

Necessity of Formation of Founding Boards for the Management of Religious Missions in the Islamic Propagation Organization of Iran

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ABSTRACT

Religious missions are formed to keep alive the Islamic values and culture and to transmit the messages of Islam to the world and today's generation. In this regard, they try to transfer this culture and message comprehensively. In addition to their cultural and social functions, these missions have played a unique role in the commemoration of Ashura events. In recent years, despite the increase in the passion of peoples' lamentations in the form of religious missions, the Islamic Propagation Organization has been considering to organize the religious missions by founding boards in order to increase their functionality. Therefore, this study tries to investigate the necessity of formation of the founding boards for the management of religious missions in the Islamic Propagation Organization.

This is a qualitative research in which the data were obtained through secondary sources and then were analyzed descriptively. Required data were collected using published and unpublished sources, including articles, publications, reports, books, newspapers, etc. The sources were available in the public libraries, special libraries in organizations, and higher education libraries in the province of Yazd. This is a qualitative study in which the data analysis is performed qualitatively.

KEYWORDS: Religious mission, founding board, Islamic Propagation Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

The wide network of religious missions with thousands of active members is the largest cultural-propagation network in Shia world. The large capacity, high position and the significant role of religious missions in deepening the culture of pure Islam of Mohammad and development of religious beliefs in the society (the Statute of the Council of Religious Missions, p. 3) has doubled the necessity of organizing this complex due to its unique role and immunity against damage.

According to paragraph 16 of Article 6 of the statute of the Islamic Propagation Organization, the organization is responsible for organizing and directing this wide propagation chain. A part of this responsibility was covered by establishing an expert-intermediate institution titled "Founding board of religious missions" in three levels of city, province, and central. This founding board in its threefold levels is the link between the Islamic Propagation Organization as the custodian of a part of religious culture and propaganda in one hand, and religious missions on the other hand (what a religious mission manager should know).

Moreover, this founding board has helped the organization to make appropriate decision for the optimal fulfillment of its serious responsibility through its advisory role in the years after the establishment. But experts and professionals in the field are still skeptical about the necessity of their forming or not forming. In this regard, this study investigates it is necessary to investigate the necessity of formation of the founding boards for the management of religious missions in the Islamic Propagation Organization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Islamic Propagation Organization was founded by the occurrence of revolution and establishment of theocratic government of Islamic Republic of Iran. Then, senior officials of the country constantly considered the necessity of creating institutions and organizations that each be able to promote cultural and religious ideals and beliefs of Imam and Islam followers in the Islamic society (Islamic Propagation Organization, 2014). To this end, it did not take long that revolutionary organizations were formed one after another by Imam Khomeini's decree and they were engaged in performing the duties including supervising the religious missions. Islamic Propagation Organization is one of the institutions which was founded with the aim to promote the elegant and rich culture of the true Islam, crystallize the spiritual life, and identify and promote belief indicators.

During its activities over the years, the activities of this organization were subject to change with regard to the prevalent needs of the society and according to the general policies of the Islamic system. From the year 2001 SH (Solar Hijri), with the Supreme Leader's particular attention, the basic aspects of education and research, development and spread of Islamic culture and studies, and familiarity with Quran was on the agenda of this organization through using new tools and modern technology as well as monitoring the religious missions (Islamic Propagation Organization, 2014).

Given the importance and volume of the codified and approved programs, and for the purpose of accurate and fast implementation of required, multiple changes in the structure of the organization started and also specialized institutions

were established. The founding institution is one of these specialized institution which was formed for the management of the religious missions.

Islamic Propagation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the supervision of the leader has important duties including policy-making, planning, directing, organizing, supporting and monitoring the demotic religious propaganda, preparing for finding faithful people, the rise of organizations of Islamic associations and similar populations, and monitoring their activities, and efforts for revival and improvement of studies, culture and history of Shi'ism in all possible ways, with emphasis on the unity of all religions and protecting them, in collaboration with relevant authorities and institutions (Islamic Revolution Document Center, 2014). Functions of the Islamic Propaganda Organization in recent years has made the organization to consider forming founder board for the management of religious missions for the purpose of favorable policy-making, proper planning, proper guidance, strategic organizing, and supporting and monitoring the demotic religious propaganda. Thus, the present study attempts to examine the success rate of predicted goals for establishing this founding board and possibly explain the necessity of formation of the founding boards for the management of religious missions to related administrators.

It is believed that the efficiency and performance of religious mission definitely increase through their being organized. According to reports and researches by the Islamic Propagation Organization, formation of founding boards is one of the ways for organizing religious missions. Thus, this research is important in two dimensions. First, if it is positive, it will help organizing and enhancing the performance of religious missions to promote Islamic culture and religious values. And if the assumptions and objectives of the research are not achieved, the necessity of formation of the founding boards for the management of religious missions will be reviewed and revised so that one day it happens that formation of the founding boards not only help organizing the religious missions, but also it imposes serious damages to it..

