
GLOBAL SOCIETY

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**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AMERICAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE
COLONIAL PERIOD: FROM THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE¹**

Abstract: *The development of globalization makes the social organizations play an increasingly important role in the international relations. There are many social organizations in the USA, which influence the politic, economic and social affairs deeply. Most social organizations can be traced back to the colonial period of the USA. This paper discusses the reasons of the establishment of American social organizations in the colonial period from the historical and cultural perspective, which are European influence, religious influence, tradition of association and concept of charity. We discuss the influences of the four factors toward the establishment of American social organizations.*

Keywords: *American, social organization, association, charity*

Introduction

With the development of globalization, social organizations play an increasingly important role in the international relations. Many scholars pay attention to the social organizations research. As early in the 1940s, Lois G. Forer², Archie M. Palmer³, John W. Hupp⁴, Charles G. Gant⁵ and others analyzed the social organizations from the perspectives of law and business. In the 1970s, with the rise of the “global association revolution”, social organizations developed rapidly around the world, which also prompted the academic research on social organizations. In the 1980s, Brian Connell and John W. Gardner made a great contribution to the research on social organizations. And Lester M. Salamon, the professor of Johns Hopkins University, published a series of books and articles about social organizations study. Lester M. Salamon analyzed the theory and practice of social organization and made a foundation for the academic research on social organization⁶⁷¹²³.

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² Lois G. Forer. Divestment of Utility Properties to Public and Nonprofit Bodies. *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Feb., 1942), pp. 232-269.

³ Archie M. Palmer. Patent Policies in Educational Institutions and Nonprofit Research Organizations. *Science*, Vol. 105, No. 2719 (Feb. 7, 1947), pp. 154-155.

⁴ John W. Hupp. Corporations: Dissolution: Rights of Members of Nonprofit Corporation on Distribution of Assets. *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Feb., 1953), pp. 594-597.

⁵ Charles G. Gant, Bertha Rubinstein. Funds for Science: The Federal Government and Nonprofit Institutions. *Science*, Vol. 117, No. 3051 (Jun. 19, 1953), pp. 669-676.

⁶ Lester M. Salamon & Charles T. Clotfelter. The Federal Government and the Nonprofit Sector: The Impact of the 1981 Tax Act on Individual Charitable Giving: A Study for Independent Factor. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1981.

⁷ Lester M. Salamon & Alan J. Abramson. The Federal Government and the Nonprofit Sector: Implications of the Reagan Budget Proposals: A Study for Independent Sector, the 501(c) (3) Group, and the National Society of Fund

The USA has a long history of social organizations. Many social organizations have been established in the colonial period, which played an important role in the American Revolution, States construction and social governance. The history of the USA can be recognized as a history of interaction between the government and the society. This paper discusses the reasons of the establishment of the American social organizations in the colonial period. From four aspects, which are the European influence, the religious influence, the tradition of association and the concept of charity, we analyze the factors of the establishment of the American social organizations in the colonial period.

The European influence

In the 17th century, the colonists from Europe established 13 colonies in North America. The development of European social organizations profoundly influenced the establishment and evolution of the American social organizations. European social organizations had a long history and could be traced back to the ancient Greek and Roman charities. The recognition of trusts, which was based on Roman law, provided the legal foundation of the social organizations. In the early days of Europe, the churches played an important role in social affairs. The effect of the churches was 1)providing relief directly to the poor, 2)advocating the relief behavior of the believers as a form of atonement, 3)encouraging the believers to donate to the poor⁴. At the same time, with the control of land, tax, jurisdiction and school, the churches influenced most aspects of social affairs and undertook the basic social welfare responsibility. The churches had built large scale social welfare institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes for the poor. The expansion of religious organizations strengthened the important influence of the churches in social affairs⁵.

