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A Study of the Role of  
Religious Organizations in the  
Kwun Tong Community

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**Suggested citation:**

Delaney, Joan and Ying-keung Chan. 1973. *A Study of the Role of Religious Organizations in the Kwun Tong Community*. Hong Kong: Occasional Paper No. 29, Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Social Research Centre

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TIONS IN THE KWUN TONG COMMUNITY

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August, 1973.

This paper is produced for the Kwun Tong Industrial Community Research Programme which was financially supported by the Harvard-Yenching Institute and was under the auspices of the Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

We wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the administrators of the religious organizations in Kwun Tong. They rendered invaluable assistance in the time they gave to providing the data for the study. The Research Assistants and clerical staff of the Centre were very diligent in providing all the necessary services to complete the study.

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## CHAPTER I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is the purpose of the overall study of Kwun Tong to ascertain the degree to which Kwun Tong is at present a community and to indicate those institutions which contribute effectively to the community. In the discussion of the definition of community, Dr. Ambrose King points out that the definition of community does not lie in its self-sufficiency, "it is rather its relative separateness from the larger whole".<sup>1</sup> In his analysis of the institutions in Kwun Tong, particular attention is paid to the ratio of intra-community to inter-community social communication flow as an indicator of the community boundary. Some institutions may indicate a high degree of self-containedness within the community; others may show more communication with the larger society outside of Kwun Tong. Our purpose in this section of the study is an attempt to determine the degree of inter-community/intra-community activity of various religious organizations in the Kwun Tong area and to estimate the importance of the religious organization in the overall study of Kwun Tong as a community.

As the above study points out, any attempt to approach Kwun Tong with its population of nearly half million people using the concept of community in the traditional sense - that of a geographic areas with symbiotic dependency, poses more problems than it solves. For this reason Warren's framework expounded in his Community in America seems the most practical as an approach to the study of religious organizations in Kwun Tong.

Warren maintains that vertical relationships between an area and the wider society outside (inter-community) are so strong that horizontal ties within the community (intra-community) are no longer sufficiently strong and meaningful to constitute a localized social system called "community". This would certainly appear to be the case in Kwun Tong. Warren goes on to propose a definition of a community which would support the conclusion of Dr. King by stating that a community is a combination of social units and systems which perform the major social functions having locality relevance. In other words we will not

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose Y.C. King and Y.K. Chan, A Theoretical and Operational Definition of Community: the Case of Kwun Tong, Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972, P. 5.

view Kwun Tong in a *Gemeinschaft* typology, looking at it in terms of a coherent group based on primary group interaction, custom, and sentiment, but rather as a "community system" with interaction taking place between various local units within the area and between the local unit and the larger society beyond Kwun Tong. We will be interested in the interaction between the religious organizations and other local units in Kwun Tong as well as the relationship of the religious organization to the larger society beyond Kwun Tong.

While many scholars (Warner, Lloyd, West and Vidich) have included the role of the religious organization in their community studies, the problem in Kwun Tong is somewhat unique. In most studies one is dealing with one or two main religious groups, while in Kwun Tong there are 19 different denominations and no one group could be said to be dominant. Their importance in the Kwun Tong area may be related to size of membership, power, type of services offered, prestige of the parent organization or effectiveness in the area. While in studies of many other institutions one need only study the inter-community aspect in terms of the relationship between the Kwun Tong institutions and the wider Hong Kong society, in the case of religious organizations, one must go one step further to their links to the international sphere.

Having established the need to examine the religious organization on the two dimensions of inter- and intra-community, the next problem was to find some way of grouping the 19 different denominations for meaningful comparisons. While the indigenous religious organizations and the Catholics (天主教) formed two easily definable groups, it did not seem realistic to group the remaining 17 denominations as "Christian" (基督教)<sup>2</sup>. Since the aim of the study is to ascertain the role of the religious organizations in the development of a community system, it appeared justifiable to group the 32 Christian bodies by whether or not they were affiliated to the Hong Kong Christian Council (香港基督教協進會) (cf. Appendix II). The reason for this being that if the religious group in Kwun Tong is affiliated to the Council, it indicates a definite link

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately from the ecumenical point of view, but fortunately for the researcher, local terminology distinguishes clearly between "Christian" (基督教) and "Catholic" (天主教). Hence the use of the term "Christian-Catholic" in some sections of the paper to refer to Council-linked Christians, independent groups of Christians and Catholics.

to the wider Hong Kong society. Also the philosophy of the Council-linked religious organizations vis-a-vis community development can be discovered by referring to the proceedings of the Sodepax Conference (1970) which states:

As an organizational structure, the churches should act as a force of union, not only by positively widening the scope of ecumenical joint planning and action for development, but also (particularly in areas where the churches are a minority) by an increasing openness to other religious and secular agencies genuinely dedicated to foster the development of peoples and nations.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the first group of Churches will be referred to as Council-Christian Churches which includes the Anglicans, the Methodists, Lutherans, 7th Day Adventists, Baptists, the Church of Christ in China and the Salvation Army. The second group, or non-Council Christian Churches includes groups which are usually small in membership and not widespread either in the Colony or abroad. However, they may be extremely active in Kwun Tong and very effectively organized to achieve their ends. Such groups are the Oriental Boat Mission, the Assembly of God Chapel, the Pentecostal Holiness Mission, etc.

The third group represented is the Catholic Church. Its presence in the Kwun Tong area while only dating from 1953 is widespread and highly organized to serve the main areas. Parishes with definite boundaries cover all the areas of Kwun Tong except a low cost housing estate known as Ping Shek which is considered part of the Choi Hung Parish.

The fourth group represents two indigenous religious groups: The Buddhists and the Tin Tak Shing Kau. One Buddhist leader belonged to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association while the other three did not.

