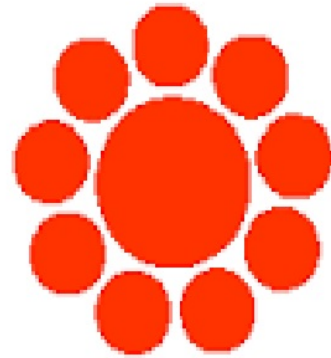


# Common Ground and Sacred Exchange- An Overview of Theological Similarities and an Account of Inter-religious Activities Among Caodaiism, Oomoto, and Dàoyuàn



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Previous Publication Information<sup>1</sup>

In the Analects of Confucius, Céng Zǐ states, “One makes friends through training in rites and learning, and through friends, one is assisted in the development of benevolence.”<sup>2</sup> The

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<http://caodai.com.vn/gallery/album/Jason%20God%20Given%20Caodai%20Oomoto.pdf>

This paper has since been retitled, revised, and expanded to include information on Dàoyuàn. All necessary permissions have been granted by myself, the author, and the previous publisher, Reverend Canh Q. Tran.

<sup>2</sup> My own translation of 12:24 from the Analects of Confucius. 曾子曰：「君子以文會友，以友輔仁。」

friendship shared among the new Asian religions Caodaism (道高臺 Đạo Cao Đài), Dàoyuàn (道院), and Oomoto (大本教 Ōmoto-kyō) certainly appears to epitomize this saying. Each religion has its unique set of rites and learning for devotees to train in, however, the prominent similarities between Caodaism, Dàoyuàn, and Oomoto provide ample ground for inter-religious exchange and cooperation. Each of these three religions is united by their usage of inclusive monotheism, revelation through spiritism, Yīn Yáng based dualistic monism, and religious syncretism. After discovering one another, in many cases quite early in their respective histories, inter-religious activities have been held frequently. Caodaism and Oomoto have made some brief details regarding of their meetings with each other<sup>3</sup> and their meetings with Dàoyuàn public, however, there has been little to no in-depth examination into this development among scholars of new Asian religions. After a brief historical and theological overview of these religions is provided, additional information including testimony gathered through interviews with representative attendees of these inter-religious meetings will be presented.

Throughout this essay, brief comparisons will be made among Caodaism, Dàoyuàn, and Oomoto. These three religions will be compared and contrasted in regards to their views on God, methods of revelation, and morality. To simplify the presentation of these rather vast topics, the confines of this essay will be such that exploration will be mostly be limited to a sampling of representative scripture via Caodaism's "The Collection of Divine Messages, Volumes One and Two (聖言合選 Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển)" and Oomoto's "Divine Signposts (道の栞 Michi no Shiori)." Although some Dàoyuàn scripture can indeed be found, if one knows where to look for it, in practice, Dàoyuàn do not make their scriptures available to those who have not received initiation. In honoring their desire for this level of discretion, information regarding Dàoyuàn's conceptions of God, methods of revelation, and morality will be taken instead from their official website, Home-one.org.tw. Other sources will be utilized for support where needed. This essay will not only explore the similarities among Caodaism, Dàoyuàn, and Oomoto but also note differences. Naturally, the investigation of such differences is not meant to disrupt interreligious harmony. Instead these differences can serve as topics which promote intriguing new avenues for further interreligious theological inquiry.

## The Founding of Oomoto

The foundress of Oomoto was Deguchi Nao (出口なお), a native of Ayabe, Kyōto. In 1892, at the age of fifty-five, the foundress came under her first possession when the God Ushitora no Konjin (良の金神) ordered her to act as His scribe via automatic writing which she was able to do despite being illiterate. Through divine guidance, a man named "Ueda Kisaburō (上田喜三郎)" was led to the foundress in 1899 in order to join her newly founded religion,

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<sup>3</sup> An up-to-date timeline of these meetings can be viewed at the following website:  
<http://caodai.com.vn/en/news-detail/history-of-exchange-between-caodai-and-oomoto.html>

Oomoto. A year later, he married into Deguchi Nao's family by marrying her youngest daughter and Second Generation Lineage Master, Deguchi Sumiko (出口すみこ). As Oomoto follows a matriarchal priestesshood, Ueda Kisaburō changed his name to Deguchi Onisaburō (出口 王仁 三郎) to enter into the Deguchi familyline. Deguchi Nao has the special designation of Foundress (開祖 Kaiso) whereas Deguchi Onisaburō is given the title of Seishi (聖師), Sagacious Master.<sup>4</sup> Others in familyline have titles as follows, the women are called "Kyōshu (教主)," Lineage Masters, whereas their husbands are called "Kyōshu Ho (教主補)," Assistant Lineage Masters and additionally change their family names to Deguchi upon marriage. Although Foundress Deguchi Nao was more prolific as an automatic writer, Deguchi Onisaburō's "Divine Signposts" appears to be one the most celebrated pieces of literature among Oomoto's various collections of auto writings. Oddly, thus far, Oomoto has only produced English translations of the works written or auto-written by male leaders. Other than "Divine Signposts," the only other Deguchi family work that has been translated into English is "In Search of Meaning (生きがいの探求)" by Third Generation Assistant Lineage Master Deguchi Hidemaru (出口 日出磨 三代 教主補). An English language biography on Foundress Deguchi Nao is available though.

