

Editorial Advisory Committee:

Eunice Barbara C. Novio, Philippines/Thailand
Hisako Kinukawa, Japan
Limatula Longkumer, India

Subscription Rates for one Calendar Year:

US \$60.00
(Europe and North America)
US \$55.00
(Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Africa and South America)
US \$40.00
(Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Japan)
US \$17.00
(Other Asian countries, the Pacific Islands, and the Middle East)

For all other information regarding *iGi*, please email service.igiawrc@gmail.com or awrccordinator@gmail.com

Website: www.awrc4ct.org

As a matter of policy, *AWRC/iGi* respects our contributors'/writers' use of English, provided it is proper and acceptable in Asia and worldwide. From henceforth footnotes and references quoting *iGi* will use the form "*in God's image*" and not "*In God's Image*."

Copyright © 2020 by AWRC

About the Cover

Orchid Dance of Elegance, Friendship and Sexuality by Ruby Amarsharan Wong. Orchid, coupled with her exotic appearance, has given her a long history of being associated with love, sexuality and elegance throughout various cultures and time. Orchid dance, women of different age and ability moving in friendship, symbolizes artistic splendor alive in them.

Published by

Asian Women's Resource Centre
for Culture and Theology
7F-1, No. 75,
Hua-Fu St., North Dist.,
Taichung 40453, TAIWAN

Contents

Asian Women's Theological Musings

- 1 Editorial *Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon*
4 Asian Women Doing Theology
Limatula Longkumer
13 Babaylan and Binukot *Kristine Meneses*
23 Be Awake to Reconcile *Sawako Fujimara*
40 In Memory of Her *Ming-Yu Lee*
47 On Generational Cycles *Wang Junmey*
48 Go After the Abandoned Sheep *Pearl Wong*
59 Challenging Dangerous Discourses
Hope S. Antone
65 Spirituality Wellness as a Strength *Yu-Fen Lin*
72 A Woman's Honor is in Her Shame *Melanie Yong*
80 My First Meeting of the AWRC *Ya-Yun Cheng*
86 On Hospitality and Spirituality...
Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro

Theological Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 95 Remembering Rebekah *Sayuri Watanabe*
104 John 12:1-8— Reflections
Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon
113 Rumbblings Thoughts in the Midst of Covid-19
Darlene Marquez-Caramanzana
116 "Lord if you had been here..."
Hope S. Antone
120 Behind Locked Doors... There is Hope
Claudia Genung Yamamoto

Reflections on Biblical Texts

- 125 The Reading Lens of the Malaysian Chinese Christian
Chow-Ping Lee
129 The Subtle Oppression of the "Sons Preferred" Cultural Value
Amy Shum
138 Say No to Divine Violence *Christina Wong*
143 Luke 7:36-50 Unnamed Woman Weeping.
Chin-Chun Lai
146 Womenet *Hsiu-Yin*

Printed by

Taiwan Church Press
No. 334, Qingnian Rd., East Dist.,
Tainan 70144, TAIWAN



Feminism, Faith, and Theology : Reflections

Asia is huge and a complex matrix and there are stark differences between our countries, our cultures, religions, languages, social hierarchies, and political economies. If we view our region solely through the lens of patriarchy it certainly helps us to see the similarities between us as Asian women, but the emergent picture is often superficial, indistinct, and blurry. If we were to use the lens of culture, religion, and politics (both secular and ecclesial) and their contemporary ferment, however, the picture might be more focused and nuanced, and as details emerge both expected and unexpected. The similarities that exist between women of Asia do not disappear when we adopt this approach but will become balanced and in parts of the picture, overwhelmed by the differences. This region of the world remains largely traditionalist and patriarchal, and progress to protect ordinary women has been sorely lacking with alarming statistics of violence against women coming out of some countries. Patriarchal dictates are evident in the importance given to the male, his name, his lineage and his honor, all preserved at the expense of the woman's body, her resources and her very life. Patriarchal culture has distanced a woman from herself by the internalization of oppression and guilt and the repression of anger and hatred. It has turned woman against herself, her daughters, her daughters-in-law, her sisters, her mother and her mother-in-law.¹ Widespread violence, conflict (ethnicity, language, ideology, religion) political instability, militarism, climate change, natural disasters (drought, floods, earthquakes), poverty, disease, sex trafficking and the overarching impacts of colonization and globalization in many Asian countries are palpable, with devastating effects on women, in particular, uniting them in a shared experience of oppression, struggle, and violence.

