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## **Catholic Church-State Relations in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: A Review of 20 Years**

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### **Abstract**

The Catholic Church and the Hong Kong British Government formed warm relations when the Church became the contractor of the government to provide education and social and medical service. The British did not provide democracy to Hong Kong but allowed ample freedom including religious freedom which the Hong Kong Catholics would like to protect in the post-colonial period under the Communist Party rule. For religious freedom, right after Hong Kong became the Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the Hong Kong Catholic Church under the prophetic and vocal leadership of Bishop Joseph Zen, became very active in political participation. Zen's leadership was short-lived (1996-2009) and the soft-spoken Bishop John Tong replaced him with a different approach of consolidating the church without antagonising the government with social issues.

**Keywords:** *Hong Kong Catholic Church, Church-state relations, political participation, Mainlandization, Vatican policy towards China*

## **1. Introduction: The Catholic Church and the Hong Kong British Government**

The Catholic Church in Hong Kong under the British rule since the British occupation of Hong Kong in 1841 had enjoyed a harmonious church-state relationship with the local government. After the Second World War both the Catholic and Protestant churches assisted the British to provide educational, medical and social services to the influx of Chinese refugees from the Mainland to Hong Kong due to the political change in the Mainland to Communist rule. The Christian Churches were selected to provide services especially in education to children of refugees for political considerations (Sweeting, 1993: 201). The British in London, with the experience of Communist infiltration in Malaysia and Singapore during this period, invited Christian Churches which are immune from atheist Communism to provide the service with relief goods to the poverty-stricken refugees from the 50s to 70s.

The warm church-state relations between the colonial government and the Catholic Church was reflected in the “contractor relationship” for long years in providing educational, medical and social services according to government’s plan and policy apart from preventing the infiltration of Communism into Hong Kong from the 1970s until 1997 (Leung and Chan, 2004. The British traditionally did not had much respect for the Catholic Church in Hong Kong which had been administered by the Italian missionaries – the Pontifical Foreign Missions Institute – because of the Italian defeat in the WWII; however, the Catholic missionaries like the Irish Jesuits and the Irish Columban missionaries as well as the American Maryknoll Sisters and priests did provide the best kind of primary and secondary school education, medical service and social welfare. Also the cooperation of the Catholic Church with the Hong Kong British government by standing away from

the pro-China group in the 1967 Riot which was a spillover of the Red Guard (紅衛兵) hooliganism. The Christian stance indirectly helped the British Hong Kong government to resume law and order with quick speed by immediate suppression of the riot. Due to the cultural heritage of the British which is embedded with Christianity, the church and state should not have any basic ideological conflict if the Church did not poke its nose into the British colonial policy. The evangelization efforts of these Catholic missionaries were demonstrated that in 2000 there were more than 76% of government high officials who were graduated from Christian high schools<sup>1</sup>. In reality, the Hong Kong government did not directly support Christian mission endeavor but indirectly the government gave opportunity for the building of church schools and social centres in refugee-filled area. Then these educational institutes were allowed for worship on Sundays while churches were attached and parishes were developed.

The harmonious church-state relations between the Catholic Church and Hong Kong government turned to a new page of distrust, distancing from each other, and even to the stage of conflict due to change of the political landscape of Hong Kong after 1st July 1997 when Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule becoming the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

## **2. Basic Problems Lying between Catholic Church and the HKSAR Government**

The root problems between the Catholic Church and the HKSAR government should go back to the dispute relationship between Catholic Church and Chinese Communist government with ideological incompatibility. Firstly, it rests on the philosophical incompatibility between the atheist Marxist-Leninism plus Maoist Thought, and

religious idealism embedded in Catholicism. Secondly, the heavily institutional structure of Catholic hierarchy challenged the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of Bolshevik tradition in which institutional control has been an important means for the success of the Communist revolution (Selznick, 1960). Thirdly, there is conflict of authority between the Catholic Church and the CCP in the question of sovereign right and national security of the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) concerning the Chinese Catholics within the Chinese boundary (Leung, 1992; Leung and Wang, 2016). The leaders in Zhongnanhai (中南海) once remarked that the Pope and Dalai Lama were the two hard nuts difficult to crack.

