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Criminalized Abnormality,
Moral Etiology, and Redemptive
Suffering in the Secondary Strata of the *Taiping jing*

An earlier paper of mine devoted to writing and orality in the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (*Scripture of Great Peace*) dealt mostly with material from the major textual stratum, or layer, of the text generally called “A” by sinologists.¹ It focused on the origin of knowledge and the emergence of an orthodoxy as a historical phenomenon (at an epistemological level) comparable to the political principle of centralized, unified power, a process in which writing played a major role. But ways of writing also play a great part in two minor textual strata or layers of the *Taiping jing*, generally referred to as B- and C-text. Stratum B has been characterized as presenting a “Heavenly Lord” (*tianjun* 天君), a “Major god” (*dashen* 大神) and “Divine Men” (*shenren* 神人), who introduce various bureaucratic procedures of the unseen world to which men submit after their death. A recurrent procedure is the permanent recording of human deeds on administrative documents by zealous divine officials of this Heavenly bureaucracy so as to determine each individual’s possible eligibility for a celestial office following death.² Stratum B com-

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¹ Espeset, “Revelation Between Orality and Writing in Early Imperial China: The Epistemology of the *Taiping jing*,” *BMFEA* 74 (2002), pp. 66–100. The best bibliography on *TPJ* studies appears in Chen Ligui 陳麗桂, ed., *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu* 兩漢諸子研究論著目錄 1912–1996 (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1998), pp. 391–407 (205 items, no. 5227–431); and Chen Ligui, ed., *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 1997–2001* (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2003), pp. 194–202 (98 items, no. 2421–518). The “stratigraphy” of the *TPJ* was first analyzed by Xiong Deji 熊德基, “*Taiping jing* de zuozhe he sixiang ji qi yu Huangjin he Tianshidao de guanxi” 太平經的作者和思想及其與黃巾和天師道的關係, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 4 (1962), pp. 8–15. Subsequent attempts were based more or less on his sectioning of the material into three forms: the first (called “A” by Western sinologists) is entitled “questions and answers 問答體”; the second, “prose 散文體,” or “C”; and the third, “dialogue 對話體,” or “B.” According to Xiong, forms 2 and 3 are closely related. Chapters of dubious nature – including the four *juan* written in meta-script (the still non-deciphered “doubled characters 複文,” and three *juan*, consisting of pictures probably of late origin – are not classified in Xiong’s three-fold scheme.

² This important aspect of writing in *TPJ* also reflects the development of the civil administration during the first centuries of imperial China. On this subject, see Etienne Balazs, *La*

bines dialogue with discursive elements, whereas stratum C, in contrast, strictly eschews dialogue.

Takahashi Tadahiko's careful study of B-material, a stratum that he does not call "dialogue 對話體," as Xiong Deji did, has led him to divide it into two substrata: a "conversational form 會話體," which includes only passages of purely dialogue style, and a "lecturing form 說教體" made up of the remaining non-dialogue parts.³ According to Takahashi, these two substrata contain the oldest parts of the extant *Taiping jing* material, but his line of argument is far from convincing and the issue remains open to discussion.⁴ Following Hachiya Kunio, who included in his stratigraphy quotations of the *Taiping jing* collected by Wang Ming in his critical edition, Jens Østergård Petersen has argued that textual elements from the later, abridged edition of the text, the *Taiping jing chao* 太平經鈔 (*Transcription of the Scripture of Great Peace*) which happen to be similar in style and themes to B- or C-material, should also be included in these strata. For example, a long fragment in *juan* 9 should be included in stratum B.⁵

The version of *Taiping jing* included in the *Zhengtong daoang* 正統

bureaucratie céleste: Recherches sur l'économie et la société de la Chine traditionnelle (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 13–67.