### **The Founding of Dàoyuàn**

The early 1900s were a time when in China wherein "spiritualism (靈學 língxué)" enjoyed a surge in popularity. This religious cultural phenomenon occurred amid an atmosphere of already high religious enthusiasm otherwise demonstrated through revival movements and reform movements in Buddhism, Daoism, and Christianity. When Dàoyuàn emerged around 1916, it vibrantly combined all of these elements into a religion which relied on spiritualist automatic writing (扶乩 fújī) and the synthesizing of the five teachings (五教 wǔ jiào)- the religions of Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam. The earliest activities of Dàoyuàn occurred in Shandong, China when magistrate Wú Fúsēn (吳福森) met with Garrison captain Liú Shàoqī (劉紹基). They gathered together a small group of likeminded individuals to utilize automatic writing as a means of seeking counsel from various buddhas, immortals, and holy figures. During these counsels before the altar (壇訓 tán xùn), the group received messages from a multitude of figures, however, one deity in particular emerged as especially significant and later revealed Himself as God.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Founding of Caodaism**

In the mid 1920s, a group of Vietnamese spiritists in Saigon likewise realized that they were receiving messages from God. On November 18th 1926, Caodaism marked their official

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<sup>4</sup> Onisaburō, Deguchi and Charles Rowe. "Divine Signposts- The Birth of Oomoto." Divine Signposts. January 1, 1985. Accessed June 20, 2016. <http://www.oomoto.jp/enSignpost/>.

<sup>5</sup> P.117-118 Brown, Rajeswary Ampalavanar, Justin Pierce, and Oliver Walton. Charities in the Non-Western World: The Development and Regulation of Indigenous and Islamic Charities. (New York: Routledge 2013), 117-118.

founding with an impressively well-attended ceremony of some fifty thousand participants. There was, in fact, so much interest in the young and rapidly growing religion that it quickly met with resistance from status-quo maintaining Buddhists, Catholics, and French Officials. By 1930, Caodaism likely had a surplus of half a million adherents, and later on would gain several million.<sup>6</sup> Early leadership came from individuals such as Lê Văn Trung (黎文忠) the first Pope (教宗 Giáo Tông) of Caodaism and also Phạm Công Tắc (范功則) the first Protector of Laws and Justice (護法 Hộ Pháp) who later ascended to become the second Pope. After receiving detailed spirit messages, Caodaism built their main headquarters, the Holy See, in Tây Ninh and a thousand plus temples were likewise built throughout Vietnam.<sup>7</sup>

## God

In Dàoyuàn, God revealed Himself progressively. First, He simply identified as the Highest Immortal or the Highest Perfected One (尚仙 / 尚真人 shàng xiān / shàng zhēnrén).<sup>8</sup> Later on though, the deity came to be understood as the one and only God (獨一無二之神 dúyī wú'èr zhī shén) and announced that His full title was “Zhìshèng Xiāntiān Lǎozǔ (至聖先天老祖),” “Consummate in Holiness - The Primordial Progenitor of Prior Heaven.”<sup>9</sup> On Dàoyuàn’s official website, Home-one.org.tw, this holy name is explained character by character as follows:

“Zhì” is a word which means that which is incapable of further increase and that to which there is none higher. “Zhì” also means the highest summit and that which is unsurpassable in height.

“Shèng” is that which is great, transformative, and dignified beyond compare. “Shèng” means “sage” in the sense used by Mencius in the chapter “Jinxīn” where he remarked, “Sages are those who are great and transformative.”

“Xiān” means the earliest to which there was no before, nor any beginning, nor any form.

“Tiān” means natural phenomena and is also used in short to refer to nature itself. Just as it is written in the Dào dé Jīng, “Humanity models itself after the earth, earth models itself after heaven, heaven models itself after the Dao, and the Dao models itself after nature.”

“Lǎo” means “elder” in the sense that Mencius used the character in the chapter “Lílóu” wherein a verse reads, “the great elder under heaven.”<sup>10</sup> “Lǎo” is like the father of all varieties of

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<sup>6</sup> Hoskins, Janet and Deepak Shimkada. "From Kuan Yin to Joan of Arc: Female Divinities in the Caodai Pantheon." In *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess in Asia*, 80-99. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press 2008), 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Brown, Rajeswary Ampalavanar, Justin Pierce, and Oliver Walton. *Charities in the Non-Western World: The Development and Regulation of Indigenous and Islamic Charities*. (New York: Routledge 2013), 117.