Although Hong Kong since 1841 has been under the British rule and its Catholics has been excluded from the religious persecution under Maoist rule in China, yet geographical affinity between Hong Kong and the Mainland allowed Hong Kong people to obtain first-hand information on the political purges and religious persecutions of the Mainland in the Maoist era and development of the open-door policy of post-Maoist era since 1979. The fear that the religious persecution would be repeated in Hong Kong has posed another problem for Hong Kong Catholics to accept Communist rule after 1997. In the post-Maoist era since 1979, the Hong Kong Catholics have been taking up the role of bridging endeavor to cement the gap between Catholics in the Mainland and the church in the free world while offering them with provisions for the revival of religious activities. This Catholic strategy of "bridging endeavor" came from the Pope and oversea Chinese Catholics especially the Hong Kong Catholics who implemented this policy enthusiastically. However, the policy of revival of church life in China does not coincide with the CCP's religious policy in the post-Maoist era to eliminate the development of any religion (Leung, 2000a).

### **3. Hong Kong Catholics' Political Participation in the Political Transitional Period (1984-1997)**

The Sino-British negotiations on the future of Hong Kong in 1984 resulted in agreeing to return Hong Kong to Chinese rule on 1st July 1997. The return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule changed the landscape of the Catholic Church-government relations in Hong Kong. The return Hong Kong to Chinese rule becoming the Hong Kong Special Administrative region (HKSAR) prompted the British to begin a policy of democratization in Hong Kong by introducing representative government as a means to protect Hong Kong citizens from totalitarian governance from Beijing. Hong Kong middle class and professionals first stood up for democratization when they felt that their rights and interest might be jeopardized by the totalitarian Communist rule (So and Kwiko, 1990). Hong Kong's leading Catholic laity are mostly from the middle class and among the professionals, because they graduated from the prestigious Catholic high schools. With the Chinese government's track record of persecuting religion including Catholicism in China<sup>2</sup>, Hong Kong Catholics have another reason for political participation – in the name of protecting religious freedom. They believe that under the rule of the Chinese government religious freedom can only be protected with the assurance of greater autonomy of Hong Kong through greater political participation in a democratic system after the takeover (Leung and Chan, 2000). This explains why the Hong Kong Catholics' political participation did not appear during the English colonial period but has emerged in the post-1997 era. This is because while the British government in Hong Kong did not grant the Hong Kong people democracy it did grant all sorts of freedom to them including religious freedom within the framework of respecting human rights.

In fact, the Catholic Church had its own preparation for the post-1997 Hong Kong Church to face the coming of the Chinese rule. First of all, in the transitional period (1984-1997), out of fear of the drastic change in church-state relations post-1997, Hong Kong Catholic Bishop John Wu (胡振中) announced his pastoral policy for the future. Wu's pastoral exhortation – “March into the Bright future” – suggested a multi-front strategy comprising seven strategies to respond to the political change in Hong Kong beyond 1997. One of these was to have more participation in socio-political affairs with Christian principles (Cardinal John B. Wu, 1989). It spelt out guidelines for the Catholic presence in Hong Kong's political arena after 1997. The ongoing dispute between the Chinese Catholics and the Communist Chinese regime was due to the clash of teaching authority between the CCP and the Catholic Church. This continuous dispute provided incentives to Hong Kong Catholics to defend religious freedom through political participation. The Catholics believed that democratization resulted from socio-political autonomy as promised by the “one country, two systems” policy would be desirable to protect them from religious persecution in the long run.

The choice of the Hong Kong Catholic leaders beyond 1997 also reflected that the Vatican had its consideration on its relations with China. It needed church leaders to have knowledge on China to lead the Hong Kong Catholics. Cardinal John Wu, the prelate of Hong Kong Catholics, reached the age of 75 in 1995. According to the regulation of the Vatican, any local bishop reached the age of 75 should submit his resignation giving the chance for Vatican to evaluate the real situation as regards whether to continue his service or to replace him with a new hand. In the case of Hong Kong, at the ninth hour of the transition period on October 1996, the Vatican announced that Frs. Joseph Zen Ze-kiun (陳日君) and John Tong Hon (湯漢) to be the coadjutor bishop and auxiliary bishop respectively.<sup>3</sup> The coadjutor means to be the successor

of Cardinal Wu as the prelate of diocese of Hong Kong. Both Zen and Tong had no pastoral experience in Hong Kong, but both of them were old hands in dealing with China affairs. John Tong was the founding director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, a research centre founded in 1980 at the desire of the Vatican to study the Catholic Church in China. Since the establishment of the Centre, Tong has been leading this Centre until today. Thus, Tong is the most informed person in the Catholic Church about China. Zen was born in Shanghai (上海) in 1932. He received this theological education in Italy and in 1961 was ordained in Rome. From 1989 to 1996 he had spent at least six months per year in teaching philosophy and theology in Catholic seminaries in China. Being a resident of Shanghai, Zen had a fuller picture and existential experience on the Catholic Church in the Mainland through his grassroots contacts of seminarians and Catholic laity in China who were his students as well as his Shanghai relatives and friends.

