

## **Umlabalaba, Yin & Yang**

by

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In the philosophy of the Dao, the world is composed of **two great complimentary forces, yin and yang**.  
Reproducing verse from my graphic novel, The Cosmology of the Tao. I will produce convincing evidence  
That the game accurately represents life as we know it.

From the non-being

Being was born.

And from that being

**Two forces were formed.**

One was called Yin

And Yang was the other

**And they mated together**

**As father and mother.**

**From their great union**

**To three they gave birth**

The men of all Nations,

The Heavens and Earth.

**Into five sections**

The earth did divide

**North, East, West & South**

**And a Central inside.**

Both the Yin and the Yang  
Are assigned values, too.  
Listen with care  
As I tell them to you.

Yin is the moon  
Whereas Yang is the Sun  
**Yin represents 2**  
**Whereas Yang stand for 1.**

Yin's low, soft and **even**  
Yang's **odd**, hard, and high.  
They balance each other  
This, one can't deny.

Yin's private  
Yang's public.  
Yang's South and  
Yin's North.

Yin's shady.  
Yang's sunny.  
Yang's **third**  
And Yin's **fourth.**

**These two great forces**  
**As they combine,**  
**Create all that is evil**  
**And all that's divine.**

## **Yin and Yang's blending**

We can not resist.

**Lest they interact**

**We can not exist.**

So what is the relationship between the above verses dealing with the Dao and umlabala? I will argue below that the umlabalaba board is in essence a representation of the earth as described in the highlighted portions of the above poem dealing with the Dao.

Indeed. The umlabalaba board mirrors exactly the highlighted verses.

1. the world is composed of **two great complimentary forces** – In the game of umlabalaba, one force represents one's own community, and the second represents the community of the other.
2. **And they mated together as father and mother** – That is, these two forces interact to survive, each receiving sustenance from each other's cattle.
3. **From their great union, to three they gave birth** – Here their interaction produces the third force which is life's struggle for survival itself.
4. **North, East, West & South and a Central inside** – If you look at an umlabalaba board[see image below] you will note that it is divided into five parts North, West, South and East and a Central inside.
5. **Yin represents 2 whereas Yang stand for 1** – That is, Yang represents all odd numbers; whereas Yin represents all even numbers (e.g. the 12 black tokens and 12 white tokens as mirrored in the alternation of day and night).
6. **Yin represents 2, whereas Yang stands for 1** – See 5 above.
7. **Yin's even. Yang's odd** – See 5 above. Note also that just as even numbers follow odd numbers; so black tokens play first in the game of umlabalaba..
8. **Yang's 3<sup>rd</sup> and Yin's 4<sup>th</sup>** - See 5 above.- Note that in Africa and apparently in the Yin Yang creation and many other mythologies, light came out of darkness, rather than vice-versa.
9. **These two great forces, as they combine** – That is, the interaction of the black and white tokens over time,
10. **Create all that is evil and all that's divine** – That is, their interaction is life as we know it.



Moreover, of particular note, is the fact that the umlabalaba board is actually a manifestation of the interaction between the numbers 3 (Yang) and 4 (Yin) in that: 1) the board is composed of 3 squares and 4 trapezoids; 2) the number of points on each line (3) times the number of sides of a square (4) = 12 (the number of sides of the board); 3) there are three squares, with each square having 4 sides; and 4). There are 4 lines (the number of lines that traverse the board) times the 3 spots on each line = 12 (the number of tokens for each player as well as the 12 sides of the three squares).

QED