of labour migration (p. 162). Rahman argues that international migration has become deeply ingrained in young Bangladeshi minds as a way of escaping unemployment, poverty and social stagnation at home (p. 166).

This well-written book combines empirical research and existing literature on migration, thus enhancing our understanding of international labour migration in the context of Singapore. However, Rahman does not reflect on the injustices that migrant workers face in Singapore, which are regularly reported by social media and other scholars. He remains silent on the difficulties that the workers face in accessing labour justice and national laws, their poor working and living conditions, and depressed salaries.

Overall, his book is an important source of knowledge for social scientists, policymakers and researchers, with the potential to

become an important text for various courses related to migration and development studies.

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*Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641–1699.* By Sher Banu A.L. Khan. Singapore, NUS Press, 2017, xvi+318 pp.

Sher Banu's *Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom* is the most comprehensive account of Sultanah Safiatuddin to date. Banu utilizes a rich stock of source materials to shed light on the contributions of this powerful and wise sultanah in early modern Islamic Aceh. One of the great *ulama*, Nuruddin al-Raniri, stated that "Safiatuddin was a great and generous queen" (p. 8), and this assessment was echoed by European travellers—including William Dampier and Thomas Bowrey, who lived in Aceh from 1669 until 1689, were interested in the region and transmitted their knowledge of Aceh back to the West.

Although there were several sultanahs who also ruled Aceh between 1641 and 1699, Banu chose to focus her attention on Safiatuddin as she ruled Aceh for the longest period—thirty-four years—of all sultanahs. By comparison, the tenure of the other sultanahs—such as Sultanah Nur Alam Naqiatuddin Syah (1675–78), Sultanah Inayat Zakiatuddin Syah (1678–88) and Sultanah Kamalat Zakiatuddin Syah (1688–1699)—were short. The longer period of Safiatuddin's reign (1641–99) meant that more accounts of Safiatuddin and her kingdom were made by European travellers and by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which conducted business in Aceh. In contrast, fewer reports were made about the other queens, especially after the VOC ceased operations in Aceh in the 1660s.