

“In the Eye of the Typhoon”

Aspirations of Buddhists and Catholics in Turbulent Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This thesis wishes to contribute to the current scholarly debate on urban religion. This debate focuses predominantly on the visibility and materiality of religious practices and symbols in the urban environment; on the effect of migration (both rural-to-urban and transnational) on the religious landscape of the city; and on religion in cities in the ‘secularised’ West. My research aims to correct some of these biases by shedding light on the ways religion features in an Asian urban setting by residents in not-always public and/or visible ways. I argue that life in cities is not only shaped by religious practices and symbols, but equally by religious orientations, which provide a lens through which residents see and evaluate the complex and at times unsettling urban environment. To that end, I investigate the experiences of Hong Kong middle class Buddhists (primarily Theravāda Buddhists) and Catholics concerning tensions between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) post-1997 Handover. These tensions culminated in the so-called Umbrella Movement, during which an estimated 1.2 million people occupied the streets of urban Hong Kong from late September to mid-December 2014.

The thesis takes its point of departure in the realisation that there is antagonism between Mainland China and Hong Kong. Fears regarding this antagonism are especially expressed by members of Hong Kong’s middle class, who see their aspirations threatened and who describe their lives to be situated in political and socio-economic turbulence. This particular turbulence inscribes itself in middle class Buddhist and Catholic orientations. At the same time, these orientations shape their attitudes towards the changes and challenges they face.

In the three main chapters that constitute this thesis (which follow a brief exploration of the position of Buddhism and Catholicism in historical and contemporary Hong Kong) I investigate how specific urban circumstances and religious orientations mutually influence each other, shaping people’s day-to-day city lives. I do this by exploring three themes. The first theme deals with how and why my informants emphasise tradition and universalism as the stable foundations of their religions. These foundations provide them with an anchor in the uncertain political environment in which they live. The second theme regards personal accountability as a central tenet in my informants’ religious beliefs, appointing their role and position in their religion and in the world. The specific notion of religious accountability shapes the way in which my informants negotiate the threat Mainland China poses to their socio-economic aspirations. Regarding the third theme, I investigate how, by trying to (re)gain the rights to the city during the Umbrella Movement, my interlocutors highlight their religious aspirations of salvation as a possible goal in the here and now. In all these themes, global, local, religious, and non-religious factors combine to give shape to life in the city of Hong Kong.

STATEMENT OF CANDIDATURE

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “**In the Eye of the Typhoon: Aspirations of Buddhists and Catholics in Turbulent Hong Kong**” has neither been previously submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of the requirement for a degree to a university or institution other than Macquarie University. I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received during my research work and the preparation of this thesis have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are acknowledged in the thesis. The research presented in this thesis was approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number **5201200242**, on **23 May 2012**.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mariske Westendorp', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mariske Westendorp (42666759)

July 2016



Hong Kong middle class Buddhism and Catholicism. Two mannequins at a fashion store in the Peak Gallery shopping mall, wearing caps with the words 'I am blessed', and a vest with the words 'I am karma' (photo courtesy of David Scott, the Peak, Hong Kong Island, 02.10.2014).

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of a four year long PhD program undertaken in the Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University, Sydney. It is an ethnographic account of Buddhists and Catholics living in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) during a time of turbulent change. For these individuals, the increasing travel and migration of mainland Chinese people to ‘their’ city, and the increasing influence of mainland Chinese politics on their lives, feels, to say the least, unsettling.

My informants’ religious reflections on these eventuations concur with my personal interest in Buddhism and Catholicism as two distinct religions. In my homeland of the Netherlands, I was raised a Catholic. Subsequent to my first visit to Asia in 2009, I developed a personal interest in Buddhism. During that visit, I conducted research on the Buddhist pilgrimage island of Putuoshan, China. This research sparked my interest in how religion is lived in the contemporary People’s Republic of China (PRC). I began to investigate questions surrounding the ways in which religious practices and experiences are coloured and influenced by politics, and vice versa. My studies of Cultural Anthropology and Religious Studies (both undertaken in the Netherlands) added scholarly complexity to this fascination, in particular in relation to questions concerning the relationship between identity and religion in politically unsettling and/or unstable contexts. This thesis, which is a result of years of contemplation, has, at its core, an attempt to combine my personal religious background and interests with anthropology and religious studies, by focusing on religion as a lived experience.

Contrary to my earlier research undertaken on the small island of Putuoshan, this thesis is the result of relatively extensive research undertaken in a large Chinese city. Cities prove excellent laboratories to conduct research on religion, because “[u]nder urban circumstance people experience, more than anywhere else, the rapidity of cultural change, the hiatus of social inequalities, the consequences of the human impact on nature and the tangible power of political authorities” (Burchardt & Becci, 2013, pp. 17-18). Research into religion (in this case, Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism) in a big Chinese city should thus bring to the fore most clearly the intrinsic relations between religion and politics.

I had initially planned to research religion in a city on the Chinese mainland, e.g., Shanghai, Beijing or Guangzhou. However, following recommendations by several scholars who I met during the first months of my PhD program, I decided to go to Hong Kong instead; a city that is both inside (officially part of the PRC under the ‘one country, two systems’ policy, see pages 3-4) and outside (especially in the discourse used by local Hongkongers, see chapters 2 and 3) of China. Conducting research in Hong Kong instead of in Mainland China provided a number of advantages: fewer language barriers; a higher degree of religious freedom; and, a relative easiness with which people talked about and expressed their religious practices and notions. Moreover, Hong Kong intrigued me. Up until the commencement of my PhD program, I had only heard of Hong Kong as a post-colonial and financial city in which members of the middle class pursue the ‘Hong Kong Dream’, while at the same time struggling to find their place in the economic world post-1997 Handover. I wanted to find out if and how, in this highly modernised and globalised city, religion features in the lives of local Hongkongers.

After deciding on Hong Kong as the site for my fieldwork, I initiated conducting a comparative study of the respective positions of the bodhisattva Guanyin and the Virgin

Mary in the HKSAR and the PRC. These two deities are often compared to each other in the literature, wherein Guanyin is sometimes referred to as the “Buddhist Madonna” (Reis-Habito, 1993). It was my intention to study the position of both deities by interviewing and observing Hong Kong religious devotees who travel from Hong Kong to Mainland China for worship. I thought that by focusing on these pilgrims, I could find out how and in which ways these deities feature in the lives of Hong Kong’s Buddhists and Catholics, and in their relationships with their ‘motherland’ China.

This initial research focus changed due to the situation I found myself in during my stay in Hong Kong. Pilgrims were hard to find: most of them travel alone so as not to raise the suspicions of Chinese officials (see also Chapter 1). Even more importantly, I soon began to sense the growing socio-political dissatisfaction that Hong Kong residents felt vis-à-vis an encroaching mainland, a dissatisfaction that became too prominent to ignore. When in late September 2014 the occupation of different Hong Kong districts (termed the ‘Umbrella Movement’) erupted after years of planning by the Occupy Central with Love and Compassion organisation, I realised that over the years leading up to the Movement I had gathered the necessary data to provide a good understanding of the role of religion in this historical political event and in the city of Hong Kong at this particular time.

Even though I had already left Hong Kong for Sydney at the time of the Umbrella Movement, I recognised the relevance of the Movement for the understanding and analysis of my data. With this in mind, I decided to investigate the situation from a distance. In my opinion, the Umbrella Movement not only occupied the streets of urban Hong Kong, but likewise occupied different (social) media and the conversations I had via these media with my Hong Kong informants. A close following of different media channels, and continued conversations with my informants via WhatsApp, Facebook and email afforded me insights

into their religious reflections on the Movement and their levels of civic engagements, either actively or spiritually. In the highly digitalised city of Hong Kong, this research method proved extremely valuable.

A few notes need to be made apropos of the research methodologies applied in this study.

During the first period of my fieldwork research in Hong Kong (July 2012 to July 2013),¹ I selected two religious centres in the neighbourhood of Tsuen Wan (New Territories): one Catholic Church and one Mahāyāna temple in the care of a Theravāda Buddhist abbot. Aided by helpful clerical members and employees at both sites (to whom I would like to express my gratitude for their cooperation, suggestions and introductions to members of the communities) I met many lay believers who in different ways were affiliated to these sites.²

They became my main research participants. Other informants to this research include people I met at other sites during different religious functions who were keen to talk to me. Meeting new people in this way often occurred on occasions when I was the only foreigner

¹ The second fieldwork period took place from March to August 2014.

² Apart from these two sites, I interviewed clergy and employees at the following Buddhist sites and organisations: Wang Fat Ching She (Tsuen Wan, New Territories), Su Bong Monastery (Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island), Chi Lin Nunnery (Diamond Hill, Kowloon), Kadampa Meditation Centre (Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island), Po Lin Monastery (Lantau Island), Centre for Buddhist Studies (Hong Kong University), Miu Fa Buddhist Association (North Point, Hong Kong Island), Dhammakaya International Society (Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island), and Tung Tsz Monastery (Tai Po, New Territories). I discussed with clergy of the following Catholic parishes: Star of the Sea Parish (Chai Wan, Hong Kong Island), Annunciation Parish (Tsuen Wan, New Territories), Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish (Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island), Saint Joseph's Church (Kowloon Bay, Kowloon), Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (Tai Po, New Territories), Saint Joseph's Church (Fanling, New Territories), Mother of Good Counsel Parish (San Po Kong, New Territories), Rosary Parish (Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon), and Saints Cosmas and Damian Parish (Tsuen Wan, New Territories). In addition, I interviewed missionaries associated with the Daughters of Charity of the Canossian Institute (Central, Hong Kong Island), Order of Saint Clare Portiuncula Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament (Lamma Island), Maryknoll Brothers (Stanley, Hong Kong Island), Sisters of the Discalced Carmelite Order (Stanley, Hong Kong Island), Missionary Society of Saint Columban (Ma Yau Tong, New Territories), and the Missionary Sisters of the Angels (Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong Island). I spoke to employees of the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity (Sai Wan Ho, Hong Kong Island), the Diocesan Catechetical Centre (Central, Hong Kong Island) and the Holy Spirit Seminary and Study Centre (Aberdeen, Hong Kong Island). I also interviewed other clergy and employees, among whom were people associated with the Protestant Tao Fong Shan (Sha Tin, New Territories), the Saint Francis Lutheran Mission, the Anglican Discovery Bay Church (Discovery Bay, Lantau Island), the Anglican Saint John's Cathedral (Central, Hong Kong Island), the Taoist Wong Tai Sin Temple and associated Sik Sik Yuen (Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon), and the Chinese Temples Committee (Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island).

present. My research data mainly consists of interviews and conversations with all these people. It should be noted that because I mainly relied on snowball sampling and haphazard encounters with people, the data reflected in this thesis is not statistically representative of Hong Kong middle class Buddhists and Catholics. Also, because of the snowball methodology, I met more Theravāda Buddhists than Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna Buddhists. However, all my Buddhist and Catholic informants are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (e.g., neighbourhoods, gender, relationship status, age, relations and attitudes to Mainland China, jobs, and incomes).

After meeting people for the first time, I made appointments with them for initial interviews. Most of these initial interviews, which were centred on life history research, culminated in conversations that lasted at least one, and in some cases up to six hours. Even though not all of my informants were willing to share their life histories with me, I nonetheless received much valuable information on how they became religious and how they experience and express their religion. After our initial first conversations, I met most of my informants again. Some of these meetings took place during religious events, e.g., Buddhist talks at temples or during Sunday church services. Other meetings happened during times when there were no religious events happening. These meetings often entailed interviews or conversations over coffee, while enjoying *yum cha* or dinner, while visiting art exhibitions or museums, or while hiking on one of Hong Kong's many hiking trails. Interviews and conversations were mostly held in English, which for most of my middle class informants proved no issue. If a participant felt uneasy about his/her level of English, I sought the help of a translator. Among these translators were students from Hong Kong University, who had replied to an advertisement I placed at the notice board of the Centre for Buddhist Studies. Others were recruited amongst undergraduate sociology students of the same university.

During interviews and conversations, I found that my background as a Catholic, and my genuine interest in Buddhism helped me establish a close connection with most of my informants. During meetings with Buddhists, they often attempted to explain Buddhist concepts to me. Meetings with Catholics often led to conversations about differences and similarities between the Church in the Netherlands and the Church in Hong Kong. Experiences like these not only enhanced my personal religious knowledge and interest, but more importantly provided me with valuable insights into what Hong Kong Buddhists and Catholics value most about their religions.

During my time in Hong Kong, I visited the aforementioned Catholic church and Mahāyāna Buddhist temple in Tsuen Wan as often as possible; and, at times, I met my informants there. However, I decided not to focus solely on these communities, but instead to follow the people I had met there to other places they frequent. This allowed me to more firmly embed my informants in the social context of the city instead of the neighbourhood or religious community. There are limits to this particular methodology. With its 7.2 million residents, Hong Kong is too large and diverse to permit one single ethnographic understanding. However, although fragmented, the advantage of this methodology is that I experienced how my informants incorporate their religious beliefs into their everyday lives and into their reflections on non-religious topics. Moreover, when meeting informants, I soon learned that although they frequently visit the same religious sites and are part of specific communities, they do not feel restricted by these (see Chapter 2; see also Westendorp, forthcoming-b). In particular my Buddhist participants often travel to different places in Hong Kong (and beyond) to listen to the teachings of the masters they find inspiring, and to access the teachings and practices they feel that they need. This also applies to my Catholic informants, albeit to a lesser degree. According to them, it is of little concern

which specific Catholic church they visit, as all churches are part of the same universal Catholic organisation. These observations made me decide to follow my informants to different places, rather than researching what was happening at the two specific religious sites.

By following Hong Kong Buddhists and Catholics, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly debate on urban religion. Most studies that focus on urban religion so far mainly highlight the religious practices that take place in urban environments. A good example is Robert Orsi's (1985, 1999a) review of the annual *festa* of the Madonna in the streets of Italian Harlem. In contrast to such studies, my research focuses on the degree to which religious notions and values permeate and give form to individual reflections on and narratives about urban aspirations. The religious orientations of my informants shape the ways in which they construct narratives of themselves, Hong Kong and China. The choice to research these 'invisible' urban religious framings and perceptions was not only deliberate, but partly a result of challenges I encountered in the field.

Some of these challenges are similar to those experienced by other urban anthropologists. For example, George Gmelch, Robert Kemper and Walter Zenner (2010 [1988]) listed the following difficulties: in an urban setting an anthropologist is often unable to reside with informants; informants mostly all live in different neighbourhoods far from each other and from the anthropologist; the researcher spends a lot of time commuting between these different neighbourhoods, leading to the possibility that interesting things happen while he/she is travelling; a lack of space in the open air (such as squares or parks) results in anthropologists having to rely on researching their subjects in indoor venues, like

homes, (religious) centres or cafes and restaurants; and, scarcity of time places constraints on the actual amount of time the researcher can spend with his/her participants.

Interesting things can be observed in the streets of Hong Kong and inside the raised apartment buildings in which I lived. Also, given that most religious events are open to the public, participation was never a problem. However, due to the vastness of the city, I rarely met my informants casually in the streets. Making appointments and travelling to meet them took up a lot of valuable time. As well, due to their particular lifestyles, mostly work-related, my informants were all very busy. In late 1980s, anthropologist Nicole Constable, doing fieldwork among Hakka Protestants in the New Territories, remarked: “Most people work at least six days a week, and cannot spend luxurious hours each day recounting stories and experiences for the anthropologist” (1988, p. 8). This was also the case during my research. Almost all of my informants are middle class residents in their early 20s to late 50s, who work on average more than 40 hours per week. At times it was difficult for them to sit down with me, recount their life narratives, and reflect on their religious experiences and expressions of beliefs. Nevertheless, I managed to meet some of my informants quite regularly, and engaged in hours long conversations with them. I am grateful for the precious time they spent talking to me and for sharing with me their perspectives on religion and politics.

Moreover, I often had to meet my informants in a room in a church or temple, or in busy cafés or restaurants. One of my first intentions when I started conducting research in Hong Kong was to visit my informants in their homes. In practice, however, I was rarely invited to the homes of my informants. Cramped housing conditions in Hong Kong result in most social time being spent outside. People mostly meet family members and/or friends

outside, eat out, go to the cinema, or engage in other outside activities. This was no different for me.

In sum, during my research time in Hong Kong, while I was highly involved in Catholic and Buddhist life in the city, at the same time I had limited access to it. Due to the above-described challenges to undertaking research in Hong Kong, most of the data presented in this thesis therefore constitutes my informants' reflections on their religious practices, experiences and notions gained during interviews and conversations, instead of the practices themselves. Because this is a departure from many other studies on urban religion, I show this sheds interesting new lights on this scholarly debate.

It is often thought that a PhD is a solitary, alienating project. My experience has not been like that, and for this I have a number of friends, colleagues, thesis participants and institutions in Australia, Hong Kong and the Netherlands to thank.

I am most grateful for the academic support and guidance I received during my PhD program from my principal supervisor Dr. Jaap Timmer, who encouraged me to apply for a PhD position at a time when I was not yet sure if I would be interested in pursuing an academic career. Jaap made me feel welcome in the Anthropology Department at Macquarie University, Sydney, from the first day I arrived. Throughout the years he has read all of my writings, and has never failed to comment on them extensively. I am grateful for his openness, his Dutch directness, and his enduring supervision. I am also grateful to my other two supervisors, Associate Professor Chris Houston and Dr. Anna-Karina Hermkens, for their advice, support and extremely useful comments that have greatly improved the quality of this work. In their individual ways, they have both proved to be very valuable supervisors.

I am grateful also for all of the work done by Dr. Estelle Dryland, whose meticulous editing of my thesis and other manuscripts has improved my English writing.

During my two fieldwork periods in Hong Kong, I was affiliated to the Hong Kong Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (Hong Kong University) and to the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong respectively. I would like to thank both organisations for granting me affiliation, for providing me with access to their universities, and for inviting me to interesting seminars. Also, I would like to thank the academic staff associated with the above universities for their valuable contributions to my research.

At various stages of my PhD program, I was funded by the Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University. My second fieldwork trip was in part made possible by a grant obtained from the Stichting Sormani Fonds (Sormani Fund Foundation), an agency based in the Netherlands. I thank both institutes for their financial contributions to my PhD. Also, I am grateful to Macquarie University for granting me the International Macquarie University Research Excellence Scholarship (iMQRES).

I would like to thank all my informants in Hong Kong, who not only told me their stories and shared bits and pieces of their lives with me, but who also introduced me to Hong Kong. Their joint contributions opened my eyes to this city's beauty. Along with my informants, I would like to thank Kate and Shirley for being my friends and for making me feel at home in the busy and overwhelming city that Hong Kong can at times be.

In Sydney, thank you to all of my friends who I have come to know via university and via other routes. Having friends has made living in Sydney so much more than just studying. At Macquarie, I thank my fellow Anthropology PhD students for their advice, for taking my mind off my own research, for the inspiring conversations we have had, and for

making my time at Macquarie University one I will never forget. I will express my gratitude to them in due time.

I am immensely grateful to the Department of Anthropology. The Department has offered me, a mere student, many opportunities to develop myself academically, and it has taught me many valuable things. Tutoring, attending weekly colloquiums, and having the opportunity to learn from fellow scholars during Research Weeks are moments that have greatly enriched my PhD experience. My very special thanks to Payel Ray (administrator of the Anthropology Department but most importantly a good friend) who works bureaucratic wonders and who always has the needed answers in times of doubt and uncertainty.

Finally, I would like to express a debt of gratitude to my family, friends and partner. Without the support of my parents, sister, brother and some of my closest friends in the Netherlands, I could not have completed this thesis. Even though I know it has been hard for my parents and siblings to have a daughter and younger sister who is 'home' only a few weeks a year, they have never failed to encourage and support me, wherever I am in the world. I am grateful to my Dutch friends; knowing that they will still be there when I return, after having been away for nearly four years, has given me the emotional support I needed. They have shown me that distance is not an issue when it comes to good friendships. Lastly, a special mention for my partner without whom I could not have been where I am today. His words of enduring encouragement, and his faith and trust in me have, despite the distance, sustained me through these years.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, I sat next to Emily on a bench by the water in Siu Sai Wan (Hong Kong Island).¹ Emily is a local Hong Kong Buddhist in her mid-30s, who works as a financial administrator for a local Hong Kong company (see the Appendix for bio-sketches of my informants). Recently, she joined SPACE (School of Professional and Continuous Education) at Hong Kong University to study subjects in Law, her aim being to gain a better understanding of the increasingly tense political situation in Hong Kong. While discussing this situation, Emily looked into the water, sighed, and said:

It feels like we [Hong Kong] are in the centre of the typhoon, right in the eye. Around Hong Kong, everything is changing. But nobody knows what it is changing towards. For long, we have enjoyed peace and freedom – but now that feeling is different (personal communication, Emily, Siu Sai Wan, 15.06.2014).

Emily's analogy summed up what I had already felt coming back to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in March 2014 after having been away for just over seven months. Protests were happening more often, and they seemed to attract increasing numbers of people, mainly younger people of a middle class background. On 4 June 2014, tens of thousands of people, more than in previous years, joined the Vigil in Victoria Park (Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island) to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. The annual 1 July protests culminated in the arrests of approximately 200 people, mainly young students under the leadership of a student

¹ To ensure anonymity, I use pseudonyms throughout this thesis. For background information regarding my informants, see Appendix.

organisation called Scholarism. And, it was anticipated that the long-awaited occupation of the Central district of Hong Kong would occur any day.

The tensions that finally erupted in late September of that year saw life in Hong Kong subjected to a period of chaos. On Monday 22 September 2014, Hong Kong university students started a week-long class boycott. The boycott, under leadership of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and Scholarism, was organised in response to the announcement of the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) on 31 August regarding the method of election of the Chief Executive (CE) of Hong Kong in 2017. Hong Kong students were dissatisfied with the proposed method of the NPCSC, regarding it as advocating "fake democracy" as it ensured only delegates approved by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could stand for election. The following Friday, the students, forming a group of young pro-democracy activists "who, unlike their predecessors, had little or no experience of a Hong Kong under colonial rule" (Cheung, 2015, p. 100), gathered near the eastern entrance of the Central Government Offices in Admiralty (Hong Kong Island). The same evening, while trying to 'reclaim' the recently privatised Civic Square by climbing over its fences, they were surrounded by policemen. Early Saturday morning, and throughout the rest of that day, police used pepper spray and other forms of force in an attempt to clear the site. Many activists were arrested, including Joshua Wong, the 17-year old Scholarism student leader. Tensions intensified, resulting in the police using more pepper spray and tear gas. Reaction to the perceived police force 'brutality' was intense, and resulted in many Hongkongers joining the students in protest from that Saturday onwards.²

² Prior to the event, the Hong Kong police force was seen as a peaceful and stable form of modern governmentality essential to the economic prosperity of the city (Constable, 2009). The only occasion in which the Hong Kong police had exercised strong physical force was during the 2006 anti-World Trade Organisation protests when Korean farmers demanding free trade clashed violently with the police. However, the violence in those protests was directed towards the Koreans, not towards Hong Kong's own people. The violence used in

On Sunday 28 September the Occupy Central with Love and Peace Movement (OCLP) also moved in support of the students. This movement was founded in 2003 by Professor of Law Benny Tai, sociologist Kin-man Chan and Reverend Yiu-ming Chu. Their goal was to peacefully occupy the Central district of Hong Kong (on Hong Kong Island) to push the government to work out a better plan for the election of the CE in 2017. Initially, OCLP had planned to occupy Central on 1 October, but due to the escalations in the student protests and the arrests of some student leaders, the movement was launched ahead of schedule. The leaders of OCLP joined the students, and together they led the Umbrella Movement (named after the umbrellas used by protesters to ward off pepper spray).

During the Umbrella Movement, which lasted for 79 days, three areas of Hong Kong were occupied: Admiralty, which was the main occupation site; Causeway Bay, the off-shoot of Admiralty; and Mong Kok, often described as the ‘lawless’ occupation site, where the leaders of HKSF, Scholarism and OCLP had no leadership and where power was in the hands of the people. It is estimated that approximately 1.2 million people took part in the protests at various times and in different forms (Hui, 2015, p. 111), an astonishing number in a city of 7.2 million residents. Finally on 15 December 2014, the Umbrella ‘revolution’ ended peacefully, albeit without concrete solutions, winners or any breakthroughs in the debate surrounding universal suffrage.

The 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement has, most definitely, been an historical incident, which brought particular issues in the HKSAR into sharp focus. At the basis of the Umbrella Movement was the ongoing debate surrounding the socio-economic and political relationship between the HKSAR and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) post-1997 Handover. This relationship is partly shaped by the ‘one country, two systems’ policy (*yige*

September 2014 signalled for the residents of the city that the police and, by extension, the Hong Kong Government had turned against the Hong Kong populace (Kuah-Pearce, 2009).

liangzhi). This political model, designed by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s and enshrined in the Hong Kong SAR Basic Law, states that Hong Kong and Mainland China are essentially part of the same country (the PRC), while at the same time having the right to have different judicial, economic, social and political systems. It also states that socialism is not to be practiced in Hong Kong, and that the capitalist system and way of life that existed in the city pre-Handover shall remain unchanged for at least fifty years until 2047.

Regardless of this policy, many local Hong Kong residents feel a definite threat of an increasing encroachment of mainland Chinese politics and immigrants on their everyday lives. The threat they feel formed the basis of the Umbrella Movement, and likewise forms the basis of this thesis.

This thesis mainly covers the period leading up to the 2014 Umbrella Movement, as my research was conducted during the two years prior to the political upheavals; more specifically, from July 2012 to July 2013, and from March to August 2014. The interviews I conducted and recorded and the conversations I held provide insights into the events leading up to the Movement. During my research period many people in Hong Kong began to increasingly express their concerns about the city's political and socio-economic present and future. When I started my research in the summer of 2012, the dissatisfaction, unhappiness and fears expressed by my informants were directed towards relatively mundane issues and were only sometimes the main focus of interviews and conversations. When I left the city in the summer of 2014, topics such as 'universal suffrage', 'Occupy Central', 'anti-Occupy' and 'civil disobedience' had become common parlance. My informants more and more spoke of the threat they felt vis-à-vis the increasing presence of mainland Chinese people in 'their' city and the growing influence of the CCP on life in the HKSAR, through migration and tourism, investments, and political measures. Writing this thesis post-Umbrella

‘revolution’, the event in numerous important ways clarified and retrospectively reorganised my comprehension of my data and significantly determined my thesis topic.

i. Urban Religion and Urban Aspirations

Although in essence the Umbrella Movement was a political movement seeking universal suffrage, it indirectly highlighted an aspect of Hong Kong life that is often overlooked or perceived to be irrelevant; i.e., the importance of religion in the everyday lives of Hong Kong middle class residents. Religion informs the lives and experiences of many Hongkongers, as well as their non-religious urban aspirations. It is this aspect of life in Hong Kong that I explore in this thesis in an attempt to discern what attracts certain members of Hong Kong’s middle class to a particular, modern Hong Kong Buddhism or to Roman Catholicism (henceforth: Catholicism). Particular focus is upon how socio-economic and political happenings in contemporary Hong Kong are reflected upon by my informants. I argue that the increasingly difficult relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China as experienced by my informants inscribes itself on their religious notions and values, and that these orientations play a determining role in reflections on their urban non-religious aspirations.

During my research in Hong Kong, I talked to more than 90 Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic laity and clerical members, whose experiences and reflections I explored in over 120 interviews and additional meetings.³ A minority of my informants describes themselves as belonging to Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna Buddhism. Even though their narratives come to light in this thesis, the main focus is on Theravāda Buddhists, as most of the

³ As indicated in the Preface, I have also spoken to members of organisations affiliated with other religions. Some of these will be mentioned in the pages to come. However, they are not the focus of this thesis.

Buddhists I met identify themselves as such.⁴ What the Buddhist individuals of these various Buddhist schools have in common is a personal attraction to a ‘modern Buddhism’, characterised by a wish to recover the original Buddhist tradition as a reaction to “the dominant problems and questions of modernity” (McMahan, 2008, p. 5). I elaborate on this in the last section of the Introduction, and in more detail in Chapter 2.

An examination of Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism in Hong Kong offers interesting insights into the role of religion in urban middle class Hong Kong, for at least two reasons. First, both religions are non-indigenous to the local Hong Kong context. Buddhism originated in present-day northern India; Theravāda Buddhism is the dominant school in Asian countries other than Hong Kong and China (e.g., Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam). Christianity originated in Western Asia; the Roman Catholic Church was later established in Rome. A focus on these two ‘indigenous’ religions allows me to discuss what is different about these religions in a Chinese religious context, as well as indicate what is unique about Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism. Second, Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism are both ‘minority’ religions in Hong Kong: Theravāda Buddhism is (similar to other Chinese contexts) the least popular Buddhist stream in the city, and Catholicism the least popular Christian one. Concurrently, they are often overlooked in the already limited corpus of literature addressing religion in Hong Kong.

Most studies of Hong Kong Buddhism focus on people who are born into a cultural Chinese style of Buddhist practice, which combines elements of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and popular religious practices. Practices related to this ‘popular’ form of Buddhism are, for example, described by Hugh Baker (1979), Joseph Bosco (2015a), Tik-sang Liu (2003), and Joyce Savidge (1977). The study of Theravāda Buddhism in Hong

⁴ For an elaboration of the origins and main differences between these three Buddhist schools, see page 43-45.

Kong, and how this school of Buddhism is valued and experienced by lay individuals, is so far underrepresented. This is a shortcoming, because, as I show in Chapter 1, this Buddhist stream is gaining popularity among the younger generation of Hong Kong Buddhists (Yeung & Chow, 2010) and is quickly becoming one of the more popular forms of Buddhism among the Hong Kong middle class. Much of the research into Hong Kong Christianity variously focuses either on the growth of Christianity during the city's colonial history (see, for example, Smith, 2005 [1985]), on the Christian conversion of local Hong Kong communities, such as the Hakka in the New Territories (see Constable, 1994), on the question of how the religious policies of the PRC might influence Hong Kong Christian organisations (mainly Catholic) in the future (see Leung & Chan, 2003), or on the Christian practices of migrant domestic workers in the city (see Constable, 1997; Hawwa, 2000; Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Little has been written on how Christianity, and in particular Catholicism, shapes the worldviews of Hongkongers in this dynamic urban environment. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism as experienced by local Hongkongers.

In addition, this thesis offers another theoretical innovation by engaging with the burgeoning academic research undertaken on urban religion, partly initiated by the work of Lowell Livezey (2000b). In the academic debate on urban religion as it is developed so far, there are three shortcomings. The first two are an overemphasis on the visibility of religious practices and symbols in the urban built environment, and an overemphasis on religious transformations due to transnational and rural-to-urban migration. In Chapters 2 and 3, I elaborate on these two shortcomings and show how the study of religion in urban Hong Kong shines new light on these debates.

A third shortcoming in the scholarly debate on urban religion is the unevenly large amount of attention paid to religion in American and European cities. Examples include Robert Orsi's (1999b) study of different religious experiences in several American cities, the abovementioned edited volume by Livezey (2000b) on religious practices in different neighbourhoods in Chicago, and Rik Pinxten and Lisa Dikomitis' (2012 [2009]) edited volume which includes chapters on China and Southern America, but mainly focuses on European cities. Many of these studies depart from an investigation of processes of secularisation and changing relations between church and state, arguing that the old theoretical paradigms of secularisation and religious decline are flawed and that attention should instead be placed on the study of religious innovation and pluralisation (Casanova, 2013; see also Conclusion).

Only recently has the study of religion in Asian cities emerged. A prime example is Peter van der Veer's (2015b) edited volume, which includes case studies from Singapore, China, the Philippines, India, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Pakistan. In his work, Van der Veer shows that urbanisation in Asia is overwhelming. Over half of the Asian population is now living in cities. The "act of being in the world" (Roy & Ong, 2011) of these cities differs greatly from their Western counterparts. Therefore, Van der Veer argues that urgent attention needs to be paid to religious life in such cities.

Regarding religious life in urban China, a large body of research has already been done. Given the overwhelming amount of such research, it is near impossible to give a concise overview here. Some of the most recent examples include Fenggang Yang's (2005) work on Christianity as practiced in MacDonald's restaurants by Chinese urban youth, Lizhu Fan and David Whitehead's (2004; 2011) explorations of spiritual resources for residents of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, Li Zhang's (2015) research on Buddhist

psychotherapy and spiritual wellbeing in urban China, and Daniel Abramson's (2011) description of the resurgence of unofficial folk-religious spaces in urban China after the death of Mao. The fact that so much research has been conducted on religion in Chinese cities is hardly surprising, considering the religious revival that is occurring in China since the early 1980s (Overmyer, 2003) as well as China's rapid urbanisation.⁵

However, the diversity of research into religion in Chinese cities is, to date, limited. First, most of the research has focused on the rapid growth of Christianity (mainly Protestantism) in China's cities. For example, Hu Anning (2013), who explores Protestants in urban China, contrasts them with Protestants in China's rural areas. Hu found urban Protestants to be more gender-balanced, younger, better educated, and more likely to emphasise religious identity and to participate in religious programs. Second, similar to urban religion research done in American and European cities, the main emphasis in the literature on religion in urban China is on migration (as in the work of Fan and Whitehead (2004; 2011), who describe migrants coming to Shenzhen to find jobs) or on visible religious practices, buildings and symbols. For example, Joseph Bosco (2015b) describes how religious practices in Hong Kong are shaped by the city, by focusing on temple processions taking place in the city streets. Gareth Fisher (2011; 2015) explores religious practices in Buddhist temples in Beijing, and the role of public Buddhist sites in the city. Likewise, Francesca Tarocco (2015) describes the development of Buddhist places in the ritual life of Shanghai urbanites since the start of the 20th century. Only few scholars focus, as I do, on how religious orientations (both Christian and non-Christian) shape and are shaped by the Chinese urban environment.

⁵ Urbanisation of the country increased from 17.9% in 1978 to 52.6% in 2012; over half of this rise (approximately 85.6 million people) is attributable to rural-to-urban migration (Chen & Song, 2014, p. 486; Lu & Wan, 2014, p. 671).

Moreover, studies on urban religion in China have so far made little use of already existing theories on urban religion developed by, amongst others, Becci, Burchardt and Casanova (2013), Day (2014), Livezey (2000b), and Orsi (1985; 1999b). The theoretical insights from these studies, based on the investigation of religion in European and American cities, can enhance the understanding of religion in urban China. At the same time, studies of religion in Chinese cities can augment the understanding of religious life in European and American cities by contributing to the already existing theoretical corpus. In the Conclusion, I elaborate on this by presenting some of the many ways in which studies on urban Chinese (and, in fact, Asian) religion and religion in Western urban settings can enhance each other's understandings.

A useful conceptual framework to bring together the study of urban religion in China with the already existing literature on urban religion is the one suggested by Van der Veer (2015a), i.e., a focus on the relations between religion and urban aspirations. According to Van der Veer, 'aspirations' is a useful concept as it helps to "get away from the static connotations of the concept of 'identity' that tends to fix people to what and where they are rather than to what and where they aspire to be" (ibid., p. 4). Moreover, a focus on the fluid and evolving aspirations of urban religious residents highlights their fears and hopes for the future (Fisher, 2015). Finally, exploring urban aspirations also helps the researcher avoid artificial boundaries between the secular and the religious, instead placing emphasis on the interrelatedness between both.

In line with Van der Veer, I employ the concept of 'aspirations' to argue that in recent years, members of Hong Kong's middle class have found it increasingly difficult to achieve their economic, political and spiritual aspirations to a 'good life'. Following anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004), I regard these aspirations as cultural capacities,

oriented towards the future, related to wants, preferences, choices and calculations. These aspirations include ideas and beliefs about “life and death, the nature of worldly possessions, the significance of material assets over social relations, the relative illusion of social permanence for a society, the value of peace or war” (ibid., p. 68). They determine a person’s wants and wishes for ‘commodities’, e.g., physical goods, marriage, work, leisure, respectability, friendship, and health. As economist Debraj Ray points out, they are part of larger ethical and metaphysical ideas and, as such, are not individual but formed in interaction with social life, or “the cognitive neighborhood of [a] person” (2006, p. 409).

While Appadurai and other scholars write mainly about the aspirations of the poor or marginalised members of society, I recognise the potential of using the concept of aspirations when focusing on members of the middle class. In Hong Kong, they are ones that are faced with the biggest socio-economic, political and religious changes in the merge of the HKSAR with the PRC. I find it particularly relevant to focus on the aspirations of this class when relating Appadurai’s notion of aspirations to the ‘good life’ to Ray’s theory vis-à-vis the aspiration gap: “the difference between the standard of living that’s aspired to and the standard of living that one already has” (2006, p. 412). Ray maintains that aspirations are always situated in a field of power. Power inequalities can reduce people’s ability to achieve their aspirations, leaving them frustrated or in despair, and susceptible to engagement in political action. Throughout the chapters of this thesis, it will become apparent how this plays out in the city of Hong Kong.

Until recently, academic debate surrounding aspirations focused mainly on the link between class and economic aspirations. While this link is clear, little attention has been paid to how these aspirations are intrinsically related to people’s religious notions and values , and how even economic aspirations may be spiritually guided and/or framed. In an attempt

to bridge the academic gap between economic aspirations and religious beliefs, I investigate the ways in which Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhists and Catholics from their specific religious orientations relate to and reflect on contemporary socio-economic and political changes in Hong Kong, and how these orientations in turn shape their urban aspirations, both in economic and political terms. By focusing on middle class perceptions around religion, I show how urban aspirations are assessed and perceived through the lens of religion. In sum, I argue that to a large extent people's religious notions and values shape how they perceive and communicate their economic and political aspirations, the difficulties they experience in pursuing these aspirations, and how they respond to emerging crises.

ii. Middle Class Buddhists and Catholics

As indicated above, emphasis in this thesis is upon Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhists and Catholics who are members of Hong Kong's middle class. Members of this class come from different backgrounds, and have different occupations, beliefs, incomes, interests, mindsets and aspirations. As I show in this thesis, they are described in scholarly and journalistic writings as the ones that hold strong ideas about what it means to be Chinese and/or Hongkonger. They are also the ones that seem most unhappy with contemporary political and socio-economic life in the city. Unsurprisingly, they are the ones that were at the forefront of the 2014 Umbrella Movement.

The Hong Kong middle class is a prominent class in academic and journalistic writing. It is often described as a very large class. For example, Siu-kai Lau states that as of 2013, "more than 70% of Hongkongers consider themselves as belonging to the 'middle strata'" (2013, p. 108), although according to the Census and Statistics Department this

figure is 46%.⁶ These different figures indicate that it is unclear what the ‘middle class’ in Hong Kong precisely entails. In a society in which there is no longer a manufacturing industry and in which the working class is no longer only ‘blue collar’ (Ng, 2009), it is hard to define what constitutes the middle class. This became for example apparent in February 2013, when Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah identified himself as part of the middle class while earning over HKD300,000 a month (approximately AU\$38,000), thereby triggering controversy about the meaning of the term.⁷

The ‘Hong Kong middle class’ is a very diverse group. My interlocutors are teachers, nurses, journalists, IT developers, retired salesmen, yoga instructors, bank employees, fashion designers, secretaries, social service workers, head-hunters, and a retired government official (see the Appendix for more details). Some of the people I interviewed and introduce in this thesis are fortunate enough to own their own property, mostly in areas far from the Central Business District (e.g., Tsuen Wan, Sham Tseng, Heng Fa Chuen, and Sha Tin). Others live alone or – if still single – with either or both of their parents in private or government-subsidised rental apartments. Their incomes range from a mere HKD 10,000 per month (approximately AU\$1,750) to HKD 150,000 (AU\$26,500). For most of my informants, their working hours extend far beyond 40 hours per week.

Despite this diversity, especially members of the younger Hong Kong middle class generation have a few characteristics in common. They have all finished their tertiary education, most of them in Hong Kong but some of them abroad. Most, but not all, are confident regarding their respective levels of English. As self-proclaimed members of the middle class, they differentiate themselves from the upper class, those they see as affluent

⁶ Source: Yan Lon (08.04.2014). Middle Class Feeling the Squeeze. *The Standard Hong Kong*.

⁷ Source: Tao Li (26.04.2013). Middle Class Myth. *China Daily Asia*. See http://www.chinadailyasia.com/business/2013-04-26/content_15073387.html.

people living in apartments in the Mid-Levels (Hong Kong Island) or close by. They also tend to differentiate themselves from people they see as belonging to the lower ranks of Hong Kong's population, those who live in areas such as Sham Shui Po (Kowloon), or areas deep in the New Territories, e.g., Yuen Long. Finally, they show the aspiration of being part of a hardworking and professional class, and of being able to identify with the 'Hong Kong Dream'. In addition, most aspire to own property and other assets (see Chapter 3).

Much has been written about middle classes in Asia (see, for example, Chua, 2000b; Robison & Goodman, 1996), and in Chinese regions such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and Macao (see Hsiao, 2014b). Research into Hong Kong's middle class has so far been mainly sociological, a notable exception being the research undertaken by Hong Kong-born anthropologist Helen Siu (2009, 2011; Siu & Ku, 2008). Siu's work offers great insights into the Hong Kong middle class and the macro processes its members find themselves confronted with. However, it does not deal with individual socio-economic, political or spiritual aspirations. In this way, Siu's research differs from my own approach, as mine focuses on individual perceptions, aspirations and religious orientations. Notwithstanding, Siu's work provides a comprehensive overview of the birth of Hong Kong's middle class in the late 1960s, and its post-Handover development into a politically active class, especially when complemented with sociological research such as that of leading scholar Lui Tai-lok (1997, 2003, 2014a, 2014b).

The Hong Kong middle class emerged in the late 1960s. Prior to this time, there was no middle class in Hong Kong due to the constant movement of people in and out of the city triggered by socio-political changes in Mainland China (Lui, 2003).⁸ From the late 1960s

⁸ Large numbers of immigrants sought refuge in Hong Kong after fleeing the Civil War in Mainland China (1927-1950), and from the subsequent establishment of the PRC in 1949. Consequently, the population of Hong Kong increased rapidly from 600,000 at the end of the Second World War (1945) to 2.2 million in the

onwards, a middle class emerged subsequent to rapidly developing export-oriented industrialisation,⁹ economic development (especially after Hong Kong's transition to an international finance centre), a stable laissez-faire economy in which competition determined one's fate, and the absence of strong opposition to a middle class formation from both the capitalist and working classes (Lui, 2003, 2014a). The Hong Kong middle class began to formulate its own identity. In 1971, the term 'middle class' appeared for the first time in the Hong Kong Government Yearbook (Hong Kong Government, 1972, p. 2). The identity of this class primarily revolved around the notion of the 'Hong Kong Dream', an aspiration in which success and upward mobility were seen as based on free competition and one's own credentials, both through work and (Western) education (So, 2014).

