

## ABSTRACT

Panel 1: Charities: The Invisible Hand in a Globalizing World

### **Building up Gentry Charity in Cities: The *Dong Jing* Assembly as a Religious Network for Elite to Shape Local Integration on Yunnan Frontier since the Sixteenth Century, Southwest China**

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The *Dong Jing* (洞经) Assembly is a combined religious teaching based on musical instrumental performances including Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian classic texts and rituals, which has been mainly practiced in cities in Yunnan since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This religious assembly has gradually developed to be a charity platform for social integration carried out by the local cultural and political elite, rather than officials. Known as the local gentries, including retired officials and famous scholars, as well as rich merchants, some local elite who represented different interests had used the *Dong Jing* assembly as their network for local control, competition and cultural innovation. The *Dong Jing* Assembly therefore worked as the leading power in cities in Yunnan and acted through their charity founding for disaster relief, medicine insurance, local security and communal rituals performance. So, the *Dong Jing* Assembly not only reshaped local religious rituals in the cities day to day life, but also became a militarized agency since the 1860s, which provided a cultural basis for the later local and provincial autonomy of warlord powers. In brief, the *Dong Jing* Assembly had functioned as a social mechanism for local integration and political negotiations due to its cultural hybrid characteristic, which was adept at dealing with the cultural diversity of city residents in Yunnan frontier. However, it was still based on a core of entitled Neo-Confucian scholars, who had wanted to develop a new version of local interpretation about Confucian ideology, since the time of a Neo-Confucian scholar, Li Yuanyan, in late Ming. Therefore, generous classics for *Dong Jing* rituals had been created by these cultural elites. Regarding *Dong Jing* Assembly as a long-term religious movement, it had reshaped a local elite culture for leading scholars and political leaders for their social welfare autonomy and cultural innovation in the process of making Yunnan into a relatively self-governed frontier space. The case of the *Dong Jing* Assembly system shows that there used be a local movement based on a cultural channel related to the state. This was practiced by a local ruling elite through their efforts to build up a cultural and political sphere locally, which could embrace cultural diversity going beyond the orthodox Confucian. Therefore, the *Dong Jing* Assembly had been a fundamental cultural network of social integration in making Yunnan different, even it continued as an important frontier of China.