Before 1997, when the British Hong Kong government prepared its political transition, various committees were set up to assure the continuity of governance in the post-1997 HKSAR period. A Selection Committee was established to select the Provisional LegCo (Legislative Council of the HKSAR, 香港特別行政區立法會) members after the 1st July 1997. Hong Kong Catholics together with democrats viewed that the election was not democratic and did not send Catholic candidates to represent the Catholic diocese, but to endorse any Catholics who would like to join the selection of the Selection Committee as private persons. This trend was the beginning of the tradition of Hong Kong Catholic diocese in the Chief Executive elections until today through a small group of Election Committee with less than 3000 members in which the majority are pro-China people since the commencement of the HKSAR bureaucratic system.

#### **4. The Political Environment of HKSAR**

In HKSAR, from the beginning of its Chinese takeover, the process of Mainlandization has been going on over the last 20 years (1997-2017). According to Sonny Lo, a political scientist, mainlandization of Hong Kong has a special flavor in which it is a policy of the Hong Kong government to make Hong Kong politically more dependent on Beijing, economically more reliant on the Mainland's support, socially more patriotic towards China, and legally more reliant on the interpretation of the Basic Law as laid down by the PRC National People's Congress (Lo, 2007).<sup>4</sup> Rey Chow (周蕾) remarked that Hong Kong's re-unification with China was never a "natural return" but a forced return with China all the time coercing Hong Kong into submission (Chow, 1992). With the policy of Mainlandization the erosion of the "one country, two systems" ( "一國兩制" ) and "Hong Kong people rule Hong Kong" ( "港人治港" ) is significant in the last twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Viewed from today's political life of Hong Kong, democratization has hardly made any progress, yet political participation of various types has been exposed even as leaders in Beijing refused to allow political reform leading to universal suffrage as promised by the Basic Law. However, new trends of political participation by various social, political and even religious groups has sprung up in HKSAR (Cheng (ed.), 2014). The Catholics' political participation has its role to play in the change in political dynamics of HKSAR in the last twenty years.

#### **5. Catholics in HKSAR**

Hong Kong Catholics had a splendid record in political participation in the first few years of the establishment of the HKSAR, under the leadership of Bishop Joseph Zen Zekiun until his retirement in 2009.



Zen's first conflict with the government was on the policy of "the right of abode" which did not allow the overstaying Mainland-born Chinese children in Hong Kong to have the right to stay in Hong Kong and receive education.<sup>6</sup> A pastoral letter issued in the name of Cardinal Wu but penned by Zen criticized the stance of the government as selfishness which restricted the reunion of families whose children were born in China. Zen's argument is very convincing as it is based on humanitarian considerations. He remarked that "a large number of adults of Hong Kong residents came from the mainland in the 1950s and 1960s; at that time Hong Kong opened the door to welcome them." Zen put the HKSAR government and those supporters of the policy of restriction to shame by remarking that: "Now you are getting rich. How can you refuse others who seek to move to Hong Kong as you did a few decades ago?"<sup>7</sup>

In 2002, the HKSAR government proposed the legislation of Art. 23 of Basic Law during Tung Chee-hwa (董建華)'s reign. It means passing Hong Kong's own law to prohibit acts of secession, subversion, treason, theft of state secrets, sedition, foreign political organization conducting political activities in HKSAR, and local political organization establishing links with foreign political groups. Many in Hong Kong regarded it as a controversial law. Legal professionals, mass media, academicians and democrats objected to the legislation because in the name of national security, the Chinese standard on human rights and freedom would be introduced, and subsequently the "one country two systems" would be undermined. In the objection to the legislation Article 23 of Basic law, Zen played a more significant and prophetic role to back up the agitators who were in the front line. His objection to the legislation of Art. 23 was based on two reasons. First, the erosion of "one country, two systems" which was a firewall to block the infiltration of Chinese influence, the Mainlandization; and secondly, the erosion of

human rights including religious freedom. He inspired the law professional and the opposition groups with the simple Catholic principles of social teaching which empathizes social justice, fraternity, charity and peace (Montemayor (ed.), 1989: 1-45). Zen remarked that as far as law is concerned, according to Thomastic principle law is for the wellbeing of people, but not for political purposes.<sup>8</sup> With his support the opposition against the legislation had developed to such a degree that it attracted half a million Hong Kong citizens to rally on the street. Eventually the HKSAR government had to withdraw the proposal.