A side effect of the ideology of the Hong Kong Dream was that due to people's belief in personal effort and their faith in the ideology of market competition, members of the newly-formed middle class did not yet see the need to organise themselves into political organisations in order to advance their class interests. This is not to say that there were no protests during this period. The two largest were the 1966 Communist Movement, and the 1967 Trade Union Protest Movement (Mathews, Ma & Lui, 2008). Overall, however, the "Hong Kong Chinese were encouraged [by the British Administration] to pursue economic wealth instead of politics" (Kuah-Pearce, 2009, p. 108); and they seemed happy to do so.

The 1970s saw Hong Kong residents become more politically active and more civically engaged. There are a number of economic, political and demographic reasons why social movements emerged during this period: social protests and petitions were better

mid-1950s. Immigration intensified during the Chinese Great Leap Forward (1958-1961); during the latter half of the 1950s, 1.3 million Chinese immigrated to Hong Kong. In 1982, Hong Kong's population numbered approximately 5.3 million people; by 1990, it had hit the 6 million mark (Baker, 1983, p. 470; Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 7; Sinn, 1997, pp. 382-395).

⁹ In a very short span of time, Hong Kong was transformed from a trading post in the 1940s and 1950s into an export-oriented industrial colony (1960s and 1970s), and eventually into a world financial centre (1980s and 1990s) (Lui, 2003).

tolerated by the colonial government; the lower class, who finally felt the positive effects of Hong Kong's economic developments, demanded social improvement; the gap between social services provided by the government and the desires of local residents increased; and (perhaps most importantly) a new class of educated youth came of age, a group of people who had been born and brought up in Hong Kong and felt they belonged to the city (Ma, 2009). These people came to regard Hong Kong as a place to stay, rather than a transit area (Mathews, 2000). However, despite these developments, generally speaking the middle class social movements of the 1970s "were not intended to challenge the legitimacy of the colonial government. They only aimed at urging the government to reform its social policies and public services" (Li, Cheung & Chan, 1998, p. 519).

This changed in the 1980s. Members of the 'old' middle class of the 1960s and 1970s included those "who achieved their service-class positions primarily through internal promotion, on-the-job training or [by] starting their own business" (Chan, 2000, p. 129). The 'new' middle class of the 1980s consisted of younger professionals, managers and administrators with higher educational backgrounds (Chan, 2000; Hsiao, 2014a). Two factors contributed to the growth of this 'new' class: economic restructuring (in relation to the opening-up of the PRC in the late 1970s) and increasing links with the international economy leading to a demand for professional and managerial personnel; and the expansion of the education sector, primarily the tertiary sector (ibid.).¹⁰

At the same time, the political situation in Hong Kong began to change. In 1982, negotiations started between colonial Great Britain and China regarding the future of Hong Kong. An understanding was reached that Hong Kong would be returned to the PRC in 1997

¹⁰ During the 1980s tertiary education, however, continued to lag behind. In 1989, "only 8 percent of eligible students were able to secure admission to local university education" (Nedilsky, 2014, p. 47). This changed during the 1990s when the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong were supplemented by five additional universities.

as an inalienable part of the mainland under a ‘one country, two systems’ policy, ending the by then 152 years (excluding the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong from 1941-1945) of colonialization. Sino-British negotiations eventually culminated in the drafting of the ‘Hong Kong SAR Basic Law’ in 1984 (also known as ‘Hong Kong’s mini constitution’), a document in which the notion of the ‘one country, two systems’ policy was explained in rather vague and broad terms. The negotiations of the early 1980s created in the city “a changed structure of political opportunities for social movements in Hong Kong, ‘new rules of game’ ... and a new agenda for participants in Hong Kong politics” (Chen, 2009, p. 67).

One would assume that this period of negotiations, in which the future of Hong Kong’s economic and political life was being debated, would lead members of the new middle class to organise themselves politically. This was, however, not the case. The large demonstrations of 1989, which saw 1,000,000 people (at that time one-sixth of Hong Kong’s population) rallying in the streets of Hong Kong in support of the students who were victims of the Beijing Tiananmen Square massacre, did little to change this middle class apathy. This is not to suggest that there was no dissatisfaction and worry among the middle class during that period. According to social studies scholar Alvin So:

College professors and journalists worried about the possible censorship of the Chinese Communist Party; barristers and solicitors worried about the possible erosion of judicial independence; social workers worried about the cutbacks in the state’s spending on welfare; and they all worried that Hong Kong citizens could no longer enjoy the human rights of freedom and liberty after the handover in 1997 (2000, p. 14).

However, instead of organising themselves politically and aspiring to keep the conditions determining the Hong Kong Dream in post-Handover Hong Kong alive, many self-proclaimed members of the middle class opted for either a position of “quiescence and

inaction” (Lui, 1997, p. 225), or chose to leave the city. The numbers of Hong Kong emigrants to countries such as Canada, the US, Australia or Great Britain rose from 20,000 per year in the early to mid-1980s to approximately 30,000 to 45,000 in the late 1980s. Post-1989, emigration rapidly increased to approximately 60,000 per year (Mathews et al., 2008, p. 44; Skeldon, 1990, p. 502).¹¹

Different scholars have given a number of reasons for the absence of middle class political organisation and the “generally apathetic” (Li et al., 1998, p. 517) attitude of members of the middle class in the period spanning the Sino-British negotiations to the 1997 Handover. Lui (2014b) argues that up until that point, politics had primarily been the business of the local elite and of government bureaucrats, not a concern of the middle class. Moreover, he opines that the middle class was simply not confident that a liberal, autonomous, capitalist Hong Kong would be able to exist post-1997 (ibid., 2003). Alvin So (2014), on the other hand, indicates members of Hong Kong’s middle class felt powerless and unable to influence the situation. In their minds, the future was beyond the control of ordinary residents. Moreover, he argues that these middle class members felt assured by the Basic Law’s promise that “the socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years”,¹² stressing the ‘stability and prosperity’ (*anding fanrong*) needed for the Hong Kong middle class to aspire the Hong Kong Dream.

Following the Handover of 1997, the first two years saw over 2,000 protests annually, mostly organised by groups representing the middle class (So, 2002, p. 405). It was, however,

¹¹ In the late 1990s and early 2000s, many of these middle class émigrés returned, “reassured by the early years of Chinese rule and seeking greater economic opportunity” (Cheung, 2015, p. 103).

¹² Source: Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1990). Hong Kong Basic Law, Chapter 1, Article 5. See http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/images/basiclaw_full_text_en.pdf.

not the Handover that urged middle class residents to take to the streets: it was the Asian financial crisis that took Hong Kong by surprise and shattered for many of its middle class members their confidence in the Hong Kong Dream. A comfortable middle class lifestyle based on pride and confidence was replaced by “a high degree of frustration, discontent and despondency” (Lau, 2013, p. 112). Moreover, the protests taking place in the years post-1997 were mainly confined to sectorial interests, not to the interests of the middle class as a whole (So, 2014).

The situation finally changed in 2003, the year in which over half a million Hong Kong residents joined a march from Victoria Park in Causeway Bay to the Central Business District (Hong Kong Island) on 1 July (the anniversary of HKSAR Establishment Day), led by the loosely organised Civil Human Rights Front. The protestors were opposing the implementation of Article 23, which:

[R]equires the Hong Kong government to legislate the prohibition of acts of secession, subversion, treason, theft of state secrets, sedition, as well as foreign political organisations conducting political activities in Hong Kong, and local political organisations establishing ties with foreign political bodies (Leung, 2009, p. 250).

In the aftermath of the protests, two cabinet members resigned and the Bill to implement Article 23 was redrawn (Kuah-Pearce & Guiheux, 2009). Surveys taken of the protesters in the march revealed a distinct profile: “They were predominantly young, educated, law-abiding, mainstream ‘Hong Kongers’ with middle-class backgrounds, jobs and aspirations” (Siu, 2009, p. 56). The 2003 protests were not only “outbursts of social, economic and political grievances and symbolic of public attitudes – particularly among the middle class – to the perceived poor performance of the government of the Hong Kong special administrative region (HKSAR) under the leadership of Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa”

(Lui, 2014a, p. 99). As well, they expressed the worry, uneasiness and anxiety felt by Hong Kong's middle class residents regarding the future of Hong Kong and the relations between the HKSAR and the PRC (ibid.).

Since 2003, members of the Hong Kong middle class have become more vocal about the future of their city. This was alluded to by one of my Hong Kong informants, who said:

Hong Kong has changed a lot since 1997. If you ask me what I think has become better, then it is the civil society. The awareness of people is getting stronger. The older generation was more indifferent politically speaking. This generation, the ones in their mid to late 20s, tends to be more conscious of its rights and its political participation. Not that people protest every week; they are just more aware. They are quite civil minded, and get the sense that they own this place (interview, Ivy, HKUST, Clear Water Bay, 22.12.2012).

There have been annual 1 July marches since 2003, held in commemoration of the 'spirit' of the first year (Ma, 2009). They are attended by different groups demanding democracy, universal suffrage, rights of minorities, and other political goals including freedom, knowledge, fair play, human rights, rule of law, integrity and transparency (Kuah-Pearce & Guiheux, 2009; So, 2014).¹³ Lau Siu-kai argues to the effect that:

¹³ The 1 July marches have throughout the years grown into large and diverse protest marches. However, the 2015 march witnessed the lowest level of turnout since 2008, only about one-fifth of the turnout in 2014. According to journalists employed by the *South China Morning Post*, this was mainly a result of the protest fatigue experienced by many Hongkongers post-Umbrella Movement, and the lack of a clear goal in the fight for universal suffrage. It may be that the most direct result of the Umbrella Movement has been that while it has rendered people tired of the democracy-debate, it has strengthened those who have opted to persist with their goals and efforts. Sources: (1) Staff reporters (01.07.2015). July 1 March Concludes, with Turnout at Lowest Level since 2008. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1830576/july-1-pro-democracy-march-kick-hong-kong-some-activists>. (2) Staff reporters (01.07.2015). Protest Fatigue and Lack of Clear Goal Blamed for Slump in Hong Kong July 1 Rally Turnout. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1831584/protest-fatigue-and-lack-clear-goal-blamed-slump-july-1>.

In essence, Hong Kong's middle class has morphed from a self-confident and complacent social class into an anxious, impetuous and discontented social class since the Handover. ... Undeniably, there is growing middle-class aspiration for political participation and political influence. They want to see changes in Hong Kong that will bring about equal opportunities, fairness and a government more responsive to their needs and interests (2013, pp. 107-114).

It is this group of discontented Hong Kong middle class residents and their well-educated children who have staged and participated in major protests over the past years, e.g., the demonstration against the proposed implementation of the Moral and National Education Program in 2012, and the 2014 Umbrella Movement.

This short overview of the birth and development of Hong Kong's middle class evinces two characteristics of this class. According to Loïc Wacquant, classes "are constantly organised, disorganised, and reorganised as an effect of struggles – economic, political and ideological – that are partly indeterminate from the standpoint of the structure" (1992, p. 51). Classes are contested and fluid categories that come into being the moment people begin to articulate their needs and interests in relation to other classes and/or the state (So, 2014). This has been the situation in Hong Kong, where a middle class developed in reaction to the capitalist and the working classes in the mid-20th century, and developed into a politically active class critical of both the government of the PRC and that of the HKSAR. Second, it shows that a 'class' is not merely based on narrow economic interests, as once suggested by Max Weber (So, 2000). Classes not only reflect material desires, e.g., property and capital, but also specific lifestyles, values, ethics, and even religious beliefs, as I show in this thesis.

iii. Modern Tradition, Local Universalism, Individual Accountability, and Salvation in the Here and Now

During meetings with middle class Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhists and Catholics, I sought to explore their material desires, beliefs, customs, values, and ethics. My interlocutors' reflections on socio-economic and political issues in contemporary Hong Kong and their aspirations to live a 'good life' elucidate how they describe their religions as a lived experience. In this thesis, I do not focus upon the practices that religious believers *should* be doing and the beliefs they *should* observe according to doctrines or theologies. Rather, my focus is on the practices they actually perform and, primarily, the beliefs and notions they actually hold (McGuire, 2008; Orsi, 2005). These beliefs and notions do not necessarily follow the particular doctrine prescribed by Buddhist or Catholic leaders or texts, but are historically and culturally contextualised (Swearer, 2010 [1995]). Because all religion is lived, it is fluid and creative; and, by extension, it is adjustable to particular socio-economic and political circumstances. I investigate this in this thesis, by privileging people's narratives about their religion in relation to their aspirations over behaviour and practices. By analysing religion and aspirations, I am able to shed light on the unique ways Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism become meaningful grids for guiding my informants and helping them understand their place in Hong Kong and in the world.

I do this by focusing on three themes, which emerge in chapters 2 to 4. These are respectively my informants' perceptions of Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism and their emphases on the stable foundations of those religions (i.e., 'tradition' and 'universalism'); an exploration of how my informants regard personal accountability in their religions and, subsequently, in the world; and an analysis of how my informants' views regarding salvation colour civic engagement. These three themes will bring to light how the contemporary socio-

economic and political relations between the HKSAR and the PRC, and the experiences of an encroaching ‘other’ combine to inscribe themselves on religious notions valued and emphasised by my informants in relation to their aspirations, and how in turn their religious views shape the way in which they experience the political and social unrest in contemporary Hong Kong.

Chapter 2 details how my informants describe Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism, and which elements of these religions they emphasise in their reflections on issues of political and religious belonging. I show that in the contemporary society of Hong Kong middle class residents are searching for something stable to anchor their identity. In reflection on the uncertain nature of the political future of Hong Kong, my middle class informants often refer to Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism using notions of ‘tradition’ and ‘universalism’. ‘Tradition’ is seen as a reliable fundament of religion, which gives the morals and ethics of said religion a firm foundation. The same goes for ‘universalism’, which equally promises a stable foundation. The latter is mostly used by Hong Kong Catholics and the former by Buddhists. However, many of my Buddhist informants also attach great value to the idea that their religion is universal. Similarly, many Catholics find it important to stress that their religion is rooted in stable and meaningful ‘traditional processes.

I employ the term ‘tradition’ in this thesis to describe an interesting tendency in my Buddhist informants’ narratives. The meaning of the term needs clarification, as my informants’ reference to the concept differs from its usage in common academic writings in two ways. First, in these writings ‘tradition’ often refers to systems which are inherited from forebears; the literal translation of the Latin word for tradition is ‘something handed over’ (Graburn, 2001). In these writings ‘tradition’ refers to religious systems that are handed down from one generation to the other, for instance through monastic lineages. As such, the

term implies the possibility of plurality. Buddhist scholar Donald Lopez, Jr., for instance writes of “various Buddhist traditions”, meaning Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhist schools. In contrast to these ‘traditions’, my informants’ use of the term assumes a ‘Tradition’, with a capital letter: a singular, supposedly stable, original teaching (i.e., *the* Buddhist Tradition) that needs to be recovered in its original form. This was for example expressed by William, a Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s:

I think in order to practice Buddhism well, one needs to understand the fundamental teachings of the Buddha and the history of Buddhism. If you understand the origins, you exactly know how Buddhism began, who the Buddha was, what he did and why, and what his teachings are. If you look at Mahāyāna and Tibetan [ed.: Vajrayāna] Buddhism, you see that elements are added to it later. Thus they are different than the origins (interview, William, Foreign Correspondents’ Club, Central, 24.02.2013).

The original Buddhist ‘tradition’ is thus described as being uninfluenced by cultural and ‘traditional’ influences. ‘Traditional’ in this case (equal to the plural word ‘traditions’) refers to that which is handed down through generations and has thus been removed from the origins. That which is ‘traditional’ is thus not necessarily part of the Buddhist ‘tradition’. As I show in Chapter 2, the emphasis on ‘tradition’ is mostly associated with Theravāda Buddhism, although not limited to this school. . Even the name of the school indicates its antiquity, ‘thera’ meaning ‘ancient’ or ‘primordial’ (Harvey, 1990).

Second, in academic writings ‘tradition’ often contradicts ‘modernity’. Early Enlightenment thinkers regarded ‘tradition’ in opposition to the rational, empirical pursuit of true modern knowledge. Later Romantics were more positive: for them, ‘tradition’ equated the essence of the authentic (Bauman, 2001). Regardless of these differences in evaluations, tradition was viewed as being opposite to modernity. This dichotomous thinking has formed the basis of much anthropological thinking, e.g., of Durkheim, who predicted tradition would

lose its value in a modern, urbanised setting (Shanklin, 1981). In contrast, my informants' attempt to recover the original Buddhist tradition can be regarded a type of modernist intervention. This attempt reflects the Buddhist Revival Movement that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in different Asian countries (Lopez Jr., 2002) and that is still continuing in many Southeast Asian countries today (e.g., Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and some regions of Vietnam), as well as in the West (Crosby, 2014). As I argue in this thesis, the emphasis on tradition is thus not opposed to modernity: instead, the claim to go back to the true, original tradition of Buddhism is a very specific, consciously modern, predominantly middle class claim. In this, modernity does not contrast tradition, but rather embraces it.

As I show in further detail in Chapter 2, the emphasis on 'tradition' in Theravāda Buddhism is thus a product of modernity. Similarly, the emphasis on 'universalism' by my Catholic informants is a product of locality. In the narratives of my Catholic informants there is a recurring emphasis on the universal aspect of their religion. My informants describe Catholicism as a universal religious system led by one central organisation and with one uniform liturgy. They see Catholic churches all over the world as following the same doctrine. Even though they acknowledge and appreciate how the Church has become localised in the Hong Kong context, they emphasise universalism over localism. However, as I show, this emphasis on the universal character of the Catholic Church is in itself a result of the specific local context of Hong Kong.¹⁴

In Chapter 3, I consider how my informants describe their role and position in their religion and in the world. I show that my Buddhist and Catholic informants each have different understandings of who or what is responsible for a certain situation, and who or

¹⁴ In this thesis, I use Church to refer to the universal Catholic Church under leadership of the Vatican, and a church as a local parish, community or building.

what has the capacity to change that situation. Most notable in my Theravāda Buddhist informants' narratives are their descriptions of Buddhism as an individually practiced religion, and their strong individual commitments to Buddhism. Even though my informants go to centres to listen to Buddhist masters and to practice meditation with others, their ultimate practice is done individually. Moreover, each person alone is thought to be held accountable for his/her actions, and has his/her own agency to influence life and karma. The emphasis on individual choice and responsibility is, I suggest, a typical middle class take on religion as it stresses a person's accountability in relation to individual aspirations.

My Catholic informants express a high degree of dependency on “cosmically external others” (Cassaniti, 2012), i.e., God, Mary, and Jesus. As responsible Catholics, they try to heed the Word of God and to follow His Path. God is seen to be responsible for the challenges and opportunities my informants face in their everyday lives. However, the agency attached to these external others does not take away the important role individual Catholics ascribe to themselves. Personal accountability is an important element in my informants' experiences of their religion. They feel they are accountable to themselves, to the Church, and ultimately to God. They are accountable to God in listening to His calling and to the words of the priests. They are accountable to the Church by fulfilling the threefold ministry of being prophets (proclaiming God's message), kings (being labourers in the Kingdom of God and extending this Kingdom) and priests (offering worship to God and Jesus). And they are accountable to themselves for leading a life of a ‘good Catholic’ and acting as such.

The emphasis on individual accountability in both religions can be related to the specific economic wants and desires of my middle class informants that shape their everyday lives, from home ownership and a reasonable income to having enough time to spend with

friends and families. Taken together, these wants and desires may be summed up as their socio-economic aspiration to the Hong Kong Dream. This aspiration is felt to be threatened by the influx of mainland Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong. The specific notions of personal religious accountability shape the way people negotiate this threat.

In Chapter 4, I explicate the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the spiritual and activist engagement of my Buddhist and Catholic informants in the uprising. I do this by focusing on the concept of ‘salvation’ (both individual and collective) and by explaining how notions related to this concept have shaped the actions of my informants during the Umbrella Movement. By focusing on the Umbrella Movement and the narratives of my informants (who either joined or did not join) I show that religion as expressed by Hong Kong Buddhists and Catholics makes participation in politics less an issue of the relationships between religion and politics, and more one that concerns future salvation and personal responsibilities to act as ‘good’ Buddhists or Catholics.

Apropos of salvation, Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism at first sight might seem to differ significantly. However, a closer examination shows how they overlap. Theravāda Buddhism is stereotypically perceived to be a religion merely concerned “with the soteriological needs of individuals conceived in otherworldly terms” (Deitrick, 2003, p. 252).¹⁵ The overall assumption in the extant writings is that Theravāda Buddhism’s emphasis on individual salvation leads to a failure to engage with societal problems. This is one of the main critiques of Mahāyāna Buddhists on Theravāda Buddhism, who regard the latter as a ‘small vehicle’, lacking proper Buddhist compassion and wisdom (for more information, see Chapter 1). However, in contrast, many Theravāda Buddhists, including some of my informants, adhere to the values of a modern Buddhist movement captured with the

¹⁵ ‘Soteriology’ refers to the study of religious doctrines of salvation.

academic term ‘engaged Buddhism’. This movement emerged in various Asian countries in the 20th century, advocated by Buddhist leaders of different Buddhist schools, including Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, and Dr. Ariyaratne. It aims to reduce the suffering in society – which is both individual and created by institutions – by applying Buddhist techniques such as meditation practices and acts of non-violence. These practices will in the end result in social justice and the reduction of societal suffering. Christianity’s emphasis on such issues has been more widespread, and is strongly rooted in theological notions such as the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth and following in Jesus’ footsteps.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by reviewing contemporary trends in the anthropological debate surrounding urban religion. In that chapter, I suggest that the theories and analyses employed in my study provide new ways of thinking about religion in urban settings, particularly when viewed from the perspectives of individual laity. Only through a thorough study of religious values and notions can an observer fully understand how the urban is shaped by religion, and how religion is shaped by the urban. Lastly, in the final section of the Conclusion, I elaborate on possible new lines of investigation on the basis of the conclusions of this thesis. These lines mainly relate to the aforementioned study of urban religion.

But before I start with the explication of the three main themes, I first provide the background for the thesis. In the next chapter, I describe the development and position of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations in Hong Kong’s past and present and indicate how these religious organisations have developed in relation to political developments both in Hong Kong and in Mainland China, and in relation to developments in other parts of the world.

CHAPTER 1:

Studying Religion in a Chinese Context

In the introduction of a recent edited volume on Chinese religious life, Philip Wickeri wrote:

Religious life is flourishing in China, and on many different levels. The growth of religion is evident not only on the mainland, but in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, and in overseas Chinese communities as well (2011, p. 3).

The city of Hong Kong has a diverse and flourishing religious landscape, one in which religious symbols are manifold and apparent. On the MTR¹⁶ and buses, one sees individuals wearing images of Buddhist deities or Christian crosses around their necks. There are religious bookstores in every neighbourhood; and Catholic congregations (mainly Filipino) celebrate Mass in public parks on Sundays. Falun Gong proponents and opponents demonstrate next to each other in busy tourist areas; religious buildings form a remarkable part of the built environment of the city; and, incense and lights are burned for popular deities on footpaths, on corners of roads, in residential and commercial buildings, and in restaurants and shops. Religion is moreover a topic of conversation that can be held at any time and place, in busy cafés or while walking on the street. Being religious in Hong Kong is nothing to be embarrassed or secretive about. As this thesis indicates, religion not only forms an important part of Hong Kong's everyday life, but is intrinsically linked to the socio-economic and political processes happening in the city.

¹⁶ Mass Transit Railway, the rapid railway system in Hong Kong.

The largest religions in terms of adherents in Hong Kong are Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Official government documents estimate the numbers of Buddhists and Taoists to be one million each (Stoker, 2013, p. 344-345). However, official membership numbers of these religions cannot be given as they do not have an official lay category as, for example, Christianity or Islam. At the same time one could argue, as I show in later chapters, that every Hongkonger is Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian, at least in a cultural sense.

Christianity accounts for approximately 12% of Hong Kong's total population, with fewer than half adhering to Catholicism. As of 2013, apart from the 374,000 Hong Kong Catholics, there were approximately 189,000 non-resident Catholics sojourning in Hong Kong, primarily from the Philippines (Catholic Truth Society, 2013, p. 666).

Notwithstanding the small percentage of Christians in Hong Kong, the influence of this religion on Hong Kong society is disproportionately large. As I indicate in this chapter, Christian (primarily Anglican and Catholic) churches provide many social services. For example, almost half of all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are religiously affiliated, predominantly Christian (Jackson, 2015). Also, three of the eight universities in Hong Kong have a Christian affiliation (Baptist University, Lingnan University, and Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, all of which have roots in Protestant educational enterprises).

Other religions are also present in Hong Kong. The proportion of Muslims in the city has steadily increased from 1.3% in 2006 to 3.1% in 2009 (Formichi & O'Connor, 2015, p. 4). Half of the Muslims are, however, migrants, mainly domestic workers (Bosco, 2015a). The 'migrant religions' of Hinduism and Sikhism account for 0.6% and 0.1%, respectively (Bouma & Singleton, 2004, p. 8; Formichi & O'Connor, 2015, p. 4).

Despite the intriguing diversity of religion in Hong Kong, it has often been overlooked in research into Hong Kong society and in policy debates. It appears to be sidelined by debates surrounding ethnicity and multiculturalism. In the introduction to a recent special edition of *Asian Anthropology*, Chiara Formichi and Paul O'Connor note that:

Much scholarship has examined the Singapore and Malaysia contexts as laboratories *par excellence* of the multi-religious, multi-ethnic state, and due to recent tensions, Myanmar has been gaining increased attention; yet Hong Kong has remained at the margins, being generally perceived as having a rather homogenous population, for which religion plays hardly any role (2015, pp. 3-4).

This thesis is an attempt to correct this bias.

In this chapter, I explore Buddhist and Catholic organisations in Hong Kong, and the ways in which these have developed over the last century. Providing an historical account of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations, mainly since the 1950s, I show that Buddhism and Catholicism in Hong Kong have developed in tandem with and have been heavily influenced by political developments, both in the PRC and in the HKSAR, pre- and post-1997 Handover. I indicate that Hong Kong religion is intrinsically intertwined with Chinese politics. It is precisely because of the mainland influence that religious organisations in Hong Kong today feel anxious about Hong Kong's future policies regarding religion, primarily the freedom to exercise religion in public and the freedom to offer religious education.

The religious organisations that I present in this chapter form the 'ground' on which the rest of this thesis rests. In chapters 2 to 4, I introduce individual Buddhists and Catholics: i.e., the people that move around on this 'ground'. To research phenomena in urban settings, Joshua Barker, Erik Harms and Johan Lindquist (2013a, 2013b) propose a methodological study of 'grounds' and 'figures'. According to this methodology, 'figures' are individuals in

a city who come to stand for something larger than themselves. They are not mere ‘objects’, but individuals who are affected by and affect the ‘ground’, i.e., the social, political and economic context in which they find themselves. The relationship between the two entities is thus dialectic: while ‘figures’ are “representative of larger structural changes in the political economy and social reality ... they also *shape* this reality through their interplay in daily life” (Barker, De Gelder & Gibbings, 2013, p. 157, original emphasis). An ethnographic account of an urban setting along the lines of this methodology requires a constant back and forth between figures and grounds; in the case of this study, between Buddhists and Catholics, and Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations in past, present and future. By using this methodology, the ways in which my informants talk about religion can be fully understood against, and in the contextual ground of, an encroaching Mainland China.

The use of ‘figures’ and ‘grounds’ appears even more useful when the concepts are slightly altered. According to Barker, Harms and Lindquist (2013b), ‘figures’ are people who loom larger than life. While earlier urban anthropologists mainly studied marginalised peoples in urban areas (such as the poor or migrants), Barker, Harms and Lindquist emphasise that “figures of urban power and authority” (ibid., p. 169) should not be forgotten. While I agree that the research focus on residents of urban settings should be broadened, in my research I neither focus on marginal characters, nor on those who stand out against the background. Most of the people I describe in this thesis are individuals who operate within the *zeitgeist* in which they find themselves without trying to powerfully influence it, and without taking on the roles of leaders of some kind. Moreover, in my research I place more emphasis than Barker, Harms and Lindquist on how my interlocutors engage in processes of self-identification and ‘othering’. In this, I follow Michael Lambek’s (2013a) critique concerning the aforementioned theorists. Lambek states that a figure “cannot exist in or as a

single portrait but only through his interactions (or not) with other figures” (ibid., p. 276). This will become apparent in chapters 2 and 3, when I explicate how Hongkongers self-identify in relation to non-Hongkongers (primarily mainland Chinese) and peoples from different religious backgrounds.

1.1 Chinese Religion

Preceding an overview of Buddhist and Catholic organisations in Hong Kong, it is important to discuss the position and meaning of religion in the larger Chinese context, in the past and in the present. Before the late 19th century, ideas of what ‘religion’ entailed were fundamentally different in China from those in the West. For example, a ‘belief’ in a particular deity was not important; rather, importance was attached to the efficacy (*ling*) of powerful spiritual entities, such as gods, ghosts and ancestors (Tarocco, 2015; Wolf, 1978). The belief in predestination played a vital role in Chinese spiritual life. However, there was at the same time an emphasis on determining one’s own fate: one was required to use the opportunities one could get to manipulate his/her destiny (Fan & Whitehead, 2004). This could be done by influencing spiritual entities through making offerings and by praying, often with the help of religious specialists. The end goals of such rituals were often family-oriented and pragmatic: one worshipped anthropomorphic gods for long life, prosperity, familial harmony, or good results in exams (Esler, 2015; Overmyer, 1986). Also, religious exclusivity was never important in the Chinese context, especially not for the laity. The three ‘indigenous’ religions of China (Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism) overlapped and in general did not demand exclusivity (Adler, 2002). The emphasis on the efficacy of spiritual entities meant people visited temples and deities that they considered useful to worship at for a particular task, regardless of the religion these temples or deities belonged to. As there

were no boundaries recognised between different spiritual systems, one was not merely Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian, but all and more at the same time (Lui, 2003).

From the late 19th century onwards, Protestant Christianity became influential in China. It was only from then onwards that an official word for ‘religion’ entered the Chinese context: *zongjiao*. The word originates from the Japanese word *shūkyō* and was first employed by Japanese translators of European texts. These texts predominantly referenced Christianity and, as a result, *zongjiao* came to be equated with religious features such as exclusive allegiance and doctrinal orthodoxy (Adler, 2002). *Zongjiao* came to encompass “a unified system of belief, theology and ethical principles, with a scriptural canon, an educated clergy, exclusive congregational membership and worship, and highly organised national institutions” (Palmer, 2012, p. 297). Other religious practices, most notably ‘popular’ Chinese practices (mostly a combination of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism), came to be regarded as ‘superstitious’ (*mixin*).

In the early 20th century, members of the Chinese elite began to enthusiastically adopt elements of Western Enlightenment. Under their influence, the Republican and later Communist Chinese regimes began to officially distinguish *zongjiao* (which they regarded as ‘real’ religion) from its corollary *mixin*, leading to “waves of cultural self-laceration, religious destruction and state campaigns of secularisation” throughout the 20th century (Yang, 2011, p. 10). While during the Republican period only the three indigenous Chinese religions were recognised as *zongjiao*, during the Communist regime this category came to include Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism.¹⁷

The distinction between *zongjiao* and *mixin* forms the basis of the definition of ‘religion’ that is still held by the CCP today. The constitution of the Communist Party

¹⁷ Note here that Protestantism and Catholicism are regarded as two distinct religions in China, instead of as different denominations of the same faith. For more information, see page 84.

guarantees freedom of religion “within the framework of normal religious activity”, meaning that no religious activities should spill over in broader society or challenge the power of the Party.¹⁸ The dominant orthodox Marxist view in China assumes that religion will fade away when people become more educated. As religion cannot yet be eradicated, it needs to be contained. This is done by the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department. These are two governmental organisations charged with administering Chinese religious affairs. At the local levels are official ‘patriotic’ associations of the five religions: the China Islamic Association; the China Buddhist Association (both founded in 1953); the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (1954); the China Taoist Association (1957); and, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (1957) (Ashiwa & Wank, 2009; Leung, 2005; Palmer, 2012).

The CCP greatly influences religious life in China by controlling organisations and individuals related to the five *zongjiao* through official policy documents, e.g., Document 19, issued in 1982. These documents dictate that the CCP has unchallenged supremacy over all aspects of life: any social organisation, including religious, must be dependent on and loyal to the Party. Also, religion should be regulated through approved channels, such as the patriotic associations. And, temples and churches can be repaired for historic or scenic value only, not for religious reasons. Religion is tolerated as long as it is subservient to and serves public interest. Loyalty to the Party always needs to supersede loyalty to religion, expressed in the statement *aiguo aijiao* (‘love the country, love the state, in that particular sequence) (Moody, 2012; Potter, 2003).

¹⁸ Source: Peter Berger (11.06.2014). Is the Chinese Regime Changing its Policy Toward Christianity? *The American Interest*. See <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/06/11/is-the-chinese-regime-changing-its-policy-toward-christianity/>.

Two notes need to be made alongside this general description of religion in the contemporary PRC. First, even though there are five *zongjiao* officially recognised by the CCP, they are not all treated in the same way. A comparison between the positions of Buddhism and Catholicism in the PRC makes this apparent. The practices of both religions are allowed within the frameworks stated by the CCP. However, the two are treated very differently. While Buddhism is less contested, the Catholic Church faces considerable scrutiny. There are multiple reasons for the different stance of the CCP towards Buddhism and Catholicism; for example, the relatively short presence of Catholicism in China, the Western (thus non-preferable) character of Catholicism, the fact that the Catholic religion is more institutionalised than Buddhism and thus harder for the CCP to control, and the fact that the Holy See recognises the Government of the Republic of China in Taiwan. I elaborate on these in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

Second, it should be noted that government control of religion differs extensively from one place to the next; and, that on local levels, there are major differences to be seen in the degree of religious control (Goossaert & Palmer, 2011; Lam, 1997 [1994]). Local differences might not always reflect the views of the central Chinese government.¹⁹ Giving an overview of the position of religion that applies to the whole of China is near impossible. It is important to keep this in mind when researching religion in any Chinese context, even Hong Kong, as this is not only shaped by official Party policies, but also by other related factors.

¹⁹ Source: Peter Berger (11.06.2014). Is the Chinese Regime Changing its Policy Toward Christianity? *The American Interest*. See <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/06/11/is-the-chinese-regime-changing-its-policy-toward-christianity/>.

1.1.1 Religion in Hong Kong

Hong Kong religious organisations have been influenced by political changes throughout the 20th century effected by three different governments: the British colonial government, the CCP, and the contemporary HKSAR Government. The effects of these influences have been experienced differently by Buddhist and Catholic organisations in the city. They have also resulted in major differences between religious life in Hong Kong and in Mainland China.

While in Mainland China in the early 20th century Chinese elite and government officials, influenced by Enlightenment ideals, began to distinguish *zongjiao* from *mixin*, such processes did not happen in Hong Kong. Consequently, large destructions of public religious symbols during the 20th century, as took place on the mainland, did not occur in the city. This was primarily a result of the overall laissez-faire stance of the British colonial government regarding social life in the colony, including religious activities (Esler, 2015). This did not mean, however, that Hong Kong society was not influenced by Republican and Communist reforms happening on the mainland. For example, in the early 20th century, the British colonial government grew somewhat suspicious of the growth of ‘Chinese’ religions (Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism) in the city, fearing possible Republican influences. One result of this growing anxiety was the foundation of the Chinese Temples Committee in 1928. The goal of this Committee was “to suppress and prevent abuses in the management of Chinese temples and in the administration of the funds of Chinese temples”.²⁰ The committee was led by Chinese elites and merchants, who were not necessary concerned with religion or the eradication of superstitious elements (as on the mainland) but who were instead concerned with maintaining (economic) stability in the region. By extension, the Chinese Temples Committee aimed to govern temples associated with ‘Chinese religions’.

²⁰ Source: Department of Justice (30.06.1997 [27.04.1928]). Chapter 153: Chinese Temples Ordinance. *Hong Kong SAR Government*. See <http://www.legislation.gov.hk/eng/home.htm>.

In the decades that followed, it became hard for new temples to be established, and old ones to be expanded (Bosco, 2015a). Ritual life in temples stagnated or declined; festivals and processions became smaller; and temple reconstructions came to be only very modest (Goossaert & Palmer, 2011).

After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the effects of political events on the mainland on Hong Kong religious life increased, for two reasons. First, the establishment of the PRC stimulated a rapidly growing number of mainland refugees who fled the mainland for Hong Kong (see pages 14-15). Numbered among the refugees were religious leaders and individuals, who continued to live their religion in the perceived safety of Hong Kong. These and other refugees “irrespective of their former wealth and professional status, required food, housing, medical care, education, employment, etc.” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 24). Religious organisations (primarily Christian, but also Buddhist) assumed the task of providing these services, on the one hand helping build Hong Kong into its current affluent milieu, and on the other attracting new converts.

Second, religious life in Hong Kong was influenced by the threat of communism. The British colonial government sought ways to minimise this threat. Christian education was thought to produce people that could resist communism (Esler, 2015). Therefore, it was favoured by the British as an ally in the fight against Chinese Communism – more so than non-Christian or ‘Chinese’ religions. As a result, Christian organisations, mainly Catholic and Anglican, were encouraged by the colonial government to provide education and other social services to the residents of Hong Kong. Moreover, “the British colonial administration had long realised that the churches could offer higher quality social and education services and at lower costs, than could the government” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 45). As a result,

between 1945 and 1969 many Christian schools were established, aided by the colonial government.

When during the early 1980s it became clear that Hong Kong would return to Mainland China in 1997, Hong Kong policy makers (including religious leaders) understood that respect for religious freedom would be an important benchmark for the way the ‘one country, two systems’ policy would be implemented (Goodstadt, 2003). To this end, the right to religious freedom was included in the 1990 Hong Kong Basic Law, Articles 32 and 148 of which state:

Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of religious belief and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public. ... The relationship between non-governmental organisations in fields such as education, science, technology, culture, arts, sports, the professions, medicine and health, labour, social welfare and social work as well as religious organisations in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and their counterparts on the mainland shall be based on the principles of non-subordination, non-interference and mutual respect.²¹

This, however, does not mean that the HKSAR Government has adopted a fully neutral or non-interfering stance towards religion in post-Handover Hong Kong. Local Hong Kong temples are being renovated with governmental financial support through the Chinese Temples Committee, but only when these temples are part of Hong Kong’s cultural heritage and attract (religious) tourism. Due to the shortage of space, there are heavy restrictions on the construction of new religious buildings in urban areas. The Government does not provide financial support to religious institutions for the organisation of religious activities. The only support provided is managerial; for example, by providing policemen to help organise the annual Our Lady of Fatima procession on Cheung Chau Island.

²¹ Source: Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1990). Hong Kong Basic Law, Chapter 3, Article 32; Chapter 4, Article 148. See http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/images/basiclaw_full_text_en.pdf.

Also, all policy matters pertaining to religion are governed by a special branch of the Home Affairs Bureau. This branch was founded in the early 1980s after the leaders of Hong Kong's six major religious organisations (Hong Kong Buddhist Association, Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, Confucian Academy, Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association, Hong Kong Christian Council, Hong Kong Taoist Association) formed the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders.²² The Colloquium is nowadays an important participating actor in political matters in the Hong Kong region. Since 1997, it plays a more formal role, given that it accounts for 40 out of 800 (since 2010, 1200) delegates during the election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive (CE). The religious leaders associated to the Colloquium are also the main speakers representing Hong Kong's religious sector in conversations with the PRC government (Goossaert & Palmer, 2011).

Despite the seemingly clear position of the HKSAR Government on religion, as written down in the Hong Kong Basic Law, there is ongoing discussion surrounding the specifics of the precise meaning of 'religious freedom'. For example, discussions have arisen on questions of whether individuals have the right to preach and practice in public, whether they have the freedom to 'explain' religion to others, whether they can receive public funding and contributions for social service provisions, and whether they can have connections with religious organisations overseas (Formichi, 2015). Up until this day, these questions remain largely unanswered.

An example of the ambiguity of Hong Kong's 'freedom of religion' was a discussion regarding the position of Falun Gong in Hong Kong in 2001. From the time that Falun Gong

²² The Hong Kong Colloquium encompasses leaders of six religious organisations, including the leader of the Confucian Academy. This is in contrast to Mainland China where Confucianism, despite the many efforts of Chen Huanzhang (president of the Confucian Association, established in 1912) to prove that Confucianism is a religion, it is not recognised as such. After Chen's failure to have Confucianism recognised as religion, he retreated to Hong Kong where since the 1970s his Association has endeavoured to be recognised. Due to Chen's campaigning, Confucian representatives are now present at interreligious meetings and official functions in Hong Kong, and are part of the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders (Goossaert & Palmer, 2011).

was founded in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, Hong Kong has played a significant role in its development. In the early years, Li often travelled from Mainland China to Hong Kong to give teachings. In May 1995, Li delivered a lecture on Lantau Island, Hong Kong's largest off-shore island. A few months later, the first published collection of Li's lectures included a chapter titled 'Teaching the *Fa* on Lantau Island'. In July 1996, when the publishing of Falun Gong literature was banned on the mainland, presses in Hong Kong and Taiwan continued to print them. On 25 April 1999, Falun Gong members in Beijing staged a large demonstration, demanding that the CCP should officially recognise Falun Gong as a religion.



Falun Gong practitioners promoting and practicing their 'religion' at the Star Ferry Terminal (source: Mariske Westendorp, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, 10.02.2013).



Anti- and pro-Falun Gong demonstrators outside Wong Tai Sin Temple, a popular tourist destination in Hong Kong. The pro-Falun Gong demonstrator (the woman at the front) is holding a sign board saying 'Falun Gong [is] good'. The writing on the banners of the anti-Falun Gong demonstrators reads: 'Boycott Falun Gong evil cult, Built [sic.: build] a harmonious Hong Kong', and 'Cherish your life, Stay away from the evil cult-Falun Gong' (source: Mariske Westendorp, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon, 24.08.2012).

The demonstration attracted over 10,000 practitioners and supporters. During this demonstration, Li was in Hong Kong. In early June of that year, in response to the Beijing government's decision to brand Falun Gong a 'cult', Li issued a statement, which was published in several Hong Kong newspapers (Penny, 2012).

After the Falun Gong was branded a 'cult' in the PRC in 1999, and practitioners were subsequently banished from the country, it resurfaced in Hong Kong. Falun Gong members put up posters in busy areas that attracted tourists (e.g., outside the Star Ferry terminals) and practiced in public. A month later, the leader of China's Religious Affairs Bureau travelled to Hong Kong to criticise the Falun Gong. In response, the Hong Kong Home Affairs Bureau panel initiated a meeting to define 'religion' as opposed to 'cult' (Nedilsky, 2014). After Hong Kong's CE Tung Chee-hwa added his voice to the denunciation of Falun Gong, the Christian community, together with Buddhist and Muslim representatives, united to oppose the banning of Falun Gong in Hong Kong (Goodstadt, 2003). In June 2001, the office of the Hong Kong CE announced that it had aborted its initiative to brand the Falun Gong as 'cult'.