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

Collecting the required data for the study is an essential step. In this research, it is attempted to collect the data according to the regulations and apply the general principles of the research based on a coherent structure. This is a qualitative study. The data were obtained qualitatively and they were analyzed descriptively. The required data were collected using published and unpublished sources such as articles, publications, reports, books, newspapers and bulletins, etc. which were available in public libraries of Taft and Yazd city, special libraries of the Islamic Propagation Organization in the province, library of Payame Noor University (PNU) in Taft, libraries of Islamic Azad Universities and Public Universities in Yazd.

3.2 Instrument

In this study, the main instrument used to collect the required data is the researcher himself. It means that the researcher has personally and directly performed the note-taking, transcription, sorting and categorizing the data, interpretation of data, data analysis, and summarizing the secondary data.

3.3 Data Analysis

The present study is a qualitative study and its data analysis was also done qualitatively.

1) All the required secondary data were collected via secondary documents, including all print and non-print Persian cases and they were classified in accordance with the objectives of the study,

2) The classified and categorized data have been mixed with researcher's knowledge and understanding of the subject. In fact, the facts have been combined with researcher's perceptions,

3) The results have been published based on the research objectives.

The organizational range of the research is the Islamic Propagation Organization. The Islamic Propagation Organization is among the pervasive cultural institutions in the country that already has representative offices in all cities. The number of agencies of the Islamic Propagation Organization is more than 300 in the country. The obtained results have been published in accordance with the research objectives and questions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The founding board is a set of individuals who establish the organization. On the other hand, the religious mission is a demotic organization which focuses on promoting the Qur'an and Etrat culture and keeping alive the tradition of mourning. These missions have a demotic structure and they usually work with weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual programs in order to achieve predetermined goals. Descriptive findings of this study indicate that the founding board has had an important role in the management of religious missions and this is an ongoing process. These two interdependent. These are a set of qualified individuals who are experts and aware of religious issues. They will also be a great support for the management of religious missions and the spiritual progress under the supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization in the field of religion.

According to findings of the present research, since each organization or mission cannot continue its activities without support, thus it is also true about the religious missions. Religious missions based on the founding board are constantly and continuously active over the year. Efforts and the work of the researcher indicate that religious missions based on the founding board are active in all religious and cultural events throughout the year in addition to having enormous activities during Muharram days. They are also active in setting up religious laws, beliefs, and Quran classes, and pilgrimage-tourism projects. On the other hand, since religious missions work in some cases through an institutional or non-institutional cohesive demotic structure, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual in terms of location and position of

establishment, so they must respect and adhere to the regulations promulgated by the founding board. Religious missions based on the founding board are one of the oldest demotic religious organizations which have various functions. These functions include: Identity giving, education, relief (charities) and social function.

On the other hand, religious missions based on the founding board could be considered as powerful cultural arms. From the sociological perspective, religious missions are regarded as social institutions which are beyond religious organizations or associations which are only formed for the purpose of publication and glorification of religious customs and practices. They are rather dynamic and effective social organizations in the society with all its complexity and interconnectedness. This study shows that the founding board has a supportive role in religious missions towards their progress and evolution. Thus, if more attention is paid to this issue, it will lead to the reinforcement of all aspects of religious missions and the Islamic Propagation Organization can be more active in this area as a demotic and Islamic institution. Religious missions based on the founding board are one of the traditional symbols of the country which are naturally placed in the social context of our community and were constantly a way of giving services and reaching sublimity whether in terms of worshiping and closeness to God, purity and cleanliness of the soul or good deeds done through this way. Therefore, religious missions play a significant role in the development of Islamic culture and values in the society in various cultural and social aspects.

The findings of this study also indicate that religious missions can have a coherent and onward process in the progression of goals if they are based on a founding board and provide the necessary measures within the framework of their activities. Also, the role of Islamic propagation Organization in this issue should not be forgotten, because this organization is among the strong foundations of culture and propagation issues of pure Islam of Mohammad throughout our Islamic country, Iran.

The findings of the present research also suggest that religious missions are the suitable basis for achieving the goals of developing Islamic culture and this will not happen unless through the formation of founding boards along with an institution like the Islamic Propagation Organization. So using the help of founding boards and religious missions and as much as possible using all capacities, with the collaboration of relevant organizations such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization, we should seek to provide conditions so that we could prepare the context for the development of Islamic culture and Iranian values while informing the people. According to results of the present research, religious missions based on the founding board is a set of individuals with sincere motive whose presence is merely intended for the closeness to God and the increasing cooperation with the historical and social leader. Such motives are the essential components of their religious behavior. Discussion and planning on how to manage and create mourning sites in the city, ordering the religious flocks, Tekyeh, and groups in the city, control of mourning flocks traffic, planning for special ceremonies and considering the appropriate media reflection of the event at the national and provincial media are among the most important issues that are implemented through the participation of founding boards and under the management and monitoring of the Islamic Propagation Organization. Discussion and planning on how to manage religious missions through the formation of the founding board in the Islamic Propagation Organization have been one of the concerns which made the authorities to recognize the cultural pathology of religious events through an Islamic and revolutionary way. Accordingly, they could reach the predetermined goals in order to improve the performance of missions while providing practical strategies to remediate the damages and increasing the collaborative management in the cultural decision making, implementation of the activities, and attracting demotic participation.

