

**Dying the Chinese Catholic Way:  
An Interreligious Study of Catholic and Buddhist Woodblock Printed Illustrations  
in Nineteenth-Century China**

**ZHANG Jie - Abstract**

By examining woodblock-printed book illustrations produced in late imperial China, this study explores the ways Catholics in China perceived death and redemption. What are the similarities and differences between Buddhist and Catholic ways of representing the afterlife? What can print illustrations reveal about the religious landscape in late imperial China? Textually, Chinese Catholics challenged the Buddhist understanding of death and cyclic existence. However, in the visual medium, there were strong parallels and compatibility between Chinese Catholics and Buddhists in the illustrations of the afterlife. Producers of Catholic books employed xylographic print technology, which has long been used for printing Buddhist scriptures. Catholic book illustration went through similar processes as Buddhist palimpsests, having been reused and repurposed for different contexts. This article contributes to conversations on Buddhist-Catholic encounters and the transnational circulation of books. The lens of materiality reveals a more nuanced relationship between Christianity and Buddhism beyond textual rivalry.

**Constructing Christ in Iron:  
The Paris Foreign Mission Society and its architecture in the Nineteenth Century  
Singapore and Hong Kong**

**Ian Y.H. Tan - Abstract**

The Paris Foreign Mission Society (Missions étrangères de Paris, MEP) was instrumental in the introduction of imported building materials like structural iron and steel in Singapore and Hong Kong during the late nineteenth century, particularly through the construction of its churches and printing house respectively. This article explores how the use of iron as a construction material, particularly those produced by French foundries, gave MEP missions access and knowledge to pioneer the use of iron as a building material overseas in the context of their mission work in East Asia. This research focuses not only on the material's ability to accentuate the liturgical qualities and missional zeal produced by these spaces, but also the agentic role of MEP's priests in transferring architectural trends and modern technology across colonial networks during its heyday. The MEP's decision to use iron based on its superiority over other local materials helped to mitigate challenging local environments such as the poor soil condition of the church building in Singapore and to fulfil the structural and functional needs of the printing house in Hong Kong. Yet as the archival research and on-site surveys show, such technology transfers were not frictionless. There were challenges in

communications between constructors in France, and the priests and local contractors in Singapore and Hong Kong, relying on limited letter correspondences and inaccurate building plans, causing delays in realising the mission's evangelical ambitions in Asia. This article also highlights constructors' intention to exploit iron's materiality and structural potential to build Gothic style churches that not only created worship experience that is profoundly spiritual and immersive, but also offered a new identity for the emerging Asian Catholic communities reflecting their aspirations for social mobility.

## **Translating Catholic Heritage through Local Environment: Materiality of Japan's World Heritage**

Toru Yamada - **Abstract**

For years, Nagasaki officials discussed and negotiated with residents from local communities in each municipality in order to prepare their nomination proposal for UNESCO's World Heritage list. The core heritage narrative of the "Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region" proposal took shape around Catholic church buildings and heritage materials. In this article, the author argues that as the World Heritage narrative emphasizes the historic materiality of these heritage buildings, Catholic materiality has been somewhat secularized as the nomination progressed. In order to avoid stirring up controversy, Nagasaki's public officials delicately used the heritage churches as the material intermediaries to moderate the uneasy relationships among the locals as well as to connect it with the interests of the national actors.

## **Sacred Space in Non-Places: An Analysis of Filipino Catholicism in the Age of 'Supermodernity'**

Mark Inigo M. Tallara - **Abstract**

This paper is about non-places and how they have changed religious spaces and practices in the Philippines. Non-places like shopping malls and airport terminals as defined by Marc Augé (2008), are created by globalization and modernization. It is a term he uses to describe the accelerated pace of life, and the dominance of technology in contemporary society. In non-places, individuals become anonymous and interactions are often transactional (Augé, 2008). Through an ethnohistorical analysis, this paper examines how Filipinos have adapted to the rise of Catholic chapels inside the shopping malls (CCIM, hereafter) in metropolitan Manila. What is a sacred space in this kind of non-place? How are non-places shaping and changing Catholicism in the Philippines? These questions frame Catholic spaces in the context of 'supermodernity', a socio-political environment in which space and time are experienced under new conditions. The research findings relied on the discussion of the study of religious space highlighting the role of power in the production of social space (Lefebvre, 1974). Moreover, the analysis

also considers the idea of *pamumuwesto* or how Filipino Catholics position themselves in a ritual space, and *commutatio*, or how they substitute a sacred site for another place (Tallara, 2022). The discussions are critical in analyzing on how the sense of community and social connection associated with sacred spaces challenge the notions of anonymity, transience, and (dis)connection of non-places.

### **Collecting Catholicity: The Materialization of Faith within the Taiwanese Domestic Sphere**

Michel Chambon - **Abstract**

This article explores how contemporary Taiwanese Catholics materialize their faith within their homes. Based on ethnographic material collected from 34 households in northern Taiwan, it presents the diversity of religious items found in the homes of churchgoers, the organizational patterns of these artifacts, and the invisible relationships behind them. Moving beyond discussions of inculturation as a process of integration and of material religion as a question of semiotic ideologies, this article argues that Catholic items found in the privacy of Taiwanese homes allow their owners to deploy an array of multidimensional relationships, a form of Catholicity that cannot easily be reduced to a single issue. From the intimacy of home, Catholic items enable churchgoers to position themselves at the heart of a rich, personalized, and evolving network of glocal Catholicism, a material and domestic form of Catholicity which complements the institutional Church.

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### **‘A Church is a Building, Too’: Multiple Affordances of Religious Structures for (Non)migrant Activities in Seoul, South Korea**

Bubbles Beverly Asor - **Abstract**

The physicality and materiality of churches are largely understudied because of the popular notion that a church is more than a building but a symbolic carrier of faith and community. As this article demonstrates, however, churches and religious buildings are also material phenomena whose architectural, physical, and spatial configurations have a structuring role by providing affordances or multiple possibilities and limitations (dis)allowing for religious and social activities by migrant congregants, non-migrant congregants, and outsiders. Using J. Gibson’s notion of affordances, Glaeser’s activity concept and drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in Hyehwa Catholic Church in Seoul, South Korea, I explore what the physicality of a church could offer to (non)migrants at the individual and community levels with regard to religious and secular activities. Within the context of migration, the church building that includes various spaces and

objects within and outside its premise has multiple affordances for one or more activities – religious affordances for sacred activities and quotidian affordances for placemaking activities. By identifying these multiple affordances of church buildings and surrounding vernacular streetscape, I endeavor to present an approach to studying religion's materiality and physical environment within the sociological discussion of agency and structure.