<sup>9</sup> 道慈研究：至聖 先天老祖 聖號淺釋 2010. Accessed May/31/2016. [http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category\\_id=74&parent\\_id=61](http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category_id=74&parent_id=61).

<sup>10</sup> To reflect the Dào yuàn usage I translated “大老” as “great elder” in the singular form because they are using it to reference their monotheistic God, Zhìshèng Xiāntiān Lǎozǔ, however, in Mencius this should be translated in the plural form as “The great elders under heaven” because in Mencius, Chapter “Lílóu (離婁) verse 13,” reads “These two elders are the (among) great elders under heaven (二老者，天下之大老也).” The two figures beings referenced are Bóyí (伯夷) and Tàigōng (太公).

existing phenomena throughout heaven and earth. In other words, heaven, earth, humanity, the universe, and all myriad phenomena were born from the qì-womb of (Zhìshèng Xiāntiān) Lǎozǔ.

In the oldest Chinese dictionary, “Ēr Yǎ,” the character “Zǔ” is believed to mean “beginning,” and this sense of “beginning” is found in the first chapter of the “Dàodé Jīng” wherein it is written, “Nameless, it is the beginning of heaven and earth.” This means that “Zǔ” is the beginning progenitor from which heaven and earth, humanity, and all myriad phenomena transformed and emerged.<sup>11</sup>

In Caodaism, God identifies Himself in two ways, as “The Jade Emperor (玉皇上帝 Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế)” and as “The Immortal Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Cao Dai (高臺仙翁大菩薩摩訶薩 Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát).” These names are used in conjunction and separately throughout Caodaism’s “Collection of Divine Messages.” The usage of Jade Emperor connects Caodaism to Daoist theology, whereas “The Immortal Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Cao Dai” is a name for God unique to Caodaism which blends Daoist, Buddhist, and Caodaist terminology.

Oomoto is somewhat more complicated in this regard as God identifies Himself as various kami, but all of these kami are taken as a single God. The names of these kami link them to pre-Oomoto Shinto deities and also determine God or Goddess in accordance with the kami’s gender. In brief, the main kami in Oomoto are Ushitora no Konjin (良の金神), Kunikotachi (国之常立神), Amenominakanushi (天御中主), and Toyokumonu (豊雲野). Oomoto devotees often address their prayers to “Ōmotosomeōmikami (大天主太神)” which functions as a pragmatic catch-all since it can refer to all kami collectively or to God.<sup>12</sup>

During the Caodaist séance which took place on Christmas 1925, “The Collection of Divine Messages” records God introducing Himself through the following verse: “I have reigned supreme for millennia. Those who improve themselves spiritually will receive blessings. The miraculous way has been taught and followed throughout the world for millennia.” The Oomoto perspective can be seen in Chapter two, verse eighty-five of “Divine Signposts” wherein Deguchi Onisaburō writes the following concerning God: “The God who created everything in the universe is one only: He is called the GOD AMENOMINAKANUSHI.”

## The Goddess Aspect

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<sup>11</sup> 「至」者，無以復加、至高無上之辭。「至」也是最高的頂端，不能再往上的意思。

「聖」者，大而化之、尊嚴無比之謂。「聖」也是孟子盡心章所說「大而化之之謂聖」的「聖」的意思。

「先」者，最早、無前、無始、無相之意。

「天」者，自然之象，也是對大自然的簡稱，如道德經中說：「人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。」

「老」者，就是孟子離婁篇中所說「天下之大老」，猶言天地萬有一切種種之父。也就是說，天地間人類、宇宙、萬物，都是從 老祖炁胞中所生化出來的。

「祖」在爾雅一書中認為是「始」的意思，而這個始也就是道德經第一章「無名，天地之始」的「始」，意思是說，天地、人類、萬物，都是從這個「祖」開始生生化化出來的。

[http://www.home-one.org.tw/GoodsDescr.asp?category\\_id=73&parent\\_id=61&prod\\_id=ZIE001](http://www.home-one.org.tw/GoodsDescr.asp?category_id=73&parent_id=61&prod_id=ZIE001)

<sup>12</sup> Onisaburō, Deguchi and Charles Rowe. "The International Edition of Divine Signposts." (Part 3 "Oomoto's concept of divinity," Part 4 "About the God Ushitora" & Part 5 "About the Spirit of Mizu") Divine Signposts. January 1, 1985. Accessed June 20, 2016. <http://www.oomoto.jp/enSignpost/>.