Among the 45 administrators who responded to the questionnaires, eight of them were Catholic and all of the 8 were priests. The fact that five of these were Americans stems from the Catholic system of all allotting certain areas to particular foreign mission groups: The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll Fathers) being particularly active in Kwun Tong. Two of the eight were Belgian priests

<sup>3</sup> Liberation, Justice and Development, proceedings of the Asian Ecumenical Conference for Development, Tokyo, Japan 1970, P. 8.



who work in village areas near Lyemun and one was a Chinese diocesan priest. This factor alone indicates strong links with a wider outside culture. Firstly, most of the administrators came from abroad and had connections with headquarters in either Belgium or the United States. Since they perceived themselves as administrator in responding to the questionnaire, we can assume they see themselves in a combined role of priest and administrator.

This presence of foreigners in Catholic organizations in Kwun Tong is in contrast to Christian organizations, whether of the Council-linked type or non-Council groups, all of whom had Chinese personnel in charge. This does not mean that foreigners may not be working with these groups; only that the person chosen to respond was Chinese. Most of them (twenty-six out of twenty-nine) identified themselves in a missionary or religious role, e.g. "priest", "minister", "missionary", "counsellor" (in the Seventh Day Adventist group), "lieutenant" (in the Salvation Army), etc. So they too combined religious and administrator roles.

Naturally, all 5 persons representing indigeneous religious group were Chinese. One was identified as "Monk" while others could only be described by the title "Dean" (主持) which also means a combination "Chairman" and religious leader.

Obviously, the respondent occupies a sufficiently high position to provide information concerning the policy of the organization. In the majority of all groups (91%): Catholic, Council-linked Christians, non-Council Christians groups and the Buddhists-Tin Tak Shing Kau groups, this person occupies a religious position. This combination of a religious role and an administrative role in a community organization can be extremely effective.

The Catholic Church differs from the other three groups in the presence of foreigners in administrative positions. While this may result in links to the wider culture, there is the possibility that the Christian groups and the Buddhist-Tin Tak Shing Kau groups may relate more easily, other factors being equal, to the people of the Kwun Tong area and be more conversant with Kwun Tong needs. However, such factors as residence in or out of the area, and language spoken (not all leaders listed as Chinese are Cantonese-speaking - some religious groups cater for specific sub-cultures, e.g., Oriental Boat Mission, Swatow Baptist

group and Swatow Christian Church) would have bearing on the extent of their effectiveness in promoting a community spirit in Kwun Tong. More important than these factors is their perception of their role in the organization. Do they see their main function as a strictly religious one of direct evangelisation or do they have more socially conscious concept of a religious leader's role? In an effort to ascertain this, questions were asked about the religious organizer's own background, his activities in the area and the religious organization's links with other Kwun Tong organizations in order to discover the horizontal pattern of the religious organization's activities.

The present study is based on data collected by the Religious Organizations Survey carried out between December 1971 and January 1972. In this survey, we intended to interview all religious organizations in Kwun Tong District - about sixty at that time. To facilitate the interview, administrators of various religious organizations were contacted and copies of a structured questionnaire were sent to persons concerned before the actual survey in the form of an interview began. This gave the respondent time to prepare certain information - particularly statistics for the interviewer.

There was a return of forty-five (75%) completed interviews: the remainder of 15 (25%) included rejected and incompleated cases. Hereunder, our analyses are based on data provided by the forty-five religious organizations which we successfully interviewed.

## CHAPTER II. GENERAL FEATURES OF KWUN TONG

While the history of the development of Kwun Tong will be dealt with in detail in the overall study, it is necessary to mention in this paper those aspects of the area which pertain to the study of religious organizations.

Kwun Tong as we know it today did not exist before 1957. The village of Ngau Tau Kok, some very small factories, a sprinkling of other villages, the Shell Oil installation and Lei Yue Mun Village were all that existed between Clear Water Bay Road and the harbour entrance. Most of the villages which did exist were situated at the water's edge with hilly terrain rising closely behind them. Population was sparse by Hong Kong standards and when an attempt was made in the 1950's to resettle people in large numbers in high-rise apartments in the Ngau Tau Kok area, the plan was unpopular owing to a lack of employment opportunity and poor transportation. Bus service was virtually nil and only a "walla walla" crossed the harbour between North Point and Ngau Tau Kok area.

Perhaps as a result of the Government's experience in Ngau Tau Kok, the plans for the development of Kwun Tong proceeded in a more realistic fashion. Transport, housing and employment opportunities were planned simultaneously and the development of Kwun Tong continued along this three pronged approach for some time. Today one could say that the providing of employment facilities in the form of factories is virtually finished; the housing programme continues as do the attempts to improve transport in the area.

From this area of scattered, inaccessible villages dominated by the Shell Oil installation as a landmark, the area referred to in the Social Research Centre study now comprises 11 fairly well defined sub-districts. Beginning with Ping Shek Estate located at the junction of Kwun Tong Road and Clear Water Bay Road and moving southeastwards along the coast line there now exists: Ping Shek Estate with a population of approximately 22,819, Ngau Tau Kok (94,293), Kowloon Bay (2,206), Jordan Valley (17,687), the Kwun Tong Town (100,438), Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate (44,528), Sau Mau Ping (81,644), Cha Kwo Ling (4,153), Lam Tin (52,060), Yau Tong (23,867), and Lei Yue Mun Village (3,135).<sup>4</sup> The Shell

<sup>4</sup> 1971 Census figures, Census & Statistics Dept.

Oil installation once a landmark with its giant petrol storage tanks now looks dwarfed among hundreds of high rise apartment buildings and sprawling factories built on both reclaimed land and sites formed by the removal of hills rising from the coastline.

This general picture, along with certain other distinctive features of the area impinges greatly on the structuring and functioning of religious organizations. Before the development of the area, an occasional temple and mission chapel were found. With the massive development by the government of Kwun Tong into a satellite town, the main denominations began an expansion of their church activities in the area and various other religious groups also entered the area both to evangelize and to provide services. Below is a brief account of religious organizations established in the various sub-districts of Kwun Tong up to 1972.

