

A Good Place to Live in –

Analysis of the Delivery of Hospitality towards Refugees and Asylum Seekers in

Hong Kong Using the Host-Guest Paradigm

THEO 5966 Theology and Hong Kong Society

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As of March 2023, there have been more than 27,000 cases of torture/non-refoulement claims received by the Hong Kong Immigration Department from asylum seekers since the launch of the enhanced administrative mechanism (late 2009), of which 302 cases were substantiated (Immigration Department, 2023). The issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, including their plights and assistance for them, have received more and more attention. This paper is concerned with examining the life of the refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong and our relationship with them through the perspective of hospitality. When it comes to hospitality, the host-guest paradigm is usually employed to frame the dynamics between the local people who are regarded as the hosts, and the refugees and asylum seekers as the guests. Conceivably, it is the former, who are more resourceful and capable of giving, to extend a helping hand to the guests, that is, refugees who are in dire need of different kinds of support for living. While this seemingly unidirectional host-guest relationship, or giver-receiver relationship, would offer us some insights into the issue against the backdrop of Hong Kong, one question of interest is whether it is sufficient to understand and reflect our relationship with the refugees and the asylum seekers, and the way they are leading their lives, and ideally speaking, to better the lives here both in terms of their material, psychological and spiritual well-being.

Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong

Though Hong Kong is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees, which provides the internationally recognized definition of refugees, and stipulates the rights of refugees to protection and the legal obligation of states to offer that protection (UNCHR, 2011), the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (UN(CAT)) has been extended to Hong Kong in 1992. This means that individuals can lodge claims related to torture or non-refoulement under the UN(CAT), and the Hong Kong government has an obligation to assess any such claims made under the 1992 convention carefully (Vecchio, 2015). Non-refoulement is the core principle underlying the UN(CAT), and previously, there were two separate mechanisms for screening non-refoulement cases in Hong Kong – one for asylum seekers under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention handled by The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and another for torture claimants under UNCAT handed by the Hong Kong Immigration Department. However, in March 2014, the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) was put in place with the Hong Kong Immigration Department in charge of assessing all non-refoulement claims. Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. Such a person may be considered a “non-refoulement claimant” or an “asylum seeker” until their application for refugee status has been approved. In the past decades, less than 10 percent of those applicants were finally granted the status of refugees (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 124). Furthermore, the determination process of refugee status and torture claim can take so long for years. Even

if they attain the refugee status, they may have to wait for long to be resettled in the recipient country.

These refugees and asylum seekers usually arrived in the city as individuals unlike what we saw in the past, most of them coming from South or Southeast Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines and from Africa as well (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 119). Due to our comparatively open border and less restrictive visa policy, Hong Kong became a potential destination for asylum seekers (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 118).

Asylum seekers in Hong Kong are provided with subsidies and in-kind assistance by the International Social Service (ISS), a subcontractor for the Social Welfare Department since 2006. These subsidies encompass a housing allowance (HKD\$1500 directly transferred to the landlord), HKD\$1200 pre-paid supermarket voucher, and other allowances for utilities and transportation; in-kind emergency food, one-off medical waiver and publicly-funded legal aid are also available. In addition, children can attend the primary and secondary school on a discretionary basis with tuition waiver or the full-time Initiation Program for non-Chinese speaking new arrival children (International Social Service - Hong Kong Branch, 2019). It is said that the level of assistance was carefully set so as to not incentivize more asylum seekers to come to the city (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 122). However, these subsidies are far from sufficient given the exorbitantly high cost of living in Hong Kong. Added to their plight is that they have no legal right to work, irrespective of the application result of their non-refoulement

claim, as the claimants are not permitted to remain legally in Hong Kong. Even though those claimants whose refugee status is substantiated can apply for a six-month work permit, it is granted on a case-by-case basis upon the approval of the Immigration Department, and currently only fewer than half of the refugees attain it (Melwani, 2022).

