



# DAOISM

*THE WAY*

# Background

- **Daoism**, also spelled **Taoism**, indigenous religio-philosophical tradition that has shaped Chinese life for more than 2,000 years.
- Belief systems tend to come with rules and prescribed (approved) practices. These include rituals, dietary restrictions, and laws.
- Daoism is somewhat different because it seems to avoid strict systems of rules and laws.
- Daoism is centered on the practice of *wu wei*, which means inaction. That might sound like Daoists believe in doing nothing, but that's not quite right. Instead, it means that a person should do nothing that conflicts with the Dao

- The Dao, which means "the way," is the natural order of the universe.
- Daoists strive to be in harmony with this natural order.
- Rather than following particular rules, Daoists cultivate a sense of naturalness, called *ziran*.
  - Ziran - to push away outside influence and embrace one's authenticity, while living natural, spontaneous, and free
  - Ziran is the highest state of being, similar to Nirvana in Buddhism.
- By being in tune with this, they believe they can avoid violence, suffering, and struggle.

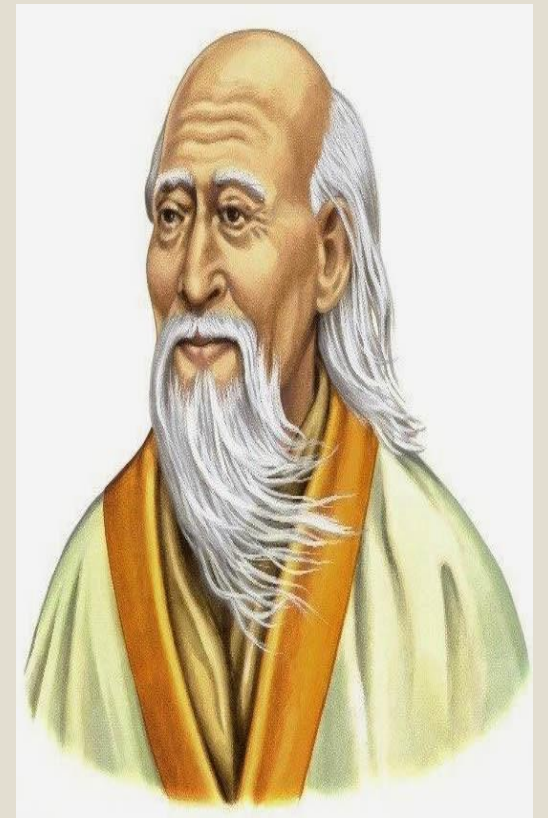
# The Dao

What is it?



- Laozi (Lao-tzu), meaning "Old Master," is believed to have authored the Dao De Jing (Tao te ching or The Book of the Way and its Power), dating back to around 3rd century B.C.E.
- According to myth, Laozi was conceived by a shooting star and was born of a virgin mother, who kept him in her womb for 82 years.
- He is considered as the first important Daoist.
- The Chinese historian Sima Qian wrote a biography of Laozi in the Historical Records (Shih Chi) in the late 2nd century B.C.E.
  - According to his biography, he worked as a government archivist but became frustrated with government corruption, and sensing his unavoidable disgrace he left.
  - He was leaving society to retire to the mountains at age 160 when a border guard recognized him as sage and requested him to share his wisdom. He sat down, and wrote Dao- de Jing.

## Founder



- This text, which emphasizes the balance between opposites and the importance of yielding to the natural order, is usually attributed to the Chinese sage (scholar) Laozi.
- But historians aren't really sure when—or if—he existed. Laozi literally means "the elder," and not much is known about this legendary figure.
- Some think he lived at the same time as Confucius, while others date him to the later Warring States Period. Paintings from different points in Chinese history depict the two thinkers meeting.
- Whether or not Laozi and Confucius ever actually did meet, these belief systems have important points of contact. In fact, the term "dao" is also used in Confucian thought, where it refers to an ethical way of living.

Laozi



- **1. SIMPLICITY, PATIENCE, COMPASSION**

- “Simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world.”

- **2. GOING WITH THE FLOW**

- “When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.”

