

The Macau Roman Catholic Church and Its Limited Involvement in Civil Society

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1 Introduction

Macau is located on the western bank of the Pearl River Delta and was a small, traditional fishing village before Europeans arrived. It gradually became the most prosperous European colony in Asia during the sixteenth century. During that period, it served as a hub of three important Portuguese maritime trade routes, as well as the regional base and training center for Catholic missionaries in East Asia. Under the Portuguese *Padroado* [patronage] (1514), the Catholic Diocese of Macau, established in 1576, was legally and practically an extension of the Portuguese Catholic Church. In other words, Roman Catholicism was the de facto national religion of the Macau enclave.

The objective of this chapter is not a detailed historical review of Roman Catholicism in Macau and the development of the colony, but putting the discussion into proper perspective requires a brief historical account of Macau and its Catholic diocese (hereafter referred to as the Macau Catholic Church, or MCC). After a brief historical review, I demonstrate the underdevelopment of civil society in Macau and then link this to an argument that the MCC is structurally constrained in the scope and effectiveness of its civic participation.

Then, I argue that three major factors constrain, or define, the pattern of civic participation by the MCC. The first two factors can be considered cultural, and the third factor relates to the structure of Macanese society. The first factor is the Portuguese influence on the MCC. Beatrice Leung gives a thorough discussion of this influence in her essay “The Portuguese Appeasement Policy in Macau’s Church and State Relations.” As the mother-culture of modern Macau, Portuguese culture (under the *Portuguese Padroado*) influences the cultural character of the local Church in politics and the ecclesiastical administration. This character can be easily identified by comparing the MCC to the Catholic Church in neighboring Hong Kong. Leung advanced her arguments with many examples, however, her main concern is the MCC’s relationship with the state.

The second factor added to this discussion concerns the relevant changes to the Roman Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council

(henceforth referred to as Vatican II; 1962–65). The internal changes in the Roman Catholic Church and its ideological foundation provided a tremendous incentive for civil/political participation by modern Catholics around the world. With the first factor as a backdrop, a more detailed discussion on how the MCC lacks responsive actions to these changes in church culture further illustrate the limited civic participation of the MCC in the local society.

The third factor is sociological. I argue that the small size of the Macanese population create serious limitations for activism by the MCC. The social network of a small society has a particular type of tension, as well as unique opportunities for interaction in the territory's underdeveloped civil society. People in various social networks have relationships that might overlap along kinship lines and personal circles. Any dramatic advocacy or interests inevitably create a social ripple at various levels of society. Because of the cultural orientation of the Chinese people toward constructing and maintaining harmony in their social networks, any major social action needs to be considered carefully and consequently diminished (if not eliminated) in the course of deliberation.

2 Macau: Early Settlement and Becoming a Colony

Macau currently has a population of around 603,000 in a land area of 21 square kilometers (approximately 8.3 square miles). Historically, the land area was much smaller. The islands of Taipa and Coloane were ceded in the 1850s and 1860s. The Portuguese came to this small enclave of the Pearl River Delta as early as 1530s and were not allowed to stay on shore until 1557. Portugal did not appoint its first governor (Francisco Lopes Carrasco) to Macau until 1616, and, even then, he did not take office. The second governor, D. Francisco Mascarenhas, arrived and took office in 1623. Before the governorship was created, the administrative duties in the settlement were performed by the Catholic bishop, Melchior Miguel Carneiro Leitão, and his successors.

During the three-hundred-year period from the mid-sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the actual political status of Macau was ambiguous. In this tiny territory, two different ethnic communities—the local Chinese and the occupying Portuguese—coexisted. Minor conflicts were inevitable, as the two communities were practically ruled by both the officials of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and the Portuguese colonial government. The Portuguese occupied and controlled the southern tip of the peninsula (to the area of the present-day Rua do Campo district) and gradually built a defensive wall with a gate to the north. Portuguese traders and sailors and their servants lived within the walled city, whereas the Chinese authorities erected a border

control at the present-day Portas do Cerco. The area between the wall and the Portas do Cerco was inhabited mainly by local Chinese, with no direct governance from either the Chinese or the Portuguese. The Chinese understood that the area occupied by the Portuguese (the southern tip of the peninsula) was leased to them. However, over the ensuing three hundred years, international politics changed. The Qing dynasty declined from a regional power to a weak state; in 1841 it was defeated by the British in the Opium War, and the unequal Treaty of Nanking was signed, with Hong Kong ceded to the United Kingdom as a colony and British Dependent Territory. The Portuguese recognized this change and seized the opportunity to advance their interests in Macau as well as in Asia.

3 The “Passive” Colonial Policy of Portuguese

Portugal’s “passive” colonial policy had far-reaching implications for the development of its colonial territories. In Macau, for the first three hundred years the Portuguese administration mainly concentrated on Portuguese self-government and paid little attention to the Chinese residents living there. This passivity can also be seen in the evangelical efforts by the Church, which did not make any major efforts to convert the local Chinese to Catholicism until the past few decades.¹ More active governance by Portugal in Macau began only in the mid-nineteenth century, in response to the weakening of the Qing dynasty and the concession of Hong Kong to the UK. This passive colonial policy was articulated by Eduardo Moreira, in his review of the Portuguese colonial policy:

Till then [1890], Portugal had been like some wealthy landed proprietor in Europe or the British Isles, who deemed himself justified in exploiting imperfectly, or not at all, some portion of the estate he had inherited, because he was not in need of its produce, or through sheer lack of initiative, caring nothing for those living in poverty within or around his estate, who had not been born with certain [traditional] rights. For centuries there was no one to dispute this.²

1 We discuss this in more detail below, but it suffices here to point out that the target of religious services of the Catholic Church in its first four hundred years in Macau was primarily the Portuguese in town.

