

2016

# Changing church-state relations in contemporary China: The case of Wenzhou Diocese

Shun-hing Chan

*Hong Kong Baptist University*, shchan@hkbu.edu.hk

This document is the authors' final version of the published article.

Link to published article: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0268580916643258>

---

## Citation

Chan, Shun-hing. "Changing church-state relations in contemporary China: The case of Wenzhou Diocese." *International Sociology* 31.4 (2016): 489-507.

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Religion and Philosophy at HKBU Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Religion and Philosophy Journal Articles by an authorized administrator of HKBU Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact [repository@hkbu.edu.hk](mailto:repository@hkbu.edu.hk).

## **Changing Church–State Relations in Contemporary China: The Case of Wenzhou Diocese**

**Shun-hing Chan**

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church in Wenzhou in contemporary China from the perspective of institutional theory. There have been four phases of interaction between the state and the Catholic Church between 1980 and today, namely, religious restoration, tightened control over religion, the management of religion and limiting religious influence. During these phases, the state coerced the Catholic Church to adhere to its policies on religious institutions but also made concessions with the Catholic clergy during negotiations. In response to the state's institutionalization of religion, the Church engaged in accommodation, negotiation, confrontation, and resistance. More recently, the Church has adjusted its political position, moving towards increased resistance against state institutions. The article concludes with a discussion of the political implications of the church–state model in Wenzhou for religious freedom in China, reflecting on the usefulness of institutional theory in Chinese society.

### **Keywords**

Catholic Church, China, church–state relations, institutionalization of religion

### **Introduction**

Wenzhou has been called ‘China’s Jerusalem’ for its high percentage of Christians, and the city is well known for its relaxed church–state relations. However, in March 2014, the local government gave an order to demolish parts of Sanjiang Church, a magnificent building that stood on a rocky promontory in Yongjia County near Wenzhou, because they claimed that it violated zoning regulations. This church was a landmark and the pride of Christians in this region. In response to the order, more than 3,000 Christians arrived to defend the church, which temporarily halted demolition.

---

### **Corresponding author:**

Shun-hing Chan, Department of Religion and Philosophy, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong.

Email: shchan@hkbu.edu.hk

Government officials finally took action on 28 April, which again drew several thousand Christians to the church to guard the building. On that day, the local government called for thousands of police to surround the church, and the entire church was demolished by bulldozers (Johnson 2014).

At the same time, the local government launched another intimidating political campaign targeting Christian churches in Zhejiang Province—the removal of crosses from its churches. From February 2014 to August 2015, 1200 crosses were removed from the rooftops of the churches in the region (Jiang, 2015). During this campaign, Christians flocked to the churches and staged protests, which often led to confrontation with the police. In some cases, Christians were brutally beaten by police as they tried to defend the churches with their bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Wenzhou generally has been considered a city of booming economic growth, as well as a region with relaxed ties between the church and the state. Some researchers have asserted that a new form of church–state relations is in the making in Wenzhou in this post-Mao reform era (Cao 2007; Chen 2005; Chen & Huang, 2004). However, the demolition of Sanjiang Church and the removal of crosses from the churches in Zhejiang Province has projected another view, that of renewed church–state tensions. The demolition of churches and church properties in Wenzhou began in the 1990s. In 1996, one church’s administrative building then under construction was torn down by the local government in Cangnan County. From April 2000 to October 2001, the local government demolished another church building in Linjiayuan Village on three occasions. These demolitions have posed challenges for researchers in understanding the relaxed yet conflictual church–state relations in Wenzhou.

This paper examines the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church in Wenzhou from the perspective of institutional theory. The research question in this study is as follows: How have state institutions affected church–state relations in Wenzhou, and what are the essential characteristics of such church–state relations? First, the theoretical framework of this study is explained, followed by a brief introduction to the history of the Catholic Church in Wenzhou. Next, analysis of the Wenzhou model of church–state dynamics from the perspective of institutional theory is provided. Finally, the direction of change drawn from the research findings, reflecting the issue of religious freedom as interpreted by institutional theory, is discussed.

## **Institutional theory and church–state relations**

Church–state relations in China have been an important issue and a much debated subject for researchers over the last 20 years. The widely accepted model explaining church–state relations in China is the model of dominance and resistance (Bays, 2004; Madsen, 1998, 2004; Potter, 2003).

In recent years, researchers have attempted to employ institutional theory to examine church–state dynamics in China. These researchers investigated how various actors have attempted to implement the modern category of ‘religion’ in China and the consequences of this action in both religious and state institutions. As explained by Ashiwa and Wank (2009, 8), the concepts ‘institutions’ and ‘institutionalization’ are key to the theory. Institutions refer to ‘rules that constitute community, shaping how individuals see themselves in relation to others and providing a foundation for purposive action,’ whereas institutionalization refers to ‘the process by which situations adapt to institutions.’

Ashiwa and Wank (2009, 3–6) have criticized two prevalent methods in the study of state and religion in China, namely the ‘dichotomous framework of antagonism and conflict,’ and the ‘dichotomous framework [that] locates conflict between state and religion in the context of [the] state’s modern hegemonic discourse of nation, science, and development.’ Institutional theory is superior to these models, they have argued, because it takes into consideration multiple actors and political processes in the interaction between state and religion, including competition, adaptation, cooperation and conflict. Moreover, in the process of institutionalizing ‘religion’, both state and religion are mutually constitutive.

Following Ashiwa and Wank, Cao (2011) used institutional theory to examine the relationship between Protestant churches and the state in Wenzhou. In *Constructing China’s Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou*, Cao stated that the socio-economic environment in China has undergone enormous changes in the post-Mao market transition, and such changes have deeply affected religion and politics in contemporary China.

According to Cao, Chinese people living along the coastal regions in East China have enjoyed unprecedented economic development and material prosperity during the post-Mao reform era, which brought huge fortunes to a new generation in the 1990s and 2000s, many of whom were Christians in Wenzhou. Different from the house-church Protestants who were mainly old, poorly educated females, the new

generation of Protestants is comprised of young wealthy males. Cao called these Protestant entrepreneurs ‘boss Christians’. Many of these boss Christians were of rural origin, but are now private business owners, hence the epithet ‘boss’. These boss Christians have publicly acknowledged being blessed by God in their business success (Cao, 2008, 63–64). Most importantly, they have introduced changes in the values, organization, and management of the church with their entrepreneurial way of thinking and practices. According to Cao, the Protestant entrepreneurs

...internalized the postsocialist mode of governance and adopted a strategic approach to engaging with state religious governance. Some highly ambitious individuals have taken advantage of the existing political and economic system to disseminate faith and in so doing they engage in remaking church–state relations (Cao, 2011, 41).