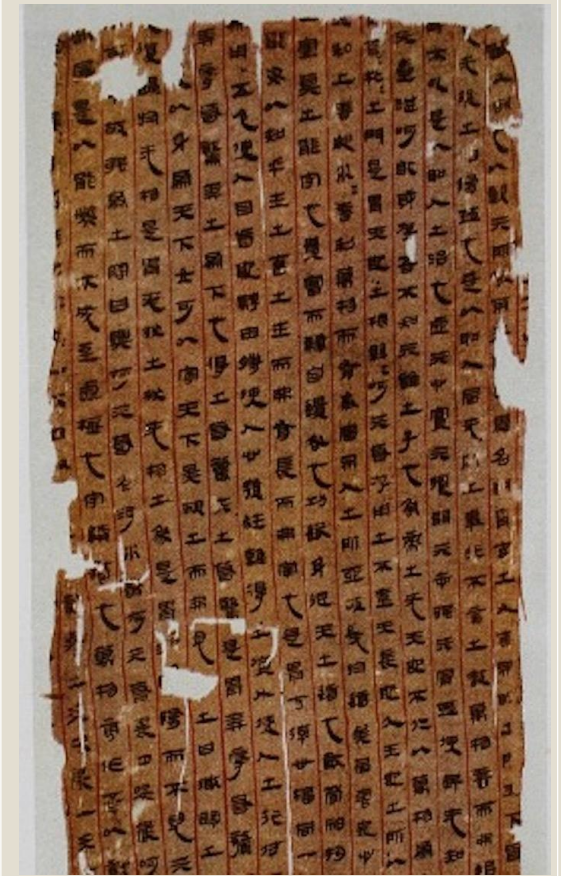
- **3. LETTING GO**

- “If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to. If you are not afraid of dying, there is nothing you cannot achieve.”

- **4. HARMONY**

- “Tao engenders One; One engenders Two; Two engenders Three; Three engenders all things. All things carry the yin (femininity) while embrace the yang (masculinity). Neutralizing energy brings them into harmony.”

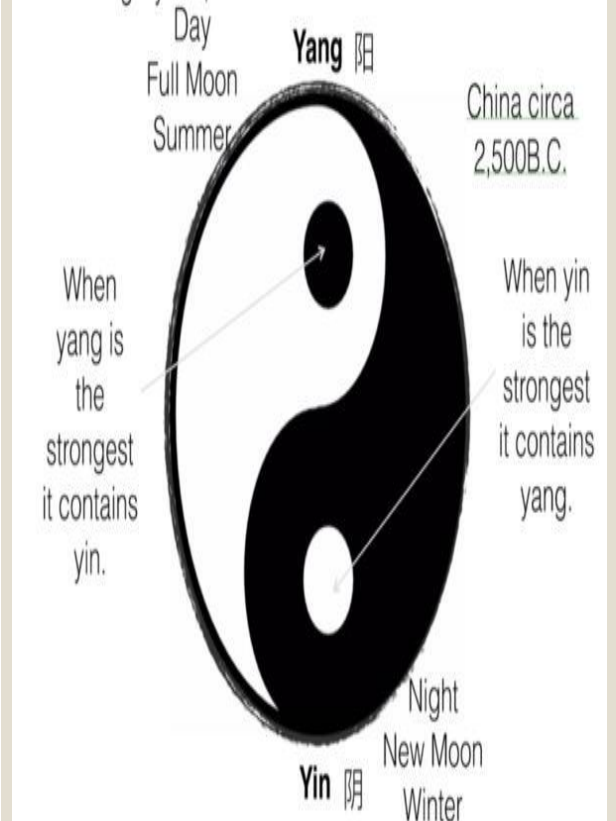
## Dao- de Jing and Dao Philosophy



- **Yin**, Chinese for “female” or “moon,” represents darkness, femininity, passivity, and the earth.
- **Yang** (“sun” or “male”) represents light, masculinity, activity, and the heavens. The balance of yin and yang were seen to influence health and order within an individual, society, and the entire universe.

## Yin/Yang

Yin & Yang Cycles, Clock and Calendar



- Humility and non-competition are among the most important virtues in Daoism.
- These virtues, together with naturalness and naturalism, as well as non-aggression and passive rule, manifest the fundamental virtue of wu wei.
  - Wu wei is an ancient Chinese concept literally meaning "inexertion", "inaction", or "effortless action."
  - Those who wu wei do act. Daoism is not a philosophy of "doing nothing." Wu-wei means something like "act naturally," "effortless action," or "nonwillful action." The point is that there is no need for human tampering with the flow of reality.

Wu Wei





# Major Beliefs of Daoism

1. People should live in harmony with nature
  - Balance between both universe and humanity
2. People should lead simple, quiet, and plain lives
  - Reject material possessions and luxury
3. Non-action → no interfering in affairs of others
  - Rejection of politics and political organizations
4. For every action there is a good and bad reaction
  - Have to accept both the good and bad of others
    - Both exist everywhere equally and balance each other out
5. Reject all conflict in life → show love and compassion