Table 1. Number of religious organizations by sub-district

	Ping Tau Shek	Ngau Kok	Jordan Valley	Kow- loon Bay	Kwun Tong Town	Kwun Tong R/E	Sau Ping	Lam Tin	Yau Tong	Cha Kwo Ling	Lei Yue Mun	Total
Catholic	2			1	1	1	1	1		1		8
Christian: Council	1	2		10	3	1	2	2	1	1		23
non-Council	1	4	4	8	2	1	1	1		1		23
Indigeneous	1			1			1				3	6
Total	5	6	4	20	6	3	5	4	1	6		60

Source: Religious Organizations Survey,  
Social Research Centre, 1971.

What becomes apparent in even this brief description is that we are dealing with 11 separate areas - 9 of which have population larger than a good size town in a highly developed country. While most of the areas would be considered primarily urban, it contains two well defined villages (Lei Yue Mun and Cha Kwo Ling) both with a long history as well as a piece of land still being reclaimed (Kowloon Bay). These factors, along with the realization that the vast majority of the residents of these urban areas have recently arrived from another parts

of Hong Kong and before that from Mainland China and that the majority of the residents are primarily of the lower socio-economic class, will have considerable bearing on the structuring and functioning of the various religious groups.

Along with the above considerations, three other features seem important to note in relation to discussion of the religious organizations of Kwun Tong area:

- A. Housing : the Government plan in Kwun Tong was originally to re-settle refugees from various squatter areas and residents of old tenement buildings throughout the Colony; therefore, two main types of housing are found in Kwun Tong: resettlement estates and low cost housing. Some private housing units have also been built but these are much fewer in number. This means that religious groups will undoubtedly be involved in definite service type activities varying from direct material assistance to medical, educational and social welfare services of a type which most often cares for fundamental needs. Since many of the Christian religious groups traditionally are structured as parishes, most religious groups in Kwun Tong are usually still structured around a geographical area as the unit of organization. The parish is still the unit for many groups who may, however, find it unsuitable organizationally in the Kwun Tong setting.
- B. Employment : In spite of a heavy concentration of factories in the area, it is not to be assumed that everyone who lives in Kwun Tong works there. One has only to experience the bus queues in the morning to conclude that quite the contrary might be true - that the majority who lives there works elsewhere. Kwun Tong is a relatively isolated area in a social sense with only one road leading into the area. It is located at a distance from large shopping areas, theatres and big attractions of Tsim Sha Tsui and Hong Kong Island. It is not difficult to conclude that people living there might wish to work outside the area in one of the more attractive sections of Kowloon or Hong Kong. Conversely, it would not seem practical to assume that factory owners would only hire, or even given preference to, Kwun Tong people for employment especially when labour is scarce in Hong Kong. This factor is also significant in the study of religious organizations for it presents three fairly distinct groups in the area - those who work there and live elsewhere, those who live there and work elsewhere and those who both live and work in the Kwun Tong area. As many religious groups are organized around a parish

structure this has tended to make the object of concern those who live in an area with little reference to place of work. However, with a large numbers of factory workers spending much of their day in Kwun Tong, the religious organizations face the need to concern themselves with the spiritual and human needs of these people.

C. Transport : As mentioned above, access to a satellite town is important both for workers coming in as well as those going out. Owing to the geographical position of Kwun Tong with one road access, one is faced with a large, heavily populated area of 4.6 sq. miles relatively cut off from the rest of Kowloon. Traffic congestion is such that a trip of 15 minutes can take 45 minutes to one hour. The single 4-lane road is served by several bus lines but the absence of a vehicular ferry to Hong Kong Island has meant that the factory lorries must also use this road to reach other parts of the Colony. This factor makes certain conclusions self-evident when studying organizations. When religious organizations speak of "volunteers" one can fairly safely assume they are from Kwun Tong or the area of the religious organization's jurisdiction since travel would discourage volunteers from other areas coming in. This can be significant in a "community study" since it reveals people in the area supporting a local organization to serve others in the same area which is an example of symbiotic dependence one is concerned with in a community study.

In another example, we may be inclined to weight more heavily the significance of a clinic or medical service provided by a religious group in the area since the nearest hospital with a casualty ward is nearly 5 miles away through congested roads. Difficult as it is to believe, there is no hospital in this area of almost half a million people. Also pertinent to Kwun Tong study is the fact that the remedy to this situation is to be provided not by the government, but by the United Christian Hospital Board who is in the process of building a HK\$46.6 million hospital in Kwun Tong proper to serve the entire Kwun Tong area.

We can see from the above description of some of the main features of the Kwun Tong area that affect the religious organizations. The general development of housing has meant that people have moved into the area within the last two decades. This uprooting from other areas may mean that the religious affiliations would be more important since often the church followed its members into the area and provides a familiar institution and a place to meet people. The fact that a greater proportion of the population is of the working and lower middle class has meant that a need to provide services for the general population has existed and while this may decline, the church's role in medicine and education provision will increase in significance. The existence of large number of factories in the area has meant that the churches have had to define their area of concern and most have limited it to people who live in the area. Those who work there and live elsewhere are not a primary concern of most groups. The transportation problem and the one road access tend to re-inforce the parish structure of the church making the area a religious entity with very little, if any, contact with church members outside of Kwun Tong.

Keeping in mind these general factors we will now proceed to examine the position of the various religious organizations in Kwun Tong as they relate to other local units in the area.

CHAPTER III. THE HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN KWUN TONG

It would be necessary to make some attempts to examine the religious organizations of Kwun Tong on the horizontal and vertical levels in order to ascertain how they relate to other groups within the area as well as to determine the extent of their links beyond Kwun Tong area to the wider Hong Kong community and abroad. With regard to the horizontal dimensions it would seem necessary to determine the numerical strength of the groups, the activities they engage in, as well as the pattern of interaction with other sectors of the Kwun Tong community. While the numerical strength of the religious organization is a factor to be considered, the background and status of the religious leaders is also an aspect not to be overlooked.