2 Eduardo Moreira, “Portuguese Colonial Policy,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 17, no. 3 (1947): 187.

Moreover, Wallace G. Mills maintained that Portuguese control of its colony was tenuous.³

These comments are further supported by the fact that Macau, even now, does not have a comprehensive education system or a unified college entrance examination after secondary school. There are no standards for teacher qualifications, curriculum, assessment criteria, and accreditation. In short, the Portuguese colonial government maintained a minimal degree of participation in Macanese society. It focused mainly on upholding minimal levels of social order and defense and the welfare of its Portuguese residents. Otherwise, services such as medical care, housing, and social welfare for the local Chinese community were mainly handled by Chinese communal organizations and the Church. The MCC was quite successful in providing public services and evangelizing. The intimate social circle formed by Portuguese colonial officials and Church leaders in Macau worked well in meeting the needs of both parties: good but minimal governance on the government side and freedom and trust that the Church needed to evangelize and serve. This passivity can also be seen in the history and development of the MCC. Although the number of Chinese Catholics in 1644 (about ninety years after the diocese was established in 1556) was 20,000, the current Catholic population is only around 30,000. Growth of 50 percent over 370 years should not be viewed as a success. Based on my observations and interviews, the MCC has not wholeheartedly implemented the changes initiated by Vatican II. Only in January 2015, after the appointment of the present bishop, who was not trained in Portuguese Catholic traditions, were some initiatives for change begun at the institutional level in the diocese.

Arriving in 1846, João Ferreira do Amaral engaged in a series of confrontations to establish total Portuguese control over the territory, including arresting and expelling all Chinese officials who had been administering the Chinese community until then. In practical terms, Amaral's actions made Macau into a free port and strengthened the Portuguese military presence there, but they also led to his assassination in August 1849. Portuguese efforts eventually led to the conclusion of the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking (1887), in which, among other things, China was forced to "accept the perpetual occupation

3 This position is expressed by Wallace G. Mills on the website for his course on Africa in the twentieth century, http://stmarys.ca/~wmills/course317/6Portuguese_Policies.html, accessed June 22, 2013. Mills's discussion referred mainly to aspects of the military and political control in Portuguese African colonies, but we found similar examples in the administrative patterns and various kinds of policies in Macau that echo Mills's argument.

and government of Macau by Portugal.” This treaty officially made Macau a Portuguese colony after more than three hundred years of Portuguese settlement.

3.1 *The December 3 Riot and Its Sociopolitical Impact*

On December 3, 1966, a violent confrontation broke out between the Portuguese colonial government and the local Chinese community, an event referred to as the 12–3 Riot. It had many long-term impacts on the development of the local civil society, so it is worth discussing here. To better understand the event and its impacts, we need to review the social and political changes over decades that preceded it. After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Macau became a major front line in the power struggle between the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists. The intense struggle between political factions mainly took the form of initiating, organizing, and controlling grassroots organizations, such as labor unions, neighborhood associations, and trade associations. The Church was caught in between this power struggle and tried to maintain neutrality by remaining silent about anything with political implications. It had gained a good reputation among the local residents by providing services to refugees who arrived in Macau during World War II and after the communist takeover of the mainland.

The riot (some 16 years later) probably broke out after the rejection or delay of a construction permit for a pro-communist school project on the island of Taipa. Corruption was not uncommon in colonies, and it may well be the main reason for the delay in issuing the permit. By this time, China was beginning the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Under strong political and ideological influence, the pro-communist group decided to start construction without the permit, which led to the arrest of construction workers and their supporters. A riot broke out in which eleven people were killed and over two hundred were injured, leading the Portuguese colonial government to declare martial law after being unable to quell the violence. What originated as a local conflict between the Portuguese colonial government and the pro-communist Chinese took a sharp turn and became a national issue on December 10, when the Foreign Office of the Guangdong People’s Government (in a neighboring province on the mainland) issued a statement. In this statement, the Guangdong government asked the Portuguese government of Macau not only for an official apology and compensation but also for seven Nationalist spies to be handed over and other Nationalist supporters to be expelled from the island. The governor of Macau, with Portugal’s consent, offered an official apology and agreed to accept all the demands of the Guangdong government.

Under the new political conditions, the pro-communist grass-rooted organizations, such as the Associação Comercial de Macau, Federação das Associações dos Operários de Macau (Association Federation of Trade Unions), and Associação Geral das Mulheres de Macau (The Women's General Association of Macau), formed the dominant social sector, with the MCC as the only exception. Academic definitions of civil society usually refer to a third sector of a society that is neither governmental nor profit making. Grassroots nonprofit groups/organizations and religious organizations are normally considered important constituent parts of any civil society. However, in the period after the December 3 riot, these grassroots community organizations were ideologically, organizationally, and financially linked to the CCP. Therefore, they may be better understood as semigovernmental organizations, rather than as ordinary nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The MCC was fiercely attacked for its diehard support of the Macau colonial government during the riot. The pro-communist rioters demanded that the Catholic schools be handed over to the pro-communist factions, but the Church refused.⁴ This political stand by the MCC is easy to understand. As mentioned above, the Portuguese colonial officials and church leaders formed a small, close circle at the upper social stratum of local society. This event had a long-term impact on the MCC, and an outspoken pro-Nationalist Chinese priest was forced into exile. Importantly, the surrender-like agreement after the riot between the Portuguese and Guangdong governments was a decisive blow for the emerging civil society in Macau. Many hold that the overwhelming victory by the pro-communist community in the 12/3 riot marked the beginning of the de facto control of Macau by the mainland Chinese government until the official return of sovereignty in 1999.⁵ I return to the impacts of these events below.

