

FRAMING MIGRATION

8-9 January 2025

The Role of Religious Actors in the
Production of International Law



*Jointly organised by NUS-Paris research collaboration and
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.*

This project is part of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC)

This workshop is jointly organised by the NUS-Paris research collaboration on fostering social scientific research on Asian societies and religious networks. This project is part of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC) hosted by the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore.

This workshop explores and analyses the role that Catholic figures, advocacy groups, religious orders, and intellectual resources have played in shaping norms and principles that have shaped and transformed the international law applied to migrants in the contemporary world. From a Euro-Asian perspective, it aims to analyse the role of Catholic entities in negotiating the norms that have transformed the international law applied to migrants in the contemporary world (1950-2000). Without assuming that Catholicism is a homogenous and coherent actor, this workshop will discuss and theorise Catholic networks and actors “in action” to document how they have intervened in the reception of vulnerable migrant populations in relation to shifting local contexts and international actors.

Since the end of the Second World War, a number of international organisations have been steadily developing new legal standards for the reception of migrants (Desmond, 2022). After the introduction of those social rights into the International Declaration of Human Rights, the right to a “normal family life” laid the foundations for a principle of transnational citizenship while the rights of refugees were reformulated and expanded (Moreno Lax, 2017).

Historiography has started to identify the way in which diplomatic relations between states have forged this international legal architecture (Rosental 2006, Ballinger 2020). It was promoted by an international network of social reformers who had organised itself since the beginning of the 20th century. Bringing together, among others, top-ranking civil servants, academics, journalists, trade unionists and professional experts such as engineers or physicians, it was also supported by non-governmental, philanthropic organisations defending migrants’ rights. Historians have been increasingly interested in how this wide international milieu managed to act on state legislation and the diplomacy of social and human rights. However, although their presence has often been noticed and hypothesised as a major one (Heo, 2021), little is known about the role of religious advocacy groups within this complex configuration.

However, since the 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the first document to tackle the social problem as a whole, the Catholic Church’s understanding of its role in the world has shifted, and the papacy gradually deployed the so-called “social doctrine”, a coherent body of principles on the dignity, nature and destiny of the person and the family. *Rerum Novarum*, which was confirmed and updated by *Quadragesimo anno* in 1931, insisted that the Church had a duty to intervene in the social sphere, while the state had a duty to intervene in the defence of those who suffered most from the economic system. This had a considerable influence on the evolution of Catholic movements and on a general awakening of Catholics to social and political action in view of legislation that was to last throughout the twentieth century.

This workshop welcomes research on the collaboration with and reception of Asian migrant populations by ecclesial institutions. The workshop is interested in case studies related to migration that emerged between 1945 and 2000. It welcomes contributions considering the role of missionary and/or religious orders, the diplomatic missions of the Holy See, and humanitarian agencies or NGOs such as the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Scalabrini Migration Center, Catholic relief service, the Sant’Egidio community, and the *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, all active across Asia and Europe. Contributors are invited to explore how these Catholic networks interacted not only with state diplomats in international organisations devoted to working migrants and refugees but also with migrant populations and social movements representing the working class and various political ideologies. Whereas some were inspired by Christianity, others referred to socialism or communism, the two most structuring ideological forces in many European and Asian countries.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
8 Jan 2025 (Wed)	10:30 – 11:00	WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	11:00 – 12:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS
	14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 1 – THE JESUIT TRANSNATIONAL FOOTPRINT
	16:00 – 17:15	PANEL 2 – MIGRANTS AND CATHOLIC DELIBERATION
	18:00 – 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER <i>(For speakers, discussants & chairpersons only)</i>
9 Jan 2025 (Thu)	10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 3 – CARITAS AND LOCAL TERRITORIES
	13:30 – 15:00	PANEL 4 – MISSIONARY ORGANIZATIONS AND PEOPLE ON THE MOVE
	15:00 – 15:30	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS
	16:00 – 17:30	CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION <i>(For speakers, discussants & chairpersons only)</i>