Having arrived at some indication of the religious group's position in the area, we can then examine their links to the wider community both in the person of the administrator and in the structure of the organization. Here an important consideration must be kept in mind: that while these vertical connections may curtail the organizations' ability to answer the local needs, the same links may serve as an effective way of relating the Kwun Tong area to a wider culture and preventing it from becoming more and more of a closed society.

A. Membership:

First it must be pointed out in contrast to community studies done in other countries that no one group of the 4 mentioned enjoys a plurality or majority of the Kwun Tong population as members. Even if all Christian groups: Council-linked groups, non-Council and Catholics were grouped together their estimated membership would only be 22,510 persons or 5.05% out of a total population of 446,659. As the majority of the Hong Kong population are ancestor worshippers rather than Buddhists, this again means that neither particular the indigenous religious group, nor a combination of other religious groups, is in a position to effect great influence through its membership on the building up of a community spirit in Kwun Tong.

Membership poses other considerations both for the religious group itself and for this study. The traditional parish structures of most Christian groups, and to some extent the temple location in Buddhist groups, relates to a rural society where the coincidence of areas



supplying daily needs was very high. School, church and market were all in the same place. People lived, worked, bought and sold and worshipped all in one general area. Church members lived and worked in the same location. Needless to say, urbanization has changed this pattern and people now live in one area, send their children to school in another area, and work elsewhere. At best, only living and religious worship areas usually coincide. In Kwun Tong this would appear to be true and the religious groups does not seem organized to cater for those who work in Kwun Tong and live elsewhere.

By the nature of the housing development in Kwun Tong one can assume that church membership will be of the working and lower middle class groups. This may well affect the type of activities in which the church engages. While food distribution is no longer a need, providing education is and will probably remain a need for some time to come. The absence of a hospital in the area means voluntary agencies, including religious organizations, are called upon to run clinics as well as to minister to other groups, such as the handicapped, the aged, and delinquents. In providing these services the religious organization comes in contact with a large number of people who do not actually belong to the denomination. While the church can be seen as an agent which promotes interaction among its own membership group in Kwun Tong, this contact with a wider group of Kwun Tong non-church persons appears to strengthen the church's position as a community system relating to other groups in Kwun Tong as well as to groups outside.<sup>5</sup>

B. Activities in which the religious organizations engage:

Having pointed out the importance of the activities in which religious groups engage as an indicator of their contact with a non-church membership and a possible link in a community system, let us now examine the actual activities of the religious organizations.

<sup>5</sup> The HK\$46.6 million United Christian Hospital was first initiated by the Hong Kong Christian Council and is a joint effort of all Christian groups in Hong Kong. A 6.5 acre site was granted free by the Government, and large sums of donation have been received from both overseas and local churches, the Government and the local community. The 545-bed hospital will be the acute general hospital serving the 500,000 persons of Kwun Tong and is anticipated to be partially in use by fall of this year.

As nurseries and kindergartens are not part of the Government educational system, they are in great demand both as a place to leave children while parents work and as a preparatory step to getting into a "good" primary school. More than half (8) of the Council Christian groups were engaged in these activities, only 23% of the non-Council group and 5 or 62% of Catholic groups, while none of the indigenous groups engaged in this activity. Primary schools were also an activity engaged in by all groups except the indigenous ones. The Catholic church ran 2 secondary schools while the Council Christian group had 4. All three groups (Catholics, Council Christians and non-Council Christian) ran vocational schools.

The following table shows the services provided for special groups:

Table 2. Services offered by various religious groups  
(Run by Kwun Tong Offices)

Types of Services Offered:

		Nursery/ Kindergarten	Primary** Schools	Secondary Schools	Vocational Schools	Clubs	Youth Activity	Educational Classes	Family Services	Home for the Aged	Home for Handicapped	Clinics	Choirs	Bible/Sunday Schools	Others
Christian-Council	Yes	8	9	4	2	8	5	7	3	1	0	1	14	13	12
	No	7	6	11	13	7	10	8	12	14	15	14	1	2	3
Christian Non-Council	Yes	4	10	0	1	4	2	2	1	0	0	1	12	17	10
	No	10	6	17	16	13	15	15	16	17	17	16	5	0	7
Catholic	Yes	5	6	2	2	4	4	5	1	0	0	3	7	8	4
	No	3	2	6	6	4	4	3	7	8	8	5	1	0	4
Indigenous	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	No	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
Total	Yes	17	25	6	5	16	11	14	5	1	0	5	33	38	27
	No	25	19	39	40	29	34	31	40	44	45	40	12	7	18

\* Three of the non-Council Christian groups gave no response.

\*\* One of the non-Council Christian groups gave no response.

In looking at the above table we find that the indigenous religious groups engage in very few service type activities. Among those services engaged in by the 2 Christian groups and the Catholic Church there are those services which would be for persons of the same belief, e.g., Bible/Choir groups, those for the Kwun Tong population and those for the wider population. Most of the items, nurseries, primary schools, family services, clinics, youth clubs, home for aged and handicapped have as their clientele the general population of Kwun Tong while the present educational system usually implies that not all secondary students are from the same area and thus means secondary/vocational schools would deal with people from beyond the confines of Kwun Tong.

However, if one examines more closely the services provided, it is also apparent that many of them are of a group nature and are for the very young: nurseries, kindergartens and primary schools; while the services dealing with adults are more of an individual type, e.g. family services and clinics. Therefore, the only interaction for adults would be with the employee of the religious-sponsored agency and the individual client and not with other sectors of the Kwun Tong population or with other organized groups. The services provided by the religious organizations cater for specific needs on an individual basis and thus could not be regarded as significant in promoting a community system in Kwun Tong.

C. The church contacts with other groups:

If the services themselves do not seem significant in the development of a community system, does the church in the person of the administrator provide a system of interaction with other organizations in Kwun Tong? As life in urban areas becomes more and more complex, some groups are needed to understand the needs and problems of the urban dwellers and to be aware of where these problems can be solved. Does the religious organization assume this liaison role between the individual and the organizations in Kwun Tong.