Interestingly, the discussions that were held during this period were not merely concerned with defining 'religion', but were similarly related to securing a clear boundary between the HKSAR and the PRC:

[M]ore than ten Christian organizations including the Catholics believed that, on the basis of religious freedom, the movement ought to be allowed to have a chapter in the SAR. They stood by the Falun Gong in the name of religious freedom. Christian organizations were not necessarily sympathetic to [the] movement's beliefs, but they were highly sensitive to any potential erosion in the religious freedom they had enjoyed in Hong Kong over the past several decades, and were therefore willing to regard the Falun Gong as a new religion (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 119).

Thus, identifying Falun Gong as a religion, as opposed to giving it the 'cult' status it has in the PRC, has been used by Hong Kong religious organisations to successfully secure the

division between the HKSAR and the PRC in the ‘one country, two systems’ policy. This division is important for understanding the role of Buddhism and Catholicism in contemporary Hong Kong.

The short historical overview above highlights that religion in Hong Kong has been heavily influenced by political and religious developments in Mainland China. At the same time, it has developed relatively autonomously, creating a religious environment in Hong Kong that at present is significantly different from that on the mainland. This will become even more apparent when looking in more detail at the developments of Buddhism and Catholicism in Hong Kong throughout the past decades.

1.2 Hong Kong Buddhist ‘Grounds’ During the Twentieth Century

Generally, the Asian Buddhist world can be divided into three schools: Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. In the first centuries after the final extinction of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) to Nirvāna, a number of Buddhist sects emerged. One of these sects evolved into Theravāda Buddhism. From the late 19th century onwards this stream became known as the most orthodox form of Buddhism throughout Southeast Asia. Nowadays, Theravāda Buddhism is the dominant school in Southeast Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos and parts of Vietnam (Lopez Jr., 2002). Another stream, promoting a different understanding of the Buddha and of the path to enlightenment, evolved in India four centuries after the Buddha’s extinction and became known as Mahāyāna. This new school emerged as a reaction to the teachings of Theravāda Buddhism, which it considers to be too selfish. Mahāyānists came to refer to Theravāda Buddhism as ‘hinayāna’: small vehicle. In the small vehicle of Theravāda Buddhism, after a monk reaches enlightenment (this is not considered possible for nuns), only he would be



2013 Retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh: Daily walking meditation, led by the master in the pouring rain (source: Mariske Westendorp, Wu Kai Sha, New Territories, 25.05.2013).



Hong Kong Coliseum, shortly before the start of the Vietnamese master's talk (source: Mariske Westendorp, Hung Hom, Kowloon, 27.05.2013).

freed from suffering and travel to Nirvāna. Mahāyāna (literally meaning ‘great vehicle’) Buddhists, on the other hand, acknowledge the existence of bodhisattvas: beings with the same level of compassion and wisdom as the Buddha, who after reaching enlightenment choose to return to Samsāra to guide other sentient beings the path towards enlightenment (Van der Velde, 2016 [2015]). Mahāyāna Buddhism is nowadays the dominant Buddhist school in China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia (Lopez Jr., 2002). Some time after the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism the third Buddhist school developed: Vajrayāna, meaning ‘diamond vehicle’. According to Vajrayāna Buddhists, one can reach enlightenment through performing rituals such as reciting mantras and making offerings. This school is nowadays most popular in Tibet (Van der Velde, 2016 [2015]).

Two notes need to be made alongside this general description of the Asian Buddhist world. First, the distinctive terms ‘Theravāda’, ‘Mahāyāna’ and ‘Vajrayāna’ are modern constructs; they are the result of Western Buddhist Studies scholarship that from the 19th century onwards seeks to differentiate Buddhist schools on the basis of different doctrines (Crosby, 2014). Second, strict boundaries between the different Buddhist streams cannot easily be drawn (Lopez Jr., 2002). None of the streams are monoliths, and the actual manifestations of Buddhism in real people’s lives and communities are marked by “fluidity, complexity, diversity, and richness” (Crosby, 2014, p. 2). This will be highlighted in the chapters that follow, in which I compare Theravāda Buddhism as described by different scholars with the Theravāda Buddhism as narrated during interviews by middle class Hongkongers

In Hong Kong nowadays, all three Buddhist schools are represented by Mahāyāna, Theravāda and Vajrayāna organisations and clerical and lay people. Under the influence of various global factors (especially since the advent of British colonialism in 1842), Hong

Kong Buddhism has transformed into a representation of Buddhist organisations from all over the world. These organisations are present in the hearts of Hong Kong's urban centres. More often than not, they occupy humble apartments or office spaces in residential or commercial buildings. Examples include a Korean Zen meditation centre situated in Causeway Bay, and the Kadampa Meditation Centre opposite Victoria Park (Hong Kong Island). The activities on offer in these centres reflect the diversity of contemporary Hong Kong Buddhism: there are centres specialised in kōan, meditation, sutra chanting and funeral rituals, to name only a few. Most of these activities are offered free of charge, making Buddhism very accessible. One Mahāyāna monk expressed his amazement regarding this abundance as follows:

Don't you find Hong Kong interesting? We have everything here. You name it, we got it! And there is no monopoly. That's why it's interesting. Hong Kong is a very interesting phenomenon. I think the world is truly flat in Hong Kong. All the masters come here. They each have their own followers – and we don't fight about that (interview, Venerable Buddhadasa, Centre for Buddhist Studies, HKU, 20.06.2013).

This, however, does not suggest that all Buddhist organisations are equally popular. Some Buddhist schools attract more Hong Kong followers than others. In contemporary Hong Kong, as in virtually all Chinese contexts, Mahāyāna Buddhism (mainly Pure Land, but also Chan and Tiantai) is the most popular form of Buddhism practiced. Theravāda Buddhism is the least popular. Historically Theravāda Buddhism has been hardly practiced in Chinese contexts. From the 7th century onwards, it was practiced only by people in Southwest China who were of non-Han ethnicity and who felt themselves closely related to the Buddhist practices of Thailand and Myanmar (Mak, 2012). Examples include the Shan of Yunnan (Crosby, 2014), and the Dai-lue people of Sinsongpannā (see, for example, Borchert, 2008).

Although Theravāda Buddhism is the least popular stream of Buddhism practiced in Hong Kong, it is gaining popularity among the younger generation of Hong Kong Buddhists (Yeung & Chow, 2010). It has also become the most popular form of Buddhism among the Hong Kong middle class. As I detail in the chapters that follow, Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhism has become a key element in the expression of Hong Kong middle class identity. It is no longer primarily influenced by the way Buddhism is practiced in Mainland China. Instead, it has become (especially since the mid-20th century) increasingly influenced by Buddhism as practiced in other Asian and, to a lesser degree, Western countries (see also Mak, 2012, one of the only articles written in the English language on Theravāda Buddhism in Hong Kong).

In this section, I elaborate on the development of the various Buddhist schools (primarily Mahāyāna and Theravāda) in Hong Kong, mainly during the 20th century. I give an historical account showcasing the influences of the British colonial government and the CCP on Hong Kong Buddhism. In the section that follows, I trace the development of the Hong Kong Catholic Church along similar historical lines. This will shed light on the intrinsic links between Hong Kong religion and Chinese politics, an elucidation which is crucial to any understanding of present-day dynamics in which fears of Chinese politics are mounting.

1.2.1 Hong Kong Buddhism under Colonialism

Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism most probably first came to Hong Kong from the Chinese Mainland during the 5th century CE, when the legendary monk Beidu built a hermitage in Tuen Mun (New Territories). In the early days, Hong Kong Buddhist monks and nuns

largely dwelled in forests or on mountains, often individually, to practice self-study (Barua & Basilio, 2009; Mak, 2012; Shannon, 2012; Welch, 1968).

In the early 20th century, the Hong Kong Buddhist sangha steadily grew in numbers. The growth among other reasons was a result of (mainly Mahāyāna) Buddhist clergy members and lay practitioners fleeing religious persecution and political instability following the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. As part of this growth, new temples were built in Hong Kong, mainly in secluded areas on Lantau Island and in the New Territories. Also, in a bid to dispel the notion within modern Buddhism (in Mainland China and Hong Kong mainly advocated by Yang Wenhui and Taixu as ‘humanistic’ or ‘engaged’ Buddhism, see also page 78) that a monastic should not be “a parasite on society but one who dedicates himself to the welfare of all” (Tsui, 1983, p. 38), several Buddhist social service centres were opened in the city.²³ For example, the first Mahāyāna Buddhist vocational school was established in 1930 by Lady Clara Lin-Kok in Happy Valley (Hong Kong Island) (Yeung & Chow, 2010).²⁴

A second wave of clergy and lay Mahāyāna Buddhists, who sought refuge post the establishment of the PRC, saw a further strengthening of the Hong Kong Buddhist sangha. In the early 1950s, numbers of clergy – estimated to be between 800 and 1,000 (Welch, 1960, p. 99) – moved into a few newly-constructed temples in secluded areas. Others moved into apartments in high-rise buildings, triggering the ‘apartment Buddhism’ phenomenon (Shannon, 2012, p. 286). However, from the 1970s onwards, the size of the Hong Kong

²³ Despite this influence of modern Buddhism on Buddhist life in Hong Kong in the early 1900s, it was not until the latter half of the century that the ideals and beliefs of modern Buddhism became popular in the city. In the chapters that follow, I elaborate on this ‘modern Buddhism’, as described in literature and as expressed by my lay informants. For now, it suffices to mention that modern Buddhist ideals originated in different Asian countries from the late 19th century onwards in all Buddhist streams, including Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism.

²⁴ See also Chung Hui Tsui (2006). *Tung Lin Kok Yuen's History Part 1-3* (Stephanie Chin & Corey Bell, Trans.). *Tung Lin Kok Yuen Buddhistdoor Website Team*. See http://tlky.buddhistdoor.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=12&lang=en.

Mahāyāna sangha rapidly declined. Old monks and nuns passed away, no new clergy members came from Mainland China to Hong Kong, and younger sangha members decided to move to countries further away from China, amongst other Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia and North America. By 1983, there were only between 200 to 250 monks and approximately 1,000 nuns left in Hong Kong; by the end of the 1980s, the number of Buddhist monks had decreased to fewer than 200 (Tsui, 1983, p. 26; 1989, p. 307). Without the mainland providing new monastic resources, Hong Kong Buddhist sangha life became almost non-existent.

At the same time, as a result of the presence and easy accessibility of Buddhist centres in urban areas, the numbers of lay Buddhists increased, leading to a “revitalization of faith” (Welch, 1960, p. 99). More Buddhist schools and other social service centres were built, the dual aim being to prove Buddhism’s usefulness to society (an important value within modern Buddhism) and to compete with the rapid growth of Christianity in the city (Tsui, 1983, 1989). In addition, the 1980s saw an influx of foreign-based Buddhist groups into Hong Kong, most notably from Tibet, Taiwan and Thailand (Mak, 2012). This led to the presence of not only Mahāyāna, but also Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhism in the city.

From the 1980s onwards, Hong Kong Buddhism increasingly began to mirror characteristics reminiscent of modern Buddhism. The historical Mahāyāna Buddhist sangha that came from Mainland China in the 1950s and 1960s had almost disappeared, and laymen felt increasingly attracted to a Buddhism that was less dependent on rituals and more on content (Mak, 2012). Meditation practices and centres soon became extremely popular. From the 1990s onwards, more *vipassanā* centres were opened, with lineages from Thailand, Sri Lanka, China and Burma. Hong Kong Buddhism had become a reflection of different Asian countries, masters, and schools; not merely of Mahāyāna Mainland China.

Since the early 1990s, and especially after the Handover, Buddhism in Hong Kong has grown rapidly in presence, popularity and membership. Several historical moments attest to this; for example, the building of the Big Buddha on Lantau Island in 1993, the implementation of the celebration of the Buddha's Birthday as a public holiday in 1998, and the showing of a Buddhist relic (provided by the PRC) in the Hong Kong Coliseum in 1998 attracting close to half a million viewers. The opening of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University in 2002 and the Centre of the Study of Humanistic Buddhism at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2005 gave modern Hong Kong Buddhism a more intellectual character, lessening the focus on ritualistic practices.

1.2.2 Hong Kong Buddhism Post-Handover

Nowadays, Buddhist dharma sharing in Hong Kong is conducted by monks and nuns who come from different countries in Asia and the West, who teach in Cantonese, Mandarin or English, and who attract international audiences. While I was in Hong Kong, I had the opportunity to listen to the teachings of a variety of religious teachers. For example, in 2013, I attended a teaching of the Australian Theravāda monk Ajahn Brahm, who visits Hong Kong every year for a full week to do dharma sharing and lead retreats. The world-famous Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh led a retreat in 2013 involving more than 1,000 people from different countries (including Mainland China) and held a dharma sharing at the Hong Kong Coliseum which attracted approximately 8,000 attendees. And, in the same year, the American nun Gen-la Kelsang Dekyong, spiritual director of the New Kadampa Tradition, attracted an audience of close to three hundred people for her dharma sharing on 'Buddhism in the Modern World'.

These examples could be interpreted as highlighting the great diversity and international character of contemporary Hong Kong Buddhism. However, when one takes a closer look at the make-up of the Hong Kong sangha, a different picture emerges. Most Buddhist organisations in the city are today still led by monks from Mainland China, or by nuns coming from the mainland, Hong Kong or Taiwan. Also, despite the growing popularity of Buddhism in Hong Kong, sangha numbers are not increasing, (Barua & Basilio, 2009). Buddhist masters from other countries usually come to Hong Kong on short or longer term visits, but not to stay. And, not many Hong Kong lay Buddhists consider becoming nuns or monks. This is perceived by some Buddhist clergy as a threat to the future existence of Buddhism in the city. From their viewpoints, it means that the Hong Kong sangha will remain dependent upon manpower coming from other countries, most notably from Mainland China. History has proven the fragility of such dependence.

In Hong Kong today, official Buddhist leadership is exercised by the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. Founded in 1945, the Association is

... an umbrella body based on individual, voluntary membership rather than temple or sect affiliation. Its members tend to be of the Mahayana, or Daai Sing, northern tradition, and include Taiwanese and Japanese sects whose members have Hong Kong resident status, but have less affinity with Tibetan and Nepali traditions. HKBA, in addition to representing Buddhists locally, enjoys membership in the World Fellowship of Buddhists (Nedilsky, 2009, pp. 217-218).

However, as membership of the Association is voluntary, and because the Association mainly represents Mahāyāna Buddhism, few Buddhist organisations in Hong Kong are connected to it. Most of the Buddhist organisations I researched are not affiliated to the Association.

One of the main tasks of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, apart from organising Buddhist celebrations and activities in Hong Kong, is to provide social services to the Hong Kong public. Since the advent of the modernising trend within Buddhism in the late 19th century, some Buddhist monastics have taken up a new role in order to remain relevant to the modernising world (Gombrich, 2006 [1988]). The same accounts for monastics in Hong Kong. Shortly after its establishment in 1945, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association set up the Charitable Chinese Buddhist School, the aim being to offer free education to the many children who were orphaned during the years of Japanese occupation (1941-1945). In the decades that followed, the Association grew into the largest Buddhist provider of social



December 2012: Hong Kong Plum Village flash mob under the clock tower in Tsim Sha Tsui (source: Mariske Westendorp, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, 15.12.2012).

services in Hong Kong, taking care of hospitals, schools, elderly services, youth services, and childcare services (Barua & Basilio, 2009; Shannon, 2012), alongside the more ritual provisions of funerary rites and burial spaces in temples and monasteries. In the school year 2008-2009, 23 of Hong Kong's 458 secondary schools were Buddhist; that is approximately 5% of all schools in Hong Kong (Yeung & Chow, 2010, p. 6). While this may seem significant, it pales in comparison to the services (mainly educational) provided by the Hong Kong Catholic Church and Catholic missionary organisations.

Politically speaking, there is almost no presence of Buddhist voices in Hong Kong, neither in public debates nor in protests, apart from the inclusion of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association in the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders. One of the only groups showing civic engagement is the local Plum Village Foundation, an organisation in line with the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. Apart from this foundation, few Buddhist groups in Hong Kong interact politically with society. The Hong Kong Buddhist way of engaging with political and social problems in the city seems to be to look inside and retreat, and to primarily offer social services to Hong Kong residents (Barua & Basilio, 2009). I reflect on this in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.3 Hong Kong Catholic 'Grounds' During the Twentieth Century

Catholicism in Hong Kong represents a diverse and international 'ground'. Most of the Hong Kong Catholic organisations present in Hong Kong today are missionary; they come from at least fifteen different countries (France, Italy, Canada, China, India, Argentina, Ireland, USA, Spain, Belgium, Mexico, the Netherlands, Algeria, Palestine and Hong Kong). Catholic religious clergy members, both fathers and sisters, are representative of even more countries.

The earliest missionary organisation was established in Hong Kong in 1847, the latest in 2011, and approximately one third during the period from the establishment of the PRC in 1949 until the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1976 (Catholic Truth Society, 2013, pp. 175-236). As is the case for Buddhism, the development of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong has been heavily influenced by political and economic changes that occurred in the PRC and in Hong Kong throughout the 20th century.

1.3.1 Hong Kong Catholicism under Colonialism

The official history of the Hong Kong Catholic Church dates back to 1841, when the Church was established as a Prefecture Apostolic. The main tasks of Catholic missionaries during the early years were to attend to the needs of Irish Catholic soldiers who were stationed in the city, and to provide accommodation, transport and financial support for the mission in Mainland China. It was only from the 1860s onwards that the Church became interested in the Christianisation of local Hong Kong people, primarily those living in the New Territories (at that time still part of Mainland China). Despite its evangelising efforts, the growth of the Church was slow, and its position in Hong Kong society marginal (Criveller, 2008; Ha, 2007).

In the early 20th century, the Church started to grow. By 1913, the Catholic population of Hong Kong had grown to 18,000; by 1939, it was over 35,000 (Chu, 2005, p. 89-101). Most missionary organisations in Hong Kong still focused most of their attention on the evangelisation of Mainland Chinese people, using Hong Kong as a platform for their mission. In co-operation with the British colonial government, some of these organisations set up social service centres for Hong Kong people, most notably schools that were attended by Catholics and non-Catholics alike (ibid.).

In 1946, shortly after the end of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese was established under the leadership of an Italian PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) Bishop. The following years saw an influx of Christian priests, missionaries and lay people from Mainland China to Hong Kong who had either been expelled or fled the Communist regime. They joined the Hong Kong Catholic Church, their numbers strengthening it. At the same time, the Church saw an increase in the number of refugees who needed social assistance, and, in response, it expanded its social services (Li et al., 1998). Missionary organisations that had been expelled from the mainland engaged in social work together with Caritas-Hong Kong (established in 1953). Missionary and Diocesan organisations built clinics (which were later converted into hospitals), schools, kindergartens and homes for the elderly. In addition, they distributed provisions including flour and rice.

As indicated before, Christian (and, due to their unified organisation, primarily Catholic) organisations were encouraged by the British colonial government to provide these services. The Hong Kong Catholic Church and the British colonial government entered into a ‘contractual relationship’ (Leung & Chan, 2003) within which the government willingly provided subsidies and other material benefits to the Church. This close relationship not only entailed Catholic, but also other Christian organisations. During colonial times, the Anglican Church was the ‘national’ religion in Hong Kong, mirroring the position of this established Church in the colonial motherland. The relationship between the British government and the Anglican Church was, amongst others, formalised in the Protocol List, “in which the Anglican bishop ranked fifth following the Governor, Chief Justice, Chief Secretary and

Commander-General” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 20).²⁵ Other Christian organisations were likewise favoured by the British government and gained important benefits. As a result, they had the opportunity to become important, elite institutions in Hong Kong, a position they still hold in the city today.

Because of the ‘contractual relationship’ between the British government and the Catholic Church, it should come as no surprise that between 1950 and the 1970s, many Hongkongers converted to Catholicism; the Church grew from 40,000 in 1952 to 250,000 Catholics divided over 52 parishes in 1969, accounting for over 6% of Hong Kong’s total population (Li et al., 1998, p. 516). People who converted to Christianity during those years came to be known as ‘rice Christians’ or ‘flour Christians’, derogative terms underpinning a perception that these people were not ‘proper’ Christians, but only converted because it was “the price paid for charity” (Nedilsky, 2014, p. 53).

Apart from the increase in Catholic population numbers, a second benefit of the contractual relationship between the Hong Kong Catholic Church and the British colonial government was the increased visibility of Catholicism in the built environment of urban Hong Kong. As part of its support for the Catholic Church’s social service provision, the British colonial government awarded land to Catholic organisations, on which these could “build churches, social centres and living quarters for the clergy, at only two-thirds of the

²⁵ It was possibly the close relationship between the Hong Kong Anglican Church and the British colonial government that resulted in the weakened position of Anglicanism in post-Handover Hong Kong. In her detailed study of the Hong Kong Anglican Church from its establishment in the mid-19th century to the early 1990s, Deborah Ann Brown (1993) highlights the strong cooperative relationship between the British colonial government and the Church. She argues that even though the Church has become largely indigenous in its clerical and lay membership, it has remained a colonial institute. Most convincingly, she shows that throughout the decades, “[t]he Anglican Church, which once was an independent leader in welfare and other social services in Hong Kong, in its capacity as a social service agency, has become a quasi-government organization. This is so because Church programs are heavily subsidized by the government and subject to its standards, policies and guidelines” (ibid., p. 209). Contrary to the Hong Kong Anglican Church, whose Bishop Kwong sought close relations with the CCP in the early 1990s, other Hong Kong Christian organisations have, since the 1980s, successfully sought ways to be financially more independent from the Hong Kong Government and the CCP. This has strengthened their developing prospects in contemporary Hong Kong.

lease price” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 31). These pieces of land were often prime locations in busy urban areas (Nedilsky, 2014).

The Catholic churches built on these locations were, however, to be more than merely places for worship. One example is the Annunciation Church in Tsuen Wan (New Territories), built in 1993. The Italian PIME priest who initiated the building of the church told me about the Kindergarten and the Caritas elderly day care centre that are also located in the building. He explained that when he received a piece of land from the British government in the early 1990s, he was obliged to include spaces in the building that could be used to provide social services for the old, the young, the needy and the poor (interview, Father Josef, St. Joseph’s Church, Fanling, 02.05.2013). This example highlights how the British government primarily ‘used’ the Hong Kong Catholic Church for its own ends.

Hence, the Hong Kong Catholic Church was aided by the British colonial government to grow in importance, numbers and visibility. However, at the same time, the only position it held was to provide social services on the government’s terms (Hsu, Hall & Coe, 2007; Leung, 2001; Leung & Chan, 2003). It was denied political influence. This placed Catholic (and other Christian) organisations “in an awkward position in so far as it became very difficult to criticize the government’s policies for fear of a loss of funding” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 20). Due to this restrictive arrangement, in pre-Handover Hong Kong, the Catholic Church had difficulty in assuming a ‘prophetic’ role and speaking out against injustices in line with the Word of God. Reflecting on the history of Christianity in Hong Kong, Leo Goodstadt observes:

In retrospect, it is tempting to accuse the Protestant and Catholic Churches of entering into an alliance with British colonialism after World War II which diminished their ability to act as Hong Kong's social conscience. Could they not have done more to foster social justice, to promote democracy, to encourage the workforce to struggle for its rights and to defend the well being of the vulnerable in society? Should they have assumed a more 'prophetic' role...? (2003, pp. ix-x).

Inevitably, the close relations between the Hong Kong Catholic Church and the British colonial government placed the Church in a difficult position during the 1980s, the period in which Sino-British negotiations regarding Hong Kong's return to the PRC were held.

From the early 1980s onwards, the Catholic Church (and other Christian organisations) and some of its leaders began to demand that the right of religious freedom should be preserved post-Handover. However, the increasingly audible voice of Catholic leaders regarding Hong Kong's future, coupled with the general incompatibility of Communism with Catholicism, upset the CCP. It strengthened its negative attitude regarding the position of Catholicism in Hong Kong. In an attempt to minimise the influence of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong's future, the CCP decided to not invite Catholic Church leaders as consultants for the drafting of the Basic Law, even though other religious leaders (e.g., Protestant and Buddhism) did get invited (Leung, 2001; Tsui, 1989). The denial of their voice in the drafting process signalled to the Hong Kong Catholic Church that the position of Catholicism in the future HKSAR was under threat.

1.3.2 Hong Kong Catholicism Post-Handover

Despite the anxiety felt by Hong Kong's Catholic religious leaders pre-1997 Handover, to date the consequences of the transition from British to HKSAR rule have not proven too negative for Hong Kong Catholicism. Take, for example, the role of the Catholic Church as social service provider. At the end of the 20th century, 35% of all social services in Hong

Kong were still provided by Catholic organisations. As of 2014, the Catholic Church ran 264 schools with over 165,000 students, 6 hospitals, and 13 clinics (Catholic Truth Society, 2013, p. 667). Another example of the continuing strong position of Catholicism in Hong Kong is the increase in annual baptism numbers. In 2011, 3,156 adults (over 7 years of age) were baptised: in 2012 the number was 3,643. In 2013, although there was a slight decrease, it was still an impressive 3,587 (Catholic Truth Society, 2011, 2012, 2013). Many of the new converts to Catholicism are introduced and attracted to the Church because of the Church's social service provisions, mainly education.

However, the increase in baptism numbers is largely caused by population growth: the percentage of Catholicism stayed equal at approximately 5%. Also, even though the amount of baptisms (apart from 2013) has slowly increased, the numbers of active lay and clerical Catholics has not. Many of the newly-baptised Catholics drop out of the Church after a short while. According to official numbers, as of 2013 there were 374,000 Catholics in Hong Kong (Catholic Truth Society, 2013, p. 666). However, some of my informants estimate the amount of Catholics attending church services or joining Catholic activities on a regular basis to be far less. For example, an employee of the Hong Kong Central Council for the Catholic Laity, an organisation that focuses on the formation and evangelisation of Hong Kong residents, estimated the number to be only around 200,000 (interview, Michelle, HKCCCL, Sai Wan Ho, 06.09.2012). While it is true that church attendance does not necessarily signal that one is religious, the above numbers are indicative of the numbers of active Catholics in a city in which 'being a good Catholic' is equated with attendance at church services (see Chapter 3).

As well as being one of the main social service providers, primarily educational, the role of the Hong Kong Catholic Church has over the years increasingly become more

political. According to Beatrice Leung (2009), the Church transformed from playing the role of contractor to the British colonial government in order to stabilise Hong Kong society, into becoming a frame for social movements in the post-Handover HKSAR. One of my informants, a locally-born priest working for the Diocesan Liturgical Committee, expressed this as follows:

I think the Hong Kong Catholic Church went through three stages. The first stage was to take care of refugees. The Church was a welfare community, and everybody knew the Church because of the work done by Caritas. The second stage is the Church as educator. We have many schools. After the end of the Civil War in China [ed.: 1950] the Church opened many schools to help the children in Hong Kong. They became educated. Because of that, they now look for social justice, democracy, human rights. The third stage is after 1997. Before 1997, we went through different periods of migration. After 1997, we got a very famous bishop, [Cardinal] Joseph Zen, who gave the Church a very good image as leader in the fight for human rights and social justice. Now, we are still in the third stage I think. Hong Kong residents look to the Church for a sign of justice. They expect us priests to speak out, to help people to love and reconcile (interview, Father Martin, Diocesan Liturgical Committee, Central, 06.06.2013).

Each year, this father joins the 4 June Vigil to commemorate events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and the 1 July protests (Hong Kong SAR Establishment Day) to show Catholics his presence.

The new role of Catholic clergy to be ‘signs of justice’ is in certain important ways a result of the increasingly tight relations between the HKSAR and the PRC. For example, in 2003, the Hong Kong Catholic Church (then under leadership of Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kun, who is now Cardinal) was highly active in protests against the implementation of Article 23 (see page 19). In his opening speech at a seminar convened to address the matter, Bishop Zen said:

According to the guiding principles of the consultation document, if the Catholic Church in China in [the] future were to be condemned as an organisation endangering the national safety, the Catholic Church in Hong Kong would follow the same fate. ... If we legislate Article 23 of the Basic Law according to the consultation document, the religious policy of the mainland can be easily transmitted to us (Leung, 2009, p. 250).

Zen concluded with the rhetorical question: “What is the religious policy of the mainland?”

Buoyed by his encouragement, many Catholics joined the 2003 rally while he stayed indoors engaged in hours of private prayer (Ma, 2009). Since 2003, the Hong Kong Catholic Church has increased its civic engagement with Hong Kong’s political life, evident in the prominent role it played in the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement (see Chapter 4).

1.4 Religious Ties with the Mainland

As I showed in the previous sections, past and present political happenings in Mainland China have influenced religious life in Hong Kong in a variety of ways. Given the close proximity between Hong Kong and Mainland China, Hong Kong has also played a role in the development of religious life on the mainland, especially since the opening-up of China in the late 1970s under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping.

In many important ways, Hong Kong Buddhist organisations still rely on ties with the mainland. An example already mentioned was the display of a Buddhist relic (claimed to be one of the Buddha’s teeth) in Hong Kong in 1998, a relic provided by the PRC where it is a national treasure. Also, apropos of manpower, Hong Kong is still for a major part reliant on mainland Buddhist organisations which send Buddhist monks and nuns (mainly Mahāyāna) to work in Hong Kong. For example, I spoke to a Chinese Buddhist monk, who came to Po Lin Monastery (Lantau Island, New Territories) six years ago. He told me that in the early 1990s, the mainland Chinese Buddhist Association donated a large sum of money

towards the building of the Big Buddha statue on Hong Kong's Lantau Island. In a spirit of cooperation, his main task in Hong Kong is to collect funds for and oversee the building of schools in Mainland China. Po Lin Monastery has so far been able to establish 310 primary and secondary schools on the mainland (interview, Venerable Dhammika, Po Lin Monastery Lantau Island, 18.10.2012).

In addition, other Buddhist organisations – based both in Hong Kong and overseas and belonging to the various Buddhist schools – aid the development of Buddhism on the mainland. Religious life in China from the 1980s onwards has witnessed a remarkable revival as religious organisations rebuild themselves after the destruction that took place during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). However, clerical members nowadays still lack proper training, and many material resources have been destroyed. Hong Kong Buddhist organisations aid in rebuilding Buddhism where possible and necessary. Over the past decades, courtesy of financial donations from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia have resulted in many temples on the mainland having been reconstructed and expanded. They are also active as charity organisations. For example, the Hong Kong-based Gracious Global Buddhist Foundation claims to run poverty relief programs in over twenty Chinese provinces; and, the Fuhui Charity Foundation has helped to set up schools, orphanages, medical clinics and emergency communities in a similar number of provinces (Laliberté, 2009). Some of my informants have volunteered for these or other organisations. An example is Francis, a man in his mid-40s, who grew up in a Catholic family, but took refuge in the Three Jewels in 2013 under a Theravāda Buddhist master, thereby officially becoming Buddhist.²⁶ Francis works at a family business close to Ocean Park (Hong Kong Island). In

²⁶ Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is the first step in embarking on the path of Buddhism. The Three Jewels stand for the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha. Once a person has taken refuge (usually a reciting of the refuge formula by monastics and laity, which is then redone on almost every other Buddhist occasion), he/she

his spare time, he designs wedding dresses, and attends Buddhist courses at different Buddhist centres. Over the past years, he has travelled to Mainland China twice with the Buddhist Seal of Love Charitable Foundation to aid their social service programs (personal communication, Francis, various times and places).

Some Hong Kong Buddhist organisations, of different streams, look to the mainland as a country of proselytising possibilities. Monica, for example, is a volunteer in her mid-40s at the Kadampa Meditation Centre in Hong Kong. During an interview, she shared that it was a goal of the Kadampa Meditation Centre to eventually start a centre in Mainland China. But, she said,

... we don't know yet if it is safe to go to China. We don't have relations yet in China, but it is a goal. There are millions of people in China. The dharma is for everybody. We maintain the wish that everybody in the world knows the dharma. But in China, it's not easy (interview, Monica, Kadampa Meditation Centre, Causeway Bay, 13.10.2012).

Despite its goal, for this organisation, as for most other Hong Kong Buddhist organisations, a Buddhist mission to Mainland China is not as important as it is for Christian organisations. It is mainly the Taiwanese Buddhist organisations (such as Tzu Chi, Fo Guang Shan and Fagushan) that have missionary tendencies in Mainland China (Goossaert, 2011).

In addition, it is mainly Buddhist lay individuals, instead of leaders of Buddhist organisations, who travel back and forth between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Some mainland Buddhists visit temples and Buddhist centres in Hong Kong to receive meditation training or to listen to dharma sharings. The other way around, Hong Kong Buddhists travel

can officially call him/herself a Buddhist (Strong, 2008 [2002]). Lay people from then on commit to the upholding of the Five Precepts: to abstain from harming living beings, taking what is not given, misconduct concerning sense-pleasures (such as sexual misconduct), false speech (lying), and unmindful states due to alcoholic drinks or drugs (Harvey, 1990).

to Mainland China to help rebuild temples or to impart knowledge on Chinese Buddhists. However, the main purpose of Hong Kong lay Buddhists traveling to Mainland China is to go on pilgrimages, for example to places associated with the ‘birth’ of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, e.g., the four Buddhist mountains (Putuoshan, Wuteishan, Emeishan and Jiuhuashan). Naturally, it is mainly Mahāyāna Buddhists who undertake these pilgrimages.

Similarly, Hong Kong’s Catholic organisations have played, and continue to play the role of important providers of financial, managerial and human resources to help the Catholic Church in China to grow. Shortly after the opening-up of China in the late 1970s, the Roman Catholic Vatican realised that the Chinese Catholic Church had missed the opportunity to update itself along the lines of the Second Vatican Council, which had taken place from 1962 to 1965. Therefore, the Vatican placed emphasis on the need to rebuild the Chinese Catholic Church, and to update its doctrines along the lines of the Council. To this end, Pope John Paul II called upon overseas Chinese Catholics to “build a bridge of reconciliation between the Church in China and the universal church” (Leung & Chan, 2003, p. 76). Apropos of the building of this religious bridge, Hong Kong played a crucial role, being a city located far enough from the PRC to not be affected by its jurisprudence, but geographically close enough to get first-hand knowledge from within the country (Leung, 2000). From then on, Hong Kong saw itself positioned in a triangular relationship with the PRC and the Vatican. Financial donations to rebuild churches, organisations and services in Mainland China came from all over the world. They were mainly channelled through Hong Kong with the blessing of the Vatican (Leung & Chan, 2003). In the 1970s, Caritas-Hong Kong opened a China Desk, the task of which was to oversee services offered to the mainland.

Apart from the Diocese, many of the missionaries who had fled the PRC during the mid-20th century and were now stationed in Hong Kong were eager to take up the role advocated by the Vatican. They slowly moved back into Mainland China to educate religious leaders, spread religious literature, and help rebuild churches. For many of the missionary organisations, Hong Kong once again became the platform from which to evangelise China (Leung, 2000). For example, one of my informants, a Mexican missionary priest who came to Hong Kong in 1996, expressed his sincere wish to help with the mission in Mainland China. For that purpose, he is now studying Mandarin Chinese. However, at the same time he realises that he might not achieve his dream to go to Mainland China as a missionary, as restrictions on Catholic missionary work on the mainland in the previous decades have become more severe (personal communication, Father Pedro, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 05.08.2014).

Nowadays, the Catholic bridging function of Hong Kong has slightly changed compared to its beginning. First, instead of merely receiving help and information from Hong Kong, the Chinese Catholic Church is now actively using Hong Kong for its own goals. Training, for example, is no longer only given on the mainland by priests coming from Hong Kong. Instead, increasing numbers of mainlanders are travelling to Hong Kong to receive training.²⁷ In August 2012, when speaking to the employee of the Hong Kong Central Council for the Catholic Laity (the organisation that focuses on the formation and evangelisation of Hong Kong residents, but in part also oversees the formation of Catholics in Mainland China, see page 59), she told me that nowadays,

²⁷ Unfortunately, however, visa requirements restrict mainlanders' travel to Hong Kong for extensive periods of time. Therefore, many priests now also travel to other countries such as Taiwan to receive their training.

... the HKCCCL has more and more contact with mainland Chinese Catholics. It is easy for them to come to Hong Kong as tourists and then visit churches in Hong Kong and get training here. We always receive the people from the mainland. We also provide them with materials, information programs and ideas. If we are invited by the mainland Church, we will go and give information, or send emails. The churches on the mainland can also download many materials from our website (interview, Michelle, HKCCCL, Sai Wan Ho, 06.09.2012).

Also, according to a teacher at the Hong Kong Holy Spirit Seminary in Aberdeen (Hong Kong Island), from time to time mainland priests come to undertake a Master of Theology or Philosophy in Hong Kong (interview, Anita, Holy Spirit Seminary, Aberdeen, 18.09.2012). Thus, the bridging function is in many ways also shaped by an active demand from mainland Chinese Catholics.

A second way in which the bridging function of Hong Kong has changed over the past years is that nowadays, the exchange of information and resources is not merely performed by clerical members. It is increasingly done by lay Catholic individuals. Lay Catholics visit churches in Mainland China to talk to people or to simply establish a presence. By observing a low-key presence they can more easily than clerical members use the symbolic religious bridge between Hong Kong and Mainland China to help with formation programs, give talks, train catechumen students and teachers, and sometimes provide money to build and/or rebuild churches or social service centres. In an important way, their efforts compensate for the lack of Hong Kong-based priests and nuns who have in the past been the main bridge building workers (Leung, 2000) but who are nowadays increasingly restricted from travelling to the mainland. It should be noted here that it is not merely individual Hong Kong Catholics travelling to Mainland China: mainland Chinese Catholics similarly travel to Hong Kong.

The numbers of individual Catholics who travel back and forth are unclear, as most of the travel is undertaken in secret. During interviews, four of my informants told me that

on occasion they travel to Mainland China for missionary purposes. One example is Walter, who was born in Hong Kong over 60 years ago. He used to be a successful businessman, but has now retired. He has been active in the Catholic Church since his daughter was born: he is now a catechumen teacher at a local parish and at the Hong Kong Opus Dei organisation. He sometimes visits churches in Fujian, mainly ‘underground’ churches. However, when he is there, he only listens. He does not speak, as he considers speaking to be the task of Hong Kong clerical members (interview, Walter, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 27.11.2012).

Albert, on the other hand, is more active. Albert attends the same church as Walter. He is a man in his late 50s, who was baptised as a Catholic in 2009. Working as a salesperson, he often has to travel to Mainland China. While travelling there, he often combines work with mission:

It is important for Catholics to go to China and be a showcase. I have friends in China. They think the Church in Hong Kong is part of the Vatican, and thus against China. But in fact we are also part of China! I like to help to make them understand that. Every time I go to China, I pray during dinner, lunch and breakfast. I invite my friends to join me (interview, Albert, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 11.03.2013).

However, it should be noted that among my group of informants, those doing such ‘missionary’ work constitute a stark minority (only four of my lay Catholic informants) compared to those not engaged in these bridge building efforts.

1.5 Conclusion

The historical and contemporary developments of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations have been and still are intrinsically linked to the political situation in Mainland China. The relationship between religion and politics in the HKSAR and the PRC evokes

feelings of threat among Hong Kong religious organisations, most notably Catholic ones. Hong Kong religious organisations have been able to develop and flourish due to the freedom of speech, assembly and worship guaranteed by the British colonial government and the HKSAR Government respectively. However, due to an encroaching Communist China, religious leaders today worry about “the long-term prospect of security for religious believers and their continued development” (Nedilsky, 2014, p. 181).

The close relation between Hong Kong religion and Chinese politics also means religious organisations need to constantly reflect on their relationships with politics and the state, both in Hong Kong and in Mainland China. Since the 1980s, and most notably since the 1997 Handover, Hong Kong religious organisations have been trying to compensate for their lack of political engagement in Hong Kong during the colonial period. For example, pro-government Buddhist groups have begun to speak out against pro-democracy groups, and conservative Christian groups (such as the Protestant organisation Society for Truth and Light) have sought to influence public policy (Bosco, 2015a). It seems that with Mainland China increasingly coming closer, Hong Kong religious organisations are becoming increasingly aware of their position in Hong Kong society, and their possible roles as leaders of a civically-engaged society. As I show in Chapter 4, this can lead either to action or passivity on the part of Hong Kong’s religious organisations and leaders. But before elaborating on this, it is necessary to more fully understand how religion is expressed as an important element in the lives of middle class lay individuals in contemporary Hong Kong.



Buddhist and Christian symbols in the urban Hong Kong landscape (source: Mariske Westendorp, different areas in Hong Kong, 2012-2014).

CHAPTER 2:

Tradition, Universalism and the Aspiration to Belong

During my sojourn in Hong Kong, and after talking to many people who expressed discomfort vis-à-vis the city's uncertain future, I often detected that – just like Emily (see page 1) – many of them felt that they were living in the eye of a typhoon. Hongkongers appeared to sense the lull that precedes a possibly big storm. This, for many, was unsettling, and many of my informants expressed the aspiration to belong to something stable, a seemingly unchangeable reference point.

In Chapter 1, I outlined how past and present political events in the PRC have affected and are affecting institutionalised religious life in the HKSAR in terms of numbers of followers, the religious programs and charity work offered, and possibilities to proselytise. The direct relations between the political situation in the PRC and Hong Kong's religious life pose issues when viewed from future perspectives, e.g., Mainland China's economic, social and political encroachments upon Hong Kong. In the remainder of this thesis, I extend this argument by indicating what this perceived threat of an ever-nearing Mainland China means for the city's Buddhist and Catholic individuals.

In this chapter I explain how my informants narrate the role of Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism in their lives. When attending Theravāda Buddhist dharma teachings or meditation classes, people often asked me what I knew about Buddhism and how Buddhism is practiced in the West. I would explain to them how in Europe people are mainly attracted to meditation and mindfulness techniques taught by popular Buddhist masters such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hahn. In response, people would often explain to me the 'true'

Buddhist teachings “as taught by the Buddha over 2,600 years ago”. Some handed me books on those teachings so that I could become more knowledgeable about what they considered to be core elements of their religion. Others, like Emily and Adam, even followed the Master of Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University, to gain knowledge of the Buddhist tradition in a more academic way.

While in conversations with Buddhists such an emphasis on ‘tradition’ was often foregrounded, my Catholic informants mainly highlighted the ‘universal’ aspect of their religion. For example, one Sunday morning, before mass in a local Hong Kong church, Sarah and I sat together. A Catholic in her mid-20s, Sarah was baptised when she was 12 years old. A few years ago, she became an official member of the Opus Dei organisation. Since then, she sanctifies everything she does in her life, including her work as a journalist. On that particular Sunday morning, Sarah offered to translate the Cantonese sermon for me. After mass, she asked me if the service was in any way different from a Catholic mass in Europe (personal communication, Sarah, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 17.02.2013). She was looking for confirmation of her perception of the universalism of the Catholic Church and of her understanding that Catholicism is a religious system that is practiced in similar ways worldwide, taking into account local variations in languages or songs.