Refugees and asylum seekers would turn to seek assistance from charitable and religious groups, including Christian Action, Society for Community Organization, International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch (ISS-HK), Hong Kong Justice Centre, and Refugee Concern Network as well as the legal sector (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 126). For example, Christian Action Centre for Refugees, the first service centre of its sort, offers to the refugees and the asylum seekers hot meals, clothing, emergency shelter, counselling and mental health care, educational subsidies and classes. On the other hand, some of them go to English-speaking international churches like Kowloon Union Church and the Vine Church which are committed to serving migrants, and a few Chinese churches like Tsing Yi Chuen Yuen Church and the Church of St. John the Baptist also offer programs and in-kind assistance for them (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, pp. 138-154). Friendship and pastoral care are pivotal to them (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 140). Recent research has shown that social bond is very significant to the life adjustment process and NGOs present a platform to establish social links, social bridges and social bonds (Lam, 2021). As for legal assistance, the law firm Barnes & Daly Solicitors was engaged in lots of cases representing non-refoulement claimants pro bono in Hong Kong's courts (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, pp. 131-135). It is pleasing to notice the recent support from the

Community Chest for the refugee work. However, concerns have been raised whether Hong Kong would have compassion fatigue and continue its commitment to caring about refugees in the future (Chan & Wickeri, 2017).

Studies of Hospitalities

After taking a glimpse of current situations of the refugees and the asylum seekers in Hong Kong, this section will examine the extant studies on hospitality.

One prominent theory about hospitality is concerned with the two kind of hospitalities proposed by Derrida (O'Gorman, 2006). Recognizing hospitality as a window to hope, he defined it as the act of inviting and welcoming the "stranger" or the foreigner, which is realized at different levels, including the individual level where the stranger is welcomed into one's home, and on the level of individual countries welcoming foreigners into their borders (O'Gorman, 2006, p. 51). He also distinguishes between unconditional hospitality and conditional hospitality. The former involves extending welcome to the absolute, unknown, anonymous stranger without imposing any conditions, limitations or reciprocity, and requires radical acceptance of their difference and their otherness (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 25). Put it to an extreme, one has to accept it even if the guests take away from you the right of mastery of your space, home and nation (Derrida, 1999, p. 71). According to Derrida, unconditional hospitality is an impossible ideal that can never be fully accomplished in practice and the consequence can be

unbearable (Derrida, 1999, p. 71); but it remains an important ethical and political goal that motivates people to pursue virtues of hospitableness (O'Gorman, 2006, p. 51).

Conditional hospitality, on the other hand, suggests embracing the stranger under certain conditions or limitations. The stranger must fulfil a priori criteria of guests or outsiders, which may include norms, values, or expectations, in order to be accepted. Hospitality is not given to unknown and anonymous guests (O'Gorman, 2006, p. 52). Derrida argues that conditional hospitality occurs in the shadow of the impossible, ideal, unconditional hospitality. On the other hand, he was also aware that it can easily be employed to justify the exclusion of those who do not fulfil a priori the norms. As he observed, people may fail to show hospitality to the others even when they have some good intentions (O'Gorman, 2006, p.52).

The distinction between unconditional and conditional hospitality virtually reveals the conflicting nature of the concepts themselves. On the one hand, unconditional hospitality challenges the exclusive boundedness of communities by championing for their expansion to embrace strangers; on the other hand, conditional hospitality reinforces political communities by acknowledging their power to decide whether or not to welcome strangers (Friese, 2009). While hospitality is viewed as an intrinsic, ethical imperative by Derrida (Kakoliris, 2015), it is also regarded as a right, of which strangers are entitled not to be treated in a hostile manner when he or she arrives upon the other nations' borders (Kant et al., 2006, p. 82).

A substantial body of research studies on forced migration has demonstrated that hospitality is always conditional and exhibits a hierarchical structure which begets the conception of the strangers and guests tinted with local hostilities and racism (Kyriakidou, 2021, p. 135). Hospitality, as extended by governments and NGOs, is imbued with the conventional, hierarchical power relations that reinforces the state authority, as aforementioned, and that further reaffirm the status of alterity of refugees (Kyriakidou, 2021, p. 135). While those strangers may be considered cultural, ethnic, racial and religious others (Swamy, 2017, p. 336), they would still be received in the host countries given that they can meet with criteria for hospitality, and for being the worthy guests, but at the cost of being deprived of their own agency (Rozakou, 2012). In a word, hospitality is predicated upon how both hospitality and deserving guests are perceived.