The administrators were asked to comment on their contacts during the past year with the following groups: the City District Office, Factories, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kowloon Motor Bus Company Ltd., the Police, the Public Work Department, Social Welfare Department, Caritas, Kaifong Welfare Associations.

Table 3. Number of interviewed administrators giving affirmative responses:

Types of Religious Organizations

Organizations Contacted	Council Christian (15)*		Non-Council Christian (17)		Catholics (8)		Indigenous (5)		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
C.D.O.	3	11	8	9	3	5	1	4	15
Factories	2	12	1	16	0	8	0	5	3
Q.E.H.	1	13	5	12	1	7	0	5	7
K.M.B.C.	1	13	0	17	1	7	0	5	2
Police	2	12	1	16	4	4	0	5	7
P.W.D.	1	13	1	16	2	6	0	5	4
S.W.D.	6	8	5	12	3	5	0	5	14
Caritas	2	12	0	17	6	2	0	5	8
Kaifong Welfare Association	2	12	0	17	3	5	0	5	5
Others (Churches/ Govt. & Non-govt. Agencies)	14	-	11	-	9	-	1	-	35

Note: Numbers bracketted indicate the number of administrators interviewed within that religious category. And the figure marked with a "star" shows that there is always one person who gave no response.

Again in the case of the indigenous religious group, contact with other community groups were rare (see Table 3). One Buddhist administrator mentioned contact with the City District Office and one with other government department. They had had no contact with any of the other groups mentioned above, including the Kaifong Welfare Association. Thus it becomes apparent that these groups see themselves as fulfilling a strictly religious function. They are geographically located in this area but do not necessarily provide non-religious services for individuals in Kwun Tong nor assume a role as an organization with relationship to other groups in the area of Kwun Tong.

Among the other three groups, all have had some contact with the City District Office, other church groups, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Police, Public Works Department, and Social Welfare Department. While a few of both Council and non-Council Christian groups had contact with factories, the Catholic group did not. Contact with other denominations was the highest for all three groups (see the last row in the Table). In spite of transport being defined by the City District Office as Kwun Tong's biggest problem<sup>6</sup>, only 2 groups had contact with Kowloon Motor Bus Company, Ltd. One suspects complaints may go to the City District Office. Many groups mentioned contact with Social Welfare Department while 2 of the Council Christian groups had contact with Caritas (the Catholic Social Welfare Agency) and the Kaifong Welfare Associations. While the Catholic groups had a preponderance of foreigners as administrators, three of them had had contacts with the Kaifong Welfare Associations in contrast to both the indigenous groups and the non-Council Christian organizations who had no contact with the Kaifong Welfare Associations.

15 of the 45 persons had contact with the City District Office in contrast to 5 in contact with the Kaifong Welfare Associations (See row total). 36 claimed they had no contact with the government in the past 3 months, 28 in the past year.

The general impression one would be forced to conclude is that both the Council and non-Council Christian and Catholic groups have had very little and infrequent contact with other groups in Kwun Tong, other than those with government agencies and other church groups. This supports the indication above that the church organizations view themselves mainly in a religious role administering to people on an individual basis.

D. Administrator's use of time:

To investigate this thesis further, we can look at the administrator's use of time.

In the indigenous group it is difficult to determine the use of time. The monk-dean may well be only a part-time administrator. His presence in a religious ceremony is not as structured and essential as the more doctrinaire Christian-Catholic groups with their emphasis

<sup>6</sup> In an interview with the C.D.O., Nov. 1972.

on an ordained ministry. Most had difficulty in answering the questions and one could conclude it might be totally irrelevant to the monk-dean's role as it presently operates.

In the Christian-Catholic groups again most of the administrator's time is spent in religious services, in religious education and in contacting individuals. This is in keeping with the previous data where the organization views its role as religious - individual orientated in contrast to a community orientated - organizational function.

Table 4. Administrator's use of time

Use of Time (in hrs/week)	Council- Christians		Non-Council Christians		Catholics		Indigenous	
	Nos.	Col.%	Nos.	Col.%	Nos.	Col.%	Nos.	Col.%
Religious Activities (Worship & Religious Education)								
0	2	13.33	0	0	0	0	1	20.00
1 - 8	5	33.33	9	52.94	3	37.50	1	20.00
9 - 16	4	26.67	5	29.42	3	37.50	0	0
17 - 32	3	20.00	1	5.88	1	12.50	1	20.00
33 - 48	0	0	1	5.88	1	12.50	0	0
over 48	0	0	1	5.88	0	0	0	0
Not fixed	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20.00
No Ans.	1	6.67	0	0	0	0	1	20.00
TOTAL:	15	100.00	17	100.00	8	100.00	5	100.00
Other Non-religious Activities								
0	1	6.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 - 8	1	6.67	1	5.88	1	12.50	1	20.00
9 - 16	2	13.33	8	47.06	2	25.00	0	0
17 - 32	2	13.33	2	11.76	2	25.00	0	0
33 - 48	4	26.67	3	17.65	3	37.50	0	0
over 48	3	20.00	3	17.65	0	0	0	0
Not fixed	2	13.33	0	0	0	0	2	40.00
No Ans.	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	40.00
TOTAL:	15	100.00	17	100.00	8	100.00	5	100.00

## CHAPTER IV. THE VERTICAL DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN KWUN TONG

Having examined the horizontal level of the religious organizations in Kwun Tong and having seen that organizationally they do not operate as a strong link in a network of various organizations forming a community system since they view their function as primarily a religious one and deal with people as individuals rather than in groups, we can now examine their vertical structure. As mentioned previously, the importance of this dimension is twofold. If organizationally the religious group is Kwun Tong-centred with regard to personnel, finance, and policy-setting it might be assumed that the group will be more accourant with the area's needs than a group which operates as a branch of an organization linked to headquarters in another part of Hong Kong or abroad. On the other hand, contacts to the larger society are important for linking Kwun Tong to the wider Hong Kong society and possibly to ways of thought beyond Hong Kong.