Hence, ‘tradition’ and ‘universalism’ are central in the ways my informants relate to their religions. Emphases on the notions of tradition and universalism relate to a specific aspiration of Hong Kong’s middle class, i.e., the aspiration to belong. I suggest it is the unstable political situation in contemporary Hong Kong that evokes middle class people’s need to relate to something stable, and that they therefore place a significant emphasis on belonging to what they perceive as seemingly stable religions characterised by tradition and universalism. In summary, in this chapter I argue that now that the question of belonging is

becoming increasingly difficult to answer for middle class people in Hong Kong, religion offers a belonging that transcends the HKSAR and the PRC. By interpreting and emphasising the aspects of tradition and universalism of Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism these religions gain particular relevance to my informants, as they offer a sense of continuity with the past and a relation with others in the world, providing a stability that the Hong Kong context does not.

2.1 The Buddhist Tradition

In the previous chapter, I described the history of Buddhism in Hong Kong, and the marginal position of Theravāda Buddhism therein. I also indicated that this stream of Buddhism is gaining popularity amongst a younger, middle class audience; as such, many of my informants have identified themselves as Theravāda Buddhists. In this section, I further detail the significance of this religion in Hong Kong, and elaborate on who my Theravāda Buddhist informants are and what it means to them when they say they are Theravādins. In the next section, I do the same for my Catholic informants.

The position of Theravāda Buddhism in Hong Kong, and in the lives of my informants, may be best illustrated by an anecdote. One day, in a local temple in Tsuen Wan, I met Ada, a Buddhist counsellor in her mid-30s. Ada, who took refuge in the Three Jewels a few years ago, has since become increasingly interested in Theravāda Buddhism. She is an active lay Buddhist: she now works as a volunteer, helping a Theravāda monk with his teachings and practices. She has also started her own counselling centre: here, she draws on Buddhist techniques, such as mindfulness and meditation techniques, to provide counselling to clients. I met Ada together with my translator Mary for an interview in a fast food restaurant close to Ada's home. She had obviously prepared well for our meeting: she had

brought along some Buddhist prayer beads and bracelets that held meaning to her. She had also wanted to bring a textbook from her years in a Chinese Buddhist Secondary School to the interview, as it represents the beginning of her Buddhist path in this lifetime. But, she could not find it. She told me that she remembered that the textbook contained a picture of Kwun Yum (Avalokiteśvara), the bodhisattva of mercy and compassion. This picture had touched her very deeply at the time.

What interested me most was how Ada reflected on Kwun Yum during our meeting. Did she still feel a special relationship to this bodhisattva, a Buddhist deity of primary importance to Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, of lesser importance to Vajrayāna Buddhism, and almost non-important in Theravāda Buddhism? In the words of my translator:

She doesn't look upon Kwun Yum anymore as she used to. She now has different feelings towards different Buddhas. She still respects the different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but after learning Buddhism, she resorts to Buddha Śākyamuni as the ultimate teacher. She is inclined to look to him for enlightenment, especially in times of trouble and delusion. ... Śākyamuni is the genuine historical Buddha. Whatever he has said or thought is credible. He has demonstrated how a human being can achieve Buddhahood. She is not sure whether the other Bodhisattvas have really existed and as such she isn't sure whether she should adopt those teachings. Throughout history, a lot of monks have taught in China and these teachings are not always official: we can't trace those teachings back to particular monks. For Kwun Yum, we can't trace back what she actually said or did. So she prefers to listen to Śākyamuni (interview, Ada, trans: Mary, McDonald's, Tuen Mun, 15.03.2013).

After she gained more knowledge of Buddhism, particularly through listening to Theravāda masters, Ada's initial perception of the religion has thus changed. As a result, she now only follows teachings that she considers to be "historically rooted" and representing the original words of the Buddha. In her opinion these teachings represent the true Buddhist tradition.

During my research I soon realised that most of my Theravāda Buddhist informants, like Ada, emphasise a wish to discover and follow the original teachings of the Buddhist

tradition. These teachings are considered to transcend temporality, linking contemporary Theravāda teachings and experiences in Hong Kong to the original message imparted by the Buddha Śākyamuni over 2,600 years ago. This first came to my attention during an interview with a Malaysian Theravāda monk during the first month of my fieldwork. A few weeks prior to our meeting the monk had undertaken a pilgrimage with a group of Hong Kong lay Buddhists to Burma, a country in which Theravāda Buddhism is the dominant religion. Commenting on Buddhism in the country, he enthusiastically observed: “In Burma, Buddhism is a living tradition. The daily lives of the Burmese people are infused with real Buddhist practices, every day”. The examples he gave of these practices were of how people steered away from the idolisation of the Buddha (a common practice in ‘popular’ Chinese Buddhism), and the importance attributed to the practice of meditation. According to the monk, when performing these practices, “only then can a person appreciate the real beauty of the Buddha’s message” (personal communication, Venerable A., Wang Fat Ching She, Tsuen Wan, 19.09.2012). This short passage exemplifies the meaning of ‘tradition’ for most of my Theravāda informants: a living out of the ‘true’ and ‘original’ teachings of the Buddha in contemporary everyday life.

Important in my informants’ process of discovering and emphasising tradition in Theravāda Buddhism is a description of an ‘other’: one needs to know and be able to signify the traditional (meaning that which is passed on through generation and is thus changeable) in order to understand and know the true value of one’s own conviction of tradition (the original, unchanged message of the Buddha). My informants’ claims to tradition come strongest to the fore when they compare their own Buddhist beliefs, behaviours, organisational structures, and morals to those as culturally practiced and lived in Chinese contexts. The ‘other’ here is described as those people who “‘hug the feet of the Buddha’ for

apparent personal gain” (Esler, 2015, p. 5). These are people who bow to anthropomorphic Buddhist gods and practice divination at local Buddhist temples. They light incense in front of statues of a wide variety of Buddhist deities, make *kowtow*, are vegetarian on each first and fifteenth day of the Chinese lunar calendar, offer money to monks in order to gain karmic merit, and/or set free birds and fishes. According to my informants, people who perform these ‘traditional’ or ‘cultural’ practices do not understand even the most basic aspects of the ‘true’ Buddhist tradition. The distinction made is thus between themselves as people who have adopted a demythologised and rational Buddhism, and fellow Chinese Buddhists, who were born into a cultural style of religious practice.

This need for discovering and practicing the original, demythologised Buddhist tradition makes Theravāda a popular and apparent choice for my informants. Theravāda Buddhism – literally the ‘Doctrine of the Elders’ (Gombrich, 2006 [1988]) – is stereotypically portrayed as the “religion of the book” (Crosby, 2014), the ‘book’ being the Pāli Canon. This canon is a large collection of works collected during the Third Buddhist Council (about 250 BCE) and validated by Emperor Asoka. The canon is the only surviving Buddhist canon written in the classical language of ancient India, and is as such often regarded as the earliest written form of Buddhism, best representing the words of the Buddha (Crosby, 2014; Seeger, 2007).

Of course, other Buddhist streams also claim to represent the original teachings of the Buddha, even though their doctrines differ from those of Theravāda Buddhism. For example, explaining the Mahāyāna Buddhist claim for tradition, Olav Hammer and James Lewis (2007) show how followers and monks of this Buddhist school argue that Buddhist truths have been deliberately withheld by the Buddha until the time was ripe for them to be revealed. Earlier texts only reveal partial truths; Mahāyāna texts are more complete and thus

closer to the original words of the Buddha. According to Vajrayāna Buddhists, some Buddhist truths are still hidden, in lakes, streams, rocks, snakes, deities, or in people who are not yet born. These teachings, which have the same power as the original words of the Buddha, will come to the surface when the time is right (Van der Velde, 2016 [2015]). These Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna claims to tradition are, however, not of essence to my informants; they clearly described to me their perception of Theravāda Buddhism as the only Buddhist stream representing the true Buddhist tradition.

2.1.1 Tradition as a Modern Construct

In early 2013, I was introduced to David. David is a Theravāda Buddhist in his late 50s, who has been teaching at Chi Lin Nunnery for almost fifteen years. Concurrently, he teaches Buddhist meditation and Theravāda Buddhism. David explained to me that the main doctrine of Buddhism revolves around the belief in the Four Noble Truths; the insight that beings are all subject to suffering (*dukkha*), that this suffering is caused by craving (*tanhā*), that there is a possible cure for this craving (*nibbāna*), and that this can be achieved by following the Eightfold Path or Middle Way (*maggā*). According to David, having correct knowledge of suffering, its causes, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation is all one needs to become enlightened (interview, David, Chi Lin Nunnery, Diamond Hill, 06.03.2013). For David, these Four Noble Truths represent the original dogmas of the Buddhist tradition as taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni.

Even though the Four Noble Truth are regarded as the original doctrine of the Buddhist tradition, the discovery of and clear emphasis on these truths have primarily been the result of a modern trend in Buddhism (Gombrich, 2006 [1988]). This trend is the result of a non-sectarian Buddhist Revival Movement that took place in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries in different Asian countries. The aim of this movement was to show the relevance of Buddhism in modern life, and its compatibility with Western science. Some scholars (e.g., Gombrich, 2006 [1988]; Lopez, 2002) situate the genesis of this “new kind of Buddhism” in modern-day Sri Lanka. However, it was never contained to merely one country, region or even Buddhist school.²⁸ For example, during the same time that modern Buddhism developed in Ceylon, a similar movement took place in Mainland China in the late 19th century. There, Buddhism was denounced by Christian missionaries as heretic and by Chinese intellectuals, who were influenced by ideas of scholars such as Karl Marx, as impeding modernisation. In response, Buddhist monastic schools were established, in which Buddhist classics were taught and monastics trained). These monastics later became leaders of the Buddhist Revival Movement in China. Examples are the Buddhist layman Yang Wenhui, who stressed the need for Buddhist rationalism, and Taixu, who emphasised personal Buddhist liberation in the here and now and the need for Buddhist social activism (Lopez Jr, 2002). In Chapter 1, I shortly mentioned these modern Buddhists and their influence on Hong Kong society in the early 20th century.

Comparable to the situation in China, the Buddhist Revival Movement was mainly a response of Buddhist monastics in different Asian countries to challenges posed to Buddhism by colonialism, missionary Christianity, and the disestablishment of the sangha and loss of power of Buddhist institutions in colonised countries (Baumann, 2002; McMahan, 2012). Instigators of a Buddhist Revival Movement aimed to compete with Western missionaries coming to Asian countries and with Western religious scholars, by seeking to claim legitimacy for Buddhism by characterising it as one of the great ‘world religions’

²⁸ According to Donald Lopez, Jr. (2002), modern Buddhism did not influence Tibetan Buddhism, as Tibet was never colonised. However, contemporary Tibetan Buddhist leaders, such as the Dalai Lama, do profess modern Buddhism.

(Soucy, 2013). They developed a new kind of Buddhism (Gombrich, 2006 [1988]; Obeyesekere, 1970), reminiscent of Protestant movements during the Reformation(hence the often-used label ‘Protestant Buddhism’ (Obeyesekere, 1970)).²⁹

Prominent in the evolution of the “new kind of Buddhism” (Gombrich, 2006 [1988],, p. 172) is the emphasis on the recovery of a ‘pure’ form of the Buddhist tradition. Following Western claims that the Buddhist tradition had declined into nothing but superstition and idolatry, modern Buddhists began to actively criticise ideas of Buddhism that were considered ‘traditional’ but not part of the ‘tradition’. Elements of Western philosophy, scientific thought, Protestantism, romanticism and psychology were adopted to reform these traditional Buddhist doctrines, practices and institutions (McMahan, 2012).

Interestingly, the modern attempt to redefine Buddhism is thus not regarded “as the culmination of a long process of evolution, but rather as a return to the original, to the Buddhism of the Buddha himself” (Lopez Jr., 2002, p. ix). Instead, it is a rediscovery of the Buddhist tradition, by evaluating this tradition in modern times. Modernists thus

... claim to be going back to the true, original tradition. Modernist movement often do not set out to establish something new but on the contrary may claim to be casting off the new and reviving the old (McMahan, 2008, p. 27).

This modernising trend can clearly be seen in the narratives of my Theravāda Buddhist informants. Their claim that Theravāda Buddhism best represents the original words of the Buddha clearly echoes the modernist claim that Buddhism needs to ‘cast off the new’ and ‘revive the old’.

²⁹ Gananath Obeyesekere’s (1970) term ‘Protestant Buddhism’ conveys two meanings: “... first, that this new form of Buddhism began as a protest against Christian missions; and, second, that it mirrored Protestant Christianity in structure and content” (Prothero, 1995, p. 281).

Crucial to acknowledge is that this ‘reviving’ of the Buddhist tradition is conditioned by modern language, social forms, practices, and worldviews (McMahan, 2008). The Buddhist tradition is evaluated and critically reflected upon by my informants from their modern, middle class perspectives. As such, the Buddhist tradition that according to them is best represented by Theravāda Buddhism can thus be said to have been invented, much like – in the classical article by Hugh Trevor-Roper (1983) – the Scottish Highland national tradition was invented only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (see also Cusack, 2010; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). However, for my informants, ‘the Buddhist tradition is the sum of “static resources that [they] understand as authentic and regard as authoritative” (Satlow, 2012, p. 133). At the heart of this is a perception of the continuity of the Buddhist tradition, and of the relevance of this tradition in the present.

In conclusion, my informants’ description of Theravāda Buddhism highlights a specific modern and middle class version of the religion, in which the modern notion of the Buddhist ‘tradition’ has become prominent. Their ideas of Buddhism are a reflection of a modernising Buddhist discourse which has been brought to the city through international networks and local circulations, as I show later in this chapter.

2.2 Universal Catholicism

In mid-June 2013, I sat down with five Catholics of the Annunciation Church (Tsuen Wan, New Territories) for a group discussion. The purpose of the discussion was to gain an understanding of how they perceive Hong Kong in general, the area of Tsuen Wan where most of them live and the church is located, and the position of the Catholic Church in their lives. I started our meeting by giving the participants a list with some questions to answer in silence and after that, we talked about their answers. One of the questions was: “What does

the Catholic Church mean to you?” I deliberately did not mention which of the meanings ascribed to the word ‘Church/church’ I meant: the Church as the communion of Christians throughout the world, the Church as a hierarchical organisation, or the local church in which we were present at that time (Burns, 2001). I wanted to leave this open, to be able to find out what my participants would themselves value and emphasise.

The answer of Albert, the man in his mid-50s who was baptised as a Catholic in 2009 (see page 81) consisted of a list of six bullet points:

1. Attend mass easily everywhere in Hong Kong; 2. A place of [Catholic] friends to stay together; 3. A place of praying to God all the time; 4. No matter where you are, you are always served by the Catholic [Church] because of [its] tradition;³⁰ 5. All kinds of supporting services; 6. Part of the larger [Catholic] community (group discussion, Albert, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013).

In Albert’s list, three points describe the Church as a universal organisation (i.e., points 1, 4 and 6). Because of its universalism, Albert feels it is possible to attend Catholic services everywhere in Hong Kong, and indeed the world – something he has experienced firsthand due to his extensive traveling. The remaining points listed by Albert emphasise the importance attributed to prayer, a specific Catholic community or parish, the networks present there, and the services on offer (mostly ‘services’ that help Albert deepen his faith, e.g., Bible readings, visits to other Hong Kong parishes, and visits to the sick and the elderly in hospitals and retirement homes).

Albert’s list is a good example of the way my Hong Kong Catholic informants experience and express their Catholic religion and the position of the Church in their lives. Central in their descriptions is the perceived universal character of the Catholic Church.

³⁰ The use of the term ‘tradition’ in Albert’s list differs from the concept as defined in regards to my Buddhist informants’ emphasis on the recovery of original Buddhist teachings. I elaborate on this later on in this section, see page 87-88.

‘Universal’ means at its most basic level the perception that Catholics all around the world preach and spread the same message, and that the Catholic religion is practiced in similar ways around the world, save local differences in language and songs. My middle class informants regard themselves as part of this one universal Catholic network, together with other Catholics in other parts of the world. Sarah, the Catholic journalist in her mid-20s (see page 72), for example said:

The Catholic doctrine is universal. The word ‘Catholic’ itself means universal. So we [Catholics all over the world] can all communicate with each other, and we can attend Catholic mass everywhere without any problems (interview, Sarah, Vietnamese restaurant, Central, 20.02.2013)

Through the universal character of Catholicism, Sarah feels connected to different Catholic people elsewhere, and to all Catholic churches worldwide. Examples mentioned by Sarah include Rome, “where our Holy Father is”; Vietnam, where she first came in contact with Opus Dei; and, Spain, where she became a member of the Opus Dei organisation.

This perceived universalism of the Catholic Church is confirmed in rituals in which my informants take part. For example, the order of mass is similar wherever in the world my informants attend a service; through baptism they become members of the same universal family; and the universal connection is continuously emphasised by the sharing of the same body and blood of Christ during the Eucharist. Even though these practices take place in local churches, they connect individual Catholics to the worldwide Catholic community.

The emphasis on the universalism of the Catholic community has not only a global, but also an historical dimension. This is likewise emphasised in particular practices my informants perform and the meanings they ascribe to these practices. Walter, the Catholic in his 60s (see page 67), was introduced to me by a parish priest, who described him as a very

devout, good Catholic and as an intelligent man. When I asked Walter how he lives his Catholic faith in his daily life, he answered:

Besides being a Sunday Catholic, I live my life in prayer. I have two periods of prayer each day: in the morning and in the evening. Early in the morning I practice *taichi*, followed by half an hour of meditation. It is called Christian meditation and it is promoted by Father John Main. He teaches us to recite the mantra 'Maranatha' from the beginning to the end. It's an Aramaic word, from a dialect spoken by Jesus at that time: you can find this word in some old versions of the Bible. Actually, this recitation wasn't developed by John Main: it is a teaching from early Desert Fathers. It is something that we forgot, and then in the past decades it has been promoted again. Before I go to sleep at night, I do another meditation following the Ignatius spirituality. ... I also travel sometimes. A few years ago, we joined a tour to Turkey and Greece, to the roots of evangelisation (interview, Walter, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 27.11.2012).

Through these practices, Walter attempts to reach back to the beginnings of the Church, to the origins as they were presumably laid down centuries ago. At the same time, Walter relates his practices to the worldwide Catholic community, in other countries and during different times.

The importance of being part of a universal community in the past, present, and indeed worldwide becomes most prominently foregrounded when Hong Kong Catholics find themselves confronted with Protestants. As may be expected, it is precisely against people with comparable religious backgrounds that one identifies, as people most likely "articulate their distinctiveness most sharply along their borders" (Lambek, 2013b, p. 11). One of the services I attended on a Sunday in January 2013 demonstrated this. It was the early morning service held in English. In his sermon, the Mexican priest leading the service shared with the predominantly female Filipino audience his dissatisfaction that some of the women would attend the Catholic service in the morning and join their friends to a Protestant mass in the

afternoon. After the service, I asked my Hong Kong informant what the priest might have meant, and she answered:

He doesn't want them to hear different things. Sometimes, they have different teachings in the Protestant church. In Protestant churches, the priest can interpret the Bible for himself, because there is not one leader. Then how can you know what is true? (personal communication, Rita, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 20.01.2012)

What struck me most in such conversations on the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism was my informants' description of the latter as a completely different religion. This can be explained as a continuation from the historical Chinese context. For example, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee (2000) in his article describes two Christian missions that were present in Chaoyang district (southern China) in the mid-19th century: the American Baptist Missionary Society and the Paris Foreign Mission (the latter Catholic). Reflecting on these two historical missions, he remarks:

Owing to doctrinal differences, the Baptist and Catholic missions tended to ridicule and compete with one another in the field as elsewhere. They even used separate Chinese terms to refer to Christianity, namely, *jidujiao* or *yesujiao* (religion of Christ) versus *tianzhujiao* (religion of the lord of heaven). This practice further confused Christian villagers' understanding of Christianity, creating an impression that Catholicism and Protestantism were two rather different religions and that missionaries from both sides were more than likely rivals, if not antagonists (ibid., pp. 79-80).

The use of the Chinese word *tianzhujiao* to refer to Catholicism was first coined by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, who came to China in the 16th century. Protestant missionaries that came to China in later centuries used different terms for God (either *shen* or *shangdi*), and termed their religion *jidujiao* (Yieh, 2010).

The main difference expressed between Catholicism and Protestantism relates to the structure of both religious institutions. While the Catholic Church is valued as a universal institution, Protestantism is seen as encompassing a multitude of different churches, streams, and teachings. It is described as unstructured, loose and diverse. Because of this, my informants question the truthfulness of Protestant teachings and of the Protestant faith. For example, before Walter decided to join the Catholic community, he attended Protestant churches for over five years. However, he was not satisfied with their teachings:

I found some disagreement about the Sola Scriptura in the Protestant church. I kept wondering: Who explains the scriptures? The Catholics have a long experience, going back 2,000 years ago. The Protestants just try to understand the Bible for themselves (interview, Walter, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 27.11.2012).

According to Walter, it is the universal character of the Catholic Church, with its foundation in history, which renders the explanations of the Bible provided by Catholic priests closest to the truth.

Another example is Vivian, a Catholic in her mid-50s, who was baptised into the Catholic Church only a few years ago. In her religious narrative, Vivian stresses that she has wanted to become a Catholic ever since she was a young girl; but, neither her family, nor her in-laws would allow her to be baptised. In 2003, her mother passed away. A year later, Vivian was diagnosed with the same disease, cancer. Feeling very down, she started to attend church services in the hope of regaining some of her strength. At first, she joined Protestant church services, but did not find comfort there. After a few months, on the recommendation of an old friend, she started visiting Catholic churches and has kept attending Catholic services ever since. She explained her reasons to me as follows:

In comparing Protestantism with Catholicism, I find each Protestant church different, dependent on the preacher. What the preacher says depends on himself. Because of this, they differ a lot, they are all very different. One preacher tells you this, the other one something else. Also, the readings in the churches are different; this church has different readings than that one, and this week is different from that week, because one preacher focuses on this part and the other on that part (interview, Vivian, in her home, Tsuen Wan, 04.02.2013).

Comments such as those made by Vivian and Walter are indicative of the relevance that my Catholic informants attach to Catholicism as being a universal organisation, endorsed by teachings expressing one universal message, related to a prescribed universal order throughout the liturgical year.

2.2.1 Universalism as a Local Construct

Regardless of the heavy emphasis placed by my informants on the universal character of Catholicism, this does not mean they do not acknowledge or appreciate local diversity and particularities. Commenting on the way the Catholic Church is localised in Hong Kong, Sarah (see page 72) continued in our interview:

Of course there are some Chinese things in the Church. I think that is fine. We are Chinese, so we use our own culture in the way we serve God. We live in our own culture, and that is the means in which we serve God (interview, Sarah, Vietnamese restaurant, Central, 20.02.2013).

For Sarah, the universal Catholic Church is thus localised in the Chinese context in the ways in which God is worshipped and served. Likewise, a majority of my informants readily acknowledge and appreciate the particularity of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong and the interaction between their universal religion and their particular culture. For them, universalism makes particularisms (such as the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese's relative openness to the Chinese practice of ancestor worship and the liturgical celebration of the

Chinese New Year) possible. Often their narratives suggest that it is precisely *because of* the universal characteristic of their religion that adjustments can be made to the local Hong Kong context. At the same time, it is the localisation of the universal Catholic Church in the specific context that strengthens its universal character.

Again, this is what sets Catholicism apart from Protestantism, according to Albert, the Catholic in his late 50s (see page 67). Albert, who grew up in a Protestant family, went to a Lutheran Primary and a Protestant Secondary School. One particular Sunday, he accompanied his girlfriend (now wife) to a Catholic mass. His three children and wife were baptised into the Catholic Church when they were young; so, he was the only one in the family not officially belonging to the Church. A few years ago, he decided to change that: he signed up for the 18-months long catechumen program and was baptised during Easter 2009. The reasons why Albert converted to Catholicism were not just family-related, but more significantly connected to what he sees as the universal character of the religion:

Of course, Protestant churches are important in God's Plan. Catholicism is like a big ship. But the big ship can't possibly move. It is too stable. Thus you need smaller ships to help people to get to the big ship. That's why Protestants are everywhere, in small houses, in large flat buildings, everywhere. ... There is a lot of treasure in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has tradition: it has its own big system. Catholicism is not simple. It has a long tradition with many holy men. Because of this, it not only depends on the Bible, but also on 2,000 years of experience. It is such a treasure! (interview, Albert, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 11.03.2013).

The universalism that Albert is seeking is not only present in the scriptures, but also in the historical practice of the Church, and the ability of local Catholic leaders to vernacularise Catholicism's universalism into local contexts and discourses. Here, 'tradition' has a different meaning than for my Buddhist informants: in the case of Albert, 'tradition' means that which has been handed down through generations, not necessarily the original Christian

message as proclaimed by Jesus Christ. This idea also came to the fore when Albert opined that “[i]n Hong Kong, all the fathers are part of society. They are localised, but they still keep the tradition, because of their long history of experience.”

This emphasis on the localisation of the universal Catholic Church in particular contexts reflects the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. The aim of the Council was to update the universal Church to modern times by offering local churches ways to better integrate into the contexts in which they find themselves. Rather than retreating, Catholic leaders and organisations had to be more open to the world and its contemporary developments (Wedam, 2000). As a consequence, liturgical reform was initiated, with an emphasis on “the replacement of the Latin Mass by vernacular celebrations” (Orsi, 2005, p. 8).

The outcomes of the Council were felt as far afield as Hong Kong. As one Italian missionary father, who had been in Hong Kong since the early 1960s, told me:

The big change in the Church in Hong Kong of the last 60 years was a result of the Vatican Council. The Church in Hong Kong changed a lot. When I first came here, I baptised one hundred people at St. Margaret’s Church in Happy Valley. The whole service was in Latin. I knew it wasn’t right; I did not speak the language of the people, so how could they understand? The Vatican Council changed all this. I was very happy about that. The language changed, and because of that the mentality, the theology, the outlook of what the Church is, and who the priests and lay people are. The Church used to be like this [he drew a pyramid on a piece of paper]; on top is the Pope, then the bishop and priests, and then the people. The Vatican Council introduced the idea of the ‘People of God’, and the Church changed into this [he drew a circle]: at the centre is Jesus Christ, and we are all the People of God that surround that circle (interview, Father Antonio, St. Joseph’s Church, Kowloon Bay, 31.10.2012).

This change in Church structure has resulted in the universal Church having been caught up in an ambiguous struggle over authority since the Second Vatican Council (D’Agostino, 2000). While on the one hand, it still has its hierarchical structure with the Pope as ultimate

leader, on the other, the Church has become localised and lay people have gained more authority (see also Chapter 3). While this might seem problematic, for my informants, this complexity of authority, and particularly the ways in which the Church has become localised through its transformation from resembling a pyramid to a circle, strengthens the universal character of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. This directly relates to their middle class aspirations, in particular the will to belong to a global world. In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on this particularity.

2.3 Political Challenges to the Aspiration of Belonging

Above, I explored my informants' emphases on 'tradition' in Theravāda Buddhism and on 'universalism' in Catholicism. These notions are of significance to them as they represent their religions as stable, almost non-changing, and 'true' systems. Why is it so important for my interlocutors to live with such stable and truthful religions?

Renowned Hong Kong columnist Jason Ng describes the ambiguous and hybrid nature of the 'Hong Kong identity' as follows:

Our identity has always been a subject of contention. Most of us aren't even sure what to call ourselves. Ask anyone on the street that question and you will get a variety of answers: 'Hong Konger', 'Hong Kong Chinese', 'Chinese Hong Konger' or, simply, 'Chinese'. These labels may sound the same to the untrained ear but not to us. With tensions between Hong Kong and the Mainland growing by the day, we are increasingly mincing words and splitting hairs to distance ourselves from the Motherland. We draw a line in the sand and swear to defend our national identity – or something that resembles one. ... Indeed, 'I'm not Chinese' is a declaration that echoes within Facebook walls and Golden Forum (高登), a popular chat room and a windsock of popular opinion. Gone are the days when we sang about 'Descendants of the Dragon' and celebrated our black hair and yellow complexion with pride (2014, p. 185).

Ng's description pointedly alludes to one of the main challenges faced by many residents of Hong Kong post-1997, namely the question of belonging.³¹ They identify as belonging to the HKSAR, the PRC, both, or something else entirely. In this section, I explore this challenge by unravelling the notion of what a 'Hong Kong identity' means according to my informants. Although I recognise the flaws in this term, I use it because my informants repeatedly used it in conversations, and because the term is dominant in a large amount of media sources and literature on Hong Kong.

According to anthropologist Gordon Mathews, the term 'Hong Kong identity' was first coined as an autonomous cultural identity in the 1960s when "[a] postwar generation reached adulthood that had only known Hong Kong as home" (2000, p. 127). As indicated in the Introduction, it were especially the children of the developing middle class of the late 1960s who came to see Hong Kong as home, not necessarily as a place of transit. For them, being 'Hongkonger' became distinct from being 'Chinese'. According to anthropologist Hugh Baker the 'Hong Kong man' of the 1980s "[was] not British or western (merely westernized). At the same time he [was] not Chinese in the same way that the citizens of the People's Republic of China are Chinese. ... Hong Kong Man is *sui generis* and the problems of the territory's future are more difficult to resolve because of it" (1983, pp. 478-479). Baker's quote signifies the importance of the 'other' in the identity construction of the 'Hong Kong man', and in the negotiation of the 'Hong Kong identity'; in this case, a British (Western) other and a Chinese other.

³¹ Coincidentally, the unrootedness of the Hong Kong identity can also be seen reflected in the flag of the HKSAR, which depicts a bauhinia flower in white against a red background, symbolising that Hong Kong is an alienable part of the PRC. It has five stars in its petals, reflecting the five stars of the Chinese flag. The flower was first discovered in Hong Kong in the late 19th century. It is, however, a sterile plant, which does not produce seeds or fruits on its own.

According to John Hewitt (2010), all identities include elements of continuity (being the same person throughout one's lifetime), integration (being one whole person, instead of different fragments), identification (being the same as others) and differentiation (being distinct from other people and thus unique). Through identity narration, a combination of these elements results in a person's uniqueness, as being different from others. A person achieves identity through the detour with the other, through the production of differences and techniques of exclusion (Hall, 1996; Ricoeur, 1971). Moreover, this process is contextual and fluid. Every new situation "carries a tension between assuming those roles, fitting in, declaring our identification with the group, and, on the other hand, doing something that emphasizes our uniqueness, our differentiation" (Ammerman, 2003, p. 210).

This fluidity of identity is most apparent in post-1997 Hong Kong, a time in which Hongkongers feel trapped in an endless process of creatively negotiating the relation between the Hong Kong 'self' and a mainland Chinese 'other'.³² Mathews (2000) argues that Hongkongers' processes of identity narration in negotiation with the mainland Chinese 'other' play out at three levels: of one's ethnicity and culture; of one's ancestral background that is rooted in the civilisation, history and heritage of China; and of the nationality and state to which Hong Kong residents belong since 1997. At all these levels, Hongkongers negotiate their identity narratives differently: they emphasise the uniqueness of Hong Kong as a city different from other Chinese cities ('two systems'); they highlight their perception that the HKSAR is part of the PRC ('one country'); or, they stress anything in between. These negotiations are individually made and fluid, depending on a person's status, job,

³² It needs to be clarified here that in these negotiations, the term 'Mainland China' does not denote one uniform category. In such a large country, with over 1.4 billion people, the terms 'Chinese' and 'mainlanders' have many different meanings. My informants distinguish themselves mostly from people coming from Guangdong, Fujian or the four Chinese municipalities; in other words, from the mainland Chinese they most frequently encounter.

political affiliation, even religion. For example, for Albert, the Catholic in his late 50s whose job as a salesperson frequently requires him to travel to Mainland China (see page 67),

... the best identity is Hong Kong: we have the freedom to travel around the world and to China. But if you [as a salesperson] say you are from Hong Kong, nobody will care about you (interview, Albert, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013).

Even though Albert rather identifies as Hongkonger, for work purposes he prefers to introduce himself as Chinese. His preferences show the negotiations that Hong Kong residents constantly need to make in their identity narrations, emphasising themselves as Hongkongers, Chinese, or a combination of both.

The ambiguity surrounding these negotiations is also exemplified by the position of Hong Kong as ‘religious bridge’ (see Chapter 1). Religious organisations attempt to cross the border between the HKSAR and Mainland China ostensibly to become part of the religious revival on the mainland. At the same time, they emphasise Hong Kong’s difference in order to protect religious freedom in the city. These examples show the negotiations Hong Kong religious organisations enter into regarding the border between Hong Kong and Mainland China, and the emphasis they place in their narratives on the ‘one country, two systems’ policy and on the promise of ‘Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong’ (Ping & Kwong, 2014).

The negotiations of individuals are also reflected in surveys that aim to measure the experiences of local Hong Kong residents in terms of belonging. For example, Eric Kit-wai Ma and Anthony Fung’s (2007) research revealed that from 1996 to 2006, Hong Kong residents identified less as Chinese or Hongkongers, and more as ‘Chinese but also Hongkongese’ or ‘Hongkongese but also Chinese’, thereby emphasising the interrelations between the different categories of belonging. Moreover, responses to the latest survey

undertaken by the Hong Kong University Popular Opinion Programme in June 2014, in descending order, included: “Hong Kong people’s feeling is strongest as ‘Hongkongers’, followed by ‘Asians’, then ‘members of the Chinese race’, ‘global citizens’, ‘Chinese’, and finally ‘citizens of the PRC’”.³³ Participants to the survey highlighted the many different aspects of belonging in Hong Kong, and the unpopularity of personally identifying with the Chinese motherland. The survey shows that the closer Hong Kong gets to Mainland China, the less prone local Hongkongers are to identify themselves as ‘Chinese’. Of particular interest is the included category ‘global citizens’, which emphasises the global character of the Hong Kong city, and its residents’ aspirations to belong to a world that is bigger than Hong Kong and that stretches beyond China.

In conversations with my informants, I asked similar questions regarding identity and belonging. Elsie, a Tibetan Buddhist housewife in her mid-30s, was born in Hong Kong, but nonetheless identifies as Chinese. With some level of irritation, she replied to my enquiries as follows:

Honestly, I don’t understand why Hong Kong people say they are from Hong Kong. It’s not mature. I would say I’m Chinese, from Hong Kong. You need to respect yourself and this is the situation (interview, Elsie, Délifrance Café, Tsuen Wan, 30.05.2013).

Wendy, a Catholic in her early 30s and teacher at a secular primary school, narrated a contrasting identity. Born in Hong Kong to two mainland Chinese parents, Wendy feels very strongly about her identity as a Hongkonger. Whenever she travels overseas, she tells people she is Hongkonger, not Chinese. She finds it important to emphasise this difference as she does not want to be seen as a Chinese tourist. I had an appointment with Wendy in early

³³ Source: HKUPOP (17.06.2014). HKU POP Releases Latest Survey on Hong Kong People's Ethnic Identity. *HKU POP Site*. See <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/release/release1150.html>.

August 2014 shortly after she returned from her honeymoon in Italy and Switzerland. Over tea, she talked incessantly about the coarse behaviour displayed by mainland Chinese tourists in the cities she had visited. She criticised them for being loud, for jumping queues, and for their poor personal hygiene (personal communication, Wendy, Oi! Arts Centre, Fortress Hill, 06.08.2014). As I indicate in the last section of this chapter, the difference in Elsie's and Wendy's responses to my enquiries might partly be explained by their different religious backgrounds.

These created boundaries between Hongkongers and mainlanders become even more important due to the arrival of mainlanders – people with different values, ideas, principles, even languages – in Hong Kong in increasing numbers. Their increased presence in the city makes Hongkongers feel that their unique Hong Kong identity is slowly being diluted, signalling the entire incorporation of Hong Kong into the PRC in the near future. One of my informants even said that she felt that the mainlanders are, in fact, colonising Hong Kong. How this affects my informants' socio-economic aspirations related to living in Hong Kong is the focus of Chapter 3.

Overall, Hongkongers seem to struggle to construct an identity narrative that encompasses both the unique (and highly symbolised) 'Hong Kong identity' and their national identity of belonging to the PRC. I would argue that this fluidity in identity is partly a result of the 'one country, two systems' policy. While Hongkongers officially live inside China's borders and in some cases carry a Chinese passport, they are not subjected to CCP strictures or laws. They are Chinese citizens, but residents of Hong Kong. The many protests occurring in Hong Kong (e.g., the 2012 protest against the implementation of the National Education Program, the 2014 Umbrella Movement, and also smaller-scale protests such as

those aimed at a reduction in the numbers of mainlanders entering the city) reflect this experience of a ‘unique’ Hong Kong identity, as opposed to that of the mainland.

2.3.1 Hong Kong’s Uniqueness

As said before, a person achieves identity through the detour with the other, through the production of differences and techniques of exclusion (Hall, 1996; Ricoeur, 1971).

According to Eva Spies, “in order to understand why and how actors relate different ... views and practices to each other, a researcher needs to pay close attention to the ‘contents’ of these differences from the actors’ points of view” (2013, p. 119). Pursuant to Spies’ comment, in this section I highlight some of the differences my informants emphasise to distinguish themselves from their mainland Chinese counterparts.

A theme frequently repeated in my interviewees’ narratives is the negative values attributed to mainlanders. They regard the latter as backward, uneducated people, inhabitants of China’s rural areas, whose morals have been destroyed by the Cultural Revolution and the recent economic boom in the PRC. For many, this new prosperity has turned mainlanders into people for whom profit making has become more important than the quality of consumer products or interpersonal relationships. Recent examples often alluded to include the 2008 milk powder scandal, the realisation after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake that houses had been built using inferior materials, stories of recycled sewerage oil being used in China’s restaurants, and widespread corruption in the PRC (for examples, see Penny, 2013).

In such narratives, two interrelated processes are often highlighted (i.e., roots and upbringing), two determinants that, in my informants’ perceptions, distinguish Hongkongers from mainlanders. First, an important aspect of the identification of Hongkongers is their perception of where their roots lay: in the HKSAR, the PRC, or somewhere else entirely. As

indicated in the Introduction, the generation of Chinese people who came to Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s as refugees mainly saw the city as a temporary place to stay. They never regarded it as their home. Only members of the post-1960s generation saw Hong Kong as a place to which they belonged and in which they wanted to live and grow old. This naturally affects the ways in which these migrant peoples and their children identify with Mainland China and Hong Kong.

Take, for example, Ivy, my main Protestant informant. Ivy works at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Born in Mainland China during the early 1980s, Ivy was brought to Hong Kong by her family when she was one month old. Her father died approximately ten years ago. Prior to his death, he expressed the wish to have his body buried close to his village in Guangdong Province, PRC, so that he could be close to his *guxiang*, the native place or region in Mainland China from which he emigrated (Sinn, 1997). Ivy, on the other hand, does not feel this need: her feelings towards her ‘native hometown’ are quite negative. She describes ‘her’ town as a small village, and her cousins as backward and simple-minded. Moreover, she is not sure exactly where her hometown is located, suggesting that she does not visit her family regularly (interview, Ivy, HKUST, Clear Water Bay, 22.12.2012).

Besides roots, identification is often linked to ‘upbringing’. This ‘upbringing’ is shaped by developments in Hong Kong and the PRC, especially since the mid-20th century. During this period, the PRC has variously experienced the establishment of the Communist regime, the Cultural Revolution, and rapid economic growth since Deng’s opening-up policy of the late 1970s. Hong Kong residents consider these developments to have destroyed many of the cultural values of Mainland China, a topic I elaborate upon in Chapter 3. At the same time, Hong Kong witnessed a rapid economic boom under British colonialism. This

economic growth was amongst others aided by the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption, which was established in 1974 with the intention to prevent corruption and bribery in Hong Kong SAR Government departments. In Mainland China, there was no such commission in place; for this reason, many Hongkongers suspect that mainlanders primarily acquired money through corruption. Also during this period, Hongkongers enjoyed Western education that was mainly provided by missionary organisations. This education has provided them with the, in their eyes, ‘correct’ morals and outlooks on life.

Teresa, a Buddhist doctor in her late 30s, works part-time in the private sector. Her work requires her to travel a lot, amongst other destinations to Mainland China. During our conversations, she often shared with me her experiences on the mainland, usually emphasising the more negative ones among them. One day, as I sat next to her on the Star Ferry from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon, I asked her to explain the relationship she felt with the PRC. She answered that she identifies as Chinese, and, as such, is similar to people living in Mainland China. However, there is one significant difference, which Teresa summed up in a telling analogy. According to Teresa, while Hongkongers and mainlanders all attend the same school, they are in different classes, with Hongkongers in the more advanced ones (personal communication, Teresa, Star Ferry, 29.07.2014). With this analogy, Teresa clearly indicated the differences she perceives based on roots and upbringing (particularly the latter).

2.3.2 Global Belongings

Hongkongers thus distinguish themselves from mainland Chinese people by emphasising differences in roots and upbringing. Their general antipathy towards a Chinese identity makes their reference point of belonging unstable.

However, mainland Chinese and/or Hong Kong identities are not the only categories of belonging that play a role in the life of Hong Kong middle class residents. According to anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, the dialectic process of negotiating one's identity is especially prominent in urban centres, as "[c]ity dwellers can be put together in a great many different ways, from the multitude of activities, alignments, and perspectives which can serve as construction materials" (1980, p. 222). City people, more than rural residents, have the ability to construct identities at the intersection of not only local, but also global communities (Orsi, 1999b). The same holds true in Hong Kong, where people construct identity narratives not only in relation to the PRC, but also to global organisations and worldviews, e.g., religious views.

In his description of the consumption patterns of middle class youth in various Asian countries, Chua Beng-Huat notes as follows:

Youth in Asia, as in other parts of the world, draw from an 'image bank' that is internationalised through popular mass media. The reference point in the imaginary is, therefore, a globalised image of youth rather than local cultural images. It is the global rather than the local that provides their identity as 'youth'. However, consumption of this global image unavoidably passes through local cultural and political conditions (2000a, p. 16).

According to Chua, a global image features prominently in the narratives constructed by urban youth in Asian countries. I argue that this does not only account for urban youth and their consumption patterns. In Hong Kong, a similar observation may be made regarding middle class religious individuals, who construct a religious identity narrative based on globalised images of Buddhism or Catholicism that stress tradition and universalism.