³ See Takahashi Tadahiko 高橋忠彦, "Taiheikyō no shisō kōzō" 太平經の思想構造, *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 95 (1984), pp. 296–97. Except for the division of B-material into two substrata, and minor shifts from one stratum to another, Takahashi's classification into three forms is derived from Hachiya Kunio 蜂屋邦夫, "Taiheikyō ni okeru genji bunsho, kyō, shū, tsū no shisō" 太平經における言辭文書共集通の思想, *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 92 (1983), pp. 36–38, which itself is derived from Xiong's pioneering stratigraphy. In a further study, Takahashi isolated and described the content of 36 fragments from chapters corresponding to both substrata; see Takahashi, "Taiheikyō no kaiwatai no seikaku ni tsuite" 太平經の會話體の性格について, *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 105 (1988), pp. 243–75. Benjamin Penny, "A System of Fate Calculation in *Taiping Jing*," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 41 (1990), p. 6, n. 7, and Barbara Hendrischke, "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the *Taiping Jing*," *East Asian History* 2 (1991), pp. 4–5, have criticized Takahashi's distinction of these substrata as unnecessary, first because both are actually entwined in the same *juan*, chapters and pages – sometimes even in the same line, and secondly because their strong similarity suggests a common source. Chap. 179, for example, is made out of four consecutive paragraphs of varying size, all of which open with the particle *wei* 惟, and in which discursive and dialogue forms alternate; see Wang Ming 王明, ed., *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1960; 1979; hereafter cited as *TPJHJ*), pp. 524–43. Wang's still widely used critical edition should be emended after Takahashi Tadahiko, "Taiheikyō gōkō no hiōten ni tsuite" 太平經合校の標點について, *Tōkyō gakugei daigaku kiyō, jinbun kagaku* 東京學藝大學紀要人文科學 36 (1985), pp. 231–44; Chen Zengyue 陳增岳, "Taiping jing hejiao shiyi" 太平經合校拾遺, *Zhongguo Daojiao* 中國道教 31.3 (1994), pp. 25–28; idem, "Taiping jing hejiao buji" 太平經合校補記, *Wenxian* 文獻 62.4 (1994), pp. 219–28; and Yu Liming 俞理明, "Taiping jing hejiao jiaodui bushuo" 太平經合校校對補說, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 1 (2002), pp. 88–90.

⁴ E.g., Hendrischke, "Inherited Evil," p. 5, n. 14, regards A-material as the earliest.

⁵ The *Daozang* location is page 11b–14a (see following n.), equivalent to *TPJHJ*, pp. 710–12. See Jens Østergård Petersen, "The *Taiping Jing* and the A.D. 102 Clepsydra Reform," *AO* 53 (1992), pp. 141–42.

道藏 is divided into fifty-seven *juan* 卷 (numbered, but untitled), which are in turn divided into 129 chapters (numbered and carrying titles). The numerical sequences of both *juan* and chapters are incomplete. In addition, the Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscript catalogued as Stein 4226 (MS S. 4226) in the British Library provides the full table of contents (but unfortunately not the text itself) of a sixth-century *Taiping jing* in which the incomplete structure of the *Zhengtong daoze* version fits almost perfectly. The Dunhuang table of contents indicates a total of 170 *juan*, and these are grouped into ten sections 部, each having seventeen *juan*.⁶ The chapters on which the present study will focus come from *juan* 110, 111, 112, and 114 of the extant *Taiping jing* (that printed in *Zhengtong daoze*, just mentioned). Moreover, the four *juan* appear in section 7 (*geng bu* 庚部) of the table of contents as seen in MS S. 4226. The twenty-four chapters that they contain are mostly characterized as B-material by modern sinologists. But, considering the affinities between both secondary strata, from a thematic and linguistic point of view, I refer to them by the generic term of “non-A” in this paper. Following Hachiya and Petersen, I also quote passages of *Taiping jing chao* that may be characterized as “non-A” material, notably from *juan* 9, which is supposedly a résumé of the lost section 9 (*ren bu* 壬部) of the *Taiping jing*.

Although a general consensus on the terminology of the *Taiping jing* strata seems to prevail, the definition of a stratum still depends mostly on its rhetorical form (that is, dialogue or non dialogue, prose or verse) and on the personae involved – with perhaps the exception of Petersen, whose definitions sometimes lack supportive evidence and thus remain cryptic.⁷ However, both criteria arguably have their own limitations. To begin with the rhetorical form, it is indeed far from being as homogeneous and clear-cut as one may infer from Xiong Deji’s three-fold stratigraphy.

⁶ One may find *TPJ* in the *Daoze* as identified via Kristofer Schipper, ed., *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages* (Paris: EFEO, 1975; hereafter, *CTT*), no. 1101, j. 35–119. The contents of S. 4226 were first published by Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊 in “Tonkō bon Taiheikyō ni tsuite” 敦煌本太平經について, *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 22 (1961), pp. 1–103; rev. edn., *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* 道教と佛教 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1970) 2, pp. 9–114. It shows that *TPJ* in the *Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏 (hereafter, *ZD*) partly preserved five out of ten sections of the 6th-c. scripture and that *TPJC* contains abstracts of four out of the five missing sections. The last section and its abstract are both lost. (See also my “Le MS Stein 4226 *Taiping bu juan di er* 太平部卷第二 dans l’histoire du Taoïsme médiéval,” forthcoming.)