8 JANUARY 2025 • WEDNESDAY

10:30 – 11:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS MICHEL CHAMBON <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:00 – 12:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS <i>Chairperson</i> MICHEL CHAMBON <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:00	The Role of Catholic Organizations in the Transformation of Migrants’ International Law: The Afterwar Period and the Legal Institution of “Family Reunion” LUISA DOLZA <i>The Sciences Po Centre for History</i> PAUL ANDRÉ ROSENTAL <i>The Sciences Po Centre for History</i>
12:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:30 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 1 – THE JESUIT TRANSNATIONAL FOOTPRINT <i>Chairperson</i> BUBBLES BEVERLY ASOR <i>De La Salle University</i>
14:00	Humanitarianism and Faith: The Role of Catholic Institutions in the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh MUHAMMAD ALA UDDIN <i>University of Chittagong</i>
14:15	Faith Promoting Justice: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines KAREN GOH <i>Independent Researcher</i>
14:30	The Southeast Asian Refugee Crisis through the Eyes of French Canadian Jesuits PHI-VÂN NGUYEN <i>Université de Saint-Boniface</i>
14:45	<i>Discussant</i> FR HUY KHANH <i>Scalabrini Migration Center</i>
15:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:30 – 16:00	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK
16:00 – 17:15	PANEL 2 – MIGRANTS AND CATHOLIC DELIBERATION <i>Chairperson</i> BERNARDO E. BROWN <i>International Christian University</i>
16:00	Feminine Eurasian Solidarities (1959-1992): Catholic Women’s Assistance to the Boat People AGNÈS DESMAZIÈRES <i>Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales</i>
16:15	God’s Children on the Move: Christian Support of Internal and External Migration for LGBT Communities GEORGE B. RADICS <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:30	<i>Discussant</i> HENDRIKUS PAULUS KAUNANG <i>Universitas Gadjah Mada</i>
16:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
17:15	END OF DAY 1
18:00 – 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER (<i>For speakers, discussants & chairpersons only</i>)

9 JANUARY 2025 • THURSDAY

10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 3 – CARITAS AND LOCAL TERRITORIES
	<i>Chairperson</i> FR HUY KHANH <i>Scalabrini Migration Center</i>
10:30 <i>Online</i>	Caritas Bangladesh and its Role in Shaping Migration Policies and Support Systems (1971-2000) MD SHAIKH FARID <i>University of Dhaka</i>
10:45	‘Refugee’ Redefined: Through the Eyes of the Hong Kong Catholic Church from the 1950s to 2000s JOANNA SI MIN TAN <i>Independent Researcher</i>
11:00	War-induced Population Movement, Faith and Public Action in Eastern Sri Lanka KALINGA TUDOR SILVA <i>University of Peradeniya</i>
11:15	<i>Discussant</i> MARUJA M.B. ASIS <i>Scalabrini Migration Center</i>
11:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:00 – 13:30	LUNCH BREAK
13:30 – 15:00	PANEL 4 – MISSIONARY ORGANIZATIONS AND PEOPLE ON THE MOVE
	<i>Chairperson</i> MARUJA M.B. ASIS <i>Scalabrini Migration Center</i>
13:30	The Mediator Role of a Faith-Based Organization as a Transnational Hub in Migrant Advocacy and Migration Policy: A Case Study of Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila BUBBLES BEVERLY ASOR <i>De La Salle University</i>
13:45	Filipino Catholic Chaplaincy Belgique: Navigating the Modern Political Demands for Integration in Belgium amidst the Enduring Filipino Culture of Political Dynasties in the Philippines LAWRENCE S. PEDREGOSA <i>Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network</i>
14:00	Making a Home for Migrants: The Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) and the Teochew Catholics of Hougang CLARIBEL SIN YEE LOW <i>Nanyang Technological University</i>
14:15	<i>Discussant</i> BERNARDO E. BROWN <i>International Christian University</i>
14:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:00 – 15:30	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS
	KENNETH DEAN <i>National University of Singapore</i> MICHEL CHAMBON <i>National University of Singapore</i>
15:30	END OF WORKSHOP
15:30 – 16:00	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK
16:00 – 17:30	CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION (<i>For speakers, discussants & chairpersons only</i>)
17:30	END OF WORKSHOP

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**The Role of Catholic Organizations in the
Transformation of Migrants' International Law:
The Afterwar Period and the Legal Institution of "Family Reunion"**

LUISA DOLZA

The Sciences Po Centre for History
luisa.dolza@sciencespo.fr

PAUL ANDRÉ ROSENTAL

The Sciences Po Centre for History
rosental@sciencespo.fr

In our communication, we will trace the different policies implemented by the Holy See after the Second World War to play an international role in migrant rights legislation. Since 1944, the Holy See has tried to weigh in this matter on the international scene alongside Jewish and Protestant organizations. Its efforts were rewarded in 1951, a fundamental year for the history of migrants/refugee rights, and for the global impact of Catholic policies. That year, the Holy See, at the invitation of the United States, sat fully at the delegates' table and influenced the international conventions on the two issues that mattered most to it: the globalization of the migration problem and, within it, the support to family unity. In a more particular way, we will also shed light on the role of the American Catholic Church, which became essential in this process, including from an economic standpoint.

