

MEDIA COVERAGE at INTERNATIONAL TAOIST FORUM, Hengshan

Report by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation

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On November 14, 2011, Journey of Civilization, was broadcast on CCTV4 to millions of viewers throughout China. It featured a lively discussion on Daoism recorded on the Monday night of the conference. It was hosted by TV host Liu Fangfei, and took the form of a discussion between ARC's Martin Palmer and former vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Mr Xu Jialu. It was billed as a Discussion about Taoism between East and West. 4

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Are China's Rulers Getting Religion? Article by Ian Johnson. With worsening inflation, a slowing economy, and growing concerns about possible social unrest, China's leaders have a lot on their plates these days. And yet when the Communist Party met at its annual plenum earlier this week, the issue given greatest attention was not economic policy but what it described as "cultural reform." 4

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BY LI YAO. Taoism is the other faith I would embrace if I was not a Christian," said Martin Palmer, whose love of Taoist deity, the temples, the peace, and the sacred mountains dates back years. Palmer, the globetrotting secretary-general of the Alliance of Religions and Conversation, began working 16 years ago with the Chinese Taoist Association (CTA), starting with protecting the ecology of sacred mountains. 8

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BEIJING IS SEEKING INSPIRATION FROM RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS TO HELP THE NATION THROUGH A "CRISIS OF SOCIAL MORALITY". BY VICTORIA FINLAY IN HENGSHAN, HUNAN PROVINCE. The central government sponsored a three-day International Taoism Forum on Hengshan mountain, a sacred Taoist site. The event, set to end today, received heavy coverage from state media, in a sign Beijing might be tapping ancient Chinese philosophy to bolster its campaign for more a more stable and compassionate society. 9

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NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 24 -- From a call for burning fewer incense sticks to living a simpler life, from an appeal to ban the use of tiger bones for making medicine to the issuance of a global ecology statement, Chinese Taoists have won recognition and applause from an international environmental protection group for their conservation efforts. "Taoism is one of the most best ways to achieve sustainability," said Martin Palmer, secretary-general of the U.K.-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), while attending the ongoing International Taoism Forum held in central China's Hunan province. 11

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HENGSHAN, Hunan - An international Taoism forum opened on Sunday, attracting 500 scholars from 21 countries and regions to Hengshan Mountain, a sacred Taoist site in Central China's Hunan province. Liu Yunshan, head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), announced the opening of the forum. 13

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NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 23 (Xinhua) -- China hosted a high-profile International Taoism Forum here on Sunday in an effort to spread the religion's influence on the world stage. In a message to the forum, China's senior leader Jia Qinglin urged the 500 participants from more than 20 countries, including China, the United States, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Japan, to explore the essence of Taoism and make Chinese culture more attractive in the world. 15

OCTOBER 22 XINHUA ENGLISH NEWS 17

HENGSHAN, Hunan, Oct. 22 (Xinhua) -- An international Taoism forum that will attract 500 scholars from 21 countries or regions will open at Hengshan Mountain of central Hunan Province on Sunday, said organizers at a press conference Saturday. Bawa Jain, Secretary General of World Council of Religious Leaders, Martin Palmer, head of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and Ren Farong, head of the Chinese Taoist Association will attend the 3-day forum, organizers said. 17

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NOVEMBER 14 CCTV Journey of Civilisation, 45 minute TV broadcast interview with Martin Palmer

On November 14, 2011, Journey of Civilization, was broadcast on CCTV4 to millions of viewers throughout China. It featured a lively discussion on Daoism recorded on the Monday night of the conference. It was hosted by TV host Liu Fangfei, and took the form of a discussion between ARC's Martin Palmer and former vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Mr Xu Jialu. It was billed as a Discussion about Taoism between East and West.

The programme can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/d55882n> It takes a short time to load.

OCTOBER 29 New York Review of Books reported in China Digital Times (see below)

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2011/oct/29/china-getting-religion/>

Are China's Rulers Getting Religion? Article by Ian Johnson. With worsening inflation, a slowing economy, and growing concerns about possible social unrest, China's leaders have a lot on their plates these days. And yet when the Communist Party met at its annual plenum earlier this week, the issue given greatest attention was not economic policy but what it described as "cultural reform."