The findings also indicate that growth, development and dynamics of religious organizations require appropriate and strong formations and in case their organizational hierarchy is implemented legally and fundamentally, there could be a ray of hope for achieving the goals. This research suggests that the formation of the founding board is one of the necessities which must be considered in religious missions through which and by offering required strategies from the perspective of sociology and Islamic culture and relying on the objectives of the Islamic Propagation Organization, actions could be taken in regard to protecting its sanctity that has a long-standing history. It is hoped that these missions can be more effective.

Religious missions hold religious ceremonies (religious holidays, births and deaths of infallible Imams) through the participation of founding boards and under the monitoring and management of the Islamic Propagation Organization mainly based on the promotion of Qur'an and Etrat. The Islamic Propagation Organization plays an important role in the formation and holding of these missions as well as the transmission of culture and religious, social, and political vision in the society. Thus, it must monitor this issue and be an effective guide in the right religious direction so that it could reach the ultimate destination away from any unwanted and hostile depravities of friends and enemies. On the other hand, the formation of founding boards for the management of religious missions in the Islamic Propagation Organization is one the necessities of the Islamic society. The reason is that due to the large capacity, high position and significant role of religious missions in deepening the culture of pure Islam of Mohammad and development of religious beliefs in the society, this requirement seems to be necessary. So, the need for organizing this large complex has been doubled due to its unique role and immunity against damage.

5. Conclusion

Policy-making, planning, guidance, organizing, and supporting and monitoring the demotic religious propaganda are among the activities of religious missions through the participation of founding boards and under the management and supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization. Policy-making, planning, guidance, organizing, and supporting and monitoring the demotic religious propaganda through the help of religious missions and participation of founding boards can help the problem-solving. According to the results of the study, while performing the mourning and

lamentation and commemoration of Islamic ceremonies, religious missions through the participation of founding boards and under management and supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization enter other aspects of social, cultural, moral, humanitarian, etc. and try to perform them with great seriousness. Of course, the main mission of the religious missions through the participation of founding boards and under management and supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization is performing the mourning and lamentation, reciting the tragedy of Hazrat Seyed Shohada martyrdom, reviving the passionate and sensational culture of Ashura, and commemorating religious rituals. But what is considered less is the social role of religious missions in society and their function in the interactions between various demotic levels of society. One of the effective functions of religious missions through the participation of founding boards and under the management and supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization is identity giving and modeling based on religious belief and observance of norms, values and ethics. People attend in religious flocks, the Tekye, and Hosseiniehs, and listen to Hadiths, moral lessons, the divine verses, and eulogies of panegyrist in praise of Mohammad and his Household, and scientifically and practically (education), they reach a culture which is based upon respecting the humanitarian spirituals, morals, and principles, as well as self-awareness and theology. This function helps the individuals to achieve a religious identity and define life.

Since the Islamic Propagation Organization supervises the effective social functions of religious missions and other religious institutions, the indirect control of society and rise of spiritual mood among people can increase their religious beliefs and devotion. In addition, one of the achievements of the activities of religious missions through the participation of founding boards and under the management and supervision of the Islamic Propagation Organization is filling people's leisure time coherently and institutionally. Individuals and members who have other similar social, ethnic, ideological interests will gather together in smaller groups during the time other than particular religious propagation occasions and Islamic events such as Muharram, Safar, Fatemiyeh, and Ramadan months. Then, they would implement various religious programs such as reciting Quran, prayers, and Ziaratname, holding educational, ethics, laws and religious sciences classes, as well as religious and cultural programs.

6. Suggestions

Therefore, paying attention to the function of religious missions which has been less considered and also losses and damages that are often imposed on these missions, requires that at least constitutive studies be conducted on this issue in research areas. As a result, appropriate solutions would be offered to address the shortcomings of religious missions' performance so that these missions will be able to continue their services more than ever. Finally, some suggestions are made by the researchers which are as follows:

1. Since religious missions and organizations are among the best centers for the promotion of Islamic culture and values with respect to their cultural identity, it is a necessity to form the founding board in all religious missions of the country.
2. With regard to the fact that the media and publications play significant role at all cultural and religious levels, publishing the dialogues which usually takes place through discussion and exchange of ideas by experts will reflect their opinions to the society.
3. Given that no similar research was discovered in the area, new scientific studies in the country will be helpful in this issue.

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