

Similarities and Differences: A Study of China's Religious Charitable Organizations Participating in Social Work

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Abstract—The issue of cooperation has key policy implications in the current debate about religious organizations in the participation in social work. Adopting a general inductive approach, the author reviews the affinity and conflict between religious charity and social work in China. This paper points out that due to the differences in practical institutional arrangements, there are some issues like the amateur charity, conflicts in service value and unprofessional service in the interaction between religious charity and social work in China. Implications for improving integration are discussed, and a call for promoting institutionalization of religious charity service, cooperating with professional organizations to promote specialization, and seeking cooperation in the field of welfare transmission are made.

Keywords—religious organization; social work; religious charity

I. INTRODUCTION

Religion has a positive effect on the ethos which shapes the emerging structure of welfare state. Western social work originates from religion. Religious charity and western social work have a strong interactive relationship. Religious charity promotes the quality and quantity of social services through coordinating with social work and makes up the shortfall of welfare state. China's religious charity has a deep historical foundation. Subject to institutions and other factors, religious charity service confronts various conflicts in the cooperation with social work. To this extent, exploring the interaction between religious charity and social work in China is conducive to promoting the local social welfare and improving the utilization efficiency of welfare resources.

II. HISTORY OF AFFINITY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS CHARITY AND SOCIAL WORK IN CHINA

China's religious charity and social work share the same goal in the field of social services, providing relief and support

to the vulnerable. Since ancient times, China's religions have participated in public welfare and charity. For example, Buddhism and Christianity were active in Medical, education and Relief practice. Religion, together with the government, clans and families, formed the cornerstone of social welfare in ancient times. In order to preach the Gospel in China, modern Christianity integrated into society by running schools, hospitals, orphanages and other means. Since the reform and opening up, along with the development of China's civil society, a large number of non-profit organizations emerged, forming a new interactive structure and analytical paradigm between religion and social fields. Since the 1990s, China's society has picked up steam in transformation, and the supply of social welfare has changed. From the paradigm of industrialism to the paradigm of civil rights, the government should change the welfare model of all-encompassing, and factors such as market and society should be incorporated into the welfare framework, so as to meet the increasing demands of citizens for social welfare of high incidence social problems. In this context, the state re-examines the relationship between the government, citizens and society, and attaches importance to the construction of a new model of government-led welfare in which the market and society participate in multiple ways. Guided by the idea of "small government, big society", the passive welfare responsibility has been altered to positive welfare responsibility, and social organizations have been encouraged to participate in the government services. The role of social organizations has been reexamined, including religious charities.

In this process, service supply and delivery are transferred from the state to the voluntary sector. The government encourages the voluntary sector of religion to participate in welfare transmission through incubation, service purchase and other means. Churches and groups with religious backgrounds play traditional service roles in education, housing, adoption,

etc., and even in hospice care, community safety, family relations, etc. Religious groups like Buddhism and Christianity widely participate in social work. Among them, there are some organizations with large influence in the society, such as the YMCA of Guangzhou and Guangzhou Sanyi social work service center, Shanghai YMCA and Shanghai Hua Ai service center, Huiling social work service center, the Amity foundation, Caritas Shengjing and so on. These organizations have a strong ability to raise resources. For example, the Amity foundation's revenue in 2018 is 168 million Yuan. The social work service projects of the above organizations involve education and training, medical and health care, disaster relief, helping the old and the young, community development and other fields. The re-establishment of the affinity between religion and social work can play a role in many aspects and stimulate the supply of social welfare, so as to satisfy the growing demand for welfare of the public.

III. INTERACTIVE DILEMMA BETWEEN RELIGIOUS CHARITY AND SOCIAL WORK IN CHINA

A. *The conflict between religious charity amateurism and social work sustainability*

The idea of religious charity service is sacred and utilitarian, and its social service is guided by the ultimate value of religion. However, this is unable to support systematic and sustainable social service, because the moral power derived from religion cannot achieve the social purpose of risk dispersion. In China's religious charity service, there are uncertainties like time continuity of the service subjects, the mobility and unprofessionalism of service providers. Service providers mainly come from interns and believers as there is a shortage of full-time employees. With limited time, the voluntary service providers may not provide sustainable services as they are driven by morality. In a word, the unstable workers are inability to provide professional and long-term services.

B. *Religious charity conflicts with the value of social work*

The value of FBO has the following conflicts with the value of the country's social welfare: The value of religious charity emphasizes the function of private charity and opposes the excessive involvement of the state in welfare^[1]. China's social work recognizes the dominant position and regulatory function of the state in the supply of welfare, and social welfare can be completed through the cooperation of the state, society and market. The social work in China is more pushed by the external force and lacks the local religious foundation. Therefore, it has strong administrative characteristics and has great differences with the religious value. Compared with the affinity between western social work and religion, the domestic social work has the characteristics of rationalization and disenchantment, so its compatibility with religion is weaker.

C. *Conflicts in service methods*

In terms of service methods, sometimes, religious charity follows the traditional sectarian practices, so it is quite different from professional social work methods. For example, the Catholic Church adopts conservative methods to prevent

youth violence and crime. The church tries its best to keep young people serving in the church and away from peer groups which are outside the church, so as to reduce the probability of deviant behavior. Whereas issues such as abortion, divorce and homosexuality are hard to tolerate. Many institutions of Catholic background fail to adhere to the principle of respect the self-determination of the people they serve and try to change the minds of the people they serve through a pluralistic approach.

