Latter Han religious mass movements and the early Daoist church

Grégoire Espesset*

The general historical and social background against which occurred, during the second half of the Latter Han dynasty (25-220 AD), the confluence of revelations and religious mass movements, is sufficiently known for our purpose: an empire increasingly menaced by non-Chinese peoples on its outer edges; struggles between a few upper-class family clans for dominion over infant sovereigns and the actual exercise of power in the palace; remonstrance and political maneuvers of civil servants who claimed integrity in the face of a corrupted and overly severe government; numerous cases of regional banditry, popular uprisings, and attempted coups by self-proclaimed "emperors," "kings" and "heirs" of various kinds.[1] At the same time, repeated disasters (drought, rains, floods, hailstorms, earthquakes, epidemics and famine) were seen as reflecting the loss of cosmic balance provoked by human misbehavior.[2] In terms of classical history, this situation of near permanent crisis and successive, often overlapping, uprisings from 132 on, was to culminate in the general unrest of 184. Several generals, among whom Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220), took the opportunity of this social upheaval to rise to the status of near-independent warlords and

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[1] See *The Cambridge history of China*, 1, *The Ch'in and Han dynasties: 221 B.C.-A.D. 220*, eds Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, 1986), pp.223-376. For a chronological table listing 42 rebellions between 108 and 180 AD, 37 of which spanned the years 132-80, see Lin Fu-shih, *Han dai de wuzhe* (1988; repr. Taibei, 2004), pp.187-92.

[2] For a table listing more than 300 disastrous events during the Latter Han dynasty, see Satō Taketoshi, ed., *Chūgoku saigaishi nenhyō* (Tokyo, 1993), pp.11-22.

began to compete for supreme power. Their struggle sounded the death knell for the imperial sovereignty of the Han house, long before Emperor Xian 獻帝 (r. 190-220), the last Han ruler, abdicated in favor of Cao's son Pi 曹丕 (187-226).[3]

Against such a harsh background, prospects for a better personal life—if not yet salvation—gained through religious observance under the strict guidance of an enlightened master must have seemed very appealing, especially in provincial and rural milieus, far away from the highest sociopolitical spheres. The imperial cult had specialized in the worship of a cosmological, "ethicized" heaven. Either uninvited or unwilling to share in the rationalism of the elite, the people may have felt it necessary to perpetuate the more or less abandoned cults of numerous national, regional, and local divinities—divinities of the popular religion, which represent local society throughout Chinese history. There must be a connection between such phenomena as the "ethicization" of the religion of the elite and the massive expansion of popular religious activities on the one hand, and the strengthening of a body of canonical learning and the emergence of alternative forms of knowledge on the other.

According to the sources, Chinese society was already predisposed to respond massively to religious prompting by the end of the first Han dynasty (206 BC-8 AD). The earliest known record of a large-scale religious movement is arguably the great excitement provoked by the imminent advent of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母) in northeast China in the first half of the year 3 BC.[4] Exchanging "tokens" (*chou* 籌) of the

[3] On the role of Daoists in the abdication, see Howard L. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i transcendent: the political culture of dynasty-founding in China at the end of the Han* (Seattle, 1998).

[4] On this Han literary and iconographic figure inherited from the lore of pre-imperial China and later integrated into the Daoist pantheon, see Michael Loewe, *Ways to paradise: the Chinese quest for immortality* (London, 1979), pp.86-126; Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence and divine passion: the Queen Mother of the West in medieval China* (Stanford, 1993).

Queen Mother of the West, thousands of people met on the roads and, after passing through 26 commanderies and kingdoms, reached the imperial capital. Some gathered to worship the goddess and perform rituals involving singing and dancing, while auspicious scripts (*fu* 符) ensuring the bearer would not die 不死 circulated among the faithful.[5] Though the soteriological movement included improper and possibly reprehensible collective behavior, no political or military threat was foreseen by the authorities, which apparently did not need to restore law and order by force. Indeed, from the official point of view, the event seemed worth recording mostly in connection with a series of abnormal cosmic phenomena seen as being characteristic of an excess of *yin* 陰, the purported cause of which lay in the arrogant conduct of Empress Dowager Fu 傅 and her meddling in governmental affairs.[6] Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9-23 AD), who relied heavily on supernatural speculations to rise from his position of regent to that of supreme ruler, used to refer in his edicts to the Queen Mother of the West movement as one of the omens of his accession.[7] Sociologically, the major differences between this early mass movement and those discussed below would seem to be the absence of a named leader (or leaders) and the lack of a central organization, either religious or paramilitary.

Notes on Latter Han popular movements (18-220 AD)

[5] Ban Gu (32-92), *Hanshu* (92 AD) (Beijing, 1962), 11.342; 26.1311-12; 27C.1476; Xun Yue (148-209), *Hanji* (200) (Beijing, 2002), 29.504. The *Hanji* gives the number of commanderies and kingdoms involved in the movement as 36. The *Hanshu* passages are translated and discussed in Loewe, *Ways to paradise*, pp.98-100; Cahill, *Transcendence and divine passion*, pp.21-23.

[6] *Hanshu*, 27C.1476-77. Empress Dowager Fu was the emperor's grandmother.

[7] *Hanshu*, 84.3432; 98.4033.

To begin with, mention should be made of a neglected statement. On the occasion of a campaign fought during the year 212 AD, we read that the official figure reflecting the number of rebels killed was "increased tenfold" 以一為十 by the command in order that the victory appear as a "great military achievement" 大武功.[8] Albeit limited to a single case, this admission may well reflect a common practice left unstated in the official documents, for obvious reasons. Consequently, the reader should always bear in mind that the large figures given in the official sources of Chinese history for mass phenomena such as uprisings and battles are probably not reliable and are better regarded as symbolical quantities rather than statistical data.

The Scarlet Eyebrows: Han legitimists or bandits?

In 18 AD, during Wang Mang's rule, amid a growing climate of general insurrection, one Fan Chong 樊崇 assumed the leadership of a few hundred highwaymen in Langye 琅邪 (in present-day Shandong 山東 province). The gang merged with other insurgent groups, victims of famine, and destitute persons from neighboring areas, until the horde amounted to "tens of thousands" of men. As their strength rapidly increased, the outlaws killed local officials and, in 22 AD, defeated generals sent by Wang Mang. Before the battle, all the insurgents dyed their eyebrows vermilion (*zhu* 朱) as a distinctive sign, hence their usual appellation in the sources, Scarlet Eyebrows (*chimei* 赤眉).[9]

[8] Chen Shou (233-97), *Sanguo zhi* (297) (Beijing, 1959), Wei, 11.339; Sima Guang (1019-86), *Zizhi tongjian* (1084) (Beijing, 1956), 66.2112-13.

[9] *Hanshu*, 99C.4154, 4172-78; *Hanji*, 30.536-40; Yuan Hong (328-76), *Hou Hanji* (Beijing, 2002), 1.3-4; 3.41; Fan Ye (398-445), *Hou Hanshu* (445) (Beijing, 1965), 11.478.

The death of Wang Mang at the hands of one of the factions of Han legitimists in 23 AD opened a period of civil troubles. Banditry spread while attempted coups d'état and rebellions multiplied. Some of the Liu 劉 pretenders saw in the Scarlet Eyebrows a serious threat and made their submission the priority military objective, whereas the issue seemed secondary to others, who urged reconquering the entire empire first.[10] In the year 24, "hundreds of thousands" of Scarlet Eyebrows (among several other seditious groups) invaded central China but Liu Xuan 劉玄, who attempted to restore the Han dynasty as Emperor Gengshi 更始帝 (r. 23-25), persuaded the leaders to surrender to him in his temporary capital, Luoyang 洛陽. Although the rebel leaders were granted official titles (Fan Chong was made general of the imperial guard 驍騎將軍), this submission was short-lived, even more so than Liu Xuan's reign. Demoralized and longing for their native east, the Scarlet Eyebrows threatened to disband unless offered action or perhaps a higher purpose; in 25, the leaders established as new emperor another member of the Liu lineage, Penzi 劉盆子 (b. 11 AD), the youngest of three brothers, and granted each other pompous titles, but the attempt failed. In 25, and again in 26, the rebels occupied the former capital of Chang'an 長安, which suffered massive destruction and looting. But they lacked supplies, and dissent was spreading among the leaders. In the year 26, "more than 100,000" Scarlet Eyebrows were defeated by the forces of the future Han restorer, Liu Xiu 劉秀 (6 BC-57 AD); in 27, after a second defeat, "80,000" of them surrendered to Xiu, who granted an amnesty to the leaders and allowed them to settle in Luoyang. Concerning Fan Chong, the extant accounts differ as to the time of his death: he either died or was killed in 25, or resumed plotting after the amnesty and was executed in 27.[11]

[10] *Hou Hanji*, 1.6; 2.22; 3.38.

[11] *Hanshu*, 99C.4193; *Hou Hanji*, 1.10; 2.28-31; 3.35-36, 43-44, 49; 4.57-61; *Hou Hanshu*, 11.475; 16.601; *zhi*

As the Scarlet Eyebrows and most of their leaders (including Fan himself) were illiterate, only a spoken oath was required of the new recruits, and a basic system of equal and direct retribution served as law. An informal hierarchy borrowed its titles from the Han local bureaucracy: elder (*sanlao* 三老), a title Fan Chong is said to have assumed; retainer (*congshi* 從事); and constable (*zuli* 卒吏, or perhaps clerk, *zushi* 卒史). The ranking members would simply address one another as "giant" (*juren* 巨人). No written documents, banners, commands, or military units were used, at least until the Scarlet Eyebrows, at the apex of their strength, formed thirty "campaigning armies" (*ying* 營, another Han term), each gathering 10,000 men under the leadership of an elder and a retainer.[12] And, as we shall see further on, the group included religious officials in charge of a local cult.

Zhang Jue and the Yellow Turbans: a failed coup?

Yellow Turban bandits (*huangjin zei* 黃巾賊) or simply Yellow Turbans (*huangjin*) was a name given the movement by contemporary people. Like the term "moth bandits" (*ezei* 蛾賊), it was not a name chosen by the rebels themselves.[13] The well-known historical characteristics which distinguish this movement include its scale, its specific sociopolitical

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志, 18.3358.

[12] *Hou Hanji*, 1.3; 3.40; *Hou Hanshu*, 11.478-81. For the corresponding Han nomenclature, see Charles O. Hucker, *A dictionary of official titles in imperial China* (Stanford, 1985).

[13] *Hou Hanji*, 24.473; *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2300. See Paul Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," *Monumenta Serica* 17 (1958), 47-127; Howard S. Levy, "Yellow Turban religion and rebellion at the end of the Han," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76.4 (1956), 214-27; Howard S. Levy, "The bifurcation of the Yellow Turbans in Later Han," *Oriens* 13-14 (1961), 251-55; Qing Xitai et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, 1, trans. David C. Yu (Lanham, New York, 2000), chap.2, "Early Daoist texts and the rise of popular Daoist sects," pp.179-92.

organization, the support it reportedly gained among high government officials within the imperial capital, and the fact that the hypothesized causes of the popular success of the movement were taken up by factions in their struggle for imperial favor. The leaders of the Yellow Turbans, Zhang Jue 張角 and his two brothers Zhang Liang 梁 (or 良) and Bao 寶, appear primarily in official records as renowned, self-proclaimed "great physicians" (*dayi* 大醫), i.e., charlatans who for more than ten years—their popular success feeding on the domestic crisis of the 170s—had "served the way of good actions" 事善道, or even "converted" 教化 the world to the "way of good actions." Around 180, the Zhangs had established 36 territorial units 坊, each one with its own military command, and their followers were said to have numbered in the "hundreds of thousands."[14] The throne misjudged the gravity of the situation despite the early warnings of a few officials and the denunciation of one of Jue's followers. At first the rebels won a few battles but, at the end of a ten-month campaign which included several decisive battles and mass executions, the Yellow Turbans were defeated and the three brothers and their lieutenants incapacitated. Liang and Bao were both executed, while Jue is said to have died from illness before the ultimate fight.[15]

Though they were officially defeated in 184, Yellow Turban leaders and their troops

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[14] *Hou Hanji*, 24.473; for *dayi*, the (later) *Hou Hanshu*, 54.1784, reads *daxian* 大賢, "great worthy"; *Sanguo zhi*, Wu, 46.1094. From the detailed passage in the *Hou Hanji*, it is clear that *fang* referred to a territorial unit, not a military command; see Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.208, no.1892. But the corresponding passage of the *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2299, prunes the earlier version so that the term designates both a territorial unit and a military command. Modern studies usually perpetuate the misuse.

[15] See *Hou Hanji*, 24.473-78; *Hou Hanshu*, 8.350; *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1865-73. For other Yellow Turban leaders, some of whom were also named Zhang though unrelated to Jue and his brothers, thus adding to the confusion, see Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," pp.111-12.

continue to appear in the chronicles until at least 207. In 188, a Yellow Turban leader, Ma Xiang 馬相, proclaimed himself Son of Heaven but was soon defeated and killed. In 191, Yellow Turban forces of no less than "300,000" men ravaged the Bohai 勃海 region (in present-day Shandong). In 192, Cao Cao claimed "one million" Yellow Turbans were active in the Yan 兗 area (Shandong).[16] In 196, Yellow Turbans defeated local governmental troops in Beihai 北海 (Shandong). In 200, several Yellow Turban leaders joined Yuan Shao 袁紹 (d. 202) in his rivalry with Cao Cao. Finally, the assassination of the king of Jinan 濟南 in 207 was attributed to Yellow Turbans again—roughly one generation after the 184 outbreak![17] The obviously exaggerated figures notwithstanding, the above chronology testifies to the enduring vitality of the Yellow Turbans as a subversive identity and rallying flag.