Theologizing by women in this region must attend to this context if their theology is to be identified as Asian, although what constitutes 'Asia' or 'Asian' is still a contested issue, one that I hesitate to address here. Asian women have still a fair bit to do in attending to the many facets of women's lives, in the exploration of our histories, our religious and cultural resources and the strands of resistance to women's oppression among our foremothers, to name a few,

1. EATWOT Women's Commission, EATWOT Asian Women's Consultation, *Spirituality for Life: Women Struggling against Violence* (Philippines: EATWOT, 1994), 20.

and bringing them into conversation with our inherited Christian theologies and scriptural interpretations. And yet, we can confidently declare that Asian feminist theologizing has today emerged as a fully conscious movement in several parts of Asia, and the number of those who identify themselves as its spokespersons is on the rise with more and more women becoming conscious of their own experiences of subjugation brought on by exposure to the media and feminist attempts in their own locales (within and outside of the church) that have sought to conscientize women. Issues of sexuality and sexual orientation are on board and being addressed albeit gently. Women have utilized the gains of both the secular women's movement in Asia and Western feminist scholarship and are attempting to delve into their very own cultural resources to analyze gender discrimination and injustice within our communities. They have articulated the need for a woman's/feminist approach and perspective that challenges patriarchy and sexism within the society, the church, and interpretations of church tradition.

Asian women's theology occurs in the daily, urgent, sometimes desperate exploration, reassessment, and recreation of meaning which women are continually making in their lives through critical reflection, evaluation, reconstruction, and appropriation of their scriptural, and confessional heritage. The year 2020 will perhaps stand out in the memory of all who survive this COVID pandemic, the likes of which has not been witnessed in a hundred years. The scale of the crisis and its impact on people's lives is immeasurable causing fear, and anxiety across the globe. Besides the stress on mental health, the pandemic has exposed and widened deep inequalities, the growing and extreme poverty; it has weakened social cohesion and expressions of social discontent. The crisis has affected women and impacted their lives in unique ways. The experience of COVID has been a fertile context for reflection and theologizing.

When the call for submissions to this issue went out, COVID-19 was not yet on the scene but by the time the deadline approached, it was at its height and at the forefront of women's thinking and reflecting and hence, many in this issue have chosen to address it either directly or indirectly revealing sensitivity to this unprecedented context. With the help of the best knowledge available to them from all sources—experience (individual and communal), faith, culture, and creation, the contributors to this issue have chosen to address and reflect on topics related to women's lives (the feminist movement, women's leadership within the academy, indigenous feminism, mental health, female sexuality and sexual orientation, aging, spirituality). They have also offered reflections on biblical texts read, and sermons delivered, in the context of COVID-19, while others have raised questions about current approaches to reading the bible, the preference for the male child as a cultural value and its impact on the girl child, and the violence experienced by women and within movements for liberation and change (Hong Kong). Some of the contributors have chosen to reflect from the context of their own personal experience and struggles as women in a patriarchal world, while others have adopted a more academic perspective. Still others mix the two, all suggesting that feminist theologizing is not seen as an academic phenomenon. While some are rooted in their faith others are more

cautious and critical of the faith that they have inherited...a good sign in my opinion, since critique is an essential component for change. It is also indicative of the fact that women are overcoming their fears and are thirsty for and committed to transforming their lives and that of others.

The *iGi* has been a crucial platform for fostering and promoting Asian feminist theologies, and for encouraging Asian women to articulate, reflect and share their stories and faith in a variety of creative ways with the wider world and to empower women in Asia. The cover page painted by Ruby Wong is in my opinion an expression of the beauty, the vulnerability, the diversity of Asian women and their attempts at theologizing. Like orchids, Asian women are seeking the right environment/world/climate/care in which they might grow, flourish, and theologize in order to bring the type of joy and goodness that orchids bring, to their communities. I am grateful to the AWRC for giving me this opportunity to guest edit this issue and I am thankful for the help rendered by dear friend, colleague, and fellow feminist Yong Ting Jin in receiving these submissions and taking care of the preliminaries.

Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon
Guest Editor

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Editorial Advisory Committee of the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology (AWRC), I would like to thank Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, the guest editor of this single issue, for a job so wonderfully done.

Even though being a very busy biblical scholar, upon hearing the need of *iGi*, she agreed to take on this tedious editing work without any hesitation – thank you! Meanwhile, much appreciation goes to Yong Ting Jin, our forever respectful coordinator, for her very well done task coordinating with most of the writers.

We wish each of you a more secure new year 2021 while being blessed to read the articles and find them very enlightening and inspiring.

Chan Hsiu-Yin (Showin)
AWRC Coordinator