The concern appears quixotic, but China is now in the grips of a moral crisis. In recent months, the Chinese Internet has been full of talk about the lack of morality in society. And the problem is not just associated with the very rich or the political connected—concerns shared in western countries—but with the population at large. This has been precipitated in part by a spate of recent incidents in which people have failed to come to aid of fellow citizens caught in accidents or medical emergencies. A few weeks ago, a two-year-old girl in Guangzhou was hit by a car and left dying in the street while eighteen passers-by did **nothing to help her**. The case riveted China, causing people to ask what sort of society is being created.

So, no sooner was the plenum over than the party indicated that it would limit the amount of entertainment shows on television and possibly **set limits on popular microblogs**. While it is easy to read this move simply as censorship, which it certainly is, it also reflects the new preoccupation with morality: many of the banned shows are pure entertainment—the party now wants more news programs—and Chinese

microblogs have long been a forum for anonymous character assassination. Meanwhile, though it has been far less noted, Beijing is giving new support to religion—even the country’s own beleaguered traditional practice, Daoism.

After decades of destruction, Daoist temples are being **rebuilt**, often with government support. Shortly after the plenum ended, authorities were convening an International Daoism Forum. The meeting was held near Mt. Heng in Hunan Province, one of Daoism’s five holy mountains, and was attended by 500 participants. It received extensive play in the Chinese media, with a noted British Daoist scholar, Martin Palmer, getting airtime on Chinese television. This is a sharp change for a religion that that was persecuted under Mao and long regarded as suspect. What, exactly, is gong on here?

Daoism (sometimes spelled Taoism) began as a philosophical tradition in early China. Its most famous work is the *Daodejing*, attributed to a person known as Laozi, who may have existed in the 6th century BCE. It developed into an organized religion by the 2nd century CE. Although its practices vary widely, it generally advocates self-discipline and good living as a way to attain immortality, as well as elaborate rituals to purge individuals or communities of evil. Its ideas of harmony with nature underlie many aspects of Chinese culture, from calligraphy and painting to architecture and medicine. For generations, its formal teachings were passed down by Daoist priests as well as lay practitioners.

During the Mao years many of its traditions, such as fortune telling, geomancy, possession by spirits, and popular rituals, were banned as superstitious. But it’s been making a limited comeback. Although still dwarfed by Buddhism, as well as newer religions, like Christianity, the number of Daoist temples has at least tripled over the past fifteen years, according to official figures. Priests and nuns who run the temples provide services to pilgrims and go out into the community to consecrate homes or businesses, and perform funerals. Others spread Daoist ideas through martial arts, such as Tai Chi, or medicine—two disciplines rooted in Daoism.

One reason authorities are now embracing Daoism as a source of moral guidance is that, in contrast to Christianity—which sometimes **runs afoul of authorities**—Daoism is widely seen as an unthreatening, indigenous religion. That’s true of Buddhism as well, which was founded in today’s India but took root in China 2,000 years ago. But Buddhism has long had a cadre of devoted, missionizing monks and nuns who try to spread the word, whereas Daoism is sometimes hard to crack—you often have to earn a Daoist master’s trust and respect before he or she will take you on as a disciple. Moreover there’s no Daoist Gideons International, dropping the *Daodejing* in Chinese hotels. And then, of course, Daoism can be seen as the original tune-in-turn-on-drop-out religion; many Daoist luminaries have preferred a life of contemplation to pursuit of earthly power.

Still, the *Daodejing*, says a lot about ruling, and one translation of that work’s title is “The Way and its Power.” Certainly, the text can be read profitably by authoritarians

(translations from Lao-tzu's Taoteching, Copper Canyon Press, 2009):

the rule of the sage empties the mind but fills the belly

Then again there are other verses that might well trouble a government trying to fight a perception that it is corrupt:

The reason people are hungry is that those above levy so many taxes

or:

the reason people are hard to rule is that those above are so forceful

Another part of Daoism that isn't so easy for the government to swallow is that it has become a world religion, one that a government can't easily control. Four months ago, for example, **a very different international conference on Daoism** had been held at exactly the same location—a conference that the government was far from excited about. Organized by Chinese and international scholars and practitioners, the conference did not have as much high-level support but it reflects something potentially more powerful: an explosion of popular interest into Daoism and Chinese religion. The authorities not only shunned it but put up roadblocks. It was almost canceled at the last moment and was eventually curtailed from five to three days, with many panels cut or abbreviated.