The SAR government's first Mainlandization policy was to reduce Christian influence (Brown, 2001). The launching of the policy of using mother tongues as teaching language was the first step to reduce Western influence in education. However, the policy was not so successful (Leung, 2000b). Most prestigious Catholic schools in Hong Kong used English in instruction, and these schools run by Catholic missionaries like the Jesuits priests, La Salle Brothers and Maryknoll Sisters who are from international religious congregations had education experience with the prevalence of globalization. They found the government policy to be a contradiction to the future development of HKSAR, and they just ignored it. Simultaneously parents still flocked to their schools for English education of their children<sup>9</sup>. After ten years it proved that they were right, and the Education Department of HKSAR had to abandon the policy quietly.

The second policy on education came from the desire of government stemming from the same Mainlandization policy of distancing Christian Churches in providing education. The real conflict between the Catholic Church and the HKSAR government was over the School-Based Management (SBM) which advocated openness, accountability and democracy in all Hong Kong schools. Catholic educators together with those of other Christian denominations regarded

SBM as a direct challenge to Christian values. Under the SBM system 60% of school managers and members of school governance councils were to be represented by teachers, parents, alumni, or segments of the community. There were too few Catholic professionals to fill the majority of management positions in the school run by Catholic Church. The problem was intensified by the fact that 90% of the teaching staff were laity and among them 72% were non-Catholics (Brown, 2001).

Given the change of the management system, the priority of Catholic education can be easily undermined. Zen opposed this policy strongly because he regarded that government eventually would introduce compulsory teaching requirement that might be contradictory to the tenets of Christianity such as support of abortion with this EBM policy. Zen, on behalf of the Hong Kong diocese requested the government to have a judicial review of this policy. At the end, the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal finding was against the appellant, the Catholic Church.

Apart from openly opposing the HKSAR government policy on the legislation of Art. 23 in the Basic Law, Zen also criticized the government's many other policies when he found that those policies were not for the benefit of the Hong Kong people but just to please Beijing. Zen's stance is grounded on the Catholic social teaching of the Catholic Church. He spent two years working with a group to translate the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's monumental work titled *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church* (教會社會訓導彙編) into Chinese. And the book was published by the Catholic Truth Society of Hong Kong (香港公教真理學會) and sold at very low price so that the Chinese Catholics around the world could be acquainted with the social teaching of the Catholic Church.

Given that Zen was active in criticizing the HKSAR government mostly on the human right issues, he was hailed as the fourth of the

Asian prophets who implemented the social teaching of the Vatican II by disregarding the danger of antagonizing the civil authority. The first prophet was Cardinal Jaime Sin ( 辛海綿 ) of Manila who helped oust the corrupt president Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines in the 1970s. The second one was Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou-hwan ( 김수환 / 金壽煥 ) of Seoul who led the Korean Catholics to support the democratic movement in South Korea in the 1970s. The third was the Vietnamese cardinal Paul Joseph Phạm Đình Tụng who protected the Vietnamese Catholic Church from the persecution of the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party. The fourth Asian prophet is Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kui of Hong Kong as an advocate of human rights (Leung, 2014).

Zen antagonized Beijing not only on religious-political issues in Hong Kong SAR, but also due to his criticism of Beijing's treatment of the Catholic Church in the Mainland, and his support for the underground sector of Chinese Catholics, as well his engagement in the bridging endeavour which was unbearable to the political leaders in Zhongnanhai. Zen stood out as the most strident and high-profile critic of the government.