Caodaism includes Goddess worship which makes use of characteristics from Vietnam's indigenous goddess worship of Đạo Mẫu (道母) which is thought to predate contact with neighboring foreign religions.<sup>13</sup> Also an influence is Daoism's "Queen Mother of the West (西王母 Tây Vương Mẫu)" who is considered to be identical to Caodaism's Goddess.<sup>14</sup> In Caodaism, the Goddess is given two rather pretty and poetic names, "Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu (瑤池金母)" and "Phật Mẫu Diêu Trì (佛母瑤池);" meaning "Golden Mother of the Pond of Jade" and "The Jade Pond Buddha-Mother" respectively. Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu plays many important roles in Caodaism such as Her role as Creatrix of all material things. Everything exists within Her form because She is the manifestation of Yin.<sup>15</sup>

Oomoto likewise features elements of Goddess devotion. In Oomoto, God and all wholesome gods/kami who are involved in the divine plan are engendered either by the masculine Yang spirit, "Izu no Mitama (巖靈)" or the feminine Yin Spirit "Mizu no Mitama (瑞靈)." For instance, God Kunikotachi would of course have this Izu quality whereas God(dess) Toyokumono would instead exhibit the Mizu quality.<sup>16</sup> Although Shinto in origin, Izu and Mizu follow Daoist Yin-Yang logic quite closely as Daoist theory influenced even the earliest of Shinto scriptures such as the "Kojiki (古事記)." For instance, Izu is associated with sky and fire whereas Mizu is associated with earth and water.<sup>17</sup>

In Dàoyuàn, Goddess devotion, at least from the materials which Dàoyuàn makes public, seems perhaps non-existent, or at the very least, considerably less pronounced. God is spoken of in almost exclusively masculine terms with the notable exception occurring when God, as Creator, is referred to as "Father," but "heaven, earth, humanity, the universe, and all myriad phenomena" are born through His "qi-womb (炁胞 qì bāo)." Though it is worth noting that there is a frequently used convention within Daoist alchemy wherein both men and women aim to cultivate and store internal energy and this process is often described using pregnancy and birth as a metaphorical analogy.

## Extended Pantheon

Caodaism's extended pantheon receives a great deal of attention from western observers. Some appraisals have applauded the multi-racial, transhistoric, and diplomatically

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<sup>13</sup> Hoskins, Janet and Deepak Shimkada. "From Kuan Yin to Joan of Arc: Female Divinities in the Caodai Pantheon." In *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess in Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press 2008), 87.

<sup>14</sup> Ninh, Thien-Huong T. "The Caodai Mother Goddess in a Globalizing World: Mediation Between Religious Universalism and Homeland Orientation among Vietnamese Caodaists in the United States." (*Asian Anthropology* 12, no. 1 2013), 63.

<sup>15</sup> Hồng, Đặng Bùì, and Đắc Bùì Hùì. *Guide to Caodai Spiritual Celebrations*. (Chan Tam Publisher 2006), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Onisaburō, Deguchi and Charles Rowe. "The International Edition of Divine Signposts." (Part 5 "About the Spirit of Mizu") *Divine Signposts*. January 1, 1985. Accessed June 20, 2016. <http://www.oomoto.jp/enSignpost/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

diverse pantheon as progressive and creative, but others have been rather scathingly critical. One such critique came from Graham Greene, the author of "The Quiet American," who infamously derided Caodaism as "...a prophecy of planchette" and also quipped "Christ and Buddha looking down from the roof of a Cathedral on a Walt Disney fantasia of the East."<sup>18</sup> Oomoto's collection of auto writings contain references to many Shinto kami and some Buddhist deities who are appropriated as kami. In Oomoto's English literature, some of the lower wholesome kami are referred to as "angels." The original Japanese term is somewhat nuanced in this regard as the written two character-compound appears as "angel (天使(かみがみ))" but the compound is given the special reading "kamigami" which would more commonly be written as "神々" meaning "the multitudes of kami." Oomoto also is known to hold other religious thought in high regard and frequently participates in inter-religious activities. One of the most iconic images from Oomoto's early history of inter-religious activities is an Oomoto painting titled "The Family of Religions" which debuted at the religious exhibition of 1930. The painting depicts religious leaders from around the world sitting at a table atop which is a map of the world. Above these figures are spirit images of great figures such as Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Socrates, various Shinto kami, and other religious founders, deities, and figures.<sup>19</sup>

Although it is somewhat more difficult to determine as a non-initiated outsider, it appears that Dàoyuàn, like other offshoots of Xiāntiān Dào (先天道 "The Way of Former Heaven"), devotionally esteems the founders or representative of the five great religions which are designated as Lǎozǐ, Śākyamuni Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. In a spiritist message Dàoyuàn received from Lǎozǔ on 7/22/2013, it was recorded prior to the main teaching that many beings from the spirit realm were in attendance. In this spiritist message there is a line in the opening which reads, "The founders of the five great religions are leading all of the saints, deities, virtuous ones, and buddhas to offer prostrations."<sup>20</sup> This verse almost certainly refers to the aforementioned five figures.

In a more general statement regarding the five great religions, Dàoyuàn's website home-one.org appeals to readers with the following prompt and contemplation:

Why is it said that the Five Teachings share the same origin?

"Buddhism" advocates "compassion"

"Daoism" advocates "effortlessness"

"Confucianism" advocates "loyalty and forgiveness"

"Christianity" advocates "universal love"

"Islam" advocates "purity"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lam, Andrew. "Cao Dai Integrates World Religion, Expands to California." News America Media. September 6, 2009. Accessed June 20, 2016. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Kerr, Alex, ed. *Bankyo Dokon- Seventy Years of Inter-Religious Activity at Oomoto*. Kameoka-shi, Kyoto-fu: (Oomoto Foundation, 1997,) 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> The line appears as follows in the original Chinese: 五教教主率所屬聖神賢佛叩幕中。

<sup>21</sup> 五教同源，為什麼？

## Items for Further Interreligious Theological Inquiry:

The extended pantheon in Caodaism contains not only a God, Goddess, various buddhas, bodhisattvas, and immortals, but also contains famous historical figures who predated the founding of Caodaism. In addition to God, Dàoyuàn likewise references various buddhas, bodhisattvas, immortals, and other religious figures. The Oomoto pantheon is mostly concerned with only Japanese Kami, and perhaps a divine status of sorts is also given to lineage holders in the Deguchi family as they are protected by kami and can also be possessed by kami to deliver divine revelations. That being said, all three groups definitely place great emphasis upon Maitreya Buddha in particular. For instance, in Oomoto, Maitreya holds a special significance because Oomoto received a prophecy of The Age of Maitreya's Construction of a New World (みろくの世建設 Miroku no yo kensetsu) had begun and the world's continuation in this age depends upon the hereditary succession of female Lineage Masters in the Deguchi family. It would be fascinating to learn what views Caodaism and Dàoyuàn hold in regards to this prophecy.

## Methods of Revelation

In Oomoto revelation is achieved when spirit possession (神懸り kamigakari) occurs between God as either an inflow of the spirit of Izu or Mizu depending on the gender of the vessel. After possession is established, automatic writing (お筆先 ofudesaki) begins. In chapter one verse four of “Divine Signposts” the process is described as follows: “Although Onisaburo writes, it is not Onisaburo who is writing. It is God who writes, using Onisaburo's hand.” Later in verse twenty-five it is clarified, “God does not have His own voice and body. Therefore, God makes all things known possessing the body of a pure soul.”

Dàoyuàn employs the ancient Chinese form of automatic writing known as “fú jī (扶乩).” According to an internal memo titled “Caodaism an Outline of the Planchette Cult Movement in the Stream of the New Popular Religions in Modern East Asia,”<sup>22</sup> written by the Japanese scholar, Shigeru Takatsu, the first recorded use of fú jī as a method to receive spiritist messages occurred during the Liú Sòng dynasty (420-479 CE). However, fú jī came into much greater prominence in the Sòng dynasty (960–1279). In one of Dàoyuàn's central scriptures,

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「佛教」主張「慈悲」；  
「道教」主張「無為」；  
「儒教」主張「忠恕」；  
「基督教」主張「博愛」；  
「回教」主張「清真」。

[http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowCategory.asp?category\\_id=57](http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowCategory.asp?category_id=57)

<sup>22</sup> This memo was dated June 30- July 1 2012.



“Spiritual Cultivation for Reforming One’s Mind (革心之修養 géxīn zhī xiūyǎng),” God is recorded as stating rather specifically the purpose for using automatic writing:

““I am Dao and Dao is me. Out of all spirits and variety of beings, there are none whom in I am not found.” Zhìshèng Xiāntiān Lǎozǔ further stated, “At present this era has been declared ended. The world will face a catastrophe. I cannot bear to see sentient beings submerged once more (in Saṃsāra). My spirit will descend to save the world by awakening the deluded masses. Through spirit possession and automatic writing (借乩 jiè jī), I have transmitted the Dao and established “Dàojuàn” and “The Red Swastika Society” in order to allow spirits and humans to cooperate together to propagate Dao and generate compassion by “rectifying people’s minds and saving the world from catastrophe.” However, worldly people do not understand the truth and thereby it is not easy to implement (this plan). Hence the maximum effect has not yet been enabled. This is truly a pity!””<sup>23</sup>

In the Caodaist context, automatic writing (執筆 chǎp bút) is also common and is defined as “To hold pencil for realization of a spiritistic séance.”<sup>24</sup> In Caodaisim’s “Collection of Divine Messages,” automatic writing was explained in a divine message received on January 3rd 1926. The explanation appeared as follows:

“In the other form of spiritual contact known as automatic writing, or inspired writing, I will come to you and make your spirit unstable for a while. During that time, your spirit will be able to listen to Me. Your hand will obey and write. In this form of spiritual contact, I cooperate with you so that you can reach Universal Truths.”

Concerning the mediums themselves, the divine message further outlined some standards:

“The mediums should be chosen for their advanced spirit so that the session will be fruitful. They should practice vegetarianism, and train themselves toward being completely balanced (as good as Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas) to be able to properly achieve the purpose of the session and transmit the teachings. They are considered My assistants in the propagation of the Way. Spiritual contact cannot be taken lightly. In the reception of vibrations from the spirit, each person has personal vibrations which may be influenced by their own emotions and personality and may interfere: subsequently these writings may not be correct. One should take caution in setting up sessions and in recognizing the authenticity of the writings. So, after each spiritism session, you have to wait for My approval before any implementation.”

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<sup>23</sup> Part of this quote from “Spiritual Cultivation for Reforming One’s Mind” is given at the following address: [http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category\\_id=66&parent\\_id=57](http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category_id=66&parent_id=57)

Readers are prompted to consult page 107 of the scripture for the full context, however, I found the quote on page 106 of the edition I was able to track down. Since the quote is partially reproduced for public consumption, I have assumed that providing the surrounding passage is likely ‘fair game.’

<sup>24</sup> Nguyễn, Đức. Dictionary of Caodaism. October 30, 2012. Accessed June 20, 2016. (Entries: “chấp bút”) <http://www.daotam.info/books/CaoDaiTuDien/index-CaoDaiTuDien.html>.

## Items for Further Interreligious Theological Inquiry:

Oomoto appears to only utilize possession and automatic writing to receive divine messages, and Dàoyuàn likewise utilizes traditional Chinese techniques to receive spiritist messages. Caodaism, on the other hand, in addition to traditional techniques also employs some methods from European Spiritism such as table-tipping/turning (xây bàn) and automatic writing through a billed/beaked-basket.<sup>25</sup>

Possession in Oomoto is quite specific in the sense that only Deguchi women can be possessed by God in His Izu aspect. Conversely, only Deguchi men (family through marriage) can be possessed by God(dess) in Her Mizu aspect. In Caodaism, this gender polarity or gender balancing is not a feature of revelations.

In Caodaism, vegetarianism is part of what enables mediums to gain proper purity before they receive divine messages. Though perhaps unrelated, Dàoyuàn, likewise seems to advocate for vegetarianism via the third precept from the “Ten Precepts for Practitioners of Spiritual Cultivation” wherein practitioners are guided to practice the “Ten Wholesome Acts.” The eighth wholesome act is listed as “Refrain from the physical action of killing. Have pity upon other living beings (身不殺生, 要愛惜物命).”<sup>26</sup> The rather pronounced Mahāyāna Buddhist language here is almost certainly a call for vegetarianism. Conversely, Oomoto does not place any special emphasis on vegetarianism.

## Morality

Moral codes and prohibitions are numerous in Caodaism and differ according to priests and lay devotees. Most basic among this extensive collection of moral codes is the Five Prohibitions (五戒禁 Ngũ Giới Cấm) which appear to be a slightly modified version of the Five Precepts of Buddhism. In the Caodaist context, they appear as follows: “Do not Kill (不殺生 Bất sát sanh), Do Not Steal (不偷盜 Bất du đạo), Do Not Be Obscene (不邪淫 Bất tà dâm), Do Not Be Drunk (不酒肉 Bất tửu nhục), and Do Not Sin By Words (不妄語 Bất vọng ngữ).” These items are explained one by one through divine messages recorded in 1928 in Caodaism’s “Collection of Divine Messages.”

Dàoyuàn likewise has multiple sets of precepts, however, the most fundamental of these sets is the “Ten Precepts for Practitioners of Spiritual Cultivation (修人十誡 xiū rén shí jiè)” which consist mostly of items lifted directly from Buddhism and Confucianism. On Dàoyuàn’s home-one.org website the precepts appear as follows with brief descriptions of each item:

“First: Refrain from Non-harmony in Relationships (誡不倫 jiè bù lún)

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<sup>25</sup> Nguyễn, Đức. Dictionary of Caodaism. October 30, 2012. Accessed June 20, 2016. (Entries: “xây bàn” & “thủ cơ”) <http://www.daotam.info/books/v/CaoDaiTuDien/index-CaoDaiTuDien.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See the following section, “morality,” for the complete version of these precepts.

Practice harmony in the five relationships (五倫 wǔ lún): there should be oughtness between rulers and ministers, intimacy between fathers and sons, distinction between husband and wife, order between senior and junior siblings, and trust between friends.

Second: Refrain from Non-Virtuous Acts (誠不德 jiè bù dé)

Practice the eight virtues (八德 bā dé) by accomplishing filial piety, tranquility, sincerity, trustworthiness, proper etiquette, oughtness, modesty, and integrity.

Third: Refrain from Unwholesome Acts (誠不善 jiè bú shàn)

Practice the ten wholesome acts (十善 shí shàn)-

Refrain from lying. Be sincere.

Refrain from using flowery or ingratiating words. Base your speech upon reason.

Refrain from harsh speech. Speak compassionately.

Refrain from being double-tongued. Speak skillfully and benefit others.

Eliminate the greedy mind. Practice giving.

Eliminate the angry mind. Stabilize your mind and practice patience.

Eliminate the ignorant mind. Act in accordance with propriety and do not act arrogantly.

Refrain from the physical action of killing. Have pity upon other living beings.

Refrain from physical action of stealing. Frequently engage in charity.

Refrain from physical action of sexual misconduct. Preserve the purity of your own body.

Fourth: Refrain from Non-oughtness (誠不義 jiè bú yì)

Maintain oughtness and act as a sincere person. Serve the Dao and follow the rules and laws in society.

Fifth: Refrain from Non-compassion. (誠不慈 jiè bù cí)

One should love from the heart, have gratitude for things, and delight in practicing compassion towards all sentient beings. One should establish a great compassion to remove sentient beings from their suffering.

Sixth: Refrain from Concealing Goodness (誠隱善 jiè yǐn shàn)

When one practices goodness, one should neither conceal nor reveal it. When others practice goodness, praise them, make their efforts known to others, spread the news of their actions, and imitate what they have done.

Seventh: Refrain from Harming (誠殘害 jiè cán hài)

Guard against injuring or harming other people and beings. One absolutely must not commit violence, forge credentials, plot against others, or break heavenly principles.

Eighth: Refrain from Deceitfulness (誠詭秘 jiè guǐ mì)

Be sincere to heaven and humankind. One must not be overly secretive, unreliable, prone to lying, or engage in deceitful sophistry.

Ninth: Refrain from Envy and Insult (誠嫉侮 jiè jí wǔ)

Do not be jealous. Do not lie to others. One should praise the capable and advance towards true benevolence and beauty.

Tenth: Refrain from Neglectfulness (誠輕褻 jiè qīng xiè)

One should refrain from frivolous speech, depravity, and strictly maintain moderation. One should achieve prudence, improve one's character, and optimize one's temperament."<sup>27</sup>

In Oomoto, morality is less prescriptive and more interpretive. Oomoto has eight items known as The Four Teachings (四大綱領 Shidai Kōryō) and The Four Principles (四大主義 Shidai Shugi). The Four Teachings are as follows: "Harmonious Alignment with Life and the Universe (祭-惟神の大道 Matsuri- Kan'nagara no Daidō), Revelation of Celestial Truth and its Lessons (教-天授の真理 Oshie- Tenju no Shinri), Innate Patterns of Behavior for Man and Society and the Cosmos (慣-天人道の常 Narawashi- Tenjindō no Tsune), and Instinctual Creative Drives (造-適宜の事務 Nariwai Tekigi no Jimu). The Four Principles are Purity: purification of mind and body (清潔主義 心身修祓の大道 Seiketsu Shugi: Shinshin Shūbatsu no Daidō), Optimism: believing in the goodness of the Divine Will (樂天主義 天地惟神の大道 Rakuten Shugi: Tenchi Kan'nagara no Daidō), Progressivism: way of social improvement (進展主義 社会改善の大道 Shinten Shugi: Shakai Kaizen no Daidō), and Unification: the reconciliation of all dichotomies (統一主義 上下一致の大道 Tōitsu Shugi: Jōge Itchi no Daidō).<sup>28</sup>

### Items for Further Interreligious Theological Inquiry:

Caodaism and Dàoyuàn adopt codes of morality from Buddhism, Confucianism, and additionally create their own codes. Oomoto does not adopt any moral codes and presents original codes only. Caodaism and Dàoyuàn includes explicit prohibitions, whereas prohibitions in Oomoto may be implicit.

### Views of One Another and the Value of Interreligious Activity

The following table is meant to provide insight into the essence of how Caodaism, Oomoto, and Dàoyuàn view one another and also records the value of interreligious activity as understood in each religion:

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<sup>27</sup> “修人十誠.” Accessed June 20, 2016.

[http://www.home-one.org.tw/GoodsDescr.asp?category\\_id=73&parent\\_id=61&prod\\_id=ZIE001](http://www.home-one.org.tw/GoodsDescr.asp?category_id=73&parent_id=61&prod_id=ZIE001)

<sup>28</sup> "Teachings and Scriptures." Teachings and Scriptures. January 1, 2010. Accessed June 27, 2016. <http://www.oomoto.or.jp/English/enDokt/dokt-en.html>.