I attended that conference, which focused on the role of women in Daoism, commercialism of its temples and other issues facing the religion, and observed the discomfort of Chinese officials as the organizers announced that next year's conference was going to be held at a German lakeside resort. One official later said to me that it should be up to the Chinese government, not a non-government organization of scholars, to determine when an important Daoist conference should be held. He was also skeptical of many of those who came, some of whom were practicing Daoists or martial artists—who were these people? Many weren't even Chinese!

Tellingly, none of the participants from June—and very few foreign scholars save Mr. Palmer—took part in the recent government-sponsored conference. It wasn't posted on scholarly websites and was treated by Beijing as something that didn't really concern the outside world.

But the more China's leaders try to use religion for their own purposes, the more difficult it may be to have an actual effect on perceived problems like society's moral decline. Despite the rebuilding of temples, religious life is still tightly limited. Many practitioners do find a deeper moral answer in the teachings of Daoism and other religions. I have seen volunteers at Daoist temples provide food for the poor or engage in disaster relief. The teachings of compassion and unity with nature also

make sense in a country that has pursued economic gain at the expense of charity and concern for the environment.

But religion is still fighting an uphill battle. The recent conference gave Daoism an unprecedented amount of media attention, but most of the time religious life is completely absent from Chinese television or other media outlets. Then again, as the Daodejing makes clear, human endeavors often miss the point: Thirty spokes converge on a hub but it's the emptiness that makes a wheel work

October 29, 2011, 10:45 a.m.

OCTOBER 29 China Digital Times blog

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2011/11/ian-johnson-are-china's-rulers-getting-religion/>

In the New York Review of Books, Ian Johnson looks at the debate over morality in China following the death of toddler Yue Yue on Foshan, and whether Daoism may be one option to fill the spiritual void in Chinese society:

The concern appears quixotic, but China is now in the grips of a moral crisis. In recent months, the Chinese Internet has been full of talk about the lack of morality in society. And the problem is not just associated with the very rich or the political connected—concerns shared in western countries—but with the population at large. This has been precipitated in part by a spate of recent incidents in which people have failed to come to aid of fellow citizens caught in accidents or medical emergencies. A few weeks ago, a two-year-old girl in Guangzhou was hit by a car and left dying in the street while eighteen passers-by did nothing to help her. The case riveted China, causing people to ask what sort of society is being created.

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After decades of destruction, Daoist temples are being rebuilt, often with government support. Shortly after the plenum ended, authorities were convening an International Daoism Forum. The meeting was held near Mt. Heng in Hunan Province, one of Daoism's five holy mountains, and was attended by 500 participants. It received extensive play in the Chinese media, with a noted British Daoist scholar,

Martin Palmer, getting airtime on Chinese television. This is a sharp change for a religion that that was persecuted under Mao and long regarded as suspect. What, exactly, is going on here?

OCTOBER 26 CHINA and China.org.cn

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-10/26/content_13976396.htm

http://www.china.org.cn/environment/2011-10/26/content_23727330.htm

Also picked up by enbar.net http://www.enbar.net/en/2011-10-28/content7_172514.shtml

BY LI YAO. Taoism is the other faith I would embrace if I was not a Christian," said Martin Palmer, whose love of Taoist deity, the temples, the peace, and the sacred mountains dates back years. Palmer, the globetrotting secretary-general of the Alliance of Religions and Conversation, began working 16 years ago with the Chinese Taoist Association (CTA), starting with protecting the ecology of sacred mountains.

A successful pilot program on Huashan Mountain in Northwest China's Shaanxi province later convinced the provincial government to give Taoists the authority to manage the mountain, with 10 percent of the ticket revenue at the scenic site to be used for financial support.

Palmer said the Taoists assume their natural role of guardians of ecological balance and do not seek to become masters or controllers of it, only to be part of it.