'Globalisation' has been a much-debated concept in social studies since the 1980s. Earlier theorists saw globalisation as an increasingly dense flow of trade, finance, culture,

ideas and people, a flow that would eventually lead to the homogenisation or ‘westernisation’ of worldwide cultures. In contrast, contemporary anthropologists recognise that globalisation also involves “how subjects respond to these processes in culturally specific ways” (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p. 5). Following these theorists, I argue that analytical focus should be upon “local and regional adaptations to and resistances against these flows” (Lewellen, 2002, pp. 7-8). Therefore, in the next section, I look at how perceptions of the ‘global’ (in this case of the perceived ‘global’ Buddhist tradition and universal Catholicism) become meaningful in the lives of my informants. Through these perceptions, they fashion new, global and stable ways of belonging to the world.

2.4 Belonging to Religious Communities

In the first sections of this chapter, I delineated the specific meanings Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism assume in the context of Hong Kong, i.e., emphasis on tradition and universalism. These meanings are in important ways shaped by the specific city in which these religions are lived, in this case by the issue of belonging as described above. In the city in which belonging to a political entity (the HKSAR, the PRC, both or something altogether) is problematized, my informants reach out to belong to other, more global institutions; in this case, religious ones. This is partly reflected in the affiliations my informants express with particular religious communities, located in specific buildings in the city. A short exploration of their overall lack of connection to such particular communities not only emphasises their expressed wish to belong to a religious tradition or a universal religion, but also sheds interesting new lights on the debate regarding urban religion. In the Conclusion, I elaborate further on this.

As I observed in the Introduction, the study of the engagement of faith with the city is a burgeoning field of research in social sciences, partly initiated by the work of Lowell Livezey (2000b). This field of research shows how religious practices, experiences and beliefs shape a city and are shaped by it. Much of the research done on urban religion so far focuses on religious symbols in the urban built environment. Examples of these studies include research into the presence of churches in the many different neighbourhoods of Chicago (Livezey, 2000a), the building of a Hindu temple in Washington, D.C. (Waghorn, 1999), and the meaning attached to temples in urban Guangzhou (Poon, 2008) and Beijing (Fisher, 2011, 2015). Katie Day (2014) focused her research on one single street in Philadelphia, Germantown Avenue. She and her research team spent six years aiming to show how congregations, as social institutions, act upon urban environments and, in their turn, are influenced by said environments. Geographers have also focused on religion in cities' built environments. Wilbur Zelinsky and Stephen Matthews (2011), for example, by mapping religious buildings, schools, cemeteries and bookstores, quite literally indicate the place for religion in the American metropolis of Chicago. Their study primarily focuses on the visible manifestations of religious life through buildings, leaving it to other scholars to determine "what it means, how it influences the dynamics of city life, and how it is lived out in everyday life-worlds" (Bjelland, 2012, p. 268). Besides buildings, religious symbols can also be present in people themselves. In such cases, the body becomes a site to articulate religious affiliation. For example, in his article on relations between Muslims and Hindus in Old Delhi, Ajay Gandhi (2013) describes how religious symbols attached to the body become ways for people to articulate religious differences between them and the other.

There is an obvious reason for the heavy scholarly emphasis on the visibility of religious symbols, e.g., buildings, in urban centres. As Filip de Boeck (2013) argues, cities

are not merely blank canvasses upon which religions feature, but in fact impact upon religious spaces, experiences and sentiments. In the case of China, for example, the CCP's modernising agenda is reflected in the built environment of its cities. Religion is confined to private spaces. However, as Shuk-wah Poon (2008) argues, it is important to remember that people are not merely passive recipients of city planning, but influence it as well. They are "proactive agents in social and urban spatial changes, rather than ... merely voiceless recipients of the government's or local elites' modernizing project" (ibid., p. 270). Thus, the built environment and religious individuals are caught in a dialectic relationship which determines the religious symbols visible in urban spaces.

Hence, the study of urban religion focuses heavily on religious symbols in the built environment. Interestingly, however, for my Theravāda Buddhist and Catholic informants, the built environment of Hong Kong and the visible religious signs therein do not hold particular significance for their religious experiences. In Westendorp (forthcoming-b), I discuss multiple ways in which the density of Hong Kong's built environment is reflected in the meanings that religious individuals ascribe to religious buildings. I show that these buildings are not the most critical medium for religious practice. Rather, what people find of value is that they represent important global networks, which relates to their emphases on tradition and universalism. Let me explain.

As of 2013, Hong Kong's population was approximately 7.2 million, a number that increases every year. Only 7% of the land in Hong Kong is residential; almost 40% of it is country parks; and, in total, there are only 17,600 ha of buildable land (Bosco, 2015b, p. 122; Lau, Giridhara & Ganesan, 2005, p. 529). The city's ever-growing population has turned Hong Kong into one of the most densely-populated areas in the world. To satisfy the intense demands of urban activities in the city, building density has become one of the accepted



Dharma sharing by a Buddhist master during the opening of the Centre for Mindfulness, Tsuen Wan West. The Centre is located in an office space that is converted into a Buddhist 'temple' (source: Mariske Westendorp, Centre for Mindfulness, Tsuen Wan West, New Territories, 26.06.2014).

solutions (Chan, Tang & Wong, 2002), resulting in a high degree of Multiple Intensive Land Use and the mixing of commercial and residential purposes within buildings (Lau, Giridhara & Ganesan, 2005). As a result of the increasing density of Hong Kong, buildings are often multi-purpose. Within this symbiosis, buildings constantly change, both inside and externally.

The increasing density and continuously changing nature and appearance of buildings have their impact on religious organisations in the city. The scarcity of available and buildable land has forced many religious organisations to move their centres into high-rise commercial or residential buildings.³⁴ In Chapter 1, I already mentioned some examples. Another example is the Centre for Mindfulness, which opened in June 2014. This Centre is situated in the TML Tower in Tsuen Wan West (New Territories), a 30-storeyed, new and modern-looking industrial building. The Centre is managed by a Malaysian Theravāda monk, who used to be the abbot of a Mahāyāna Buddhist temple with notable temple-like features. A single, two-storeyed high building with a Chinese-style sloped roof typical of Mahāyāna Buddhist temples, this temple has three large rooms which are used for prayer, meditation and Buddhist classes. There is also a main shrine room containing different Buddhist statues and Buddhist ritual items. A library and dormitories for Buddhist monks and nuns are located on the second floor of the building. In contrast, the Centre for Mindfulness is an office space of approximately 100 square meters on the sixteenth floor of the TML Tower. However, irrespective of the non-religious space in which it is located, the Centre attracts reasonable-sized audiences during the programs it offers. So clearly, for Hong Kong

³⁴ One exception is the recently built Tsz Shan Buddhist Monastery in the Tai Po District (New Territories). However, the purchasing of the land and the building of this new temple were only possible because it was funded by Li Ka-shing, one of the richest tycoons in Asia. For other Buddhist organisations, a similar act would be near impossible.

Buddhists, it is not the space, but the programs on offer and most importantly the master leading the dharma sharings that are of significance.

During the celebration of the Buddha's Birthday in 2013, Francis, the Theravāda Buddhist in his mid-40s (see page 62-63), took refuge in the Three Jewels under the tutelage of the above-mentioned Malaysian monk in the temple of which the latter was previously abbot. Prior to taking refuge, Francis had stayed in the temple for a short while to sort out personal issues with the help of the monk. He enjoyed staying in the temple, not necessarily because of its location or appearance, but because of the presence of the monk. In 2014, when I asked Francis about the newly-opened Centre for Mindfulness, he replied that the Centre "is just a place where we can come together". When I asked him if he missed going to the temple in which he had stayed earlier, he answered: "I loved that temple because of the master's warmth. Once he withdrew, it became just a building" (personal communication, Francis, Simply Life Restaurant, Admiralty, 14.05.2014).

Francis' story foregrounds the meaning he attaches to his Theravāda Buddhist master, not to the specific building. It is particularly the master that Francis feels attracted to and his specific teachings, which for him represent the actual original words of the Buddha, and thus the Buddhist tradition. According to Donald Lopez, Jr., "authority in Buddhism is often a matter of lineage, traced backwards in time from student to teacher, ideally ending with the Buddha himself" (Lopez Jr., 2002, p. xvii). This is not the case in the narrative of Francis, for whom the lineage of his Buddhist master is not of significance. Neither does the community of which this master is a member. Instead, it is the individual master and his teachings that Francis feels attracted to. In other words, Francis' main evaluation of the master centres on his qualities of sharing the dharma, not his representation of a particular lineage.

Similar aspects can be discovered in the narrative of Teresa, the Theravāda Buddhist doctor in her late 30s (see page 97). Her Buddhist learning started in Hong Kong's Chi Lin nunnery, where she attended a foundational course every Sunday for half a year. Over the past ten years, she has regularly visited a small Buddhist temple on Lantau Island, and she once attended a retreat on Cheung Chau Island. In Hong Kong, she joined several meditation camps, held at different places, led by international masters including the Australian Theravāda monk Ajahn Brahm and the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn. But Teresa's Buddhist path stretches beyond the borders of Hong Kong. Sometimes she travels to other countries and Buddhist organisations, e.g., Taiwan for the Dharma Drum Foundation, or to monasteries in Bhutan where she enjoys the teachings she finds interesting (personal communication, Teresa, various places and times). For Teresa, engaging with these Buddhist centres in and outside of Hong Kong and listening to the teachings of particular international masters has two meanings. First, by travelling around, she can choose to listen to the teachings which she thinks reflect the true tradition of Buddhism. Second, travelling gives her a feeling of belonging to a larger Buddhist network led by international masters and attended by an international audience. For her, travelling not only creates a sense of belonging to the global world, but equally allows her to actively search for a religious community of which to be part. In addition, although she strongly identifies herself as being Theravāda Buddhist, she visits centres and masters that belong to various Buddhist schools. Her Buddhist path is thus not only one in which she creates a belonging to a global world, but equally one in which she actively and individually searches for elements she associates most strongly with the Buddhist tradition. I elaborate more on this emphasis on individual accountability in the following chapter.

Thus, instead of being a member of a particular community located at a specific site, Francis and Teresa (and likewise many other of my informants) feel they belong to a larger Buddhist network. In this network, authority is given to specific masters. According to my informants, these masters represent the Buddhist tradition as initiated by the Buddha. The buildings in which my informants meet these masters are merely spaces to come together, and are hence of limited significance. As said before, this is a valuable insight into the scholarly debate surrounding urban religion, which tends to over-emphasise the study of religious buildings in cities.

Regarding Catholicism, my informants' valuation of particular church buildings and parish communities is influenced by the tension between the universal and the particular as described in section 2.2. In the bullet point list stated at the beginning of that section (see page 81), Albert described the church (with a small letter, meaning the particular community) as a network where people can meet each other, and as part of the larger universal Catholic Church. This reflects the ways most of my informants value individual churches and church communities.

According to my informants, local churches are focal points with beautiful and inspiring architecture; places to belong to administratively; or simply the closest places to attend services. They regard it important to visit these places regularly, preferably every week, to uphold relations with fellow churchgoers, but most importantly with God. For them, churches are local parts of the universal Church that one visits to attend services and uphold a relationship with God. However, as the same services are offered everywhere and as God is present in each and every Catholic church building, in Hong Kong and in other countries, one can visit any church one desires.

Sarah, the Catholic journalist in her mid-20s (see page 72) expressed this most clearly. Sarah was baptised into the Annunciation Church in Tsuen Wan in 2001. Since then, she volunteers in the church during important gatherings, for example during the Easter Vigil when dozens of adults are baptised. Even though Sarah appreciates the Annunciation Church as the building she religiously grew up in, it is not the only church she attends. Depending upon how busy her schedule is on Sundays, she attends either the Annunciation Church or a church close to her home in Sha Tin (New Territories). When not in the vicinity, she will try to attend afternoon mass in a church in Prince Edward (Kowloon). Sarah stressed that she is not too concerned regarding which church she attends as “my church is everywhere. Even Rome is my church” (interview, Sarah, Vietnamese restaurant, Central, 20.02.2013). In effect, she emphasised that the Catholic Church is a universal organisation, and that all churches within and outside of Hong Kong are representations of this universal Church.



Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan: a highly visible church building in Hong Kong's urban built environment (Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, New Territories, 15.07.2014).

According to Lawrence Cunningham (2009), this minimal value attached to local churches and the emphasis on the universal is a result of globalisation. In his *An Introduction to Catholicism*, he argues that,

... [in] the traditional model of a clearly designated parish marked off as a discrete geographical area ... a stable population was envisioned. It assumed that people would be born, raised, spend their childhood, and end their lives in a well-defined place. That still happens, but it is less and less the case for large numbers of people (ibid., p. 265).

Cunningham paints a picture of globalisation that is often repeated in literature, i.e., one in which people, due to increased mobility, lose connection to particular places. However, the middle class narratives of my Catholic informants paint a slightly different picture.

Confronted with an ambiguous belonging to the PRC and/or the HKSAR, they reach out for a stable connection. They find this in their religion. It are the religious practices they can perform, the services they can attend and the relationship with God they can uphold that symbolise this universal connection, not particular church buildings or parish communities.

Again, this sets them apart from Protestantism, as indicated by Wendy, the Catholic teacher in her early 30s (see page 93-94). Wendy converted to Catholicism after being introduced to the Catholic Church a few years earlier by her boyfriend (now husband). She was baptised during Easter 2012. Before she started attending Catholic services, Wendy used to attend a Protestant church located in a residential complex. For different reasons, she did not feel comfortable there. One of these reasons was the actual building in which the Protestant services took place compared to the aesthetically-designed Catholic church she and her husband now attend. According to Wendy, the architecture of Catholic buildings gives her “a feeling of peace, calmness and quietness”. This is a feeling she experiences in every Catholic church she visits, emphasising the kind of universal experience that one can

have in such buildings. In contrast, Protestant churches “might only be a single room. You just walk in a building and only one floor will be the gathering room or the church. It feels like going to my friend’s house” (interview, Wendy, Japanese restaurant, Sha Tin, 14.03.2013). Hence, for Wendy, the feeling one has when entering a Catholic church is the same in every church in Hong Kong and worldwide. This is testament to both the universalism of the religion, as well as to the lack of relevance attached to a specific church building and its community. This is not to say that all Catholic churches are equal to each other. There are differences between churches, and these are appreciated. For example, some of my informants favoured the fan-shaped layout of the main chapel of the Annunciation Church (Tsuen Wan), the mosaic at the back of the church, and the open courtyard which offers a space in which to gather after Sunday mass. Others liked to occasionally go to Hong Kong’s more historical churches, e.g., the Rosary Church in Tsim Sha Tsui East (Kowloon), St. Theresa’s Church in Prince Edward (Kowloon), St. Margaret’s Church in Happy Valley (Hong Kong Island), or the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Central (Hong Kong Island). However, the specific features of these buildings do not determine the meaning ascribed to said Catholic churches. For my informants, each Catholic church in Hong Kong and the world is an equally important place to visit, to attend services and to be in contact with God, because all of these churches are part and representations of the one universal Catholic Church.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed my informants' emphases on tradition and universalism in Buddhism and Catholicism. I argued that the fashioning of these ways of belonging to global religious communities has gained specific meaning in contemporary Hong Kong.

The issue of aspiring to belong to something stable is best explained in relation to an imagined Mainland China encroaching upon Hong Kong. According to Peter van der Veer, what makes cities unique is that they are “the meeting ground[s] of various populations that had been hardly in touch with one another before arriving there, which makes the need to self-identify and connect quite important” (2015a, p. 9). Contrary to Van der Veer's observation, Hong Kong residents have always been in contact with mainlanders, who in most cases are members of their families. Even though until recently connections with Mainland China were almost exclusively with people from the Guangdong province, the contact with mainlanders from all over China has intensified over the last years, evoking reflections on people's relations with mainland Chinese. This has resulted in the emergence of a high degree of “the idea that the interests of ‘native’ Hong Kongers should take priority over those of visitors or recent immigrants from mainland China” (Cheung, 2015, p. 99). This ‘nativism’ is best explored by looking at my informants' socio-economic urban aspirations to the Hong Kong Dream, as I do in the next chapter.



Protestant churches are to be found everywhere in the urban landscape, thereby attesting to their non-universal character (source: Mariske Westendorp, Jordan, Kowloon, 13.04.2014).



A woman lighting incense before deities at Man Mo Temple, a practice associated with 'non-traditional' Buddhism as culturally practiced in Chinese contexts (source: Mariske Westendorp, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong Island 19.08.2012).

CHAPTER 3:

Accountability and Socio-Economic Aspirations

In Chapter 2, I outlined how Hong Kong Buddhists and Catholics relate to global religions that represent tradition and universalism, and that transcend temporal and spatial borders. In this chapter, I explore people's roles in their religions and, subsequently, in the city of Hong Kong. I focus on the emphasis my informants place on their own accountability to be 'good' Buddhists and Catholics.

I foreground this by placing particular emphasis on my informants' socio-economic aspirations, most prominently expressed by middle class people in the notion of the 'Hong Kong Dream'. This Dream, which originated in the 1970s, is built upon the premise "that hard work plus a little bit of luck could bring great success" (Mathews, Ma & Lui, 2008, p. 36). However, according to local Hongkongers, the increasing influx of mainland Chinese tourists, traders and talented professionals into their city makes it increasingly difficult to achieve this Dream. I show that the ways in which they reflect upon this problem are significantly coloured by their particular religious notions of who or what can be held responsible for certain situations, and who or what has the capacity to change them.

Accountability is defined as the person or power that can be held responsible for a situation in the past, present or future. This notion obviously has consequences for ideas about causality as well as about how people see themselves as 'agents'. As such, accountability is interrelated with notions of agency. Based on her fieldwork conducted on religion, morality, and emotion in a Buddhist and Christian town in Northern Thailand, Julia Cassaniti (2012) argues that the main difference between the two religions is the concept of

belief and consequent notions of agency. Christianity, according to Cassaniti, “serves to mediate the agency of the self with the agency of what is conceived of as an acting, cosmologically external Other” (ibid., p. 297); that is, God, and at times Jesus (and, in Catholicism, Mary and other saints). Buddhism is constructed around the notion of accessing a cosmologically natural self. As Buddhists do not recognise a cosmologically external other, agency is conceived of “as involving solely the agentive nature of the individual” (ibid., p. 303). Therefore:

[I]n one, you must believe in the power of an external agent to appropriate personal agency, and in the other personal agency is imagined as emanating from a natural order, and hence one does not need to ‘believe in’ an external source (ibid., p. 311).

It should be noted that this is mainly the case in Theravāda Buddhism, and, to a lesser degree in Mahāyāna Buddhism. As indicated before, Mahāyāna Buddhism recognises bodhisattvas, who at times function as external agents who can reduce one’s suffering. Theravāda Buddhism places almost full emphasis on the agency and thus accountability of the self. How these different theological notions of agency and accountability play out in the religious lifeworlds of my informants is the main focus of this chapter.

An important point to remember vis-à-vis this chapter is that my informants are all, to use Helen Siu’s (2011) term, ‘immobile’ people, that is, locally born, middle class Hongkongers who themselves or their parents came of age during the 1960s and 1970s, and whose cultural icon is the famous TV series *Below the Lion Rock*. They or their parents created a good life for their families and themselves through hard work, education, family commitments and political detachment. These ‘immobile’ people have developed a strong attachment to Hong Kong, regard themselves as different from the mainland Chinese, and express a certain degree of ‘nativism’. According to Siu (2011), whereas this cohort was

once the backbone of Hong Kong's economy, it has now become the city's most urgent problem.

In Chapter 2, I indicated that the burgeoning field of research on urban religion is for a large part focused on the study of religious symbols, e.g., temples and churches, in a city's built environment. Another emphasis in the academic debate on urban religion is on religious transformations that result from transnational and rural-to-urban migration. The focus here is on immigrants coming to a city, searching for a space to belong religiously. According to Rik Pinxten and Lisa Dikomitis, international migrants "obey the local rules and do business with the establishment, but at the same time they strengthen the ties with their region or country of origin" (2012, p. 117). As a consequence, they shape (religious) life in the city.

An often cited edited volume of the relationship between international migration and urban religion is the one by Jane Garnett and Alana Harris (2013) that explores the role of religious practices as strategies for negotiating the experience of migration. Other studies look at the emergence of 'religious innovations' in urban areas as a result of (international) migration (Becci, Burchardt & Casanova, 2013), and at the effects of increasing religious diversity due to the coming of immigrants to different English cities, primarily Birmingham (Stringer, 2013). Synnøve Bendixsen (2013) studied how young people with diverse ethnic backgrounds, but who were born in Germany, become members of a Muslim youth organisation. She argues that the religious practices of immigrants to a city can become sources of belonging, or sources of segregation. José Casanova (2001) likewise has indicated the various pluralistic ways in which Muslims act within modern non-Islamic cities. Often, these studies relate the coming of migrants to already existing relations between church and state in a city, and the effects of the migration on these relations.

Migration is often also the main subject of studies on religion in Hong Kong. This was, for example, the focus of the recent special edition in *Asian Anthropology* (see page 31). Examples from this special edition include studies on Islam in Hong Kong (Baig & O'Connor, 2015; Law, 2015; see also O'Connor, 2012), or the religious experiences of Catholic and Muslim domestic workers (Hawwa, 2000; Ho, 2015; Nakonz & Shik, 2009; Yap, 2015) and of Pakistani secondary students (Chee, 2015).

My research moves away from this theoretical scope. I do not research religious practices of immigrants coming to the city of Hong Kong, nor do I look at how local Hongkongers react to the increasing religious diversity in Hong Kong due to migration, or how these influence already existing relations between church and state. Instead, I look at how the specific urban context of Hong Kong inscribes itself in the religious notions of middle class 'immobile' Hongkongers, and how these in turn fashion understandings of the city. This is not to say that migration does not play a role in my research; on the contrary. As I show in this chapter, the increasing immigration of mainland Chinese people to Hong Kong influences life in the city in intense ways. Mainlanders coming to the city as tourists, traders or talented professionals likewise influence the values of tradition and universalism attributed by local Hongkongers to Buddhism and Catholicism (see Chapter 2). In my opinion, these influences are most clearly foregrounded when researching the 'immobile' residents of Hong Kong.

3.1 Modern Buddhist Accountability

In Chapter 2, I discussed how my Theravāda Buddhist informants describe their religion as representing the original Buddhist tradition. I also argued that their emphasis on 'tradition' is a characteristic of modern Buddhism which emerged from the late 19th century onwards. In

this modern form of Buddhism, which encompasses all Buddhist schools, various aspects of the religion are demythologised, psychologised and rationalised, making it better adjusted to ‘modern’ tastes (McMahan, 2008).

Other characteristics of modern Buddhism are it being more socially engaged, less ritualistic and hierarchical, and more focused on the individual instead of the deified Buddha. These features are reflected in the increasing importance attached to the role of the laity in modern Buddhist practices (Gombrich, 2006 [1988]). For example, the aspiration to reach enlightenment is no longer merely associated with monastic vocation, but can equally be aspired to by the laity. Personal experience has become central. Commenting on “Reformist Buddhism” in contemporary Singapore, Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng (2009 [2003]) concludes that members of a new generation of local Chinese Buddhists in the city

...are not only interested in the functional aspects of religion, but rather are intent on seeking solutions to their individualized religious needs and personalized spiritual fulfilment. As with other modern religious trends, they see their religious needs as *personal*, no longer tied to religious needs of their families or community (ibid., p. 6, my emphasis).

Attempts to fulfil such personal needs lead to the formation of lay Buddhist associations and movements for practice (Swearer, 2010 [1995]). There is also a heavy emphasis placed on the practice of meditation by the laity, which was originally only a practice of the clergy (Mak, 2012; Swearer, 2010 [1995]). As a result of these modern trends, the distance between clerical and lay Buddhists has become less; egalitarianism between the two has increased.

It should therefore come to no surprise that many of my informants picture Buddhism as an individually practiced religion, highlighting their individual commitment to it, and emphasising their strong and relatively intolerant self-identification as belonging to a global stream of Buddhism instead of to a specific community or lineage. The latter point is



Accumulating karmic merit: Offering gifts to Buddhist monks and listening to teachings during Buddha's Birthday (source: Mariske Westendorp, Tsuen Wan, New Territories, 17.05.2013).

described in Chapter 2.4. In this section I discuss the first two characteristics (i.e., the individual nature of Buddhism, and personal commitment to the religion) and indicate how these features relate to Buddhist notions of accountability. These notions feature in the narratives of most of my informants, regardless of which Buddhist school they feel most attracted to.

Most of my informants regard Buddhism to be a religion which has to be practiced individually. Each person alone is thought to be held accountable for his/her actions, and has his/her own agency to influence life and karma. In Buddhism, accountability is closely related to the notion of karma, or the principle of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’. A popular understanding of karma is that “each deed has its consequences, either in this life or a future one; good and evil deeds will eventually come back to you” (Palmer, 2011, p. 94). Various Buddhist schools have different understandings of how karmic merits can be gained, if and how they can be transferred to others, and when karma will take effect (Van der Velde, 2016 [2015]). In Theravāda Buddhism, karma is the sum of merit created by an individual in his/her present and past lives. In order to secure a good rebirth, preferably in the human world, one has his/her own ability to create positive merit. Karma is thus created by and for oneself (Cassaniti, 2012), through one’s own agency. It follows from this that every individual is to be held accountable for his/her karma, and, by extension, for what happens to him/her.

Positive karma can be accumulated through practice. For my Theravāda Buddhist informants, one of the most important practices is meditation. The practice of meditation is linked directly to the life of the Buddha, who reached enlightenment while meditating under the Bodhi tree. When meditating my informants feel they relate to the original Buddhist tradition. Under modern Buddhist influence, meditation can no longer only be practiced by

the clergy; and, it nowadays also involves more than merely sitting down in lotus position with the eyes closed in order to calm the mind and try to attain enlightenment. Instead it entails, similar to meditation in Western Buddhism, “all forms of focused concentration, mindfulness, prayer, chanting, and other ritual activities that are performed as means of cultivating one’s heart and mind or expressing one’s faith” (Wallace, 2002, p. 36). Such meditation practices are believed to lead to a better state of mind; this betterment will be reflected in one’s actions, reducing suffering. This better state of mind will imbue believers with a deep understanding of how, according to Buddhism, ‘things really are’ (Gombrich, 1984), a significant insight that needs to be gained in order to attain enlightenment. The relevance of the practice of meditation can be seen reflected in the growing amount of meditation centres in Hong Kong, of all different schools. These centres are different from monasteries, and often advertise their practices not as necessarily rooted in religion, but as awareness techniques or approaches for psychological healing. An example is an advertisement of a Buddhist meditation centre that could be read on the MTR in June 2014, which read: “Bodhi Meditation. Health and Happiness. Have you meditated today? Start for your health!”.



Buddhist advertisement on the MTR. The title reads: “Bodhi Meditation. Health and Happiness. Have you meditated today? Start for your health!” (source: Mariske Westendorp, MTR, 28.06.2014).

Regardless of the many meditation centres present in Hong Kong today, attaining Buddhist understanding through practice is something which needs to be done individually. Even though practices include going to temples and listening to dharma sharing, Buddhism is a religion that one practices by oneself. This conviction was shared by not only my Theravādin informants, but by all my Buddhist informants. For example, Emily, the Tibetan Buddhist in her mid-30s (see page 1), chooses not to practice with her mother, who is also a Tibetan Buddhist. When I questioned her about this, she replied: “Religion is something that is really individual and you’ve got your own way to act on it” (interview, Emily, Starbucks Café, Central, 14.11.2012). The individual is thus him/herself accountable for practicing, calming one’s mind and accumulating positive karma.

The important role of the individual is also stressed in my informants’ narratives of Buddhist ‘conversion’; again, this is shared by all my Buddhist informants and is not specific to Theravāda Buddhism. Often, these narratives resemble Christian conversion stories as they revolve around a description of how people became personally interested in the Buddhist religion and which steps they have undertaken since then to become devout practitioners. This path is most often described in terms of individual choices, and emphasis is primarily placed on the agentive power of individuals. Even when an interest in Buddhism has emerged out of growing up in a Buddhist family, current adherence is described as a personal decision to become more knowledgeable about the Buddhist tradition and practice it in the ‘correct’ ways.

Consider the story of Adam. Adam is a Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s. He used to work as manager of Cathay Pacific. After having become interested in Buddhism a few years ago, he quit his job to become the manager of an orphanage in Malawi, run by a Buddhist charity organisation, for one year. After completing his one-year contract, he

returned to Hong Kong where, until recently, he worked as an executive officer in a newly-constructed Buddhist monastery in Tai Po. The following is a short abstract of his ‘conversion’ narrative:

I come from a typical Chinese family. In our house, there was a Kwun Yum statue, maybe one from the Buddha, a kitchen god, some ancestors – everything. When I grew up, I went to a Christian school; I had 13 years of Christian education. I also went to Christian fellowships, because I believed that there was some sort of god out there. I appreciated a lot of the Bible and I believed religion was good for society: it provides people a sense of basic morality. But I started to question Christianity and the Christian God. I did not know about other religions, so how could I tell this was the ultimate one? I was not convinced. I knew it was important to be a good person – but I was not sure that meant being a follower of Christ.

For the next 20 years, I was not religious at all. I started studying and working.

However, as the years passed, I got questions about the meaning of life. Is there a greater meaning than just being an employee? Three years ago, when I was in my mid-30s, I had all these questions.

Then a friend of mine went to a *vipāssana* centre in Taiwan. When she came back, she was very quiet and felt very peaceful. I knew she was under a lot of stress, so I wondered how she could be so calm. I then joined a meditation camp myself at the University of Hong Kong. I wanted to go there, because I knew Hong Kong University to be a good university. Therefore, I thought the brand of the camp was good. It was very inspiring. I experienced inner joy. Subsequently, I joined the Master of Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University, I took refuge in the Three Jewels, and later I joined a Buddhist charity organisation, called Amitofo Care Centre. I went to Malawi to work in a Buddhist orphanage. Now, I work in a Buddhist temple in Hong Kong as an executive officer.

In Buddhism, I found the answers. There is only karma, cause and effect. If you believe in karma, you can explain the whole world. And since you are creating your own karma right now, you must start working on your future in the here and now (interview, Adam, Thai restaurant, Tai Mei Tuk, 19.01.2012).

This narrative clearly emphasises Adam’s personal role in learning about, understanding and practicing Buddhism. It also highlights his personal accountability for his future

Interestingly, Adam also clearly highlighted the moment he took refuge in the Three Jewels. In almost all of my Theravāda Buddhist informants’ narratives, taking refuge has

been an important moment in their lives, strongly associated with their self-identification as Theravāda Buddhists. By taking refuge, they obtained a personal, almost exclusive and very strong commitment to this particular school of Buddhism. This can be seen as a disjuncture with being Buddhist in historical Chinese cultural settings as described in Chapter 1, in which religions did not demand exclusive membership or the rejection of the teachings of other religions (Adler, 2002). Instead, for my informants, choosing Theravāda Buddhism is often a deliberate rebellion against the ritualistic elements within Buddhism as culturally practiced in Chinese contexts. In contemporary Hong Kong, ‘being Theravāda Buddhist’ has become for my informants an exclusive category, quite similar to ‘being Catholic’.

The stress on personal accountability of my Buddhist informants not only has its effects on their religious life; it also shapes their ideas about how they can actively control and change the world around them. In Buddhist thought, the environment is a reflection of a person’s inner self and one’s state of mind. By changing oneself, one changes the world. Following upon this is a second Buddhist perspective: the impermanence of the world. Because the world is a reflection of the sadness and happiness within an individual, at the same time it is impermanent and fluid. David, the Theravāda Buddhist teacher at Chi Lin Nunnery in his late 50s (see page 77) described life as being “like a river that comes and goes” (interview, David, Chi Lin Nunnery, Diamond Hill, 06.03.2013). This idea of impermanence affects how Buddhists perceive the world around them and their position in that world. It is important to remember here that a change in the world is believed to be not merely a perception of change, but actual change itself. It follows from this that each individual can be held accountable for the condition of the world. As I show in the last section of this chapter, it is this empowering agency (expressed in sayings such as “Be the change you want to see in the world”, or, in the words of one of my informants: “It is a

transformation of one's ideas on life, and thus life itself") that features predominantly in how my Theravāda Buddhist informants view issues in contemporary Hong Kong society.

3.2 Local Catholic Accountability

Buddhism differs from Catholicism in the emphasis on the concept of "cosmologically external others" (Cassaniti, 2012). For my Catholic informants, these external others are God, Jesus, Mary, other saints, and the universal Catholic Church. Emphases on these external others relate to ideas of personal accountability. Similar to my Buddhist informants, this personal accountability relates to religious life, as well as to one's place in and perception of the world.

For my Catholic informants, God's Will and Way are important. Primarily through prayer and the confession of sins can God's Will be negotiated. Prayer is a way in which my informants communicate with God, Mary and, to a lesser degree, Jesus and other saints. The purpose of prayer is to ask these cosmologically external others for help to get through the day, and to express gratitude, in particular in difficult times. Christopher, a Catholic in his early 30, who works as a teacher in a Catholic primary school, expressed this as follows: "The Church is a place I can depend on, and prayer makes me comfortable" (interview, Christopher, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013). Moreover, God is seen as the power that grants opportunities and creates the challenges that my informants face in their lives. God (and subsequently the Church as representation of the Will of God) is seen to determine what happens to individuals and to society. This was also expressed by Christopher. After studying pharmaceuticals, he was unemployed for some months. One day, he read a job advertisement in the *Sunday Examiner* (the weekly newspaper of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese) for teaching assistants at a Catholic school in Tung Chung. He

applied for the job, and his application proved successful. This set him on the path to getting his teaching degree. He is now an independent teacher at one of Hong Kong's Catholic primary schools. Reflecting back on past years, Christopher said: "I think God decided my way to be that of a teacher" (interview, Christopher, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 03.02.2013). He referred to this experience as a "miracle". Christopher feels that God is guiding him and knows what is best for him. Consequently, he places trust in God, as "I feel I can handle things with God's help" (interview, Christopher, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013).

Besides God, the Catholic Church as external other also plays an important role in my informants' religious lives. It shows people right from wrong conduct, and has the responsibility to guide them towards acceptable behaviour. Bishops and priests, who are seen as the representatives of the Church and of the true Christian teachings, play a key role here. Because of their public role, they have the ability to make people listen to them when they speak up. Christopher explained:

I think the Catholic Church can show Hong Kong people the correct way. Hong Kong society is too much focused on consumerism and on how to earn and spend money. But a person's life is not about money. It is about spirituality and awareness of health – those kinds of things. The Catholic Church can promote Catholic thought to the Hong Kong people; not just Catholics, but to all people. Its message is not about money or consumerism, but about self-awareness and self-improvement (interview, Christopher, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013).

Thus, God as a cosmologically external other, and the Church as additional external other play important roles in the religious expressions of my informants.

However, the relevance attached to these (cosmologically) external others does not take away the important role my informants ascribe to themselves as lay Catholics. Even though the Church and God are seen to have the responsibility to guide people towards



Our Lady of Fatima Procession on Cheung Chau Island, and the blessing of the cross by Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun after the Procession (source: Mariske Westendorp, Cheung Chau, 25.05.2014).

acceptable behaviour, in the end it is still the individual Catholic who needs to recognise this and act upon it. One way to do this, according to Kelly, is to show gratitude for whatever happens, for both challenges and opportunities. Kelly is the coordinator of the catechism program at one of Hong Kong's Catholic churches. Approximately 40 years of age, she works as a civil servant for the HKSAR Government, has a husband (a teacher at a Catholic school) and a young son. She said:

Youngsters nowadays are not showing their gratitude. They lack thankfulness. I think it's important to not blame others for everything. You have to fight for your own values and the betterment of society, but don't blame everything. Thankfulness is the core value of our religion. We thank God for everything, even for challenges or difficulties. It is all part of God's Plan (interview, Kelly, Discovery Park shopping mall, Tsuen Wan, 13.07.2014).

Kelly evinced the above in July 2014, when we were discussing the intensity of the political situation in Hong Kong. She explained that people, in her opinion, should be grateful for whatever challenges God provides instead of complaining about the 'mainlander issue', as I describe below.

Personal accountability is thus centre stage in my Catholic informants' expression of their religion. They feel they are accountable to themselves, to the Church, and to God. They are accountable to God in listening to His calling and to the words of the priests, and in following His way. They are accountable to the Church by fulfilling the threefold ministry of being prophets (proclaiming God's message), kings (being labourers in the Kingdom of God and extending this Kingdom) and priests (offering worship to God and Jesus). And ultimately, they are accountable to themselves for leading a life of a 'good Catholic' and acting as such.

As each person is individually responsible to follow God's calling and ways, it is of no use to 'push' somebody into becoming Catholic. One of the main criticisms of Protestantism expressed by my informants is that they are too 'pushy', forcefully pulling people into their churches. Kelly explained to me that Catholic churches, on the other hand "are very open; we don't force you to believe." She explained that "it is your responsibility to listen to God's calling. If you don't want to respond, that is your responsibility, but I will not call you to come" (interview, Kelly, Discovery Park shopping mall, Tsuen Wan, 17.03.2013).

The importance attached to individual accountability to God, the Church and oneself intrinsically relates to my informants' emphasis on personal conversion to Catholicism. Similar to Hong Kong Buddhists, this conversion is described as the result of one's own assertiveness, and as based on individual evaluations made of the Church and its teachings (although, naturally these evaluations are also influenced by familial and societal backgrounds). Moreover, my informants' conversion to Catholicism is exclusive, but accommodating. My interlocutors are confidently Catholic and do not adhere to religious practices that they do not associate with Catholicism, or that they think are in disjuncture with universal Catholic teachings. At the same time, they are tolerant towards people who believe in different religions, indicating that "every religion has something good in them probably; otherwise people wouldn't believe in it" (personal communication, Rita, Crystal Jade restaurant, Heng Fa Chuen, 06.05.2013), and "all religions teach people to do good and to be good people" (interview, Christopher, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013).

To examine the ground realities of Catholicism in Asia, Malaysian priest Edmund Chia (2002) has conducted a survey amongst almost 400 Catholics in nearly twenty different Asian countries. One of his conclusions was that "a significant proportion of Asian Catholics

do not believe that either Jesus, the Church or Christianity is the sole, unique or normative repository of truth” (ibid., p. 3). He found that only 20-25% of his respondents acknowledge the truth to be only found in Catholicism (see also Chia, 2007). Likewise in Hong Kong, the Catholic Church is seen as a sign of justice and peace that teaches my informants to be good people and guides them on the right path. At the same time, however, they realise the Church might not be the only religious path to justice. The fact that my informants encounter people of different beliefs on a daily basis (at work, at school, or even at home) might contribute to this openness to other religions.

The above described emphases on the individual accountability to be ‘good’ Buddhists or Catholics naturally not only have consequences for the ways in which my informants express and live their religious life: they also affect the role my informants ascribe to themselves in the city in which they live, and their perceptions of that city. This is the topic of the remainder of this chapter.

3.3 Economic Challenges to the Aspiration to the Hong Kong Dream

A 2006 AsiaBarometer study measuring the quality of life in Hong Kong and other Asian countries indicated that despite the level of socio-economic development in Hong Kong since the 1960s, the majority of Hong Kong people were not content with their quality of life. According to this study, “[t]he overall quality of life that Hong Kong people experience does not match the high level of objective indicators of development under which they live” (Sing, 2009, p. 331).

One of my informants who expressed such discontent was Rita, a Catholic in her early 40s. Rita works as a business development manager at a local IT company. During dinner, she told me about her two daughters who were 5 and 7 years of age respectively. In

particular, she spoke of the busy schedules they have: school, homework with tutors, and musical instrument lessons. I wondered if Rita's children have any spare time to play with friends. Sadly, Rita told me that playing is not a priority for parents in Hong Kong, for just as the pressure to perform is increasing, possibilities to succeed in life are decreasing. Rita, speaking of her own adolescent years, said:

When I was young, my parents pressured me. My mother and father told me if I wanted to survive and have a job, I needed to study well. In the old days, when my parents came to Hong Kong, the only way for them to leave poverty was to have a proper education. So they always told me to study well. But in the olden days, there were more opportunities. Not now. Now, even if you have a bachelor's or master's degree, you will not be guaranteed to find a good job. There is so much competition. So I want my children to learn more and better, so they can find a good job and later take care of themselves (personal communication, Rita, Crystal Jade restaurant, Heng Fa Chuen, 06.05.2013).

Rita was not the only informant to mention the increased pressure to succeed. Many of my informants consider this intense pressure an important source of unhappiness in a city marked by a high degree of competition and expectation. The consequences of this competitiveness are reflected in official numbers. As of 2014, male employees on average work 45.9 hours per week; and, female employees work 43.4 hours per week.³⁵ This led a visiting Australian monk to remark during a dharma sharing in February 2013 that "in Hong Kong, there are no human beings, only human goings" (dharma sharing, Ajahn Brahm, Day of Mindfulness, HKU, 27.02.2013).

The wish to succeed in life, coupled with increased competition, is in important ways related to the idea of the 'Hong Kong Dream', as expressed in an email I received from Winston in June 2014. Winston is a Buddhist in his early 30s, who works as a senior

³⁵ Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2015). 2014 Report on Annual Earnings and Hours Survey. *Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong SAR*, p. 13. See <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr14-15/chinese/panels/mp/papers/mp20150421-rpt201503-ec.pdf>.

correspondent at Buddhistdoor.³⁶ In his email, Winston reflected on the inequality (or, as he called it, injustice) between the rich and the poor in contemporary Hong Kong society. Hong Kong's Gini coefficient (the most common indicator of inequality in a society) increased from 0.430 in 1971 to 0.525 in 2001 and 0.537 in 2011 (as compared to 0.477 in Mainland China) (Goodstadt, 2013, p. 75). Nowadays, approximately one-fifth of Hongkongers live under the poverty line.³⁷ In his email, Winston made reference to multiple factors resulting in the growing gap between rich and poor, factors which for him likewise signal "the end of the Hong Kong fairy-tale, or our version of the American Dream":

There aren't going to be any more Li Ka-shing rags-to-riches stories told to inspire anymore. It is extremely hard to grow a business from a family-owned, start-up to a multinational conglomerate. You will likely keep struggling in small businesses, while already huge groups like Jardines [ed.: Jardine Matheson Holdings] and the real estate companies continue to gobble up more companies and real estate. ... Not only is the rags-to-riches tale over (except for the occasional miracle that the media seizes on) but the middle class aspirational narrative of 'study hard, get your well-earned rewards after' is also almost broken. Look at how Hong Kong students break their backs and have such a miserable life. For what? Think also, of all the things Hongkongers associate with the middle class; home ownership, a comfortable office job in either suit or smart casual clothes, a family with two or more kids. This Dream is becoming bankrupt in Hong Kong (personal communication via email, Winston, 03.06.2014).

The Hong Kong Dream, as described by Winston, is the belief that one can become rich through one's own merit and achievements. In the 1970s and 1980s, many Hong Kong middle class residents were able to achieve this Dream due to economic opportunities and improvements in education (Baker, 1983). They came to be seen as possessing the 'Lion

³⁶ Buddhistdoor is multi-media platform, based in Hong Kong since 2006, offering content on Buddhist teachings, arts, culture and news in English and Chinese languages. See <http://www.buddhistdoor.net/>.