Apart from the Catholic bridging endeavour, Bishop Zen (later Cardinal Zen), also crossed the Chinese government in defending the rights of the Catholic Church on the issue of ordaining five Chinese bishops without the consent of the Holy See in January 2000, and with his defense of the Vatican's position on the canonization of 102 saints in China on 1 October 2000.<sup>10</sup>

In 2003 when the objection to the legislation of Art. 23 was in full swing, it was reported that Beijing suggested to the Vatican to remove Zen from Hong Kong in exchange for the reopening the suspended Sino-Vatican negotiation. Without the spiritual pillar of the objection, in the mind of Beijing leaders, the HKSAR campaign against the legislation of

Art.23 might be much weakened heading towards vanishing. In fact the Vatican did not oblige with the request of Beijing. On the contrary the Pope gave the red hat of a cardinal to Zen in 2006 to support his endeavor in employing militant approach in church-state relations to stand by the side of the non-governmental sector of the Chinese Catholics who were persecuted by the government but loved by the Vatican because of their loyalty to the Church.

However, Zen's leadership as the bishop of Hong Kong was short-lived. It lasted only from 2002 to 2009. He was "granted" the permission from the Vatican to resign from the position of the bishop of Hong Kong at the age of 75.

Within the same period of time Bishop Paul Shan Kuo-hsi (單國璽) of Hualien, Taiwan (臺灣花蓮) in 1998 submitted his resignation at the age of 75. However, the Vatican not only did not allow his resignation but also granted him the red cap of a cardinal elevating him to be the Prince of the Church and the top leader of the seven dioceses of the whole island of Taiwan. The Vatican's move was due to the pastoral and political need of the Taiwan Church at that juncture to uplift the Catholic life there when the decrease of Catholic population was significant, e.g. in 2008 there were 290 thousand Catholics, but in 2015 the number had gone down to 230 thousand.<sup>11</sup> The difference of Vatican's dealing with Joseph Zen in Hong Kong and Paul Shan in Taiwan can be explained from Vatican's political consideration of its paradigm shift in policy on China and Taiwan.

The issue of "granting of permission to resign" could be taken as Zen's relationship with the Vatican which had experienced a paradigm shift in its relationship with China. While Zen's elevation to the Cardinalate was an appreciation of the Vatican on Zen's effort towards China through his militant approach in supporting the underground/non-officially sanctioned sector of the Catholic Church in China, and his

strong stance to protect human rights in socio-political issues in Hong Kong, the request for Zen's resignation from the position of the bishop of Hong Kong had also come from the Vatican when some of its European officials did not support Zen's militant approach towards China. The Vatican European officials' understanding of Communism was mostly based on Menshevik branch of Communism, and they failed to consider the political behavior of Bolshevik Communism which prevailed in China and Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> The officials in the Vatican found that Zen's militant orientation was never favorable for Sino-Vatican reconciliation. They removed Zen, who was regarded as the archenemy by Beijing's political leaders, in order not to jeopardize its relations with China when the Vatican wished to take a more reconciliatory approach towards China in the Sino-Vatican negotiation.

The Hong Kong Catholic Church's political participation in the post-Zen era turned a new page in the history of Catholics' socio-political involvement. Bishop John Tong took up the Catholic leadership of Hong Kong after Zen stepped down in 2009. After 3 years Bishop Tong was elevated into the Cardinalate in 2012. It reflected the importance of the Hong Kong diocese in the eye of the Vatican.

Although on many occasions, Tong claimed that there is no difference between his policy in the Church with that of Zen, the soft-spoken Tong gave people a different image compared to that of the outspoken Zen who always led the Catholics to rally on the street, and heavily criticized government policies. No one had seen Cardinal Tong joining any public protest on the street.

Cardinal Zen has a charismatic character in speaking the truth. That is why he was honoured as the fourth prophet in Asia after the Vatican II. However, the truth is never welcomed by everyone. Not only in China he became the *persona non grata* but also in the Vatican those who supported the Menshevik approach of Communism isolated him from

the Vatican's policy-making circle (Zen, 2016), while in the free world he strongly criticized the Vatican on its reconciliatory policy towards China as a betrayal of Christ.<sup>13</sup> Although in the eyes of the HKSAR government he was a headache, he was very much supported by democrats in Hong Kong. A few non-practising Catholic lawyers and intellectuals in the struggle of objecting to the legislation of Art. 23 returned to the Church just because they were inspired by Zen's courage in the implementation of Christian teaching through the protection of human rights.

## **6. HKSAR Catholics' Political Participation under Cardinal Tong's Leadership**

The appearance of Cardinal Zen was once regarded as a bright comet in the dark sky showing the way the Catholics in Hong Kong should go in order to follow the Catholic social teaching. When Cardinal Tong took up the leadership to lead the Hong Kong Catholics, he did not follow in Zen's footsteps by continuously taking up the prophetic role to antagonize the Beijing or HKSAR government, mainly because of his personality which was not of the confrontational type. However, he tried to lead the Hong Kong Catholics to track on the path which had been shown by Zen during the period of Zen's office from 1996 to 2009 with the strategy of internalization and consolidation of the social teaching of the Church and strengthen the Hong Kong Church with deeper spirituality.

