

# Genders, Sexualities, and Theopastoral Imaginations in Southeast Asia International ECR Workshop 2021

The School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia, in collaboration with De La Salle University in the Philippines, is holding a two-day International ECR (Early Career Researcher) Workshop on *Genders, Sexualities, and Theopastoral Imaginations in Southeast Asia* on 18-19 November 2021. The main co-organisers are Dr Joseph N. Goh and Dr Michael Sepidoza Campos. They are assisted by Ms Sabina Tzu-Ching Hung.

As an integral part of many Southeast Asian lives, 'religion' has always been at the centre of discourse when it comes to civil protections in Southeast Asia. Recent consultations address the effects of religious and customary laws on women, and examine the legal status of women and LGBTQI persons in light of the principle of Freedom of Religion and Belief. Recognising the force of religion and its correlation with cultural practices, they have also cautioned that:

- Conflating religion with culture—particularly in Asia's post/colonial contexts—diminishes its potency to become a critical actor in protecting human rights; and that
- Identifying 'religion' too closely with institutional structures overlooks its complicity in propagating gender and sexuality biases that shape legislation.

With this in mind, the Workshop aims to bring together ECRs of Southeast Asian origins to cultivate a series of scholarly discussions on religion and gender and sexuality in addition to how the interaction of the two has affected lived realities in Southeast Asia. The Workshop will be hosted online by Monash University Malaysia. Scholars who hail from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines will be joining us with their knowledge and experiences in their respective fields.

Composed of two main sections—Abstract Presentations and Roundtable Conversation—the Workshop engages in collaborative discussions and collegial feedback with the intention to enhance the acumen and rigour of research. The presentation will offer each presenter twenty minutes to share their research followed by another twenty minutes or so of feedback exchange with other participants. The Roundtable Conversation on the second day invites practitioners and scholars to reflect on their personal and professional contexts as leaders engaged in questions of religion, theology, meaning, sexuality, gender, and ministry.

Acknowledging that Southeast Asian projects of knowledge production should be carefully situated in the region's postcolonial history, the Workshop encourages the use of epistemologies and methodologies that privilege Asian scholarship and prioritise the vision of 'Asia as method'.

In this regard, the Workshop will focus on addressing the following two questions:

To what extent has Southeast Asia's postcolonial contexts defined Christian religious practices and theologies in relation to gender and/or sexuality? How do/can/ought religious institutions/communities attend practically to the diverse gender and/or sexual identities and expressions specific to Southeast Asian postcolonialities?

The Workshop defines 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'theopastoral' broadly in order to incorporate and put forth underrepresented issues of Southeast Asia in feminist and queer epistemologies. With the focus on Christian theology and wider implications of religious institutions' positions in Southeast Asian gender and sexuality discussions, the Workshop seeks to create a safe space for communication and an environment to foster possible imaginations for the future.

(Prepared by Sabina Tzu-Ching Hung)