

towards a positive future. The recommendations and conclusions drawn by Kathie Carpenter are an insightful and important contribution to contemporary debates regarding child protection policy for the improved care of children living in out of family residence. The book also provides an alternative view for scholars to consider within childhood studies and international development.

AMANDA MILLER

University of the Sunshine Coast

Indonesia

After the tsunami: Disaster narratives and the remaking of everyday life in Aceh

By ANNEMARIE SAMUELS

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020. Pp. 214. Illustrations, Map.
doi:10.1017/S0022463422000819

This anthropological project deals with the narratives, culture of grieving, social memory structure, and agency of survivors renewing their lives after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia. This 'anthropology of suffering' book is based on Annemarie Samuels' intensive ethnographic fieldwork, which captures the everyday lives of the survivors in 2007 and 2009, followed by almost another ten years of field observations and long-distance communications.

After the tsunami 'traces the long process of remaking the post-disaster world from the perspective of tsunami survivors in and around Banda Aceh' (p. 3), where Samuels problematises everyday life after disasters by addressing 'what the continuous processes of making and remaking of everydayness entails, including the questions of what can be remade, how it is done and where the limits are' (p. 5).

Psychologically, the normalisation of calamities and vulnerabilities is part of brain processing as humans are programmed to edit and reinforce certain memories in ways that may differ from actual experience. Samuels' anthropological reflections show how survivors paradoxically edit their views on post-disaster life when at a certain point, things have become normal again (*sudah biasa lagi*) or like they used to be (*seperti dulu*)—every day is normal (again) and (yet) will never be the same (again) (p. 4).

There are five chapters. Chapter 1, 'Starting from zero: Reconstruction, reciprocity and recognition', provides an overview of how the survivors and the subjects made sense of all the events and processes, including the complex recovery process involving local and international actors. The chapter portrays the typical uncertainties and complexities of displacements after large-scale disasters, including survivors' narratives of 'helpful strangers' (international aid), which can be transcendental ('the world is with us') and seen as a sign that 'God sent aid to Aceh' (p. 50).

Chapter 2, 'Ruptures, hauntings and embodied narratives', deals with the question of how such a massive loss of people (and their missing bodies) 'keeps haunting post-disaster life' (p. 24). Samuels argues that in (the act of) telling tsunami stories, the moment of narrative sharing and the embodied articulation of deeply disturbing

experiences co-create sociality, a sense of togetherness in the world (p. 79). The telling of tsunami stories is seen as an exercise of the survivors' agency because it can develop narratives that help them reconfigure their world of loss, grief, pain, dream, ups and downs.

Chapter 3, 'Islam, gender and the ethics of grieving', offers an overview of the culture of grieving in Aceh's Islamic context and gender dimensions of grief and loss. Instead of condemning the fatalism of religions and the idea of divine agency, this chapter offers some interesting observations. For example, sincerity and surrender to divine power are displayed as ways of coping with grief and loss as religious ritual 'channels emotion in socially accepted Islamic ways' (p. 97).

Chapter 4, 'Memory in urban space: Objects, places and absences', examines 'the politics of memorialisation and survivors' subjective processes of remembering in space, and traces the ways in which these politics and subjectivities may shape each other or diverge' (p. 112). The politics of memorialisation refers to state-led projects such as tsunami museums with memorial and educational objectives and other monuments such as the ships (including *PLTD Apung*) left inland by the tsunami, and mass graves. These public, formal ways of disaster memorialisation are contrasted with community-based or vernacular approaches.

It is no surprise to read that disasters, once again, serve as events that offer opportunities for personal and social renewal as suggested by religion. Social and cultural institutions, including religion, offer and/or dictate how events are interpreted and understood. Religions are 'machines' that 'normalised' bad events by offering frameworks for meaning-making (p. 155). This can be seen in chapter 5, 'Improvement momentum: Imagination of the post-tsunami future'.

The final part of the book provides some interesting answers to the question 'What does it take to achieve a sense of everydayness' in the context of painful memories after a disaster. Samuels argues that:

It required the work of physical healing, of speaking up, of burial, of finding support. It required the work of recreating relations of kinship, marriage, cleaning up, of recovery of a livelihood. It required the work of grieving, prayer, narration or silence, and reorientation in space. It required the work of finding meaning, of dreaming, of creating a narrative of belongings, even if collectively reimagining one's place in the nation and the world. It requires both remembering and forgetting. (p. 152)

After the tsunami contributes to a better understanding of disasters and recovery, topics which need more attention from disaster scholars and social anthropology in general. The ethnographic approaches in this book are also relevant to studying the suffering inflicted by regional or global catastrophes such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, I like this book and recommend it for students and academics in disaster studies, development studies, gender studies and anthropology.

However, in my work on humanitarian, emergency and disaster management, I have struggled to understand social anthropologists studying disasters. While engaging deeply with their subjects, some (including Samuels) tend to keep their subjects' worldview, including their accounts of the disaster, sterile from the wider knowledge on disaster risk mitigation, which would include governance and political issues. During more than a decade of interaction with her subjects, apparently the author left

the subjects to remain in their ‘magical awareness’ of disasters as either divine or natural. There was barely a move to discuss ideas about disaster risk mitigation. In other words, scholars tend to take for granted and thus conserve the vulnerability of survivors, thus their subjects have to pick up ideas about disaster resilience from somewhere else. As a disaster scholar, I find this something of a moral dilemma.

Our encounters with the people who survive disasters should be empowering and transformative, leading to future resilience, including a new understanding that nature and divine power are not the primary causes of suffering and death on the planet.

JONATAN A. LASSA

Charles Darwin University

Indonesia

The Kakawin Ghaṭotkacāśraya by Mpu Panuluh

Edited and translated by STUART ROBSON

Tokyo: Research School for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2016. Pp. 332. Foreword, Plate, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

doi:10.1017/S0022463422000716

Stuart Robson’s contribution to our knowledge of ancient Java’s literary history has been considerable. With *The Kakawin Ghaṭotkacāśraya by Mpu Panuluh* he has added to an already impressive list of published editions and translations of major ancient Javanese epic *kakawin* and *kidung* poems.

Post-Enlightenment Western ‘regimes of truth’ have framed the dominant hegemonic discourses concerning the nature of the social and cultural life of colonised peoples and diverted attention from a need to understand how colonised indigenous peoples themselves imagined the world which they inhabited and the epistemological grounds on which their imaginings were founded and, importantly, from consideration of the shape in which indigenous discourses are cast: how knowledge concerning the social, moral, creative and spiritual life of these peoples was given expression in the form of narratives, song cycles, prayers, dances, art, architecture and ritual. (See inter alia, Vincent Clement, ‘Beyond the sham of emancipatory Enlightenment: Rethinking the relationship of indigenous epistemologies, knowledges, and geography through decolonizing paths’, *Progress in Human Geography* 43 (2019), and Regis Tove Stella, *Imagining the Other: The representation of the Papua New Guinean subject* [2007], and the literature cited there). Helen Creese in her study of marriage and sexuality in the courts of Java and Bali (*Women of the Kakawin world: Marriage and sexuality in the Indic courts of Java and Bali*, 2004) and Adrian Vickers in his study of the *Malat* epic (*Journeys of desire: A study of the Balinese text Malat*, 2005) and the various literary, theatrical, sculptural and painted forms in which it was cast in Bali, serve as an important reminder that in precolonial Java and Bali epic *kakawin* and *kidung* were important forms in which the inhabitants of aristocratic courts gave expression to their sense of community; how, in these epic poems, poets gave meaning to, and