

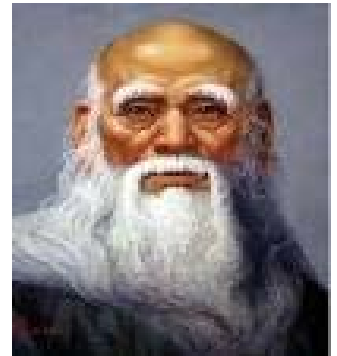
# Daoism



Daoism is a philosophy that teaches that people can gain peace and happiness by becoming one with the Dao, or the Way. The Dao is a universal force connected to nature that creates order for all things. Daoism teaches that people should see themselves as a part of nature and lead a balanced life in harmony with it. Followers believed that for people to discover how to behave, they should notice how nothing in nature strives for fame, power, or knowledge. Instead, nature accepts what comes its way, like how a piece of grass bends when the wind blows.

Daoism, sometimes referred to as Taoism, is both a philosophy and religion that are attributed to Lao Zi. The philosophy emerged from Lao Zi's observation of nature, while the religion evolved from a belief in a universe that requires balance. True harmony comes from balancing the opposite forces of nature, called yin and yang. According to Lao Zi's teachings, it is impossible to have good without bad, beauty without ugliness, or pleasure without pain. Because Daoists see good and bad as connected, they try to accept both.

Daoism was extremely influential with the government. Lao Zi taught rulers to make fewer laws, referring to this style of ruling as wuwei (woo-way), or "action through nonaction". Rather than attempting to take control and guide the people, a ruler should take very little action and only support the people in achieving what they naturally desire. Just as a farmer cannot force a plant to grow, Lao Zi thought that a ruler cannot force the people to prosper.



Daoism was based on many of the folk traditions of the early Chinese civilizations, including ancestor worship and filial piety, which would eventually be included in the development of Confucianism. Daoism also encourages people to worship inside their homes, rather than attending a specified church service or temple. Daoists build altars in the sacred, purified spaces of their home, where people will pray for guidance and support from their ancestors in order to honor them.

Daoism significantly influenced Chinese culture from the Shang Dynasty forward. The recognition that all things and all people are connected is expressed in the development of the arts, which reflect the people's understanding of their place in the universe and their obligation to each other. During the Tang Dynasty, Daoism became the state religion under the reign of the emperor Xuanzong because he believed it would create harmonious balance in his subjects. He mandated that all citizens keep Dao writings in their homes and follow the beliefs and traditions. Xuanzong's rule is still considered one of the most prosperous and stable in the history of China and the high point of the Tang Dynasty.

As the Tang Dynasty declined in popularity, Daoism fell out of favor as well. It was eventually replaced by Confucianism and Buddhism. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mao Zedong and the Communists worked to suppress Daoism and all other religions, but elements of Daoism survived and are still practiced today.