Before the 4th-century *Hou Hanji* and the 5th-century *Hou Hanshu*, a 3rd-century source, of which only quotations survive, calls Zhang's movement the Way of Great Peace, *taiping dao* 太平道.[18] Indeed, an occurrence in the *Hou Hanshu*, unsupported elsewhere and rather ambiguous, states that "Zhang Jue had many of these [Great Peace] writings."[19] These

[16] This single dubious figure surpasses in number the 360,000 estimate—i.e., no more than 0.7 percent of the total population of contemporary China according to the official census—established by Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," pp.100-04.

[17] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 1.9-10, 13; 17.522; Shu, 32.876; *Hou Hanshu*, 8.356; 9.385; 48.1610; 70.2263; 73.2359; 75.2432; *Zizhi tongjian*, 60.1925, 1935-36, 1940; 62.1990; 63.2030; 65.2073.

[18] Yu Huan 魚豢, *Dianlüe* 典略 (Essentials of the [Wei] records; ca. 270), quoted in *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.264, commentary by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372-451), and *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2436, commentary by Li Xian 李賢 (651-84).

[19] *Hou Hanshu*, 30B.1084: "張角頗有其書焉," where *qi shu* 其書 designates the *Taiping qingling shu* 太平清領書 (Writings of the pure guidance of Great Peace), a work described in the *Hou Hanshu* (30B.1080,

"divine writings" 神書 were said to have been found by one Gan Ji 干吉, who transmitted them to his pupil Gong Chong 宮崇 from Langya 琅玡, who in turn submitted them unsuccessfully to the throne under Emperor Shun's 順帝 rule (126-44).[20] But establishing a possible historical and literary relationship between that text, now lost, and the *Taiping jing* 太平經 in the Ming Daoist canon remains highly hypothetical.[21] The military titles chosen by the Zhang brothers in 184 ("general of the Lord of Heaven," *tiangong jiangjun* 天公將軍, "of Earth," *digong jiangjun* 地公將軍, and "of Man," *rengong jiangjun* 人公將軍) may seem reminiscent of the *Taiping jing*'s ideology, which is centered around the heaven-earth-man triad, but the triad already had a long history by that time and belonged to the Chinese archive, in the Foucauldian sense of the word, rather than to a specific tradition.[22]

1084) as dealing with the respect due heaven and earth and conformity with the five agents (*wuxing* 五行) and also providing various recipes for ensuring the prosperity of the state and descendants for the emperor.

[20] *Hou Hanshu*, 30B.1080 (quoting Xiang Kai's 襄楷 166 AD admonition), 1084. Langya is synonymous with Langye, the place mentioned above, in present-day Shandong province. Though it recounts Xiang Kai's admonition to the throne (22.427-28), the earlier *Hou Hanji* does not mention Gan Ji or "divine writings" of Great Peace.

[21] *Taiping jing* (Scripture of Great Peace), HY 1093. The same may be said of the possible relationship between these two texts and an even earlier Great Peace text mentioned in the *Hanshu*, 75.3192, the *Tianguan li baoyuan taiping jing* 天官曆包元太平經 (All-encompassing scripture of Great Peace in accordance with the computation system of the celestial offices), a book purportedly dealing with the renewal of the heavenly mandate of the Han, and twice alluded to as belonging to the "prophetic" (*chen* 讖) literature genre; see *Hanshu*, 11.340; 99A.4094.

[22] For the titles of the Zhangs, see *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2300; *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1865. On the triad in the *Taiping jing*, see Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.79-84; Grégoire Espesset, "À vau-l'eau, à rebours *ou* l'ambivalence de la logique triadique dans l'idéologie du *Taiping jing* 太平經," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14

Interestingly, about the same period, the earliest firmly dated text of the Way of the Heavenly Master (*tianshi dao* 天師道) uses the variant expression *taiping zhi dao* 太平之道 in reference not to Zhang Jue's historical movement but to the revelations bestowed by "the Dao" upon Gan Ji—not during the 2nd century AD but at the end of the Zhou 周 era![23] Gan Ji was already becoming a figure of Daoist hagiography, also known as Lord Gan 干君 in Daoist sources. Though there probably was a historical Gan Ji who actually lived toward the end of the Latter Han dynasty, the connection of this character with the tradition of Great Peace and his role as an intercessor in the revelation of Great Peace texts are probably a later Daoist invention.[24]

Zhang Lu's "theocratic" state in Hanning

The official sources first tell us of a medium (*yaowu* 妖巫 or *wuren* 巫人) named Zhang Xiu 張脩, from Ba commandery 巴郡 (in present-day Sichuan 四川), who locally led a group of

(2004), 61-95. See also Anne Cheng, "De la place de l'homme dans l'univers: la conception de la triade Ciel-Terre-Homme à la fin de l'antiquité chinoise," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 3 (1983), 11-22; Hu Jiacong, "Daojia Huang-Lao xue de tian-di-ren yiti guan," *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 8 (1995), 18-30.

[23] "Da daojia lingjie" 大道家令戒 (Rules governing the family of the great Tao; 255), in *Zhengyi fawen Tianshi jiaojie kejing* (Commandments of the Heavenly Master from the canon of Orthodox Unity; late 3rd century?), HY 788, 13a. No Great Peace text is mentioned. See also Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures* (Berkeley, 1997), p.168.

[24] Gan is alternatively spelled Yu 于, and Ji sometimes given as Shi 室. For a convincing critical approach to the mention of Gan Ji in the *Hou Hanshu*, see Jens Østergård Petersen, "The early traditions relating to the Han dynasty transmission of the *Taiping jing*," *Acta Orientalia* (Copenhagen) 50 (1989), 133-71; 51 (1990), 173-216. For Daoist hagiography on Gan Ji, see Maeda Shigeki, *Shoki dōkyō kyōten no keisei* (Tokyo, 2004), pp.17-37.

followers—sometimes referred to as "grain bandits" 米賊, "grain mediums" 米巫 or "grain people" 米民—into the 184 AD uprising.[25] Zhang Lu 張魯, apparently unrelated to Zhang Xiu, appears in 191, not as a religious or rebel leader but, together with Xiu, as two provincial officials holding military titles obtained thanks to the acquaintances of Lu's mother in the provincial government.[26] The two Zhangs were entrusted with a military mission in the Hanzhong 漢中 area by Liu Yan 劉焉, governor (*taishou* 太守) of Yi 益 province (in modern Sichuan). There, either Xiu was killed in battle or Lu had him eliminated; Lu then incorporated Xiu's followers and seized the city of Hanzhong. After the death (in 194) of Liu Yan, his son Zhang 劉璋 succeeded him and killed Lu's mother and brother. Lu then consolidated his position in Hanning 漢寧, as he had renamed Hanzhong, and the throne had no choice but to recognize his takeover and, accordingly, made him governor of Hanning. Lu was tempted to claim kinghood but a counselor dissuaded him. In his capacity as governor, Lu sent tribute to the throne.[27] An interesting historical and social

[25] *Dianlüe*, quoted in *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.264, and in *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2436; Chang Qu (ca. 290-ca. 360), *Huayang guozhi* (ca. 340), ed. Liu Lin (Chengdu, 1984), 2.117; *Hou Hanshu*, 8.349. The nicknames stem from the "way of the five bushels of grain" (*wudoumi dao* 五斗米道), the appellation given the group in reference to a contribution made by the adepts; see a quotation from Liu Ai 劉艾 (ca. 160-after 220) in *Hou Hanshu*, 8.349; 75.2435; *Huayang guozhi*, 2.114. The contribution superseded a local tax levied by the Han administration and constituted a breach of the state taxation prerogative; see Zhang Zehong, "Wudoumi dao mingming de youlai," *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 4 (1988), 12-17.

[26] Lu's title was *duyi sima* 督義司馬 (investigative commander) and Xiu's *biebu sima* 別部司馬 (adjunct division commander); see Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i transcendent*, p.75, where the character 都 is misprinted for 督.

[27] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.263-64; Shu, 31.867; *Huayang guozhi*, 2.114-18; *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2432-37; *Zizhi tongjian*, 60.1928; 63.2040; 64.2043.

feature of the territorial entity ruled by Lu was its strong non-Chinese ethnic component.[28]

The territory under Lu's jurisdiction is said to have been organized into territorial units referred to as *zhi* 治, "parishes" or "dioceses" in Western translations, with the first 24 founded by Lu's grandfather Ling, or Daoling, 道陵 in 143 AD, the next 12 by Lu's father Heng 衡 in 196, and the last eight by Lu himself, in 198.[29] Doubts concerning the historicity of Zhang Ling and his role in the founding of the Heavenly Master church are not a recent development in Sinology. Pelliot wrote a century ago that Lu necessarily had a grandfather, whose name *might* have been Zhang Ling and who *might* have studied the Dao and enjoyed local or regional notoriety; that Lu certainly used the "legend" of his grandfather to strengthen his own local prestige and authority; and that Zhang Ling's traditional and exceptional longevity is hard to accept.[30] Maspero also criticized the received "pontifical" filiation Zhang Ling ~ Zhang Heng ~ Zhang Lu.[31] Indeed, the sole extant biographical data

[28] See Rolf A. Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au II^{e} siècle ap.J.-C.," *T'oung Pao* 50.1-3 (1963), 1-78, pp.21-38; Terry F. Kleeman, *Great perfection: religion and ethnicity in a Chinese millennial kingdom* (Honolulu, 1998), pp.25-46; Liu Ts'un-yan, "Was Celestial Master Zhang a historical figure?," trans. Benjamin Penny et al., in *Daoism in history: essays in honour of Liu Ts'un-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (Oxford, 2006), pp.199-202.

[29] See Franciscus Verellen, "The twenty-four dioceses and Zhang Daoling: the spatio-liturgical organization of early Heavenly Master Taoism," in *Pilgrims, patrons, and place: localizing sanctity in Asian religions*, eds Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver, 2003), pp.15-67. For the historical development of the *zhi*, Verellen draws on sources quoted in texts from the Ming *Daozang* the earliest of which date to the second half of the 6th century (pp.16-18).

[30] Paul Pelliot, review of J.J.M. De Groot, "Is there religious liberty in China" (*Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin* 5 [1902], 103-51), *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 3.1 (1903), p.104.

[31] Henri Maspero, "Note additionnelle sur les Maîtres Célestes de la famille Tchang," in *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine*, 2, *Le Taoïsme* (Paris, 1950), pp.179-84. See also Liu Ts'un-yan,

belong to the later legend of the patron saint of the Church.[32] We will probably never know whether a man named Zhang Ling had revelations in 142 AD, nor if the same man, aged 122, passed away around 156. Heng's historicity is even less well documented than Ling's, hence even more dubious; according to a classic interpretation, arguably too oedipal to be uncritically admitted, this Heng was no other than the Zhang Xiu eliminated by Lu.[33] As a result, the traditional Daoist lineage before Zhang Lu may well amount to one of the earliest cases of "invention of tradition."

Sources record that Zhang Lu "did not establish government subalterns" 不置長吏 but ruled through his own administration, composed of officials bearing the title *jijiu* 祭酒.[34] On this basis, every scholar specialized in the history of Chinese religion feels compelled to call Hanning "an autonomous sect with an independent territorial base," or "an independent theocratic state," a "theocracy," or "China's first, and for a long time its only, theocracy," or even "a Daoist state" or "statelet."[35] This recurrent modern terminology would be

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"Celestial Master Zhang," pp.190-92. For an ideal family tree admitting the traditional filiation, see Camille Imbault-Huart, "La légende du premier pape des Taoïstes et l'histoire de la famille pontificale des Tchang," *Journal Asiatique* 8.4, 3 (1884), p.454, plate.

[32] Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.134-41; Verellen, "The twenty-four dioceses," pp.29-34; Liu Ts'un-yan, "Celestial Master Zhang," p.189.

[33] Pei Songzhi's assumption, in his commentary to the *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.264. For the problem of Zhang Xiu, see Liu Ts'un-yan, ibid., pp.193-97.

[34] *Dianlüe*, quoted in *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.263, and in *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2436; *Huayang guozhi*, 2.117. In the *Huayang guozhi* account, this statement appears after the recognition of Lu's takeover by the emperor and the bestowing of the dignity of governor on him. *Jijiu* (libationer or chancellor) was originally a Han official title; see Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.130, no.542.

[35] See Peter Nickerson, "*Abridged codes of Master Lu for the Daoist community*," in *Religions of China in practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, 1996), p.348; Kleeman, *Great perfection*, pp.88-89; Barbara Hendrischke, "Early Daoist movements," in *Daoism handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden, 2000), p.139; Qing et

appropriate and even necessary if theocracy was an abnormal phenomenon in the Chinese context, but theocratic forms of political authority were the rule rather than the exception: the emperor was officially called the Son of Heaven, and the ruling mandate of his house was understood as emanating from the highest transcendent powers—a textbook case of theocracy. For all that, strangely, China's imperial state is rarely called "theocratic." The crucial piece of information in these statements is not that Lu's administration was made of priests in lieu of laymen but rather that, although acting as a local potentate and, soon after, officially raised to high office, Zhang Lu never embraced the orthodox ways of an imperial governor and retained his former methods of a clique leader instead.

His territory being of strategic importance for the control of the southwest, Lu came under attack from both Cao Cao and his rival Liu Bei 劉備 (161-223) in 211. Dubbed "a bandit… not worth worrying about" by Liu Bei in 212,[36] Zhang led military activities like any other warlord, occasionally forming alliances with some of them, in particular Ma Chao 馬超 (176-222), whom he made his right hand man in 213, with the dispatch of much-needed fresh troops and the title *dujiang jijiu* 都講祭酒.[37] Even after Ma, repeatedly defeated, went over to Liu Bei's side—he logically ended up with a high military command in the Shu 蜀 (221-63) administration—Zhang's military activities continued, unsuccessful

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al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.158-59, 206; Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: the* Taiping jing *and the beginnings of Daoism* (Berkeley, 2006), p.26.

