



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
AND ETHNOGRAPHY NAS RA



## ‘Eastern Christianity, Migration and Reconciliation’ Workshop

### Final Programme

Villa Ayghedzor, 23 Ayghedzor Str., Yerevan, Armenia

Co-organisers: Dr Lucian Leustean, Aston University; Dr Jasmine Dum-Tragut, University of Salzburg and National Academy of Sciences of Armenia; Dr Alina Poghosyan, Institute of Migration and Social Changes, Yerevan; and Professor Aghasi Tadevosyan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia

#### Friday 1 November

2.30 – 3.00 pm: Registration (all participants)

3.00 – 3.30 pm: *Introduction*, Dr Lucian Leustean, Dr Jasmine Dum-Tragut, Professor Aghasi Tadevosyan and Dr Alina Poghosyan

3.30 – 4.30 pm: First session: *Religion and Migration in Eastern Christianity: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*

1. *Forced Displacement and Migration in the Finnish Orthodox Community: Historical Developments, Empirical Findings, and Theoretical Insights*, Dr Helena Kupari, Post-Doctoral Researcher in the Department of Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki
2. *Religious Policy and Human Security in the Post-Soviet Space: Beyond Orthodoxy*: Dr Ansgar Joedicke, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

4.30 – 5.00 pm: Tea/Coffee Break (all participants)

5.00 – 6.00 pm: Second session: *Religion and Migration in Bulgaria and Moldova*

1. *Religion and Forced Displacement in Modern Bulgaria*, Dr Daniela Kalkandjieva, Project Leader, Scientific Research Department, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Sofia
2. *The Republic of Moldova between Religious Revival, Massive Emigration and Exclusionary Identity-Framing*: Andrei Avram, Programme Coordinator, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bucharest, Romania, and Chisinau, Moldova

7.30 pm: Dinner (for paper presenters)

## Saturday 2 November

9.30 – 11.00 am: Third session: *Religion and Migration in Armenia (1)*

1. *The Migration Service, The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of the Republic of Armenia*, Armen Ghazaryan, Head of the Migration Service, Yerevan
2. *The Involvement of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the Migrants' Support in Armenia and Europe*, Dr Alina Poghosyan, Founder, Institute of Migration and Social Changes, Yerevan
3. *Migrants' Churches: Religion as a Tool for Social Re-integration*, Dr Yulia Antonyan, Associate Professor, Faculty of History, Yerevan State University

11.00 – 11.30 pm: Tea/Coffee Break (all participants)

11.30 - 1.00 pm: Fourth session: *Religion and Migration in Armenia (2)*

1. *'Knock and It Shall Be Opened Unto You': Accommodating Strategies of the Armenian Apostolic Church to Migrants in the Past and Present*, Dr Anna Ohanjanyan, Senior Researcher, Matenadaran - Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan
2. *Articulation of Religious Identities in the Context of Armenian Migration Processes: Digital Social Network Analysis*: Dr Aram Vartikyan, Director of Migration Competence Centre, Department of Sociology, Yerevan State University
3. *Caritas Armenia*: Lusine Stepanyan and Movses Hakobyan, Yerevan

1.00 - 2.30 pm: Lunch (all participants)

2.30 – 3.30 pm: Fourth session: *Religion and Migration in Georgia*

1. *Forgotten by Many and Remembered by Few: Religious Responses to Forced Migration in Georgia*: Tornike Metreveli, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of St Gallen, Switzerland
2. *Anti-Migrant Narratives among Georgian Ultranationalist Groups*, Ekaterine Chitanava, Director, Tolerance and Diversity Institute, Tbilisi

3.30 – 4.00 pm: Tea/Coffee Break (all participants)

4.00– 5.30 pm: Fifth session: *Policy Perspectives & Religion and Migration in Russia and Georgia*

1. *The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe*, Sharon Brown, Executive Secretary, The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Brussels
2. *The Paths of the Christian Migration in Russia: Migration as Reformation*: Dr Roman Lunkin, Director, Centre for the Study of Religion and Society, Institute of Europe, the Russian Academy of Science, Moscow
3. *Peaceful Solution of the Conflict in Donbas from the Perspective of Ukrainian Churches*, Dr Dmytro Vovk, Associate Professor of Law, Center for the Rule of Law and Religion, Yaroslav the Wise National Law University, Kharkiv

7.30 pm: Dinner (for paper presenters)

For any queries please contact Dr Lucian Leustean, Aston University, at [l.leustean@aston.ac.uk](mailto:l.leustean@aston.ac.uk). Dr Leustean's research is supported by the British Academy's Sustainable Development Programme, as part of the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund.