To look at this we asked questions about the structure of the organization as well as the administrator's own education and training.

A. Location of the organization's headquarters:

One of the first points was to establish the actual location of the group's headquarters. Was it in Kwun Tong, Hong Kong or elsewhere?

Table 5. Location of organization's headquarters

Location	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics *	Indigenous
U. S. A.	8	10	6	0
England/London	4	0	0	0
Italy	0	0	2	0
Canada	0	1	0	0
Switzerland	1	0	0	0
Norway	1	0	0	0
Independent	1	6	0	5
TOTAL:	15	17	8	5

\* The Chinese administrator works with The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. The Belgian administrators regarded Rome as their international headquarters.



Only 12 (including the 5 indigenous groups) listed the question as "Not Applicable", since they were independent, the rest cited various countries in the following order: U.S.A., England, Italy, Canada, Switzerland and Norway. What this does indicate is that the majority of Christian-Catholic groups have some association with another country. To illustrate this in a fuller detail, let's consider the following table.

Table 6A. Relationship between international headquarters and local religious organizations

Frequency of contact	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous	TOTAL
Close	6	8	7	0	21
Little	5	3	1	0	9
Nil	0	0	0	0	0
No Answer	3	0	0	0	3
Not Applicable	1	6	0	5	12
TOTAL:	15	17	8	5	45

If we collapse the categories of Table 6A as shown below, one is inclined to conclude that all Christian-Catholic groups have some relationship with their international headquarters outside Hong Kong, whilst the 5 indigenous groups remain "Nil" in such relationship.

Table 6B. Relationship between international headquarters and local religious organizations - after dichotomization

Frequency of contact	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous
Have contact	11	11	8	0
No contact	0	0	0	0

Table 6C. Policy-making of the religious organizations

Decision-making on policy	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous	TOTAL
By H.K. Head-quarter	1	5	1	0	7
By a person at K.T. Office	0	1	0	2	3
By a committee at K.T. Office	4	3	0	0	7
By both Head-quarter & K.T. Office	6	3	0	0	9
No Answer	4	5	7	1	17
Not Applicable	0	0	0	2	2
TOTAL:	15	17	8	5	45

Now, let's turn to another level of analysis. How much say does the international headquarters have in the policy of the local religious organization? Apparently very little since the majority of Christian-Catholic administrators felt the control was through their Hong Kong headquarters, the result derived from Table 6C agrees with a question on finance in which only 10 out of 45 groups (see Table 7) listed the Hong Kong headquarters as contributing in any way to the financing of the Kwun Tong work. Most financing for all groups came from a combination of members donations and the Hong Kong headquarters.

Table 7. Decision-making on finance

Decision-making on finance	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous	TOTAL
By H.K. Head-quarter	5	4	1	0	10
By a person at K.T. Office	0	1	0	3	4
By a committee at K.T. Office	3	4	0	0	7
By both Head-quarter & K.T. Office	3	3	0	0	6
No Answer	4	5	7	0	16
Not Applicable	0	0	0	2	2
TOTAL:	15	17	8	5	45

Since it appears that while many of the Christian-Catholic groups are linked to an international organization, this international headquarter does not finance the Kwun Tong activities nor set policy.

#### B. Administrator

Having indicated some aspects of the vertical structure between the organization and the wider Hong Kong community and the international community we can now turn to the administrator himself to see how he relates to the wider community. First we will look at his level of education, his proficiency in English, whether he has studied or travelled abroad. This should provide some indication as to whether the religious-individual service orientation of the previous section is likely to be offset by a wider view, the introduction of new ideas and programmes and possibly a change in the orientation of the religious organization to a more community development concept of the religious group.

##### a) Education

The education of the total group varied from self-education to university graduate. The post-secondary category was used to include theological training which while lengthly would not necessarily include a degree. Among both the Christian groups most administrators had attained the post-secondary level and most of the Catholic administrators (seven out of a total of eight) are university graduates. But in the indigenous group, the administrator usually had a secondary education and one of them has not received any formal education.

Table 8. Analysis of education of administrator

Level of Education	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous
Self-educated	0	0	0	1
Secondary	1	1	0	3
Post-secondary	12	16	1	0
University	2	0	7	0
No Answer	0	0	0	1

b) Study overseas and travel abroad

In the following tables, questions refer only to Chinese administrators who were 38 in all (Chinese having obtained other nationality were still considered as Chinese).

Most administrators in Council and non-Council Christian groups and the one Chinese administrator in the Catholic group received their training in Hong Kong and/or China, and have not studied overseas. However, the Catholic Chinese administrator had travelled abroad, and among those administrators who have travelled abroad in the Christian groups, Council Christian officers were more numerous (see also Table 9 and Table 10). None of the administrators in the indigenous groups have studied or travelled abroad.

Table 9. Administrator travels abroad

	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous	TOTAL
Yes	6	3	1	0	10
No	8	13	0	5	26
No Answer	1	1	0	0	2
TOTAL:	15	17	1	5	38

Table 10. Administrator studies overseas

	Council Christian	Non-Council Christian	Catholics	Indigenous	TOTAL
Yes	2	2	0	0	4
No	12	15	1	5	33
No Answer	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL:	15	17	1	5	38

c) Proficiency in English

We view the proficiency in English of Chinese administrators from four aspects, namely: Writing (W), Reading (R), Speaking (S) and Listening (L). With such a composite weighting, we arrive at the following table.

Table 11. Administrator's proficiency in English

Degree of Proficiency	Council Christian				Non-Council Christian				Catholics				Indigenous			
	W	R	S	L	W	R	S	L	W	R	S	L	W	R	S	L
Proficient	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Satisfactory	6	11	7	9	6	8	5	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poor	7	2	6	4	9	8	11	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
None	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5
No Answer			2				1				0				0	

With the exception of the Catholic Chinese administrator and one administrator in the non-Council Christian group who felt competent in English, all other administrators in the Christian groups thought either their English was only satisfactory or even poor. And none of the administrators in the indigenous groups had knowledge of English.