4 Development and Problems after the Handover

With the consent of and support from the Beijing government, Macau has developed into a world-class entertainment city with careful planning and detailed regulations on the gambling industry, which had been legalized in 1847. After the handover in 1999, economic development reached a high point in its growth, but civil society did not develop in tandem with

4 Beatrice Leung, "The Portuguese Appeasement Policy in Macau's Church and State Relations," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 64 (2010): 387.

5 The 12-3 Incident, in Wikipedia.com, accessed November 30, 2016.

TABLE 10.1 Annual gambling revenue and Macau government total income, 2013–2015

	2013	2014	2015
Revenue from gambling	134,382 (76.38%)	136,710 (84.4%)	89,573 (81.59%)
Other revenue	41,567 (23.62%)	25,151 (15.6%)	20,205 (18.41%)
Total revenue	175,949 (100%)	161,861 (100%)	109,778 (100%)

SOURCE: GOVERNMENT OF MACAU SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION, STATISTICS AND CENSUS SERVICE, *MACAU IN FIGURES 2016*, 2016, 17; AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://WWW.DSEC.GOV.MO/STATISTIC.ASPX?LANG=EN-US&NODEGUID=BA1A4EAB-213A-48A3-8FBB-962D15DC6F87/](http://www.dsec.gov.mo/statistic.aspx?lang=en-us&nodeguid=ba1a4eab-213a-48a3-8fbb-962d15dc6f87/), ACCESSED NOVEMBER 28, 2016.

this growth. Table 10.1 shows the single source of public revenue in Macau. Although the table lists the revenue from 2013 to 2015, it basically represents an overview. Macau's overreliance on the gambling industry has also created a host of social and economic problems. Because of the "easy money" flying in from nearby countries, the social mindset has become pragmatic and shortsighted. Young people seem to have lost their vision, their interest, and the patience required to gain success through education and hard work. The rapid increase in government revenue might have caused the local people to have a certain feeling of gratification. More deeply rooted social and economic problems started to emerge when the "easy money" diminished in double-digit percentages. Table 10.1 shows both the overreliance on revenue generated from gambling and the sharp decrease in government revenues in 2013–15.⁶

A typhoon hit the city in late August 2017 and caused heavy losses in life and property. The deficiencies in public administration and the backwardness of infrastructure were exposed and heavily criticized. The superficial economic boom led by the gambling industry was revealed not to have been matched by corresponding social and political development. Corruption remains widespread in the public and private sectors.

6 The sharp decrease in gambling income was primarily due to the harsh anti-corruption policy initiated by the Beijing government and the Chinese Communist Party, headed by Xi Jinping. There is no way to determine the length and levels of implementation of this policy. As a result, the basis of public income for the Macau government remains very fragile.

The reduction in public revenue, the imbalance in economic and sociopolitical development, the backwardness in education and social services, and the lack of a long-term vision for the city have created a huge social vacuum, and the Church could have played a more active role in advocating for the needs of the poor and marginalized groups. Yet the MCC seems satisfied with its traditional role in taking care of the spiritual/inner needs of individuals.

5 Macau Catholic Church: Past and Present

According to the provisions in the Portuguese Padroado, the Portuguese Catholic Church was actually administered by the king of Portugal, and in return, the kingdom of Portugal fully protected the Church. The MCC has been treated as an integral part of the Portuguese Catholic Church since the beginning of the Portuguese settlement in Macau.⁷ This explains why the administrative duties were initially entrusted to the bishops and missionaries. In its early years, the MCC's jurisdiction extended across China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the Malay Archipelago. Early Jesuit missionaries, as well as other Catholic missionaries, gathered and prepared in Macau before going off to explore and evangelize in the Chinese empire and the neighboring countries. The Ruins of St. Paul's, the landmark most visited by tourists in Macau today, serves as physical reminder of the first Western university in Asia.

Even though in 1565 Roman Catholics numbered five thousand, they were primarily Portuguese and their households. The number of Chinese converts was very small and grew slowly.⁸ The local priests we interviewed share the view that the Portuguese priests and missionaries did not make much effort to evangelize the local people. The Portuguese and the Chinese made up two separate communities in the MCC that coexisted without much interaction until the 1980s, when the return of sovereignty to China was becoming imminent. Domingos Lam, the first Chinese bishop of Macau, was appointed in 1987,

7 The Catholic Diocese of Macau was established under the Portuguese Padroado in 1556, one year before the formal settlement of Portuguese traders and sailors in the southern tip of Macau peninsula in 1557.

