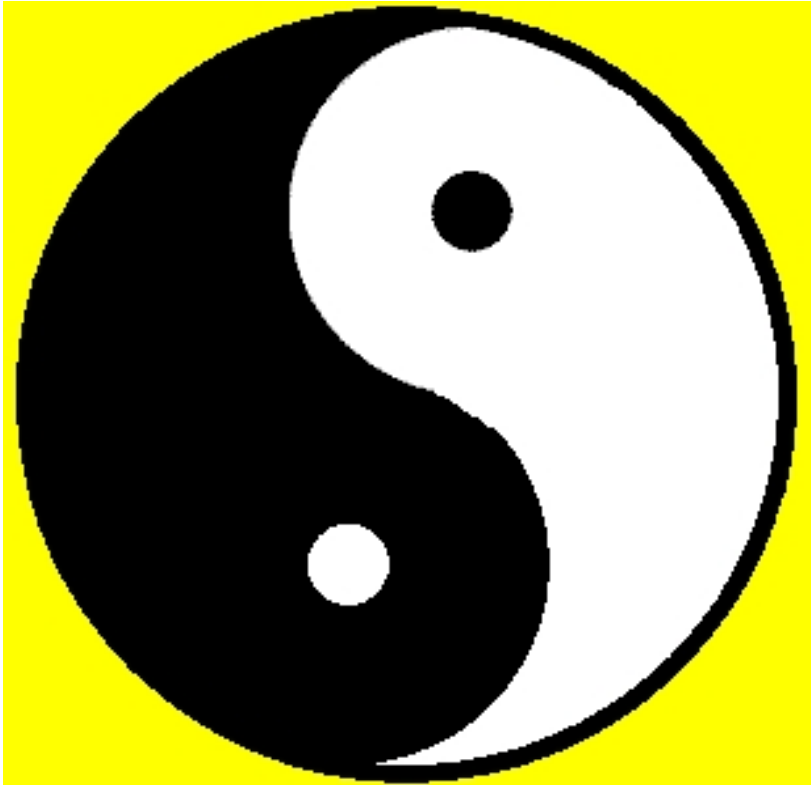


*Tam Giao, which includes Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, plays the key role in Vietnamese religion. “Tao” means “path” or “way” that turns Taoists’ thoughts to health, longevity, immortality and spontaneity.*

The origin of Taoism

**Taoism is believed to be founded by Lao Tseu (Lao Tu), a Chinese contemporary of Confucius in about 500 B.C. The ideas and doctrines of his religion are explained in his book entitled Dao Duc Kinh (The Book of Morality).**

**He did spend his life on searching for a way that would avoid the constant feudal warfare and conflicts that disrupted society during his lifetime. Taoism, therefore, is the natural mode of behavior that encourages one to live purely and simply. It relies on harmony between Man, Nature and a Universal Order. Such a harmony would promote good will, personal integrity. The ritual of Taoism in Vietnam today consists of religion-magical features, divining, worship of the spirits of nature, and so forth**



▪

**The Yin Yang is a common theme in Taoism, with black representing *yin* and white representing *yang***

▪

**The symbol was derived from**

**astronomical observations which recorded the shadow of the sun throughout a full year. The two swirling shapes inside the symbol give the impression of change - the only constant factor in the universe. Hence, another idea states that, Yin - the dark side- represents the breath that formed the earth or symbolizes for the feminine which is**

**soft, cool, calm, introspective, and healing...**

**In contrast, Yang - the bright side- symbolizes the breath that formed the heavens and associate with**

**the masculine: hard, hot, energetic, moving, and sometimes aggressive.**

**However, since nothing in nature is purely black or purely white, the symbol includes a small black spot in the white swirl, and a corresponding white spot in the black**

**swirl.**

## **The implications of Yin and Yang**

The Yin Yang symbol reflects the inescapably intertwined duality of all things in nature. No quality is independent of its opposite, nor pure . This principle applies to all elements of existence – from nature to a particular individual. Social disturbance, natural disasters, personal illness, unsettled family relationships and so on are the

results of an imbalance between the forces of Yin and Yang

## **A comparison between Taoism and other beliefs**

**The congruity of Taoism and Confucianism is obvious. Confucianism is a means of regulating behavior without a spiritual dimension while Taoism grant people**

**precepts that mostly go without spirituality and mysticism. Like some aspects of Buddhism, Taoism seems to have overtones of pessimism and a negative attitude toward attempts to change drastically the life patterns.**

# Vietnam and Taoism

**Prior to the  
Communist  
domination, many**

**Vietnamese tended to accept all the three religious beliefs, Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, without conflict concerns. Taoism aims to adjust the nature, and has its evidence**



**in the daily life circle  
of ethnic  
Vietnamese whether  
they are  
city-dwellers or  
peasants on rice  
paddy fields.  
Through our  
country, you can see  
so many images of**

**the Gods of Taoism to be worshipped in temples and pagodas. Most families use their altar to worship the ‘Kitchen God’- one of Taoist deities that monitor the families’ behaviors. Coming**

**to Vietnam, you may be puzzled by a small mirrored octagonal disc, with the Yin Yang and other symbols, fixed above the door of most houses and small shops. According to the**

**Vietnamese people,  
it plays an important  
role in barring  
wandering spirits or  
ghosts.**

# More Vietnam

## religion:

- Confucianism

- The "Vatican"  
of Caodaism

- Taoism – a part

# of the Tam Giao (Three Religions) of Vietnam

- Christianity
- Buddhism