The old model of dominance and resistance was therefore no longer appropriate in explaining church–state relations in Wenzhou in the post-Mao reform era.

Institutional theory, as advocated by Ashiwa and Wank, and the empirical study conducted by Cao have provided a new perspective of research on church–state relations, or state–religion relations, in China. The present study seeks to examine the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state from the perspective of institutional theory. It will also examine whether Catholics in Wenzhou display characteristics similar to those of the Protestants described by Cao, assuming that they all belong to the Christian family.

## **Data and methods**

This research project used fieldwork to collect data in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province. The study of the Catholic Church in China today continues to be very sensitive. Fieldwork has allowed researchers to collect data in Catholic dioceses in a flexible way by meeting and interviewing clergy and laity from both open and underground churches. The interviews in this study were conducted through the snowball sampling method, in that the Catholic Church in Wenzhou was recommended by a researcher of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, and the contact person of the Catholic Church in Wenzhou recommended key people from different factions in the Catholic community there.

Fieldwork was conducted in the diocese of Wenzhou on two separate occasions.

The first trip was conducted in June 2007, during which four parishes were visited and 10 people were interviewed, including Catholic priests and laity in both open and underground churches. The different views of the priests and laity in the two hierarchies on certain events and issues were useful in confirming the information gathered and in understanding the complexity of the related issues. The second trip was conducted in January 2009. The purpose of that fieldwork was to conduct further in-depth interviews and to validate the information collected during the first trip. Preliminary research findings were shared with the interviewees and in turn they shared their feedback. To protect the interviewees' safety, their identities and titles have been concealed in this article.

### **Changing church–state relations in Wenzhou**

The Wenzhou Diocese is located in the southern part of Zhejiang Province, and its history can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty in 1696. In 1949, the Vatican selected the city of Wenzhou to be the diocese of Yongjia (*Yongjia jiaoqu* 永嘉教區) and appointed Ningbo Bishop André-Jean-François Defebvre as the Apostolic Administrator to lead the new diocese. Bishop Defebvre was assisted by a Chinese Vicar General, Father Su Xida 蘇希達.

The diocese of Yongjia is commonly called Wenzhou Diocese today. The open church is led by Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang 朱維芳, who has a 'Pontifical Mandate'<sup>2</sup> from the pope, and it consists of 70,000 baptized Catholics, 30 priests, 84 nuns, and 13 seminarians. Both the diocesan curia and St. Paul's Cathedral are located in the city of Wenzhou. The underground church is led by Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin 邵祝敏, who was appointed as the coadjutor bishop of the diocese by the Holy See in 2007. The underground church has approximately 40,000 Catholics and 17 priests.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Imposition of State Institutions on Religion***

The key actors representing the state institutions that impose laws, policies and regulations on religion are the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) and the Public Security Bureau (PSB). In addition, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) is a state-controlled organization whose function is to support national policies.

The RAB is a state organization at the provincial level under the State Administration for Religious Affairs. There are equivalent units at the municipal, county, and even township/village levels. The official mandate of the RAB is

...to study and propose policies and guidelines for the work related to religious affairs, formulate and implement such policies and guidelines,... guide and promote religious circles to conduct their activities within the framework of law and policies and protect citizens' freedom of religious belief. (Chan and Carlson, 2005: 6–7)

The PSB is responsible for security at the provincial level under the Ministry of Public Security. Generally, cadres at the PSB deal with religious activities that are not officially recognized by the authorities (Chan and Carlson, 2005: 8). For instance, the unregistered underground Catholic Church is considered illegal by the authorities; as such, the PSB can enforce the law against underground churches, including arrests and detentions.

The CCPA is one of seven religious associations for the five recognized religions established by the state. Generally, the task of the seven religious associations is to ensure that religious activities remain within government-set parameters (Chan and Carlson, 2005: 15). The CCPA carries out its work in close association with the government, and the leaders of the CCPA publicly echo the policies of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Practically, the CCPA has been promoting 'the principle of independence' (*duli zizhu* 獨立自主) and encouraging Catholics 'to take the management of churches into their own hands' (*zhiban jiaohui* 自辦教會). These slogans are meant to coerce the Catholic Church in China to cut ties with the Vatican and the Pope and elect and ordain bishops on its own, without regard to the Pope (endorsing *zixuan zisheng* 自選自聖, 'self-election and self-consecration').

This study covers the period from 1980 to 2015. During this period, four different phases of interaction between the state and the Catholic Church were identified. The first phase (1980–1990) was the restoration of religion. During the Cultural Revolution, most of the churches were closed down or occupied by different units distributed by the government. Since there were no churches for Catholics, the clergy clandestinely celebrated Mass with church members at their homes. After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, the CPC began to restore religion for the purpose of the market economy. In Wenzhou, government officials asked the clergy to come out from hiding and take part in the upcoming China Catholic Congress 溫州市天主教代表會議 at Huaqiao Hotel 華僑飯店, which would pave the way for the establishment of the Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church in Wenzhou (ACCCC 溫州天主教教務委員會). Both the China Catholic Congress and the ACCCC are regarded as state institutions reflecting state policies on religion in the

reform era.

The second phase (1990–2000) was tightened control over religion. The Catholic Church thrived during the 1980s due to the Open Door Policy and the success of the market economy in Wenzhou. During this period, the power centre of the Catholic Church shifted from the city of Wenzhou to Cangnan. The local government tried to use a variety of measures to control the Church, including the establishment of a CCPA in Cangnan and a manipulated election of a pro-government bishop. These incidents and the reaction of the Catholic clergy and laity will be further discussed in subsequent sections.

The third phase (2000–2013) was management of religion. This phase developed as a reaction of the local government not being able to impose its policies and regulations effectively in Wenzhou. The data collected from the interviewees revealed that government officials had tried to use management (i.e. incentives and sanctions) to deal with the ‘problem’ of the Catholic Church. To use a Chinese saying, the government used the ‘soft’ way to solve the ‘problem’ of religion rather than the ‘hard’ way to suppress religion. However, with no fundamental change in its policy on religion, this left the door open for government officials to revert to the use of the ‘hard’ way, such as suppression or crackdowns, if a situation was deemed out of control.