The International Catholic Centre for Migration (ICCM) was created in Geneva, under American leadership and with American funds, as was the case for almost all the organizations present in the Swiss city. Whereas the High Commissioner for Refugees was a rare exception to U.S. pre-eminence, and therefore suffered a lack of funds and credibility, ICCM had a deep influence on the web of international organizations, mostly located in Geneva, involved in migration issues, and particularly on the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), which would later become the International Organization for Migration.

Luisa Dolza is a historian of techniques who has trained in Turin, Oxford, and Florence. She has focused on the relationship between states and those who possess new technical knowledge, as well as on the institution of industrial privileges that shaped economic activity across all European territories and states during the modern era. Currently, she is involved in a multi-site project that connects the Sciences Po Centre for History (CHSP) and the history department of the National University of Singapore. This project explores and analyzes, in a comparative manner between Western Europe and Southeast Asia, the role that Catholic organizations have played in the circulation and reception of labor migrants since the Second World War. Through archival research, she investigates how these organizations responded to decolonization movements, the struggles of the Cold War, and the impact of globalization on the intensity of migration flows.

Paul-André Rosental is Professor of Contemporary History at Sciences Po and associate researcher at the Institut National d'Études Démographiques. He specialises in the history and social policy of populations (demography policies, social and sanitary policies), an area in which he directs the research team Esopp. At Sciences Po's Center for European Studies, and in association with the Center for History, he directs the ERC Senior Advanced Grant "From silicosis to silica hazards" (the SILICOSIS project), which combines the disciplines of history, medicine and the social sciences. The author of numerous articles, book contributions and other publications, Paul-André Rosental has also edited a number of special issues of academic journals, including with Regula Argast, "Eugenics after 1945." *Journal of Modern European History*, 10(4) in 2012 and "Health and Safety at Work. A Transnational History", *Journal of Modern European History* 7(2), 2009.

Humanitarianism and Faith: The Role of Catholic Institutions in the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh

MUHAMMAD ALA UDDIN

University of Chittagong

ala.uddin@cu.ac.bd

Beginning in the 1970s, over a million Rohingya refugees fled violence and persecution in Myanmar, creating a major humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. This study explores the role of Catholic humanitarian organizations in addressing this crisis, focusing on their provision of aid, education, and social services within the refugee camps. The central research question of the study is: How do Catholic institutions, particularly Caritas Bangladesh and the Jesuit Refugee Service, contribute to the welfare and resilience of Rohingya refugees? The theoretical framework is grounded in the intersection of faith-based humanitarianism and social justice, drawing on Catholic social teachings which emphasize the dignity of the human person, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor. Utilizing an ethnographic approach, the research combines field observations, in-depth interviews with organizational staff and refugees, and analysis of reports and documents.

The findings reveal that Catholic institutions play a crucial role in fostering community resilience and promoting refugee well-being through various programs. Caritas Bangladesh has been instrumental in providing emergency shelter, food distribution, and healthcare services, while also offering vocational training and educational programs aimed at empowering refugees. Similarly, the Jesuit Refugee Service focuses on holistic support, including trauma counseling, education, and community development projects addressing both immediate and long-term needs. A significant aspect of this research is the exploration of the intersection between faith and humanitarianism. Catholic organizations operate with values rooted in Catholic social teachings, emphasizing the dignity of the humans, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor. These principles guide their interventions, making their efforts expressions of a broader commitment to social justice and human rights. The study also features the challenges faced by these organizations, including limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and the complex socio-political dynamics of the refugee camps. The insights gained underscore the importance of religious actors in global humanitarian efforts and highlight the potential of faith-based approaches to contribute meaningfully to resolving complex humanitarian emergencies.

Muhammad Ala Uddin is a faculty member of Anthropology at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. His scholarly pursuits are centered on the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. His research portfolio is notably diverse, spanning critical domains such as the Rohingya refugee crisis, social gerontology, health and culture, religious pluralism, urban poverty, and migration and diaspora. Noteworthy is his prior tenure as a Fulbright scholar in 2014 at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he conducted research on 'Religious Pluralism and Public Presence'. Presently, Dr Uddin is engaged in investigating the complexities surrounding Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, as part of a collaborative JSPS-UGC research initiative from 2022 to 2024. His ongoing research endeavours encompass a spectrum of pressing societal issues, including the elucidation of the Rohingya's plight, critical analysis of community health clinics, exploration of urban residents' perceptions of non-human elements, and the exploration of smart city initiatives.

