

survivors seek refuge in the foreign concept of trauma because it is identified with general human emotions of sadness and does not deviate from religious norms.

Chapter 4 dwells on processes of (selective) remembering and forgetting of Aceh's past through memorial sites, such as the Tsunami Museum, monumental ships and mass graves. While generally appreciated by survivors for their educational purpose, these places have become significant tourist attractions that emphasize the governmental success story of reconstruction and reconciliation. Other potential sites of commemoration, however, have been left out of Banda Aceh's collective memory. Notably, the separatist conflict has only received marginal attention in the memorialization process of Aceh's past. In chapter 5, Samuels introduces the meaningful idea of "temporal momentum of improvement" (p. 132) to explain widespread ideas of opportunity for change in the first five years after the tsunami struck. She goes on to show that these ideas (as revealed by her interlocutors as well as by social-political discourse) connect with the Islamic concept of *hikmah*, or divine wisdom brought by misfortune that allows for a better future. To conclude with Samuels' words, "the narratives that people construct, silently or openly, not only represent the work of recovery but also form essential ways of finding paths into the future and remaking the post-disaster world" (pp. 157–58). This book serves as a remarkable tool of reflection for those who are interested in disaster-struck Aceh and beyond.

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Hard at Work: Life in Singapore. Edited by Gerard Sasges and Ng Shi Wen. Foreword by Teo You Yenn. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2019. xxxvi+377 pp.

Featuring a collection of everyday work experiences shared by sixty people of different professions in Singapore, *Hard at Work* offers a

rare glimpse into the realities of thriving in the modern global city that has some of the world's longest working hours (p. xx). This edited volume presents a selection of interviews conducted between 2014 and 2017 as part of an ethnography project at the National University of Singapore, where the topic of work is purposefully used as a starting point to explore the lived experiences of development and change faced by ordinary working individuals in Singaporean society.

The compilation by Sasges and Ng shines in its thoughtful arrangement and vibrant selection of interviews that delivers a "wide-ranging story of Singapore" (p. xxi). As the introduction explains, the book is dedicated to showcasing stories of the working population whose diverse contributions made Singapore possible (p. xxv). This commitment is cleverly reflected in the organization of the interviews as they are sorted into thirteen thematic chapters, from "Drinking" to "Moving" and "Protecting", according to the nature of each job's contribution to the nation. The book also commits to featuring interviews with a wide range of occupations, giving a more realistic snapshot of Singapore's diverse workforce. To name a few, there are accounts from doctors, teachers, a drag performer, a postal worker, a tissue seller and a maid, showcasing diversity in job function, visibility, location and employment types; there are even accounts from foreign workers.

Nonetheless, the charm of the whole collection lies in the meticulous curation and vivid storytelling that respectfully features the authentic voices and stories of these workers. The introduction details how each interview is carefully styled into a first-person narrative and lightly edited to showcase the stories as best aligned with the original intent (pp. xxi–xxx). The book also leaves out any commentaries or analysis, thus allowing the workers and their stories to speak for themselves as to the raw and unfiltered experiences of working and living in Singapore.

As a result, the collection is rich in data, and it allows the readers to reflect and to make their own interpretations in an ethnographic-like manner. The realities of Singapore's working

world, for instance, can be seen in the many accounts of business owners struggling with rising rental costs and of their concerns about future operations and retirement savings (tea seller, pp. 11–16, and tailor, pp. 79–85). Singapore's dependence on foreign workers is also made obvious in the collection. Stories from the Thai disco singer (pp. 7–11), Indonesian maid (pp. 144–50) and Bangladeshi shop owner (pp. 112–16) demonstrate the effects of globalization and list some push and pull factors that influence labour mobility. The social structures, systems and conventions influencing one's position are made apparent through cases such as the cleaner who fears being reported by the public if found resting (pp. 134–37), in comparison with the success of a restaurateur who has help from his wealthy family connections (pp. 37–48). From such stories, readers can further observe how facets of one's identity influence one's experiences—as demonstrated in the tension felt by the gay volunteer policeman in supporting some of the country's laws on account of his sexual orientation (pp. 244–51). Many lessons can, therefore, be drawn from each story, but taken together the collection forms a unique historical account of Singapore through the lens of the working people and the lived experiences of global processes and rapid change.

There are, however, areas that would benefit from more coverage. For one, readers would benefit from more insights into the organization of the book. Although the collection does well in sorting the stories into thematic chapters, there is a lack of clarity as to how and why chapters are organized in this manner. As a result, ending the book with the “Entertainment” chapter seems rather abrupt; more thought or an explanation would have helped in understanding how the chapter concludes the entire series of the working stories of Singapore. Moreover, at times readers will need to make assumptions about certain facets of an interviewee's identity and will often need to scavenge the text to find these details. Including a brief profile of the interviewees would have facilitated an understanding of how issues of race, gender and many others might overlap and intersect in shaping these experiences.

In sum, the collection provides a unique opportunity to observe the ground-level realities and to begin to understand the complexities that people experience in a fast-changing diverse society like Singapore. With underlying themes of inequality, labour mobility and globalization, the book will be of interest to students of sociology and labour studies and readers interested in real-life case studies and detailed accounts. The book essentially gives a voice to working people in celebration of their hard work and experiences, thus offering an engaging and relatable read that even a general audience would appreciate.

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Blood Work: Life and Laboratories in Penang. By Janet Carsten. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2019. xv+237 pp.

In her new book, *Blood Work*, Janet Carsten extends her meditation on kinship and relatedness in everyday life to technical settings and medical workplaces. By navigating blood banks, surgical theatres, staff-only laboratory areas and community drives for blood donation, Carsten shows how the mysterious power of blood to confirm certain connections or to sever them is amplified in these nodes of medical infrastructure. As the material properties of blood are scrutinized for accuracy and safety in these sites, Carsten emphasizes that the symbolic and moral meanings of blood thicken rather than diminish. She meticulously traces how blood is valued, categorized, analysed, stabilized and reconnected with its unruly force by providing rich ethnographic details that reflect the cultural and political complexities of contemporary Malaysia. In this carefully crafted ethnography, blood banks and hospital laboratories reveal unexpected social dramas and reflections on morality, danger and politics that are otherwise hidden in the daily rhythms of systematized work.