In 2000, the CTA banned the use of endangered animals such as rhinos and tigers in traditional Chinese medicine. Another idea that took root was the Three Sticks Movement, which promotes burning only three sticks of incense to reduce pollution caused by burning incense, candles, paper and fireworks on Taoist sites, Palmer said. Many Buddhist temples such as the Lama Temple in Beijing followed the movement.

It sends the simple message that three sticks are enough - one for heaven, one for earth and one for yourself - and contrasts with consumerism and greed in temples where people offer many incense sticks to the gods and expect more sympathetic ears for their prayers, Palmer said.

Victoria Finlay, Palmer's wife and colleague in environmental activism, recalled a monk from South China's Guangdong province saying at a conference in 2008 that he noticed one day birds were returning as a result of their Three Sticks Movement.

"The curtain of smoke around temples was removed. And we do want more birds to come back," Finlay said.

China has achieved economic prosperity that few would have imagined 20 years ago, but Palmer raised the question whether the country still has compassion and the understanding about how to keep a balance between human needs and the rest of the universe.

Palmer said Taoist wisdom has much to offer not only on issues about sustainability, but also about how to keep people compassionate as well as competitive.

OCTOBER 26 China Daily: Forum Closes

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-10/26/content_13976402.htm

BY LI YAO: A Taoist declaration stressing harmony and sustainable development brought the three-day International Taoist Forum to a close on Tuesday at Hengshan Mountain, Hunan province.

Zhang Jiyu, vice-president of the Chinese Taoist Association, read the Nanyue Declaration at the closing ceremony, expressing the vision of a contemporary Taoist community promoting a balanced lifestyle and harmonious co-existence between humans and nature, to help reduce poverty, social inequality and conflicts, and environmental degradation.

Wang Zuoan, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said the forum achieved its aim of discovering Taoism's significance in contemporary society and its vision for future development.

OCTOBER 25, South China Morning Post (page 2 with lead from page 1)

<http://topics.scmp.com/news/china-news-watch/article/Beijing-looks-to-ancient-sages>

BEIJING IS SEEKING INSPIRATION FROM RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS TO HELP THE NATION THROUGH A "CRISIS OF SOCIAL MORALITY". BY VICTORIA FINLAY IN HENGSHAN, HUNAN PROVINCE. The central government sponsored a three-day International Taoism Forum on Hengshan mountain, a sacred Taoist site. The event, set to end today, received heavy coverage from state media, in a sign Beijing might be tapping ancient Chinese philosophy to bolster its campaign for more a more stable and compassionate society.

The death of a two-year-old in a grisly hit-and-run in Guangdong that saw several pedestrians neglect to help the bleeding girl prompted much national anguish.

"We can get some inspiration from Taoism in the period of globalisation," Wang Zuoan, deputy director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said yesterday. "We are concerned not just for environmental protection, but also for heart and soul protection."

Such problems are the focus of the forum, which aims to "help Chinese society solve existing problems [through] Taoist wisdom", according to Zhang Jiyu, vice-president of the China Taoist Association (CTA).

Last night state broadcaster CCTV aired an hour-long talk between Xu Jialu, former vice-president of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, and Martin Palmer, who translates Taoist books into English and runs an religious foundation in Britain.

More than 500 delegates attended the forum, around 80 of whom came from Hong Kong as representatives of major Taoist temples in the city, along with Chinese University academics and business leaders. There were also scholars and state delegates from 21 countries worldwide.

Xu, the former legislator, said the meeting dealt with how Taoist concepts of contentment, minimising material needs and learning to slow down in a frenetic world could be applied in China.

"Humanity needs to urgently return to the wisdom of ancient sages," Xu said yesterday. "Their words and philosophical thinking are more closely related to the real truth and rules of our world."

Palmer said the big problem facing the mainland was how to make its breakneck growth sustainable.

"No one disputes the astonishing growth of consumerism and wealth in China today. And increasingly, China is trying to address whether this is sustainable," he said.

"But maybe deeper than this is the question of whether China can also be compassionate, wise and community-focused once again," said Palmer, who was an adviser for CTA for 15 years.

"This is why the [Communist Party], for the first time ever, is meeting with the Taoists to see how this ancient wisdom and spirituality might put a heart back into the ever-expanding body of modern China."