**Faith Promoting Justice:
The Jesuit Refugee Service and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines**

KAREN GOH

Independent Researcher

katheros@gmail.com

Founded in 1980, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) embodies the Jesuit mission of reconciliation and justice through its profound commitment to accompanying, serving and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced persons. This paper discusses the early years of JRS and its way of proceeding. It highlights the early engagement of JRS in Cambodia, where firsthand experience of the devastating impact of landmines on local communities galvanised JRS and its partners to join the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The collaboration of governments, international organizations and civil society represented by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines culminated in the signing of the Ottawa Treaty in 1997, which was a significant milestone in global disarmament efforts.

Karen Goh is a consultant on communication strategy and reputation management. After many years of advising leaders in business, government, and non-profit organisations, she now works mainly with Catholic religious orders and organisations. She is interested in how faith inspires and supports action for justice and has long been following initiatives by Catholic religious, leaders and organisations to fight human trafficking. She partnered with the Conference of Religious Major Superiors in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei for several years to raise awareness of human trafficking.

The Southeast Asian Refugee Crisis through the Eyes of French Canadian Jesuits

PHI-VÂN NGUYEN

Université de Saint-Boniface

pve.nguyen@gmail.com

Many communities across the globe mobilized to provide support to the hundreds of thousands of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, seeking shelter in neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Canadians privately sponsored over thirty thousand refugees in less than eighteen months, often through religious organizations. Why were religious actors and institutions uniquely positioned to both shift official processes and generate a wide mobilization to welcome Southeast Asian refugees in 1979?

While most of the literature has explored evolving state-society relationships in the sponsorship process, this paper analyzes the role of a religious organization, the French-Canadian Jesuits, in refugee protection. It claims that Canadian Jesuits were particularly suited to advocate for and provide greater protection to refugees for two reasons. Their pastoral duties as priests helped them mobilize parishioners and easily generate collective action. Second, their own experience as a scattered community, living across societies, cultures, and political borders helped them transfer crucial information, make use of administrative structures across different spaces, and redeploy resources and people depending on the situation. Jesuits were professional transnationals, fortified by centuries of experience as a community, both united as a single family in the same spiritual mission, and yet scattered across political borders.

Phi-Vân Nguyen is Associate Professor at the Department of Social Science and Humanities of the Université de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg, Canada. She is a historian specializing in war, migration and religion in modern Vietnam. Her publications have appeared in several disciplinary and area journals, including *The Journal of Asian Studies* and *French Colonial History* and her book *A Displaced Nation, The 1954 Evacuation and Its Political Impact on the Vietnam Wars*, will appear this December 2024 with Cornell University Press.

**Feminine Eurasian Solidarities (1959-1992):
Catholic Women's Assistance to the Boat People**

AGNES DESMAZIERES

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales

desmazieres.agnes@gmail.com

This paper will examine how the assistance to Asian boat people became central in the agenda of the Catholic Women's League (CWL) of England, an NGO founded in 1906, in the 1960s. If the organization's initial goal was to provide support to female workers in England, it soon enlarged to relief actions toward Catholic populations of territories occupied by the Germans during World War I. At first, their range of action was limited to Europe. The proclamation by the United Nations of a World Refugee Year in 1959 can be considered as a turning-point, inducing the CWL of England to become more involved in other continents and, especially, to help Asian migrants.

Basing on the archives of the CWL of England, the paper will thus study the role played by the international organizations in raising Catholic women's awareness of the refugees' vulnerability and the need for their help. The CWL of England was engaged in UN activities through the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, an international umbrella for Catholic women's NGOs, which had a consultative status at the UN. It will also highlight how the political structures have shaped the organization of Catholic women's assistance to the refugees. The model of the CWL of England spread through the Commonwealth, giving birth to various national CWLs with which the parent organization had privileged relationships. In fact, the contacts established with the CWL of Hong Kong were crucial in encouraging the CWL of England to supply relief to Chinese boat people in the early 1960s. The paper will also show how the CWL of England's experience of assistance to Vietnamese refugees in England in the following decades was fundamental in pushing the NGO to advocate for higher legal standards and challenge restrictive UK legislations on asylum especially. It will therefore highlight the distinctive – and complex – dynamics at stake in the assistance, provided by both the CWL of England and the CWL of Hong Kong, to the Chinese boat people and their later conduct towards the Vietnamese boat people. Finally, it will question the prevalence of a religious agenda in Catholic women's assistance and the influence of the secularization process on its relief activism.

Agnès Desmazières, PhD (European University Institute, Florence) and *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* (Sorbonne Université), is a French historian, specialized in the history of 20th century Christianity and women's history. She is currently associate member of the Centre d'études en Sciences Sociales du Religieux (CéSor) at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris and she has recently published a book on the history of sexual violence in the Catholic Church: *Sans loi ni foi : Prêtres et violences sexuelles. Au cœur du système catholique* (Payot, 2024).

