



# CONSTRUCTING THE „ANTIOCH OF ASIA“

## CHRISTIANITY, MISSION PRACTICES AND THE STATE IN SINGAPORE

Matthias Deininger M.A. | Heidelberg University (Germany)

### SUMMARY

Over the last decades Singapore has become a prominent base for both international and homegrown Christian missionary organizations as well as a culturally-significant hub for Christianity in Southeast Asia. It is against this background that Singapore is commonly referred to as being the Christian 'Antioch of Asia'. The growing presence and visibility of evangelical Christianity in Singapore and, with its global missionary zeal of transforming the world through evangelism, however, challenge the very ideas of the urban public sphere and the 'secular' nature of the multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Singaporean polity. In an environment, where the government exercises strong bureaucratic and legal control over the functioning of all religious matters Christians are thus forced to creatively develop flexible strategies to negotiate their position within society and their relation to the Singapore state. Taking up the notion of the "global city", this project seeks to understand how Christians in Singapore re-engage the imaginary of Singapore as the Christian "Antioch of Asia" and how this self-understanding in turn is reflected and impacts Singaporean missionary practices and strategies. The aim is to analyze the ways Christians locate themselves within the nation as a rooted aspect of the national community without losing their evangelical and outward-oriented character.

Two lines of investigation are followed:

- Level one focuses on the historical trajectory of the „Antioch of Asia“ narrative.
- Level two analyses the concrete forms and enactments of this narrative, comprising three research fields: (1) mission outreach to other countries (2) Christian social engagement within Singapore (3) arenas of public moral discourses on sexuality and family values.

### OUTLINE