³⁷ Sources: (1) Fox Hu & Michelle Yun (20.09.2013). Hong Kong Poverty Line Shows Wealth Gap with One in Five Poor. *Bloomberg News*. See <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-29/hong-kong-poverty-line-shows-wealth-gap-with-one-in-five-poor.html>. (2) Jennifer Ngo (10.04.2013). Poll Reveals Widening Income Gap in Hong Kong. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1211000/hong-kongs-poor-take-6pc-income-share-while-rich-account-43pc-poll>.

Rock Spirit', the theme of a popular TV series which was broadcast from 1974 to 1994. The series, which portrayed the life stories of Hong Kong people from different strata against a backdrop of historical happenings in the city, showed "how people had survived even tougher times in the old days of relative poverty with a strong will and a spirit of community and self-help" (Lee, 2005, p. 304). People who were able to realise the Hong Kong Dream mainly came from worker and peasant family backgrounds (So, 2014), most often from the mainland. They grew up to be Hong Kong's middle class, and saw themselves as the backbone of Hong Kong's post-war affluence. They had facilitated the city's engagement with the industrial world, and worked hard to produce vocationally trained children to fuel the post-industrial service economy (Siu & Ku, 2008). Their "ideology of opportunity and mobility" (So, 2014, p. 250) has long been widely accepted and believed in.

But, the belief in the possibility to achieve the Hong Kong Dream is now rapidly declining, being replaced by a feeling of incapability and a lack of confidence in the future. In essence, the middle class of Hong Kong "has morphed from a self-confident and complacent social class into an anxious, impetuous and discontented social class since the handover" (Lau, 2013, p. 107). Consequently, the psyche of the Hong Kong middle class can nowadays best be described as "an amalgam of dread and confidence, or a mix of pessimism and optimism" (Hsiao, 2014a, p. 6)

Multiple reasons can be given for the decreased possibility to achieve the Hong Kong Dream. For example, Helen Siu and Agnes Ku (2008) argue that the window of opportunity that formed the basis of the belief in the Hong Kong Dream was wide open when China was remote, and when the world demanded only superficial engagement. Since China's economic liberalisation of the late 1970s, the environment has changed drastically; and, by

extension, it has demanded a change in the established formula for Hong Kong's social advancement, a change that to date, Hongkongers have failed to make.

Second, and most prominent in the narratives of my informants, is the perceived negative effect of the increasing presence of mainland Chinese tourists, traders and trained professionals in the city. Even though Winston (and likewise Rita) did not explicitly voice this opinion, the common perception of Hongkongers is that the demise of the Hong Kong Dream is mainly due to the influence of mainlanders on economic life in Hong Kong. The number of mainland Chinese coming to Hong Kong as tourists has increased sharply since 2003 when – in an attempt to boost the economy after the outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) – the 'Individual Visit Scheme' was implemented, allowing visitors to come to Hong Kong on an individual basis. In the year 2014, 47.2 million mainlanders visited Hong Kong (accounting for almost 80% of all visitors to the region). Among them, a slight majority were same-day visitors.³⁸ Moreover, since 1995, on average, 150 mainland Chinese people are granted permanent residency daily in Hong Kong under the so-called 'One Way Permit Scheme' (Siu, 2008, p. 121).

As I already indicated in previous chapters, Hong Kong has always attracted mainland Chinese immigrants and visitors. Especially from the 1970s onwards, these 'new immigrants' started to evoke negative responses among those Hong Kong residents that perceived the city to be 'their' home. During the years that followed, many of these 'new immigrants' found work and integrated in Hong Kong society. Most then returned to their native areas in Mainland China to find spouses and to start a family. In the 1990s, some brought their spouses and children to Hong Kong under the 'One Way Permit Scheme', forming the second wave of 'new immigrants' (Siu, 2008). These immigrants were allowed

³⁸ Source: Hong Kong Tourism Commission (11.05.2015). Tourism Performance. *Hong Kong: Hong Kong Tourism Commission*. See http://www.tourism.gov.hk/english/statistics/statistics_perform.html.

residency on the basis of family reunion rather than talent. Because many of them were females with small children, they were seen as “poor, dependent women with few marketable skills and burdened by young children” (ibid., p. 120).

It was only in the post-Handover period that the HKSAR Government realised that it would have to import skilled professionals from outside Hong Kong to strengthen the city’s service economy. Different schemes were set up; but, the number of professionals coming from Mainland China to Hong Kong remained small. Professionals who did come were predominantly from Guangdong, Fujian or the four Chinese municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing). Mainly men in their mid-30s to mid-40s, they had enjoyed high levels of education (Zheng, Wong & Wang, 2014). In July 2003, a new ‘Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals’ was implemented, under which “the number of talents or professionals imported from the Mainland ... increas[ed] steadily over the years and is of increasing significance in Hong Kong” (Chan, 2008, p. 178). During the first five years of the Admission Scheme, 21,580 professional mainlanders were ‘imported’ into various sectors of Hong Kong’s markets (Zheng, Wong & Wang, 2013, p. 191). This group is likely to increase in the coming decades, due to a broadening CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Agreement) and plans for an integrated Pan Pearl River delta (Siu, 2008).

Economically speaking, mainlanders (tourists, traders and talented professionals) coming to and going from Hong Kong are crucial to Hong Kong’s future. Since 2002, Chinese mainlanders have become the strongest support for Hong Kong’s tourism and consumer markets (Chan, 2008). Even more crucial is the need for ‘new immigrants’ to stimulate the economic reinvention of Hong Kong. Scholars agree that attracting new human capital from outside, and nurturing new and local talent through education and training, are crucial to sustaining Hong Kong’s economic development (Chan, 2008). For example,

Richard Wong and Ka-fu Wong argue that Hong Kong has always been a migrant society.

Its success has been little more than a miracle resulting from different migration processes:

It is often believed that the important reason for the post-war economic miracle in Hong Kong was the increase in the available stock of human capital of these newcomers. Most were young, with a high expected fertility and morality rate that rapidly declined. The demographic dividend accounted for a major part of Hong Kong's rapid economic growth (2008, p. 90).

Nowadays, due to low fertility rates and higher life expectancy, Hong Kong's population is rapidly ageing. According to Hong Kong columnist Jason Ng, "[b]y 2040, a mere generation away, people aged 65 or above are expected to account for nearly 30% of Hong Kong's population, up from 13% today" (2014, p. 58). In order for Hong Kong to stay a strong competitor in the global and Asian markets (and live up to its title of 'Asia's World City'), it needs to remain a place of circulation, and it needs to attract younger professionals (Siu, 2011).

This view is shared by a number of my informants. In April 2013, Adam, the Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s (see page 121-122), took me to dinner at a local Hong Kong restaurant in Tai Po (New Territories). On our way back from the restaurant, Adam and I took the MTR, changing trains at Kowloon Tong, a busy interchange station where mainland Chinese people – amongst others – board trains taking them back to their home towns on the Chinese mainland. These people, a majority of whom come to Hong Kong for one day only, can often be seen pulling large trolley bags filled with luxury and sanitary products. They purchase these items in Hong Kong and (most probably) resell them for a small profit on the mainland. While making our way through the thick crowd, Adam and I discussed the relevance of attracting mainland talented professionals to Hong Kong. Adam opined:

Hong Kong has always been an open society: people come and go. It has been so for many years. And now people want to close it? Look at the history: an empire falls when people get too proud of themselves and close their doors. Then everything starts to fall apart. You need to keep reinventing yourself. ... A lot of people come from Mainland China and they really reinvent the city. This place is different than China, because it is free. We have always been an open society, with an open economy. And now they want to close it? Why? Because they are too proud of themselves! (personal communication, Adam, Kowloon Tong MTR station, 23.04.2014).

According to Adam, the coming and going of new talents – amongst others from Mainland China – is needed for the improvement of Hong Kong. Moreover, being open to newcomers is an important aspect of the freedom offered by Hong Kong, a core value often mentioned by my informants.³⁹

Adam's opinion was only shared by a minority of my informants. Most of the people I spoke with look upon the flow of mainland tourists, traders and talented professionals with suspicion. Concurrently, discrimination against recent waves of 'new immigrants' grows ever more intense. These immigrants are described as 'locusts' that use up all the city's resources, or as loud, rude, unfashionable and shameful.⁴⁰ They are seen to negatively influence life in the city, as for example expressed by columnist Jason Ng:

Signs that Hong Kong is gradually turning 'red' are everywhere. Cantonese is increasingly being marginalized by Mandarin, a language spoken by a population nearly 200 times bigger. Traditional Chinese characters – used in Hong Kong and Taiwan – are slowly giving way to China's simplified characters in public signage and advertisements. More and more local television programming, restaurant menus

³⁹ For example, Maggie, a Catholic student of Theology at the Holy Spirit Seminary in her mid-30s (see page 182-183) proudly recounted how in 2013, Edward Snowden first came to Hong Kong to tell his story, thereby emphasising the freedom offered by Hong Kong (personal communication, Maggie, Holy Spirit Study Seminar, Aberdeen, 26.06.2014).

⁴⁰ Sources: (1) No author (01.02.2012). About That Hong Kong 'Locust' Ad. *Apple Daily*. See <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/02/01/about-that-hong-kong-locust-ad>. (2) Jonathan Corpus Ong (30.08.2013). Phone Cams and Hate Speech in Hong Kong. *Huffington Post UK*. See http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/gates-cambridge-scholars/hong-kong_b_3827577.html. (3) Renee Lewis (26.04.2014). Row over Urinating Toddlers Reveals Rift between Hong Kong, Mainland China. Al Jazeera America. See <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/4/26/china-hong-kong-.html>.

and retail designs cater to Mainlanders. Freedom of expression is on the decline, media self-censorship is on the rise. Our way of life is under threat (2014, p. 188).

This short excerpt clearly highlights a certain discourse of cultural insecurity, or even xenophobia, present amongst Hong Kong residents. They perceive the new immigrants to threaten job opportunities and opportunities to enter universities. Immigrants are equally felt to be responsible for the rise in property prices, the shortage of available beds in hospitals, and the increasing number of shopping malls being built in the city. Most of my informants feel that their way of life is being threatened by the immigrant mainlanders. In response, they, and other Hongkongers, are turning inwards, “highlighting an essentialized set of core values, and unleashing frustrations in street protests and direct political action” (Siu, 2011, p. 130).

But the Hong Kong Dream is not entirely lost. Some scholars opine that “there are still opportunities for people from humble backgrounds to climb to middle class positions via the channel of education” (Hsiao, 2014a, p. 5). For example, based on his longitude research undertaken in 1989, 1992 and 2006, Tai-lok Lui concluded the following:

[O]ur survey findings suggest that people in Hong Kong are still able to find the opportunity of social advancement. Many middle class respondents that we have interviewed are still ‘first generation middle class’. And ... many are able to enter middle class positions by doing well in the education system (2014b, p. 44).

Whether or not members of the middle class still have the chance to become successful depends upon two factors. The first is education, highlighting the importance still attached to the role of tertiary education in the city of Hong Kong. The second factor, according to Lui (2014b), is the ‘China factor’, i.e., whether the (especially economic) aspirations of members of Hong Kong’s middle class are directed towards Mainland China or not. Lui detects a “emerging cleavage of the middle class from within” (ibid., p. 37) between those who are

working in sectors (such as business services and finance) that have relations with Mainland China, and those who are not. The split, in effect, is between “those whose career would directly benefit from a booming market environment driven by economic development in the mainland and those whose career prospects firmly belong in the local context” (ibid., p. 51). According to Lui, it is essentially people in this latter category who are the most pessimistic about Hong Kong’s future.

3.3.1 *Home Ownership*

The “amalgam of dread and confidence” (Hsiao, 2014a, p. 6) of contemporary Hong Kong residents is most clearly evident in references to home ownership. The aspiration to own a house features prominently in Hong Kong media and in the Hong Kong Dream. As Winston, the Buddhist senior correspondent in his early 30s (see page 130-131) observed:

The lavish lifestyle is shouted at your face every day. CCTV has changed. Look at their sitcoms: they talk about the everyday life of Hong Kong people, but their apartments and homes are Mid-Levels apartments, of more than 1,000 square feet! It’s brainwashing, their message that this is the average Hongkonger. No wonder people are unhappy! They look at that and think: I’m middle class, why don’t I have that life and those possessions? The sad thing is, even if they work 50 hours a week, they will still not get it. Of course there are always people with the right circumstances, who strike it lucky and become wealthy: we shouldn’t deny their story. I’m just saying that the average Hongkonger is not like that (personal communication, Winston, Starbucks Café, Hung Hum, 12.04.2014).

For almost all of my informants, owning a house is strongly aspired to; but, it is an aspiration that is difficult to achieve. Those who do manage to buy their own home usually purchase a small apartment in a tall residential complex, far removed from the city’s Central Business District, not to mention the Mid-Levels (Hong Kong Island). Property prices on Hong Kong Island are the third most expensive in the world, after Monaco and London. On average,

families of four live in apartments of less than 50 square metres. The average housing size is 45 square metres, one of the smallest in the world.⁴¹ Some people live in ‘cages’, as ‘human battery hens’ in small square apartments, or in single beds surrounded by bars on which to attach their personal belongings.⁴² Winston recently bought a small apartment in the newly-built Bellagio apartment complex in Sham Tseng, on the southwest coast of the New Territories. His apartment is small; but, it is all he can afford, even in Sham Tseng.

Home ownership has always been a sign of success in the Hong Kong Dream. According to Gordon Mathews and Tai-lok Lui (2001), many Hongkongers have become rich and famous through speculation on the property market, making a fortune out of Hongkongers’ eagerness to acquire their own properties. More importantly, home ownership is also related to a sense of connectedness felt to the Hong Kong city. In the 1980s, Hugh Baker wrote:

The family which has managed to take out a mortgage or even buy its flat outright is a family which can look forward to an improved standard of living, for rents are high and the prospect of not paying anything once the purchase is completed is a most attractive one. Ownership also gives a sense of permanence to the home, and in a society as volatile and mobile as Hong Kong the security and tolerance of the family counts for much (1983, p. 473).

⁴¹ Sources: (1) Global Property Guide (year unknown). World's Most Expensive Cities. *Global Property Guide*. See <http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/most-expensive-cities>. (2) Jennifer Pak (11.04.2013). Hong Kong Copes with Tight Living Spaces. *BBC News*. See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-21973486>. (3) Lindsay Wilson (year unknown) How Big is a House? Average House Size by Country. *Shrink that Footprint*. See <http://shrinkthatfootprint.com/how-big-is-a-house>.

⁴² Recently built flats have even been referred to as ‘mosquito homes’ due to their minimal size. Sources: (1) Phila Siu (09.10.2012). HK\$91m Plan all Set to Help People out of Cage Homes. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1056505/hk91m-plan-all-set-help-people-out-cage-homes>. (2) Simon Tomlinson (22.02.2013). Hong Kong's Human Battery Hens: Claustrophobic Images show how Slum Families Squeeze their Lives into the Tiniest Apartments. *Mail Online*. See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2282764/Hong-Kongs-human-battery-hens-Claustrophobic-images-slum-families-squeeze-lives-tiniest-apartments.html>. (3) Director unknown (07.07.2015). Hong Kong's ‘Mosquito’ Flats Sell for Big Bucks. *South China Morning Post TV*. See <http://www.scmp.com/video/asia/1834054/hong-kongs-mosquito-flats-sell-big-bucks>.

The dream of owning a home is thus not only related to making an investment, but is also “an extension of [the] long road of building families in Hong Kong” (Mathews & Lui, 2001, p. 19), being a way for immigrant families to secure permanent settlement in the city of Hong Kong.

The 1997 Asian financial crisis triggered the start of the housing crisis in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, as well as in Singapore, “the respective property bubbles burst, causing inflated prices to plunge by up to 50 per cent in both private and public housing” (Chua, 2000a, p. 17). Nowadays, according to columnist Jason Ng “[o]ur society is divided into two groups of people: those who own property and those who are trying to” (2014, p. 25). Within this latter category, there are “many others who are praying every day for another market crash, like the ones we witnessed in 1998, 2003 and 2008. Their bad wishes are motivated not by malice but by necessity, for the elusive goal of home ownership is putting their life plans indefinitely on hold” (ibid., pp. 29-30).

In the perceptions of many Hongkongers, the difficulty of acquiring property is made even more severe by the increase of immigrant mainlanders coming to the city. First, the increase in population figures has led to a scarcity of housing. Ivy, the Protestant in her mid-30s (see page 96), mentioned that “the Hong Kong Government is influenced by Mainland China. Look at the houses in the New Territories. They are built near the border. They are built for mainlanders. When that part of the New Territories is developed, it will be for mainland people from Shenzhen, not for us” (personal communication, Ivy, New Town Plaza shopping mall, Sha Tin, 27.07.2014). Second, Chinese developers are perceived to drive the housing prices up. Elsie, the Tibetan Buddhist housewife in her mid-30s (see page 93), commented: “I see a lot of mainlanders who are very wealthy. They want to spend their black money, so they buy a lot of properties here. That is why our housing prices are up sky

high” (interview, Elsie, Délifrance Café, Tsuen Wan, 30.05.2013). Even though I have no official data supporting these opinions, these public narratives are popular in Hong Kong, expressed in both conversations and popular (social) media.

Apropos of the opinions of my informants, whatever their veracity, they made clear their perceptions vis-à-vis the future of Hong Kong and its residents. If owning property is such an important part of the Hong Kong Dream and, more importantly, is related to feelings of belonging and being a rightful resident of Hong Kong, what will happen when local Hong Kong residents are no longer able to buy properties? And, what will be the consequences for the already ambiguous ‘Hong Kong identity’ (see Chapter 2)? Even though these questions in this point of time cannot be answered, a recent discussion I had with Teresa, the Buddhist doctor in her late 30s (see page 97), offers some insights:

Hong Kong has such an unclear future from the perspective of local Hong Kong people, that I am considering buying a flat elsewhere, maybe Bangkok, so that I can stay there when Hong Kong changes just like other Chinese cities. ... Hong Kong’s houses are expensive, yet the space is small. And politically, Hong Kong will become a Communist region. Also, my lifestyle is simple, and I will not have lots of money, so I want to go to a cheaper place (personal communication via WhatsApp, Teresa, 09-13.06.2015).

In the near future, Teresa might decide to leave Hong Kong, in an act similar to those Hongkongers who left the city in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Other Hongkongers may opt to stay and fight to preserve the uniqueness of their city, a strategy I elaborate upon in Chapter 4. In the remainder of this chapter, I indicate how these responses and aspirations of the Hong Kong Dream and home ownership are partly dependent upon my informants’ religious notions regarding accountability.

3.4 Religious Perspectives on the Hong Kong Dream

As Adam and I continued walking through the overcrowded Kowloon Tong MTR station (see page 135-136), he expressed his opinion regarding the ‘mainlander issue’. As said before, unlike most of my informants, who spoke quite negatively about the mainlanders, Adam felt that mainlanders cannot be blamed for their behaviour:

They don’t know some things. They are poor, not well educated, and they don’t know how to act. You can’t blame them, it’s not their fault. So you shouldn’t treat them disrespectfully. ... No one is perfect. I don’t support some of their behaviour. But in the end, you should look at the underlying causes and their effects (personal communication, Adam, Kowloon Tong MTR station, 23.04.2014).

The way Adam sees ‘cause’, and ‘effect’ reflects his Theravāda Buddhist belief in karma (as described above). Prior to our taking the MTR, Adam had tried to explain this concept to me. Raising the ‘mainlander issue’ was a good way for him to repeat what he had ‘taught’ me before. He also emphasised another Buddhist notion that we had talked about before; he suggested that he could actively change the way he perceived the current situation in Hong Kong, and thus the situation itself, thereby referring to earlier described notions of Buddhist accountability.

As indicated, many people in Hong Kong attribute the failure of the Hong Kong Dream to the increasing presence of mainlanders in their city, newcomers who are competing for the same positions in schools and universities, the same jobs, and the same houses to live in. Despite differences in their religious backgrounds, my Buddhist and Catholic informants both describe this ‘mainlander issue’ in similar ways, highlighting the same problems, causes and effects. A clear difference, however, is in the ways my informants reflect on this situation. According to Marian Burchardt,

... religious vitality emerges from, and must be situated within, the broader social context of the challenges that people ... face in their everyday lives. ... The question is thus how practices of acting upon these challenges shape and are shaped in the religious field (2013, pp. 169-170).

In this section, I focus upon how the different religious backgrounds, beliefs and expressions of my informants affect their perceptions and evoke different adjustments to their socio-economic aspirations. In the process, I show that my Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhist informants, rather than simply debating the issue, attempt to change their attitudes towards it, by extension changing the nature of the issue. In contrast, for my Catholic informants, the issue is a prominent one that can only be reflected upon.

Considering that my Buddhist informants place heavy emphasis upon personal accountability, and on the idea that the world is a reflection of one's personal mind, it comes as no surprise to learn that they consider each individual personally responsible for changing his/her personal situation. Thus, they do not necessarily view the 'mainlander issue' and the growing "aspiration gap" (Ray, 2006) as factual issues. Instead, they reflect on their own selves as powerful agents capable of changing the issues. Teresa, the Buddhist doctor in her late 30s (see page 97), explained to me how Theravāda Buddhism made her look at the world in a different way. She summed up her beliefs as follows:

The external environment reflects your own heart. Therefore, the solution is always in yourself. You can clean up your own heart and then the environment, instead of asking for the external to change (interview, Teresa, at her home, Kowloon Tong, 25.02.2013).

Teresa observed how the older generation who came to Hong Kong after the establishment of the PRC "focused on earning money to raise their children" (personal communication, Teresa, Life restaurant, Central, 15.07.2014). As long as there was food on the table, they

were satisfied. Part of the issue in contemporary Hong Kong is, according to Teresa, that these aspirations have changed: it is no longer simply enough to earn enough money to buy food. Instead, a full Hong Kong Dream should be realised. But, as Teresa said, this leads people to become attached to too many material things:

In Hong Kong, money is the main value. That's why people work like madness. People of the middle class sometimes don't realise that they can just concentrate on loving their families and friends, and be happy. They want society to change. But if you want something to change, you need to change yourself (personal communication, Teresa, Life restaurant, Central, 15.07.2015).

Teresa emphasised that in order to acquire a goal, the goal and one's attitude towards said goal should be changed. She thereby stressed every individual's own accountability in the world.

A person who experienced this firsthand is William, a Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s (see page 24). He is a wealthy upper-middle class Hong Kong resident, working as a professional mediator. He discovered Theravāda Buddhism a few years ago and since then tries to lead a more basic lifestyle. During his career, he met a number of "wealthy business men"; and, he was not impressed:

In my career, I have seen all these so-called business leaders; I have been rubbing shoulders with the elite in our society. I don't find them respectful. ... When you are in the middle management, you want to be the senior of the firm. Then you want to be the managing director, then the CEO, then a board member, and in the end a chairman of a charitable organisation. But these are all ulterior motives; they don't come from within (interview, William, Foreign Correspondents' Club, Central, 24.02.2013).

William thus reflects negatively on focusing on aspiring to materiality, even when this means funding a charitable organisation.

Despite William's and Teresa's emphases on non-materialism, both participate in the material world: just like other of my Buddhist informants, they have not retreated from the world by becoming monks or nuns (although William has expressed his interest to do so). Somewhat significantly, I met William in the Foreign Correspondents' Club; and Teresa on multiple occasions in expensive Western-style cafés and restaurants. The difficulty for my Buddhist informants is to strike a correct balance between non-attachment to materialism on the one hand and securing a decent lifestyle for oneself on the other.

This challenge is perhaps best illustrated by the story of a Mexican fisherman, narrated by an Australian Theravāda monk during one of his visits to Hong Kong.⁴³ In the story, a vacationing American, a well-known professor at a US business school, travelled to Mexico. One day, he met a fisherman who was unloading his catch for the day. He asked the fisherman why he was finishing his work so early. The man replied that he had caught enough to feed his family for the day, and that he was going home for a siesta and to spend the rest of the afternoon with his family and friends. The American professor told the fisherman that with a little extra effort, he could become the owner of a large fishing fleet in a few years, even climb to the top to become a millionaire. When the fisherman asked the American professor what he could do with the money, the professor told him he could retire, buy a small house by the sea, go fishing in the morning, and spend time with family and friends in the afternoon. In other words, he was simply emphasising what the Mexican fisherman was already doing in the present (Ajahn Brahm, 2005, pp. 195-197). This narrative clearly offers a solution to the seeming paradox described above; i.e., one should work hard to achieve a comfortable living standard in the here and now, without becoming attached to possible future wealth. In effect, one should follow the middle way "between the

⁴³ The actual source of this story is probably Mark Albion, who allegedly wrote the story for students doing an MBA course (see Albion, 2008).

extremes of asceticism and pleasure-seeking” (Morris, 2005, p. 48). For my Hong Kong informants this means being able to eat in expensive restaurants, and ideally owning one’s own property, without becoming attached to those material assets.

This indicates that the Theravāda Buddhist way of thinking about attachment and non-attachment (similar to thoughts in other Buddhist schools) leads to a particular reflection on the growing difficulties impeding on achievement of the Hong Kong Dream, a future-oriented goal. This Dream entails being able to secure a place in a good school and university, get a good job, pursue an outstanding career, earn money, and own property. Whether the Dream becomes impossible to achieve, however, depends upon how attached one is to the particularities of this Dream; that is, how much one should earn, in which high-quality university one should study, and in which part of Hong Kong one should own a house.

Thus, although my Buddhist informants recognise and acknowledge the severity of the ‘mainlander issue’, they also recognise that they themselves are accountable for the gravity of the issue. They have the personal ability to change the situation, either by becoming less attached or by changing their perspectives towards the perceived problem. Theravāda Buddhism teaches them to be active actors who are personally responsible for the existence of the ‘mainlander issue’, the manner in which this issue is experienced, and consequently the ways in which one should respond to it.

As suggested above, among Catholics there is the notion of a cosmologically external other as a medium. For this reason, my Catholic informants view the ‘mainlander issue’ differently from my Buddhist ones. For example, Albert, the Catholic in his late 50s who works as a salesperson in Hong Kong and Mainland China (see page 146-147) recognises that “life in

Hong Kong is under a lot of pressure, and there is a lot of competition.” Despite this competition, Albert opines that a certain lifestyle can still be achieved; one can have money, buy a house and enjoy a good education. What is, however, crucial is the way in which this lifestyle is achieved:

People in Hong Kong are losing life values. Fortune is not about money. Of course, we shouldn't be hungry. But we should also not be pressured performing strange behaviours that will only benefit you and your family. In Hong Kong, this is done a lot now, because of work pressure. But this comes from the Devil. God is inside us (interview, Albert, Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, 11.03.2013).

For Albert, this is why spirituality and a belief in God are important. They represent the basis of morality; and, they are things that someone can fall back upon. The mentioning that “God is inside us” might seem contradictory to the characterisation of Catholicism as based on a reference to a cosmologically external other. This is however not the case. What Albert meant was the power of God working inside him; it is his responsibility as ‘good’ Catholic to let God do the work through him.

Albert was not the only person to comment on this in these terms. For example, Rita, the Catholic in her early 40s (see page 129-130), commented that in capitalist societies like Hong Kong, people only tend to look at the results of their actions, not necessarily at the moral basis for said actions. People take short-cuts. She fears that this practice has become common practice or the norm in contemporary Hong Kong. Increasing numbers of people are merely concerned with building up a good life for themselves and their families. They merely act out of self-interest. Rita related this to the practices of the mainlanders, who she perceives as performing similar actions. Second, she realises that the increasing competitiveness that is part of the ‘mainlander issue’ is causing many people to turn inwards and focus merely on their own achievements. Going to church and depending on God will

help them to get back on the right path. Again, while the Church has the responsibility to show people the correct way, people can themselves be held accountable to attend church and listen to the Word of God (interview, Rita, Star of the Sea Parish, Chai Wan, 27.01.2013).

These narratives of my Hong Kong Catholic informants highlight their different reflections on the increased difficulty involved in achieving the Hong Kong Dream. They observe that individuals are not necessarily seen to be the creators of issues: nor should they be required to solve them. Instead, it is God's Will that leads the way, and will lead my informants in the future. God is the one that poses challenges and grants opportunities. Clearly then, the 'mainlander issue' is an issue for which God, as the Creator, can be held accountable. However, at the same time, individual believers have the personal accountability and agency to listen to the Word of God as reflected in the teachings of the Church. When they do this, they will find the means to reflect on the situation differently and the strength to deal with it. The difference with Buddhist reflections is thus clear: while the latter have the ability to change the situation by adjusting the goals of the Dream or by reflecting differently on the world, many Catholics place their trust in God and the Church to guide them through the difficulty and to show them the right way to act upon it.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I delineated how Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhists and Catholics reflect on the perceived difficulties facing those who aspire to the Hong Kong Dream, difficulties exacerbated by the influx of mainland Chinese tourists, traders and talented professionals and their increasing influence on Hongkongers' everyday lives. This influence is something

which is felt and experienced on a daily basis. It is, therefore, hardly strange that religious notions, e.g., accountability, are employed to reflect on this influence and related challenges.

The increasing presence of the mainland in the everyday, mundane life in urban Hong Kong gives rise to questions regarding Hong Kong's future. What will become of Hong Kong as it increasingly nears integration with China? Will it become an integral part of China, indistinguishable from cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin or Guangzhou? As I indicated in Chapter 2 and in this chapter, fears and uncertainties related to this question of the future of Hong Kong in significant ways shape the lives of the people domiciled in the city. Amongst others, this has resulted in the 79-day long Umbrella Movement in the Fall of 2014.

CHAPTER 4:

Salvation and Rights to the City

In the Introduction I wrote that in mid-June 2014 I was sitting on a bench by the water in Siu Sai Wan with Emily, the Tibetan Buddhist in her mid-30s (see page 1). While looking out over the water, Emily said she felt that Hong Kong was being engulfed in the “eye of a typhoon”. So many things around her were changing. However, Emily was not sure what these changes entailed. Three and a half months after our conversation, the proverbial ‘typhoon’ reached Hong Kong in the form of the Umbrella Movement. The ‘typhoon’, which lasted 79 days, was a consequence of the increasingly difficult and intense relationship between the HKSAR and the PRC as described in the previous chapters. It brought with it large-scale protests, and the occupation of three important areas of urban Hong Kong.

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I explored the religious orientations of my informants. I highlighted how they describe their religion and I explored their religious ideas around their place in the world. In this chapter, I focus on the third theme of this thesis: salvation. For my Theravāda Buddhist informants, control over suffering (both societal and individual) can help to achieve individual salvation. For Hong Kong Catholics, trying to address the injustices in the world can help to effectuate the Kingdom of God on earth. By exploring these soteriological beliefs of my informants, I indicate how their religious values and notions shape their behaviour as ‘good’ Buddhists and Catholics, not only in Hong Kong, but in the modern, global world. In this, all of the issues raised in the previous chapters come to the fore: i.e., the influence of mainland Chinese politics on religious organisations in Hong Kong; the aspiration of my informants to belong to a global world, transcending

geographical boundaries between and within the PRC; the felt anxiety over the direct influence of Mainland China on Hong Kong's everyday life; and, notions of who or what is accountable for a particular situation.

My informants' emphasis on salvation will be exemplified by focusing on their aspiration to regain the right to the city of Hong Kong (as stated in the promise of 'Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong' (Ping & Kwong, 2014)) during the 2014 Umbrella Movement. As I suggested in previous chapters, the encroachment of the PRC on everyday life in the HKSAR has given rise to a deeply felt perception among my informants that their Hong Kong Dream is under threat. I also proposed that the ways in which this threat is interpreted are in many and important ways related to Buddhist and Catholic notions of the concept of accountability. In this chapter, I build upon this argument by analysing how my informants have responded to the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. Some went out into the streets when circumstances allowed, some joined social media discussions, and others decided to stay away entirely, choosing inaction or private prayer as their forms of activist or spiritual engagement.

Arguably, the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement was a political movement which stood in line with other major protests, or "fresh political awakening[s]" (Mishra, 2012, p. 196) that the world has witnessed throughout the last decade. Examples of these movements include: the 'Arab Spring', "a wave of demonstrations and protests [challenging] ... regimes in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Bahrain, Iran, and beyond" (Dole, 2012, p. 227); the 2011 Occupy Wall Street Movement, which started in Zuccotti Park, New York, and spread to 951 cities (including Hong Kong) in 82 different countries; and, the occupation of iconic squares, e.g., Gezi Park in Istanbul and Tahrir Square in Cairo. These movements started in 2009, when,

... [a] wave of revolt ... started [in] Greece, Iceland, and other Western countries ... Revolt then spread to Tunisia and Egypt, and then back to the West in 2011, with the United States, Greece, and Spain at the center. As the wave seemed to subside, Turkey and Brazil erupted in 2013 (Tuğal, 2013, p. 147).

This new eruption soon “spread everywhere” (ibid.), Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement arguably being the most recent revolt.

The global protests described above have often been portrayed as different outbreaks of one single global resistance movement. They frequently involve people in urban settings confronting neoliberal forces, reclaiming their “right to the city” (Harvey, 2012) and, by extension, claiming their aspirations to democracy. Many similarities between the movements are indeed apparent. For example, as Christopher Dole claims, most of the protests were part of a “seemingly universal democratic impulse, a refusal of repression that we all share” (2012, p. 228). In the main, they were sparked by middle class concerns regarding economic strongholds, concerns for the future, and apprehension vis-à-vis the concentration of power in the hands of the few. These apprehensions were exemplified in the Occupy Wall Street slogan ‘We are the 99%’, a slogan arguably invented by anthropologist and anarchist David Graeber (see Byrne, 2012). Furthermore, almost all of the movements took place in cities, thereby indicating the relevance of the urban as “physical and symbolic [terrain] for socio-political change” (Fregonese, 2012, p. 111). Students played a significant role in almost all of the movements (Tuğal, 2013). Also, strategies borrowed from other movements were applied in different cities. For example, almost everywhere social media were intensively used as a transformative power (Juris, 2012): to organise protests; to learn from other movements; and, to communicate with an (inter)national audience.

The 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement was no exception to these similarities. Groups of students were at the forefront of the Movement, which occupied social media as

well as the busy streets of urban Hong Kong. The occupation of social media platforms, Facebook for example, was especially visible during the first weeks of the Movement. During this time, many of my Hong Kong informants replaced their profile pictures with pictures of a yellow ribbon, thereby indicating their support for the Movement. Some replaced their images with sombre black squares, expressing the grief felt following the police violence of 28 September 2014. Facebook, in particular, became an important site for discussions. Polarisations were highlighted, evident in the number of people ‘defriending’ Facebook-friends with opposite opinions.

Due to a series of overlaps, movements that have occurred globally over the past years have often been described in relation to each other.⁴⁴ As a result, the differences between them are often overlooked. However, anthropological studies of Occupy movements have indicated that they were in fact all different (Dole, 2012), leading to a complicated picture of protests that were reactions to different causes and concerns and that were acted out in “myriad heterogeneous, transnational, leaderless public spheres” (Fregonese, 2012, p. 110). While some movements were the result of struggles against crony capitalism and corruption, others concentrated around the bursting of real estate bubbles, or concerns for young people’s lives (Tuğal, 2013). Thus, the driving forces behind the movements were not necessarily the negative impact of global forces such as neoliberalism, capitalism or commodification, but more in the form of local concerns. For example, Maple Razsa and Andrej Kurnik note that in the 2011 Occupy Slovenia Movement “there are

⁴⁴ A good example is Nouriel Roubini, who summed up the many movements as follows: “There were the Arab uprisings and revolts; the riots in England as well as earlier protests against pension cuts and higher tuition fees; the Israeli middle class protesting high housing prices and the squeeze from high inflation; Chilean students concerned about education and jobs; vandalism of the expensive cars of fat cats in Germany; Greeks demonstrating against fiscal austerity; India’s movement against corruption; mass demonstrations by the Russian middle class against the authoritarian Putin regime; riots in China in reaction to corruption, inequality, and illegal land seizures, as well as similar complaints in the blogosphere, where the Chinese can more freely express their dissatisfaction with government policies; and then the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York and across the United States” (2012, p. 150).

important continuities and discontinuities between the forms of direct democracy at encampments like OWS [ed.: Occupy Wall Street] and those that characterized the alter-globalization movement” (2012, p. 240). These discontinuities were for a large part due to the influences of local culture and the history of protests in the specific locale of Slovenia. A similar argument may be made when analysing the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, a Movement that was not only a response to global forces, but that was equally influenced by local factors (such as the emergence of a politically active middle class since 2003, and the perceived increasing influence of the PRC on life in the HKSAR).

In addition, there are two shortcomings in the general literature addressing Occupy movements of the last decade. First, due to overemphasis on economic and political factors, insufficient attention has been paid to socio-cultural and religious factors.⁴⁵ In some cases, attention has been paid to religious leaders active in the worldwide Occupy protests, and to commentaries on the movements written by religious leaders and theologians (see, for example, Rieger & Kwok, 2013). However, the relevance of religion in the lives of lay individuals who took part in the protests has yet to be fully analysed. In this chapter, by building on another publication (Westendorp, forthcoming-a)⁴⁶ and by analysing religious motivations of my informants, I show that movements such as the Umbrella Movement do not emerge merely as a result of economic or political concerns, but equally have religious

⁴⁵ One exception is Michael Greenberg (2012), who in two paragraphs in his short essay on the Occupy Wall Street Movement argues that religious leaders’ involvement in the Movement had as purpose to try to redefine justice.

⁴⁶ See also Mariske Westendorp (26.05.2015). Buddhist and Christian Interpretations of the Hong Kong Protests: Socially Engaged Religion and the Umbrella Movement. *Society for East Asian Anthropology*. See <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2015/05/26/buddhist-and-christian-interpretations-of-the-hong-kong-protests/>.

motives, as ways to live out one's faith in the here and now. This is a new insight that has – at the time of writing – not been offered for the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement yet.⁴⁷

A second shortcoming in the current Occupy literature is the insufficient attention paid to generational and class divisions: divisions on the one hand between the working and middle class, and between the middle and upper class on the other. Essays on the global movements of the past decade demonstrate the diverse types of groups who join Occupy Movements, reifying the lack of a uniform message or demand (Graeber, 2012). However, little attention has been paid to the struggles between people who joined these movements and those who opted not to but who were nevertheless affected by them. A similar situation occurred in Hong Kong, where local and foreign media kept lauding the Umbrella Movement as a peaceful one. One example was an article published in the *South China Morning Post* at the start of the Movement, titled 'United They Stand: Democracy Protest Bonds Hongkongers from All Walks of Life'.⁴⁸ However, in reality, generational and class differences emerged and were magnified during the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. In an email sent to me in early October 2014, Henry, a retired civil servant in his late 60s who is interested in Buddhism, wrote:

⁴⁷ Lida Nedilsky's (2014) recent publication, titled 'Christian Converts to Civil Society' offers an insight into the relations between Christianity and political culture in contemporary Hong Kong, primarily from the viewpoint of Christian converts who are active or have been active in different (Christian) NGOs. Her study shows how, in the political turmoil in Hong Kong from 1997 to 2008, people broke and forged Christian bonds, and entered and exited religious commitments. Nedilsky explores what Christianity does or does not offer Hong Kong residents, and the fluidity of the answers to that question. Although interesting inasmuch as she explores relations between religion and state in the HKSAR, Nedilsky's study primarily focuses on conversion and on how converts' entering and exiting shapes Hong Kong Christianity, instead of – as I do in this thesis – on how Christianity (and Buddhism) offers a lens through which socio-economic and political issues are shaped and negotiated.

⁴⁸ Source: Staff Reporters (29.09.2014). United They Stand: Democracy Protests Bond Hongkongers from All Walks of Life. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1603521/united-they-stand-democracy-protests-bond-hongkongers-all-walks-life>.

One thing is certain: the movement has split Hong Kong residents. Within my family, there are three different views among four persons. We have the capacity to respect and consider each other's conflicting views. The same cannot be said of the [Hong Kong] community as a whole (personal communication via email, Henry, 03.10.2014).

Henry's words, which were similarly expressed by many of my informants, clearly highlight the internal divisions within Hong Kong society, created and exacerbated by the Umbrella Movement during which "the most committed camped out in the streets, and the less committed had to make a living. The uncommitted gradually lost their patience, and the antagonistic grew more hostile" (Hui, 2015, p. 115).

These shortcomings, primarily the first, will be addressed in this chapter. My explication of my informants' religious perceptions of how to achieve salvation shows that the Umbrella Movement was not solely a socio-political movement aimed at achieving universal suffrage and keeping the HKSAR a politically and economically unique city within the PRC. Equally important was its emergence as a religious movement that urged public rethinking of different concepts such as individual and collective salvation, and individual accountabilities. As such, it echoed the emphasis placed on tradition and universalism of Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhists and Catholics.

In the first part of this chapter, focus is on the civic engagement of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations during the Umbrella Movement. According to Zhidong Hao et al. (2014), civic engagement is composed of two parts: social services and civic activism. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I already described the social services provided by Hong Kong Buddhist organisations, the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese and different Hong Kong missionary organisations. Below, I focus on the civic activism of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations and leaders during the Umbrella Movement which included "such

activities as protest rallies, demonstrations, and declarations of positions on various social and political issues” (Hao et al., 2014, p. 50).

In the second and main section of this chapter, I detail the narratives of my Buddhist and Catholic informants and their individual motivations for civic engagement. In this section, I define civic engagement as “the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a



A rare sight: a Buddhist nun (most probably Mahāyāna) joining the 1 July protest (source: Mariske Westendorp, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island, 01.07.2014).



Localists during the 1 July 2014 rally, carrying the British colonial flag and signboards indicating their aspiration for an independent Hong Kong. The waiving of the colonial flag might be more rhetorical than literal: people do not literally want to return to British colonial rule, but are instead asking for a better government for Hong Kong, in this case self-governance (source: Mariske Westendorp, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island, 01.07.2014).

community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 236). I demonstrate two ways in which my informants became civically engaged with the Umbrella Movement; i.e., through spiritual engagement and/or through activist engagement (although, as I will show, the two cannot be easily distinguished from each other). For them, the different positions of Buddhism and Catholicism in the PRC and the HKSAR are not as important as for organisations; instead, their narratives highlight their attachment to perceived Buddhist and Catholic notions of salvation, namely those as highlighted by adherents to an engaged Buddhism and to what I would like to call a post-Second Vatican Council image of the Church.