The international forum opened on Sunday evening with a spectacular opening ceremony directed by one of Hunan's most famous sons, Oscar-winning composer Tan Dun.

Much of yesterday's discussion tackled key issues confronting Chinese society - including declining moral standards, rampant corruption and unbridled consumerism - from the perspective of Taoism, China's oldest religion. Speakers included Taoist monks and nuns, academics, businessmen, media leaders and government representatives.

Liu Changle, chairman and CEO of Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV, discussed at length how the controversial case of 18 people walking past the bloodied body of two-year-old Wang Yue 10 days ago in Foshan showed the Taoist concept of *De* - often translated as virtue - was lacking in society.

"The cost of doing good should be accepted by all," he said. CTA vice-president Huang Zhian said: "Busy and tired seems to be the normal life of many Chinese people. Behind busy and tired, we see the crazy pursuit of money and gain. But quietness and purity are the fundamental rules of the world. "If you have a lot of possessions you cannot carry them forever. A wise person will not carry them for very long at all."

OCTOBER 25 English.Eastday.com

<http://english.eastday.com/e/111025/u1a6169266.html>

NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 24 -- From a call for burning fewer incense sticks to living a simpler life, from an appeal to ban the use of tiger bones for making medicine to the issuance of a global ecology statement, Chinese Taoists have won recognition and applause from an international environmental protection group for their conservation efforts. "Taoism is one of the most best ways to achieve sustainability," said Martin Palmer, secretary-general of the U.K.-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), while attending the ongoing International Taoism Forum held in central China's Hunan province.

"Taoism does not just view sustainability as a purely human concern. Of course, part of our concern is making sure that we and our children and our grandchildren have enough food to eat, water to drink, materials to build and means to travel. But Taoism also says that we must help to sustain the whole cosmos, of which we are but a part," he said.

The Chinese Taoist Association has cooperated with ARC since the international organization was founded in 1995. Currently, the two sides are jointly carrying out an Eight-Year Plan (2010-2017) for the protection of the environment.

The Chinese Taoist Association, in accordance with the plan, has been calling for a healthier and more environmentally friendly style of pilgrimage and travel. The association has advocated "three-stick incense burning," a practice in which just three sticks of incense are burned in temples, rather than a massive pile, in order to reduce pollution. The association has also recommended offerings of biodegradable flowers and fruit.

Reforms and improvements in pilgrimage methods have already started in Taoist

temples and on Taoist mountains.

Palmer said that as China has become wealthier, the idea has arisen that the more incense sticks you offer to the gods, the more they will listen to your prayers and requests.

"But why just three sticks? The answer, according to the ancient wisdom of Taoism, is to only use what you need and to only need what the world can offer sustainably," he said.

"The story of the Three Sticks Movement expresses the core truth written by the great sage Lao Zi (founder of Taoism) more than 2,500 years ago," he said.

The Eight-Year Plan also calls on Taoists to lead simpler lives, encouraging them to select their food according to natural principles. The plan also issues requests to temples, asking them to purchase facilities that will allow them to recycle used items and waste, as well as install sewage treatment systems.

The environmental protection efforts of Chinese Taoists can actually be traced back to even earlier times.

In 2000, the Chinese Taoist Association published an official document banning the use of parts of endangered animals, such as rhinos and tigers, in traditional Chinese medicine. The association published its own "Statement on Ecology" as early as 1995.

"Taoism has a unique sense of value, in that it judges affluence by the number of different species. If all things in the universe grow well, then a society is a community of affluence. If not, the kingdom is on the decline," Palmer said.

"This view encourages both the government and people to take good care of nature. This thought is a very special contribution by Taoism to the conservation of nature," he said.