IV. INTEGRATED APPROACH OF RELIGIOUS CHARITY AND SOCIAL WORK

A. *Promoting the institutionalization of religious charity services*

Many religious groups in China, churches, temples, and mosques have institutionalized social services, confined to providing alms and rice, donations, accommodation and other simple decentralized services. This kind of material assistance is not consistent with the scientific philanthropy, so it cannot cure the root issues once and for all. Therefore, we need to introduce charity organization and management, scientific skills and professional training into charitable service process. The charity service should be developed in a well-organized, institutionalized and centralized way, and at the same time, it should be rectified and the ultimate goal is to make service objects strong enough to feed themselves. Zheng Xiaojun pointed out that the contemporary religious charitable public welfare undertakings have confronted dilemma of Chinese styles, the practice of religious organization charity activity models is not in line with its identity, difficult to form "glass pocket" effect^[2]. This kind of predicament accompanied by the government contract outsourcing is quietly changing, as the cooperation between religious charity organizations and government is gradually strengthened. Many religious voluntary organizations in China are enthusiastic about public social services and have strong financial power. However, their social services do not go beyond the boundary of sanctity, and most of them serve religious people or groups within the church. Most organizations such as churches have realized that the charity model of "helping the poor with a basket" can no longer adapt to the modern social welfare situation. What Chinese society needs is systematic, continuous and professional services, and charity and social justice can only be realized by relying on the formal social system.

B. *Cooperating with professional institutions to promote specialization*

"Three parties interaction" is the idea to address the relationship among communities, social organizations and social workers in China. The cooperation between religious charity organizations, universities and professional social work organizations is at the initial stage. In terms of service skills, religious charity organizations, universities and professional social work departments complement each other. For example, religious charities and universities achieve a win-win cooperation by means of the practice base where religious organizations invite social work teachers in colleges and universities as a supervisor, organize charity workers through seminars and lectures, promote social welfare

professional college students practice work, and accept the social work and social security professional student volunteers to practice, addressing the shortage of high-quality volunteers for charity organizations. In terms of project design and demand assessment, charity organizations can rely on professional social workers to carry out project design, tap project needs, fully demonstrate the needs of service objects and communities and , form a preliminary understanding of the feasibility of the project by investigation and research, and reduce the risk of charity organizations in project development. During the project, religious charity organizations and professional social work organizations can cooperate with each other. For example, charity organizations cooperate with social welfare institutions to supply projects, design projects and plans. Charity organizations provide venues and volunteers, and social welfare organizations provide professional service personnel to carry out projects. The religious charity organizations can assist the clients to solve problems. Those that cannot be solved are referred to relevant welfare institutions. In addition, it is necessary to improve the capacity building of religious charity organizations by increasing government incubation projects or relying on mature social organizations. Charity organizations like Amity foundation and Jinde public welfare fund are also capable of incubating small scale, charity organizations that lack systematic services.

C. Seeking cooperation in the field of welfare transmission

Currently, China is building a moderately inclusive social welfare system for its large demand from the poor, orphans and the disabled. However, limited public welfare resources cannot meet the needs of diversified social welfare. From the perspective of maximization of welfare resources, the government's cooperation with religious charity organizations in welfare transmission is conducive to absorbing funds, infrastructure, volunteers and other resources of religious charity organizations. As Chinese government comes to adopt pluralistic welfare, social organizations, including religious charities, can fill the welfare gap with their resources to a certain extent, which objectively reduces the financial burden of the government and is conducive to the formation of a "small government, big society" model of civil society. Religious charities have a unique advantage in hospice care, deserting adoption, mentally disabled, family relationships and other fields. Therefore, taking religious charities into the field of social work can widen China's social work services scope; bring the category of social work services in line with international standards, improving the overall level of social work development. Social work institutions and religious charitable organizations both are the active in the implementation of social governance in China. Religious charity organizations are active in the community and provide a large number of preventive social services based on the perspective of community development. Religious charity organizations can play an important role in shaping the sense

of mission and belonging of the community because they have been rooted in the community for a long time, understanding the needs of the community through interactions with residents in the community. The integration of social work institutions and religious charity organizations can accelerate the adaptation of social work institutions in the community and realize residents' needs in a targeted way with social services.

V. SUMMARY

Having witnessed the historical changes, China's religious charity shows a trend of integration with social work, which is reflected in the aspects of value integration, service method and management institutionalization. In 2012, the state administration of religious affairs, in conjunction with the united front work department of the CPC central committee and other departments, issued the Opinions on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Circles to Engage in Public Charity Activities, which clearly put forward the main scope, basic forms, support and preferential policies available to religious circles and the basic principles to be observed^[2]. After that, changes have been made in the development of religious charities. With Christian association as the main body, Chinese Christian autonomous organizations speeded up the exploration to participate in public social services. For example, Christian association and Three-self Patriotic Movement Committee in Shandong province have promoted the development of Xinwangai service center for the disabled, support it as a subsidiary, and raise resources for it. Shandong Bible Seminary is also trying to explore ways to cooperate with social work majors to improve the professionalism of social services. In the future, one of the ways for the cooperation between religious charity and social work may be to set up a social work major in the seminary. Through the cultivation of professional talents, the service level of priests can be improved and the service can be extended to all churches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Supported by Humanity and Social Science foundation of Ministry of Education (Project Name: Grant No.18YJC730006); Supported by Humanity and Social Science Foundation of Ministry of Education (Grant No.12JJD730002)

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