## **7. The Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) Movement**

The OCLP movement in September 2014 was not initiated by a political party, but by two intellectuals plus a church leader who are democrats who opposed Beijing's decision on 31 August 2014 to reject universal

suffrage in the 2017 election of the Chief Executive. The three members who initiated the OCLP was inspired by the traditional civil disobedience and applied it with non-violent means as manifested by Chan Kin-man ( 陳健民 ), one of the 3 founding members (Chan, 2015). The OCLP lasted for nearly 3 months from the end of September to December 2014. The OCLP had embedded a certain degree of Christian values. First of all, the three founders were Christians – Professor Benny Tai ( 戴耀廷 ), Rev. Pastor Chu Yiu-ming ( 朱耀明 ) and Professor Chan Kin-man. The Catholic Church made significant contribution with the participation of Cardinal Zen and the Italian missionary Fr. Franco Mella ( 甘浩望 , with the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME)), although the issue took place when Zen was no longer the bishop of Hong Kong. Among all the tents in the occupation area, there was an area for prayer and consultation for the spiritual needs of participants. A reporter of *The Wall Street Journal* observed that the Hong Kong Church played a quiet but important role in the city's protest by offering food and shelter to demonstrators while some organizers and supporters citing Christian value as inspiration in their struggle.<sup>14</sup>

Cardinal Zen at the age of 82 joined the protestors by sleeping on the street overnight as an iconic figure to Catholic participation. After the OCLP he accompanied the three founders of the OCLP when they had to report to the police station on their “crime” against the public order. He was the oldest one in the whole College of Cardinals in the Vatican to join the protest by sleeping on the street, and the news was reported widely by the *Vatican Insider* and was known throughout the whole Catholic world.<sup>15</sup> Fr. Franco Mella accompanied the protestors by placing himself in the prayer area for long hours to comfort the protestors who needed spiritual support amidst the social movement.



## 8. The Internalization of Catholic Socio-political Participation under the Cardinal Tong Administration

In the diocese of Hong Kong, the Commission of Justice and Peace was a local unit of the Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace established after the Vatican II with its headquarters at the Vatican. The Hong Kong branch of Social Justice and Peace cooperated with Zen very closely in the social movements. This commission became very outspoken with the backup of Zen and had cooperated with other interest groups to advocate the same objective in social movements such as the objection to the legislation of art. 23. After Zen's retirement from the diocese of Hong Kong, Cardinal Tong appointed Fr. Stephen Chan Moon Hung (陳滿鴻), a religious sociologist, as its spiritual director. There was no comparison between Cardinal Zen and Fr. Chan in terms of eloquence and social status. In important issues the Hong Kong people found no Catholic voice in the mass media, because in Zen's era, the *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) always had special coverage on Zen's socio-political participation.<sup>16</sup> The coverage of Fr. Chan in *Apple Daily* had been much reduced for reason of eloquence and personality. However, in the Chinese Catholic weekly, *Kung Kao Po* (公教報), there is always a special column reserved for the Commission of Justice and Peace to express its opinions on socio-political issues, not only by Fr. Chan but also by other members of the Commission. This phenomenon reflected that the Catholics' socio-political participation has been reduced to the Catholic circles only. On important political issues, for example, Cardinal Tong did not join the democrats requesting universal suffrage of the Chief Executive when everyone in Hong Kong noticed that Beijing had played a decisive role in the selection of the in-coming Chief Executive, the successor to Leung Chun-ying (梁振英). Cardinal Tong on congratulating Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) on her election on 26th March 2017 to be the new in-coming Chief Executive, presented the

wish of the Catholic diocese in the context of the Church's social teaching for the prevalence of democracy, the well-being of the majority, social unity, and religious freedom under her governance.<sup>17</sup> From the Catholic news items and reporting in *Kung Kao Po*, it appears that the Hong Kong Catholic Church has shifted its paradigm from its external activities involving itself in socio-political issues to the internalization and consolidation of Christian faith and social teaching through prayers and studies especially in terms of the digging up of the Church history in Hong Kong and the nearby areas, and strengthening the Church management and spiritual formation. For example, the Catholic Studies Centre put a great effort in researching the history of Catholics in Swatow<sup>18</sup>, as well as to revitalize the country church in Sai Kung (西貢) which is the first Catholic Church in Hong Kong as means to re-activate the spirit of evangelization as those missionaries came to Hong Kong hundred years ago.<sup>19</sup> It planned to blend tourism in that area with the historical site of the first Catholic mission church, as an endeavour to make it a pilgrimage site like that of the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James) network of ancient pilgrim routes across Europe which come together in north-west Spain. By doing this it aims at contributing spiritual elements to the secular business of tourism.<sup>20</sup>