8 Tang Kaijian 汤开建, "Mingqing shiqi Aomen tianzhujiao de fazhan yu xingshuai 明清时期澳门天主教的发展与兴衰 [The Development, Rise and Fall of Roman Catholicism in Macau during the Ming and Qing Dynasties]," in *Aomenshi xinbian* 澳门史新编 [A New Macau History], ed. Wu Zhiliang 吴志良, Jin Guoping 金国平, and Tang Kaijian 汤开建 (Macau: Fundação Macau, 2008), 1104.

twelve years before the return of sovereignty to China and eighteen years after the appointment of the first Chinese bishop in the neighboring Hong Kong diocese. This explains in part why the Catholic population in Macau has never exceeded 10 percent of the population.⁹

By 1999 when the Portuguese government returned Macau's sovereignty to the PRC, local Roman Catholics made up only about 5 percent of the population. By any measure, the Catholic evangelical mission in Macau cannot be counted as a success, probably because from the beginning, due to a lack of resources, the Portuguese never thought about developing the settlement, except as a connection point for different maritime routes and as a stepping-stone for missionaries en route to other East Asian countries.¹⁰

At present, the Macau Catholic Diocese has six parishes, two quasi-parishes, and one mission. In 2016, Catholics totaled 28,122, accounting for 5.1 percent of the territory's population.¹¹ According to the diocesan handbook *Catholic Diocese of Macau*, a total of 11 male missionaries, 111 priests or religious brothers, and 22 female missionaries as well as 219 religious sisters live and work in Macau. In addition, Macau has thirty-two schools and educational institutions (11 parishes, 17 seminaries, and 4 Caritas). Caritas Macau is a major component of the social services offered by the Catholic Church in Macau. It operates twenty-four programs in six fields: infant, elderly, family, rehabilitation, youth, education, and community. The Diocese of Macau and the Caritas Macau respectively have also organized twenty-four other social service groups.¹² Stephen Bun-sang Lee was appointed as a new bishop by the Vatican on January 16, 2016. Bishop Lee is from Hong Kong and was an auxiliary bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong.

6 Catholic Social Doctrines and the Direction of Church Civic Participation

The role of the Roman Catholic Church in social change in different parts of the world has attracted the interest of several scholars. On the one hand, as a transnational social organization with a long history, the Church holds

9 Leung, "The Portuguese Appeasement Policy," 389.

10 Tang, "Mingqing shiqi Aomen tianzhujiao de fazhan yu xingshuai."

11 Roman Catholic Diocese of Macau, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Diocese_of_Macau/, accessed November 26, 2016.

12 Camara Eclesiastica, *Directorio Catolico de Macau* [Macau Catholic Church Directory 澳门天主教手冊]. Macau: Diocese de Macau [Diocese of Macau], 2012.

certain basic ideological views (dogmas and teachings), traditions, and fixed management structures (the hierarchy) to maintain unity and stability. On the other hand, together with the stabilizing factors mentioned earlier, it allows diversity across its transnational boundaries and entrusts local churches with the responsibility to develop viable plans and strategies of action in response to social and cultural conditions, as long as they are consistent with the ideological guidelines. In the mid-twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church developed from a traditional religious organization to an active sociopolitical agent (though not limited to this). To the surprise of much of the world, Pope John XXIII summoned an ecumenical council to rejuvenate the Church and its mission in the modern era. More than 2,300 Roman Catholic bishops from all over the world participated in sessions over four years, and the Second Vatican Council dramatically redefined the self-understanding of the Church, its relationship to society, and its mission in the world.

John W. O'Malley (2008), Professor of church history at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, viewed "Vatican II as making a significant break with the past," but this break did not signify a disruption of continuity. To connect his remark with our discussion here, Vatican II represents the Church's effort to rethink its role in the modern world. Instead of being simply negative, the Roman Catholic Church (based on a critical internal review of its own nature and mission in the Council), realized that in order to fulfill its mission in the modern world more efficiently and effectively, it has to understand and engage with this new environment in more active and positive ways. This new realization and strong determination are clearly stated in one of its most important documents, the *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*). In the preface, the Council states:

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. ... That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.

As O'Malley mentioned, this bold step of opening up the Church's new and active mission in the world did not represent a complete break from the past. It was, indeed, a continuation and a more assertive way of reaffirming the social role of the Church. This role has been the central theme of papal messages to Catholics since Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) and to the public since Vatican II.

These messages are generally known as Modern Catholic Social Teaching. As announced at the conclusion of the *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 90),¹³ Pope Paul VI, in his own social encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, set up a new papal commission called Justice and Peace to help fulfill the role and social concerns of the Church better.¹⁴ In response to Paul VI's advocacy, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of national bishop conferences, archdioceses, and dioceses set up corresponding commissions at national and local levels. The Hong Kong Catholic Diocese set up a Justice and Peace Commission in 1977. To this day, the Macau Catholic Diocese has not established a similar corresponding ecclesiastical body for social action.

Neither *Gaudium et Spes* nor *Populorum Progressio* was anything new. Rather, they were part of ongoing modern Catholic social teaching, better known as Catholic Social Doctrine, the term usually used by the Vatican.¹⁵ In addition to the Vatican II documents issued in the mid-1960s, the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of its mission in the world was reaffirmed in 2004 with the issuance of *The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*. In Article 53, the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, a branch of the Vatican Curia, stated: "The transformation of social relationships that responds to the demands of the Kingdom of God is not fixed within concrete boundaries once and for all. Rather, it is a task entrusted to the Christian community, which is to develop it and carry it out through reflection and practices inspired by the Gospel."¹⁶ In light of this entrustment to every local Catholic church, I discuss the extent to which the MCC has achieved its social mission. I start by assessing how much of the spirit of the social doctrine has been received in the MCC and then review what has been done in concrete social activities.

13 *Gaudium et Spes* was one of the most important and influential conciliary document issued by the Vatican II Council in 1965.

14 *Populorum Progressio*, no. 5, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html, accessed November 29, 2016.

15 At least fifteen papal and ecumenical council documents are usually listed as the basic documents for modern Catholic social teaching. Other than these documents, there are other less influential documents at the regional, national, and diocesan level used by Catholic social activists.