OCTOBER 25 People's Daily Online

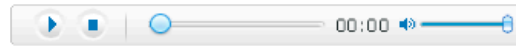
Story in pictures

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90783/91324/7625333.html>

China hosts high-profile Int'l Taoism Forum in C. China (4)

(Xinhua)

08:52, October 25, 2011 🔍 + -



Martin Palmer, Secretary General of the UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), greets audience during the International Taoism Forum in Hengyang, central China's Hunan Province, Oct. 24, 2011. China hosted a high-profile International Taoism Forum here on Sunday in an effort to spread the religion's influence on the world stage. (Xinhua/Li Ga)

[\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#)

OCTOBER 24 China Daily

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-10/24/content_13958625.htm

HENGSHAN, Hunan - An international Taoism forum opened on Sunday, attracting 500 scholars from 21 countries and regions to Hengshan Mountain, a sacred Taoist site in Central China's Hunan province. Liu Yunshan, head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), announced the opening of the forum.

Du Qinglin, head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, addressed the opening ceremony. He said the Taoist emphasis on harmonious co-existence between people and nature had growing relevance in the

contemporary world.

In recognition of the growing Taoist influence in modern China, the forum will focus on how to integrate Taoist philosophy with social reality and share Taoist wisdom and concerns about sustainable development, the pursuit of happiness and progress through cooperation, and protecting spiritual well-being in seminars on Monday and Tuesday.

Prominent guest speakers include Bawa Jain, secretary-general of the World Council of Religious Leaders, Martin Palmer, a British environmental activist and director of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, and Ren Farong, head of the Chinese Taoist Association (CTA).

Global celebrities including Prince Philip of the United Kingdom sent congratulations to the opening of the forum.

Xu Jialu, a retired vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and Palmer are scheduled to make a live TV appearance on Monday evening, exchanging eastern and western perspectives about harmony between nature and human beings.

In an interview with the Union of Catholic Asian News earlier this month, Palmer said that the Taoist "message of simplicity, respect for nature, humility and striving for a proper balance is perhaps more important than at any time in China's history", and he said that he considered the forum "a powerful indication that China is looking for ways to protect its nature as well as its people".

Delegates from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland will hold discussions live on TV on Tuesday, exploring opportunities to strengthen existing ties among Taoist circles in these regions and taking stock of religious pluralism in China as exemplified by the syncretism of Taoist, Buddhist and Confucianism.

Leaders of Taoism associations in the United States and Europe - including Germany, France, Spain and Italy - will have small brainstorming sessions about how to broaden Taoism's global appeal.

The three-day forum is co-sponsored by the CTA and China Religious Culture Communication Association. On the Chinese mainland, about 30,000 Taoist monks live in temples, another 60,000 practitioners of Zhengyi Taoism are scattered throughout the country and five major institutes offer Taoism training, the organizers announced at a news conference on Saturday.

"Today, Taoist places of worship can be found in more and more countries. Many research institutes around the world show a growing interest in Taoism as a lens to study Oriental culture. Taoism will see its global influence spreading in the near future," Lin Zhou, vice-president of the CTA, said on Saturday.

Taoism, a philosophical and religious tradition that originated in China, seeks to

establish harmony between human beings and the principle of the universe, which is called Tao. The emblem of Taoism is the tai chi symbol, which is a circle with an S-shaped line dividing the white (yang) and black (yin) halves.

OCTOBER 23 Xinhua English news

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-10/23/c_131208100.htm

NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 23 (Xinhua) -- China hosted a high-profile International Taoism Forum here on Sunday in an effort to spread the religion's influence on the world stage. In a message to the forum, China's senior leader Jia Qinglin urged the 500 participants from more than 20 countries, including China, the United States, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Japan, to explore the essence of Taoism and make Chinese culture more attractive in the world.

Jia, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said that the event represented a blessing to the pursuit of prolonged world peace and common prosperity.

"Taoism is important part of Chinese traditional culture as well as valuable properties of human civilization," said Jia.

Du Qinglin, head of the United Front Work Department of Central Committee of CPC, also attended the ceremony and delivered a speech, saying that Taoism will enrich human being's intelligence.

Prince Philip of the United Kingdom sent a congratulatory message to the forum.

This is the first time China staged an international Taoism forum. Vice Premier Hui Liangyu said prior to the opening ceremony that the forum should become a key platform for worldwide Taoist exchanges.

Taoism was a 1,800-year-old religion originated from Lao Tze's philosophy. Lao Tze (BC 571-471) was the author of the book Tao De Ching, in which he pointed out that everything in the universe was born from vacuum or nothing and the balance and harmony should be achieved between human beings and nature. His thoughts even stimulated the creativity of some renowned modern physicists.