**God's Children on the Move:
Christian Support of Internal and External Migration for LGBT Communities**

GEORGE B. RADICS

National University of Singapore

socrgb@nus.edu.sg

Although one could argue that the rights of LGBT people in Southeast Asia continues to grow and evolve, in many nations, LGBT people are still legally discriminated against in a myriad of ways, including marriage, rights to adopt, visitation of partners in hospitals, and inheritance. Furthermore, conservative interpretations of Christianity can often leave LGBT communities of faith isolated and stigmatized. First, this article argues that instead of viewing Christianity in Southeast Asia as monolithic and anti-LGBT, we should see Christianity as dynamic, flexible, diverse and, often, privately LGBT friendly. Next, while it is undeniable that there are certain conservative Christian churches that reproduce and enforce anti-LGBT laws, there are other Christian denominations playing an important role in supporting LGBT communities of faith, especially with regards to migration. Based on interviews in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore, this article will explore the role of Christian churches in providing safe spaces for LGBT people, encouraging international migration to urban centers where more progressive denominations first emerged, to now exporting and supporting LGBT affirming doctrine to rural communities. With regards to external migration, though legally void in the countries they are performed, gay marriage certificates issued by Christian churches can be used as evidence of a longstanding relationship for migration to countries that do recognize gay marriage. In short, LGBT affirming churches are pushing the boundaries of their religion, helping it to evolve, and in the meantime encouraging the movement of people and ideas within and outside national borders.

George B. Radics received his PhD from the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore. He currently teaches Law and Society, Selected Topics in Law and Justice, Social Thought and Social Theory, and Sociology of Emotions. After receiving his PhD, Dr Radics studied law at the University of Washington, where he obtained his Juris Doctor degree with a concentration in Asian law. He served as a research attorney at the Supreme Court of Guam for two years after graduating from law school. His interests are law and minorities, sociology of the law, criminal law, sociology of emotions, postcolonial studies, and Southeast Asia. He is Associate Editor of *Philippine Sociological Review* and *Sociology Compass*, and serves as a book review editor for *Asian Journal of Social Science*. He is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK).

Caritas Bangladesh and its Role in Shaping Migration Policies and Support Systems (1971-2000)

MD SHAIKH FARID

University of Dhaka

sfarid@du.ac.bd

This paper investigates the role of Caritas Bangladesh in shaping migration policies and support systems between 1971 and 2000. As a leading Catholic humanitarian organization, Caritas Bangladesh has played a crucial role in responding to the challenges faced by migrants and refugees, particularly in the aftermath of the 1971 Liberation War and subsequent waves of internal displacement and refugee influxes, including the Rohingya crisis. The research questions center on how Caritas's interventions aligned with or diverged from broader Catholic social teachings and international human rights norms, and how these efforts contributed to the evolution of migration policies in Bangladesh. Conceptually, the study is framed within the intersection of religious advocacy, humanitarian aid, and international law. It draws on theories of transnational networks and the role of non-state actors in shaping legal and policy frameworks. Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative approach, utilizing archival research, policy analysis, and interviews with key stakeholders involved in Caritas's programs during the specified period. It also incorporates case studies of specific initiatives, such as Caritas's involvement in refugee resettlement programs and labor rights advocacy for migrant workers. Key findings suggest that Caritas Bangladesh not only provided critical humanitarian aid but also engaged in significant advocacy efforts that influenced national migration policies and contributed to the international discourse on migrant rights. The study reveals how Caritas's work, rooted in Catholic social doctrine, facilitated the integration of social justice principles into local and national policy frameworks. This research highlights the organization's role as a bridge between religious doctrine and practical humanitarian action, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive approach to migration policy in Bangladesh. The findings underscore the importance of religious actors in the broader landscape of migration governance and international law.

Md Shaikh Farid is a professor in the Department of World Religions and Culture at the University of Dhaka. He holds a PhD in missionary education in Bangladesh from the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong and an Erasmus Mundus Master's in Bioethics. His research interests include Catholic education, missionary education in Bangladesh, comparative education, ethics of reproductive technologies, and ethical issues in organ donation. His recent book, *Can the Church be Decolonized? Holy Cross Education in Bangladesh*, is published by Springer. He is also the author of *Caodaism: A Syncretistic Religion of Vietnam*. His work has appeared in journals such as *Asian Bioethics Review*, *HEC Forum*, *International Studies in Catholic Education, Religions*, *Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics*, *Journal of Sociology, Philosophy and Progress*, *Arts Faculty Journal*, and *Dhaka University Studies*.