Besides being reflected on our individual and national acts of giving to the strangers, extent of hospitality can also be sensed in media. Current studies on the media coverage on the refugee problems has unraveled how refugees are depicted and hospitality is generally presented in mass media. It is found that in the European media, normative sense of media hospitality towards the refugees remains elusive. While it is maintained that media institutions are morally obliged to be open to the discourse of distant others and to welcome them in the public space of media (Silverstone, 2007, p. 139), refugee voices have been largely ignored in media coverage. Instead, reinforcing the primacy of national borders and sovereignty of the hosting countries, the media tend to de-humanize the strangers, portraying them either as helpless victims of international politics, wars, smugglers or as a security threat to societies or even criminals (Chouliaraki &

Zaborowski, 2017), without any political presence. Consequently, the coverage of refugees' voice remains meagre in European media. In the same vein, research studies in news framing in Hong Kong has yielded similar results, showing that most of local Chinese news articles depicted asylum seekers as fake refugees and criminals, and tended to frame the issue as social ill, and suggest restrictive recommendations to deal with the problems including establishment of the detention camps and withdrawal of the UN(CAT) (Ng et al., 2019). The newspapers even mixed up illegal immigrants, asylum seekers with refugees, and added racial labeling towards them (Ng et al., 2019, p. 610). This may sap the readers' empathy and induce more anger towards the refugees and asylum seekers, and may finally lead to tougher immigration policies (Ng et al., 2019, p. 612). A subsequent study on the online media found the resistance against the above-mentioned news framing of the refugee issues, and demonstrated that online media tended to focus on the humanitarian issues rather than the alleged criminal offences of the refugees and asylum seekers (Ng et al., 2021). This may be partially due to the media owners and the comparatively more independent operations of online media (Ng et al., 2021, pp. 12-13)

Furthermore, media coverage of refugees is one of the pivotal factors leading to the construction of a hierarchy of deservingness of hospitality, which is in turn based on a hierarchy of causes for leaving the homeland. To wit, the media narratives portraying the victimhood of refugees, whether it be war victims, or people of absolute poverty which receive more legitimacy, or people of economic desperation which yield lower acceptance, would be closely linked to the consequent perception of the worthiness of

hospitality (Kyriakidou, 2021, p. 139). In other words, the host-guest relationship in the delivery of hospitality is moderated by this mass media factor.

Theology of Migration and Hospitality

Hospitality to the refugees and the asylum seekers is of paramount importance, as explained above. This could be understood more broadly as part of the theology in response to the refugee crisis around the world. In fact, migration is the central, inseparable part in the biblical world, from Adam and Eve being moved out of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23-34), exodus of ancient Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus, Chapter 1-18), to moving to the new heaven and new earth for whoever believes in Him (Revelation 21:1-4), with all these occurrences witnessing the presence God's divine being, His grace and salvation. Migration itself can be a theologizing experience (Swamy, 2017, p. 338). Encouragingly there is rising attention towards doing theology in response to the issues of refugees (Groody, 2022; Padilla & Phan, 2013; Swamy, 2017). A theology of migration is not a new realm of theology; instead it is to understand our Christian faith from the perspective of migration which is even more prevalent nowadays. Groody (2009) lays down four founding principles for the theology of migration, namely, *Imago Dei*: crossing the problem-person divide, *Verbum Dei*: crossing the divine-human divide, *Missio Dei*: crossing the human-human divide and *Visio Dei*: crossing the country-kingdom divide. In brief, theologizing of migration should be grounded on the image of God – all human beings are created in the image of God. This provides a starting point for the public discourse on migration (Groody, 2009, p. 644). By so doing, we should defy the labelling of the strangers. With this basis, theologizing of migration