Taoism is also a source of artistic creation, inspired the Oscar winning film "Crouching tigers and hidden dragons."

Taoism was wiped out during the chaotic Culture Revolution (1966-76) and resumed after China's reform and opening up to the outside world in the late 1970s. Latest statistics show that there are nearly 100,000 Taoist priests and over 5,000 religious sites in the Chinese mainland.

"There are many Taoist believers in western countries and a lot of foreign universities and academies have been doing extensive research into Taoism," said Lin Zhou, deputy president of Chinese Taoist Association.

He said that Taoism is vital to solving modern dilemmas as it suggest people stop wars, live peacefully with nature, avoid extravagant consumption and give up fierce competition.

"Lao Tze said that 'big country should keep itself in a humble position,' but in the modern world, a number of powerful countries prefer to use violence to bully weak countries -- that is not in accordance with the 'Way'," said Ren Farong, president of Chinese Taoist Association.

He added that China has mapped out a strategy this month to reform and develop its culture, and Taoism should be seen as a kind of soft power of the country.

Topics of the forum will cover environmental protection, sustainable development, cross-religious harmony, world peace and the role Taoism could play on solving those issues. Bawa Jain, Secretary General of World Council of Religious Leaders, is expected to give a speech at the forum.

Xu Jialu, former vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, or China's legislature, will discuss cross-culture issues with Martin Palmer, Secretary General of the UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC).

A special seminar will be launched for Taoist societies from Europe and America and other continents to discuss the religion's development in their territories.

The forum is held at the foot of Mt. Hengshan in the Nanyue District of Hunan's Hengyang City, one of the five sacred religions Mountains in China and a scenic site renowned for hundreds of Taoist and Buddhist temples. The three-day event is co-sponsored by the Chinese Taoist Association and the China Religious Culture Communication Association. A grand artistic performance featuring Taoist culture and directed by famous musician Tan Dun was held after the opening ceremony.

OCTOBER 22 Xinhua English news

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-10/22/c_131206913.htm

Picked up by BBC monitoring via COMTEX and retransmitted by a number of websites including Investors.com powered by Investor's Business Daily

<http://news.investors.com/Newsfeed/Article/137252055/201110222140/China-to-host-international-Taoism-forum-23-25-October.aspx>

HENGSHAN, Hunan, Oct. 22 (Xinhua) -- An international Taoism forum that will attract 500 scholars from 21 countries or regions will open at Hengshan Mountain of central Hunan Province on Sunday, said organizers at a press conference Saturday. Bawa Jain, Secretary General of World Council of Religious Leaders, Martin Palmer, head of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and Ren Farong, head of the Chinese Taoist Association will attend the 3-day forum, organizers said.

The forum will focus on how to integrate Taoism philosophy with social reality and highlight Taoists' concerns about the present world and their desire to help society solve existing problems with Taoist wisdom, Zhang Jiyu, vice president of the China Taoist Association, said in a September's press conference. The forum will be open between Oct. 23 and 25 and is co-sponsored by China Taoist Association and China Religious Culture Communication Association.

Taoism, a philosophical and religious tradition that originated in China, seeks to establish harmony between human beings and the principle of the universe, which is called Tao. The emblem of Taoism is the Taiji symbol, which is a circle with an S-shaped line dividing the white (yang) and black (yin) halves. Hengshan Mountain, 1,300 meters above sea level, is a scenic site renowned for Taoist and Buddhist culture.

Why Taoism can change the world (People's Daily Overseas Edition) October 27

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90780/7628555.html>

By Ye Xiaonan 16:27, October 27, 2011

Edited and Translated by People's Daily Online

The closing ceremony of the international Taoism forum and a prayer meeting for

world harmony concluded at Hengshan Mountain of Hunan province on Oct. 25. The forum has made the "Nanyue Declaration," which states that "being simple and sincere can help people to secure a peaceful mind, and following the laws of nature will ensure sustainable development," "respecting public lives will generate common prosperity" and "striving to promote harmony between heaven and mankind as well as world peace."

More than 500 attendees from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and 19 countries communicated during the world's largest Taoist forum and witnessed the profound Taoist culture.