Even though the two sections of this chapter are interlinked, setting up this chapter in this two-tiered manner allows me to bring to the fore two arguments. First, it allows me to show that individual motivations for participating in the Umbrella protests were engendered by personal perceptions pertinent to the concepts of salvation and accountability, concepts which are not always compatible with the official doctrines dispensed by religious leaders (although they are in part shaped by them). Second, it allows me to stress that, as said before, even though the protests were sparked by contemporary political and economic relations between the HKSAR and the PRC, religious factors were equally significant in determining my informants' involvement in the Umbrella Movement, either actively or spiritually.

4.1 Buddhist and Catholic Presence in the Umbrella Movement

In early November 2014, Winston, the Buddhist senior correspondent in his early 30s (see page 130-131), sent me a message via WhatsApp. I had been in contact with Winston throughout the whole period during which the Umbrella Movement took place, reflecting on

the daily happenings in the streets (he never joined them, but he read many articles online and heard stories from friends) and debating which steps should be taken next. Winston sent me the following message:

See the mess that Occupy has made. They're stuffed, they have no bargaining power left and they are fighting among themselves. It's because they had no spiritual guidance. Social activists fall into this trap of thinking that their cause is the highest one. They get burned out and bitter. Religious guidance helps them to see the longer term, and the bigger picture (personal communication via WhatsApp, Winston, 08.11.2014).

I found Winston's message remarkable, given that although he is Buddhist, he had never before mentioned the significance of religion for and in the protests. His words further intrigued me, as they alluded to the visible absence of Buddhist spiritual guidance in the streets.

During the initial weeks of the Umbrella Movement, media were quick to emphasise the religious aspects of the protests, both the religious symbols present 'on the ground' and those that were absent from the occupied sites. Only a few English media sources noted the responses of Buddhist organisations and leaders in the protests: they mainly commented on their absence. Reference was made to Buddhist symbols seen in the streets, the building of makeshift Buddhist shrines at the protest sites, and the gathering of Buddhists in occupied areas.⁴⁹ Buddhist monks volunteered as first-aid workers, or wrote articles to express their concern about the protests. Nevertheless, as these media articles showed, these Buddhist efforts were minimal compared to the Christian presence. It could be argued that the relative absence of commentaries on Buddhist symbols during the Movement might be an artefact of

⁴⁹ Source: Jennifer Ngo (27.10.2014). Religion on the Front Line Puts Faith into Practice: Christians, in Pursuing Equality and Justice, Have Long Been Part of the City's Fight For Freedom. *South China Morning Post*. See <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1625126/religion-occupy-central-front-line-puts-faith-practice?page=all>.

the English language sources writing about the protests. However, my Buddhist informants told me the same: there was almost no Buddhist presence in the streets. Moreover, in early October 2014, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association released an official statement which advocated “that Buddhists and students at Buddhist schools should avoid the protest locations and nearby areas (and likewise exhort their friends and children to do so)”.⁵⁰

Contrary to the above, English language media sources of Hong Kong news providers and international sources placed considerable emphasis on the presence of (Protestant) Christian groups and leaders, and on the support churches provided to the protestors. Mention was made of how some churches opened their doors to protesters and police alike, offering first aid, snacks and water, refuge, and/or simply a place for people to go to the bathroom. Other sources indicated the presence of prayer groups, crosses, and people reading their Bibles in the occupied areas.⁵¹

Particular attention was paid to Christian leaders, both clerical leaders of Christian groups and lay Christian leaders of different protest groups. For example, sources mentioned that the Occupy Central with Love and Peace Movement was led by, amongst others, Benny Tai, a committed Christian, and Reverend Chu Yiu-ming of the Chai Wan Baptist Church. Joshua Wong, leader of the student organisation Scholarism and an evangelical Christian who had attended a Protestant private school and the United Christian College, posted the following comment on Facebook in early July 2014:

⁵⁰ Source: Buddhistdoor (24.10.2014). Unattached Involvement: Expressing Socially Engaged Buddhism. *Buddhistdoor Global*. See <http://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhistdoor-view-unattached-involvement>.

⁵¹ Sources: (1) Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra (13.10.2014). Hong Kong Christians Lead Protests for Democracy. *Christianity Online*. See <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/hong-kong-christians-lead-protests-for-democracy-china.html>. (2) Jack Jenkins (12.10.2014). Why Christians are Helping Lead Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Movement. *Think Progress*. See <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2014/10/12/3579154/why-christians-are-helping-lead-hong-kongs-pro-democracy-movement/>. (3) Ned Levin (03.10.2014). Hong Kong Democracy Protests Carry a Christian Mission for Some. *Wall Street Journal*. See <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-democracy-protests-carry-a-christian-mission-for-some-1412255663>.

The reason why I join the social movement is faith. ... Without faith, I wouldn't have realised that we have to search for the value of life, to respect every individual as equal. God blesses everyone and they should be treated as equal.⁵²

Emphasis was also placed on the position adopted by some Christian clergy members; for example, on the outspoken Catholic Cardinal Zen, who had supported the fight for democracy from its earliest moments (but later changed his position slightly). The media also singled out Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong, who was heavily criticised following a sermon he delivered in early July 2014, in which he urged Anglicans to remain silent, just as Jesus remained silent when awaiting his crucifixion, “like a lamb awaiting slaughter in silence”.⁵³ The spotlight also fell on certain Protestant ministers, e.g., the Reverend Tin Yau Yuen of the Methodist Church who, in an open letter that he wrote in October 2014, seemed to suggest that the Christian faith supports the fight for democracy. He stated: “The gospel we believe in is necessarily related to social and political issues. It's impossible to be politically neutral, as who can have no political view?”⁵⁴

Multiple reasons may be cited for the apparent difference in the level of civic activism between Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations. A first explanation is based upon the historical legacy of both religions. As I suggested in Chapter 1, Buddhism

⁵² Source: Oiwan Lam (12.07.2014). Hong Kong's Anglican Archbishop Says Pro-Democracy Protesters Should be Like Jesus and Keep Quiet. *Global Voices Online*. See <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/07/12/hong-kongs-archbishop-tells-democracy-protesters-to-keep-quiet/>.

⁵³ The official explanation provided by the Reverend Peter Koon (Provincial Secretary General of the Hong Kong Anglican Church) was that Kwong was merely “trying to remind fellow Christians of the church's role as a ‘facilitator of peace’”. Sources: (1) Oiwan Lam (12.07.2014). Hong Kong's Anglican Archbishop Says Pro-Democracy Protesters Should be Like Jesus and Keep Quiet. *Global Voices Online*. See <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/07/12/hong-kongs-archbishop-tells-democracy-protesters-to-keep-quiet/>. (2) Ernest Kao (09.07.2014). Archbishop's Sermon on Occupy Central was 'Taken Out of Context'. Church says Controversial Remarks on Occupy were Meant as Humor, Not a Public Statement. *South China Morning Post*. See www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1550314/church-defends-reverend-paul-kwong-who-told-pro-democracy-residents.

⁵⁴ Source: Reverend Tin Yau Yuen (10.06.2014). Pastoral Letter From the President, Revd Tin Yau Yuen to the Methodist Congregations of Hong Kong: A Church at Crossroads. *Methodist Congregations of Hong Kong*. See http://www.methodist.org.hk/media/filehotlink/2014/10/06/Pastoral_Letter_to_MCHK_congregations_Eng.pdf.

and Catholicism have different foundations in Hong Kong society. Both developed differently in relation to the political and social situation on the Chinese mainland, and in relation to the British colonial government. This legacy is still visible in the ways both religions are civically engaged and visibly present in Hong Kong's social service sector today. Moreover, this legacy relates to civic activism in two ways. First, as many of my Buddhist informants observed, for them, Buddhism is not a proselytising religion. In contrast, as indicated in Chapter 1, Hong Kong Catholicism has always had a relatively strong tendency to proselytise, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. During the Umbrella Movement, Catholic leaders were seen to build on this history of evangelism by showing a certain degree of civic activism. Second, many members of Hong Kong's contemporary elite were educated in Christian schools and received additional Christian training. These trainings have equipped them with certain Christian values, which become externalised in situations such as struggles for universal suffrage and social justice.

A second reason for the difference in the presence of Buddhist and Catholic symbols and leadership during the Umbrella Movement is the position that both religions hold in the contemporary HKSAR and the PRC. As several of my informants stressed, ideas regarding the freedom of religion are critical here. For example, a professor I met at Hong Kong University – after I told him that I was interested in learning more about Buddhist and Catholic engagement in Hong Kong's political life – said that in the 'one country, two systems' policy, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism emphasise the 'one country' part, whereas Catholicism and Protestantism in Hong Kong mainly emphasise 'two systems' (personal communication, professor, HKU, 07.09.2012). He did not mention other religions,

most probably because “among other religions in Hong Kong, Hindus and Muslims are almost all South Asians and therefore have no political say”.⁵⁵

Similar assumptions were made by media sources, some of whom suggested that Buddhist organisations appear to be relatively satisfied with the status quo of Buddhism in the PRC and with recent attempts by the CCP to promote ‘Chinese religions’ such as Buddhism (particularly ‘popular’ Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism) and Taoism.⁵⁶ Most media sources argued that for these reasons, Hong Kong Buddhist organisations kept a low profile during the 2014 Umbrella Movement. In the same light, some media sources suggested that for Christian groups, the protests were not merely about attaining universal suffrage; they were more a way of expressing anxiety vis-à-vis Communist infiltration in Hong Kong’s society, and the likely decrease in religious freedom in the city. One news report for instance observed that “the protests now roiling in Hong Kong are about democracy. But there is an undercurrent of another, much older tension: between Christianity and Communist China”.⁵⁷

Even though most of the Buddhist monks I spoke to during my research time in Hong Kong were not too positive about the position of religion (including Buddhism) in the PRC, they stopped short of openly criticising the Chinese Government. Some even emphasised the benevolence of the CCP in the development of religion in both China and Hong Kong. For example, in Chapter 1, I wrote about the display of the Buddha’s tooth in Hong Kong in 1998. One Buddhist monk recalled that this would not have been possible without the close

⁵⁵ Source: Reporters (26.09.2014). Christians Back HK Democracy Protests with Food and Faith. *UCA News*. See <http://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-back-hk-democracy-protests-with-food-and-faith/72056>.

⁵⁶ Source: Shai Oster (25.10.2014). How Smashed Jesus Shrine Reveals Christian Undercurrent to Hong Kong Protests. *Bloomberg*. See <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2014-10-28/christians-lead-h-k-protests-in-test-of-china-s-control.html>.

⁵⁷ Source: Ned Levin (03.10.2014). Hong Kong Democracy Protests Carry a Christian Mission for Some. *Wall Street Journal*. See <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kong-democracy-protests-carry-a-christian-mission-for-some-1412255663>.

relationship between Hong Kong Buddhism and the Chinese Government post-Handover (interview, Venerable Buddhadasa, Centre for Buddhist Studies, HKU, 20.06.2013).

In comparison, almost all of the Catholic clergy I interviewed were more sceptical about the situation of religion, and especially Catholicism, on the mainland. One local Hong Kong Catholic priest (who asked to remain anonymous) said:

We are part of China now. My passport says I'm a Chinese. And unless the Chinese Government changes into a non-Communist system, Hong Kong will be influenced. We are praying that China will change, but who knows? For me it's not threatening yet; we have the gospel, we are safe. But we don't know how to respond to the future. We need to prepare ourselves, also in China. That is why we are fighting for the election in 2017. They [the Chinese Government] say: 'The candidates have to be pro-China', because they cannot say: 'They have to be pro-Communist.' But that's what they want to say actually. ... I don't know politics. But I'm concerned. I can't do much. I can only teach the gospel, so that people can choose what is right.

This priest clearly acknowledged the difficult relations between Catholicism and Communism, and the felt threat of Chinese influence on Hong Kong religious life.

If one looks beyond politics in China – both in the PRC and in the HKSAR – one can discern different reasons underpinning the dissimilarities in prominence between Buddhism and Catholicism in the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. One reason has its genesis in the ways the religions are organised in Hong Kong. I already suggested in Chapter 1 that even though on paper the Hong Kong Buddhist Association is the overarching Buddhist organisation in Hong Kong, only a small minority of Hong Kong Buddhist organisations are affiliated to it. Moreover, the fact that this Buddhist Association has no political organ makes it hard for it to express a strong activist voice. In contrast, an important and strong organisation within the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese is the Justice and Peace Commission. The Hong Kong Justice and Peace Commission was established in 1977 to increase the Church's participation in

social actions and to promote civic participation among Hong Kong's lay Catholics. It was established in line with the 1967 Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace proposed by Pope Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council. The intention of the Pontifical Commission was for the universal Catholic Church to be more active in promoting social justice and global peace, two activities considered essential for spreading the gospel. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese is one of the many localised commissions that attempt to fulfil this mission (Leung & Chan, 2003; Li, Cheung & Chan, 1998; Nedilsky, 2014). In early October 2014, this Commission issued an official statement on behalf of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, calling for dialogue and reconciliation between different parties involved in the Umbrella Movement. Public prayer meetings were organised during the Movement by the Commission, some for the purpose of promoting democracy, others to promote dialogue and peace.

Another difference between Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations' presence during the Umbrella Movement relates to local religious leadership. As I wrote earlier, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association issued a statement in early October 2014 urging Buddhists not to become involved in the protests. Consequently, no Buddhist clergy of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association was seen in the streets. In contrast, an important visible aspect of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese was the role played by its two main leaders, Bishop John Tong Hon and Cardinal Zen. While the latter is "[a]n outspoken advocate of secular democracy for Hong Kong's general polity" (Nedilsky, 2014, p. 178), the former, being more of an introvert, became civically engaged in a different manner. In early October, while Bishop Tong was still in Rome, Cardinal Zen released a statement in which he called for a 24 Hour Eucharistic Adoration to pray through the day and night. He urged the Catholic laity not to give up the fight against the Chinese

totalitarians. Bishop Tong's attitude was more measured, instead advocating retreat and moderation. In a pastoral letter of late September 2014, he observed:

It is ... my sincere wish that all those who are trying to voice their grievances will be resilient in their determination to stay calm. Where there is a will, there is a way. As Christians, we believe that with God as its Creator, our world can always offer hope.⁵⁸

He also urged the Hong Kong SAR Government "to put the personal safety of fellow citizens as their prime concern, exercising restraint in deployment of force with a view to listening to the voice of the younger generation and of citizens from all walks of life".⁵⁹ The statements of Cardinal Zen and Bishop Tong both indicate a difference in opinion on how to engage with the Umbrella Movement, either spiritually or civically. As I show in the next section of this chapter, my informants were faced with similar considerations concerning engagement.

Interestingly, as the Umbrella Movement progressed, Cardinal Zen's position changed slightly. During the first days of the Umbrella Movement, Zen was a constant focus of media attention. They photographed him leading prayer groups in the streets, encouraging people to speak their minds, or sitting in a corner sleeping, having succumbed to exhaustion. However, a few weeks after the publication of the statement in early October, Cardinal Zen declared that the protests had gone too far and that the students should retreat. During the

⁵⁸ Source: Cardinal John Tong Hon (29.09.2014). An Urgent Appeal from the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Regarding 'Occupy Central'. *Hong Kong Catholic Diocese*. See http://www.catholic.org.hk/v2/en/pressrelease/urgent_appeal_regarding_occupy_central_29092014-eng.pdf. Bishop Tong's passivity was more recently demonstrated in a pastoral letter, titled 'Electoral Reform and the Well-Being of Hong Kong Society', which started with the following Biblical quote: "Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer" (Romans 12:12). While acknowledging that "a sound political system is intimately linked with the well-being of society", Bishop Tong invited all Christians to pray, invoking God's help and blessing for the HKSAR. Source: Cardinal John Tong Hon (30.05.2015). Pastoral Letter of Cardinal John Tong: Electoral Reform and the Well-Being of Hong Kong Society. *Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong*. See http://catholic.org.hk/v2/en/message_bishop/y2015_530.html.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

last weeks of the protests, the Umbrella Movement lost important support of the Hong Kong Catholic Church, signalling the fluidity of both the Movement (which had become increasingly divisive) and the position of Hong Kong Catholic leaders.

Even though officially the Hong Kong Buddhist Association was less involved with the protests than the Hong Kong Catholic Church, at local levels, as well as in individuals' appreciation of the visibility of their religious leaders, the picture was slightly different. Leaders of local Buddhist organisations made personal decisions whether to join the protests or not. One example is the newly-appointed abbot of a temple in Tsuen Wan, who maintained that "a monk should be involved with social work, not political". He did, however, explain the difficulty underpinning this decision: "When I talk about politics, they say I'm a political monk. If I don't, they think I don't care about social issues. That's a dilemma". His personal solution is to focus on and teach the dharma, rather than touching on issues of political concern (personal communication, Venerable Dhammananda, Wang Fat Ching She, Tsuen Wan, 19.05.2014). However, some Buddhist monks in Hong Kong chose to do otherwise. Francis, the Theravāda Buddhist in his mid-40s (see page 62-63), made mention of a Buddhist monk who actively commented on the protests on Facebook, based on his observations and experiences in the streets. While Francis appreciated the monk's engagement, his friends scorned the monk for being too attached and for not seeing clearly the impermanence of the situation (personal communication via WhatsApp Francis, 06.10.2014).

Similar personal negotiations were entered into by leaders of Catholic parishes. During the protests, church doors were either open or stayed shut. While some parish priests opted to join the protests, others preferred to stay in their churches. For many of the local Hong Kong priests, the question of whether to join or not was negotiated based on decisions

to either offer pastoral care and emphasise the faith dimension of Catholicism, or to be civically active. Take, for example, the parish priest of a church in Tsuen Wan. This priest always attends the annual 4 June Vigil and always marches in the 1 July protests. However, he decided not to join the Umbrella Movement, preferring instead to take care of his parishioners at the church (personal communication, Father Pedro, Annunciation Parish, Tsuen Wan, 22.05.2014). The line between offering spiritual care and being civically active is, naturally, a fine one; and, often the two go together. For example, joining in social protests and political demonstrations may be a way for Catholic priests to show the people of Hong Kong that they are there for them, and a way to listen to the concerns harboured by people of the proverbial Catholic flock, and indeed of those who are yet to join that flock.

The last and perhaps most obvious reason for the difference between Buddhist and Catholic civic activism expressed during the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement is a difference in theology. In the rest of this chapter, I focus on this difference by analysing the narratives of my informants. I argue that their theological ideas, which are primarily related to the concept of salvation, were the main driving forces behind their motivations to either join or not join the Umbrella Movement. By focusing on their theological notions, I show that it is not only the reasons stated above (the ways in which both Buddhism and Catholicism are organised in Hong Kong and the position they hold with regard to politics in the HKSAR and the PRC) that were of relevance to my informants' motivation: their decisions were also made on the basis of individual considerations.

4.1.1 Lay Aspirations in the Movement

Regardless of the teachings of the religious organisations and leaders mentioned above, individuals' perceptions of what should take priority within their faith, and how to be a

‘good’ Buddhist or Catholic, might differ. Individual believers do not always follow the actions of faith leaders, churches or congregations. In many cases, they choose their own trajectories, reflecting their perceptions of personal accountabilities.

For my Theravāda Buddhist informants, the personal decision of whether to join the protests or not was less coloured by the example set by Buddhist organisations and leaders, probably because the latter were distinguished by their absence. For example, Adam, the Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s (see page 121-122), said, after I asked him if he thought that Buddhist leaders in Hong Kong could have done more, that they should have promoted “COMPASSION! COMPASSION! COMPASSION!” (personal communication via email, Adam, 22.11.2014). The editors of the non-sectarian Internet organisation Buddhistdoor answered similarly. In an editorial, they wrote:

In Hong Kong, the question is whether Buddhists could have had more of a presence in the streets – not to support a particular side, but to bridge the physical and ideological divide between opposing parties. ... Maybe Buddhist temples and charities could have set up tents and booths where protesters and police alike could enjoy refreshments for free. When the scuffles and brawls broke out, perhaps Buddhists could have been present to physically protect belligerents from one another, without worrying how others might react to their mediation. Another powerful statement might have been to hold a meditation ‘flash mob’.⁶⁰

The individual motivations of my Catholic informants to be civically or spiritually engaged were mainly related to individual evaluations given to Bishop Tong and Cardinal Zen. An example is Rebecca, a Catholic in her mid-60s, who used to work for an American company, but retired a few years ago. Since then, she volunteers in a nursing home for the elderly, and at the Missionaries of Charity, a nun’s order in the line of Mother Theresa. Rebecca has lived through all of the socio-political developments of Hong Kong. She has

⁶⁰ Source: Buddhistdoor (24.10.2014). Unattached Involvement: Expressing Socially Engaged Buddhism. *Buddhistdoor Global*. See <http://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhistdoor-view-unattached-involvement>.

consistently been actively engaged in Hong Kong's major protests since the late 1960s, with the exception of the 1967 protests which, she said, were too violent. When discussing with her the role of the Hong Kong Catholic Church in today's Hong Kong society, she opined that "Bishop Tong is too gentle" (personal communication, Rebecca, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hung Hom, 17.04.201). As someone who joined the Umbrella Movement as often as she could to show her support for the students, Rebecca may have seen in Cardinal Zen a reflection of her own actions.

For Wendy, the Catholic teacher in her early 30s (see page 93-94), however, the story was different. In 2012, when I asked her about her opinion of Bishop Tong and Cardinal Zen, she replied that she valued Zen's ability to speak out and to make people listen to him. She thought this especially important in a society in which polarisations were rapidly increasing (interview, Wendy, Annunciation Parish, Tsuen Wan, 08.06.2013). However, two years later, during the Umbrella Movement, she revealed that she thought Zen was being too outspoken. Her reaction most probably was an expression of the disjuncture she felt between Cardinal Zen's actions and her own. Wendy opted not to join the Umbrella Movement, being of the opinion that occupying the streets of Hong Kong was not the right means to the aspired end of regaining the rights to the city (personal communication via WhatsApp, Wendy, September-October 2014). She felt that Cardinal Zen, a prominent and outspoken leader of the Hong Kong Catholic Church, however created the expectation for her to join the protests: "When people know I'm a Catholic, they will ask if I'm going as well. People will expect me to go, but I oppose it" (personal communication, Wendy, Thai restaurant, Tsuen Wan, 26.05.2014). Wendy was clearly struggling with how to cope with this obligation placed upon her by Zen's activism.



A group of individual Christians organising a prayer meeting, most probably in the tradition of Taizé (source: Rebecca, Admiralty, Hong Kong Island, 18.10.2014).



Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium, resting after having been out into the streets (source: Rebecca, Admiralty, Hong Kong Island, 18.10.2014).



Crowds occupying streets in Mong Kok (source: Ivy, Mong Kok, Kowloon, 29.09.2014).



Crowds occupying streets in Causeway Bay (source: Emily, Causeway bay, Hong Kong Island, 29.10.2014).

Thus, instead of merely following the examples or recommendations set by their religious leaders, my informants had their own ideas of how they should engage with the Umbrella Movement. These ideas were in varying degrees related to the concept of accountability as elaborated on in Chapter 3. They also relate to individual notions regarding the concept of salvation.

Ideas of salvation (and damnation) feature prominently in most religions, including Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism. They are central doctrines of these religions, stated in authoritative documents, either describing ideas of Nirvāna which can be accessed through the eradication of suffering, or a Kingdom of God after the eradication of social injustices in the world. These soteriological ideas are reflected in the religious notions of my informants; through living a spiritual life and sanctifying one's actions in the here and now (thus living as 'good' Buddhists or Catholics), my informants aspire to attain salvation in the (near) future. According to Rachel McCleary, who considers the effects of religious participation and beliefs on economic growth:

Salvation is a spiritual goal that may or may not be attained through human effort. If people believe in the possibility of salvation through their own efforts, it makes sense that they are likely to perform the actions that contribute to attaining such an end. Therefore, religious beliefs have implications for behavior, such as work effort, saving, and charity (2007, p. 51).

This quote highlights the links between the notions of accountability and aspirations to salvation. Rather than exploring economic behaviour, as McCleary has done, I look at the civically engaged behaviour performed by my informants in response to the Umbrella Movement. To this end, I describe my informants' actions as spiritual engagement and/or activist engagement. I focus thus on salvific merit (i.e., "the effects of a person's actions on the person's probability of attaining salvation" (McCleary, 2007, p. 51)), not as defined by

religious doctrines, institutions, and leaders, but as pursued by individuals. I argue that by emphasising salvation, the Umbrella Movement provided a way for my informants to relate their situations to similar situations in different places and times, thereby giving the Umbrella Movement a larger temporal and spatial dimension than it might appear to have at first sight.

4.2 Buddhist Salvation

Nearly a month after the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement started, the editors of the Internet organisation Buddhistdoor posed the following question in their weekly editorial: “Can Buddhists be socially engaged while remaining ideologically and emotionally unattached?”⁶¹ In their article, the editors attempted to discuss how Hong Kong Buddhists might respond to the protests in a Buddhist manner, especially considering – as indicated above – the absence of visible Buddhist leadership in the streets. By posing this question in their editorial, the editors referred to the modern Buddhist movement of ‘engaged Buddhism’.

As previously indicated, Hong Kong Buddhism (and likewise Catholicism) is not an autonomous entity separate from the rest of the world. It has developed alongside and in response to other religious movements and institutions in both Mainland China and globally. For the modern Buddhism my Theravādin informants feel attracted to, this means engaged Buddhism. Even though the movement of engaged Buddhism is not as well-developed in Hong Kong as in other Asian countries, its ideologies have played a significant part in the ways in which my informants responded to the Umbrella Movement, either actively or spiritually.

⁶¹ Source: Buddhistdoor (24.10.2014). Unattached Involvement: Expressing Socially Engaged Buddhism. *Buddhistdoor Global*. See <http://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhistdoor-view-unattached-involvement>.

In many countries in Asia today, Buddhist organisations and leaders of different Buddhist schools adhere to the values of engaged Buddhism. Even though “socially and politically engaged Buddhism continues to grow and diversify in Asia and the West, [and] continues to challenge conventional assumptions about the nature and direction of Buddhism” (Queen, 2003, p. 1), it is at the same time “too diverse to be considered a single movement, and still too new to have developed a theoretical framework for Buddhism’s engagement with contemporary issues” (Cho, 2000, p. 78). ‘Engaged Buddhism’ is an academic category that alludes to the teachings and aspirations of particular Buddhist teachers in Asian and non-Asian countries, of all different Buddhist streams. Through advocating particular teachings and practices, engaged Buddhist leaders seek to achieve “a stable order and a just society, seen as *necessary or prior conditions* for the discovery of genuine freedom (or awakening) by each person” (Queen, 2003, p. 20, original emphasis). According to this definition, a just society is seen as a prerequisite for aspirations to salvation. This can be achieved through offering social services and being politically active.

The teachings of engaged Buddhist masters are often a “response to a grave crisis facing the country, such as war, invasion, deep poverty, ecological crisis, or human rights abuse” (King, 2012, p. 196; see also Truong, 2000 [1998]). By responding to such crises in an engaged and nonviolent manner, the particular Buddhist masters highlight the relevance of Buddhist teachings for the modern world (King, 2005). Included among renowned Buddhist leaders who adhere to these engaged Buddhist values are the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda, Dr. Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne in Sri Lanka and Taiwanese nun Cheng-yen, the foundress of the charitable Tzu Chi Foundation (Bond, 2003; Huang, 2003; Park, 2010; Weiner, 2003). Among lay practitioners are the Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa, and Burmese

politician Aung San Suu Kyi, a noted Buddhist lay person who is often seen as acting out the ideals of engaged Buddhism (Henry, 2006; Kittel, 2011).

Being an academic category, ‘engaged Buddhism’ entails many different aspects, and is somewhat controversial. For example, some scholars and Buddhist leaders consider social services and political activism to be foundational components of the Buddhist religion, while others argue that Buddhist spirituality is separate from civic activism (for a good discussion on this debate, see Queen, 2003; Yarnall, 2003). Another issue regards salvation, and the question of whether suffering is the consequence of individual tendencies to cling to the self which can only be eradicated through personal liberation (Deitrick, 2003), or whether it can in part be collective and caused by the state and other social institutes (Cho, 2000; Hershock, 1999). A last point of discussion regards the actual practices that need to be undertaken to eliminate, or at least reduce, individual and/or collective suffering. For Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda, one way of becoming spiritually engaged in the conflict in Cambodia was to organise meditative ‘peace walks’. Ghosananda recognised “the need for inner peace to create social peace and [suggested] the use of Buddhist meditation to reach this goal” (Weiner, 2003, p. 116). For him, mental purification forms the basis for reaching salvation. On the other hand, in response to the 2011 Occupy Wall Street Movement, American Zen teacher Lewis Richmond offered his reflections on the question of how Buddhists should respond to the protests.⁶² While some of his Buddhist friends instructed occupiers to emphasise non-violence, compassion and meditation, Lewis expressed a more active approach. He argued for a true awakening, one similar to the awakening that Prince Gautama experienced when he left his palace and was confronted with the ‘four sightings’ (the old, the poor, the sick, and the dying). His awakening was not based on meditation (“Gautama, after

⁶² Source: Lewis Richmond (16.11.2011). Occupy Buddha: Reflections on Occupy Wall Street. *Huffington Post*. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lewis-richmond/occupy-buddha_b_1114139.html.

all, was not schooled in meditation when he experienced the four sightings”) but on anger. Thus, emphasis on anger, and consequent civic activist engagement, might lead people to gain positive merit, as “performing morally good deeds with the right intention earns the individual *karmic* merit necessary for movement toward *nirvana*” (McCleary, 2007, p. 55, original emphasis).

Consciously or unconsciously, my Hong Kong Theravāda Buddhist informants relate in important ways to these discussions concerning engaged Buddhism. Most of them express a wish to reduce suffering (both individual suffering and the suffering in society), attain happiness in the “here and now” (reflected in Thich Nhat Hahn’s famous quote: “happiness is here and now”) and eventually reach enlightenment. Echoing their emphasis on personal accountability, salvation is an aspiration that needs to be reached individually. However, opinions differ as to how this should be done: through focusing on individual salvation or by attempting to reduce suffering in society.

For example, Teresa, the Theravāda Buddhist doctor in her late 30s (see page 97), opted not to join the Umbrella Movement: her reasoning was that when it came to fulfilling one’s aspirations, personal effort would be more effective than economic or political involvement. She wrote: “Buddhist teaching is about how to be mindful and achieve physical, psychological and mental peace by evaluating our thinking process” (personal communication via email, Teresa, 22.11.2014). Eventually, becoming mindful would lead to change in the environment. In effect, Teresa was saying that “when one’s mind becomes purified, society will also be purified” (Cho, 2000, p. 77).

In contrast to Teresa, Francis, the Theravāda Buddhist in his mid-40s (see page 62-63), engaged more actively in the Umbrella Movement, being guided by spiritual engagement. In early October 2014, Francis actively began using his Facebook account

again after nearly two years of relative silence. He started by changing his profile picture into the picture of a yellow ribbon. When I questioned him about his reappearance on the social media platform, he replied:

I try only to share articles which are written by people who hold mild opinions or express their feelings, but not any 'reports' or 'facts', as you can't be sure what is true or false. ... As a Buddhist, we are told to be aware of how we use our words: we should try not to spread any information we are not sure about in order to avoid others being influenced by our words. ... We can voice out our own opinion, but should not be spreading uncertain information (personal communication via WhatsApp, Francis, 06.10.2014).

By using Facebook as a medium, Francis expressed his engagement with the protests in a manner he saw justified by Buddhist doctrines. His engagement could lead to the elimination of societal obstacles (often called 'defilements') derived from the three poisons of desire, hatred and ignorance (Cho, 2000). Although Francis did not directly attempt to eliminate desire, hatred or ignorance, he steadfastly avoided spreading information that might feed these root causes. By doing this, he related spiritual to activist engagement, and related his actions to engaged Buddhism ideals.

Adam, the Theravāda Buddhist in his early 40s (see page 121-122), was one of my few Buddhist informants who actively went to the occupied areas to show his support. In an interview in 2012, he said: "I hope the philosophy of Buddhism can be applied in Hong Kong. The world would be a lot lovelier" (interview, Adam, Thai restaurant, Tai Mei Tuk, 19.01.2012). With this statement, he clearly expressed his wish for being engaged, not only with himself but with society. However, in June 2014, before the Umbrella Movement had actually started, when I pressed him further on the actual engagement he desired from Buddhist leaders, he rhetorically asked:

What did the Buddha do 2,600 years ago, when his kingdom was overtaken by other rulers? He didn't say they should fight; he didn't do anything. And what about Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama? They don't fight. When Thich Nhat Hanh was expelled from his country, he didn't fight his way back in (personal communication, Adam, small Buddhist temple, Lantau Island, 28.06.2014).

Perhaps paradoxically, Adam did join the occupation. For him, it is important to always try to find the middle path. Both physically fighting and not engaging are reflections of choosing sides. For Adam, choosing the middle path, that is, not becoming attached to an opinion or side in the debate, is an important condition of his aspiration to salvation. In his response to my questions, he mentioned other Buddhist leaders of various Buddhist schools – the Buddha himself, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama – who, in his eyes, expressed similar ways of engagement.

Similar personal decisions were made by other Buddhists as well. Emily, the Tibetan Buddhist in her mid-30s (see page 1), explicitly placed her response to the Umbrella Movement in the broader context of Buddhist teachings vis-à-vis struggles over social justice, in effect implicitly relating the Umbrella Movement to the ideals of engaged Buddhism. Initially, Emily supported the Movement, especially in the first days, right after the police violence had taken place. On Sunday 28 September, she tried to go out into the streets at night, but could not get further than Admiralty station. During the weeks that followed, her attitude changed as a result of the increasing violence occurring in the streets. In mid-October, she indicated via WhatsApp that she wanted to take a break from the restless environment and protests. She said: “We need to learn how to manifest democracy in a peaceful way”. I asked her if staying away from the protests was not an act too passive in the struggle for universal suffrage. “Not really,” she answered, “Buddhist noble silence is the most powerful [method]. Think about Thich Nhat Hanh and his sangha: how did they react to the Vietnamese Government?” (personal communication via WhatsApp, Emily,

September-October 2014). Similar to Adam, by emphasising the links between the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement and other iconic struggles fought in other countries during different times, the Movement took on an extra dimension as a way of aspiring to societal and eventually personal salvation that reaches beyond the specific context of Hong Kong.

4.3 Catholic Salvation

After the 2011 Occupy Wall Street Movement, theologians Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan argued for the creation of a new Christian theology, i.e., a theology of the multitude:

The Occupy movement calls for serious reflection on the social and economic teachings of the church, its images of God and other topics, and a public theology that speaks to the challenges of our time. In the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology, and other liberation theologies emerged during the periods of mass social movements against colonialism, economic exploitation, and gender and racial discrimination. ... No doubt the world has changed, and movements and ways of analyzing the world are changing as well. But much of what liberation theology has to say is still very relevant. The world is in need of liberation more than ever before (2013, p. 4).

The theology of the multitude, for Rieger and Kwok, is a theology that recognises the interrelations – rather than the boundaries – between the sacred and profane, and between the religious elite and the people, thereby transforming notions that religion is other-worldly or private. In the aftermath of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, one could acknowledge the emergence of a similar newly-engaged Christian theology. As was the case with my Buddhist informants, many Hong Kong Catholics also experienced the Movement to be part of larger Catholic struggles for social justice.

Since the “third wave of democratization” (Hao et al., 2014, p. 51) from the mid-1970s to 1990s, the universal Catholic Church has had an important voice in global human

rights revolutions. This is partly a result of the Second Vatican Council and two related documents, the ‘*Dignitatis Humanae*’ and the ‘*Gaudium et Spes*’. According to José Casanova, the Council resulted in

... a fundamental relocation of the Catholic Church from a state-oriented to a civil society-oriented institution. Moreover, the official adoption of the modern discourse of human rights allowed the Catholic Church to play a crucial role in opposition to authoritarian regimes and in processes of democratization throughout the Catholic world. Yet the Catholic Church’s embrace of voluntary disestablishment meant not the privatization of Catholicism but rather its relocation from the state to the public sphere of civil society (2008, p. 107).

This relocation of the Church was referred to in the Second Vatican Council as *aggiornamento*, or ‘spirit of openness’.

The outcomes of the Second Vatican Council amongst others made possible the popularity of the Latin American liberation theology. The goal of this theology was the universal alignment with the struggles of the poor against inequality and injustice, referred to as the “preferential option for the poor”, by addressing the specific local conditions of social and economic oppression (Chidester, 2000; Morris, 2007). Ultimately, the alignment with the poor would lead to the reduction of injustice in the world and thus the creation of a Kingdom of God on earth. Christian theologies in other denominations, which were in part stimulated by the changes in the Catholic Church post-Second Vatican Council, were for example the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the US, in which black Evangelical churches played an important role and in which Martin Luther King, Jr. “defined his involvement ... according to the Christian principle of unconditional, self-sacrificial love (*agape*)” (Kittel, 2011, p. 905). According to King, devotion to Jesus Christ could be expressed through civil disobedience to unjust laws. In the same decade, black theologian James Cones maintained that “any theology that was not committed to the liberation of the oppressed was not a

legitimate Christian theology” (Chidester, 2000, p. 526). Even though the Second Vatican Council took place in Europe, where the Church had relinquished its authority as provider of governmental leadership, it has had consequences for how the Church engaged, and still engages, in political and state-related issues in other parts of the world, including Asia (Brown, 2004). For example, the local South Korean Catholic Church played a large role in the *minjung* Movement and struggle against the dictatorial government in the 1970s (Park, 1985; Rieger & Kwok, 2013). In Hong Kong, the Catholic Diocese has similarly been involved with social justice issues, as indicated in the first section of this chapter.

The ideals of the universal Catholic Church regarding social justice were also emphasised by some of my Hong Kong lay Catholic informants. Even though not all of them were consciously aware of the changes in the Catholic Church post-Second Vatican Council, and not all consciously referred to Christian social justice movements in other countries and in other times aimed at making possible the Kingdom of God on earth, my informants who touched on the subject did describe their actions to be part of being a ‘good’ Catholic within the universal Church.

In May 2014, I met Maggie, a Catholic in her mid-30s and student of Theology at the Holy Spirit Seminary. Many of the conversations I had with Maggie over the weeks following our initial meeting concerned the political situation in Hong Kong and in the rest of the world; and, she was always very opinioned. Maggie supported ideas of universal suffrage and of worldwide democracy, and the role of the Catholic Church in achieving these goals. However, when the Umbrella Movement finally took off, she only joined the protests once or twice upon the invitation of friends. She said that her Catholic training at the Seminary had taught her to think carefully and to discern God’s Will before participating in movements such as the Umbrella Movement. She wanted to make sure that her actions were

in accordance with the Bible and the teachings of the Catholic Church. So, instead of actively participating in the protests, Maggie chose to pray for greater democracy in Hong Kong. On 29 September, the day after the police violence, she and her friends set up a Taizé prayer meeting to pray for justice, peace and democracy. Personally, Maggie regarded prayer a spiritual means more fit to achieve the preferred goal (personal communication via Facebook, Maggie, September-October 2014).

Maggie's emphasis on spiritual engagement through prayer was a personal choice, partly influenced by her teachings at the Holy Spirit Seminary. In mid-June 2014, Maggie showed me around that Seminary. In the Holy Spirit Study Centre, an organ of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese situated in the same building, she introduced me to Dr. Anthony Lam, a senior researcher and author of the book *The Catholic Church in Present-Day China* (1997 [1994]). While reflecting on the heightened political uncertainty in Hong Kong and the 'threat' of Occupy Central hanging in the air, Lam quoted a popular saying at the Holy Spirit Seminary: "The Kingdom of God is almost here, but not fully yet". To live in this 'here but not yet' moment as good Christians, Lam explained Catholic laity and clergy should seek to establish a just society based on equal rights and freedom. According to Lam, civic engagement is a key aspect of being a good Christian (personal communication, Dr. Lam, Holy Spirit Study Centre, Aberdeen, 26.06.2014). Even though Lam did not explicitly mention other social justice struggles, his words did echo the actions of Catholics in previous times who had done the same.

The ministry of being a good Catholic through expressing civic engagement can be carried out in different ways, i.e., actively or spiritually. Maggie chose to do it spiritually. Other of my informants similarly decided to follow Bishop Tong's call for prayer at home or in small communities. They chose to be more spiritually than actively engaged with the

protest, although aspiring to the same ideas of salvation. In late September 2014, Sarah, the Catholic journalist in her mid-20s (see page 72), told me that she did not want to discuss the protests any more, as they tired her out. Instead, she asked me to “please pray harder” for the situation in Hong Kong. According to her, prayer was the best response to what was happening in her city:

My thoughts are: go with it and pray for it. That’s the only way we can do it. God has the Way and it’s already planned. I think this is the best way. Others are doing something else. Some people choose to follow Cardinal Zen to protests or whatever. That is their choice. ... Everyone has different roles (personal communication via WhatsApp, Sarah, 04.10.2015).

In her response to the protest, Sarah emphasised the degree to which the Movement was destroying Hong Kong society. Being a ‘good Catholic’, she resorted to relying on God to show the way.

Other of my informants went out into the streets. An example is Rebecca, the Catholic volunteer who has been active in most of Hong Kong’s political demonstrations since the 1960s (see page 170-171). During the Umbrella Movement, she and her husband travelled to Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok as often as possible to show their support to the students. She also joined several prayer meetings that were held in the streets, and invited her friends to come with her. During the time of the Umbrella Movement, she often sent me pictures and shared with me her experiences, ending each WhatsApp message with an emoji depicting prayer.

Another good example of being actively engaged was the narrative of Ivy, the Protestant in her mid-30s (see page 96). She sent me an email in mid-November 2014 expressing her ideas vis-à-vis the Umbrella Movement. Up to that point, and in the weeks following my receipt of her email, Ivy had been very active in the Umbrella Movement,

joining the crowds in the streets whenever her busy work schedule allowed. In her lengthy text, Ivy offered me “some bits of her reflection” on what was happening in Hong Kong at that time. Most prominent in the email were the references she made to Jesus, in particular how he rebuked the hypocrisy of the leaders of his time:

I can't help but think that Jesus himself was one who was defiant to the law. I thought of how he healed the cripple and the sick on the Sabbath, how he entered the temple to chase out merchants selling stuff, how he was challenged about why his disciples had not followed the Jewish rule, etc. Actually quite a lot of things that he did were considered to be in violation of the law. What he did in the temple was destructing the business eco-system and undermining the self-interest of those people who enjoyed status quo in his time. There's nothing new under the sun – I see equivalents of the Pharisees in modern days (personal communication via email, Ivy, 15.10.2014).

According to Ivy, Jesus' actions went against the laws and status quo of his time. She saw them as comparable to the actions of the Hong Kong students, who were seen to be performing acts of civil disobedience, and who were perceived of as fighting against the status quo of contemporary Hong Kong. In her email, Ivy indicated that her personal response to the situation in Hong Kong was partly a result of her trying to be a responsible follower of Christ, by marrying her message to the message she reads in the Bible. She felt that the gospel was telling her how to act, albeit in her own individual way, thereby again emphasising her personal accountability to act as 'good' Christian. According to Ivy, each Christian – at the end of his or her life – will be held accountable before God for performed actions; consequently, each Christian should respond to the Hong Kong protests in a responsible manner. For her, the protests were like a form of prayer, a way to transcend the protests. Her words showed that protests not only exist in the political, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, in the religious realm.