The diocese puts more resources into spiritual formation by setting up more retreat houses in the urban and rural area. For example, the Trappist Monks on Lantau Island (大嶼山) renovated their traditional guest house for better service in retreat<sup>21</sup>. The Precious Blood Sisters in Fanling (粉嶺), the Canossian Sisters in Mount Davis (摩星嶺) and the St. Paul Sisters in Sheung Shui (上水) have renovated or extended their retreat and spiritual formation services.

The institutionalization of the HKSAR Catholic Church was reflected in its endeavor to revise the Pastoral Directory which stipulates the regulations, rules and directory of pastoral service on parish level

and individual levels. In fact in 1982 during the time of Cardinal Wu's administration, a Pastoral Directory was issued. However after 35 years (1982-2017) a revision is necessary. The first issuing of the Pastoral Directory was internally circulated among clergy and religious community engaging in the pastoral work. Now the revised issue was publicly announced in *Kung Kao Po* (7th May 2017) inviting the Catholic laity to public lectures on various dates on various topics, such as the introduction on the diocesan administration, its personnel and financial management, on the sacraments of Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, and on the pastoral care of the sick and funeral arrangement. Special invitations were given to those volunteer workers in the parish on various areas.<sup>22</sup> In the Holy Spirit Seminary College, there was a new certificate programme established on church administration (教會職務文憑課程) by offering special training for those lay workers in youth pastoral work, hospital pastoral service, hospice service, and Christian community development projects.<sup>23</sup> In fact the services in these areas have a good performance for the need of the modern society of Hong Kong. This study programme aims at institutionalizing and consolidating these services.

The institutionalization might be a response to the need of globalization as Hong Kong is an international metropolis. However, it might turn the Church into a civil organization if the prophetic voice is silent.

Cardinal Zen from time to time accepted to give talks on special themes such as encountering the Truth, while calling upon his audience to protect the Hong Kong values. He was even invited to Macau to give a talk on the Sino-Vatican relations with good attendance<sup>24</sup>. However his talks were not on the whole diocesan level at an institutional level, and the news coverage was much thinner than before.<sup>25</sup> The Commission of Justice and Peace offers activities without a radical approach. For

example, it only offered a low-key celebration with a Holy Mass to commemorate the iconic martyr for social justice in South America, Archbishop Óscar Romero, to be beatified by the Vatican. No large-scale conference was called by inviting radical speakers on the antagonism of Romero and its implication to Hong Kong.

The Catholic Church's prophetic role in any society is like the "salt" in a cuisine which needs proper amount of salt to make the food tasty. Too much salt would make the food uneatable because of too salty. However, without the prophetic view, the Church would no longer play a significant role in the society, and the Church is not the "salt" any more but has deteriorated into a lump of sand. Is the Catholic Church in HKSAR heading to this direction?

## **9. Conclusion**

In short, the Catholics' socio-political participation in Hong Kong has a long history of ups and downs. It depends on the timing, leadership, and political environment not only in Hong Kong but also in Beijing. However, one cannot ignore the influence of the Vatican on the Hong Kong Catholics' political participation. The leadership of Cardinal Zen and Cardinal Tong has a big demarcation on Catholic participation in socio-political affairs. Zen can be regarded as a comet in the dark sky showing the way that the Hong Kong Catholics should follow in the context of Catholic social teaching. In the era of Cardinal Tong's leadership the phenomenon of internal development or internal strengthening of the Catholic Church is very significant. Would it be a strategy to implement Zen's advocacy of Catholic social teaching in a subtle way according to the Chinese saying "strong water runs deep"? Or might the strategy of institutionalization turn the Catholic Church into a civil organization without a prophetic view?

