

★ **What the Oceans Remember: Searching for Belonging and Home**

Sonja Boon

Wilfrid Laurier University Press (Sep 15, 2019)

Hardcover \$27.99 (328pp)

978-1-77112-423-2

Sonja Boon's evocative, informative memoir *What the Oceans Remember* follows her research into her family's history.

Invited to build her family tree, Boon was finally able to address longtime questions about her heritage, identity, and history. Although the family's history spanned five continents, some parts of it proved easy enough to trace. However, neatly ordered names didn't answer what Boon most wanted to know about her ancestors' experiences and how much their lives informed her own, and so she went deeper, into archival research.

A detailed and enthralling account of finding ancestors amid archival files from around the world, the book establishes an emotional connection that spans centuries. Boon's personal and family map includes Amsterdam and Paramaribo, England and India, and she recalls traveling to places where the pieces of her heritage puzzle waited in silence, connected by oceans said to remember the stories of those who crossed them, willing or not. Special attention is placed on ancestors who crossed the oceans as slaves or indentured workers, landing in Suriname, where Boon's mother is from.

Family and heritage are the pillars for topics of colonialism and multiculturalism, which the book addresses through a combination of meticulous research and an empathetic perspective. Boon's book strikes the perfect balance between fact and feeling. The almost romantic appeal of archives as holders of stories comes through with decisive clarity.

Boon's writing elevates an already excellent book into a beautiful work of literature. Her language is precise and evocative, conjuring images of ocean voyages and sun-touched skin, deep longing, horrific suffering, and resilience against all odds.

Sonja Boon's memoir *What the Oceans Remember* presents professionally conducted genealogical research tempered by emotion. It is an important book for anyone with an interest in colonialism, multiculturalism, and family as a social and emotional unit.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (September / October 2019)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.