



**Voices
from Religions
on Sustainable
Development**

Religion influences many people's world views, lifestyles and engagement, making it a powerful force for individual and collective change. This book offers an insight into how religions and indigenous traditions from all over the world understand sustainable development and contribute to it. Its publication marks the launch of the new *International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)* during the international Berlin conference *Partners for Change – Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in February 2016. The *PaRD* aims to strengthen and institutionalise cooperation between governments, multilateral organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, and religious actors working in the fields of development, peace, interreligious dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

**Voices
from Religions
on Sustainable
Development**

Contents

- 4 Introduction**
Gerd Müller
Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development

- 6 Foreword**
His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa
Ogyen Trinley Dorje

- 9 Foreword**
H.E. Horst Köhler
Former Federal President of Germany

- 11 Voices from Religions**
- 12** The Bahá'í Faith
- 24** Buddhism
- 34** Christianity
- 46** Confucianism
- 58** Daoism
- 70** Hinduism
- 84** Indigenous traditions: *Lankuntuwakan*, the Lenape way of life
- 96** Islam
- 108** Judaism
- 120** The Sikh Religion

- 135 Authors**

- 159 Acknowledgements**



Daoism

Fan Guangchun
He Yun

Daoism in a nutshell

Daoism, also known as Taoism, emerged in China on the basis of what are known as the “One Hundred Schools of Thought” during the period 770–221 BCE. From the formal establishment of Daoist organisations in the East Han period (25–220 CE), the religion has a history going back nearly 2,000 years. Today it is estimated that 170 million people follow Daoism. The majority of Daoists live in mainland China, Taiwan, Japan and South-East Asia. Daoism gained its name from the Chinese word for Way – *Dao* – and it teaches how to follow the Natural Way of the Universe based upon its core text, the *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*), which is said to have been written by Lao Zi. Daoism has a class of clerics. According to the statistics provided by the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, there are 50,000 Daoist clergymen and women, known as Daoist masters, resident in over 9,000 temples in China alone. In addition, there are about 100 Daoist associations all over China, affiliated to the China Daoist Association. They are responsible for coordinating events and charitable work among local temples, setting up colleges to train Daoist masters and facilitating the research and teaching of Daoism.

Left page: “Dao follows Nature.” This is a quote from the Book of Dao. The Dao is the path of nature, of the universe. To follow nature is the highest achievement of all life.
Source: Calligraphy by Master Ren Farong, former President of the China Daoist Association

***“Humankind follows the ways of the Earth,
The Earth follows the ways of the Universe,
The Universe follows the ways of the Tao.
Tao follows nature.”***

Dao De Jing, chapter 25

Daoism has been one of the main components of Chinese traditional culture for over two thousand years and has exerted great influence on the Chinese people’s way of thinking, working, and acting. It is one of the five recognised religions in China – the others are Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Daoism is the only native-born religion in mainland China apart from Confucianism, which is not officially recognised as a religion. Predating Buddhism but in many ways contemporary with the development of Confucianism, Daoism has been influenced by both but especially Buddhism. The rise of a monastic movement, the creation of major temple complexes and the creation of a canon of texts all show the influence of Buddhism. From Confucianism came the hierarchy of deities such as the Jade Emperor – mirroring the Imperial world below.

A key concept in Daoism is the balance of Yin and Yang. They represent two opposing but complementary forces in the cosmos. Yin is the force behind earth, shadow and death and Yang forms heaven, light and life. Though the two forces compete with each other, inside each one is the seed of the other. Without one there would not be the other, in the same way as there cannot be death without life or shadow without light. Only when they are in balance can the world prosper. This belief shapes how Daoists view development and climate change. According to this view, the earth is Yin and the heaven is Yang. When we burn fossil fuels taken from the earth and emit greenhouse gases, we are transforming Yin to Yang, thereby disturbing the balance of the cosmos. Global warming is a consequence of this imbalance and only when it is corrected can the world prosper. Destroying nature for the sake of development also causes disruption to the natural balance of Yin and Yang and should therefore be avoided too.