Ivy ended her email by quoting Dante, a quote also used by Martin Luther King, Jr., during his fight for black equality: “The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality” (personal communication via email, Ivy, 15.10.2014). By using this quote, Ivy drew parallels between the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement and theologies accompanying Christian movements for social justice performed in different countries and at different times, thereby establishing parallels between the Hong Kong Movement and other iconic international struggles for social justice. While reading Ivy’s email, it became clear to me that for her, relating the Umbrella Movement to these other social movements that aimed to aspire similar soteriological goals placed her actions during the protests in a discourse of religious truth.

Ivy was the only person I met in Hong Kong who explicitly expressed her knowledge of and relation to other Christian social justice movements in the world. None of my Catholic informants were so explicit about it, even though – as said before – they did allude to it. This is interesting. The Catholic Church in which most of my informants grew up is a Church post-Second Vatican Council. In the teachings of this Church, the emphasis on social justice is taken for granted. Whether the struggle for social justice has always been emphasised by the Catholic Church throughout history is not of importance to my informants. Instead, what is of importance is that being a ‘good’ Catholic entails being engaged with local societies all over the world and fulfilling one’s ministry of being a prophet, king and priest. By civically engaging, either actively or spiritually, with the struggle for social justice ‘at home’, one is thus fulfilling one’s role as part of the universal Catholic Church. Hence, not only are my informants aspiring to create a just society through their actions performed in the here and now: through the ways they are civically engaged they are likewise expressing their aspirations to be part of a universal religious system.

4.4 Conclusion

My Buddhist informants' reflections on the Umbrella Movement revealed that their decisions to engage in the Movement were related to commitments made on an individual basis. While some Buddhists found it important to actively or spiritually engage with the protests, and to try to bring an open mindset to the movement, others used similar arguments to not get involved, and to not worsen the polarities already rife in Hong Kong society. Even though Buddhist motivations were all based on the same religion, my informants all expressed different answers and subsequent outcomes, indicating the diversity of the religion and, more specifically, the plurality of (engaged) Buddhism.

A similar plurality of engagement occurred among Hong Kong's Catholics, who tended to frame their attitudes towards the Umbrella Movement in notions of Christian theology, albeit expressed in different ways. While some of my Catholic informants went out into the streets following their understanding of what a 'good' Catholic should do, others stayed at home, trusting in the Will and Ways of God and being spiritually engaged through prayer.

This shows that although informed by disciplinary and historical religious decrees, aspirations to salvation are primarily personal. Individuals need not necessarily follow the same political practices as those advanced by the religious organisations to which they belong, or of the religious leaders representing them. In effect, while many individuals are undoubtedly influenced by religious structures and leadership, they make decisions based on personal considerations and choices. This is most apparent in cases where the authority of religious leaders and organisations is fragmented, especially in the case of Buddhism. It also attests to what I stated in the introduction to this chapter; i.e., that the Umbrella Movement was not merely a local movement sparked by context-specific politico-economic factors, nor

merely one movement in the line of many others. Instead, it has for some people equally been a movement that was underpinned by religious ideas and that was reflected upon through particular religious lenses.

As of 2015, it is still unclear what the results of the Umbrella Movement will be, or how different Hong Kong activist groups can proceed from here. Nowadays, subsequent to the protests, Hong Kong still finds itself perilously located in the “eye of the typhoon”, anxiously awaiting a next turbulent storm. Similar to the Occupy Wall Street Movement, “we need a longer time frame to appreciate the remarkable achievements and lasting promise of the Occupy movement” (Gresham, 2012, p. 277). The main question – of whether the Umbrella Movement has brought about the political change in Hong Kong society it hoped to achieve – must in all likelihood be answered negatively. However, somewhat interestingly, for many of my informants the Umbrella Movement was not necessarily seen as a movement to bring about such political change. Rather, it was viewed as one of a host of other movements, aspiring to the creation of just and equal societies. Knowledge of these companion uprisings made my informants reflect more actively upon salvation and enlightenment at very personal levels.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

This thesis explored the aspirations of a number of Hong Kong middle class Buddhists and Catholics in order to highlight the entanglements between religion and the tense socio-economic and political dynamics of Hong Kong as a city, home, future, and religious, political and economic domain. In contrast to other studies and popular media regarding the contemporary entanglements between the HKSAR and the PRC, I probed deeper into the role of religion by focusing on religion as expressed by middle class people in Hong Kong. I listened to their stories, recorded their narratives and analysed recurring religious notions that relate to their urban aspirations. These notions have taken on heightened meanings in the current socio-economic and political predicament in which Hongkongers find themselves as residents of a city in turmoil.

As I showed through the three main chapters of this thesis, most prominent in my informants' narratives are notions of tradition, universalism, accountability and salvation. Consequently, I used these notions as key concepts to analyse my informants' political and economic narratives. What my analyses have revealed most clearly is Hongkongers' search for stability through religious identifications and the ways in which the uncertain future of the city affects people's aspirations to live a 'good life', economically, politically and spiritually. My research reveals that their religious orientations shape my informants' political activism and the ways in which they defend their 'Hong Kong Dream'. Moreover, it reveals the relevance of the recognition of mainland and global 'others' in the identity narration of Hongkongers.

5.1 Analysing Narratives on Religion in the Umbrella Movement

In late September 2014, the ‘typhoon’ of Emily’s analogy (see page 1) hit Hong Kong and led to the occupation of three different districts of the city. For a period of 79 days, streets in these districts were occupied by thousands of people engaged in a struggle to attain universal suffrage, and to emphasise the boundary between the HKSAR and the PRC in accordance with the ‘one country, two systems’ policy. Different media sources painted a picture of young members of Hong Kong’s middle class fighting for the democratic right to vote for their Chief Executive in 2017 without interference from the government of the PRC. The narratives of my informants, however, evinced something different. In response to the outbreak of the Umbrella Movement, they referred to personal religious values and notions to explain why and how they participated as ‘good’ Buddhists and Catholics. What their different narratives have in common is a preoccupation with questions of belonging and salvation, and of which religion offers meaningful answers to individuals.

In Chapter 2, I showed that since the 1997 Handover, many Hong Kong residents are struggling with the question of to which political entity they belong; the HKSAR, the PRC, both, or neither. I detailed how this struggle leads to aspirations to belong to global religions that would render the aspirants more stable than belonging to Hong Kong or China. When expressing their religious identities, my Theravāda Buddhist informants tend to emphasise what they perceive as being the true Buddhist tradition. My Catholic informants emphasise the universal aspects of their religion. These notions of tradition and universalism conjure up larger religious networks transcending the often problematic and ambiguous border between the HKSAR and the PRC, and surrounding China in general. They also connect my interlocutors to communities in the past and in the future. Through these connections, they

identify themselves as members of larger global and future communities, and consequently act as members of said communities.

Similar patterns come to the fore in my informants' narratives regarding the Umbrella Movement. In Chapter 4, I showed how my informants engaged with this Movement in a variety of spiritually and actively engaged ways. While some went to the protest sites, others stayed at home to pray. Many decided to disengage from the protests altogether. While different in terms of civic engagement, there is significant similarity in these narratives regarding the perception of how to act as 'good' Buddhists or Catholics. Teresa, for example, did not join the protests. She privately thought that personal effort would be more effective in fulfilling her Buddhist and political aspirations than trying to influence the politico-economic environment in which she finds herself. Francis, on the other hand, engaged more actively in the protests in an attempt to eliminate the three poisons of hatred, desire and ignorance from his Facebook-friends. In the case of Sarah, her Catholic background prompted her to spiritually engage with the protests through prayer and through following God's Way. Ivy tried to follow Jesus' way; that is, to actively participate in the street protests as often as possible. Taken together, all of these personal narratives are related to religious notions of salvation. In the case of my Buddhist informants, being spiritually or actively engaged or disengaged would lead to a reduction of suffering and, by extension, would bring people a step closer to reaching Nirvāṇa. For my Catholic informants, engagement or disengagement (following God's Will) would help to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.

Importantly, the narratives surrounding the Umbrella Movement were related to larger temporal religious movements taking place in different times and regions. For my Buddhist informants, these larger temporal movements were initiated by renowned engaged

Buddhist leaders of various Buddhist schools; for example, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama. My Catholic informants related the Umbrella Movement to other Christian social justice movements, particularly post-Second Vatican Council. Consequently, the Umbrella Movement became ‘deterritorialised’, extending beyond the spatial boundaries of the HKSAR and the PRC, and beyond the temporal dimension of the Movement.

Interestingly, my Buddhist and Catholic informants’ perceptions of the Umbrella Movement do not fully coincide with the narratives provided by Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations and/or religious leaders. In Chapter 1, I discussed the development of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations in relation to the political past and present of the HKSAR and the PRC. The British Colonial Government, the current HKSAR Government and the CCP have in significant ways shaped the position and relevance of religious organisations in contemporary Hong Kong. Apropos of these organisations I also showed how they have managed to influence and be part of the religious revival in Mainland China.

For religious organisations and leaders in Hong Kong, the evolving dialectic between the city of Hong Kong and Mainland China has determined the ways in which they responded to the Umbrella Movement, and to similar political movements that occurred in Hong Kong in the past. For example, Cardinal Zen’s active role during the 2003 protests against the implementation of Article 23 clearly expressed his fear of Chinese Communist involvement in Hong Kong and the possible subsequent loss of religious freedom. As different media sources have indicated, this fear of a possible loss of religious freedom in Hong Kong in large part determined the responses of Hong Kong Catholic (and other Christian) organisations to the Umbrella Movement. In contrast, Buddhist religious leaders and organisations kept a relatively lower profile during the Movement. According to media

sources, this resulted from their contentment with the position of Buddhism in the contemporary PRC.

However, not all of my informants were content with the stances their religious leaders and organisations adopted during the Movement. Some of my Buddhist informants lamented the lack of Buddhist leadership during the protests. Adam, for example, said he wished Buddhist leaders had shown the protestors how to be more compassionate. My Catholic informants were similarly divided in their opinions about the involvement of Catholic leaders in the protests. Their conjecture mainly extended to include Cardinal Zen and Bishop Tong.

Moreover, the position of religion in the contemporary PRC was not as prominent in my informants' reflections as they were in the narratives of Hong Kong Buddhist and Catholic organisations and leaders. Rather, many of my informants related the Movement to public narratives that transcended the particularities of religion and politics in the HKSAR and the PRC. Similar to their aspiration to subscribe to a timeless Buddhist tradition or a global universal Catholicism, during the Umbrella Movement they emphasised the importance of transcending the contemporary borders within and surrounding China. They chose to engage with dominant public narratives of engaged Buddhism and of Christian movements striving for similar goals, in both past and present, and in different countries worldwide.

5.2 Analysing Narratives of the Other

The narratives presented in this thesis are informed by the recognition of an 'other'. The most dominant 'other' in my informants' narratives has constituted a mainland Chinese collective, a cohort with and against whom Hongkongers in the main identify. The boundary

between Hongkongers and mainland others is often expressed in terms of the increased difficulty in the aspiration to achieve the Hong Kong Dream. As I showed in Chapter 3, while all of my informants aspire to this Dream, the ways in which they reflect on this aspiration vary due to theological differences between Theravāda Buddhism and Catholicism. My Theravāda Buddhist informants express their personal accountability for the situation as reflections of their own states of mind. For them, while the increasing presence of mainland tourists, traders and talented professionals in their city makes achieving the Hong Kong Dream more difficult, this obstacle can be overcome by changing their attitude towards the perceived intrusion. In contrast, because Catholics acknowledge the presence of a cosmologically external other (God, Jesus or sometimes Mary and other saints, and the Church) to whom they pray and upon whom they rely, they see themselves as part of a Plan created by God. Only He can offer solutions to their problems, and gratitude should be expressed to the challenges and opportunities provided by Him. Importantly, this belief does not make Catholic individuals passive agents but rather actors involved in society, trusting in God and following His Path.

The ‘other’ in my informants’ narratives is not only a mainland Chinese, but also a global ‘other’. From the standpoint of my informants, the relevance of this global ‘other’ in their identity narrations sets them apart from Chinese Buddhist who practice Buddhism in a culturally instructed manner, and from Protestants. My Theravāda Buddhist informants repeatedly distinguished themselves from such Chinese Buddhists, who they see as having combined “too many cultural practices” with “true” Buddhist tradition. These ‘Buddhists’, according to them, are people (mainly women) who go to temples on set days of the month to burn incense in the hope that their wishes will be fulfilled. They have scant knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and other fundamental Buddhist dogmas. Catholics set themselves

apart from Protestants in terms of the universalism of their religion. They see Protestant organisations mushrooming everywhere in Hong Kong, in places that to them are all dissimilar and therefore meaningless. Protestant clergy are also seen to have different ways of preaching, depending on particular individual emphases. In contrast, my Catholic informants perceive themselves to be part of a global and universal Catholic community for which the Catholic message is proclaimed and practiced in similar ways.

It needs to be remembered here that the people whose religious lives I explored in this thesis are all people whose (grand)parents or themselves were born and grew up in Hong Kong. For this reason, they feel they belong to the city. They are all self-defined middle class residents, and they are all religious. Their particular ways of being have shaped not only their aspirations, but also their reflections vis-à-vis the predicament in which they find themselves. However, Hong Kong is a large city with a diverse range of residents. There are many other narratives to be collected and heard, both of long-term Hong Kong residents and of recent immigrants. For example, there are large numbers of mainlanders sojourning in Hong Kong. Among them are tourists, traders, and increasing numbers of talented professionals. They are either visiting Hong Kong, or are settling in the city. These ‘new immigrants’ have been excluded from this study. But, considering their increasing numbers, research into the religious lifeworlds of these ‘new immigrants’ and how they experience living in a city in which they are treated with hostility would greatly complement my study. It would elucidate whether the aspirations addressed in this thesis are primarily those of middle class Hongkongers, or whether they are shared with others residing in the city.

5.3 Urban Religion in Asia

In this thesis I detailed how religious values and beliefs shape perceptions of the city of Hong Kong vis-à-vis urban socio-economic and political processes and aspirations. Religion, and religious identification in particular, provides a way for people to find stability, and to find a space for themselves in the crowded and chaotic city of Hong Kong. As I showed, religion can be an important driver for (re)claiming rights to the city, not only in terms of awareness and reflection, but also in (political) actions such as protests supporting the (re)gaining of these rights. As such, religion shapes how a city is formed and used in physical and material ways. The often pervasive presence and power of religion, while not always visible, is always present. In the case of Hong Kong, as an invisible and at the same time tangible form of power, it binds people within and across the city's borders, shaping their political awareness of and actions directed towards Mainland China.

As such, this thesis contributes to the debate on urban religion. As argued at the start of this thesis, the relations between religion and politics can best be observed in a city, because “[u]nder urban circumstances, people experience, more than anywhere else, ... the tangible power of political authorities” (Burchardt & Becci, 2013, pp. 17-18). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the study of religion in urban settings is a burgeoning field in social sciences.

According to scholars of urban religion, researching the role of religion in cities is important for two reasons (Burchardt & Becci, 2013). First, it makes one aware that classical secularisation theories of religion need to be rewritten. These theories have in the main assumed that religion recedes with the advent of modernity and industrialisation. However, as scholars including José Casanova (1994, 2008) have shown, these processes have not signalled the end of religion, but rather a transformation. The question of how increasing

urbanisation influences religious conversion is, for example, addressed in a recent publication edited by Rik Pinxten and Lisa Dikomitis (2012 [2009]) titled *When God Comes to Town: Religious Traditions in Urban Contexts*. By examining grassroots level case studies of what they call ‘traditional’ religions (e.g., Islam and Christianity), the volume shows how religion has adjusted itself to new contexts in which the ‘traditional’ modes of relatedness between religious adherents (i.e., common ancestry and peer pressure groups) have changed. According to Pinxten and Dikomitis, these changes stem from changing relations between the church and state, changes in the organisation of religious institutions, and changes due to increased modernity and migration. In his work titled *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City*, Lowell Livezey (2000b) explores similar themes, albeit from a different perspective. He argues that religious organisations must interact with three different processes in order to participate effectively in urban life: urban restructuring, religious restructuring and social transformation. His book, which includes research undertaken in over seventy-five congregations in eight different neighbourhoods of Chicago, focuses not merely on the question of how congregations adapt to change in the urban context, but also on the consideration of how these congregations “may reflect, resist, or influence the change itself” (Livezey, 2000a, p. 6).

Second, the study of religion in cities is important because urban religious practices and experiences are inherently different from those of rural areas (Burchardt & Becci, 2013). Even though a strict divide between the rural and the urban is impossible to make due to the intense interrelations between villages and cities (Van der Veer, 2015b), the latter are unique in their complex interplays of different structures, functions, power networks, hegemonies, politics and ethics. In cities, more complex processes of contestation, identification and

symbolisation take place. A thorough study of religion in urban centres will expose these processes to scrutiny (De Theije, 2012 [2009]).

However, these two reasons (particularly the first) mainly stem from urban religious research undertaken in Western contexts (see also Van der Veer, 2015b). In order to paint a more complete picture, the debate on urban religion studies needs to take into account the study of religion in non-Western cities. In this final section, I attempt to indicate the relevance of studying religion in non-Western cities for the study of urban religion in general. I do this by presenting some possible new lines of investigation in the academic debate on urban religion in an Asian city based on the conclusions presented above.

The vast majority of urban religious studies in European and Western cities take as their point of departure discussions on secularisation. Their emphasis on ‘religion’ and, more specifically, on Christianity in Western cities has led to urban religious studies arguing for or against the validity of the secularisation theory. However, this debate may have limited applicability to studies of religion in non-Western contexts given that the process of secularisation is seemingly confined to cities in Europe and some of its cultural outliers (Burchardt & Becci, 2013). Asian countries have experienced radically different processes of modernisation and of religious development. Indeed, “[f]or the majority of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, ... secularization as religious decline is of fairly limited importance outside particular, often elite cultural and political milieus” (ibid., p. 8). Therefore, academic accounts of these cities’ modern religious experiences and expressions can offer a different perspective on the debate surrounding secularisation. For example, my research shows (in line with Casanova, 1994, 2008) how religions do not lose relevance, but are instead transformed under urban influences. This is especially apparent in Theravāda

Buddhism, a Buddhist school usually associated with ‘tradition’ but lived in modern, middle class ways.

Second, the current urban religion debate is often related to changing relations between religion and the nation-state due to increased globalisation and migration. Marian Burchardt and Irene Becci, for example, interpret the entanglements between religion and the nation-state as one of two “crucial horizons through which religion is folded into urban modernity and must be interpreted” (2013, p. 15). This line of thinking has its genesis in the assumption that rapid urbanisation culminates in the diminution of the role of the nation-state (see, for example, Castells, 1996). In contrast, some Asian cities have shown that increasing urbanisation does not necessarily lead to either diminishing relevance or decreasing dominance of the nation-state. A case in point here is China. While Chinese cities are rapidly growing and increasingly becoming crucial (economic) parts of ever-expanding global networks, the Chinese state remains a dominant actor in the lives of the country’s urban dwellers. This has resulted in different relations between religious experiences and the nation-state: in other words, between the Church and the State. These changing relations between the Chinese state and Mainland Chinese religious life also have their impact on religious life in urban Hong Kong. Here, religious organisations react in various ways to the perceived threat imposed by the mainland on Hong Kong by “reflect[ing], resist[ing], or influenc[ing] the change itself” (Livezey, 2000a, p. 6). A case in point is the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, which continuously aims to give active form to its position as provider of social services and promoter of social justice.

Thus, by including studies from non-Western parts of the world into scholarly debates on urban religion, the debates can be deflected from their “radically secular perspective” (Van der Veer, 2015b, p. 6) characterised by their emphasis on Christianity.

Close scrutiny of the seemingly inevitable processes of secularisation and the changing relations between church and state will render clear that the old theoretical paradigms of secularisation and religious decline are flawed, and that attention should instead be placed upon the study of religious innovation and pluralisation (Casanova, 2013).

Similarly, theoretical insights into the current scholarly debate on religion in European and American cities can enhance the understanding of religion in Asia. Studies of Asian cities can incorporate the theoretical insights of the urban religion debate to not only research, for example, China's religious revival under socialist rule, but to include wider theories regarding migration, transnationalism, and/or the effects of urbanisation on structures and organisations of local religious communities. Van der Veer argues that "[t]he understanding of Asian urban societies cannot rest on an extrapolation of our understanding of Western urban phenomena" (Van der Veer, 2015b, p. 10). While I agree that new social science theory needs to be developed based on urban religion in Asian cities instead of merely copying theories based on Western cities, in my opinion this does not have to exclude the wealth of knowledge already accumulated by scholars researching religion in Western cities. Moreover, the long history of contact and mutual influence between Asian and Western countries makes it impossible to fully separate the two. To clarify this, I provide some initial examples in which research conducted on urban religion in Western cities can be used to gain a better understanding of Asian urban religion.

A first possible starting point can be Pinxten and Dikomitis' (2012 [2009]) premise that 'traditional' religions originally used the following two foci of relatedness in order to appeal to and attract followers: emphasis on common ancestry or lineage of descent; and, the formation of a peer group as a basic social reference group. In modern urban contexts,

“[a]lthough both these references will probably continue to be relevant, they seem to be losing power” (ibid., p. x). Relationships change due to rapid urbanisation: this has likewise been the case in Asian cities. For example, for my Hong Kong Catholic informants, being part of a global, universal religious organisation is of more relevance than being a member of a particular Catholic parish. The same can be said for my Theravāda Buddhist informants, who do not value a particular monastic lineage but a master’s skills in teaching the dharma. Although urbanisation processes and religious relationships differ all over the world, finding (religious) relations in urban environments and global networks is an interesting point of similarity to investigate, and hence a good starting point for cross-cultural examination.

Migration has played a significant role in the changing relations between church and state, and in consequent changes in urban religion (see Bendixsen, 2013; Garnett & Harris, 2013). As I observed earlier, much of the research into religion in urban settings has focused on these changes. Cities in China, as well as in other Asian countries, have a high number of transnational migrants. In his book titled *Ghetto at the Center of the World*, Gordon Mathews (2011), for example, details the vastness of the transnational networks created in Chunking Mansions, a 17-storeyed commercial/residential building in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui (Kowloon), one of Hong Kong’s busiest tourist and shopping areas, that is home to traders and asylum seekers from all over Africa and Asia. Adjacent to Chunking Mansions is the Kowloon Mosque, which is attended by, amongst others, Chinese Hui Muslims, Indonesian domestic workers, and Pakistani Muslims (O’Connor, 2012). Unfortunately, neither of the above two studies makes reference to the valuable insights gained from research undertaken in Western cities into changes in urban religious atmospheres due to transnational migration. While the former work is not necessarily a study of religion, the latter is, and could be complemented greatly by other research conducted on similar

processes in other parts of the world. Even when migration is not the starting point of investigation, as in my research, it nevertheless plays a vital part in life in cities, and therefore needs further investigation.

Another theme that bridges the gap between urban religion studies in Western cities and those in Asia concerns the interplay between religion and economy. According to François Gauthier, Linda Woodhead and Tuomas Martikainen (2013) researching the interrelatedness between economy and religion acknowledges that the latter is not a separate domain of life, but an integral part of it. They argue that consumption, consumerism and the hyper-mediatisation of culture are driving forces of globalisation which likewise affect religious practices, beliefs, expressions and institutions. If this is true, religious organisations have to become players in the neoliberal market: they have to apply strategies of demand and offer if they are to remain relevant to modern urban contexts. This line of research could prove particularly interesting in Asia and in particular Hong Kong, an increasingly dominant player on the global economic market.

Obviously, there are numerous other possible research foci in which insights gained from studies of religion in Western and Asian cities can be combined. I hope that my thesis will not only contribute to this debate, but will facilitate comparison with other studies of religion in both Asia and Western urban contexts.

APPENDIX:

My Informants

During the course of my research, I met over 90 persons, both laity and clergy, from different religious organisations (Catholic, Buddhist, Protestant, Anglican, and Taoist).

Unfortunately, I have not been able to mention them all in this thesis. The names of the lay Buddhists and Christians that I have mentioned throughout the chapters appear here in alphabetical order.

Ada was born in 1980, the youngest of two daughters. Her parents are from the mainland. Her father ships containers; her mother used to work in factories, but has now retired. Ada is still single and lives with her parents in a government-subsidised rental apartment in Tuen Mun (New Territories). She was educated in a secular primary school and a Buddhist secondary school. After that, she studied Psychology at the Open University, and undertook a Master's in Counselling at the Polytechnic University. Since graduating, she has had several jobs, one as a travel agent. Every time she travelled to Mainland China, she visited Buddhist temples there. She was often overawed by the beautiful statues and architecture, and intrigued by the rituals being performed there by so many people. A few years ago, after learning about Buddhist teachings through her lecturer in Counselling, she started to explore the religion. Nowadays, she is a volunteer at one of Hong Kong's local temples. As well, she has started her own company which she has called the Jing Hui Counselling Centre. Through this company, she tries to provide counselling to clients, drawing from Buddhist techniques of mindfulness. *See pages 73-74.*

Adam, in an interview he did with a local broadcasting network, was called “the manager of an airline company who gave up his job”. Born in Hong Kong approximately 40 years ago, he attended Protestant schools. After graduating from Hong Kong University and the University of Hawaii, he was appointed manager of Cathay Pacific. During these years, he bought an apartment in Tsing Yi (New Territories), where he lives by himself; but, he would rather own a home on Hong Kong Island due to its “interesting mixture of East and West”. A few years ago, Adam became interested in Buddhism. He undertook a Master’s degree in Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University, graduating in the same year as Emily. After his graduation, he decided he wanted to make a change in life. So, he quit his job and became manager of an orphanage run by a Buddhist charity organisation in Malawi. He worked for this Buddhist organisation for one year. After completing his one year contract, he returned to Hong Kong where, until recently, he worked as an executive officer in a newly-constructed Buddhist monastery in Tai Po. At the time of writing, he is travelling all over the world. His dream is to one day open a small bed and breakfast business, earn a little money, and be happy. Adam loves travelling, both in other countries and in Hong Kong. He knows his city very well, and on each occasion we met, he took me to a different area. He showed me around, and introduced me to ‘historical’ Hong Kong places, restaurants and dishes. *See pages 72, 121-122, 135-136, 142, 170, 178-179, 193.*

Albert was born in Kwun Tong (Kowloon), the eldest of three sons. He attended a Lutheran missionary primary school and a Protestant secondary school. He remembers that when he was at primary school, he had ‘foster parents’ in Denmark who paid his school fees and occasionally sent him postcards. He now lives in Tsuen Wan (New Territories) with his wife and three children. Albert was baptised as a Catholic only recently, in 2009. He often travels

to Mainland China for business and is rather positive regarding Mainland China. He happily identifies as ‘Chinese’, indicating the links between him and his fellow countrymen, links which are especially beneficial for his role as salesperson. *See pages 67, 81, 87-88, 92 146-147.*

Christopher was born in 1984 in Tsuen Wan (New Territories). He and his wife recently bought an apartment in the same neighbourhood. After studying Pharmaceutics at one of Hong Kong’s universities, he was unemployed for a few months. One day, he read a job advertisement in the *Sunday Examiner* (the weekly newspaper of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese), which set him on the path to becoming a teacher. He now works as a teacher at a Catholic primary school. Because he is a Catholic, he can teach Religious Studies. He works approximately 45 hours a week, and earns approximately HKD 20,000 (approximately AU\$ 3,500). Christopher attends church every Sunday, usually the church in Tsuen Wan. When he is travelling, he tries to attend church services in those countries. According to him, this is possible because almost all churches have the same liturgy and order in their masses. *See pages 124-125, 128.*

David, a middle-aged Hongkonger, has been teaching at Chi Lin Nunnery for almost fifteen years. He teaches Buddhist meditation and Theravāda Buddhism. He also does translation work, translating Buddhist texts written in the Pāli language into Chinese. *See pages 77, 123.*

Elsie, a Buddhist in her mid-30s, owns an apartment in Tsuen Wan (New Territories), where she lives with her second husband and little son. She attended both Buddhist primary and secondary schools, and has always been interested in Buddhism. A few years ago, along with

a friend, she attended a dharma sharing of a Tibetan lama in Mainland China. Since then, her interest in Tibetan Buddhism has grown. Nowadays, whenever her mind wanders, she recites mantras in the hope of settling her mind. She does this, for example, when cooking, when walking in public, even when riding the MTR. *See pages 93, 94, 140-141.*

Emily is a Tibetan Buddhist in her mid-30s. Her parents were both born in Hong Kong. She enjoyed her education in Catholic primary and secondary schools, and afterwards studied Finance at Hong Kong University. She now works for a local Hong Kong company. Recently, she joined SPACE (School of Professional and Continuous Education) at Hong Kong University to study subjects in Law, her aim being to gain a better understanding of what is happening in contemporary Hong Kong. She completed a Master's in Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University, graduating in 2010. She speaks very fondly of this course as – in her words – it gave her a lot more knowledge about Buddhism. Emily has travelled a lot: she has lived for lengthy periods in the US, in Beijing and most recently in Jordan. She also occasionally visits her aunt, a Tibetan Buddhist nun who lives in a nunnery in India. Her many travels have made her realise that she would rather live somewhere else, rather than in Hong Kong. Her preference is Canada: her brother had moved there a few years earlier, in the hope of finding a good school for his young son. Emily's sister-in-law once told me that she did not enjoy the Hong Kong schooling system: it puts too much pressure on children to perform well. Both she and Emily's brother thought that Canadian schools would place more emphasis on creativity and play. Emily would like to join her brother in Canada. But, she cannot leave Hong Kong yet; being a single woman, she still lives with her parents in a public estate in the eastern part of Hong Kong Island. Chinese customs require her to fulfil her filial piety, i.e., to take care of them. *See pages 1, 71, 72, 121, 151, 172, 179-180, 190.*

Francis, a man in his mid-40s, grew up in a Catholic family (hence his ‘Catholic’ name), but took refuge in the Three Jewels in 2013 under a Theravāda Buddhist master, thereby officially becoming Buddhist. He contacted the Buddhist master after experiencing personal issues, and stayed with this master in a Buddhist temple for a few days to work things out. Francis, who describes himself as a ‘Hong Kong Islander’, has spent most of his life on the Island. Today, he lives in Central with his parents. He would like to move out, but does not have enough money to buy his own place in Wan Chai or Central, and does not want to settle in another area. Francis works at a family business close to Ocean Park. Often in the evenings he goes out with friends in Causeway Bay, Wan Chai, Admiralty or Central. In his spare time, he designs wedding dresses, and attends different Buddhist courses. Even though Francis describes himself as ‘not rich’, I met him on several occasions in pricy, Western-style restaurants. Francis feels uneasy identifying as Chinese or a Hongkonger. He feels that he belongs somewhere else, possibly because he had earlier spent many years in Australia attending university, and had become used to an Australian lifestyle. As a result, he considers himself partly Western and partly Chinese. *See pages 62-63, 104, 106, 168, 177-178, 191.*

Henry worked as a civil servant for the Hong Kong Government from 1964 to 2001. After being posted to approximately fifteen different Government departments, he worked his way up from being a clerk to being principle assistant secretary for the Home Affairs Bureau, particularly for its Religious Affairs Department. After his retirement, he studied for a Master’s degree in Law. His special interest was Human Rights. When I met him, he was studying for a Master’s degree in Buddhist Studies part-time. Politically, Henry feels close to the HKSAR Government (due to his professional background); but he also criticised the way

things are being run nowadays. Notwithstanding, he did not join the Umbrella Movement. He considered it a destructive Movement and claimed that it was destroying what he and others of his generation had worked so hard to achieve. *See pages 156-157.*

Ivy is my main Protestant informant, although currently she does not attend a church in Hong Kong. I met her at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, where she works. Immediately, I noted the necklace she was wearing. It was a small blue cross, the symbol of the Taizé community which she first visited in 2005. She spent a further two months among the community in France in 2011, and has in between visited a few times. Ivy, who was born in Guangdong Province, Mainland China, was brought to Hong Kong when she was one month old. At the age of 17, she was baptised into a Baptist church when she was attending a missionary secondary school. During the first years following her baptism, she attended church regularly, and joined the church group meetings. However, going to Taizé changed her perspective on Christianity. In her own words, she started to realise that believing is not about ‘doing’, but about ‘being’ and having a close relationship with God. Ivy studied at Hong Kong University, and spent one year at a university in Canada. She actively participated in the Umbrella Movement, and – as a Hongkonger – does her best to try to fight for the city she calls ‘home’. *See pages 20, 96, 140, 172, 184-186, 191.*

Kelly is the co-ordinator of the catechism program at one of Hong Kong’s Catholic churches. Approximately 40 years of age, she works as a civil servant for the HKSAR Government, has a husband (a teacher at a Catholic school) and a young son. She and her husband own an apartment situated above a shopping mall in Tsuen Wan (New Territories). They bought it three years ago. Kelly said they would have to pay the mortgage on it for at least 15 years.

However, she also knows that its price has doubled already. Kelly studied Social Work at Hong Kong University. During her time at university, she was baptised into the Catholic Church and came into contact with the Christian Life Community, of which she is still a member. It was around this time that she met her husband. She often travels, both as a tourist and as a pilgrim. But, she is always happy to return to Hong Kong, a city she loves for its vibrancy and convenience. *See pages 127, 128.*

Maggie, a Catholic in her mid-30s, has one younger sister, is single, and still lives with her parents in Shau Kei Wan (Hong Kong Island). She studies Theology at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Aberdeen, and hopes to one day become a theology teacher. *See pages 182-183.*

Monica, a full-time volunteer at a Tibetan meditation centre in Causeway Bay (Hong Kong Island), occasionally travels to sister organisations in other countries. Prior to volunteering at the organisation, she worked in one of Hong Kong's banks, working in excess of 60 hours per week. In 2013, she quit due to work pressure. She was born in Hong Kong in 1970 to two mainland parents. While still small, she lost her father to suicide. She is still single, and lives with her sister in Kowloon City (Kowloon) in an apartment they own together. *See page 63.*

Rebecca, who was born in Shanghai in the 1950s, has three siblings. Her youngest brother was born in Hong Kong. Rebecca was brought to Hong Kong by her family when she was six months old. The family first lived in a squatter area in Diamond Hill (Kowloon), and later moved to other areas. Rebecca was unable to go to secondary school. She had to stay home and help her mother with needle work to earn some money. Later, she met her

husband and moved to Tsuen Wan (New Territories). They bought the apartment in which she, her husband and their maid still live today. She found a job with an American company, and until recently worked there part-time. Rebecca had two sons. One was killed in a car accident in 2009; the other, who is in his late 30s, works as an engineer. In her spare time, Rebecca volunteers for the Missionaries of Charity, a nun's order in the line of Mother Theresa, which has a centre in Hong Kong where the sisters hand out two meals a day to the poor, and have beds for up to 70 homeless people. Rebecca also volunteers at a nursing home for the elderly. Rebecca has experienced all of Hong Kong's economic, social and political developments from the 1950s onwards, and has been civically active during protests, 1 July marches and 4 June vigils whenever possible. She strongly identifies as a Hongkonger, and is proud of the city she lives in, a city that in her perception she has helped to build. *See pages 170-171, 172 , 184.*

Rita was born in Chai Wan (Hong Kong Island) in 1974, the youngest of five children. She still meets with her whole family every Sunday afternoon, when she and her siblings take their parents out for *yum cha*. After completing her primary and secondary school studies, she studied Quantitative Analysis for Businesses at City University. She used to work in merchandising, but could not handle the pressure of the job and the long working hours. She now works as a business development manager at a local IT company. Even though she still works approximately 50 hours per week, to her it seems much less. The plus side of her hard work is her salary, which is around HKD 45,000 per month (approximately AU\$ 8,000). Rita has two daughters, 5 and 7 years old. She was baptised only a few years ago after her eldest daughter, who attends a Catholic missionary school, wanted to become a Catholic.

Since her baptism, she attends church every Sunday, and keeps in contact with her catechism classmates through WhatsApp. *See pages 84, 128, 129-130, 133, 147-148.*

Sarah, one of my youngest informants, was born in 1990. An only child, she lost her father when she was still young. Nowadays, she lives with her mother in a government-subsidised rental apartment in Sha Tin (New Territories). She attended Catholic schools, and was baptised when she was 12 years old. Nowadays, Sarah is a journalist. She works 45 hours a week (excluding overtime), including Sundays for an online magazine. She also works as a volunteer for the newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Macao. A few years ago, when travelling through Vietnam, Sarah was introduced to the Opus Dei organisation. After visiting the Opus Dei centre in Spain, she became an official member. In line with the principles of Opus Dei, she sanctifies all her actions. She knows that her vocation is in this Catholic organisation. Even though Sarah was born in Hong Kong, she does not like the city. In her eyes, it is too crowded and the people are too self-centred. In the future, after her mother passes away, Sarah hopes to be able to move to another country, preferably in Europe, to live there and learn other languages. *See pages 72, 82, 86, 107, 184, 191.*

Teresa, a Buddhist, lives in a small rental apartment in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon) with her husband, a female Thai domestic, and three cats. She has no ambition to buy a flat in Hong Kong. It is far too expensive, and she does not want to be obliged to stay in Hong Kong. Recently, she expressed her aspiration to buy an apartment in another country, e.g., as Taiwan or Thailand, as for her the situation in Hong Kong has become too unstable. Teresa was born in Tsuen Wan (New Territories) in 1978. Her father came from Mainland China to Hong Kong in the 1950s: her mother was born in Hong Kong. She has two siblings. She

studied Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong; but working in a hospital for several years, she quit her job, and now works as a part-time doctor in the private sector. Her work requires her to travel a lot, often to Mainland China. She speaks Mandarin Chinese reasonably well. She now also studies Analytical Psychology, and attends several Buddhist classes. *See pages 97, 105, 106, 141, 143-144, 145, 177, 191.*

Vivian was born in Hong Kong in 1959, the eldest of five children. Her parents came from the mainland. Her mother was from a landowning family; her father, who lived in the next village, was from a poor family. After arriving in Hong Kong, Vivian's mother did embroidery work to earn some money. Vivian went to an Anglican primary school and to a Protestant secondary school. After completing her education, she started work in a factory, and later became a teacher. In 1998, she started studying at Hong Kong University. She did a Bachelor's degree in Education, and a Master's in English and Mathematics. After graduating, she became a counsellor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. As of 2012, both she and her husband are unemployed. A childless couple, they live in a small apartment in Tsuen Wan (New Territories), close to a Catholic church which Vivian attends every Sunday. *See pages 85-86.*

Walter was born in Hong Kong over 60 years ago. He has six siblings. He now lives with his wife, their 17-year old daughter, and his mother in an apartment in Tsuen Wan (New Territories). He never went to university as it was almost impossible in the 1970s to gain admission. So, he started work immediately after finishing his secondary education. Notwithstanding, he managed to work his way up and became a successful business man. However, when his daughter was born, he realised that he had nothing to give her but his

money. So, he turned his life around. He became active in the Catholic Church and has since become, in his words, “more balanced and happy”. He is now a catechumen teacher in a local parish, and at the Hong Kong Opus Dei branch. *See pages 67, 82-83, 85, 86.*

Wendy has just recently moved into an apartment in Tsuen Wan (New Territories), which she bought with her husband who she married in November 2013. Although their apartment is small, according to her it was still very expensive. She and her husband are trying to have a baby, but so far their attempts have proven unsuccessful. She is a teacher at a secular primary school. Wendy’s style of clothing is plain and simple: her jewellery is limited to small earrings and her wedding ring. Born in Hong Kong in 1984, she has one younger brother. Her father came from Dongguan, Mainland China. She went to Protestant primary and secondary schools, and attended a Protestant church before meeting her Catholic fiancé. However, she did not enjoy her church attendances; somehow, she felt uncomfortable. For example, people from the group she joined told her that she could not practice yoga, something she enjoyed doing for physical reasons. Following her introduction into the Catholic Church by her fiancé, and after having attended some services, she decided to join the catechism classes. She was baptised into the Catholic Church during Easter 2012. *See pages 93-94, 108-109, 171.*

William was born in Hong Kong in the early 1970s, a middle child with two sisters. His parents are Hong Kong-born Chinese. He was educated in the United States, and then attended universities in England and Hong Kong where he studied Modern Chinese History, majoring in East-Asian Studies and Law. After graduation, he became a head-hunter for an international company. This brought him into contact with Hong Kong’s elite society. He

became influential and wealthy, bought an apartment in Kennedy Town (Hong Kong Island), invested in gold, and purchased multiple sports cars. But, despite being part of such an elite society, he decided he wanted something else. In 2009, he enrolled in a course on ‘Enlightenment on Life’ offered by SPACE (School of Professional and Continuous Education) at Hong Kong University. The lecturer was a Buddhist nun. Inspired by her teaching, he undertook a Master’s in Buddhist Studies at Hong Kong University. Nowadays, he is the executive committee member of the Centre for Buddhist Studies Alumni Association, and owns his own company, Prajñā Pāramitā Holdings, a reference to the Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of the perfection of wisdom. *See pages 24, 144-145.*

Winston, a senior correspondent at Buddhistdoor, writes and edits articles about Buddhism and travels frequently to places associated with Buddhism in different Asian countries. He was born in Kennedy Town (Hong Kong Island), and 30 years ago. He has studied both at Hong Kong and English universities. Recently, he bought an apartment in Sham Tseng (New Territories); he shares it with his girlfriend. It is a small apartment, but all he could afford. *See pages 130-131, 133, 138, 139, 159-160.*

APPENDIX:

Ethics Final Approval

27-6-2016

Macquarie University Student Email and Calendar Mail - Ethics - Conditions Met Final Approval - Ref. 5201200242



MACQUARIE
University

MARISKE WESTENDORP <mariske.westendorp@students.mq.edu.au>

Ethics - Conditions Met Final Approval - Ref. 5201200242

1 message

Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>

23 May 2012 at 07:59

To: Dr Jakob Timmer <jaap.timmer@mq.edu.au>

Cc: Faculty of Arts Research Office <artsro@mq.edu.au>, Miss Mariske Femie Westendorp <mariske.westendorp@students.mq.edu.au>

Ethics Application Ref: (5201200242) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Timmer,

Re: (Lived religion in China: Buddhist and Catholic pilgrimages in the People's Republic of China')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee and you may now commence your research.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Jakob Timmer
Miss Mariske Femie Westendorp

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 23/05/13
Progress Report 2 Due: 23/05/14
Progress Report 3 Due: 23/05/15
Progress Report 4 Due: 23/05/16
Final Report Due: 23/05/17

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee

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