Dàojuàn	Oomoto	Caodaism
View of One Another		
<p>“Oomoto and Caodaism are both My utterly formless-formlessness. They are the profound-profundities of this reality. What is different (among Dàojuàn, Oomoto, and Caodaism) are the causes and conditions regarding the time period and location (where they arose). Now the globe has become a unified village.” A spiritist message from Lǎozǔ on 7/22/2013</p>	<p>(Oomoto, Dàojuàn, and Caodaism share) faith in One God, the Creator, the Almighty. God will make this world in peace and justice: Establishing the Heavenly Kingdom on earth—Age of Maitreya. Faith that all religions spring from the same source. ~ Oomoto Scholar, Masamichi Tanaka</p>	<p>All three religions emerged through spiritism. ~ Caodaist Priest, Reverend Canh Q. Tran</p>
The Value of Interreligious Activity		
<p>Our Purpose “The Five Teachings Return to the Singular Dao. Through edification, interreligious conflict can be eliminated.” “Through uniting our spirits and chanting scripture, devastating cataclysms can be dissolved back into formlessness.” “Develop the spirit through seated quiescence. Cultivate your mind-nature.” “Combine interior and exterior forms of cultivation, save others and yourself, edify the minds of others, and work towards world peace.”<sup>29</sup></p>	<p>All Religions Spring from the Same Root (万教同根 bankyō dōkon)  There are many countries in the world, but the God they trust in is one. His name differs from country to country, but the Lord who descended to save us --- call Him Kami or Budda --- Originally all are names for Love and Compassion. We live under the sun which shines on us all, but our worldly hearts keep us apart. Religions have differed by time, place, or situation, I speak of the religion of ages.” ~ Onisaburo Deguchi<sup>30</sup></p>	<p>“Cao Dai philosophy is “All religions are one.” There is only One God, venerated under different names, so indirectly we are all brothers and sisters. Cao Dai spreads Unity, Harmony, Peace. A Cao Dai disciple accepts all religions, no discrimination whatsoever.”  ~ Caodaist Priest, Reverend Canh Q. Tran<sup>31</sup></p>

<sup>29</sup> “(2)宗旨” Accessed June 27, 2016.

[http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category\\_id=66&parent\\_id=57](http://www.home-one.org.tw/ShowGoods.asp?category_id=66&parent_id=57)

<sup>30</sup> Kerr, Alex, ed. Bankyo Dokon- Seventy Years of Inter-Religious Activity at Oomoto. Kameoka-shi, Kyoto-fu: (Oomoto Foundation, 1997,) 4.

<sup>31</sup> Cao Dai- A Collection of Various Papers from 1970 Thru 2011. California: (Caodai Overseas Missionary, 2012,) 111.

## Conclusion

Caodaism, Dàoyuàn, and Oomoto contain many common features, and their shared claim of similarity holds up quite well even under critical analysis. Caodaism and Oomoto have fairly comparable beliefs regarding God manifesting both male and female attributes but ultimately transcending both in a unified wholeness. Likewise, all three religions practiced similar methods of automatic writing to receive divine messages.

Strikingly different, but perhaps not irreconcilable, is Caodaism and Dàoyuàn's prescriptive codes of morality juxtaposed against Oomoto's moral ideals which do not contain explicit prohibitions. Likewise unique is Oomoto's gender dynamics which were previously explored as it related to God, Goddess, and possession. In other ways also, Oomoto's concept of gender challenges certain Caodaist conventions. In Caodaism, neither of the two highest positions, Cardinal (掌法 Chưởng Pháp) and Pope (教宗 Giáo Tông), can be occupied by women. The reasoning for this is that it would create a system of Yin dominating Yang which would lead to apocalyptic consequences. The divine message conveying this theological glass ceiling stated, "If a day came when the YANG disappeared and the YIN reigned, the universe would fall into decay and be destroyed!"<sup>32</sup> Curiously enough, Oomoto's hierarchy seems to be precisely such a case of Yang playing a subservient role to Yin as males who marry into the Deguchi family can only act as Assistant Lineage Masters (教主補 Kyōshu Ho) whereas the women act as Lineage Masters (教主 Kyōshu). In Oomoto, rather than this arrangement causing the universe to fall into decay, the hereditary matriarchal lineage of Deguchi women are needed to sustain the universe in the present age.

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<sup>32</sup> L, Emma. "The Spiritual Week Interviews Hum Bui." The Spiritual Week Interviews Hum Bui. January 1, 2011. Accessed June 27, 2016. <http://www.daotam.info/booksv/Interview-HumBui/interview-hb.htm>.

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