Compassion is another key concept in Daoism. While Confucians' compassion is directed more towards humanity and Buddhism considers compassion necessary as a vehicle to reach enlightenment, Daoist followers feel the need for compassion for "all under heaven", including humankind and all of nature. This is because Daoism believes that the outer cosmos corresponds to the inner cosmos of the individual. Compassion extended, acts of good *karma*, will be rewarded internally with a sense of balance and peace. Therefore, Daoists strive to maintain a balance in the external world and between the external world and our human society. This means that certain elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as peace and conservation will have a particular significance for Daoist activists.

Nature and simplicity are also cherished concepts. Daoism believes that the greatest Dao lies in supreme simplicity – 大道至简. All Daoist followers are therefore asked to live simply with as little material sustenance as possible. In the past, Daoists retreated to remote areas and lived in caves, surviving on herbs and dew. Even today, Chinese people have huge reverence for these Daoist sacred sites. A study in the 1990s showed that forest coverage on mountains with sacred sites is much better preserved than those without. In this sense, Daoists are not only followers of Nature's Dao, but defenders of Nature and Nature's Dao.

Planet

There are two ways to view humankind's place in the universe. One is anthropocentric. It assumes that humankind is the central, most significant species on this planet. The other is non-anthropocentric, believing that humankind is just another species on earth and this world is not created for our consumption. Daoism takes the latter view.

There is a famous story that reflects the Daoist view of the world. A rich man decided to host a large banquet in his house. Over one thousand guests

*“Only by forsaking desires
can one’s original nature
be at peace.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 37

arrived and the feast was the most extravagant that anyone had ever seen. There were many different kinds of fish, a variety of birds, oxen, pigs – anything you could name. The rich man was very pleased. He looked around and said, “Heaven has been extremely generous to us. It yields grain for our meals and made fish and birds our food.” His guests agreed with him eagerly: “Yes, yes, how wonderful it is that heaven created all of these just to satisfy our needs.”

There was, however, a little twelve-year-old boy at the dinner. And he disagreed with everyone. He came up to the host and said, “It is not the way you said. Just because we eat these birds, fish and beasts, it doesn’t mean that they are created for our consumption. You see, mosquitoes take our blood.

Daoism in practice

Daoists are actively involved in work that helps people to live a good life. They run clinics for the sick and subsidise school attendance for children from poor families. In areas of northern China, where access to clean drinking water is difficult, Daoists dig wells and share water with the locals. Wealthy Daoist temples have set up foundations to assist in disaster relief, nursing for the elderly and poverty reduction.

Since over 40% of poverty is caused by high medical expenses in China, more and more Daoist temples are

opening Daoist clinics to help treat patients who cannot afford healthcare or prescriptions. Patients only need to pay a small price for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) prescriptions and acupuncture. Qigong classes are sometimes offered free of charge. Some Daoist temples are also starting to grow herbal TCM ingredients in nurseries in or around the Daoist temples. This has the twin benefit of bringing down medical costs as well as encouraging the use of herbal remedies in TCM to replace animal ingredients and hence protect wildlife and biodiversity.

Tigers and wolves eat our flesh. But we are not created for the purpose of feeding mosquitoes and tigers, are we?”

This story comes from *Lie Zi*, one of the most important Daoist classics. It was written two thousand years ago, but its message still rings true today. Even though we humans have become the dominant species, this does not make the rest of the living planet our dinner table. Rather, because we have the capacity to think and tell right from wrong, we all have a duty to protect the world’s animals and plants – and the environment we live in – so that all of us can live and thrive on this planet, side by side.



People

According to Daoism, people can only live a good life if they are healthy. Daoism therefore places great emphasis on health. Daoism believes it is possible to preserve the body and to become immortal through the physical body, though only a very few ever achieve this. This quest has led to many centuries of health exercises and medical practices which form the foundation of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Qigong and acupuncture. Daoists are often famous practitioners of TCM, and Daoist temples are places where people go to seek treatment. Daoism therefore has a long history of facilitating healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, and is looking to play a similar role in the context of the SDGs.