16 Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican, 2011, no. 53, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, accessed November 28, 2016.

In the *Compendium*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace stated that the Church's social doctrine should be considered "an instrument of evangelization."¹⁷ The social doctrine encompasses six basic principles that guide Catholic social action: common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, the importance of participation, solidarity, and the fundamental values of social life.¹⁸ Under the sixth principle, the Pontifical Council asserted that truth, freedom, and justice are fundamental values in any social life. Sincere attempts to uphold the values of freedom and justice in any given society inevitably touch on the issues of respecting and protecting basic human rights, including workers' rights, as well as fair economic and political structures. With this in mind, it is hard to imagine that any meaningful social participation in local society can be achieved merely by providing social services, in which the MCC has been successfully involved to high acclaim. Below, I examine this social participation by the MCC in light of these official Catholic teachings.

First, however, we note the self-understanding roles and the corresponding activities of Roman Catholics in the course of evangelization. This enables better understanding of the pattern of their social participation. Christians understand themselves as followers of Jesus Christ who acquire a threefold Christian identity when they were baptized: as priest, as king/servant, and as prophet. Doctrinally, these are not three different roles but, rather, one role with three different dimensions. As priests, Catholic believers, including bishops, priests, and laity, have a duty to consecrate all of creation. This means that Christians have a mission to actively make the world closer to their religious ideal. As king/servants, Christians have a duty to serve the needs of the world. It is commonly believed that this refers to (but is not limited to) social services that the Church renders to the needy. In this respect, the MCC has obviously played an active and historically successful role in local society. As prophets, Christians, in the course of consecrating the world, are messengers of God and should courageously point out social problems, provide solutions, and identify their root causes. Both the servant and prophetic dimensions of Christian roles are

17 Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican, 2011, no. 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, accessed November 28, 2016.

18 The national bishop's conferences, local churches, and scholars have minor differences regarding these principles. One major principle not mentioned by the *Compendium* is the principle of the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Because this unofficial principle is so commonly accepted by scholars and Christian communities, we adopt it as a valid principle of Catholic social doctrine in our discussion.

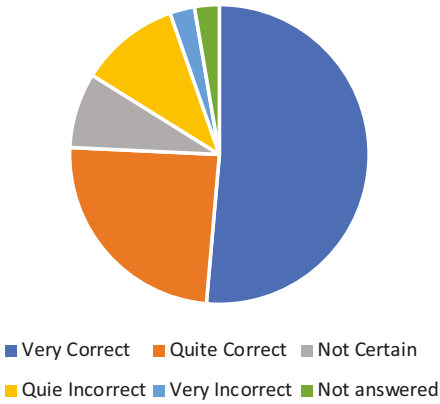


FIGURE 10.1
Church organization/parish adopts cooperative attitude toward the government

concrete ways of consecrating the world. Through these roles, the Church is fulfilling its mission as believers in God. Many Catholic communities and their members appear to understand their Christian calling in a narrower sense, not in the threefold mode of understanding as described above. Instead, many prefer to live out only the role of servant by offering services to the needy, and only a minority take on the prophetic role.

7 Catholic Civic Participation in Macau

To offer a more comprehensive view of how the MCC performs in its social mission with reference to the principles and themes of Catholic social doctrine, in this section I make use of some findings in related research.¹⁹ In this research project, we collected data through questionnaires, focused interviews, and in-field observations. We analyzed the data comparatively based on the sociological theory of “religious economy.” The following are some salient findings from the questionnaire.

Question 3 in the questionnaire asked whether “the Church organization/parish usually adopt[s] a cooperative attitude to the government.” As shown in Figure 10.1, 50 percent of the respondents selected “very correct” and 23.7 percent chose “quite correct,” which, when combined, show that the MCC is clearly perceived as having a cooperative relationship with the local government. The

19 The research project Catholicism and Civil Society: An Exploratory Comparative Study of the Civic Engagement of the Catholic Church in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan was conducted in 2012–13 under the leadership of Professor Hao Zhidong.

respondents answering “quite incorrect” and “very incorrect” are 10.5 percent and 2.6 percent respectively; 7.9 percent reported that they were “not certain,” and 5.3 percent did not answer the question. These results confirm the general impression that the MCC has a good relationship with the government. This good relationship has a long historical foundation and forms the basis of the church-state relationship in Macau. As Portugal’s national religion, Roman Catholicism and its clergy enjoyed many privileges. For example, according to the *Padorado*, Catholic priests received monthly stipends paid by the Macau colonial government until its sovereignty was returned to China in 1999. Most of the Catholic clergy in Macau either were Portuguese or trained in Portugal before their ordination. Therefore, they shared a closed social network and cultural background, if not political interests, with the ruling elites in the colony. The MCC easily reflects their point of view, and they proposed social services that would be permitted within a close social network. No direct and confrontational social actions or mobilization of the masses were needed to secure policy changes.

In Question 7, respondents were asked whether they had been able to “advocate social reforms.” As shown in Figure 10.2, 10.5 percent answered “very correct,” and 42.1 said, “quite correct,” a combined 52.6 percent; 13.2 percent answered, “quite incorrect” and 7.9 percent said, “very incorrect,” a total of 21.1 percent, with 13.2 saying they were “not sure” 13.2 percent declining to answer. More research is needed to understand what these respondents mean by “social reforms.” For example, does the term merely refer to issues of morality related to gambling? Or do reforms deal with more fundamental and structural roots of gambling, including shifting away from overreliance on gambling for government revenue?