[36] *Zizhi tongjian*, 66.2106-11, 2117. I quote Rafe de Crespigny's translation in his *The last of the Han: being the chronicle of the years 181-220 A.D. as recorded in chapters 58-68 of the* Tzu-chih t'ung-chien *of Ssu-ma Kuang* (Canberra, 1969), p.294.

[37] *Dianlüe*, quoted in Pei Songzhi's commentary to *Sanguo zhi*, Shu, 36.946; *Zizhi tongjian*, 66.2123. On Ma's title, see de Crespigny, *The last of the Han*, p.480, n.13. Hendrischke's contention, in "Early Daoist movements," p.141, that "Zhang [Lu] was not an independent ruler in a formal sense," in particular because "he did not set up officials of high rank," is thus invalidated.

though they generally were, and peaked in 214. The following year, according to the official sources, Zhang finally agreed to submit to Cao Cao, but with highly favorable terms of surrender, namely, official titles for himself and his five sons and the marriage of his daughter to a son of Cao. On that occasion again, Zhang Lu distinguished himself as a smart political negotiator, even though he probably never met Cao.[38] Textual evidence suggests that "the hereditary leader Zhang" (Zhang *xishi* 張係師, i.e., presumably the historical Zhang Lu) died in 216 or early 217 AD, and that from this date onwards, including under the early Wei 魏 (220-65) dynasty, the religious group faced political difficulties.[39] Between 215 and 219, inhabitants of the Hanzhong area were forced to migrate northwards, possibly in several successive waves, which led to the spread of the new Daoist religion to other parts of the empire.[40]

Supreme deities

Defining the supreme gods of the religious mass movements of the Latter Han era, not to

[38] *Sanguo zhi*, Shu, 32.884; *Huayang guozhi*, 2.119; *Zizhi tongjian*, 67.2128, 2138-40. For a convincing reexamination of the historicity of the meeting between Zhang Lu and Cao Cao in 219, see Howard L. Goodman, "Celestial-Master Taoism and the founding of the Ts'ao-Wei dynasty: the Li Fu document," *Asia Major* 3rd series 7.1 (1994), 5-33.

[39] Tao Hongjing (456-536), *Zhen'gao* (499), HY 1010, 4.14b. See Goodman, *ibid*., pp.30-31.

[40] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 15.472-73; 23.666. For more on the early Heavenly Master church, see also Maeda Shigeki, "The evolution of the Way of the Celestial Master: its early view of divinities," *Acta Asiatica* 68 (1995), 54-68; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.29-37; Kleeman, *Great perfection*, pp.66-80; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.126-72; and Terry Kleeman, "Community and daily life in the early Daoist church," in *Early Chinese religion. Part Two: The period of division*, ed. John Lagerwey (forthcoming).

mention their "pantheon" if indeed they had any such notion, is a very difficult task.[41] Information about their religious beliefs and practices is scarce and certainly biased, at least to some extent. For example, the statement according to which Zhang Jue and his brothers "killed people to sacrifice to heaven" 殺人以祠天 in 184 contains one acceptable item of information—the cult to heaven—and one which, to the modern mind, seems unlikely in the context of a successful mass movement—human sacrifice.[42] Besides, Chinese official sources as well as Buddhist polemical literature usually connect the Yellow Turbans with the Heavenly Masters and emphasize the similarities between the religious practices of both communities, as modern Sinology would do centuries later.[43] For instance, in the *Zizhi tongjian*, when Zhang Xiu bursts onto the dramatic scene in 184 AD, his leadership, organization, and practices are immediately compared with those of Zhang Jue.[44] True, scattered Yellow Turban troops and their followers, routed by Cao Cao in 192, were said to have fled to the region which would become the Heavenly Master church's hallowed grounds, so that both communities may have eventually merged together; but evidence is needed. On this point, Rolf Stein's careful survey of the question still proves useful reading more than 40 years after its writing, despite Stein's own extrapolations.[45]

The "shamanistic" cult of the Scarlet Eyebrows

[41] As regards Daoism, we lack sources pointing to a unified pantheon before the Tang; see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "The Daoist pantheon," in *Early Chinese religion. Part Two: The period of division*, ed. John Lagerwey (forthcoming).

[42] *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2300. The statement may be understood as referring to an extraordinary sacrifice prior to the uprising as much as to a common practice.

[43] The locus classicus is the quotation of the *Dianlüe* in the *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.264.

[44] *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1872.

[45] See Stein, "Remarques," pp.3-7. See also Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," pp.76-81.

Historical sources record that the Scarlet Eyebrows movement included mediums (*wu* 巫) from Qi 齊 (Shandong) who would beat drums, dance, and pray to a god called Prince Jing of Chengyang 城陽景王 for his blessing. The Prince, according to the mediums, was infuriated by his present low condition and felt he deserved a much higher rank (*xianguan* 縣官).[46] Those who laughed at the Prince's complaint fell ill, and the whole army was greatly impressed. This was the main incident which prompted the Scarlet Eyebrow leaders to enthrone their own Han emperor. Indeed, the deity was none other than Liu Zhang 劉章 (200-177 BC), a former prince of the Han dynasty who had ruled briefly a fief in the region of origin of the rebels and, having contented the population of the princedom, had been worshipped at the local level ever since his death, with full official support. The adolescent monarch Penzi, unwillingly crowned by the Scarlet Eyebrows after a lucky draw performed during a religious ceremony, was one of his descendants.[47]

In its original location, Prince Jing's cult remained successful until its suppression by Cao Cao among numerous other "unorthodox cults" (*yinsi* 淫祀).[48]

Zhang Lu's "way of ghosts" and early Daoist cults

[46] On the role of *wu* in popular movements from Wang Mang through the Latter Han dynasty, see Lin Fu-shih, *Han dai de wuzhe*. On the place of the *wu* in early China, see Lin's chapter in the present work and his "Early medieval shamans and politics," in *Early Chinese religion*. *Part Two: The period of division*, ed. John Lagerwey (forthcoming). Rendering *wu* by "shaman" remains controversial. As for *xianguan*, literally district magistrate, it could be an indirect reference to the imperial dignity in the present context; see Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.241, no.2510.

[47] *Hou Hanji*, 3.40-41; *Hou Hanshu*, 11.477-81; 42.1451.

[48] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 1.4, commentary.

From the official viewpoint, Zhang Lu deceived his followers with a *guidao* 鬼道, an expression also applied to his mother, who is said to have intrigued to obtain an official title for him.[49] We may wonder what the "way of ghosts" (a literal rendition for *guidao*) refers to in official discourse, given the wide array of meanings and applications of the word *gui*:[50] vague hermetic techniques perhaps, or unofficial, hence heterodox, religious practices, or the arts of the medium, which included healing.[51] Later Buddhist sources would use *guidao* as a coverall—an obviously deprecatory designation of the Chinese indigenous popular religion, of the mass movements occasionally associated with it, and of the practices purportedly advocated by its leaders—and Zhang Ling and his successors were named as typical examples.[52] But *guidao* may simply reflect the emphasis put by the communities of the Latter Han period on various threats from the unseen world and the apotropaic rituals offered by their sacerdotal personnel in response.

It is commonly assumed that the supreme god of the early Daoist church was called "Lord Lao" (Laojun 老君) or, alternatively, "newly emerged Lord Lao" (*xinchu* Laojun

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[49] *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2432; *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.263.

[50] See Michel Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford, 2002), pp.71-74; Poo Mu-chou, "The concept of ghost in ancient Chinese religion," in *Religion and Chinese society*, 1, *Ancient and medieval China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong, 2004), pp.173-91.

[51] "Magical techniques," in Stein, "Remarques," pp.6-7, and Hendrischke, "Early Daoist movements," p.140. For examples of *wu* practices involving *gui* in Han times, see Lin, *Han dai de wuzhe*, pp.50-56. For a later (early 4th century AD) therapeutic application of *guidao*, see Lin Fu-shih, *Jibing zhongjie zhe: Zhongguo zaoqi de daojiao yixue* (Taibei, 2001), pp.135-36. For an interpretation of *guidao* as the "family teaching" of Zhang Lu and his mother, see Liu, "Celestial Master Zhang," pp.198-202.

[52] For example, see Falin (572-640), *Poxie lun* (On refuting error; 622), T 52, no.2109, 11.167b; Falin, *Bianzheng lun* (Debate on the right; ca. 633), T 52, no.2110, 2.500a.

新出老君) and "Most High Lord Lao" (Taishang Laojun 太上老君). And yet, as far as these divine titles are concerned, we hardly find any firsthand supporting evidence, at least for the Latter Han. Seidel has convincingly reconstructed the process of deification which transformed the "philosopher" Laozi 老子 into a divine entity worshipped during the Han dynasty, basing her study mainly on an inscription from a stele erected in 165 on Emperor Huan's 桓帝 (r. 147-67) initiative.[53] Reportedly a Huang-Lao 黃老 devotee, Huan ordered an imperial sacrifice to Laozi (not "Laojun" in our source) to be performed the same year, before sacrificing in person to the philosopher-god in the following year (166).[54] Another stele inscription even suggests that Laozi's identification with the Dao itself may have taken place as early as the middle of the 2nd century.[55] Unfortunately, both inscriptions fail to link the deified Laozi with a defined movement. The former mentions "those who are fond of the Dao" 好道者, while the latter contains no information on the matter. "Lord Lao" appears several times in Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Baopu zi* 抱朴子 (*Master who embraces simplicity*; ca. 330) but the book, reputedly, does not mention the Heavenly Master church, though the phrase '*tianshi*' 天師 is present in a scripture title.[56] All the Daoist narratives devoted to the

[53] See Bian Shao 邊韶, "Laozi ming" 老子銘 (Inscription to Laozi; 165), in Hong Gua (1117-84), *Li shi* (Transcriptions into regular script; 1177) (Beijing, 1985), 3.1a-3b; translated in Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris, 1969), pp.122-28.

[54] *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi*, 8.3188, with a description of the altar erected on the occasion.

[55] "Laozi shengmu bei" 老子聖母碑 (Stele to the saintly mother of Laozi; 153), attributed to Wang Fu 王阜, quoted in *Taiping yulan* (Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping era; 984), ed. Li Fang (925-95) (Beijing, 1960), 1.4a. Liu Yi, "Laozi mu bei kaolun," *Shoudu shifan daxue xuebao* 4 (1998), 34-41, argues that the inscription quoted in the *Taiping yulan* is of a much later date than Wang Fu's original composition.

[56] Ge Hong (283-343), *Baopu zi neipian*, ed. Wang Ming, 2nd ed. (Beijing, 1985), p.334. Ge completed a first version of the *Baopu zi* in 317 and the final version around 330; see *The Taoist canon: a historical companion*

founding revelations of 142 AD and including the name of the deity involved, plus the titles of the scriptures bestowed upon Zhang Ling on the occasion, belong to the later legends of the church's origins.

The tetra-syllable "*xinchu* Laojun" is attested to as early as 255 in the "Da daojia lingjie" (14a), a text incorporated in a later Daoist scripture. The earliest occurrence of Taishang Laojun is sometimes thought to be that in the *Zhen'gao*, but apart from the fact that the *Zhen'gao* is a later compilation and is known to contain interpolated material, doubt remains as to whether the occurrence refers to a single Most High Lord Lao or two distinct entities, a "Most High" and "Lord Lao."[57] The phrase famously appears once in the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Laozi*, an exegetical work generally dated to the early 3rd century and even attributed by some to Zhang Lu.[58] But, since the single available version of this

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to the Daozang, eds Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen (Chicago, 2004), pp.70-71 (hereafter quoted as *The Taoist canon*).

[57] See *Zhen'gao*, HY 1010, 5.14b. The validity of the occurrence is examined in Terry F. Kleeman, "Reconstructing China's religious past: textual criticism and intellectual history," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 32 (2004), 29-45. The *Zhen'gao* was compiled from original autograph manuscripts attributed to Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-86) and his patrons Xu Mai 許邁 (300-48) and Xu Mi 許謐 (303-76), which Tao gathered mostly in the years 488-90 and authenticated. See Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, 2, *Catalogue analytique des œuvres du Shangqing originel* (Paris, 1984), pp.313-29.

[58] *Laozi daojing*, *shang*, *Xiang'er* 老子道經上想爾 (Laozi's scripture of the Tao, Part 1, Xiang'er), London, British Library, MS Stein 6825 (late 6th century?). Photographic reproduction in Ōfuchi Ninji, *Tonkō dōkyō: zuroku hen* (Tokyo, 1979), pp.421-34. Critical edition in Jao Tsung-i, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaojian* (Hong Kong, 1956). English translation in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.78-148; p.8 for the relevant passage (cols 108-09 in the MS). For the date and authorship of the *Xiang'er* commentary, see Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.160-61; Kristofer Schipper's entry "*Laozi Xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注" in *The Taoist canon*, pp.74-77.

commentary is a Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscript probably copied at the end of the 6th century in north China, the occurrence perhaps reflects the recently acquired predominance of the four-character title in Daoist discourse after Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365-448) had been granted revelations by the same Most High Lord Lao in 415.[59] The relationship of the commentary with the early Heavenly Master movement is unclear; according to Schipper's entry in *The Taoist canon*, the text would even seem "closer to the (Mawangdui 馬王堆 [Hunan 湖南 province]) versions (of the 2nd century BC or earlier) than to any other of the early *Laozi* versions" and may "[represent] an earlier stage of community Daoism than the ecclesia of the Heavenly Master." One wonders if the *Xiang'er* commentary represents the whole Heavenly Master church or a "dissident" group within it.[60]

Finally, another stele inscription, dated 173 AD, mentions Zhengyi 正一 ("Orthodox Unity") and "Daoist rites of the Heavenly Master" (*tianshi daofa* 天師道法) but does not name Laozi nor a Lord Lao.[61] It is worth pointing out that the reading of its opening sentence is marred by a problematic character, in all likelihood *lao* 老.[62] If this reading is correct, then

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[59] Wei Shou (506-72), *Weishu* (554) (Beijing, 1974), 114.3050-51. This locus is also the earliest occurrence of "Taishang Laojun" in the corpus of Chinese official histories. Kou's Daoist reform was promulgated under the early Northern Wei 北魏 (386-534); see Richard B. Mather, "K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist theocracy at the Northern Wei court, 425-451," in *Facets of Taoism: essays in Chinese religion*, eds Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven and London, 1979), pp.103-22.