## Guests

1. Haykanush Chobanyan, Head of External Relations Division, State Migration Service of Armenia.
2. Gagik Yeganyan, Former Head of State Migration Service of Armenia (1999-2018) and Minister of Labor and Social Affairs (1998-1999).
3. Dr Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, Associate Professor and Chair of the Political Science and International Affairs Programme, American University of Armenia.
4. Vahan Bournazian, Associate Professor, the Center for European Studies, Yerevan State University.
5. Representative from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin (to be confirmed).
6. Tevan Poghosyan, Head of the International Center for Human Development and Adviser to the President of Armenia (to be confirmed).

## Abstracts

### ***Helena Kupari: Forced Displacement and Migration in the Finnish Orthodox Community: Historical Developments, Empirical Findings, and Theoretical Insights***

Over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, the Orthodox Christian community of Finland has faced several waves of migration that have significantly affected its makeup and circumstances. The most important of these are the internal displacement of Karelians in the aftermath of the Second World War, as Finland ceded its Karelian territories to the Soviet Union, and the flux of immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of WW2, two-thirds of the Finnish Orthodox were forced to leave their homes. Presently, over ten percent of the members of the Orthodox Church of Finland (OCF) have been born outside Finland; moreover, divine services and church activities are also frequented by immigrants who self-identify as Orthodox but have not joined the OCF.

In this paper, I present an outline of how these two waves of migration have impacted the Finnish Orthodox community. First, I make some observations concerning reactions and policies on the institutional level. On the one hand, after WW2, the OCF rebuilt its activities and infrastructure virtually from scratch. It was operating under difficult social and political conditions and could offer only limited support to evacuated communities. In present-day Finnish society, on the other hand, the OCF has a stable and well-respected status. The church has made an active effort to welcome and service migrants from various parts of the Orthodox world. Second, I draw on recent qualitative case studies – both my own and those of others – to discuss the reverberations of (forced) migration on the individual level, reflecting on how it has shaped the religious practice and expression of the Orthodox faithful in Finland.

I end my presentation by elaborating on the theoretical insights of my research on the long-term influences of forced migration on individual religiosity. In my studies, I have made use of a micro-sociological approach as well as qualitative data primarily in the form of interviews. Furthermore, to understand how individuals employ religious practices and imaginaries to cope with their history of displacement, I have applied and developed notions from practice theory, social memory studies, and the study of lived religion.

### ***Ansgar Joedicke: Religious Policy and Human Security in the Post-Soviet Space: Beyond Orthodoxy***

Although most of the contributions to this workshop examine cases of Orthodox Christianity, the underlying problems of interest are more general. This contribution presents steps towards a broader geographical and comparative perspective by including post-Soviet countries with a dominant Islamic heritage as Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Assuming that religious policies determine a great deal of the religious communities' role in these countries, forced migration and human security serve as examples for the conflictive or cooperative relationship between religious groups and the state. The contribution examines the conditions and consequences of their cooperation (or non-cooperation) in the framework of the "post-Soviet religious model" (Curanović) and discusses the value of this model for comparison with predominantly Orthodox countries.

### **Daniela Kalkandjieva: *Religion and Forced Displacement in Modern Bulgaria***

The first Bulgarian Constitution, adopted in 1879, postulated that “any slave, regardless their sex, faith, and nationality, becomes free as soon as they enters the territory of Bulgaria” (Article 61). Assumed as a response of the young nation-state to the past five centuries of Ottoman rule, this ethos of freedom was widely shared by the political and church leaders of modern Bulgaria. While secular politics soon abandoned this attitude to their country as a place of asylum, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church demonstrated it on various occasions by offering aid to Armenian survivals from the 1915 genocide, Russian émigrés from Bolshevik Russia, and the local Jews during the Holocaust. The Church’s respect to the persecuted, however, was not all-embracing, e.g. it was absent in the case of those ethnic Bulgarian refugees from the Ottoman areas who did not belong to Orthodoxy.

### **Andrei Avram: *The Republic of Moldova between Religious Revival, Massive Emigration and Exclusionary Identity-Framing***

The revival of religious life and the massive emigration of working age adults represent the two single most significant social developments that ensued after the Republic of Moldova gained independence in 1991. While the two phenomena are not interrelated per se, religious communities have been put in a position to respond to a plethora of social issues caused by migration within the country, while also playing a role in maintaining and cultivating national identity for the diaspora. Furthermore, despite a relatively low level of immigration to the Republic of Moldova, certain elements of the Orthodox Church have been at the forefront of public discourses critical of the purportedly negative effects of inward migration, especially from the Muslim world. Such approaches have been embedded in wider narratives critical of Western European stances on fundamental values, viewed as a threat to the (Eastern) Christian way of life, thus influencing political debate.

