

## **EMF and ARC to assist building of Daoist Eco-temples**

3 November 2005

Through astrological dances, chanting, processions, invocations and offerings, the three great gods of Taibaishan in central China were not only invited back to the ancient temple site of this pilgrim mountain in October - but were also asked to bless a Daoist ecology centre opening there next year.

The temple was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, although the ancient pilgrims' tree mercifully survived. It is around this historic tree that a new temple and a unique Daoist ecology centre will now arise.

In a ritual that dates back millennia, Daoist priests from Lou Gwan Dai - one of the most historical centres of Daoism where the Dao De Jing is said to have been written - asked the three astrological deities of the mountain to offer their protection once again to the sacred landscape of the Qinling mountains.

A beautiful set of wall charts in Chinese based around the Daoist statement on ecology have been published as part of the launch of this project. They were designed and created by Dr He Xiaoxin, a former professor in Daoist architecture from Wuhan University, and ARC's director of Chinese programmes.

An ARC and EMF delegation attended the dedication and held discussions with the Provincial Communist Party Government, religious leaders and - in an unexpected and greatly welcomed new initiative - with professors and staff from Shaanxi Normal University.

The University is one of only a handful of universities in China with a religious studies centre. As from next year, assisted by ARC and EMF it will develop a unique religions and ecology centre, officially supported by both government and religious authorities.

Discussions are now under way as to how the centre will develop, and the key environmental issues that it will seek to address. The centre is expected to open by summer 2006 and will provide an urban education centre in Xian, to complement the rural and spectacular mountain centre at Taibaishan.

ARC wishes to record its gratitude to Mr Allerd Stikker, director of EMF, whose enthusiasm and support for this programme has made it possible.