

Centre for the Humanities and Medicine
The University of Hong Kong

Convergence and Collisions: Disease, Religion, and Healing in Asia

Infinite Blessings

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“Infinite Blessings” will look at the re-incarnation of Daoism in today’s China as part of the leisure tourist industry. In particular it will look at the activities of the Shaolong Guan 绍龙宫 at Jinyun Shan 缙云山 in Chongqing 重庆. Here we see a revived and vigorously flourishing cult under its charismatic leader the Daozhang Li Yi 李一 offering both Daoist ritual services and Yangsheng healthcare to an enthusiastic following drawn from across the nation. This following appears predominantly affluent and well-educated. Indeed the temple seems fairly remote from most of the surrounding populace – entrepreneurs and property developers aside. However it offers something beyond price to its true adherents – an existential purpose (*with Chinese characteristics*), while the Daozhang’s softly spoken wisdom and magical demonstrations of his Gongfu afford proof beyond doubt. There is nothing new or specifically Chinese about this coalescence of religious and spiritual belief, health concerns and leisure travel – as the annual Lourdes pilgrimage or a brief glance at Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales will attest – what is particularly interesting is the way that the Shaolong Guan positions itself within what is permissible in contemporary China and the strategies it uses for executing this. Ultimately there is no gainsaying what it appears to propose and, at present, whether and how much of its teachings you accept is as arbitrary, personal and uncontestable a choice as whether you like coffee or not.

无量寿福！