[60] Terry Kleeman, "Daoism in the third century," in *Purposes, means and convictions in Daoism. A Berlin symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp.11-28, suspects an internal dispute centered on "the special veneration accorded Laozi… as the embodiment of the Dao."

[61] "Miwu jijiu Zhang Pu tizi" 米巫祭酒張普題字 (Inscription of Zhang Pu, Libationer of the grain mediums; 173), in Hong Gua, *Li xu* (Supplement to the transcriptions into regular script; 1179) (Beijing, 1985), 3.8a-b.

[62] Kleeman, *Great perfection*, p.69. The alternate form of *lao* is commonly encountered in other stele

we have the phrase "ghost soldiers of the Heavenly Elder," *tianlao guibing* 天老鬼兵. Originally one of the ministers of Huangdi 黃帝 (the Yellow Emperor), the Heavenly Elder was later seen by Daoists as the sixth manifestation of Laozi as an advisor to the sovereign (*diwang shi* 帝王師), i.e., the one active in the time of Huangdi, as the *Laozi bianhua jing* 老子變化經 shows.[63] But, like the *Xiang'er* commentary, the *Laozi bianhua jing* is today believed to represent the ideas of a Daoist group distinct from the Heavenly Master church. Finally, according to Stein, *tianlao* may be an equivalent of *laogui* 老鬼, a familiar name for Lord Lao in a tomb purchase contract dated 485 AD.[64] But whether this equivalence also applies to the 173 AD stele inscription or not remains to be determined.

Zhang Jue's yellow god

In the official sources, when the emperor questions high officials about the causes of Zhang Jue's popular success, Zhang's teachings are referred to as "the way of the Yellow Turbans"

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inscriptions. For unconvincing tentative readings of the character, see Sawa Akitoshi, "Gotōbeidō seiken no soshiki kōzō," in *Dōkyō bunka eno tenbō*, ed. Dōkyō bunka kenkyūkai (Tokyo, 1994), pp.134, 149, n.12.

[63] See *Laozi bianhua jing* (Scripture of the transformations of Laozi; ca. 185 AD?), London, British Library, MS Stein 2295 (copied 612). Photographic reproduction in Ōfuchi, *Tonkō dōkyō: Zuroku hen*, pp.686-88. French translation in Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoïsme des Han*, pp.59-75; p.66 for the relevant passage (col. 46 on the MS). For the date of the text, see Seidel, ibid., pp.73-74: the last date mentioned is 155 AD and the last event, the founding of a temple 30 years later. On Tianlao as a manifestation of Laozi, see Seidel, ibid., p.66, n.5.

[64] Rolf A. Stein, "Religious Taoism and popular religion from the second to seventh centuries," in *Facets of Taoism*, eds Welch and Seidel, p.77, n.83.

(*huangjin dao* 黃巾道), if not as "deviant arts" (*yaoshu* 妖術).[65] But, perhaps even more puzzling, Zhang is elsewhere said to have worshipped the way of Huang-Lao.[66]

Admittedly, the earliest reference to Huang-Lao in Chinese official sources is to be found in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the historian*), a work presented to the emperor in 91 BC and which mentions "the arts of the Way and Virtue of Huang-Lao" 黃老道德之術.[67] A philosophical current mainly dealing with statecraft during the Han dynasty, Huang-Lao opened up to immortality and self-cultivation concerns during the Latter Han dynasty, venturing into the religious sphere. During the 2nd century AD, Huang-Lao was in vogue in the palace. Emperor Huan of the Latter Han is blamed in the *Hou Hanshu* for his worship of Huang-Lao during the Yanxi era (158-67) and his complete destruction of local places of worship (*fangsi* 房祀), a criticism possibly aimed at a form of religious radicalism in Huang-Lao practices and beliefs.[68] But in his written admonition to the throne in 166, Xiang Kai pointed to the emperor's lack of respect for the teachings of "Fotuo (i.e., the Buddha) and the

[65] *Hou Hanji*, 24.476; *Hou Hanshu*, 78.2534-35; *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1864, 1867-68.

[66] *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2299; 76.2470.

[67] Sima Qian (145-86 BC), *Shiji* (91 BC) (Beijing, 1959), 74.2347.

[68] *Hou Hanshu*, 76.2470. For the meaning of *fangsi*, see *Hou Hanshu*, 57.1841, where a similar case of destruction of local places of worship (*fangsi*) is ascribed to Luan Ba 欒巴 (d. 168)—a Han official and adept of the Dao but not of Huang-Lao specifically—as a means of putting an end to disturbances caused by supernatural entities attracted by offerings in an area swarming with cults to spirits (*guishen* 鬼神); at first dissatisfied with the destruction, the locals eventually acknowledged the end of the disturbances. Interestingly, the *Xiang'er* commentary and precepts also oppose offerings to spirits; see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.119-20. On Luan Ba and his possible relationship with the historical Zhang Ling, see Liu, "Celestial Master Zhang," pp.219-26.

way of Huang-Lao" 佛陀黃老道.[69] Though one of the admitted influences in the formative stage of the Daoist religion (and, interestingly, in the ideological development of the *Taiping jing*),[70] Huang-Lao seems to lack a satisfactory charting as a tradition in transition, despite an increasing number of studies.[71] Moreover, the understanding of the bi-syllable was soon perverted by Buddhist discursive practices, which used "Huang-Lao" as a common deprecatory equivalent for Daoism and called Daoists "followers of Huang-Lao."[72]

The well-known slogan of the 184 AD general uprising was: "Azure Heaven is dead; Yellow Heaven should rule. The year is *jiazi*, which is a very good omen for the world"

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[69] *Weishu*, 114.3028. For a similar association, see *Hou Hanshu*, 30B.1082-83, which has Futu 浮屠, assumed to be the earliest Chinese transcription for Buddha; see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese history: a manual*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), p.40.

[70] See Chen Ligui, "Cong *Taiping jing* kan daojiao dui Huang-Lao lilun de fuhui yu zhuanhua," *Zhongguo xueshu niankan* 16 (1995), 27-52.

[71] Recent interpretations include Chen Ligui, *Qin Han shiqi de Huang-Lao sixiang* (Taibei, 1997); Robin D. S. Yates, *Five lost classics: Tao, Huang-Lao, and Yin-Yang in Han China* (New York, 1997); Michael Loewe, "The heritage left to the empires," in *The Cambridge history of ancient China: from the origins of civilization to 221 B.C.*, eds Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge, 1999), pp.986-88. So far, the link between the *Huangdi sijing sipian* 黃帝四經四篇 (Four canons of the Yellow Emperor, in four chapters), listed in the *Hanshu*, 30.1730, and the manuscripts excavated from tomb no.3, dated 168 BC, at Mawangdui, is still hypothetical. See Edmund Ryden, *The Yellow Emperor's four canons: a literary study and edition of the text from Mawangdui* (Taibei, 1997), pp.1-2.

[72] For instance, the phrase "followers of Huang-Lao who worship the way of the five bushels of grain" 奉五斗米道黃老之徒 appears in an anecdote dated 313 AD, in Daoshi (d. 683), *Fayuan zhulin* (Forest of pearls from the garden of the law; 668), T 53, no.2122, 13.383b-c. For many instances of Huang-Lao as a deprecatory equivalent for Daoism, see Daoxuan (596-667), *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Expanded collection for the spread of enlightenment; 664), T 52, no.2103, 4.114c; 8.135b, 136a; 10.153a; 12.171c, etc.

蒼天已死, 黃天當立, 歲在甲子, 天下大吉.[73] In his commentary to the *Sanguo zhi*, Pei Songzhi quotes a message sent to Cao Cao by the rebels. This message provides an interesting variant of the slogan, which not only names the Han dynasty, but also emphasizes the political change under way as a cosmic, hence inevitable phenomenon: "The course of the Han is finished; the Yellow House must rule. This is a major celestial revolution, which it is beyond your ability to stop" 漢行已盡, 黃家當立, 天之大運, 非君才力所能存也.[74] To be fully understood, both versions should be connected with one of Jue's self-proclaimed titles, Yellow Heaven (*huangtian* 黃天) or, as it is found elsewhere as a fully developed formula, Supreme Peace of the Yellow Heaven (*huangtian taiping* 黃天泰平).[75] It seems clear that Zhang sought to found a new dynasty which would bring forth an era of renewed cosmic equilibrium. Before him, Wang Mang, founder of another dynasty, had chosen yellow as the emblematic color for his own rule.[76]

In their message to Cao Cao, the Yellow Turbans liken the Dao of their leader to the Great One of the central yellow (Zhonghuang Taiyi 中黃太乙).[77] To associate the center with the color yellow is standard practice in the five agents logic of Chinese "correlative" cosmology, traditionally but perhaps groundlessly ascribed to Zou Yan 騶衍 (3rd century BC). The early Han emperors sacrificed to the spatialized Five Emperors (*wudi* 五帝);

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[73] *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2299.

[74] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 1.10.

[75] See *Sanguo zhi*, Wu, 46.1094; *Hou Hanshu*, 8.348.

[76] The symbolic role of colors in political and religious movements throughout the Han era is a well-known feature of the history of early imperial China, as rightly emphasized in Hendrischke, "Early Daoist movements," pp.136-37; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.189-90. For a discussion of Zhang's political motives, see also Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," pp.97-100.

[77] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 1.10. See Liu, "Celestial Master Zhang," pp.234-38.

before them, the Qin 秦 (221-207 BC) sacrificed to four of these emperors, excluding the northern one.[78] The "Seal of the Yellow God, sovereign of the center" 黃神中皇之章, a protective Daoist artifact of which specimens have been discovered and dated to the 1st or 2nd century AD, reflects the paradigmatic association of a yellow deity with the center.[79] In Han astronomy, the Yellow Emperor was identified with the central star (β Leo) of a five-star constellation, the Seats of the Five Emperors (Wudizuo 五帝座), located in the Taiwei 太微, that is, *not* in the most central sector of the nocturnal sky. Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139) called him the Yellow God Xuanyuan (*huangshen* Xuanyuan 黃神軒轅) in this astronomical context.[80] Having noticed the association of the Yellow God with the Northern Dipper, i.e., *Ursa Major*, in late 2nd century AD funerary material (*huangshen beidou* 黃神北斗), Seidel believed the entity to be one of the "different names or facets of the same supreme deity of Han religion in various traditions and contexts" and, as such, to be equivalent to Heavenly

[78] See Marianne Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne: théorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux* (Paris, 2000), pp.67-69, and her chapter in this volume. The former kings of Qin traced their ancestry back to the Yellow Emperor (so did the kings of Qi 齊); while kings of other states sacrificed to the White Emperor, the Green Emperor, etc. For a survey of state rituals in pre-imperial China, see also Loewe, "The heritage left to the empires," pp.978-82.

[79] See Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*, pp.141-42. The seal is mentioned in the *Taiping yulan*, 675.3137b; 676.3146b. The name of an analogous "transcendent seal of the Yellow God" (*huangshen yuezhang* 黃神越章), without any reference to the center in its name, is inscribed on a grave-securing jar dated to the late 2nd century AD; see Ikeda On, "Chūgoku rekidai boken ryakkō," *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 86 (1981), p.274, no.9.

[80] See Zhang Heng, *Lingxian* 靈憲 (Celestial rules), quoted in *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi*, 10.3216. Xuanyuan is another name of Huangdi.

Emperor (*tiandi* 天帝) and Yellow Emperor.[81] A Yellow God is also mentioned in connection with the Northern Dipper in fragments of weft or apocryphal texts (*wei* 緯) related to the *Hetu* 河圖 (Yellow River Chart), which depict the Yellow Emperor as proceeding from "the essence of the Yellow God of the Northern Dipper" 北斗黃神之精.[82]

To conclude, the Yellow God, the Heavenly Emperor, and Huangdi may be regarded as three hypostases of a single supreme deity, but their exact name, power and astronomic identification possibly varied from group to group. For instance, in a manual for visualization which, at least partly, may date back to the Latter Han, the *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經, the Yellow God appears as a divine officer bearing the title of general inspector (*zongyue* 總閱) and is in charge of checking each adept's moral account every year in the eighth month, as the censors of the Han administration used to do during their annual tour of the empire.[83]

The Great One's color may have been yellow for Zhang Jue and his followers but, in the context of earlier state cults, its emblematic color was purple, i.e., the imperial color *par excellence*. Taiyi had been made the head of the pantheon by Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 140-87 BC) whose religious activities were driven by his quest for immortality. Under Wang Mang,

[81] See Anna Seidel, "Traces of Han religion in funeral texts found in tombs," in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka*, ed. Akizuki Kan'ei (Tokyo, 1987), pp.25-30.

[82] *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 6, *Kato: Rakusho*, eds Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi (Tokyo, 1995), pp.47, 85. Born from "the daughter of a chthonic deity" 地祇之女, the Yellow Emperor is a cosmic product of the conflation of heaven and earth.