The fourth phase, which began in 2014 and continues today, aims at limiting religious influence. The beginning of this phase was marked by the government’s campaign to remove crosses from the rooftops of churches and to demolish church buildings in Zhejiang Province under the policy of ‘Three Changes and One Demolition Action’ (meaning it would change the old residential areas, factories and villages surrounded by expanding cities by demolishing illegal buildings). In this fourth phase of church–state interaction, removing crosses and demolishing churches can be seen as deliberate acts aimed at reducing the influence of the churches in the region. Although it is not the focus of this study, some of the incidents that have occurred during this campaign are presented below.

On 27 February 2014, the cross on Huanghu Protestant Church in Hangzhou was removed, and was later embedded in the exterior front wall of the church. This was widely recognized as the first cross of a church to be removed. In fact, the cross of Qiaosi Church had been removed sometime earlier but this was unknown to many people. On 28 April 2014, the government demolished Sanjiang Church in Yongjia.



The original construction cost of the church was as high as RMB 30 million (US\$4,605,120) and it was rated as a model project by the city of Wenzhou's former Party Secretary (Chuandaozhe, 2014). Thereafter, the campaign focused on Zhejiang Province. From February 2014 to August 2015, 1,200 crosses on Christian churches were removed (Jiang, 2015).

In Wenzhou Diocese, Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang issued a pastoral letter on 1 August 2014, criticizing the campaign as mistaken and unjust. He urged all clergy and lay Catholics to uphold their 'genuine Christian conscience, courage and strength', and to safeguard their rights and defend their dignity.<sup>4</sup> On 24 July 2015, Bishop Zhu led more than 20 clergy in staging a protest at the Bureau for Letters and Calls in Wenzhou's government building. They held a long banner on which was written 'Defend our Christian dignity, oppose the coercive action of removing crosses', and they distributed leaflets printed with 'Oppose coerced removal of crosses' to the public.<sup>5</sup> On 28 July 2015, the clergy of Wenzhou Diocese issued a public statement entitled 'Wenzhou Catholic Diocese's Appeal Letter to Fellow Countrymen and Christians throughout China', criticizing the government for violating the law and suppressing people's civil rights, and urging their fellow citizens and Christians to express their opposition to the campaign of cross removals (Ritchie and Lawrence, 2015). This campaign against church influence, the reasons for which have yet to be studied, is continuing in Zhejiang today.

### ***Various responses to state institutions by the Catholic Church***

The key actors of the church (i.e. the clergy and laity) in different factions within the Catholic community chose their own political positions in reaction to coercion by state institutions, and such positions have been changing over the last 30-plus years. This study identified four different reactions, namely, accommodation, negotiation, confrontation, and resistance. In the following sections, these reactions are examined in detail.

It is noteworthy that the Vatican has played an important role in affecting the key actors of the Catholic Church in China. Since the 1950s, the Vatican has refused to accept the CCPA as part of the Catholic Church in China. In 1988, Cardinal Josef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, issued the 'Eight-Point Directive on Dealing with China', which makes the following remarks:

The Catholic Doctrine clearly affirms that only those are fully incorporated into the

society of the Church who accept her entire system and all means of salvation given to her, and through union with her visible structure are joined to Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops. This joining is effected by the bonds of professed faith, of the sacraments, of ecclesiastical government and of communion. (Tomko, 1988)

The directive explicitly stated that as the pope is the Head of the Catholic Church, Catholics should not accept the CCPA because it denies the leadership of the pope. Moreover, those who conduct or accept consecrations without the Pope's approval can be subject to '*latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See' (Lam, 1997: 172–176).

If the state institutions of religion were a political mechanism at work, then the Vatican was a more powerful religious institution, providing values, norms, and directives to Catholics in the same space and time. The state offers political legitimacy whereas the Vatican offers religious legitimacy. The two institutions were in conflict because the Chinese government and the Vatican disagree on a number of issues. Therefore, the clergy and laity had to make their own choice regarding which authority to side with.

### ***Accommodation***

In the restoration of religion phase, a small number of clergy and laity chose to accommodate state institutions. Early in 1958, the government established the CCPA in Wenzhou. After the Cultural Revolution, the government intended to revive the CCPA, but most of the clergy and laity refused to take part in the organization. The government could find only three people in the church to work in the CCPA office in 1979: Bishop Fang Zigang 方志剛, Chen Dafu 陳達夫, and Lin Bin 林彬. During that time, Chen was the chairman of the CCPA and Bishop Fang was the vice-chairman. The CCPA office was located in the city of Wenzhou's diocesan curia. However, most of the clergy in the diocesan curia held that Bishop Fang, Chen, and Lin had betrayed the Pope and thus they isolated these three pro-government fellow Catholics. As a result, the government's instructions and commands were, on the whole, ineffective.

Father Cai Shuyi 蔡叔毅 took over the CCPA when Chen and Bishop Fang retired. In the 1950s, Cai sided with the government and became its spokesperson during a time of political turmoil, which earned him a bad name for betraying the

Church. In this restoration of religion phrase, Cai made efforts to find a position from which he could work for both the state and the Church. He also used his power in the CCPA to reclaim many church properties confiscated by the government. In doing so, he was recognized by the Catholic community as standing with the church, although he also worked for the CCPA.

