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## Taoism



### What does Tao mean?

Tao means "way". It is pronounced dow.

The Way, according to Taoists, is the spiritual force that underlies the universe and is found in all things. Even though it is a part of all things, it is greater than all things. It is the ultimate reality.

### How did Taoism begin?

Taoism was started by the Chinese philosopher Lao Tze, the Supreme master, in the 6th century BCE. Tao lived in the same time as another ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius. It is said that one day Lao Tze left his job and rode off west on an ox. At a mountain pass the guardian asked him to write down his teachings. This is how the sacred book of Tao called the Doodejing came to be written. It is also why you see statues and figures of Lao Tze in an ox.

Today Taoism is practiced by about five million people in China, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Viet Nam. It is not uncommon for Taoism to be combined with Confucianism and Buddhism.

### What do Taoists believe?

Taoists believe that they should live in harmony with the Tao or Way. If they do this they will merge with the Tao, free their soul, and become one of the Immortals.

In the beginning Taoists believed there were no gods or goddesses only the Tao but over time people began worshipping Lao Tze and other important Taoist teachers. They also began worshipping forces of nature such as the sun, moon, stars and tides.

### What is the code of behavior for Taoists?



Taoists believe that good actions will mean a better life for their soul so Taoists follow rules and guides for living. They are not allowed to tell lies, steal, commit adultery, commit murder or drink alcohol. They also have a list of good deeds to further guide they way they live. They are encouraged to obey their elders, love their parents, be tolerant, help others act, stay in excellent physical and mental shape, practice self control of mind and body, and act without thinking of themselves, in other words act selflessly.

**What does T'ai Chi Ch'uan have to do with Taoism?**

T'ai Chi is a set of very controlled, slow-moving exercises that discipline the body and the mind. It is both a form of physical exercise and a kind of meditation. It was invented by a Taoist. Millions of people today, especially Chinese, still practice T'ai Chi.

**What does the Yin/Yang Tao symbol stand for?**

It represents the harmonious interaction of the two opposing forces in the Universe, male or yin and female or yang