[83] See John Lagerwey, "Deux écrits taoïstes anciens," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), pp.150, n.28, 162-63; Kristofer Schipper, "The inner world of the *Lao-tzu chung-ching* 老子中經," in *Time and space in Chinese culture*, eds, Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher (Leiden, 1995), pp.114-31; Kristofer Schipper's entry for the *Taishang Laojun zhongjing* 太上老君中經 (HY 1160) in *The Taoist canon*, pp.92-94.

the cult had been confirmed, Taiyi being then worshipped together with the feminine divine earth as a masculine deity bearing the title of "Great One and Emperor on High of August Heaven" 皇天上帝泰一. After the restoration of the Han house at the beginning of our era, Taiyi was progressively removed from state cults, but transmitted and epigraphic sources suggest that, though discarded by the elite, it remained a leading deity in popular religion.[84] Two other stele inscriptions from the 160s and 170s depict in similar terms fellow Dao enthusiasts who come from afar and gather in a holy place, sometimes to play music and chant songs to the Great One, sometimes to perform meditation and visualization.[85]

Of course, Taiyi also had a stellar counterpart, probably β UMi (Kochab). Unlike the astral seat of the Yellow Emperor, not only was this star located in the Ziwei 紫微 (Purple Tenuity, i.e., the circumpolar area of the nocturnal sky) but even more than that, it was polar, or almost polar, in Han times. This idea of the celestial and axial supremacy of Taiyi underlies a fragment of *Chunqiu wei* 春秋緯 (Spring and Autumn weft exegesis) which regards the Great One as "the seat of the Heavenly Emperor of the North Pole" 北極天帝位, that is, another central and pivotal location.[86] In addition, the fragment states that Taiyi's radiance contains "primordial pneuma" (*yuanqi* 元氣), a crucial concept in Han times.

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[84] Li Ling, "An archaeological study of Taiyi 太一 (Grand One) worship," trans. Donald Harper, *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995-96), 1-39; Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne*, pp.142-49; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.185-88.

[85] Bian Qian 邊乾, "Wangzi Qiao bei" 王子喬碑 (Wangzi Qiao stele; 165), in *Li shi*, 20.17a-b; Liu He 劉合, "Di Yao bei" 帝堯碑 (Emperor Yao stele; 175), in *Li shi*, 1.5b. For a discussion of the authenticity of the first stele and a French translation, see Marianne Bujard, "Le culte de Wangzi Qiao ou la longue carrière d'un immortel," *Études chinoises* 19.1-2 (2000), p.125-30.

[86] *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B, *Shunjū ge* 春秋下, ed. Nakamura Shōhachi (Tokyo, 1992), p.166. See Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, p.57.

Beliefs and practices in context

Religious therapeutics

Healing was one of the basic needs of the masses in the context of the social upheaval, almost continual warfare and repeated epidemics of the Latter Han. This may explain why, though religion and medicine admittedly became increasingly remote from each other during the early centuries of imperial China, therapeutic practices were one of the central features of popular religion as opposed to elite cults and court rituals. In this regard, the extant *Taiping jing* expresses two ideas of equal importance: first, the cosmos needs to be healed in order for universal equilibrium to be restored; second, believers struck down by illness because of their sins need to be healed in order to fulfill their longevity allotment.[87] Though expressed in surviving strata probably of different periods, these ideas are not antagonistic, in that both suggest a therapeutic way to deal with the dramatic issues of cosmic imbalance and human mortality. In this light, Paul Unschuld's comment on the *Taiping jing* seems of striking relevance, all the more so in that it emanates from a scholar outside the field of Daoism: "Nowhere else do we find such a clear admission of the complete integration of medical and political concepts."[88] Remarkably, cosmic dysfunctions are believed to be induced by human misconduct at all levels of society but above all within the palace—ideas on the same wavelength as the ideology of the weft fragments.

[87] On the first idea, see Lai Chi Tim, "The Daoist concept of central harmony in the *Scripture of Great Peace*: human responsibilities for the maladies of nature," in *Daoism and ecology: ways within a cosmic landscape*, eds N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp.95-111; on the second idea, see Grégoire Espesset, "Criminalized abnormality, moral etiology, and redemptive suffering in the secondary strata of the *Taiping jing*," *Asia Major* 3rd series 15.2 (2002), pp.48-49.

[88] Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: a history of ideas* (Berkeley, 1985), p.121.

According to scarce information provided by official sources, ritual healing was one of the few characteristics common to the two major Latter Han mass movements. To begin with the Yellow Turbans, the annalists who wrote the records later compiled as the official histories did not dwell on the religious life of the community but did stress the therapeutic functions of their practices in contemporary local society. Zhang Jue and his two brothers, as we have seen, called themselves "great physicians." The masters (*shi* 師 seems to refer here to a title in the priestly hierarchy of the movement) would carry "nine-knot staves" (*jiujie zhang* 九節杖) with which they would cast their charms and spells (*fuzhu* 符祝). The sick would be instructed "to kneel and prostrate, and confess their faults" 跪拜首過 (or, as a variant reads, "to kowtow and reflect upon their faults" 叩頭思過). They would ingest lustral water (*fushui* 符水). Patients who got better would be praised as Daoist faithful while those who retained their morbid condition would be considered nonbelievers.[89]

The features of the "way of the five bushels of grain" are slightly better documented. They included two social spaces, individual and collective: under Zhang Xiu, "quiet chambers" (*jingshi* 靜室) where the sick would withdraw to reflect upon their faults (*si guo* 思過);[90] under Zhang Lu, "charity lodgings" (*yishe* 義舍) similar to the postal relays of the imperial administration (*tingzhuan* 亭傳) but, in addition, offering free food supplies for the traveling (and abstemious) faithful. Each territorial unit (*zhi* 治) was under the authority of a grand libationer (*da jijiu* 大祭酒). "Ghost troopers" (*guizu* 鬼卒; a title reminiscent of *guidao*) formed the novitiate of the movement, if not its armed forces, as *zu* may imply.

[89] *Hou Hanji*, 24.473; *Dianlüe*, quoted in *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.264, and in *Hou Hanshu*, 75.2436; *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1864.

[90] See Stein, "Remarques," pp.70-72; Yoshikawa Tadao, "Seishitsu kō," *Tōhō gakuhō* 59 (1987), 125-62.

Ordinary libationers (*jijiu*) included *jianling* 姦令[91] who were in charge of the repeated recitation in chorus (*duxi* 都習) of "Laozi's text in five thousand characters" 老子五千文 (a version of the *Daode jing* 道德經 including a commentary later ascribed to Zhang Ling),[92] and "ghost clerks" (*guili* 鬼吏; also reminiscent of *guidao*) who made the sick confess their faults (*shou guo* 首過) and implore and pray (*qing dao* 請禱) for their recovery by means of personal handwritten documents dispatched to the Three Officers (*sanguan* 三官) of Heaven, Earth and Water. Under Zhang Lu, minor transgressions could be remitted by means of repairing 100 paces of road 治道百步 and prohibitions included killing in spring and summer, "in compliance with the 'Monthly ordinances'" (*yi* Yueling 依月令), and the consumption of alcoholic beverages.[93]

The stele inscription dated 173 AD suggests that the conferment of the title of *jijiu* was already current in religious communities several years before Zhang Xiu and Zhang Lu appear in the official sources of Chinese history.[94] But there is no evidence that the title, which already had a long history by that time,[95] was the trademark of the early Heavenly

[91] Officers of the community's vice squad? Kleeman, "Community and daily life in the early Daoist church," believes that *jianling* points to the illegitimacy of the officials.

[92] For instance in the *Bianzheng lun*, 6.531c-32a.

[93] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.263-64, including the *Dianlüe* quotation in Pei Songzhi's commentary.

[94] "Miwu jijiu Zhang Pu tizi," in *Li xu*, 3.8a-b; see Kleeman, *Great perfection*, pp.68-69. The same title *jijiu* appearing in the "Baishi shenjun bei" 白石神君碑 (Stele to the divine lord of the white stone) inscription, dated 183, in *Li shi*, 3.22b-24a, is assumed to be an honorific form of address rather than a religious dignity; on that stele, see Marianne Bujard, "Célébration et promotion des cultes locaux: six stèles des Han orientaux," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 87.1 (2000), 247-66; K.E. Brashier, "The spirit lord of Baishi mountain: feeding the deities or heeding the *Yinyang*?," *Early China* 26-27 (2001-02), 159-231.

[95] See Stein, "Remarques," pp.42-59; Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no dōkyō* (Tokyo, 1991), pp.334-42.

Master church in the context of Latter Han religious movements.

Self-confinement and pneumatic techniques

The practice of seclusion for a religious purpose ascribed to the "way of the five bushels of grain" reminds us of a similar practice of the early Christians toward the end of the 1st century if not before.[96] It is also present in the *Taiping jing*: while "deeply secluded in a retired chamber," the saints and worthies of Antiquity would "meditate on the Dao" 深居幽室思道, and the proper thing to do in order to achieve the Dao was, following their example, "to maintain one's purity and quietness in a retired chamber" 守清靜於幽室.[97] In addition to Stein's remarks, I would suggest that these secluded places may have something to do with those chambers (*shi*), carefully insulated and hermetically closed, built for the purpose of "watching for the ethers" (*houqi* 候氣) as described by Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-92) in his treatise on pitch pipes and the calendar ("Lüli" 律曆), later included in the *Hou Hanshu*.[98] I would also suggest that these chambers have to be connected somehow with political ideology, as reflected by the *Taiping jing*: not only the saints and worthies of Antiquity, but the emperor of today should "sit quietly in a retired chamber, free from

[96] See the Gospel according to Matthew (ca. 80-100 AD), 6:6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

[97] *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校, ed. Wang Ming, 2nd ed. (Beijing, 1979), pp.48, 278; the theme of retreat also appears on pp.30, 63, 109, 174, 180.

[98] *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi*, 1.3016; translation of the passage in Joseph Needham et al., *Science and civilisation in China*, 4, *Physics and physical technology*, 1, *Physics* (Cambridge, 1962), p.188; for the authorship of this treatise, see B.J. Mansvelt Beck, *The treatises of Later Han: their author, sources, contents and place in Chinese historiography* (Leiden, 1990), pp.61-63.

anxiety" 安坐幽室無憂, while petty officials deal with routine governmental matters.[99] Needless to say, the theme bears the hallmark of "non-interference" or "non-striving" (*wuwei* 無為) ideology.[100]

Still in the *Taiping jing* but now in a more religious context, the spiritual purpose of meditation in seclusion is made clear as we read that it will produce divine visitation (eventually, all gods will spontaneously come before the adept) or the adept's own ascension for an audience with the heavenly gods.[101] Though not explicitly referring to the practice of seclusion, the author of the *Xiang'er* commentary emphasizes the same need for "purity and quietness" (*qing jing* 清靜), an "unfocused" state of mind allowing the faithful to regulate the circulation of cosmic pneuma within their own body and to commune with the Dao.[102] In a 2nd-century stele inscription dedicated to a local saint named Fei Zhi 肥致, who lived roughly one century before it was erected (fl. 76-89 AD), the discourse revolves around the

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[99] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, p.322. That the ruler should sit quietly (*an zuo*) and constantly be free from anxiety (*wu you*) and annoyance (*wu shi* 無事) is one of the themes of the Great Peace agenda; see, for instance, *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.133, 136.

[100] See Liu Xiaogan, "*Wuwei* (non-action): from *Laozi* to *Huainanzi*," *Taoist Resources* 3.1 (1991), 41-56; Liu Xiaogan, "Naturalness (*tzu-jan*), the core value in Taoism: its ancient meaning and its significance today," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, eds Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany, 1998), pp.211-28.

[101] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.427, 450.

[102] Translation in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.99-101, 118, 141-42. See also Michael J. Puett, "Forming spirits for the Way: the cosmology of the *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Laozi*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 32 (2004), 1-27. On the ideological connection between the *Xiang'er* commentary and the *Taiping jing*, see Jao, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaojian*, pp.98-101; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, p.171; Guo Wu, "Cong *Taiping jing* he *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* kan daojiao shenxue de chuangli," *Shanghai daojiao* 4 (1993), 6-11; Zeng Weijia, "Cong *Taiping jing* yu *Laozi xiang'er zhu* kan zaoqi daojiao shenxian sixiang de xingcheng," *Qiusuo* 5 (2003), 243-45.

phrases *rushi* 入室 ("entering the chamber," col. 7), *daoren* 道人 ("man of the Dao," col. 5), *zhenren* 真人 ("perfected," col. 10), *xiandao* 仙道 ("way of immortality," col. 18) and *shizhi* 石脂 ("mineral grease," a siliceous paste used by seekers of immortality, col. 19).[103] Unfortunately, the stele fails to name any religious movement.

In ancient China, the notion of *qi* 氣 as a sort of cosmological and ontological *materia prima* was admittedly shared by many traditions, if not by all of those known to Sinologists.[104] An overwhelming concept encompassing the macro- and microcosmic spheres, *qi* is one of the key words in the discourse of the *Taiping jing* and *Xiang'er* commentary; it is also in common use among the weft fragments, though frequently in the mantic context of atmospheric and astronomic observation, given the importance of the theme in the collected remnants. The idea of a primordial, or original, pneuma (*yuanqi*) as the subtle, primeval source of all particularized forms of *qi* prior to the formation of the universe retained a prominent position in Daoist cosmogony and cosmology.[105] On this theoretical basis, a wide array of pneuma-related practices developed, involving rituals,

[103] Xu Jian 許建, "Henan Liang dong Anle Fei jun zhi bei" 河南梁東安樂肥君之碑 (Stele of Lord Fei of Anle, east of Liang, Henan; 169); on which, see Kristofer Schipper, "Une stèle taoïste des Han récemment découverte," in *En suivant la Voie royale: mélanges en hommage à Léon Vandermeersch*, eds, Jacques Gernet and Marc Kalinowski (Paris, 1997), pp.240-42 (translation), 246 (reproduction of an ink rubbing), 247 (transcription by Feng Congde 封從德).