can make reference to incarnation of Jesus Christ through taking on human flesh, which can be understood as a border-crossing event. Jesus enters into the sinful, broken human world to save us the sinners and help us migrate back to His home. Coupled with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, this analogy shows us, those who receive His grace and salvation, a model of self-giving to act in response to the needs of migrants (Groody, 2009, p. 652). Moreover, theologizing of migration should transcend limits of any human constructions that hinder Jesus' work of reconciliation, including nation, religion and any ideology (Groody, 2009, pp. 653-654). This aligns with Jesus' numerous attempts of reaching out and showing his gratuitous friendship to the Gentiles and other marginalized and despised groups like tax collectors and prostitutes, beyond contemporary borders and boundaries demarcated by humans as documented in the Gospels (Langmead, 2014, p. 175). Lastly, theologizing of migration should set the sights and advocate the ultimate obedience to the Kingdom of God. This brings in a novel vision of human life and identity which is defined with close relevance to spiritual expanse of His Kingdom beyond the existing national, racial, politico-social and ideological territories (Groody, 2009, p. 663).

Concordantly, Langmead (2014, pp. 176-177) put forward that extending hospitality to strangers and sharing with them hospitable friendship is an expression of Christian mission in response to our own experience of God's overflowing hospitality to welcome us to His home. Thus, in this sense, mission can be understood as a kind of spiritual welcoming, in addition to the widely-known material welcoming.

The above-mentioned theology of migration or hospitality helps provide theological framework for Christian public engagement to reflect on receiving strangers, and offer protection and assistance to refugees, which may have backwash effect on the theological underpinnings (Swamy, 2017, p. 337). This notion aligns with the methodology of liberation theology in the sense that it helps bring the human suffering and God amidst this suffering to the center of theology reflection (Swamy, 2017, p. 338).

Doing theology of migration and hospitality is also significant for interfaith dialogue, given the fact that most refugees are religious (Langmead, 2014, p. 183). As Moltmann suggested, certain preconditions and cultural forces, or *kairos* moment, can facilitate interfaith dialogue. In fact, the migration crisis around the world can be taken as the *kairos* moment for Christians, Muslims and other faith communities to join hands to address the socio-political, theological and humanitarian challenges arising from the crisis (Ralston, 2017, pp. 25-26). It could be a constructive exercise to develop a Christian-Muslim-secular framework for public engagement that hails openness, dialogues and collaborative actions (Ralston, 2017, p. 26). Through creative and living witnesses to God which are deep-rooted in both Christian and Muslim traditions, it is said that both religions can come together to place the confidence and trust in the power of God, and hence bring hope among us, instead of defending their own superiority or religious power (Ralston, 2017, p. 32). It is suggested that the church reaches out proactively to both Christian and non-Christian refugees to listen and learn with respect using a dialogical approach, not only about their daily life, but also their faith experience

(Langmead, 2014, p. 183; Ralston, 2017). This kind of exchange is particularly useful where power difference exists between the hosts and the guests.

Host-Guest Paradigm in Delivery of Hospitality

The above discussion has seen the assistance provided by the government and non-government organizations for the refugees and the asylum seekers in Hong Kong. Under the host-guest paradigm, Hong Kong can be taken as the host, who takes her own share of responsibilities for the sustenance of the guests, that is, the migrants. In this section, we will first review the issue employing this paradigm in relation to the Christian faith, and see if this paradigm with these two seemingly fixed roles is sufficient for us to grasp the thorough understanding of the current situation.

By the principle of Christian hospitality, the hosts should show intentional and caring gesture to welcome the others including guests, strangers, and those in desperation, and even create a safe and comfortable space for the others (Langmead, 2014, pp. 176-177). As aforementioned, different government measures are implemented to help the refugees and the asylum seekers sustain their living here, which exemplifies some responsibilities shouldered by the host. But all along the stance of the government on the refugee issue is very unequivocal, as seen in the written reply by the then Secretary for Security Mr. John Lee concerning the inquiry about the non-refoulement claim in the Legislative Council (HKSAR Government, 2020): “The United Nations’ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol have never applied to Hong Kong, and hence illegal

immigrants seeking non-refoulement in Hong Kong will not be treated as ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘refugees’. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government maintains a firm policy of not granting asylum and not determining or recognizing refugee status of any person.” Instead, “non-refoulement claimants are illegal immigrants, overstayers or persons who were refused entry upon arrival in Hong Kong. They do not have any legal status to remain in Hong Kong” (HKSAR Government, 2020). In 2016, the Chief Executive even suggested quitting unilaterally the UN(CAT) in order to address the problem of fake refugees abusing the screening system (Ngo & Leung, 2016). This is added to some suggestions from some legislative councilors for restricting the refugee policy like establishing detention camps (Cheung, 2016; Leung et al., 2016). Taken together, albeit the government’s supportive measures for the refugees and the asylum seekers, they are not officially recognized. If the government is playing the role of host, it could be said to be done as a duty, rather than as a welcoming gesture.