Question 8 concerns whether the church organization/parish encourages social participation. The result is one-sided (see Figure 10.3). The responses “very correct” and “quite correct” total 94.7 percent, which reflects that an overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that their organizations or parishes have encouraged their members to be socially active. The one-sided response might be due to the inclusiveness of the term “social participation.” Even though Catholic social doctrine is the basis of modern Catholic social activism and highly esteems the values of civil society, it does not limit Catholic activism and mobilization to structural and human rights issues. As mentioned earlier, serving the needy by satisfying their immediate needs in an apolitical and humane fashion has always been a part of the Catholic social mission. Given that the MCC and its charity arm, the Caritas Macau, have a long and well-regarded tradition of offering social services and basic education to the needy, it is highly likely that the one-sided answer to this question is related to these services and schools. Further, the respondents to this

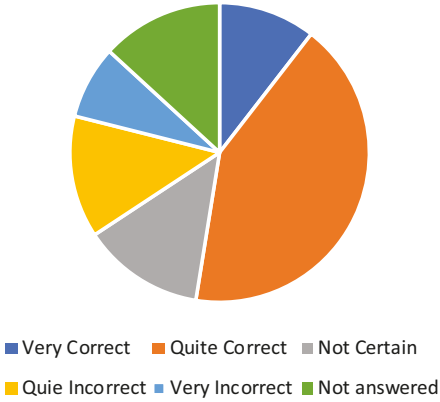


FIGURE 10.2
Church organization/parish advocate for social reform

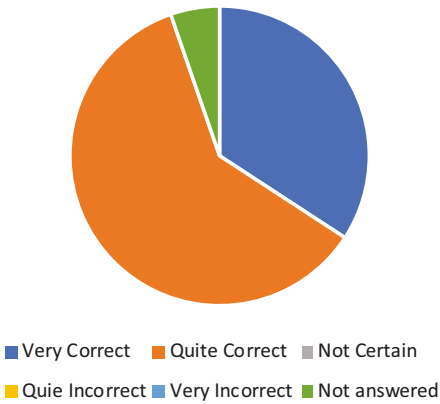


FIGURE 10.3
Church organization/parish encourages social participation

questionnaire were not common Catholic laity at those Church organizations and parishes; rather, they were actually people in charge. So, it is possible that they overstate the degree to which their performance follows the principle of “participation” in the Social Doctrine. We simply do not know much about the extent to which the Social Doctrine has reached the Catholic laity.

Question 10 is about Catholic organizations’/parishes’ special attention to marginalized people in society. As shown in Figure 10.4, 94.8 percent of the respondents assert that they offer special care to marginalized groups in society, and 5.2 percent did not answer. This result is consistent with the principle of “preferential options for the poor” in the social doctrine. Caring about the needs and conditions of the poor has always been a core concern of Catholic social participation. Individual Catholics and organizations can determine the needs of the poor and then provide the necessary services and activities based on their own resources and abilities. As mentioned, social services and education

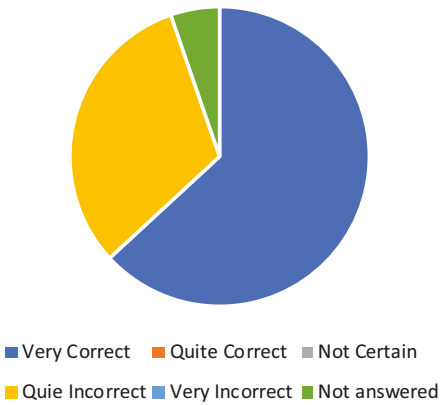


FIGURE 10.4
Church organization/parish pays special attention to marginalized groups

are highly valued by the local community; it is natural for the Catholic service providers to carry out their social mission by being involved in an area in which they are experienced. At the same time, serving society, especially the poor, by addressing political and economic structures and policies would be something new for many Macanese Catholics, even the leaders.

We also asked the respondents to prioritize their values and social issues, and the data on fourteen different items are summarized in Table 10.2.

To further analyze the responses in this table about social value priorities at Macau's Catholic organizations, I combine information collected through in-depth interviews and my personal experiences in the Catholic communities as follows. The table gives the impression that the MCC's social consciousness is quite positive. For example, seven of the fourteen items listed receive a high level of support (more than 50%), including some sensitive issues such as "promote human dignity" (81.6%); "advocate respecting human rights" and "Defend personal freedom" both have a high level of support as well.

A deeper analysis is needed to understand these percentages in context. It is true that the core of Roman Catholic faith is a person's total trust and reliance on God. However, Roman Catholic ethics stress the value of human beings because, as a species and as individuals, human beings carry the image of God; therefore, they have greater weight than all other creatures and concerns. Humans occupy a unique and favorable position in the universe: "Therefore, 'being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone.'"²⁰ Based on this understanding, the social doctrine further affirms that:

20 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 108, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, accessed November 28, 2016.