[104] Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p.15. In English, the word *qi* is variously translated as "breath," "vapor," "steam," "pneuma" or even "energy"; see Ulrich Libbrecht, "Prāna = pneuma = ch'i?," in *Thought and law in Qin and Han China: studies dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the occasion of his eightieth birthday*, eds Wilt L. Idema and Erik Zürcher (Leiden, 1990), pp.42-62; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.15-20.

[105] See Isabelle Robinet, "Genèses: au début, il n'y a pas d'avant," in *En suivant la Voie royale*, eds Gernet and Kalinowski, pp.121-40.

breathing techniques and meditation.[106] One of the most famous examples is the rite known as the "merging of pneumata" (*heqi* 合氣), soon condemned by Daoists—condemnation taken up later by Buddhists—because of abusive interpretations and hence poorly documented in ancient sources, but which, as Kleeman reminds us, was "so central to the Celestial Master identity that it could be used as synonym for a member of the Church."[107] But when the received understanding of the rite as a sexual union is put into perspective, its religious significance as a reversion to primordial unity appears to be at least equally important.[108] Together with beliefs and practices testified to in a cluster of Great Peace materials,[109] this ritual may have prefigured the agenda of the future inner alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) practitioner, namely to return to a cosmic and ontological state of original non-differentiation by reversing the entire process of cosmogony through the successive stages of internalized elixir refining.[110]

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[106] See also Catherine Despeux, "Pratiques bouddhiques et taoïques du III^e^ au VI^e^ siècle (221-581)," in *Religion et société en Chine ancienne et médiévale*, ed. John Lagerwey (Paris, forthcoming).

[107] Kleeman, "Daoism in the third century."

[108] As argued by Gil Raz, "The Way of the Yellow and the Red: re-examining the sexual initiation rite of Celestial Master Daoism," paper presented at the "Symposium in celebration of *The Taoist canon: a historical companion to the Daozang*," University of Chicago, 6-8 October 2005. Raz differentiates the sexual practices of the Daoists from non-Daoist "arts of the bedchamber" *fangzhong shu* 房中術; on which, see Douglas Wile, *Art of the bedchamber* (Albany, 1992); Donald J. Harper, *Early Chinese medical literature: the Mawangdui medical manuscripts* (London and New York, 1998), pp.135-41; Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao*, rev. ed., (Beijing, 2000), pp.382-433.

[109] See Espesset, "À vau-l'eau, à rebours," pp.79-81.

[110] See Isabelle Robinet, "Le rôle et le sens des nombres dans la cosmologie et l'alchimie taoïstes," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 16 (1994), 93-120; Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, "Inner alchemy (*neidan*)," in *Daoism handbook*, ed. Kohn, pp.464-97.

Daoist discourse on pneuma practices revolves around numerous compounds, among which *xingqi* 行氣 ("circulating pneuma") and *tiaoqi* 調氣 ("regulating pneuma") in the context of *taixi* 胎息 ("embryonic breathing"); *biqi* 閉氣 ("pneuma retention"), *buqi* 布氣 ("diffusing pneuma") and *guqi* 固氣 ("stabilizing pneuma") for therapeutic purposes; *yanqi* 咽氣 ("swallowing pneuma"), *shiqi* 食氣 and *fuqi* 服氣 ("ingesting pneuma") in dietetic observance and ritual; and *qiguan* 氣觀 ("observation of pneuma") in meditation and visualization. Traces of these practices appear in Han sources, though arguably still not fully theorized, ritualized, nor collectivized. Harper's masterful study of the medical texts excavated from early Han funerary sites suggest that "vapor" (as he renders *qi*) played an essential role in physiology, dietetics, gymnastics, etiology and therapeutics.[111] Wang Chong 王充 (27-ca. 100 AD) ridiculed "specialists of the Dao" for their "conducting pneuma" (*daoqi* 導氣, here to be understood in the light of the compound *daoyin* 導引, "gymnastics," used by Wang in the same passage) as a mean to gain an extended longevity, and cast doubt on pneuma ingestion, preferred by such people to "ingesting matter" (*shiwu* 食物), i.e., eating ordinary food.[112] The "Laozi ming" stele inscription also alludes to breathing techniques (呼吸至精).[113] The *Taiping jing* mentions fasting and breath control 自不食與氣結 as well as pneuma ingestion in several places, here as a method to unite with primordial pneuma, there in connection with the regulation of breath, elsewhere in

[111] See Harper, *Early Chinese medical literature*, "Prolegomena," pp.3-183 (*qi* appears on almost every page). See also Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, pp.67-73.

[112] Wang Chong, *Lunheng* (Balanced assessments; ca. 75), ed. Yamada Katsumi (Tokyo, 1976), pp.497, 520. The whole chapter is translated in Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-Hêng*, 1, *Philosophical essays of Wang Ch'ung* (1907; repr. New York, 1962), pp.332-50.

[113] "Laozi ming," in *Li shi*, 3.3b; translated in Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu*, p.128.

opposition to ordinary sustenance ("ingesting tangible matter" 食有形之物); "pneuma regulation" (*tiaoqi*) also appears, but as a part of the fulfillment of the collective role of human beings in the macrocosm rather than in the context of individual practice.[114] Later on, the *Hou Hanshu* would recount how an aging Cao Cao surrounded himself with "masters of techniques" (*fangshi* 方士), among whom two specialists of embryonic respiration and nutrition (胎息胎食) and breath control (結氣不息).[115]

Sources of Latter Han religious movements

In the 173 AD stele inscription mentioned above, the phrase "Daoist rites of the Heavenly Master" (*tianshi daofa*) and its ordination context are assumed to imply that the Heavenly Master community already transmitted a corpus of scriptures by the late 2nd century of our era, at least for ritual purposes.[116] However, it is impossible to name confidently which texts were included in this corpus nor, for that matter, in the corpus of any other religious movement believed to have played a role in the formative years of the Daoist church and before the end of the Latter Han. In terms of literary history, the major problems concern the dating and authorship of texts and the hazards of their transmission, including textual modification, disappearance, and intertextuality: texts assumed lost reappear or are "rediscovered," re-edited under different titles, integrated into other texts, or divided into a

[114] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.48, 90, 278, 316, 450, 605, 658.

[115] *Hou Hanshu*, 82B.2750-51; passage translated in Ngo Van Xuyet, *Divination, magie et politique dans la Chine ancienne* (Paris, 1976), pp.143-46. The term *fangshi* may have originated from the Zhou official title mentioned in Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.209, no.1912.

[116] Terry F. Kleeman, "The structuring of reality in Daoist moral codes," paper delivered to the "Conference on religious thought and lived religion in China," Vancouver, B.C., 14-15 September 2002.

number of separate texts. In this regard, the case of the *Taiping* texts mentioned or quoted through the centuries, either lost or extant, is of striking relevance. The worldview of the received *Taiping jing* bears a distinctive Han "cachet" (for want of firsthand evidence still to be provided by archeological and epigraphic finds) but the same may be said of many texts in the Daoist canon, including material of unquestionably later origin. Contrary to a widespread idea, the surviving text does not tell us much about Latter Han religious movements as far as historical facts are concerned: to my knowledge, the extant scripture includes no date or allusion to any datable event, name of person or group, toponym firmly identifiable, or quotation of sources which would enable us to locate incontrovertibly its origins in time and space.[117]

Though often quoted in later Daoist sources, most of the earliest scriptures of the Heavenly Master are lost, e.g., the *Zhengyi jing* 正一經 (Scripture of Orthodox Unity), and those preserved in the Ming Daoist canon, when datable, usually prove to be of comparatively later date. One has only to consult the entries provided in the *The Taoist canon* for 16 Heavenly Master texts "in internal circulation" in the Six Dynasties (220-589). Among the dates proposed there, one will note the following formulae: "Six Dynasties" (five times), "third century?" (four times), "Eastern Jin (317-420)" (twice), "fifth century?" (once); one text is dated "ca. 255"; and the remaining three texts are given the dates of their putative authors, spanning the years 365-478.[118] So, in the majority of cases, and despite the

[117] The analysis of the rhymes in a few versified passages of heptameter composition has allowed recent Chinese research to confirm a Han date for these elements, but the heuristic method of these studies has yet to be verified before being extended to other parts of the text. See Wu Weimin, "*Taiping jing* yu qiyan shi de chuxing," *Shanghai daojiao* 3-4 (1989), 34-40; Wang Jian, "*Taiping jing* zhong de qiyan shi," *Guizhou shehui kexue* 135 (1995), 82-84.

[118] Entries by Ursula-Angelika Cedzich (nos.1205, 1218), Adrianus Dudink (nos.790, 1195), Marc Kalinowski (no.1289), and Kristofer Schipper (nos.615, 658, 785, 786, 789, 1127, 1243, 1273, 1288, 1294, 1343), in *The*

recent advances made in the field of Daoist studies, which the content of some entries brilliantly reflects, dating remains nearly as doubtful as it was when the second edition of the *Daozang tiyao* 道藏提要, the Chinese forerunner of the *The Taoist canon*, was released a decade ago.[119] As a result, our knowledge of the early Heavenly Master scriptural corpus depends on the retrospective interpretation of Six Dynasties material, from the 3rd century at the earliest. For this reason, rather than dealing here with the complex issues of philological dating which specialists are still painstakingly debating, I will focus on a few issues of theological and epistemological relevance connected with the cultural representations of the Han era and the corresponding discourse in contemporaneous sources.

Heaven and masters

Famously, the two characters *tian* 天 and *shi* 師 already appear as a compound in a group of "various chapters" ("Zapian" 雜篇) of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 defined by A.C. Graham as "ragbag" chapters, "quite heterogeneous" and "badly fragmented." In a fragment left by Graham unassigned to any of the textual strata he believed the *Zhuangzi* to be made of, we find the Yellow Emperor kowtowing twice before a perspicacious boy from whom he has just sought advice about the best way to govern the empire, and praising him as his "Heavenly Master."[120] In the *Taiping jing*, the same compound is commonly used by the

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Taoist canon, pp.120-37.

[119] Cf. the corresponding entries in *Daozang tiyao*, eds Ren Jiyu and Zhong Zhaopeng, 3rd ed. (Beijing, 2005), pp.268 (no.610), 284 (no.653), 341-42 (nos.779-80), 343-44 (nos.783-84), 535 (no.1118), 577 (no.1185), 581-82 (no.1195), 587-88 (no.1207), 603 (no.1231), 617 (no.1261), 623-24 (nos.1276-77), 625-26 (no.1282), 650 (no.1331).

[120] *Zhuangzi* (4th-2nd centuries BC), partly by Zhuang Zhou (ca. 370-301 BC), "Xu Wugui"; see Burton Watson,

disciples to address their master in the dialogue parts, as shown by the number of occurrences of the compound in the most widely used critical edition of the text.[121] The three-character compounds *tianshi dao* 天師道 and *tianshi jiao* 天師教 even occur in the same *Taiping jing*, but they refer to the teaching of the master (in the dialogue parts), not to a religious organization or dogma.[122] As for the official histories, the first tri-syllable remarkably does not appear as a reference to the Daoist church before the middle of the 7th century,[123] while the second, to my knowledge, is simply foreign to the whole corpus of standard histories.

The bi-syllable *tianshi* is also found in epigraphic material unearthed from Han funerary sites. In the manuscript on bamboo slips from Mawangdui entitled *Shi wen* 十問 (Ten questions) and dated to the early 2nd century BC (ca. 180), *tianshi* is the title of one of the "ten macrobiotic specialists" (Harper) consulted by none other than the Yellow Emperor himself.[124] Three centuries later, 2nd-century AD inscriptions designed to secure graves mention a "divine master of the Heavenly Emperor" (*tiandi shenshi* 天帝神師), a phrase

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trans., *The complete works of Chuang Tzu* (New York, 1968), pp.264-66. For the textual strata to which the "various chapters" may belong, see Angus C. Graham, *Chuang-tzŭ: the seven inner chapters and other writings from the book Chuang-tzŭ* (London, 1981), p.28.

[121] About 90 occurrences in the *Taiping jing hejiao*. Dialogue, discursive and mixed forms alternate in the received *Taiping jing*, reflecting textual strata assumed to be of different social and historical origins. For a critical approach to the criteria used to define these strata, see my paper "Criminalized abnormality," pp.1-5; Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace*, pp.347-53.

[122] For *tianshi dao*, see *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.70, 82, 357, 680; for *tianshi jiao*: pp.98, 238, 291, 312, 391, 432, 460.

[123] See Fang Xuanling (578-648), *Jinshu* (644) (Beijing, 1974), 67.1803; 77.2030; 84.2199.

[124] See Harper, *Early Chinese medical literature*, pp.28-29 (description of the manuscript under the classification mark VI.A), 122 (Harper's commentary), 385-88 (English translation).

assumed to be a near equivalent of another tetra-syllable from similar epigraphic sources, "emissary of the Heavenly Emperor" (*tiandi shizhe* 天帝使者).[125] And references to a deified heaven called either Heavenly Lord (*tianjun* 天君) or Duke (*tiangong* 天公, perhaps a respectful form of address which could be rendered as "Sire Heaven") may be found in archaeological material as well as in transmitted sources.[126]

Western Zhou (1045-771 BC) documents suggest that the belief in a deified heaven played an important role in the political and religious life of the early Chinese elite. And yet, by the middle of the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 BC), "no prophet spoke on behalf of Heaven, no priests explained its will, there was not even a sacred book to explicate Heaven's demands of the people."[127] Heaven's influential role was either ignored, questioned or played down as a mere behavioral ideal—at any rate, it had fallen far below its former status—in the discourse of the elite of the Warring States era (480-221 BC). During the Han dynasty, for ideological and political motives, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (195-115 BC) pleaded for a return to the religious tradition of the Zhou and laid the theoretical basis of a new imperial cult to Heaven, but his posthumous victory in 31 BC also ensured the

[125] See Anna Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt: Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Graburkunden der Späteren Han Zeit," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl and Hans-Hermann Schmidt (Würzburg, 1985), p.179; Seidel, "Traces of Han religion in funeral texts found in tombs," p.28.