In the 16th century, with the rising of secular power, the church power became weak. Henry VIII implemented religious reforms and enacted the Act of Supremacy in 1534. Henry VIII confiscated the church property, such as schools and hospitals. The reform of Henry VIII made the church power to shrink and church's ability to control social affairs had declined. The reforms in the religion also changed the principle of charitable activities: 1)advocating personal charity was self-salvation; 2)redemption to God did not require donating property to the church; 3)the way to obtain redemption was no longer relying on heritage donations; 4)you could do that by doing good things during your lifetime.

The transformation of religious ideas had led people to gradually ignore the role of the church in charitable activities and founded their own organizations to implement charitable activities. There were a large number of private charitable organizations to provide public goods for the society, such as helping the poor and setting up schools. The religious attribute of charitable organizations had gradually faded⁶. According to the internal and external factors, the dominant effect of the church in charity had gradually disappeared and the role of government and private organizations had become prominent increasingly.

In the early 17th century, there was a serious social crisis in England, such as the trouble of economic development, population pressure, high unemployment rate, the gap between the rich and the poor. These social contradictions became increasingly acute. The government promulgated “the

Raising Executives. Washington, DC: Urban Institute,1981.

¹ Lester M. Salamon. *The Nonprofit Sector and the New Federal Budget*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute,1986.

² Lester M. Salamon, David M. Altschuler, Carol J. De Vita. *New York Nonprofit Organizations: The Challenge of Retrenchment*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1987.

³ Lester M. Salamon, Lisa A. Tunick, De Vita. Rhode Island. *Nonprofit Organizations: The Challenge of Retrenchment*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute,1987.

⁴ Yang Changdong. *The contribution of Christianity in middle Europe*. Beijing: social sciences academic press, 2000, pp.18-20.

⁵ Warren Weaver. *U.S. Philanthropic Foundations: Their History, Structure, Management and Record*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967, p.9.

⁶ Sandra. Cavallo. *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Truin, 1541-1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.54, p.60, p.64, pp.118-120.

Act of the Relief of the Poor 1601”, which stipulated that 1)the tax should be imposed on the people according to the division of the parish; 2)The income tax should be used to distribute relief funds to the poor; 3)The government should establish special nursing homes to take care of poor old people; 4)The orphans should be received and taken care of by special government-designated families; 5)The homeless should be placed in the government-established correctional institutions for control. “The Act of the Relief of the Poor 1601” had been regarded as a milestone in the history of charity¹. The government began to provide public goods such as maintaining social order, helping the poor for the society, based on “the Act of the Relief of the Poor 1601”.The activities showed the important influence of the government in social affairs.

The social organizations also played an important role in social affairs. For example, the charitable relief activities were mainly carried out through charitable trusts and charitable corporations. In the English legal system, legal persons were classified into collective legal persons, independent legal persons, church legal persons, secular legal persons, civil legal persons, charitable legal persons. The social factors of the Britain had experienced a long time accumulation and development. The origin of the concept of legal person was a new starting point for the Britain society to move forwards into the modern society². The legal person association and the national legal person were regarded as individuals similar to natural person. The individual subjective rights were protected and grown in the concept of legal persons. The origin of the concept of legal person was the key to understand the transformation of Britain society into the modern society.

The ideas and practices of the Britain in social governance affected the social governance model of the North American colonies. Some colonies established social relief regulations by emulating the British law, which required every town to take responsibility on relief by providing house and food for the poor and maintaining the basic survival guarantee for the poor³. The earliest relief in the North American colonies appeared in Rensselaer and then appeared in Boston in 1660. The private voluntary charity appeared in the Scottish Charity Association, founded in 1657 by 27 Scottish people who lived in Boston. More and more charitable associations were established, such as the Irish Charity Association in New York, the German Charity Association in New York, the French Charity Association⁴.

The North American colonies also inherited the corporate concept of the Britain, following British charity trust to develop the American charity. The European tradition had profoundly influenced the development of the American social organizations and social governance.

The religious influence

The religious factors have a pivotal position and influence in American history. The establishment and development of the American social organizations are also closely related to religion. The Puritan, who established the North American colonies, adhered to the Puritanism. The Puritans mainly had three characteristics: 1)in terms of religious ethics, they advocated Predestination; 2)in religious systems and the structure of the church, they opposed the bishop system and required the church organization democratized and advocated freedom of policy and belief; 3)in religious rituals and doctrines, they advocated the removal of the remnants of the Anglican Church; 4)in secular life, the Puritans advocated the democratization of political life; 5)they also promoted frugality, diligence, asceticism, wealth and hating laziness or evil⁵.

As a spiritual ideal and universal moral standard, Christianity had a profound influence on the formation of the American national character, said by Zi Zhongyun. Some basic principles advocated by religions had always been the common values that maintained the American society.

¹ Liu Cheng. *Comparative study on social security law*. Beijing: China labor and social governance press, 2006, p.229.

² Zhang Naihe. The Origin of the concept of Modern British Legal Person. *World History*, 2005(5), p.55.

³ Walre A. Friedlander & Robert Z. Apte. *Introduction to Social Welfare*. New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1974, p.40.

⁴ Huang Annian. *Contemporary American Social Governance Policies (1945-1996)*. Beijing: China social science press, 1998, p.6.

⁵ Dong Xiaochuan. *Confucian Culture and American Protestant Culture*. Beijing: commercial press, 1999, pp.40-41.

No matter how different they were in race, occupation, situation, social status, political views and even denominations, they generally agreed with the Christian orientation towards people, society and knowledge and had common standards of good, evil, right and wrong, as well as ethical and moral concepts. From president to homeless, everyone is at least theoretically equal before god. In the early days, the church was the center of education. The priest was the most respected person in the area and was the symbol of moral articles. The church played a great role in the development of education and the establishment of schools. With the development of science and economy, the church had become increasingly secular. But even today, the influence of religion, whether as a practical social force or an abstract spiritual force, cannot be underestimated¹.

Religious associations were established in the colonies at first. These religious associations played an important role in maintaining the daily order of the colonies, providing medical services and education. Max Weber, in his book “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, argued that religious associations began early in America. When they migrated to New England, they tended to precede the formation of political society (in the manner of the Mayflower Compact). The immigrants from Dorchester assembled a congregation and elected ministers and teachers before moving in 1619. In the Massachusetts colony, the church was a fully independent group, of course, accepting only citizens as members of the church. Church membership, on the other hand, was a prerequisite for civil rights. Similarly, in the early days of New Haven, church membership and good conduct (equivalent to being able to take part in communion) were preconditions for civil rights².

Religion also connected the colonists through rituals and other activities. Religions gathered scattered residents together and built a platform for the colonists to communicate with each other while spreading the Gospel. So residents could communicate information and exchange ideas. With the increasing social diversity, the religious enthusiasm of the colonists waned and then Theodore Frelinghuysen, a protestant pastor in New Jersey, led the religious awakening in 1720-1760. Pastors of various denominations preached on the road to persuade people to stick to their religion. Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were best known for their religious awakening. Jonathan Edwards spoke to people about god's omnipresence and his connection to their lives. Jonathan Edwards appeal people to value their faith³. George Whitefield also promoted the revival of religious consciousness through mass sermons, attracting more and more people to believe in religion⁴. Religious awakening made religious enthusiasm back to the colonists and regular worship became an important part of colonial life.

The colonists participated in collective religious activities for sharing information and exchanging ideas. The religious activities also became a link for the colonists uniting each other. The significance of religious awakening transcended the religious category and became one of the important sources of American revolutionary thought⁵. The religious awakening revolutionized people's inherent and traditional habits of thinking, feeling and behavior. Meanwhile, it revolutionized people's mind and promoted the reconstruction of American society⁶.

As signed in the Mayflower Compact, “for the Glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honor of our King and Country” was the reason for these immigrants to go to North America. It was the sacred mission of immigrants to build “a city upon a hill” in North

¹ Zi Zhongyu, Chen Lemin. *Cold Eyes to the Ocean: A Century of Revelation (Vol. 1)*. Beijing: Life • Reading • Xinzhi Sanlian Bookstore, 2000, p.31.

² Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. translated by Kangle& Jian Huimei. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2007, p.204.

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⁴ Page Smith. *Religious Origins of the American Revolution*. Montana: Scholars Press, 1976, pp.134-136.

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⁶ Tracy Josephthe. *Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield*. New York: Dayton&Newman, 1842, Viii.

America and lead the whole world to the light. The charity and mutual assistance advocated by religions enabled many charitable organizations to be established. For example, clubs, associations and fraternities took charity as their important activity. The clergy also served as a teacher in schools. With the help of religious organizations, many colleges were established in the colonies, including some world-renowned universities such as Harvard University, which started the development of American higher education. Therefore, religion plays a very important role in the establishment of the American social organizations.

The tradition of association

The American society has a strong tradition of association. Americans naturally form various associations to face challenges and solve problems. First of all, there were land disputes between the immigrants and the American Indians. Meanwhile, the Britain and France, Spain and other countries' military force in North America was serious threat for the colonists. Therefore, the colonists established militias to protect themselves. Secondly, the early colonial immigrants were weak and scattered in multiple gathering points. It was difficult for a single immigrant family, which lacked labor force, to cope with heavy agricultural activities. The colonial immigrants helped each other to form agricultural cooperatives for agricultural production. Moreover, the shortage of doctors and medicines in the colonies made a serious threat to the colonists. The doctors among immigrants joined together to establish a series of medical associations and medical organizations. For the need of survival, most organizations established in the early colonial period, which integrated resources and concentrated efforts to cope with survival challenges.

In "Democracy in America", Tocqueville described the American tradition of association. When traffic jams occurred, a group of people immediately gathered and formed a temporary group to handle the problem. If there was some kind of celebration, it was also possible to organize a community, perhaps just for making the celebration more formal and glamorous. Some communities aimed to resist enemies who wandered outside the moral nature of human beings, or to reduce the ill of society. Furthermore, American social organizations were used to maintain society order, such as promoting industry and commerce and maintaining social morality and religion¹. The strong tradition of association promoted numerous social organizations. The establishment of these social organizations provided guarantees for the American people to safeguard their rights and compete with the authority of the government.

The tradition of association and the strength of social organizations provide great energy for American society and shape the long-term interaction framework for American society and government. As Thomas Paine had pointed out that man existed before government and there must be a time without the government and rulers. Therefore, there was nothing to make contracts. So the fact of the matter was that many individuals, by their own right of self-determination, entered into a contract with each other to produce a government. This was the only way for a government to having the right to be established and the only principle for a government to having the right to exist. There was a natural game relationship between government and society in Paine's opinion. The American society had a strong force and the American people have a common appeal on restricting the power of the government, which is highlighted by the debate between federalists and anti-federalists in the early days of the founding of the USA. The interactions between the government and the society in the American history became an important factor affecting the development of American social governance.

The concept of charity

The concept of charity also plays an important role in the establishment of American social organizations. Puritanism contained the principle of encouraging charity and the puritans also followed the European charity concept and tradition to establish the early American charity. In

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. translated by Zhou Mingsheng. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2014, p.228.

1630, John Winthrop, the Puritan leader, actively preached to the colonists, advising them to help others who were in trouble. Everyone was equal before god and there was no advantage or disadvantage between each other. Rich people should be grateful for god's favor and should use their wealth to relieve the poor and improve the inequality in society. It was a disgrace and a blasphemy to keep wealth for oneself, which was against god's providence. Helping others was noble, moral and following god's will¹. John Winthrop's advocacy of charity concept made an ideological foundation for the development of American charitable organizations and promoted the establishment of a large number of American charitable organizations.

Like John Winthrop, Cotton Mather also made outstanding contributions to the development of American charity. Mather preached to the American people the importance of doing good, pointing out that doing good was not only a way to wash away sins, but also a noble responsibility entrusted by god. Perseverance in helping others and doing good would surely be forgiven by god and also would bring people unsurpassed nobility and happiness. People should unite and gather to do charity. In Mather's opinion, to do charity was not simply to donate money, but to help the poor². With the advocacy of Mather's concept of unity and charity, American charitable organizations were established one after another. Mather promoted American charity from an individual behavior to a collective enterprise.

Along with the great promotion of religious charitable activities, a large number of politicians also promoted the upsurge of charitable consciousness and the establishment of charitable organizations. For example, Benjamin Franklin actively advocated the idea of charity and engaged in charitable activities. Franklin emphasized that the goal of charity was to transform society and help the poor fundamentally. Franklin pointed out that money and relief can only lead to the recipients' dependence psychology, which would result giving up the self-survival consciousness. Therefore, Franklin suggested that charitable activities should be transformed from giving money to providing labor opportunities. He suggested that training schools should be set up to provide education and training for the poor to enrich their knowledge and improve their skills so that they can live on their own. Only eradicating the root of poverty would truly help the poor³.

Franklin practiced his idea of charity. He donated a lot of money to establish various charities to help people in trouble. Franklin's thought and practice pushed American charity from the religious field to the secular field. There were more and more people doing charity, and there were more and more types of charitable organizations, both church and secular. There were both individual and group charitable organizations. There were both private and government charities.

The establishing charitable organizations and conducting charitable activities became an American consensus. According to moral standards, the man will be recognized as a middle class only by doing charity⁴. With the promotion of leaders such as Winthrop, Mather, Franklin and so on, the charitable atmosphere in the American society had become more and more intense. More and more people devoted themselves to charity and they successively established charitable organizations and implemented charitable activities. Those charitable organizations helped the social poverty and promoted the continuous development of the American charity.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, there are many factors for the establishment of the American social organizations in the colonial period. The Europe, especially the Britain, deeply influenced the American social organizations. Such as the Act of the Relief of the Poor provided legal framework

¹ John Winthrop. A journal of the transactions and occurrences in the settlement of Massachusetts and the other New-England colonies, from the year 1630 to 1644. Hartford : Elisha Babcock, M,DCC,XC, 1790, p.156.

² Cotton Mather. An Essay Upon The Good, That Is To Be Devised And Designed By Those Who Desire To Answer The Great End Of Life, And To Do Good While They Live. Boston in N. England : B. Green, 1710, X.

³ Benjamin Franklin. *The life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin. Written by himself*. Philadelphia: Printed for Benjamin Johnson, No. 147, High-Street, M,DCC,XCIV, 1794, p.143.

⁴ Lori D. Ginzberg. *Women And The Work of Benevolence; Morality, Politics, And Class In The Nineteenth-Century United State*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p.24.

and the European social organization's structure was the basic model for the American social organizations. With the arrival of immigrants from Europe, more and more social organizations were established which were similar with the European social organizations.

Meanwhile, the religious activities provided a public field for the establishment of the American social organizations. The communication and interaction in the religious activities gathered and united the people to form a group based on the similar interest. And the group became larger and larger with the participation of others. At last, the group developed into a social organization to protect people's benefits.

Furthermore, the tradition of association is also a key factor of the establishment of the American social organizations. The association is the natural and inherent consciousness of American, which promoted American to establish numerous social organizations to cope with various challenges in the colonial period.

The factor of the advocacy of charity also cannot be ignored. Many philanthropists did so many charitable activities, which made examples for others and led the trend to implement charitable activities. Many charitable social organizations were established for charity in the colonial period.

The American social organizations play a great role in the social governance of the American society. The American government's decisions in politics, economy, diplomacy and other aspects are all influenced by the social organizations. The decision-making model of the American government is based on the dual game between the government and the society. Therefore, the research on the social organizations is a key to understand the American internal and external affairs. Therefore, it makes the signification of a study on the establishment of the American social organizations.

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