### **Alina Poghosyan: *The Involvement of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the Migrants’ Support in Armenia and Europe***

Migrations and formation of a large diaspora is one of the main narratives of Armenian history. Armenians’ big displacements resulted by the Genocide in 1915, emigration from Armenian instigated by the earthquake in 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and overall socio-economic crisis following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the face of these events, Armenian Orthodox Church has been one of the most influential institutions in supporting the Armenian communities, providing humanitarian assistance, organizing education, mobilizing the community, lobbying their needs and political agendas, etc. However, as much the Armenian Orthodox Church is engaged in supporting Armenian migrants abroad, it is equally disengaged in the migrants support in Armenia. In the proposed paper I will analyze the role of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the Armenian communities abroad (based on the case studies of Russia, Latvia, Germany, and Switzerland) and in Armenia. I will compare the churches’ humanitarian, political, and religious agendas in Armenia and abroad, and elaborate on the factors underpinning the differences. I will argue that the differences between the Armenian Orthodox Church’s agendas and involvement in the migration issues in Armenia and abroad are grounded on the symbolic, ethnic and political roles attributed to the Armenian Orthodox Church both by the religious elite and the communities.

### **Yulia Antonyan: *Migrants’ Churches: Religion as a Tool for Social Re-integration***

Based on a field study of the Gegharkunik region of Armenia, the research addresses the process of construction of new churches in the context of social and economic life of the Armenian province before the Velvet revolution. The main characters of the research were founders and sponsors of tens of newly constructed churches, represented by several social types and, in particular, by a type of the affluent (nearly always male) migrant, who, being enrooted in a foreign country (mostly Russia, Ukraine), simultaneously wanted to re-appear at his home village in a new, much higher status. For them, building a church usually became (and becomes, as the practice still continues) a kind of a social project, through

which affluent migrants constructed a positive image of themselves, strengthened personal and family influence among local authorities and business people. There had been a number of rational reasons (bureaucracy, corruption, monopolies, etc.) why building a church was easier, more available and more desirable than other really social projects such as constructing schools, medical centres or renovating roads. A newly-built church was also perceived as a visit-card, through which they claimed to join (at least temporarily, for the periods of their short stays in the homeland) to the local oligarchic elites. On the other hand, due to the highly localized functions and the individual character of construction, the migrants' churches rarely become community spiritual centres. Being attended mostly by members of the family of a sponsor and its neighbours, they usually take over functions of the family shrines and can serve as sites for family reunion.

**Anna Ohanjanyan: *'Knock and It Shall Be Opened Unto You': Accommodating Strategies of the Armenian Apostolic Church to Migrants in the Past and Present***

The accommodative strategies of the Armenian Apostolic Church for the migrants are obviously rooted in dominical sayings 'knock and it shall be opened' and 'come to me all, who are weary,' regardless the lack of an official document constituting its position and concept on migration in general. Both in past and present the Armenian Church has been strongly Armeno-centric. Its accommodative strategies are designed predominantly for the Armenian migrants in and outside Armenia. Given the two-fold, if not multi-fold, geographical settings in Armenia and Diaspora, the Armenian Church has been targeting either on harbouring Armenians into Armenian society, as in case of repatriates during Stalin regime and recently with the Armenian-Syrians, or on integrating migrant Armenians into the Armenian communities in Diaspora. In spite of centralised governance of the Armenian Church, such a double-vector character of migration strategies discloses a palette of different nuances on local grounds as well as the fragmentariness when it comes to the implementation of the strategies per se. It also reveals a strong need in further elaboration of both theological and social concepts on migration mirroring the official position of the Armenian Church.

Drawing upon archival documents, short communications, encyclical letters, as well as interviews with migrants, this paper aims to reconstruct comparative picture of accommodative strategies of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Soviet past and in present days. It touches upon the issues of theological bases, migration agents, geo-political and strategical polyphony in Armenia and Diaspora as well as integrity and blind spots in the adopted strategies then and now.