TABLE 10.2 Support for values and social issues by Macau Catholic organizations/parishes

Priority	Issues/Value	Support
1	Promote human dignity	81.6%
2	Advocates respect for human rights	76.3%
3	Advocates respect for other religions	76.3%
4	Protect the integrity of marriage/family values	65.8%
5	Defend personal freedom	65.7%
6	Environmental protection	57.9%
7	Advocates women's rights	52.6%
8	Support workers' rights of living wages and reasonable working conditions	47.4%
9	Advocates a fair share of economic activities in accordance with principles of social justice	47.3%
10	Against exploitation of labor	42.2%
11	Against the death penalty	39.5%
12	Advocates sustainable economic growth	39.5%
13	Against abortion	39.4%
14	Advocates democratic politics	34.2%

men and women, in concrete circumstances of history, represent the heart and soul of Catholic social thought. The whole of the Church's social doctrine, in fact, develops from the principle and affirms the inviolable dignity of the human person. In her manifold expressions of this knowledge, the Church has striven above all to defend human dignity in the face of every attempt to re-dimension or distort its image; moreover, she has often denounced the many violations of human dignity.²¹

Given this cardinal status in its understanding of what the Gospel is about, it is not surprising that the item "Promote human dignity" is the top priority in the table. Indeed, this prime value guides the other thirteen, and therefore, interpretations of this cardinal value have permeated various levels and kinds of activities, programs, and pastoral actions by the Church. To be sure, reassertion

21 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 108, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, accessed November 28, 2016.

of the importance of the spiritual nature of human beings is an essential part of these activities, programs, and pastoral activities. The spiritual nature and needs of human beings are particularly highlighted in the modern world, in which materialistic atheism has become a major challenge to the Church's understanding of original human nature. Therefore, for many priests, caring about the spiritual needs of Catholic laity and other non-Catholics is indeed part of their commitment to advance and "promote human dignity." In this sense, the service aspects of civic participation, such as raising education levels and providing medical services to the sick, are a concrete part of "promoting human dignities." From the perspective of those on the receiving end of these services, these kinds of civic participation are more indirect and effective.

Another data point in Table 10.2 should be understood in the context of local society. The items or issues that occupy the top levels of support are not very controversial. The crucial point is the kinds of activities through which the Church participates in local civil society. Macau has a very tolerant social environment and religious freedom, so it is acceptable for the Church to carry out its mission to "promote human dignity," "advocate respect for human rights," "defend personal freedom," "advocate respect for other religions," "protect the integrity of marriage/family values," and seek "environmental protection" through social services. In contrast, items/values with a lower level of support from respondents, such as "Support workers' rights of living wage and reasonable working conditions," "Advocate for a fair share of economic activities in accordance to principles of social justice," "Oppose exploitation of workers," "Oppose the death penalty," "Advocate sustainable economic growth," and "Oppose abortion," are not only more controversial but also touch on the structural and political roots of social problems. Possible and effective solutions to these structural and political roots cannot be delivered by providing social services and inevitably require certain rearrangements of power and economic benefits—and these rearrangements are problematic to those who are in power. As "Advocating democratic politics" might reflect rearrangements of power and economic benefits, it scores the lowest level of support. This might illustrate the MCC's preference for providing social services, rather than taking direct social action or mobilizing people.

These politically sensitive items/values are core principles of the Church's social doctrine. The MCC does not sufficiently (at least in terms of direct social action) live out its prophetic role, as described in the documents on Catholic social doctrine. One example that helps to explain this point is that, up to the present, the MCC does not echo the call of Pope Paul VI to set up an ecclesiastic organization for justice and peace at the diocesan level.

To be fair, we do find some prophetic voices within the MCC. *Observatorio de Macau*, a biweekly newspaper published by the Catholic Lay Association of Macau since 1995, covers news in the church and society and regularly comments on social and political issues from a Catholic and critical point of view. The director of this newspaper is an active Catholic and a member of a pro-democratic group. He was once elected as a Legislative Council member. Priests and nuns are part of its editorial board. But they make it very clear that their voices do not represent the Church's position. Since 2014, some Catholic laity, with assistance from diocesan priests, and clergy from Hong Kong, have already organized two formation courses on Catholic Social Doctrines. According to one of the organizers, these formation courses are targeted at common Catholics and aim to raise their social awareness. Sporadic interaction between local parishes and the government were also reported—primarily about environmental and neighborhood concerns.

Based on my review of this data and information, I conclude that the MCC has a long tradition of serving the local community and newcomers (i.e., refugees) with needed services. These services earned the Catholic Church a good reputation, even in difficult times. But, at the same time, although the MCC follows the Social Doctrine of the Church, it implements its social mission by participating in apolitical activities, rather than through politically sensitive mobilization of people and direct criticism. Therefore, I describe the social participation of the MCC as limited, not in terms of the number or quantity of its services but in terms of the imbalance from performing the role of “servant,” rather than “prophet.”

8 The Small Size of Macanese Society as a Social Reality

The third factor that acts as a constraint on the MCC's social participation is sociological. Academic research on the participation of the Catholic Church in Macau must admit that Macau is a “small society.” Rather than merely acknowledging the comparatively small size of its land area and population, it is important to pay close attention to the implications of this size on the social relationships and networks. Mark Bray (Bray and Packer 1993), following Burton Benedict's research (1967), pointed out that members of a “small-scale society” constantly interact with one another in a wide variety of social settings. In other words, in a small society, social relations have multiple combinations, involving and serving a variety of different interests. Because the different social roles of members of each “small society” often overlap, the decision of any individual in any particular social setting is likely to affect himself/herself in other social settings.