**Refugee' Redefined:
Through the Eyes of the Hong Kong Catholic Church from the 1950s to 2000s**

JOANNA SI MIN TAN

Independent Researcher

tansm_joanna@u.nus.edu

This article contributes to the contentious discourse surrounding the definition of the modern refugee, by examining how the Catholic Church conceived of and advocated for the refugee as a person with human dignity. While much has been studied about how the category of the refugee has radically transformed over time, little is known about the role influential non-state actors have played in shaping the laws, ideas, and reception of the modern refugee.

Through the ethnographic case study of Hong Kong, a British colony which saw two major waves of refugees descend on its shores, this paper proffers that looking at non-state actors can be more productive than looking at state actors when it comes to defining the category of the refugee. It is worth noting that refugees exist precisely because of the failure of a state and the international system of states. Rethinking the definition of the refugee through the lens of the Catholic Church, this article argues that the Catholic Church promotes a more expansive idea of a refugee as a person with not just political and civil liberties, but economic and social rights. This definition was informed by church social doctrine, specifically the idea of human dignity, and was further developed in practice through the expansive church global networks which channelled funds and labour to refugee relief efforts in Hong Kong. Non-state actors such as the Catholic Church, with its doctrinal definition of a refugee and its transnational reach, serve as a good methodological object of analysis to help us gain better clarity on the definition of a refugee.

Joanna Si Min Tan is a social anthropologist trained at the University of Cambridge (MPhil). Primarily historical in nature, her research has sought to understand the construction of the Singaporean Nantah Spirit and the personhood of the Singaporean-Catholic seen through the eyes of the Singapore Young Christian Worker's Movement, post-Vatican II. She is currently interested in investigating the intersection between the anthropology of Christianity and psychological anthropology.

War-induced Population Movement, Faith and Public Action in Eastern Sri Lanka

KALINGA TUDOR SILVA

University of Peradeniya

kalingatudorsilva@gmail.com

Religion plays multiple roles in war-induced population movements within and across national boundaries. Eastern Sri Lanka was an important flashpoint in the war between the Government and the Tamil Tigers from 1983 to 2007, with Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala civilians and different religious groups struggling to coexist in a fragile setting. Focusing on war-induced population displacement in eastern Sri Lanka since 1990, this paper examines the landscape of faith-based organizations (FBOs) with the Catholic Church as an important nucleus in shaping public action towards war-affected populations. This was by no means a mere reactive response to an evolving crisis but a faith-informed effort at understanding and shaping humanitarian assistance to displaced populations and assisting their resettlement or onward migration depending on the circumstances in which they found themselves. The paper uses hitherto unutilized data from a collaborative ethnography inclusive of oral history conducted in the immediate aftermath of the war (see Spencer et al. 2015), to explore 1) the role of the Catholic Church in organizing a joint religious framework for responding to an evolving crisis in a war-displaced population, 2) the responses of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism to large scale displacement and related disturbances in their communities and 3) the role of religious actors in framing post-war development, migration and law as a tool for social justice in Sri Lanka.

Kalinga Tudor Silva is Professor Emeritus in Sociology at University of Peradeniya Sri Lanka. He holds BA from the University of Peradeniya and PhD from Monash University, Australia. He served as the executive director of the Centre for Poverty Analysis from 2001 to 2002, and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies from 2007 to 2008. Currently, he is the chief editor of the Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences, published by the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka. He is the author of *Decolonization, Development and Disease: A Social History of Malaria in Sri Lanka*, published in 2014 by Orient Blackswan and a joint author of *Checkpoint, Temple, Church and Mosque: a Collaborative Ethnography of War and Peace*, published by Pluto Press in 2015 and the lead author of *The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Building Activities of Local Faith Actors in Sri Lanka*, published by World Vision International in 2021.