From the above, it appears that the majority of the Council Christian groups have links to an international group and these have been described by administrators as fairly close. However, the policy-making and the financing is centred either in the Kwun Tong headquarters or in a combination of the Kwun Tong and Hong Kong headquarters implying that the religious organizations are free to respond to local needs as they see fit and are without a great deal of centralized control from beyond Hong Kong. While some of the administrators of the Christian and Catholic groups by their training, knowledge of English and travel abroad would seem to have considerable contact with a wider culture, there is a sizeable group who lack the opportunity to see other ways of doing things. Because their knowledge of English is not adequate, or at least they feel it is not adequate, they may not have access to widening their experience through reading in English. Much of the emphasis on the religious organization as a force in community development comes from developed countries. It would seem that the only access to such ideas for most of the administrators would be through the contact they have with their international headquarters since knowledge through observation

of organizations abroad and through written material in English has not been possible for them. This would account for the apparent discrepancy between what is written about as the community role of the modern religious organization and the more individualistic approach of most of the religious organizations in Kwun Tong.

## CHAPTER V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the data gathered on Kwun Tong religious organizations we find that a variety of organizations - Buddhist, Christian and Catholic - are engaged primarily in catering to the religious needs of believers who constitute a small percentage of the total population of the area. Beyond this, the Christian-Catholic groups engage in a variety of activities which bring them into contact with the general population of Kwun Tong. This contact is with all age groups; however, contact with adults tends to be on an individual basis rather than through group activity. Few activities or services are provided for people who work in Kwun Tong, and live elsewhere.

Through the religious organization's contact with the general population and owing to the fact that the religious administrator usually occupies a dual role as religious leader and head of an organization, it might be supposed that the religious organizations in co-operation with other non-religious organizations in Kwun Tong are a strong link in the development of a community system. However, the data revealed that there is a lack of contact between most religious organizations and other groups in Kwun Tong and that intra-community activity is decidedly weak.

From the above we are led to conclude that the greatest strengths of the religious organization - their contact with large numbers of the general population and the dual role of their administrators are under-utilized because of the lack of contact with other organizations in the area. The reasons for this situation will be suggested later in the paper.

Turning to the inter-community activities between Kwun Tong religious organizations and the wider society, we find that most of the organizations are relatively independent in finance and policy-making and therefore, they are free to respond to local needs as they view them. Going beyond Hong Kong society, many of the administrators mentioned the connections which the organization had to international headquarters thus providing a definite links to a wider culture. For some, this contact was great since they had studied and travelled abroad and they could read in an international language, English. For those who had not had the opportunity to study or travel abroad and who did not feel adequate in English, exposure to a wider culture and different ideas would only be

through whatever other contact they had with the international headquarters. This might be in the form of translated writings, overseas visitors, or locally arranged seminars.

Before going on to attempt an explanation for the weak intra-community activity on the part of the religious organizations in Kwun Tong, we can examine the possible ways in which religious organizations are known to affect the life of the community in order to evaluate those in Kwun Tong. Religious organizations are traditionally seen as

- a. Providing a place for individual and group worship
- b. Providing recreational enjoyment
- c. Providing educational experiences
- d. Performing health and welfare functions
- e. Providing a social structure of officials in various relationships to members
- f. Influencing the social process either in promoting change or in contributing to stability in the community.

In looking over the data, we see that religious organizations in Kwun Tong are concerned with items "a" to "e", but for a variety of reasons item "f" - influencing the social process - does not appear to be a conscious concern of most of the religious organizations in Kwun Tong. It appears that the majority of the groups do not see themselves in this role and hence very little activity is consciously structured to fulfill this function.

It is apparent that the administrators give considerable time to religious functions - the indigenous groups spending almost all of their time on this activity with Christian-Catholic groups also emphasizing it heavily. Added to this is the fact that the juridical framework of most religious organizations is concerned primarily with a specific group of people - those who live and worship in a given geographical area. Added to this is the fact that the number of believers



are relatively small, so we can assume that the administrator has fairly close contact with this group in a very influential way since he is ministering to their spiritual needs on an individual or small group basis.

Going a step further, we can consider the role of the religious organization in providing recreational enjoyment. As mentioned earlier, people in Kwun Tong have been resettled and ties to the religious group may be very important as a place to feel at home. Parish social activities are important for meeting new friends, providing new experiences and enabling different age groups to co-operate. In a densely populated area such as Kwun Tong, this well may be seen as one of the most significant activities of the religious organization.

Coming now to the final way in which religious organizations function and the one with which this study would be most concerned is the influence that the religious organization has on influencing change or promoting stability in the community. One reason why this poses a problem is owing to the lack of agreement concerning the role of the religious organization in relation to the social process. The problem centres on the question of whether the religious organization's main concern is to be with development (with all its ramifications) or with evangelization. While very few religious leaders would exclude one in favour of the other, the degree of emphasis is by no means clear or universally accepted.

What needs to be kept clearly in mind is that the organization being studied is not an economic, or a social, or medical, organization, but a religious organization and religious activity by the very nature of the group will be very important aspect of the organization in the eyes of religious officials and their followers if not in the eyes of the social scientists and the general public. Secondly, it appears obvious from the data that a certain dicotomy exists between much of the theorizing about the role of the religious organization in modern society and the actual practice in the field. There seems to an inverse ratio operating - the higher the level of theory, the greater the discrepancy between what is advocated and what is happening. International religious conferences advocate high level programmes of community development and local religious leaders spend most of their time preparing sermons and visiting parishioners.

Having revealed this dicotomy in Kwun Tong, perhaps it is time to look again at the role of the religious organization in the community. Given that most religious system and in particular, Christianity, value the individual, it can be expected that most of those engaged in work in the religious organization will have this basic orientation towards the individual and his religious needs. While one cannot ignore other human needs, it would seem that there will always be a tendency to prefer to deal with people individually rather than collectively. While the role of the religious organization can be viewed as one more social unit promoting a community system, it may be more profitable to examine the contribution it makes to a community by providing a place where an individual can find understanding and support in an impersonal urbanized society.