## Notes

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1. This was the result of a research by this author in the year of 2000 in Hong Kong.
  2. Archbishop Dominic Deng Yiming (Dominic Tang Yee-ming, 鄧以明) of Guangzhou (Canton, 廣州) after a solitude imprisonment for 22 years was released in 1980. His own memoir, *How unfathomable is God's will*, revealed how he lived his life behind bars.
  3. *Sunday Examiner* (Hong Kong), 25th October 1996; *Kung Kao Po* (公教報) (Hong Kong), 25th October 1996.
  4. On the reliance on the Chinese interpretation of the Basic law, see Wong (2014).
  5. As early as 2004, the crisis of Mainlandization was prominent. See: Wong (ed.) (2004).
  6. Wong Yiu-chung (王耀宗) had a detailed discussion on the verdict of this issue which is leaning toward the wish of PRC. See: Wong (2014).
  7. "Cardinal Wu's Pastoral Letter: 'God is Love' in 1999". In: Leung and Chan (2004), pp.175-177.

8. This was expressed by Cardinal Zen when he was interviewed by the author in 2004, Hong Kong.
9. The author obtained the information from one of the religious sisters from USA who had been working many years in education of Hong Kong. The interview was conducted in October 2006, Macau.
10. For Zen's defense of the Vatican position in the canonization, see: Zen (2000).
11. The figures were given by the Archbishop's office of Taipei with the request of the author in September 2016.
12. This is the impression that this author obtained when she contacted one of the European Catholic Church leaders in discussing with him the questions of the Communism in a Catholic institution in Macau (澳門). The discussion was held in September 2007.
13. "Hong Kong Cardinal says any deal between the Vatican and China would be 'betraying Christ'" (by Kevin Lui), *Time*, 28th November 2016. <<http://time.com/4583089/hong-kong-cardinal-joseph-zen-vatican-betrayal-christ-deal-beijing-china/>>
14. "Hong Kong democracy protests carry a Christian mission for some" (by Ned Levin), *The Wall street Journal*, 3rd October 2014 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-democracy-protests-carry-a-christian-mission-for-some-1412255663>> (accessed on 20th January 2017).
15. "Cardinal Zen joins Occupy Central protests: The Bishop Emeritus has taken to the streets to defend freedom, while his successor John Tong has appealed to both sides to engage in dialogue", *Vatican Insider*, 29th September 2014 <<http://www.lastampa.it/2014/09/29/vaticaninsider/eng/world-news/cardinal-zen-joins-occupy-central-protests-Thc0e4byEkfJwRBJEh8oXO/pagina.html>> (accessed on 20th January 2017).
16. The owner of the *Apple Daily* Jimmy Lai Chee-Ying (黎智英) is a democrat who has financial support for Zen and other democrats. He was converted to Catholicism because he was impressed by Zen.

17. “湯樞機致林鄭賀函提四點期望：談民主公益社會團結宗教自由” [Cardinal Tong’s letter to Carrie Lam brings up for hopes: about democracy and public well-being, social solidarity and religious freedom], 公教報 (*Kung Kao Po*), 2nd April 2017, p. 1.
18. The Catholic Studies Centre put out an announcement regarding the commencement of a history project on Chaozhou (潮州) and Swatow (汕頭) – 「潮汕天主教會」研究小組 (*Kung Kao Po*, 2nd April 2017, p. 10). G. Criveller has a long article on Fr. Galbiati to commemorate the missionary of Hong Kong on his political writing (*Kung Kao Po*, 9th April 2017, 23rd April 2017).
19. 「復修及活化西貢小堂計劃」集思會 (*Kung Kao Po*, 6th April 2017, p. 3).
20. 湯漢樞機「活化西貢小堂集思會」講詞 (*Kung Kao Po*, 7th May 2017, p. 12).
21. The Trappist Monks put out an announcement in the Catholic newspaper informing the public that from April to September 2017 there will be internal renovation of their retreat house (*Kung Kao Po*, 23rd April 2017, p. 4).
22. The diocesan office made a special announcement of this event on a prominent page of *Kung Kao Po*, 7th May 2017, p. 3.
23. The Holy Spirit Seminary had the announcement of this programme “教會職務文憑課程” in *Kung Kao Po*, 7th May 2017, p. 19.
24. 「中梵關係的前景研究會」(澳門觀察報 (*Observatório de Macau*), 5th March 2017, p. 1).
25. 「明愛辦聖多瑪斯節講座 陳日君樞機籲維護真理」(*Kung Kao Po*, 26th March 2017, p. 2).

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