**The Mediatory Role of a Faith-Based Organization as a
Transnational Hub in Migrant Advocacy and Migration Policy:
A Case Study of Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila**

BUBBLES BEVERLY ASOR

De La Salle University
bubbles.asor@dlsu.edu.ph

The organizational study of migration has been long understudied and underresearched until recently with the growing interest in research on immigrant organizations within the discussions of social movements, transnationalism, civil society, diaspora politics, development and civic engagement. To contribute to this emerging literature, this paper examines the mediatory role of a faith-based organization in the field of migrant advocacy and migration policy at the local, national and transnational levels. Using the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) in Manila as an illustrative case, I explore how it links and connects multiple social actors (other church-based organizations, non-religious groups, state agencies in home and host societies, regional and international organizations) and multidimensional migration-related activities (research and publications, coalition- and solidarity-building with other migration actors, influencing public policies through research and collaboration, and communicating research to the public). Using interview data with SMC and its alliances and data from SMC's reports and publications, I analyse how SMC serves as a (trans)national advocacy hub which connects and coordinates a multiplexity of migration 'spokes' (academics, state actors, other non-profit groups, private sectors, migrant organizations and individual migrants) to achieve migration-related goals such as promotion of the rights of migrants. Utilizing the Gould-Fernandez brokerage model (1989), I probe how SMC may play different mediatory roles in the form of coordinator, itinerant broker, gatekeeper, representative, and liaison for each relation with the 'migration spokes'. By investigating the organizational workings of a faith-based organization like SMC towards migrant advocacy and migration policy, I am able to identify how it contributes to critiquing and advancing global agendas such as social inclusion and international migration.

Bubbles Beverly Asor is currently Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology and Behavioral Sciences and the academic coordinator of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC) at De La Salle University Manila. She received her PhD in Sociology at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests include religious organisations, migrant integration, urban diversity, border studies, everyday life, international migration to South Korea, and Philippine migration. She also holds a research fellow position with the Border Studies Cluster, Faculty of Humanities at the Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia. She is the editor-in-chief of *Philippine Sociological Review*, the flagship journal of the Philippine Sociological Society.

**Filipino Catholic Chaplaincy Belgique:
Navigating the Modern Political Demands for Integration in Belgium
amidst the Enduring Filipino Culture of Political Dynasties in the Philippines**

LAWRENCE SANTIAGO PEDREGOSA

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network

lspedregosa@yahoo.com

This interdisciplinary research in migration studies presents how the Filipino Catholic Chaplaincy Belgique (FCCB) navigates the double pastoral demands to facilitate Filipino migrant integration while preserving their cultural expressions of the faith in Belgium. Tracing its roots in the 1980s, the FCCB was formally founded in 1996 to address the pastoral needs of Filipino migrant communities. Beyond the typical *ad intra* Church concerns, however, the FCCB is also confronted with *ad extra* sociopolitical factors. Aside from Belgium's integration demands, Filipino migrants, especially those who still bear Filipino citizenship, are also affected by the political dynamics in the Philippines. Based on fieldwork interviews, the study reveals the paradoxes of Filipino migrant voting behavior. While FCCB facilitates Filipino migrants to become accustomed to vote for political parties founded on modern ideologies as means to integrate, the underlying political culture in the Philippines traditionally based on political dynasties still proliferate among Filipino migrants. In this regard, the study demonstrates the political inconsistencies of Filipino migrants (Belgian-Filipino residents/citizens) as seen in their voting preferences. This paradox has consequences in the production of international migration laws given that the election of politicians, both in Europe and Philippines, have the power to decide on what policies will be pursued.

Lawrence Santiago Pedregosa works as an advocacy and communication officer at the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) in Belgium. He also works as a thesis adviser/corrector at the CICM Maryhill School of Theology in the Philippines. He is also an academic member of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC) based in Singapore. He holds a Doctor of Theology and a Doctor of Sacrae Theologiae from KU Leuven, Belgium. Before his studies at KU Leuven, he taught as an Assistant Professorial Lecturer at De La Salle University-Manila, Philippines. He also received his degrees in MA Applied Theology from De La Salle University-Manila and AB in Political Science from the University of Santo Tomas-Manila, Philippines. His research interests are political philosophy, critical theory, ethics, metaphysics, liberation theology, postcolonial theology, and migration theology.

**Making a Home for Migrants:
The Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) and the Teochew Catholics of Hougang**

CLARIBEL SIN YEE LOW

Nanyang Technological University

isclaribellow@ntu.edu.sg

Established with the calling to evangelise non-Christian Asian countries, the Société des Missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) has been active in Asia since as early as the 17th century. Indeed, the official establishment of the Catholic Church in Singapore has often been credited to them as well. Using Singapore's Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a case study, I seek to illustrate how this evangelising mission was made possible and successful by migration. Specifically, by foregrounding social support for the local Teochew migrant community, the MEP was incidentally able to attract both Catholic and non-Catholic Teochew migrants to Hougang. This in turn allowed the MEP to fulfil its mission of evangelising, which it had faced challenges with over the past decades. Put differently, the success of the MEP's mission in Singapore was very much built upon its willingness and ability to embrace migrants and to create a home for them in Hougang and beyond. Undeniably, the support rendered by the MEP to these migrants made the Church socially relevant to them and gave the missionaries more success than they had evangelising in China. Some means through which the MEP offered social support include the establishment of schools and the provision of education as well as the renting of land at cheap rates so families could farm and make a living. Over time, a unique, indigenised Catholic community emerged. By situating such local cases within the broader, global context, the impact that the Rerum Novarum and other related social doctrines have had on the success of such missionary efforts becomes evident. As such, the growth, evolution and trajectory of Catholicism has also been inadvertently yet undeniably shaped by various Catholic missions' responses to migration flow, which were informed by Rerum Novarum and the like.