Against this backdrop, it is understandable the government tends to give minimal support for the refugees and the asylum seekers, which is undeniably far from enough for them to make ends meet. Despite the difficulty in completely realizing the above ideal of Christian hospitality or Derrida’s notion of unconditional hospitality, we, as the host, can further explore in what way we can aid this marginalised group, if not held up to the standard of “show[ing] intentional and caring gesture to welcome the others”.

Understanding that any increase in the handouts may risk drawing in more asylum seekers, certain extent of adjustment in subsidies and a wider coverage of the in-kind assistance in line with the rising cost of living should be considered given the inflation in

the past few years. As a matter of fact, the financial subsidies for them have not been revised since 2014; and the current assistance for children does not fully cover the expense for stationery, textbooks, school supplies and activities. As for the employment issue, it is complicated because of the legal status of the refugee and the asylum seekers, as well as the concern for the impact on the job market if they are allowed to join the workforce. There have already been reports of illegal working in Hong Kong, even involving illicit trade; some of them did that out of desperation, or as they claimed, a means for survival given no other legal options; and they are very often targeted by organized crime in the city (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 127; Melwani, 2022). However, there is opinion arguing that refugees and asylum seekers who work illegally tend to take up some high-risk, irregular and low-paid jobs that local people do not like, and hence this actually is advantageous to the city (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 128). In a survey conducted in 2018, the right to work is one of the top measures respondents chose to address the issues of refugees and asylum (Ng, 2020, p. 329). Thus it is suggested that a more positive and practical approach can be adopted to treat them as an asset rather than a problem (Ng, 2020, p. 329). If they are allowed to work like in some European countries, it will conceivably help ease their financial woes and improve their well-being. Definitely this issue warrants caution, but the government may first consider relaxing the restrictions for those whose refugee status is substantiated to work on a discretionary basis.

Besides the government measures, it is encouraging to see more and more NGOs and churches, playing the role of a host and participating in the service and ministry of

refugees and asylum seekers. They are in an apt position to extend intentional and caring welcome to the migrants, which can be complementary to the regulatory role of the government and fill in the gap in the delivery of hospitality. In particular, churches should be ready to be the hosts and take greater initiatives to show hospitality to these strangers in society without reciprocity, as it is an expression of the Christian mission and faith in response to the salvation bestowed upon us by God. As said above, God's plan of salvation very often involves migration, and even Jesus has experienced the life as a refugee, thus migrants should be of His great concern. In fact, the Hebrew word for salvation, *yasha*, is associated with the meaning of being liberated, saved, and set free into a spacious place from a constricted one (Langmead, 2014, p. 177). Given the significance of delivery of Christian hospitality and Jesus' teaching that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew, 25:40), local churches should take a bigger role in offering care and support to the migrants. Most of the churches involved in the ministry of refugees, as seen above, are mostly international churches; the local Chinese churches' participation is meagre, perhaps because of their overriding conception of evangelism being confined by the national, social or religious territories. In this respect, the four founding principles for theology of migration, posited by Groody (2009), may give the churches some insights that serving the migrants as guests who are likewise created in the image of God is also a mission commissioned by God, and Jesus' incarnation provides us a role model of sacrificial giving. On the other hand, some local charitable foundations only fund programs of which the beneficiaries are Hong Kong residents (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, pp. 161-162). This limits the financial sources for the local NGOs serving the refugees and the asylum seekers. To provide more

comprehensive support for them, it is hoped that more charity groups and foundations consider targeting at them as their beneficiaries. In a word, the NGOs and the churches are playing a significant hosting role to help the migrants sustain their living in the city and to be accepted and included into the community, though more can be done to meet the needs.