The incident of the episcopal election in Wenzhou in 1999 reveals the difficult position of the clergy who chose to accommodate state institutions. In 1999, the underground church's Bishop Lin Xili 林錫黎 was arrested by the PSB and put under house confinement in Wenzhou. The local government intended to arrange an election, finding a pro-government priest in the open church to replace Bishop Lin. This election was arranged by the CCPA without the approval of the Vatican. Government officials intervened in the nomination and election processes, resulting in Father Cai Shuyi winning the majority of the votes. However, the open church clergy persuaded Father Cai to seek approval from the Pope and obtain the Pontifical Mandate appointment certificate, which was considered the proper procedure for elections as stipulated by the Code of Canon Law. The open church clergy maintained that the CCPA's practice of 'self-election and self-consecration' without the Pope's approval was a betrayal of the Pope and represented a dissociation from the worldwide hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Father Cai should have understood the consequences of not following the institution of the Catholic Church. He told government officials that the election results had to be reported to the Vatican and were subjected to the Pope's approval. After two months, the Vatican had not sent its reply to the open church in Wenzhou. Tired of waiting, government officials urged Father Cai to accept the title of Bishop immediately so that they could arrange the consecration ceremony. Father Cai refused. Government officials then sent Father Cai to Hangzhou to meet with Zhang Dejiang 張德江, Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province. In facing Zhang's authority, Father Cai insisted on not taking the title of Bishop in Wenzhou. Finally, the election was declared void and the consecration ceremony was cancelled, leaving a government official to sigh with disappointment, saying, '*Aiguohui* (CCPA) *juerbuzhang*, *Jiaoqu xuanerbuju* 愛國會舉而不彰，教區選而不舉' ('The CCPA was established, but it had no function; the election took place, but it was void').

The incident of the episcopal election showed that state institutions were largely ineffective in implementing their policies and regulations, while the religious institution of the Vatican proved to be much stronger. Most of the clergy and laity

considered religious legitimacy to be more important than political legitimacy. As a result, the clergy and laity who chose to accommodate state institutions were sidelined by the majority of the Catholic Church.

### *Negotiation*

The clergy and laity in the city of Wenzhou chose to negotiate with state institutions, holding the position that they should face up to the government rather than keep hiding underground. Moreover, the clergy and laity believed that they should engage in ‘dialogue’ (*duihua* 對話) with government officials, defending the principles of the Catholic faith, and fight for the interests of the Church.

In the restoration of religion phase, government officials in Wenzhou began to revive the work of religion by calling on the clergy to come out into the open and work with the government, and in return the government promised to return church properties. In December 1981, government officials from the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau asked the clergy to take part in the China Catholic Congress at Huaqiao Hotel in the city of Wenzhou. The clergy discussed how they should react to this government initiative, and they came to the decision that they should divide themselves into two groups. One group would work with the government, administer the open church, and reclaim church properties, while the other group would continue to work underground. In this way, the government could not arrest all of them if there was another campaign targeting the clergy.

Then, a group of clergy began to negotiate with government officials, proposing four principles for cooperation. The terms were as follows:

1. The ACCCC in Wenzhou holds that the pope is the head of the Catholic Church;
2. Those priests and laity who betray the pope are not allowed to take part in the ACCCC in Wenzhou;
3. The ACCCC in Wenzhou has no hierarchical relationship with the ACCCC in Beijing and the ‘two associations, one conference,’<sup>6</sup> and will not follow their path in dissociating from the pope; and
4. The clergy are willing to comply with the laws and government policies on the condition that these laws and policies do not violate Catholic doctrines and teaching.

Government officials agreed to these terms, which led to a group of clergy surfacing to work in the open church. The principles came to be known as the “Four Principles of Huaqiao Hotel’ by the clergy and laity in the open church. The group of clergy used their legal status to reclaim many church properties confiscated by the government during the Cultural Revolution, including the diocesan curia and St. Paul’s Cathedral in the city of Wenzhou. In December 1983, St. Paul’s Cathedral was fully restored and a grand ceremony took place in the cathedral during the Christmas celebration.

The case of the ACCCC is a good example with which to illustrate the position of the clergy who chose negotiation in reaction to coercion by state institutions. The four principles showed how the clergy negotiated between the Vatican and the state. The first principle asserted that the Pope, not the state, was the leader of the church. The second and third principles declared that the diocese of Wenzhou was independent from pro-government Catholic organizations, and that the pro-government clergy and laity of Wenzhou must be excluded from the ACCCC. The fourth principle states the condition for cooperation with the government: the Catholic faith comes first if there was a conflict between Catholic doctrines and state policies. In sum, the ‘Four Principles of Huaqiao Hotel’ upheld papal supremacy and downplayed state institutions.

### ***Confrontation***

Another group of clergy and laity chose to defy state institutions. They organized the underground Catholic Church and refused to register their churches with the Department of Civil Affairs. By definition, all underground churches are illegal. This group of clergy also criticized the open church clergy for betraying the Pope.

In the restoration of religion phase, the clergy split and sided with either the open or the underground church after the establishment of the ACCCC in 1983. Led by Father Wang Zhongfa 王忠法, the underground church clergy formed another church hierarchy in the counties of Cangnan, Leqing, Ruian, and Yongqian, confronting both the local government and the open church. The underground church clergy held that the ACCCC was essentially the same kind of organization as the CCPA. Moreover, supporting the government in establishing the ACCCC violated instructions from the Pope. The underground clergy called the open church the ‘patriotic church’, while calling the underground church the ‘faithful church’. The underground clergy also persuaded Catholics in Wenzhou to join the underground church, claiming that Mass and the reception of the sacrament administered by the open church clergy were

invalid.

In the tightened control over religion phase, government officials urged the underground clergy to join the CCPA in Cangnan and to register their churches with the Department of Civil Affairs. If they refused to comply with this policy of registration, the PSB would demolish church buildings. From April 2000 to October 2001, the local government demolished the same church building in Linjiayuan Village in the county of Cangnan on three occasions, which triggered severe confrontations between Catholics and the police (Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, 2004: 36, 38).

In April 2000, PSB officers forced the clergy to join the CCPA and treated violently those who refused to do so. They also damaged and blocked churches, disturbed Sunday Mass, and even beat up Catholics. On Easter Sunday, the PSB demolished an underground church for the first time, and in December 2000, the PSB demolished the church again. Catholics rebuilt the church in three days and nights, but the PSB soon leveled it again, using an excavator to destroy the base of the church building. Undeterred, Catholics celebrated Christmas Day Mass on a small hill made from a pile of soil from the church. The third confrontation occurred in October 2001, after Catholics rebuilt the church. The vice governor of Zhejiang, together with the chiefs of the PSB and the RAB, called on about 600 police to demolish the church again (Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese 2004, 36, 38).

In the management of religion phase, government officials used a more pragmatic approach in handling the matter of the underground church. An interviewee told the following story.<sup>7</sup> In 2004, Catholics in the underground church planned to build a house for the purpose of religious activity. Government officials told them that they needed to obtain a Permit of Premises and Land Ownership for the construction project. The Catholics submitted their application for the construction plan, and the application was approved. When the construction work was nearly completed in 2005, the RAB sent its officials to inspect the building and they informed the local government of the results of their inspection. The government officials requested that the Catholics make some changes internally to satisfy safety measures. The Catholics changed the internal design according to the request and government officials issued the permit. Finally, the simple but beautiful church building was completed in 2006.

This story shows how government officials tried to deal with the ‘problem’ of the

underground church with great restraint. The Catholics were also cooperative. In 2007, some underground clergy in Leqing and Pingyang registered their churches with the Department of Civil Affairs. This suggested that a new pattern of church–state relations was evolving during this period.

### *Resistance*

In the early 1980s, Longgang was a fishing village located in Pingyang County with a population of 20,000, of whom 1,000 were Catholics. In 1983, the local government elevated Longgang to the status of a town and incorporated it into Cangnan County, which attracted farmers from other areas who sought jobs, built houses, and took part in different sectors of industry and commerce. In the last two decades, the population of Longgang has increased to 300,000 and the Catholic Church has thrived along with this huge influx of population. Today, there are seven churches in Longgang Parish, with a total of 25,000 Catholics.<sup>8</sup>

In the restoration of religion phase, a group of clergy and laity chose to resist state institutions, and this stance fell somewhere between negotiation and confrontation. The group responded to the government officials' instructions, but they did not engage in negotiation with them as the clergy and laity in the diocesan curia had. Instead, they resisted government control, although they did not confront them to the same extent as the underground clergy in Linjiayuan Village. The group representing this position were the open church clergy and laity in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Longgang ('Longgang Church'), Cangnan County.

The conflict between the underground church and the open church in the city of Wenzhou after 1983 paved the way for the development of Longgang Church, which now has 12,000 Catholic members. In 1988 and 1992, two church leaders, Father Zhu Weifang and Father Wang Yijun 王益駿, were released from prison, respectively. Father Wang was the Vicar General of Wenzhou, the successor to Father Su Xida. Initially, the two leaders intended to return to the diocesan curia. However, the open and underground churches were in fierce opposition. Returning to the diocesan curia would amount to siding with the open church. Father Zhu and Father Wang decided to stay at Longgang Church. Thereafter, Father Wang administered the open church in Longgang. The power centre of the Wenzhou diocese then shifted from the diocesan curia in the city of Wenzhou to Longgang Church.

The release of Father Wang Yijun from prison in 1992 triggered competition for

leadership between the open and underground churches. On 3 September 1992, the underground church leader Father Wang Zhongfa arranged a secret consecration, asking Bishop Xiao Liren 蕭立人 of Xingtai Diocese in Hebei Province to ordain Father Lin Xili as the Bishop of Wenzhou. This act aimed at establishing a new leader in Wenzhou to supersede Father Wang Yijun. During that time, the open and the underground churches were comparatively equal in power, each securing strong support from the clergy and laity of their respective churches.

In the tightened control over religion phase, government officials exercised their power by giving warnings to the clergy and laity of Longgang Church on several occasions. The incident of the Young People's Association for Evangelization (YPAE) in Wenzhou was an important chapter in the history of Longgang Parish. On 20 May 1995, the young lay leaders of Longgang Church established the YPAE. The central office was located in Longgang Church, and other churches in the parishes of Cangnan and Pinyang served as branches. The activities of this association attracted many young people to the Catholic Church. For example, the YPAE organized speech and singing contests in the church, drawing approximately 600 young people to participate in each of the contests. The YPAE also published the newspaper *Herald*, which was sent out to the network of Catholic churches in Wenzhou.

The YPAE's activities and newspaper drew the attention of the local government. On 15 August 1995, PSB officials from Zhejiang and Wenzhou went to Longgang and banned the association and its newspaper. The reason for these bans, according to the PSB officials, was that both the association and the newspaper were illegal. The young lay leaders retorted to the officials that they had tried to register the association with the Civil Affairs Bureau in Wenzhou, but were told that the church already had a legal status, so registration for the association was not required. Likewise, the *Herald* was an internal publication of the church and was not for sale, and as such it should also enjoy a legal status. The PSB officials ignored these explanations and proceeded to search the association's central office and the houses of the young lay leaders. Finally, they issued a fine of RMB 80,000 (US\$12,278) to the church.

Another incident was the demolition of the church's administrative building by the local government. In 1996, Longgang Church bought the land next to it from a factory and submitted a construction application to the Bureau of Land and Resources for an administrative building. The application was subsequently approved by the Bureau of Urban Planning. However, when the building was in the process of construction up to the third level, the local government gave an order to demolish the



building. The reasons for its demolition, according to the government officials, were that the church had changed the function of the building and the building breached the rules set by the government. The clergy and laity considered such reasons unconvincing and they employed a lawyer from Beijing to sue the local government. The church won the first round of litigation, but the lawyer decided to back down. The lawyer told the clergy that there was no hope of winning the case because the litigation was a political matter. Ultimately, the church lost the lawsuit.

After two years, the church submitted the construction application again, and the construction plan was the same as the previous one. The government officials did not ban the construction this time, and the administrative building was completed in 1999. I asked interviewee 6 why government officials allowed the construction to be completed a second time.<sup>9</sup> He said that the demolition in 1996 was a second warning given to the clergy and laity, which was related to the incidents of the YPAE and the newspaper *Herald*, meaning that the church should have submitted to the authority of the government.

In 1999, Longgang Church faced another maneuver of tightening control from the government. In that year, the local government forced the clergy and laity to take part in the establishment of a CCPA in Cangnan. Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang of Zhejiang went to Longgang to meet with the clergy and laity in the diocesan curia and gave his order in person. Father Wang Yijun was at the meeting and he sought ways to resist government control over the Catholic Church through the CCPA. His plan was to establish an ‘alternative CCPA’ that was faithful to the Pope and would be at the service of the Catholic Church.

The first step was to seek support from the Vatican. Father Wang asked Bishop Qian Zhi-chun 錢志純 of Hualien Diocese in Taiwan to convey a message about his plan to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of People, and the reply was affirmative (Qian, 2003). The second step was to insert a new article into the constitution by defining the nature of the CCPA. The clergy proposed adding a new article following a general article in the Wenzhou Constitution of the CCPA, as follows:

The association is a social organization organized by the clergy and laity in the city of Wenzhou, emphasizing patriotism and faithfulness to the church. The aims of the association are to support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, uphold the values of patriotism and faithfulness, unite the clergy and laity in

recognizing the majesty of the law, protect the interests of the people, promote ethnic solidarity and unification of the country, implement the principles of independence and management of the church by our people and protect the interests of the Church.

As Catholics, we hold fast the principles of the Catholic faith; follow the Teaching of the Bible; affirm the doctrines, teachings and rules of the Church; and administer the Church according to the spirit of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic tradition.

The first article was common to all CCPA constitutions in other regions, reflecting the political ideology of the CPC. However, the second article was unique to the constitution of the CCPA in Wenzhou, in which the clergy professed their faith and affirmed their ties with the Vatican by upholding papal supremacy of the Catholic Church. In exchange for establishing the CCPA, government officials agreed to put this article in the constitution. The CCPA in Cangnan was finally established in 1999, and Father Wang was the chairman of the association.<sup>10</sup>

This incident showed that the government intended to impose state institutions on the Catholic Church, but the clergy resisted these state institutions using resources from doctrines and Church tradition. By inserting the article of faith in the constitution, the clergy was able to convey a message of loyalty to the Vatican.

There were also signs of change in the political position of Longgang Church. In the 1990s, a senior lay leader of the diocesan curia debated with the young lay leaders of Longgang Church about whether the Church should engage in dialogue with the government. After numerous debates over the next 10 years, the young lay leaders gradually changed their attitude, agreeing that they should negotiate with government officials on state policies in order to protect the interests of the church. The discrepant position between the diocesan curia and Longgang Church became narrower at this stage. Most importantly, the young lay leaders of Longgang Church were able to communicate with the clergy and laity in both the open and the underground churches, bridging the two hierarchies and steering them in the direction of reconciliation and unity.

Field research at Longgang Church in June 2007 revealed the economic power and religious enthusiasm of the Catholic community. The Church was reconstructed in 2004 and its construction costs were as high as RMB 18 million (US\$2,762,552). The

building, a fusion of Gothic and Romanesque architecture, could accommodate 3,000 Catholics celebrating Mass. The economic power of Catholics in Longgang was evident in the donations for the construction of the church made by the laity. Of the RMB 18 million in construction costs, RMB 1 million (US\$153,460) came from the diocesan curia in Wenzhou, RMB 2 million (US\$306,876) from churches in Longgang Parish, and the remaining RMB 15 million (US\$2,301,568) was donated by the laity.<sup>11</sup> This also explained why Longgang Parish chose to resist the government rather than build an amicable relationship with them. The reconstruction of Longgang Church illustrated that the Catholic Church in Wenzhou is strong in terms of its Catholic population and wealth.

Interviews with Catholic priests and laity in Longgang revealed lay church leaders who were ‘boss Catholics’, with their own factories and guest houses in Longgang, and businessmen with companies and factories outside Wenzhou. They were all core members of the Church Ministry Committee. The organizational structure of Longgang Church was similar to many Catholic dioceses in other provinces, where lay church leaders followed the doctrines and teachings of the Church and assist the clergy in church administration. These boss Catholics in Wenzhou were different from the general laity from other Catholic dioceses, who were largely passive, obedient, and submissive to the clergy.<sup>12</sup> The boss Catholics in Wenzhou took a more active role in church planning and development, and they bravely faced up to government officials when negotiating with them. Undoubtedly, their experience as businessmen and their problem-solving abilities were key factors in their choice to resist church–state relations. In this light, the phenomenon described by Nanlai Cao, in which he observed that many Protestant entrepreneurs administered the church by introducing their own business strategies and practices and that they actively built a cooperative relationship (*guanxi*) with local government officials, was not found in the Catholic Church.

One possible explanation for these differences between the Catholic and Protestant churches in the same area of Wenzhou was organizational differences. The Catholic Church had its own religious hierarchy, including the ecclesiastical structure and doctrinal unity conforming to orders from the Vatican. All Catholics, including boss Catholics, had to comply with the hierarchy and order of the Church. Moreover, individual Catholics cannot change these orders at will. In contrast, boss Protestants had the freedom to insert their entrepreneurial ambitions into their church mission.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This article has examined church–state relations in the diocese of Wenzhou from the perspective of institutional theory. The research findings show that church–state relations in Wenzhou Diocese have changed over the last three decades or so. For the state, government officials adjusted the way they implement religious policies with regard to political circumstances. After the Cultural Revolution, the state admitted that the ultra-leftist policy of their political campaign was wrong, and government officials promised to return confiscated properties to the Catholic Church. In return, the government urged the clergy to work openly in the church. In negotiations with the Catholic clergy, government officials compromised and made concessions. In 1981, government officials agreed to the ‘Four Principles of Huaqiao Hotel’ proposed by the Catholic clergy. Agreeing to these principles was equivalent to accepting the religious legitimacy of the Pope, who has the authority to lead the Catholic Church in Wenzhou.

Another concession made by government officials was the establishment of the CCPA in Cangnan in 1999. The government agreed to insert a confession of faith into the Wenzhou Constitution of the CCPA. Agreeing to insert this confession of faith was equivalent to accepting papal supremacy and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Such compromises and concessions might have been an act of expediency adopted by government officials. However, they would have found it more difficult to ask the Catholic clergy to follow the commands of the CCPA unless they allowed that the religious legitimacy of the Pope overrode the political legitimacy of the state.

Since the 1980s, government policies have worked like a pendulum swinging between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ way of managing institutions depending on social circumstances. Regarding the Catholic Church, after the Cultural Revolution, the government expressed its good intentions by asking the underground clergy to work in the open church. As the Church grew rapidly under the more relaxed environment, and both the Catholic population and Church influence were on the rise, government officials tightened their control on the Church. However, when the government’s ‘hard’ policies met with the clergy’s resistance, the government swung back to the ‘soft’ method of management. In 2014, in an effort to control the Church using ‘hard’ methods once again, the government began removing crosses and demolishing church buildings. Although institutional theory has shed light on this campaign, the reason for the government swinging back to the ‘hard’ method to reduce Church influence is still unknown. Some analysts have suggested that Xi Jinping wanted to tighten ideological control after his accession to the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party in

2012 (Zhao, 2015). However, this does not explain why the government targeted Zhejiang Province instead of staging a nationwide political movement in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

For the Catholic Church, although the clergy divided themselves into various factions, they also adjusted their position regarding political circumstances. For the faction choosing accommodation, the clergy did not follow every order given by the government, although they worked for the CCPA. An illustrative example of this was Father Cai accepting the government's managed election of bishop but refusing to attend the ordination ceremony because he had not received a Pontifical Mandate from the Pope. For the faction choosing negotiation, the fourth principle of the 'Four Principles of Huaqiao Hotel' was illuminating: 'The clergy are willing to comply with the laws and government policies on the condition that these laws and policies do not violate Catholic doctrines and teaching.' As such, the clergy could choose to cooperate or resist in negotiating with government officials. For the faction choosing confrontation, clergy members compromised at a later stage, although they fiercely opposed the government. An example of this was registering some of their churches with the Department of Civil Affairs. For the faction choosing resistance, they agreed to negotiate with government officials, although they initially refused to work with the government. This faction found a middle path between negotiation and confrontation. The above analyses show that church–state relations have changed during the last 30-plus years, and the direction of change can be seen in the multitude of acts of resistance against state institutions and policies.

The changing church–state relations in the diocese of Wenzhou have profound political implications. One of the indelible impressions during fieldwork was the clergy's contempt for government officials' arbitrary execution of laws and policies. Examples of this include the YPAE incident in 1995 and the coercive demolition of the administrative building of Longgang Church in 1996. Catholics found neither authority in the government's laws and policies nor political legitimacy in the government officials.

The changing attitudes among the clergy in their interaction with government officials are crucial to advancing the limited religious freedom in Wenzhou. Among the four factions in the Catholic Church, the choices of accommodation and confrontation have proved to be deficient. Those who chose accommodation had to work for the CCPA, which was isolated from the majority of the clergy, while those who chose confrontation had no legal status and they could not administer the church openly. On the contrary, the choices of negotiation and resistance have proven to be

more desirable. Those who chose negotiation could administer the church openly with their legal status and they could deal with government officials in negotiations, which led to the latter making concessions. If government officials refused to concede, the clergy could resist the local government in its implementation of policies and regulations. It is in these choices of negotiation and resistance that the Catholic Church in Wenzhou has been able to expand its limited space of religious freedom.

The church–state relations in Wenzhou also provide a useful case for theoretical reflection. Institutional theory is a more flexible and inclusive conceptual framework for analysing church–state dynamics, allowing other possible patterns of church–state interaction other than antagonism and conflict. The case of Wenzhou Diocese shows that although the local government coerced the Catholic clergy into complying with religious policies and regulations, government officials did compromise and make concessions. However, as argued previously, the basic attitude of state actors has been to control the Catholic Church using either the ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ method of management, depending on the circumstances. Although there are different factions in the Catholic Church, all of the church actors have been turning to different methods of resistance over the last 30-plus years. It is, of course, an oversimplification to see only antagonism and conflict in church–state relations. However, it is equally a mistake to deny the pattern of domination and resistance, particularly when ideological and organizational conflicts are embedded in such relations, as shown in the case of the Catholic Church. The rationalization of domination and resistance is still appropriate in explaining the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church in China, albeit this explanation may not be applicable to the relationship between Buddhism, Taoism, popular religion, and the state.

The case of Wenzhou Diocese is also useful in comparing the behaviour of Catholics and Protestants in Wenzhou. Neither the church–state relations described by Cao Nanlai nor the entrepreneurial behaviour of ‘boss Protestants’ were found in the diocese of Wenzhou. The church–state relations described by Cao reflect only the case of the Protestant community in Wenzhou, and it is difficult to draw the conclusion that a new form of church–state relations is emerging across the nation in the post-Mao reform era. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of institutional theory can be used to explain a multitude of church–state relations in the same social context, including cooperation and resistance. Even though institutional theory can provide an explanation for the cooperative relations between the local government and Protestant churches, it cannot exclude the antagonistic and conflictual relations between the local government and the Catholic Church. The case of Wenzhou Diocese has shown that

institutional theory not only is useful in explaining the church–state pattern of domination and resistance between church and state, but also provides nuanced analyses of the multitude of resistant behaviours as demonstrated by the Catholic clergy in Wenzhou.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments on an earlier version of this article. I would also like to thank Anthony Lam for his helpful advice on this research project.

### **Funding**

This research was supported by the Research Grants Council of the Universities Grants Committee, Hong Kong (ref. HKBU 2430/06H).

### **Notes**

1. ‘Police clash with 200 Christians in Wenzhou as they defend their churches’ crosses’, *AsiaNews.it*, 13 June 2014. Available at: [www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-clash-with-200-Christians-in-Wenzhou-as-they-defend-their-churches%E2%80%99-cross-\(video\)-31347.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-clash-with-200-Christians-in-Wenzhou-as-they-defend-their-churches%E2%80%99-cross-(video)-31347.html) (accessed March 2015).
2. According to the Code of Canon Law, no bishop is permitted to consecrate any bishop without a Pontifical Mandate. This canon underlines the relationship of communion between the Pontiff and the College of Bishops. If there is no such mandate at the ordination, both the ordaining minister and the minister are subject to *a latae sententiae* excommunication, which is reserved to the Holy See. (See Herghelegiu, 2008: 117–118).
3. The data were collected during my fieldtrips to Wenzhou in June 2007 and January 2009 and were updated in 2012. Regarding the number of priests and nuns, see Charbonnier (2008) and Ucanews.com (2010) ‘Wenzhou diocese’s new bishop installed’, *Ucanews.com*, 23 December. Available at: [www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/2010/12/23/wenzhou-dioceses-new-bishop-installed&post\\_id=59510](http://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2010/12/23/wenzhou-dioceses-new-bishop-installed&post_id=59510) (accessed 25 July 2013).
4. ‘Bishop urges Chinese Catholics to defend rights and dignity’, *Union of Catholic Asian News*, 4 August 2014. Available at: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/bishop-urges-chinese-catholics-to-defend-rights-and-dignity/71582> (accessed 18 January 2016).
5. ‘Old bishop led clergy to stage a protest in front of the government unit in Wenzhou’, *Union of Catholic Asian News*, 24 July 2015. Available at:

<http://china.ucanews.com/2015/07/24/%E6%BA%AB%E5%B7%9E%E6%95%99%E5%8D%80%E8%80%81%E4%B8%BB%E6%95%99%E5%B8%B6%E9%A0%98%E7%A5%9E%E7%88%B6%E5%80%91%E5%88%B0%E5%B8%82%E6%94%BF%E5%BA%9C%E9%83%A8%E9%96%80%E8%AB%8B%E9%A1%98/> (accessed 18 January 2016).

6. The term ‘two associations, one conference’ refers to the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church, and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference.
7. Interviewee 7, Wenzhou, 17 June 2007.
8. The data were provided by interviewees 3 and 8, Wenzhou, 17 June 2007.
9. Interviewee 6, Wenzhou, 19 June 2007.
10. The underground clergy reacted strongly to the establishment of an ‘alternative CCPA’. See Wenzhou *moshi* [Wenzhou model], *Vatican Radio*, n.d. Available at: [www.radiovaticana.org/cinesebig5/tingzhong2/letter166.html](http://www.radiovaticana.org/cinesebig5/tingzhong2/letter166.html) (accessed March 2013).
11. Interviewee 1, Wenzhou, 17 June 2007.
12. See the studies on the dioceses of Mindong, Fengxiang, and Cangzhou (Chan, 2012a, 2012b, 2015).
13. One of the reasons may be the publication of Cao Nanlai’s Chinese version of his book *Constructing China’s Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou* in 2013, which equated to announcing to readers in the Chinese-speaking world that a Christian city was emerging in the territory of Socialist China. The Chinese government could not tolerate this situation in Wenzhou; hence, the state has been working to reduce the influence of Christian churches there.

## References

- Ashiwa Y and Wank D (2009) Making religion, making the state in modern China: An introductory essay. In: Ashiwa Y and Wank D (eds.) *Making Religion, Making the State: the Politics of Religion in Modern China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 1–21.
- Bays D (2004) A tradition of state dominance. In: Kindopp J and Hamrin CL (eds.) *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church–State Tensions*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 25–39.
- Cao N (2007) Christian entrepreneurs and the post–Mao state: An ethnographic account of church–state relations in China’s economic transition. *Sociology of Religion* 68(1): 45–66.
- Cao N (2008) Boss Christians: The business of religion in the ‘Wenzhou model’ of



- Christian revival. *The China Journal* 59: 63–87.
- Cao N (2011) *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chan KK and Carlson ER (2005) *Religious Freedom in China: Policy, Administration, and Regulation; A Research Handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA, and Hong Kong: Institute for the Study of American Religion and Hong Kong Institute for Culture, Commerce and Religion.
- Chan SH (2012a) Changing church and state relations in contemporary China: The case of the Mindong Diocese, Fujian Province. *The China Quarterly* 212: 982–999.
- Chan SH (2012b) Changing church–state relations in contemporary China: The case of the Fengxiang Diocese. *Chinese Sociological Review* 45(Winter): 65–77.
- Chan SH (2015) Changing church–state relations in contemporary China: A case study of the Cangzhou Diocese. *Journal of Church and State* 58(2): 243–267.
- Charbonnier J (2008) *Guide to the Catholic Church in China 2008*. Singapore: China Catholic Communication.
- Chen CF (2005) *Zhuanxingqi de zhongguo jidujiao: Zhejiang jidujiao geanyanjiu* (Chinese Christianity in Transition: Case Studies of Christianity in Zhejiang). Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe.
- Chen CF and Huang TH (2004) The emergence of a new type of Christians in China today. *Review of Religious Research* 46(2): 183–200.
- Chuandaozhe (2014) Zhejiang chai shizijia ji jiatang yundong de shishi xushu [The description of facts regarding the campaign of removing crosses and churches in Zhejiang]. *Reflection* 134: 4–9.
- Herghelegiu M (2008) *Reservatio Papalis: A Study on the Application of a Legal Prescription According to the 1983 Code of Canon Law*. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Jiang YN (2015) 1,200 crosses were removed, and the largest church in Asia is in jeopardy. *Initium Media*, 20 August. Available at: <https://theinitium.com/article/20150820-china-church-cross> (accessed August 2015).
- Johnson I (2014) Church–state clash in China coalesces around a toppled spire. *New York Times Online*, 29 May. Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html?_r=0) (accessed March 2015).
- Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (ed.) (2004) *Bird in the Cage: Freedom of Religious Belief in China*. Hong Kong: Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese.
- Lam SK (1997) *The Catholic Church in Present-Day China through Darkness and Light*. Hong Kong: The Holy Spirit Study Centre.

- Madsen R (1998) *China's Catholics: Tragedy and Hope in an Emerging Civil Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Madsen R (2004) Catholic conflict and cooperation in the People's Republic of China. In: Kindopp J and Hamrin CL (eds.) *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church–State Tensions*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 93–106.
- Potter PB (2003) Belief in control: Regulation of religion in China. *China Quarterly* 174: 317–337.
- Qian ZC (2003) Feichang zhuoyue de 'jialtan' yuandi (An excellent platform for 'dialogue') *Vatican Radio*, 13 May. Available at: [www.radiovaticana.org/cinesebig5/tingzhong3/letter225.html](http://www.radiovaticana.org/cinesebig5/tingzhong3/letter225.html) (accessed March 2013).
- Ritchie R and Lawrence B (2015) Zhejiang government continues cross removals; Wenzhou Catholic Diocese releases statement condemning persecution. *China Aid*, 21 August. Available at: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/08/zhejiang-government-continues-cross.html> (accessed 18 January 2016).
- Tomko J (1988) Guidelines on China from the Vatican: Directives on some of the problems of the church in continental China. Pope Benedict the XVI's Letter to the Chinese church. Available at: <http://www.cardinalkungfoundation.org/ar/ARdirectivesonproblems.php> (accessed 10 September 2016).
- Zhao C (2015) The ongoing war against religion in China. *China Change*, 4 August. Available at: <http://chinachange.org/2015/08/04/the-ongoing-war-against-religion-in-china/> (accessed 18 January 2016).

### **Author biography**

Shun-hing Chan is Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist University. His research focuses on the sociology of religion, church–state relations, and religion and social movements. His publications have appeared in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, *China Quarterly*, *Chinese Sociological Review*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, and *Journal of Church and State*.