Claribel Low Sin Yee is a Senior Analyst at Social Cohesion Research Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. She holds a Master of Science in Asian Studies from RSIS where she specialised in the comparative study of religion and interreligious relations in plural societies. Prior to that, she graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in Sociology and English Language. Her research interests include critical religion, interreligious relations, religious nationalism, secularism and the sociology of knowledge.

ABOUT THE ORGANISER, DISCUSSANTS & CHAIRPERSONS

Bernardo E. Brown is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the International Christian University in Tokyo. He received his PhD from Cornell University and his MA from the New School for Social Research. He is also one of the coordinators of ISAC- Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics. His research has focused on Catholicism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, with a particular interest on transnational religious networks and priestly formation at Asian Catholic seminaries. With Brenda S.A Yeoh, he co-edited *Asian Migrants and Religious Experience* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018). He has also co-edited special issues for *TAJA-The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, and *SOJOURN-Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, and is the author of more than a dozen peer-reviewed journal publications.

E | bbernardo@icu.ac.jp

Hendrikus Paulus Kaunang, PhD Candidate is a researcher affiliated with the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies and the Centre for Security and Peace Studies at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He is also a member of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics, Singapore. He specializes in peace and conflict study, democracy, tourism, digital media and inter-religious studies. He actively participates in academic collaborations and publishes some articles in a reputable journal. His recent work emphasizes the importance of digital inclusion for the indigenous religious community and also the significance of inclusive governance in the politics of tourism development in Indonesia.

E | erichkaunang@ugm.ac.id

Kenneth Dean is Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho's Professor at Yale-NUS College, Research Cluster Leader for Religion and Globalisation in Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore (NUS), and Director of Wan Boo-Sow Centre for Chinese Culture in the Department of Chinese Studies at NUS. He is the author of several books on Taoism and popular religion in Southeast China. He has published several volumes of epigraphic sources on the history of religion in Fujian and Singapore. He directed *Bored in Heaven: A Film about Ritual Sensation* (2010) and has developed websites and digital platforms including the Singapore Historical GIS and the Singapore Biographical Databases.

E | chsdek@nus.edu.sg

Maruja M.B. Asis is a sociologist with more than 30 years of research experience studying international migration and social transformation with a special focus on the Asian region. Her research and publications explore the themes of gender, family and migration; migration and development; and migration governance. She has a lot of experience working on transnational research projects and is actively involved in various scientific and consultative bodies on international migration. She was involved in the development of resource materials for pastoral workers involved in the migrant ministry in Asia. She is a Consultant to the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. She served as Director for Research and Publications for many years and as Director (January 2019-January 2024) of the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC). She was involved in various capacities – Associate Editor, Co-Editor and Editor – of the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* between 1997 and 2023. She continues to be affiliated with SMC as a Senior Researcher working on selected projects.

E | marla@smc.org.ph

Michel Chambon is a French theologian and a cultural anthropologist working on Christianity in the Chinese world. As a research fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, he coordinates the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC), an international scholarly network developing and promoting social scientific research on Asian Catholics in contemporary societies.

E | mchambon@nus.edu.sg

Nguyen Hoang Khanh Huy (Huy for short) is a Vietnamese Catholic priest belonging to the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, also known as Scalabrinian missionaries. This religious congregation, with a specific mission of caring for the migrants, was founded by Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, an Italian bishop in 1887. Huy completed his philosophy studies in Vietnam in 2010 and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in theology from the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila, Philippines, in 2018. He was ordained a priest in 2018 and was sent to Italy. His first assignment in Italy was as the chaplain of the Filipino Community in Piacenza, a city in the northern part of the country. After that, he moved to Rome, where he pursued a Master's in sociology at the Pontifical Gregorian University from 2020-2023. Currently, he serves as the Director of the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila from 1 February 2024.

E | khanh_huy2305@yahoo.com

WORKSHOP CONVENOR

Dr Michel Chambon

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

SECRETARIAT

Ms Valerie Yeo

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
AS8, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, #04-04, Singapore 119260
E | valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg