

Theological foundations of American evangelical missions and its influence on their evangelistic approach in Qajar Iran

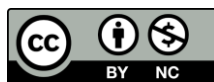
Azam Fooladi_Panah , Mohammad Ali Kazim-Beygi,

Jamal Moosavi

Department of History of Islamic Culture & Civilization, Faculty of Theology,
University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Original Article Main Object: Interdisciplinary Scope: Iran</p> <p>Received: 16 May 2024 Revised: 03 June 2024 Accepted: 09 June 2024 Published online: 22 June 2024</p> <p>Keywords: American missionaries, Christianization, civilization, postmillennialism, Qajar Iran, the second great awakening movement.</p>	<p>The widespread and systematic presence of Christian missions in Iran goes back to the Safavid period. Protestant evangelical missions also came to Iran from the Qajar period with the aim of propagating Protestant Christianity. Among the Protestant missionaries in Qajar Iran, the American missionaries were older and more powerful. For this reason, they were able to be present and active in Iran for a long time. One of the ways to explain the performance of Christian missions is to examine their intellectual and ideological foundations. The present study aims to explain the ideological foundations of the American evangelical missions in Qajar Iran with the historical-analytical method and using library sources, and then examine its effect on their evangelistic approach in Qajar Iran and answer the question why American missionaries spread Christianity in Qajar Iran by creating a network of schools, hospitals and service centers. The results of the research show that the American missionaries, based on their own ideological foundations, Christianized the Iranian society through civilization. They started the civilization and westernization plan with tools such as schools, hospitals and publications, and they followed this method until the end of their presence in Iran and expanded it.</p>

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* Corresponding author: ✉ fooladi.panah@ut.ac.ir,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4341-5479>

Extended Abstract**Background**

The presence and activities of foreign missionaries in Iran during the Qajar era is one of the important topics in the social and religious history of Iran. Qajar Iran was the destination of many Christian missionaries, and during this period, French, English, German, Russian, etc. missionaries spread Christianity in many different ways in many parts of Iran. Meanwhile, American missionaries were older and more powerful than other missionaries, and due to their financial resources and special evangelistic methods, they influenced many regions and nationals of Iran. There are many ups and downs in this path, and they came to work with suitable ways to work, and this is how they have a continuous and stable presence in Iran for about a century (1250-1358 AH/ 1834-1940 AD). The activities of the American mission had a humanitarian form, which was needed by Iran, therefore, the presence of this mission was accepted by the Qajar authorities and the masses of the people in the fields of health, education, medical, etc. services.

Aims

The present study aims to explain the reasons of American missionaries spread Christianity in Qajar Iran by creating a network of schools, hospitals and service centers.

Methods

To explain the ideological foundations of the American evangelical missions in Qajar Iran with the historical-analytical method and using library sources, and then examine its effect on their evangelistic approach in Qajar Iran, the independent variable is the ideological foundations of American evangelical missions and the dependent variable is the evangelistic approach of Qajar Iranian evangelistic missions. This research has been carried out with a descriptive-analytical approach in the field of library-documentary studies. The research method is a historical method based on the analysis of events. In this method, collecting information in line with the research problem, measuring and evaluating information, comparing information and describing it, analyzing events in line with research questions and objectives, and evaluating the results with the research hypothesis have been followed.

Results

The activities of American missionaries in Iran entered a new phase from 1870. This development was due to the change of American missionaries active in Iran. Thus, the early American missionaries, who were mostly Millennialist Congregationalists, gave way to Presbyterian missionaries. From the ideological point of view, the Presbyterians believed in the issue of Christianization through

civilization. This issue automatically changed the operation of the American mission in Iran. American evangelical missions needed tools such as schools, publications, and medical centers to implement the plan of Christianization through civilization. The results of the research show that the American missionaries, based on their own ideological foundations, Christianized the Iranian society through civilization. They started the civilization and westernization plan with tools such as schools, hospitals and publications, and they followed this method until the end of their presence in Iran and expanded it.

Conclusion

In the 19th century, following religious developments and reforms in the West, especially in the United States of America, the activities of American foreign missionary missions expanded in different regions of the world. In this process, Iran was one of the target areas that the American evangelical delegations entered and worked in in 1834/1249 AD. Considering the religious sensitivities of Qajar Iran, regarding the promotion of Christianity among the majority of Muslims, American evangelical delegations focused on promoting Evangelical Protestant Christianity among the Nestorians of Azerbaijan region. The American evangelical missions active in Iran, which were more than a branch of the Presbyterian sect since 1870, based on their theological ideology, along with Christianization, were thinking of civilizing the Iranian society and saw these two as complementary to each other. Thus, in the form of providing educational and medical services and through schools, hospitals and publications, they were able to communicate with the Iranian society, make them civilized and evangelize them. American evangelical delegations were not very successful in the Christianization project of Iranians, but they were able to play an important role in the field of civilizing and westernizing Iranian society.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to the original idea, study design.

Ethical considerations

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is

available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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