Spreading Taoism across the world

Chang Cheng, president of the Taoism Society of Taiwan, said that the book Tao Te Ching has become the second best-selling book in the West, only after the Bible. It has been translated into about 500 languages in the world.

A Japanese Taoist said during the forum that Japanese Taoist temples are working on the collection, analysis and research on the Taoist materials that were written in Chinese and preserved by Japan's first generation of Taoists during the country's Edo Period. Japanese people have not only built Taoist venues across the country, but they have also published clear and simple modern versions of the Tao Te Ching and popularized the book through the Internet.

Lin Zhou, deputy president of Chinese Taoist Association, said that Taoism has taken root in many countries and regions, and Taoist believers and followers can be seen in many places around the world. Overseas Chinese make up the majority of Taoist believers outside of China. Wherever there are a large number of Chinese people, there will be Taoist believers. Many Taoist temples have been built in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, France and other countries. Moreover, many Westerners have become Taoist believers, and a lot of foreign universities and academies have been doing extensive research into Taoism.

Taoist principles to salve world ills China Daily – October 25, 2011

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-10/25/content_13975515.htm

NANYUE, Hunan - Taoist principles could help address problems including conflicts and inequality, according to a declaration drafted as part of an international Taoism conference concluding Tuesday. The declaration was composed in Chinese and English ...

Taoism: remedy for a world in crisis? Xinhua - Deng Shasha – October 25, 2011

NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 25 (Xinhua) -- From environmental protection to crime prevention, Taoist priests, scholars and dignitaries on Tuesday called for building a harmonious world by using the ancient wisdom of Lao Tze, a Chinese philosopher who lived ...

Modernize Taoism to promote the religion: former Chinese legislator Xinhua - Xiong Tong - Oct 25, 2011

NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 25 (Xinhua) -- More young Taoist priests need to be recruited, and the religion must make greater use of modern technology if it is to appeal to new audiences, a former Chinese legislator said at a Taoism conference that concluded ...

Beijing looks to ancient sages South China Morning Post (subscription) - Oct 24, 2011

Beijing is seeking inspiration from religious teachings to help the nation through a "crisis of social morality". The central government sponsored a three-day International Taoism Forum on Hengshan mountain, a sacred Taoist site. ...

Deep roots China Daily - Oct 24, 2011

Taoism is an indigenous traditional religion in China with a history of nearly 2000 years. It has been one of the main components of Chinese traditional culture with deep roots in the Chinese people's customs and worldview. ...

Taoist forum looks at environment China Daily - Li Yao - Oct 23, 2011

HENGSHAN, Hunan - An international Taoism forum opened on Sunday, attracting 500 scholars from 21 countries and regions to Hengshan Mountain, a sacred Taoist site in Central China's Hunan province. ...

China holds high-profile Taoism forum China Daily - Oct 23, 2011

CHANGSHA- A high-profile international Taoism forum was held in Central China's Hunan province on Sunday in an effort to spread the religion's influence. In a message to the forum, senior Chinese leader Jia Qinglin urged the participants from 20 ...

China promoting Taoism's influence abroad Xinhua - Mu Xuequan - Oct 23, 2011

NANYUE, Hunan, Oct. 23 (Xinhua) -- China hosted a high-profile International Taoism Forum here on Sunday in an effort to spread the religion's influence on the world stage. In a message to the forum, China's senior leader Jia Qinglin urged the 500 ...

Chine : un forum international de taoïsme aura lieu dans le mont ...Chine.org – Oct 23, 2011

http://french.china.org.cn/news/txt/2011-10/23/content_23700725.htm

Bawa Jain, secrétaire général du Conseil mondial des chefs religieux, Martin Palmer, directeur de l'**Alliance des religions** et de la **conservation**, ...

Taoist forum looks at environment China Daily 24-11-24

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-10/24/content_13958625.htm

By Li Yao (China Daily)

HENGSHAN, Hunan - An international Taoism forum opened on Sunday, attracting 500 scholars from 21 countries and regions to Hengshan Mountain, a sacred Taoist site in Central China's Hunan province. Liu Yunshan, head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), announced the opening of the forum.