While there seems to be no communal bigotry, hatred or xenophobia towards the refugees and the asylum seekers, it has been unveiled in our discussion above that there is some public opinion against the abuse of the fake refugees on the screening mechanism and worry about their threat to public security (Cheung, 2016; Ngo & Leung, 2016). Also some local news media tend to portray the refugees and the asylum seekers in a negative frame, potentially leading to misinformation, misunderstanding, bias and even restriction of the refugee policy (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 128; Ng et al., 2019). This negative attitude and action against the migrants is consistent with the notion of traditional Chinese that hospitality is not essentially present in the host-guest relationship; instead, it is only offered exclusively to guests or friends but not strangers (Chen, 2018, p. 509). This is in contrast with the western view that hospitality is given to both guests and strangers, being a fundamental principle to human existence and reflecting the cultural values of societies (Chen, 2018, p. 59). Obviously, for those who hold an unwelcoming view of refugees, they may take them solely as strangers and may not extend gestures of hospitality to them.

What is seen above is the illustration of the host-guest relationship in the delivery of hospitality, with most of the examples showing the unidirectional delivery of benefits from the beneficiaries or the hosts to the benefactors or the guests. However, it is noticed that this fixed-role framework may not be sufficient to fully cover the multifaceted interaction dynamic between the local people and the refugees/asylum seekers. In fact, the roles of host and guest may be changing in different contexts; they are not fixed. The migrants are not only guests or passive recipients of handouts; they can also serve as hosts who can give back to the community. The following discussion will demonstrate that by referring to several examples.

First, there are emerging endeavors made by the refugees and the asylum seekers who try to open themselves to reach out to the local people. In the same vein, many local people are also willing to learn more about other ethnic groups, as shown in the survey in 2018 (80% of the respondents expressed their eagerness to do so) (Ng, 2020, p. 329). Recently some refugees and asylum seekers have created a website called "Seeking Refuge" which is aimed at improving communication and raising public awareness about their situations. The website offered a platform for them to share their stories and for the general public to learn about their lives. Despite a few posts on the website, it demonstrates their attempt to connect with the wider Hong Kong community through social media (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 128). Furthermore, Christian Action Center for Refugees organize programs which offer such platforms for them to communicate with the locals, for example, interactive workshops on refugee issues, Chungking Mansions tour, refugee walk, awareness and advocacy campaign and the human library. Through these activities,

refugees and asylum seekers are empowered to share with the audience at first hand about who they are, why they flee from their homes, their struggles and their neighborhood. In particular, the program called the human library, which originates from Denmark, enables the vulnerable refugees to speak out for themselves and to the audience about their experience of injustice, stigma, stereotype and prejudices, and hence raise public awareness towards the issues (Christian Action Center for Refugees, 2019). They portray themselves as a book for the audience to read in a judgment-free space, just echoing the saying “don’t judge a book by its cover”. Taken together, refugees and asylum seekers can also play the role of the host, showing their willingness and readiness to share with us their life stories.

Second, the aforementioned employment issue frustrating the refugees and the asylum seekers actually reflect their eagerness to adapt themselves to the city, connect with the local people and contribute to society in general. Definitely, this also gives them more meaning of life and a means for survival and supporting their families. In fact, many refugees are well-educated professionals and high-skilled workers like lawyers, doctors, engineers and plumbers (Melwani, 2022). These talents are wasted under the current immigration policy. Whatsoever, though not every one of them can have the privilege to work legally here, they are not satisfied with simply being a guest receiving the handouts; and if they are granted a work permit, they are willing to stand on their feet. On the other hand, for those working illegally, they are struggling with this role of host to earn a meagre living, though it is unlawful.

