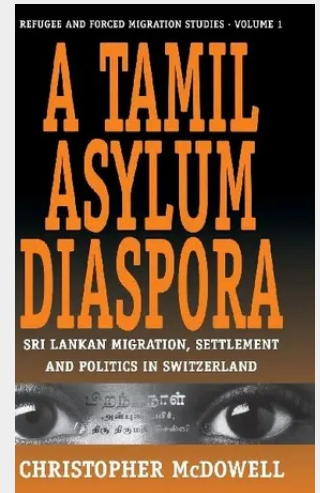


A Tamil Asylum Diaspora

Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland

During twelve years of ethno-nationalist secessionist violence in the north and east of Sri Lanka, insurrection in the south, and island-wide state repression, many Tamils were forced to seek political asylum overseas. At least 200,000 Tamils, primarily from the Jaffna Peninsula, have escaped to Europe of whom ca. 25,000 (the largest group relative to the population) have settled in Switzerland, the focus of this study. The author examines the conditions in Sri Lanka that led to the flight, the phases and technicalities of the emigration and resettlement in Switzerland. Based on anthropological fieldwork and on completely new archival material, the author not only looks at the development of the Tamil community in all its diversity but also at the impact of federal and cantonal policy and practice, at the economic situation and broader changes in Switzerland which led to demands for reforms to the country's asylum and immigration rules. In this respect, Switzerland set an example that other governments were soon to follow.

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