



CREATING SPACES
TO SHARE OUR STORIES
AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS DIVIDES

How did it all begin? – DAOISM

Background:

Traditional Chinese beliefs are based on three important religions: Daoism, Buddhism and the teachings of Confucius. This story comes from the Daoist tradition and is based on the study of nature, and its most important symbol, the yin and yang.

Yin and yang are not seen as gods or deities but as natural forces. The dark and the light, describes the creative power which sustains all life and being. Even the Chinese gods are seen as creations of the yin and yang. Here is one version of how the world came to be.



Yin and Yang - (Story can be found on back)

Follow up questions:

1. In this creation story, what was the first thing to emerge from the chaos and mist?
2. What were the distinct features of Yin and Yang and why did they need each other?
3. What was special about Pan Gu and how did he help with the work of creation?
4. What happened to Pan Gu's body when he died?
5. Are there any similarities or differences with other creation stories you have heard?
What do you want to remember about this story?

Yin and Yang

There was a time when there was nothing but chaos, and it was like a mist and full of emptiness. Suddenly, there came a great, colourful light and from this light all things that exist came to be. Then the mist shook and separated. Light things rose up to form heaven and heavy things sank, became solid, and formed the earth.

Then strong forces came from heaven and earth and these forces combined to produce Yin and Yang. Yang was like a dragon - hot, fiery, male, full of energy. Yin was like a cloud - moist, cool, female, and slowly drifting. Each force had great power. On their own they would destroy the world and chaos would return, but together they balanced each other and kept the world in harmony.

From Yin and Yang came everything. The sun was of Yang and the moon, Yin. The four seasons - Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn - and the five elements - water, earth, metal, fire and wood – all these things sprang from them as did all kinds of living creatures.

So there was the earth, a featureless ball, floating like a jellyfish on water. Then the forces of Yin and Yang created the giant figure Pan Gu, the Ancient One. Pan Gu, never stopped growing during every year of his long life and he set to work to put the earth in order. He dug the river valleys and piled up the mountains. Over many thousands of years, he shaped and created the folds of our earth.

But such work took its toll. Even mighty Pan Gu could not escape death and, worn out by his long life of work, he collapsed and died. His body was so vast that when he fell to the ground his body became the five sacred mountains, his hair became the plants and his blood the rivers. From his sweat came the rain and from the parasites living on his body came human beings.

The people, at first, lived in caves but soon the Heavenly Emperor came to teach them how to make tools and houses. The people also learnt how to build boats, to fish, to plough and plant, and to prepare food. This is how it all began.

(Traditional Chinese Tale)