Third, the interaction between the refugees/asylum seekers and their churchmates also witnesses the shifting host-guest relationship. For example, those joining the Kowloon Union Church are found to serve the church in various capacities, like forming a choir, serving as worship leaders, Sunday school teachers and church council members (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 140). While receiving greater acceptance from the congregation, they join the peacemaking program organized by the church as the “Ambassador of Peace” to reach out and visit local schools, churches, charity organization and community centers. They are encouraged and empowered to share their talents, skills and culture with the audience, for example, games, drumming lessons and French classes. And most importantly, they will host gatherings for those people whom they visited and receive them at church – their home (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, pp. 141-142). By doing so, they can recognize their own gifts from God, see that they can also give to the others and integrate with the local communities. They are not necessarily the “others” that are to be served and granted with all kind of assistance; they can actively bless the others with their gifts and talents. Another telling example is a Nepalese refugee who once attended the Vine Church and converted to Jesus there. He brought a lot of his compatriots to church, and later on after he resettled in the United States, he has been doing his evangelistic ministry among refugees there. So it exemplifies how a person who once sought a refuge shifted his role from the guest to the host.

Another case in point showing the changing host-guest relationship is the rising number of marriages between male asylum seekers and Hong Kong Chinese women (Chan &

Wickeri, 2017, p. 128). Though this accounts for just a very small portion, it shows more people are willing to show acceptance for them to be the members of society.

In fact, the reversal of host-guest relationship has also been seen in different places facing refugee crisis. For example, the war between Israel and Hizbullah displaced 10,000 Lebanese citizens which received shelter and hospitality by Palestinian refugees in the camps of southern Lebanon. In this way, the Palestinian guests became the hosts to the people of their hosting country (Ramadan, 2008). This even led to rebuilding of the relationship between Palestinian refugees and their host.

All together the above examples have unveiled that while the host-guest paradigm can help us analyze the relationship between local people and the refugees/asylum seekers, the role taken up by these stakeholders is not fixed. Instead, it can be interchanged in different contexts. This brings some significance to our understanding of the underlying dynamic of our interaction with the refugees and the asylum seekers, and develop the ministry of hospitality as well as theology of migration. First, those who are beneficiaries can become benefactors coming back to share benefits with the others as seen above. This tunes down, if not eliminate, the conventional hierarchy and sense of superiority, out of resourcefulness, authority and power, existing in the relationship between the host/giver and the guest/receiver, because the role dynamic can be altered depending on the contexts. On the one hand, this in turn allows the refugees and the asylum seekers to realize and practice their own values and gifts, as well as uphold their identity and dignity against the plights they are experiencing; they need not be subject to the inferiority

complex as a stranger. On the other hand, the ones who used to be the hosts who give to the refugees and the asylum seekers can be the guests being served by them with their knowledge, skills, culture or simply their life experience. Without doubt, their experience can broaden our world view and even our faith experience which will be further elaborated. All these benefits lead to the second point to be made here. Given this significance of the changing host-guest dynamic, we should try to enable and empower the refugees and the asylum seekers to take the courage to be the hosts when developing the ministry of hospitality. Uni-directional supply of assistance is undoubtedly important to sustain their living, but what they also need is the acceptance from the community and inclusion into it (Chan & Wickeri, 2017, p. 146). This can be achieved by giving the platforms and resources that they need to take up the role of the host. Third, the interchanging nature of the host-guest relationship can give us some insights for doing the theology of migration. To wit, it can help counter the labelling effects on the refugees and the asylum seekers, and further prompt the hosts, especially Christians, to look for our commonalities with the guests when theologizing the experience of migration – we are all created in the image of God and we are all migrants in some sense. The former point has been elucidated above, which points to the starting point for public discourse on migration and how we should view those strangers among us. The latter refers to the analogy between the refugees/asylum seekers' journey of looking for a recipient country which can grant them a refuge, and Christians' spiritual journey to seek the salvation and refuge from God in His house. As Peter said, we are foreigners and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11), who are migrating to the heavenly home ultimately. Realizing these commonalities can help us refine the theology of migration which in turn can encourage

the churches to develop the mission as hospitality. In this way, strangers can become guests and then hosts (Langmead, 2014, p. 177).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the above discussion has briefly reviewed and evaluated the current situations of the refugees and the asylum seekers under the host-guest paradigm. Both the government, the NGOs and the churches are playing pivotal roles in showing hospitality towards the migrants. Whereas the former tends to give them minimal support and maintain strict refugee policy, the latter is more ready to extend warm welcome to them and contribute significantly in terms of enabling and empowering to develop themselves as the hosts. To show our genuine hospitality, we need to reach out to assist these guests, accept and embrace them into our community and be ready to be hosted by them.

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