Daoism advocates a vegetarian diet. In Daoist tradition, the 1st and 15th day of each month are considered as “fasting days” when no meat should be consumed. It is believed that those who fast on these two days receive blessings from heaven. Since more than a quarter of all the meat produced worldwide is consumed in China, increased meat consumption has become a burden for Chinese agricultural land, polluting the water and causing diabetes, obesity and

*“Health is the greatest possession.
Contentment is the greatest treasure.
Confidence is the greatest friend.”*

Lao Zi

other illnesses.¹ Livestock is also one of the major producers of greenhouse gases. By encouraging people to follow the Daoist diet and refrain from eating meat two days a month, Daoism is helping to cut down meat consumption, encouraging the development of sustainable agriculture and assisting in the battle against climate change.

Prosperity

Daoism does not measure prosperity in terms of personal wealth or material abundance, but rather in the well-being of the planet and the number of species that co-exist with us harmoniously. According to the Daoist classic, the *Taiping Jing*:

*“I have three treasures.
The first is compassion.
The second is simplicity and
the third is never putting oneself
before the rest of the world.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 67

“Heaven is our father and earth is our mother. All the species that live in between heaven and earth are their creations. If these species become extinct, then it means our mother and father are depleted. If our father and mother are depleted, how can we prosper?”

This Daoist understanding of “prosperity” puts the development of humankind alongside the relative well-being of nature and all other species. But how do we achieve Daoist prosperity? The “Three Treasures” of Lao Zi cast a clear light on the path to prosperity:

- to have compassion towards oneself, other people and this living planet;
- to live in simplicity, keeping our use of resources to the minimum and avoid exhausting nature’s generosity;
- to refrain from competing with the others over resources.

“Others” means not just other people, but also future generations to come. With this world view, Daoist teachings match the very definition of sustaina-

ble development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is therefore imperative that all Daoists protect wildlife, the eco-system, water and biodiversity while society transforms and becomes more prosperous. Because the notion of the Dao covers all life, not just human existence, biodiversity is seen as a gift and a manifestation of the wealth and creativity of the universal Dao. Protecting, treasuring and also making appropriate use of this diversity is therefore central to Daoist practice.

Peace

Daoism advocates tolerance over exclusion, peace over warfare and accommodation over violence. Lao Zi said, “No victory is free of grief, and so to celebrate one is to glory in the death of innocent people. No-one who revels in death like this can be true to the Dao or is fit to rule in our world.”²

There is a famous story about how Daoists used a chess game to resolve a major dispute with the Buddhists in the early 6th century CE. A Buddhist monk called Hui Si wanted to build a Buddhist temple on Hengshan, a traditional Daoist sacred mountain. Yue Jun, the powerful Daoist deity there, proposed a chess game to decide the matter. Hui Si agreed and won the game. He then told Yue Jun that he wanted the site of the original Daoist temple to build the first Buddhist temple. Instead of becoming angry, Yue Jun generously conceded and moved to the bottom of the mountain. This is why today the major Daoist temple in Hengshan is located at the bottom of Hengshan instead of the top. This story of dispute resolution was widely celebrated both among the Buddhists and the Daoists. It is a good example of how the Daoists would handle a situation involving major disputes.

*“A faithful Daoist
does not use force.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 38

Another famous legend concerns Master Qiu Chuji, who is the founder of the Quanzhen School of Daoism. When he saw that the Mongols were destroying cities and slaughtering people, he travelled great distances through devas-

tation and war zones to meet Ghengis Khan and convince him to spare the northern cities in China. Advocating peace and non-violence is an enduring legacy of Daoism.

At a time of growing religious confrontations and intolerance, Daoist advocacy of peace, sharing and accommodation shines like a beacon of light through the heavy shadow cast by religious terrorism and rising extremism.

Partnership

The Daoist interpretation of partnership is closely related to its understanding of the relationship between Yin and Yang in the Taiji symbol. The balance of Yin and Yang can be understood as the perfect partnership (和合) as while the two compete with each other, they also complement and nourish one another.

*“The perfect partnership
between Heaven and Earth
is the driver for all life.”*

The Annals of Lu Bu Wei

As the story from Hengshan above shows, working together is central to Daoism. China is unique in never having had a major conflict between its major faiths – Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. Nor has there been conflict between the different traditions within Daoism. Combined with the notion that human life is a partnership

with the Dao, and through the Dao with all that lives, the yin/yang model has laid firm foundations of cooperation rather than competition. This is manifested in the fact that the Daoists of China have been the first of the Chinese traditional faiths to develop major environmental programmes with outside agencies such as the UN, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and WWF International.

We are facing a dangerous world with global warming, water scarcity, religious extremism and the greatest wave of extinction ever seen on this planet, but it is precisely because of this that we should and we will partner with



Daoists in China in traditional robes planting the first ginkgo tree in their Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC) organic herbal nursery in 2015. These robes are worn daily by Daoists in their temples. The cap symbolises Heaven, as in Chinese traditional belief Heaven is round and the Earth is square.

Source: Fan Guangchun

each other, overcoming our differences and biases, to form the perfect partnership in the pursuit of a common future as set out in the SDGs. Daoists are confident that this partnership will happen, and they will work to make it happen based upon core values, a narrative of both hope and engagement and a true sense that they have a role to play.

Vision

Daoism is an inspiring force for facilitating the realisation of the SDGs of Agenda 2030 – especially in the most populated country in the world, China. In contemporary China, the quest for something deeper and more significant than just consumerist capitalism is drawing millions to seek wisdom in their ancient traditions. Daoism is increasingly being seen as a storehouse of such wisdom and, more than this, a way of life that can give vision and thus hope to millions.

Recommended links

www.taoist.org.cn

Official website of the China Daoist Association

<http://daoism.org>

World Organisation of Daoism

<http://arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=11>

Daoist ecology

Recommended reading

Allerd Stikker, *Sacred Mountain: How the Revival of Daoism is Turning China's Ecological Crisis Around*, Bene Factum, 2014

Martin Palmer and Victoria Finlay, *Faith in Conservation*, The World Bank, 2003

Martin Palmer and Jay Ramsay, *Tao Te Ching translated by Man-Ho Kwok*, Element, 1994

¹ Earth Policy Institute, www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2012/update102

² Book of Dao, Chapter 31



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

Published by

German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ)
Division 111: Churches; political foundations; social structural programmes;
religion and development

Responsible

Martin Mauthe-Käter

Addresses of the BMZ offices

BMZ Bonn

Dahlmannstraße 4

53113 Bonn

T +49 (0)228 99 535 0

F +49 (0)228 99 535 3500

BMZ Berlin | Im Europahaus

Stresemannstraße 94

10963 Berlin

T +49 (0)30 18 535 0

F +49 (0)30 18 535 250

Project coordination

Ulrich Nitschke and Khushwant Singh

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development

Registered offices

Bonn

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 36

53113 Bonn

T +49 (0)228 4460 3933

Eschborn

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1–5

65760 Eschborn

T: +49 (0)6196 79 0

www.giz.de/Values-and-Religion

www.twitter.com/ReligionGIZ | www.facebook.com/ReligionMattersGIZ

Editors

Khushwant Singh and Judith Steinau Clark

Design

kipconcept GmbH, Bonn

Book orders

Copies of this book can be ordered from ReligionMatters@giz.de

First edition February 2016, second edition May 2016, third edition April 2017

Cover: Paul Klee, *Highway and Byways*, 1929

Religion is sometimes seen as a hindrance to development and peace. This book shows that religion can be part of the solution to the global challenges we face. It brings together the multifaceted wisdom of religions and indigenous traditions on sustainable development.

More than 25 inspiring followers, theologians, practitioners and academics from the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Indigenous traditions, Islam, Judaism, and the Sikh Religion share their spiritual and religious insights on the five dimensions of the new Agenda 2030: Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Without claiming any form of representative authority, their authentic contributions increase our knowledge of religions and describe how religious actors promote development. The book demonstrates that common spiritual values are at the heart of all religious and indigenous traditions – and that bringing these virtues to life can contribute to overcoming environmental destruction, poverty, forced migration, corruption, terror, discrimination and injustice.

The authors give cause for optimism that the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 signed by 193 nations at the United Nations in September 2015 can be achieved through a conscious individual and collective effort – provided we ourselves are willing to change in the first place.

Published by the German Federal Ministry for
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)