This situation often has an impact on economic and social development. For example, an employer who dismisses an incompetent employee has to take into account the reaction of the employee's parents because the employee is the son of a relative of the employer's father and the employee's brother is in charge of approving the employer's application for a loan. This kind of social network is very common in a "small-scale society." From a sociological perspective, "small societies" tend to form the "special" tendencies mentioned by Talcott Parsons, rather than the "rational" and "universalist" tendencies of "large societies."²² To explain the introverted religious vitality of the Catholic Church in Macau and its participation in society in the form of "social services" based on this theory, we must first clarify the relationship between the church and the state under Portuguese rule there. Because of the limited number of Portuguese people in Macau, the colonial government officials and church leaders were quite consistent in terms of nationality, religion, culture, world view, and even interests, which enabled them to negotiate, resolve, or mitigate many things without a "social action" approach. Moreover, before Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church's overall outlook and theological reflection were conservative and introverted. Even after the return of sovereignty was on the agenda, the Catholic Church in Macau had to become more "Sinicized." The first Chinese bishop, Lin Jiajun, became the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Macau in 1988, symbolizing that the Chinese were the masters of the MCC as the Portuguese priests gradually withdrew.

Since then, the social network of "small societies" has not changed. During our interviews, we obtained at least four confirmations of this fact from the interviewees, who said: "Macau is very small, [so] if you want to stretch your skills, you will easily encounter others," and "any big action in Macau will certainly involve people." These comments help to explain why the Catholic Church in Macau is unwilling to adopt a more aggressive "social action" approach to fulfill its social mission. Any "social action" will lead to friction with the government or other powerful groups and might cause a split in the church.

Although the 12/3 riot was basically a political event, it had a great impact on the MCC. As the Portuguese national religion, the MCC carried some strong cultural marks of its mother Church. Its leaders maintained deep social ties to the Portuguese community in Macau. It is not surprising that the MCC had long been labelled a colonial church and therefore naturally became the target of mass attacks during the riot. In addition, the fact that

22 Parsons, *The Social System*, 180–200.

the church firmly refused to give up its right to provide education and its ownership of the schools angered the angry mob further. The MCC was attacked, and these attacks were a profound and horrifying experience for the older generation of the clergy and the Catholic laity. Moreover, some of the Catholic priests in Macau were refugees from the mainland who had experienced political movements and persecution there. These factors greatly influenced the MCC's role in local society. It was in this period of "passivity" that pro-Beijing grassroots organizations expanded their influence among the local people by filling the vacuum left by the departure of pro-Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) social forces and the inertia of the MCC. The MCC generally tried to avoid any possible social conflict with the broader society from "dramatic action." Therefore, after the 12-3 riot, the MCC settled into a long period of "passivity." Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the church does not participate directly in social affairs to avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding. Rather, it actively developed social services for the lower classes.

However, the influx of new immigrants in the 1980s increased the demand for social services in Macau, which gave the MCC an opportunity to re-engage with society. Caritas Macau, which initially evolved out of individual missionaries' personal efforts, emerged as an important force and pioneer in the MCC's social participation.

9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter analyzes the limited civic participation of the MCC, beginning with a brief review of the history of the city and the Catholic Church there. Based on the social context of the local society, it is difficult to conclude that a civil society per se exists in Macau. However, the civilians have made persistent efforts to assert and expand their civil rights and freedom. In view of the openness of its political structures, the control and operation of the mass media, and the political background of NGOs, at best, Macau has an underdeveloped civil society. During its colonial and postcolonial periods, the relationship between the MCC and the government has been rather peculiar. The following are some of our conclusions.

First, Macau has a free society, and the Catholics, as well as believers in other religions, enjoy a high degree of religious freedom, even though Macau has long been under the control of the Chinese government through its representatives at various levels. Historically, the political and social impacts of the December 3, 1966, riot and the large number of immigrants from the mainland

(due to economic expansion in the 1980s and 1990s) secured this control before the handover in 1997. Yet the MCC (because of the appeasement policy, described by Leung) has not felt restrictions in its religious life.

Second, under the conservative influence of Portuguese culture and the traditions of the Church in Portugal, the religious vitality of the MCC is primarily “introverted.” The church aims to maintain the faith of its members and administer sacraments and rituals. The prophetic role of the Roman Catholic social doctrine arising from Vatican II is not sufficiently implemented in the religious life of the MCC. The Portuguese cultural impact is an important internal factor that constrains the MCC in Macau in its civic participation.

Third, it is an undeniable social reality that the MCC is located in a “small society” and that the social fabric in this kind of society means that the church-state relationship cannot be analyzed dualistically. The multiplicity of social relations within and among its members and the larger social networks, as well the “particularism” of a “small-scale society” constrains the Church’s ability to join in a more aggressive type of civic participation. Church leaders understood that this mode of action, or the prophetic role, would easily undermine internal and external social relations. The 12–3 riot made the MCC more cautious in participation in social affairs for fear of weakening the already fragile relationship between the Church and local political and social forces.

Fourth, the “service” mode in the social mission of the MCC might not be a result of a deliberate consensus. Rather, it is the cumulative result of long-term responses to historical development. Within the MCC are different voices. My research reveals disappointment and dissatisfaction among many active church members due to the church’s failure to live out the prophetic role of its Christian calling. These alternative views come mainly from young Catholics and foreign missionaries. The slow but steady implementation of the Vatican II reforms in the MCC, along with inevitable changes in church personnel and leadership, portend that the MCC might yet play a more active “prophetic” role in civil affairs.

This chapter analyzes the limited civic participation of the MCC, focusing on the conditions and history of the MCC and the local community. Beatrice Leung has correctly pointed out in her discussion of the “appeasement policy” of the MCC that the Vatican had its own set of agenda and policies within which the overall interests of the Roman Catholic Church as a whole are taken into account. In line with Leung’s insights, we cannot help but ask whether the local option chosen by the MCC is a purely passive response to the historical conditions or a clever and deliberate strategy made by those far from East Asia.

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