[126] Seidel, *ibid*., pp.25-30; Espesset, "Criminalized abnormality," pp.6-17; Donald Harper, "Contracts with the spirit world in Han common religion: the Xuning prayer and sacrifice documents of A.D. 79," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), pp.236-37, n.28; 256-61. *Tiangong* should here be distinguished from the "indirect reference to the Emperor" mentioned by Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.509, no.6706.

[127] Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian thought: intellectual life in the Chunqiu period, 722-453 B.C.E.* (Honolulu, 2002), p.61.

absolute separation of the heavenly and human realms.[128]

It is certainly not a coincidence that this evolution through the centuries before and after the founding of the empire was contemporaneous with the development of more "rational" cosmological theories. However, Han sources, either official or unofficial (e.g., the *Taiping jing*), suggest that cosmology underwent a process of "moralization" toward the beginning of our era.[129] This moralized cosmology seems to go well with the conception of heaven which we find precisely in the *Taiping jing*.[130] The archaic conception of heaven reflected in the extant *Taiping jing*, somewhat reminiscent of the Mohist concept of the "will of heaven" (*tianzhi* 天志), helps us understand why the Great Peace agenda was briefly endorsed by the throne under Emperor Ai's 哀帝 rule (6-1 BC) before its promoters were accused of heresy and their reforms, which failed to bring forth any beneficial effects, of being contrary to the Classics (*jing* 經).[131]

In addition to frequent references to a transcendent source of legitimacy and imperial or royal dignity, popular leaders of the Han era may also have included the concept of master (*shi*) in their titles.[132] The various titles Zhang Jue is said to have chosen for himself include

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[128] See Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne*, pp.63-75, 219-25; Michael J. Puett, *To become a god: cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), Chapters 6-8.

[129] For the moralization of cosmology in official sources, see Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and political culture in early China* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.129-72; in the *Taiping jing*, see Espesset, "À vau-l'eau, à rebours."

[130] See Barbara Hendrischke, "The place of the *Scripture on Great Peace* in the formation of Taoism," in *Religion and Chinese society*, 1, ed. Lagerwey, pp.251-61.

[131] *Hanshu*, 11.340; 75.3193-94. Ideologically and rhetorically, the incident revolved around "the compliance with heaven's mind" 應天心, the renewing of "the original mandate of heaven" 天之元命, and the help 佑 sent down to the deficient emperor by August Heaven 皇天.

[132] For examples, see Hendrischke, "Early Daoist movements," pp.137, 156; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, pp.175-79.

"great worthy and excellent master (or master of court gentlemen)" (*da xian liang* [or *lang*] *shi* 大賢良 [or 郎] 師), while Zhang Lu is said to have styled himself "master lord" (*shijun* 師君) and Zhang Xiu, "master of the five bushels of grain" (*wudoumi shi* 五斗米師).[133] At least originally as an official title, *shi* did not refer to a charismatic or religious figure, but rather to an imperial official with advisory or educational functions.[134] For example, Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192), the well-known official who seized power in Luoyang in 189, chose the archaic title of one of the highest court dignitaries, "great master" (*taishi* 太師), in 191, at the peak of his career.[135] Clearly, *shi* as a title (or a compound title including *shi*) is indicative of the continuation of an influence first and foremost of a hierarchical and bureaucratic nature. In the *Taiping jing*, the "enlightened master" 明師 and his handful of still dull disciples 愚生 eager to improve are not only the active partners in dialogue in the rhetorical format of the *Taiping jing*,[136] they also represent major concepts in the sociopolitical ideology of the text.

A probable reason for the increasing prestige of masters during the early centuries of imperial China is the added value of a claimed personal knowledge of the transcendent realm. By that time, ideas of ascension to heaven and other supernatural experiences were already a familiar part of the mental framework of the Chinese, as witnessed by numerous accounts in both received and excavated sources. The polyvalent *Taiping jing*, here again,

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[133] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 8.263; *Hou Hanshu*, 71.2299; *Zizhi tongjian*, 58.1872. For *xianliang* 賢良 as a title in Han nomenclature, see Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.242, no.2515.

[134] *Ibid*., p.421, no.5202.

[135] *Hou Hanji*, 26.506; *Zizhi tongjian*, 60.1919. See Hucker, *A dictionary*, p.481, no.6213.

[136] See Barbara Hendrischke, "The dialogues between master and disciples in the *Scripture on Great Peace (Taiping jing)*," in *A Daoist florilegium: a festschrift dedicated to professor Liu Ts'un-yan on his eighty-fifth birthday*, eds Lee Cheuk Yin and Chan Man Sing (Hong Kong, 2002), pp.185-234.

offers an excellent example of "self-divinization" as the master recalls how, after "a very long time" spent "achieving the Dao and accomplishing Virtue," he could "unite his will with heaven" and "know what heaven wished to say"; then heaven sent forth "essential spirits of the Great Yang" to instruct him. This autobiographic synopsis ends with the statement that "[he has] taken heaven as his master" 以天為師.[137] This idea that heaven may be taken as one's master may seem reminiscent of *Zhuangzi*, where, with identical wording, it figures among the characteristics of the saint (*shengren* 聖人).[138]

Outside the official hierarchy and sometimes perhaps in rejection of the civil service, the charismatic and scholarly figure of the master as a "philosopher" (*zi* 子) had a long history when the empire was founded.[139] Concomitant with the ascending status of this-worldly masters and, I suspect, inseparable from it, was a similar process of deification undergone by some prestigious masters of the past. This process naturally took place on the imaginary and representational level but undoubtedly had a profound social and historical impact. Since Seidel's study, the best-known example is of course the deification process of Laozi, to which we need not return.

Less emphasized in religious studies is the case of Confucius, even though his cult began immediately after his death, first at the local level and later on as a full state-sponsored sacrificial activity in Lu 魯 according to Sima Qian.[140] The official history of the

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[137] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, p.70. I translate and discuss the passage in my paper "Revelation between orality and writing in early imperial China: the epistemology of the *Taiping jing*," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74 (2002), p.71.

[138] *A Concordance to the Zhuangzi*, ed. D.C. Lau (Hong Kong, 2000), p.73. This locus classicus belongs to one of the problematic "ragbag" chapters in Graham's stratigraphy.

[139] See Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and authority in early China* (Albany, 1999), pp.63-73, 83-94.

[140] *Shiji*, 47.1945.

Latter Han records one sacrifice to Confucius ordered by the emperor in 29 AD, and three sacrifices to Confucius and his 72 disciples performed by the emperor in person, in 72, 85 and 124 AD.[141] The unhistorical role of Confucius—as the ideal compiler, editor, expurgator and/or transmitter of the works which were to be included in the "Confucian" canon—progressively developed until it became widely accepted from the Han era on, albeit with varying and often conflicting interpretations as regards the exact nature of his contribution and its extent.[142] But this is arguably only a part of the sanctification process through which the figure of the Sage was recast into Han orthodoxy as a prophet of the accession of the Han house.[143]

Epistemology and revelation

Since orthodoxy builds its identity in opposition to heretical types defined by itself, the concept of heresy and heretical concepts are both essential in the shaping of orthodoxy.[144] With the weft or apocryphal (*wei*) remnants and the composite *Taiping jing*, we enter the unorthodox sphere of the epistemic alternatives which various social groups felt compelled to offer as a challenge to the centralized state, its orthodox ideology, and the established canon. In 175 AD, the standard version of the Five Classics was carved upon stone and the

[141] See *Hou Hanshu*, 1A.40; 2.118; 3.150; 5.238; *zhi*, 8.3184. For a table summing up Latter Han imperial sacrifices, see Mansvelt Beck, *The treatises of Later Han*, pp.90-94.

[142] See John B. Henderson, *Scripture, canon, and commentary: a comparison of Confucian and Western exegesis* (Princeton, 1991), pp.21-37, and Michael Nylan's chapter in the present work.

[143] Lewis, *Writing and authority*, pp.218-38.

[144] See John B. Henderson, *The construction of orthodoxy and heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian patterns* (Albany, 1998).

resulting steles, known as *shijing* 石經, were erected in Luoyang for public use.[145] This coincided with the period of almost absolute eunuch domination: the eunuchs had instigated a "proscription of the faction" (*danggu* 黨錮) in 169, a measure aimed at virtually any politically involved group or person in disagreement with their control over the emperor and potentially plotting against them.[146] Though there is no apparent causal relation between the events of 169 and 175, the carving of the stone Classics added intellectual and epistemological closure to the elimination of all political debate by the dominant clique.

A recent comparative study suggests that the weft writings may have "served as an authoritative foundation" for *jinwen* 今文 ("new text") hermeneutics as regards any topic not covered by the Classics.[147] But the fact that the *weishu* are often conveniently but reductively referred to as "the Confucian apocrypha"[148] in the West has obscured their uniqueness and the richness of their content, which covers exegesis of the Classics, but also politics, history,

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[145] *Hou Hanshu*, 8.336; 64.2116; *Zizhi tongjian*, 57.1834-36. See also Wilkinson, *Chinese history*, pp.439-40, and Michael Nylan's chapter in the present work, which calls into question the traditional understanding of this event.

[146] See Rafe de Crespigny, "Political protest in imperial China: the great proscription of Later Han: 167-184," *Papers on Far Eastern history* 11 (1975), 1-36. For the role of eunuchs in the politics of the Latter Han, see also Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," pp.67-75.

[147] See Hans van Ess, "The apocryphal texts of the Han dynasty and the old text/new text controversy," *T'oung Pao* 85.1-3 (1999), p.61. "New text" and "old text" (*guwen* 古文) refer to competing versions of the Classics in Han times, proponents of which debated political and institutional issues through their commentarial activities; see Michael Nylan, "The *chin wen/ku wen* controversy in Han times," *T'oung Pao* 80.1-3 (1994), 83-145.

[148] The relevance of the term "apocryphon" as a translation for *wei* is discussed in van Ess, "The apocryphal texts of the Han dynasty," pp.30-36. On these documents, see Jack L. Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal (*ch'an-wei*) texts of the Han dynasty," PhD thesis (University of Washington, 1966); Zhong Zhaopeng, *Chenwei lunlüe* (Taibei, 1993).

morals, mantic arts, apotropaic rituals, cosmology (including cosmogony and cosmography), theology, ontology, musicology and more. For example, the *Hetu* and *Luoshu* 洛書 (River Luo Writ), long before reappearing as numerological graphs of the magic square genre during the Song,[149] were transcendent documents of political and religious significance conveyed to chosen men by supernatural beasts (a tortoise and a dragon-horse) that emerged from the waters of the Yellow river and the river Luo.[150] An *Yijing* 易經 commentary ascribed to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) and quoted in the weft companion entitled *Qian zuo du* 乾鑿度 states that "[he who] receives the river Luo Writ has been appointed Son of Heaven"; and, according to fragments of *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects) weft material, the Yellow River Chart was expected to reveal to the monarch-to-be the predetermined dates of his tenure (*qi* 期) together with advisory material (*mou* 謀) and the writs (*shu* 書), charts (*tu* 圖) and auspicious omens (*fu* 符) betokening his legitimacy.[151] The fragmentary weft writings collected by Yasui and Nakamura are teeming with occurrences of esoteric material for enthronement such as charts (*tu*), records (*lu* 錄), glyphs (*wen* 文) and "cinnabar writs" (*danshu* 丹書) revealed to imperial contestants by auspicious animals: scarlet birds (*chique*

[149] See Isabelle Robinet, "Les marches cosmiques et les carrés magiques dans le taoïsme," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 23 (1995), 81-94.

[150] See Anna Seidel, "Imperial treasures and Taoist sacraments: Taoist roots in the apocrypha," in *Tantric and Taoist studies in honour of R.A. Stein*, 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels, 1983), pp.296-302; John B. Henderson, *The development and decline of Chinese cosmology* (New York, 1984), pp.82-87. For a wooden figurine of a dragon-horse excavated from a Han tomb, see Li Lin, "Cong Qinghai chutu mu longma kan Han dai mashen chongbai," *Wenbo* 1 (1991), 56-59.

[151] *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A, *Eki jō* 易上, eds Yasui and Nakamura (Tokyo, 1981), p.48; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 5, *Kōkyō, Rongo* 孝經論語, ed. Nakamura (Tokyo, 1992), pp.117, 120, 130.

赤雀), phoenixes, dragons. Among the recipients are the Yellow Emperor and Confucius himself, here as the uncrowned king, *suwang* 素王.[152]

At first, the Han sovereigns encouraged the proliferation of weft texts, but also of prophetic materials (*chen*), which blossomed under Wang Mang's rule. Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 (r. 25-57 AD), the founder of the Latter Han dynasty, is known to have relied widely on weft texts and prognostications in order to assert the transcendent legitimacy of his accession to the throne, as much as Wang Mang. A scarlet light (*chiguang* 赤光) was said to have lit the chamber where the future Guangwu had been born; the year of his enthronement, he claimed that he rode a scarlet dragon (*chilong* 赤龍) in a dream, and an "auspicious omen of submission to the scarlet" (*chifu fu* 赤伏符) circulated among the people.[153] The treatise on sacrifices ("Jisi" 祭祀) in the *Hou Hanshu* quotes a weft text entitled *Hetu chifu fu* 河圖赤伏符 (*Auspicious omen of submission to the scarlet of the Yellow River Chart*) among several other prognostication texts related to the Han.[154] Guangwu even officially ordered in the year 56 AD that "charts and prophecies" (*tuchen* 圖讖) be spread throughout the empire.[155] But from the end of the dynasty onwards, weft texts were repeatedly

[152] *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B, ed. Nakamura, pp.135-36.