**Aram Vartikyan: *Articulation of Religious Identities in the Context of Armenian Migration Processes: Digital Social Network Analysis***

Migration and many adjacent processes have historically and in the recent decades been the inseparable and obvious part of the everyday life of certain groups of people from the perspective of their in-depth sources and various consequences. The issues of identity, as well as the shaping, preserving and reproducing of belonging are particularly important among the many problems that challenge the widespread and non-homogeneous Armenian diaspora, and the migrants who have temporarily or permanently left Armenia. In this view, the issue of religious identity of an Armenian migrant is significant, which becomes even more actual and innovative when observed under the light of the transnational "digital" communities, specifically with regards to the functional logics and the possibility of existence of so-called "digital diasporas". Hence, one of the particular aims of this study is to analyze the features of articulation of the religious identity of the members of Armenian diaspora and the Armenian migrants residing abroad, in the everyday life context and especially in the frames of certain digital social networks and social platforms.

**Lusine Stepanyan and Movses Hakobyan: *Caritas Armenia***

Armenian Caritas is one of the main role players in the Migration field in Armenia. On the one hand, it supports reintegration of returnee Armenian migrants from EU countries and integration of Syrian Armenian refugees and other displaced persons, on the other hand contribute to the protection of the

rights of Armenian labour migrants in Russia as well as to the improvement of the National Migration policy through different programmes.

**Tornike Metreveli: *Forgotten by Many and Remembered by Few: Religious Responses to Forced Migration in Georgia***

Georgia has witnessed a series of forced displacements since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The displacements were of ethnic character and an outcome of wars. As a result, Georgia has a population of 273,411 internally displaced persons (IDP) from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This paper will look at the two largest volumes of forced displacement of the Georgian population from Abkhazia and South Ossetia and examine how three major religious institutions in Georgia – Georgia Orthodox Church, the Islamic community and Armenian Apostolic Church responded to it. The paper will employ situational analysis as a method of data gathering in order to triangulate between discourse, policy, historical and legal analysis. By showing divergent and at times counterintuitive responses of the three religious organizations to the forced displacement of the Georgian population, the paper will propose three possible explanations.

**Ekaterine Chitanava: *Anti-Migrant Narratives among Georgian Ultranationalist Groups***

Recently strengthened ultranationalist groups in Georgia particularly target migrants from Africa and Asia. The group of actors at first glance is homogeneous, but if we examine more closely, it is quite diverse. While zooming out, they still gather around the same values and the ways of articulation of their protest are similar – verbal and physical violence. They request that the State ban the sale of land to non-Georgians; prohibit foreigners settling in Georgia; they request the government to outlaw NGOs and some international organizations, as traitors of the nation; they fight against freedom of expression, nightclubs, art, literature and films. The targets change according to the current political, social and cultural context. The frontline of this conflict is a public space which embodies political power and cultural hegemony. Some individuals and organizations also use the Georgian Orthodox Church for the legitimacy. At the same time, their ideas often accord with the policies of the Russian government, creating strongholds of soft power. Mainly in the fight against liberal values, modernism, democracy and the concept of human rights some groups use distorted narratives of Georgian traditions and symbols to prove the West is undermining authentic Georgian identity. At the same time, others align themselves with the populist and far-right groups in Europe to buttress their arguments about the threat coming from Islam and so-called migrant crisis.

**Roman Lunkin: *The Paths of the Christian Migration in Russia: Migration as Reformation***

Russian territory is unique example of the country where the changes of the cultural atmosphere and religious consciousness of the society depended more from the migration than from the inside natural changes. There were waves of the Christian migration from outside as at the Lutherans that became the part of the Russian society in the XVIth century or the evangelical groups from Germany that invaded Russia from the end of the XVIIIth century. The emigration became a part of Russian life from the beginning of the XXth century when Russian evangelical sects and Old believers emigrated to Canada and Latin America, later believers emigrated to the USA until late 1980s. The third type of the migration was deportations of the Christians, Jews, some nations to the Central Asia in the middle of the XXth century. The main questions – why it was and is so in the land of Orthodoxy and what is the consequence of that process? The answer lays in the understanding of the nature of Russian state and Orthodox faith that held monopoly on truth and souls of the people on that territory and have to represent to Russian citizens all images of Christianity that were lost in the past and that Russia continue to lose.

**Dmytro Vovk: *Peaceful Solution of the Conflict in Donbas from the Perspective of Ukrainian Churches***

In my paper I will investigate how Ukrainian Christian churches address the conflict in Donbas. I will demonstrate what they consider to be causes of the conflict and how it should be resolved. In particular,

I will analyze approaches to the nature of the conflict offered by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is supposed to be politically pro-Russian religion, and the new Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which are considered to be politically pro-Ukrainian. Also, I will examine Ukrainian churches' and the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations official sources, statements, addresses and activities, both abroad and within the country, in order to show their peaceful initiatives in Donbas with emphasis on the problem of forcibly displaced persons. Several cases of priests and religious communities forced to leave the territory of the so-called DPR/LPR will be also investigated.