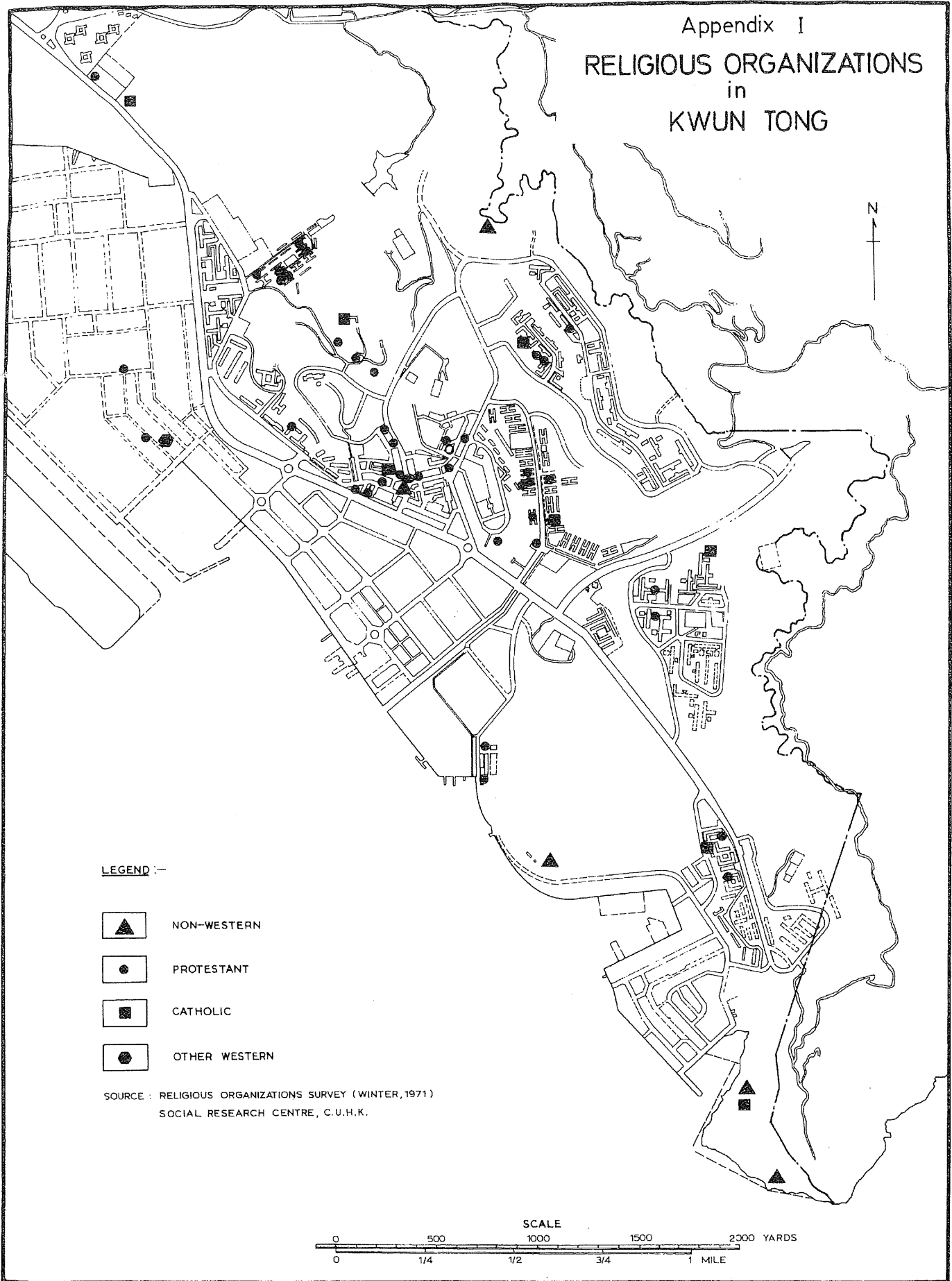
What then can we expect of the religious organization in relation to the development of a community system in Kwun Tong? As we have pointed out above, believers are a small proportion of the population and religious activities are considered important on the part of the administrators so we can conclude that religious organizations of all types are important for the religious-social function they provide to approximately 5% of the population of the area. If the trends in conversion to various religious continue at the present rate, this portion of the population will continue to remain small.

The religious organizations will more than likely continue to be in contact with a fair proportion of the general population through medical, social welfare and educational services. Probably more efforts will be made to reach the workers of the area, but unless the attitude and activity of the administrators change, these contacts will tend to be seen as service to the individual rather than intra-community activity to build up a community system in Kwun Tong.

The inter-community links, especially those beyond Kwun Tong and Hong Kong will probably continue to be strengthened and expanded as more and more communication between various parts of the world through visits, conferences and extension of the written word occur. If it is accepted that the religious organization of today has a role to play in co-operating with other civic groups in the area in order to strengthen the community system, then it is through these links to the wider culture

that one must look for the means of changing the attitude of the administrators who by their dual role, their contacts with the general population and their influence with their followers would enable the religious organization to be an important force in influencing the social process in Kwun Tong.

Appendix I  
**RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**  
 in  
**KWUN TONG**



Appendix II. List of Christian Groups in Kwun Tong\*

<u>Denominations</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
I. Council-linked Christian Churches	
Church of Christ in China .....	1
Methodist .....	1
Church of England .....	1
Baptist .....	3
7th Day Adventist .....	1
Salvation Army .....	1
Lutheran .....	7
TOTAL .....	15
II. Non-Council-linked Christian Churches	
Christian National's Evangelism Commission .....	4
Assembly of God Chapel .....	3
Pentecostal Holiness .....	1
Missionary alliance .....	2
Cicero Bible Church, Oriental Boat Missionary ....	2
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints .....	1
Independent .....	4
TOTAL .....	17
GRAND TOTAL .....	32
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\* Only those interviewed are included.