[153] *Hou Hanji*, 1.1; 3.39; *Hou Hanshu*, 1A.21-22; 1B.86; 17.645. Liu Bang 劉邦 (240-195 BC) had chosen red (agent Fire) as his emblematic color before he founded the Han dynasty in 206 BC, then had ruled under the aegis of the color black (Water). Emperor Wu had changed for yellow (Earth). Emperor Guangwu reverted to red in 26 AD, i.e. one year after he restored the Han house.

[154] *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi*, 7.3165-66. Fragments of the *Hetu chifu fu* are collected in *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 6, eds Yasui and Nakamura, p.98. See also Huang Fushan, "Dong Han tuchen *Chifu fu* benshi kao," *Jingxue yanjiu luncong* 8 (2000), 319-50.

[155] *Hou Hanshu*, 1B.84.

prohibited and destroyed.[156] Centuries later, providing founders of dynasties with revealed documents legitimizing their accession had become the most prominent political function of Daoist dignitaries.[157] As for the *fu*, reinterpreted as talismans or esoteric glyphs with (among other) apotropaic and therapeutic functions, their design, production, use and distribution to the faithful were perpetuated by Daoist and extra-Daoist religious traditions right down to the present.[158]

Modern scholarly attention has already been drawn to the possible role of the weft ideology in the shaping of the Daoist religion, and on the relationship of the weft texts to the *Taiping jing*.[159] Due to the difficult social conditions toward the end of the Han dynasty, the expectations of people engaged in self-help movements were inclined to feed on numinous matters and, as masters claimed new and transcendent sources of inspiration, revelation would legitimately appear as an alternative and higher form of knowledge. In the *Taiping jing*, the authority of the master's discourse solely and satisfyingly proceeds from its intrinsic divinity; and his own text, being of heavenly nature and thus the only reliable one,

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[156] See Dull, "A historical introduction," pp.112-31.

[157] See Seidel, "Imperial treasures and Taoist sacraments," pp.348-66; John Lagerwey, "Taoist ritual space and dynastic legitimacy," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995), 87-94; John Lagerwey, "Rituel taoïste et légitimité dynastique," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 84 (1997), 99-109.

[158] See Seidel, "Imperial treasures and Taoist sacraments," pp.310-16; Monika Drexler, *Daoistische Schriftmagie: Interpretationen zu den schriftamuletten* Fu *im "Daozang"* (Stuttgart, 1994); Catherine Despeux, "Talismans and sacred diagrams," in *Daoism handbook*, ed., Kohn, pp.498-540; Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*; Christine Mollier, "Talismans," in *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale: étude des manuscrits de Dunhuang de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et de la British Library*, ed. Marc Kalinowski (Paris, 2003), pp.405-29.

[159] See Seidel, "Imperial treasures and Taoist sacraments," pp.335-40; Li Yangzheng, "*Taiping jing* yu yinyang wuxing shuo, daojia ji chenwei zhi guanxi," *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 16 (1999), 89-106; Hsiao Dengfu, *Chenwei yu daojiao* (Taibei, 2000).

should be used as an epistemological tool to check any other writing ever produced.[160] In the *Xiang'er* commentary, those who derive knowledge from non-Daoist writings (*waishu* 外書) are denounced as "deceptive" or "deviant" masters, unable to fathom the truth of the Dao (*dao zhen* 道真, or revealed truth), while the single acceptable scripture is said to be "this text of the Dao" 此道文, obviously a self-reference to the *Laozi* interpreted in the light of the *Xiang'er* commentary.[161] The days of the intellectuals of the pre-imperial era who struggled with each other over effectiveness of method and acceptability of ideas are past. We are witnessing the birth of scriptural bodies of revelations claiming to supersede any past or present competing corpus, in conjunction with the first known large-scale popular gatherings of potential believers expecting the enlightened leadership of providential men.

Great Peace

A theme already found in the main text of the Classics and their exegetical apparatus, Great Peace is generally understood to refer to a state of universal equilibrium engendered by the right behavior and governance of the ruler—the way of Great Peace, *taiping zhi dao*.[162] To some extent, this definition is applicable to Great Peace in the *Taiping jing*, at least in its main textual stratum. But the context of revelation gives the notion a new dimension. Just as the orthodox canon (official knowledge) was carved upon stone in 175 AD, revealed knowledge demanded a concrete form in order to be definitively established and to circulate

[160] See my "Revelation between orality and writing in early imperial China," pp.78-93.

[161] See Bokenkamp's translation in *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.107-09.

[162] For instance, see *Shisan jing zhushu* (Thirteen classics with commentaries and subcommentaries), ed. Ruan Yuan (1764-1849), pp.419a, 2616b (1818; repr. Beijing, 1980). For a recent historical survey of the intellectual background of the notion of *taiping*, see Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace*, pp.4-13.

among the faithful. Any manifestation serving the purpose would simultaneously belong to the codified form of the revelation and constitute an integral part of it. Thus every *taiping* text was simultaneously the means of revelation of Great Peace ("divine writings," *shenshu* 神書) and one of the phenomena characterizing the advent of Great Peace (an auspicious omen). In other words, Great Peace went beyond the thematic content of these texts and their material format.

Expectedly, the received *Taiping jing* shares the ideas of the great responsibility of the ruler for bringing about Great Peace and of the auspicious omens sent by Heaven in response. The sovereign should acknowledge the orthodox writings of the Dao (including the Master's own writings) and ensure their widest practice throughout the empire, starting with himself, so that the collective and cumulative burden of past human transgressions (*chengfu* 承負) might eventually be dispelled.[163] The *Xiang'er* commentary also uses the rhetoric of Great Peace.[164] The notion is also commonly encountered among the fragments of weft texts, which suggests that there were ideological exchanges or reciprocal influence between weft hermeneutics and Latter Han religious mass movements. In the weft fragments, Great Peace is a positive characteristic of an idealized early Zhou dynasty. Its advent also depends on the proper ritual behavior of the sovereign and his Virtue (*de* 德) as well as on the euphonic resonance of musical notes. When the time has come, the advent of Great Peace is confirmed by the observation of specific auspicious signs, including harmonious weather conditions, the growing of rare plants, and stellar phenomena such as

[163] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.53, 66, 100. See Barbara Hendrischke, "The concept of inherited evil in the *Taiping jing*," *East Asian History* 2 (1991), 1-30; Kamitsuka Yoshiko, "*Taiheikyō* no shōfu to taihei no riron ni tsuite," in *Rikuchō dōkyō shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1999), 301-37.

[164] See Bokenkamp's translation of the relevant passages of the *Xiang'er* and his comments in *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp.90, 128-29, 136-37.

the path of a meteor or the color of a given star. There is even mention of a "metropolis of Great Peace" 太平之都 in the center of heaven, which reminds us of the pivotal location of the stellar deity Taiyi and would seem to foreshadow later Daoist cosmography.[165] It is on the basis of these comparatively consonant Han ideologies that Daoist schools and sectarian groups throughout the Six Dynasties would emphasize the prophetic value of Great Peace, particularly in salvation and cataclysmic contexts.[166]

Concluding remarks

Anyone in early imperial China would assuredly have had some kind of religious beliefs—more or less elaborate, more or less intense, more or less conformist—and anyone pursuing political power would make use of religious claims if they might help his cause. But Latter Han religious mass movements should also be approached within their historical and sociopolitical context, i.e., the decline of central authority and the resulting compensations—more or less adequate—in the form of new bonds of local and regional solidarity. Common people would probably feel that the inexorable slipping of the imperial hold allowed such incidental appropriations of power, unacceptable as they might be under circumstances of

[165] See *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 1A, eds Yasui and Nakamura, pp.129, 163; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 2, *Sho: Chūkō* 書中候, eds Yasui and Nakamura (Tokyo, 1995), p.87; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 3, *Shi: Rei: Gaku* 詩禮樂, eds Yasui and Nakamura (Tokyo, 1988), p.90; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 4B, ed. Nakamura, p.78; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 5, ed. Nakamura, pp.42, 126; *Jūshū Isho shūsei*, 6, eds Yasui and Nakamura, pp.94, 124, 127, 192.

[166] See Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du V^e siècle: le Livre des incantations divines des grottes abyssales* (Paris, 1990); Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "Time after time: Taoist apocalyptic history and the founding of the Tang dynasty," *Asia Major* 3rd series 7.1 (1994), 59-88; Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*, pp.85-103.

peace and prosperity. Whenever the data is available, we realize that the nomenclature and organization of the mass movements discussed in this paper mostly stem from the official bureaucracy. Those who claimed or seized power locally were not just brigand leaders or megalomaniac gurus, whatever their stereotypical representation in the official discourse. By way of illustration, I will mention the case of a commandant of cavalry 騎都尉 who, in present-day Hebei 河北 province, toward the end of the 2nd century, ruled a local community which enacted its own laws, punishments and marriage regulations, and even created its own school system; non-Chinese tribes from the area ended their plundering activities and sent gifts.[167] And yet, no particular religious activities are reported in the official sources, nor the religious healing practices we half expect to find among them. I think it probable there were many other such instances of mutual aid communities in various parts of the empire, but most of them were omitted in the official sources because of lack of information or of relevance to the government. Religious mass movements are an integral part of this phenomenology, and the most tangible part of it.

Politics and religion interacted in a much more complex way than suggested by the picture painted in average textbook accounts.[168] Let me take a few more examples. In the winter of 148 AD, two unrelated usurpers were subdued and executed. The first called himself Son of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi *zi* 黃帝子) and appointed his own officials; the second claimed to be a Perfected (*zhenren*) and was convicted of plotting a seditious action.[169] Though the source fails to provide any religious affiliation, the titles of both characters are reminiscent of contemporary Daoist and Huang-Lao ideas and discourse—just

[167] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei, 11.341-42; *Zizhi tongjian*, 60.1947-48.

[168] The importance of countless local cults, in particular, is still underestimated, as suggested by Marianne Bujard, "Célébration et promotion des cultes locaux."

[169] *Hou Hanshu*, 7.293.

like those of dozens of other would-be emperors during the Han era. Elsewhere, we are told of a Latter Han military leader named Zhang Jin 張津, who abrogated the laws and statutes of the Han house (or, in a later rendition, was fond of cults to spirits), would wear a crimson turban, play drums and lute, burn incense and read heterodox popular books of the Dao.[170] Here again, the official redactors fail to identify clearly the character as a follower of Huang-Lao or a medium, or as being an individual and unaffiliated practitioner rather than adhering to a religious group. The worship of spirits (*guishen*) suggests popular local cults while the colored head gear, musical instruments, and burning of incense could refer to Daoist as well as Buddhist practices. Needless to say, though very Daoist-sounding in a literal English equivalent, the expression *daoshu* 道書, "books of the Dao," may have actually covered a wide variety of writings in Han context; and not only *daoshu*, but the homophonous phrase *daoshu* 道術 ("arts of the Dao") could designate such diverse techniques and areas of knowledge as astronomy, hemerology, mantic arts, *jing* hermeneutics, *wei* exegesis and more.[171]

In the fnal analysis, what does the word "Daoism" applied to the religious life of the Latter Han era mean? In Seidel's wording, the period spanning the years 82-193 AD would be "before and outside of Daoism" and the epigraphic and archaeological sources of the same period would reflect "pre-Daoist or proto-Daoist Han religion."[172] At any rate, it seems clear that what is sometimes referred to as Daoist religious identity today may cover, in

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[170] *Sanguo zhi*, Wu, 46.1110; *Zizhi tongjian*, 66.2105. Both passages are translated in de Crespigny, *The last of the Han*, p.281; Qing et al., *History of Chinese Daoism*, p.191.

[171] See Stein, "Remarques," pp.39-40; Hoshina Sueko, "Kan dai ni okeru dōjutsu no tenkai: keigaku, shin'i, jutsusū," *Shirin* (Kyoto) 83.5 (2000), 39-65; Kristofer Schipper's "General introduction" to *The Taoist canon*, pp.5-7.

[172] Seidel, "Traces of Han religion," pp.28, 39.

Latter Han times, a number of rival sectarian groups, which at most shared a religious "fondness for the Dao," as the 2nd-century stele inscriptions referred to above put it,[173] but also would disagree on issues of dogma and practice, as well as, probably, ecclesiastical authority. This is in line with the denunciation, by the author of the *Xiang'er* commentary, of "deviant learning" from "deviant masters," "deceptive sages with their knowledge of deviant writings" and "flawed or unproductive teachings."[174] And, similarly, the *Taiping jing*'s discourse resorts to a rich lexicon to stigmatize all possible kinds of unacceptable speech, either oral or written: heterodox 邪, false 偽, wicked 惡, spurious 巧, or shallow 浮華.[175] As a result, the concept of a "Daoist identity" seems quite anachronistic, even if one deliberately restricts its use to the Heavenly Master group—an ideological bias echoing the strong monistic component of Daoism's apologetic discourse on itself.

When retrospectively superimposed, identity seems to give birth to self-contradictory utterances in our scholarly discourse. For example, let us consider the following premise: "It seems reasonable to limit the appellation 'Daoist' to those movements which not only engaged the services of certain religious or perhaps Daoist experts, but were actually led by them."[176] Would any mass movement only need the active presence of "certain religious experts"—say, a few mediums, or Buddhists, or state ritualists—to be safely called a "Daoist movement?" There can be no doubt that the Scarlet Eyebrows, be it the leaders or the rank-and-file, would be extremely surprised to discover themselves filed under this heading. One wonders if the term is still relevant as an epistemological notion when dealing with a

[173] On the same wavelength, see Anna Seidel, "Das neue Testament des Tao: Lao tzu und die Entstehung der taoistischen Religion am Ende der Han-Zeit," *Saeculum* 29.2 (1978), 147-72.

[174] Translated in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p.108.

[175] *Taiping jing hejiao*, ed. Wang, pp.92, 139, 162, 431, 435, 512.

[176] Hendrischke, "Early Daoist movements," p.137.

complex array of phenomena defying research compartmentalization and conventional simplification.