⁷ Petersen, “*Taipingjing* and Clepsydra Reform,” has adopted Takahashi’s distinction of two substrata. He characterizes them, respectively, as “relating the recommendation by a *dashen* to the *tianjun* of a person eligible for office in the celestial bureaucracy” (Takahashi’s “conversational form”) and, somewhat abruptly, as “describing the economic and religious administration of hunger refugees in the Huai River delta” (Takahashi’s “lecturing form”).

Chapter 106 (sect. 5, j. 70) provides a good example of the limitations of any purely stylistic characterization of the content of the *Taiping jing*. In this chapter, generally regarded as belonging to the A-text, the dialogue elements actually boil down to the mere indication of the opening question by a disciple (properly formulated as: “A Real Man asks respectfully 真人謹問”) and the occurrence of “*shan zai* 善哉” (“Good indeed!”), used to separate the question from its answer – whose speaker remains unnamed.⁸ Strikingly, the rest of this four-page chapter is entirely discursive and, furthermore, never mentions the Heavenly Master (*tianshi* 天師) assumed to characterize the majority of A-stratum dialogues. Besides, the abridged and edited content of the *Taiping jing chao* throughout exemplifies how literary elements formerly of A-style dialogue form may be rewritten into non-A dialogue, by means of such tricks as altering the mentions of the alternating speakers and deleting the most colloquial interjections, or even into plain monologue (discursive) text, by deleting all interjections and mentions of speakers and turning what were formerly questions between interlocutors into silent objections raised by the orator himself in the course of his solitary reflection. As for the various personae involved, comparing chapters of the *Taiping jing*, passages of the *Taiping jing chao*, and the numerous *Taiping jing* quotations from other sources conveniently inserted by Wang Ming in his critical edition shows that, at least from a strictly functional point of view, the Divine Man and Real Men staged in some dialogues may be interpreted as rhetoric substitutes for the Heavenly Master and his disciples specific to A-material. In such conditions, the best way to deal with the extant Great Peace corpus would be to focus on the doctrines and beliefs expressed in the so-called strata (not to mention dubious “substrata”) rather than take their eventual rhetoric form at face value.⁹

In this respect, the present study will appropriately show that, while discussing themes seemingly typical to non-A material, A-material often proves fully relevant. Now to summarize the characteristics of the content of A-stratum: a master delivers lessons to a group of disciples, tackling various issues relating mostly to cosmology and episte-

⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 276.

⁹ For a further analysis of the dialogue form, see Barbara Hendrischke, “The Dialogues between Master and Disciples in the *Scripture on Great Peace (Taiping jing)*,” in Lee Cheuk Yin 李焯然 and Chan Man Sing 陳萬成, eds., *A Daoist Florilegium: A Festschrift Dedicated to Professor Liu Ts'un-yan on His Eighty-fifth Birthday* (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press Ltd., 2002), pp. 185–234. Despite valuable remarks on the definition of A- and B-text dialogue forms and the difficulty in firmly circumscribing the corresponding strata, the rhetoric form rather than the content remains the prevailing criterion throughout Hendrischke’s paper.

mology, plus, in some instances, to sociopolitical concerns (generally dealt with from a symbolic point of view). As a result, sociologically and historically contextualizing elements pertaining to this stratum remain highly problematic, and the reader is given the impression of wandering over a blurred landscape as random themes dictate. Even the toponymy and chronology at times referred to have been standardized (for example, a generic Southern Mountain, *nanshan* 南山), if not fully conceptualized (the successive reigns, through three ages, of Three Augusts, Five Emperors, Three Kings, and Five Hegemons).¹⁰ Hence this part of the text may be defined as a treatise on universal order to be restored, and watchfully maintained, by means of a strict adequacy of all possible phenomena to cosmic laws, provided that all beings – first and foremost the earthly ruler of mankind – comply with these revealed laws. Though the *Taiping jing* non-A-material analyzed in the present study undeniably shares a general worldview with A-stratum, I believe that this material emerged against a specific social, historical, and ideological background, and I am convinced that, whichever stratum it conventionally belongs to, it forms a consistent piece. My view is that what we grasp from this background echoes the earliest Taoist communities and seems reminiscent of some of the features of their parish life. Concomitantly, this study will also supplement our knowledge of Chinese beliefs regarding life after death, Taoist bureaucratic views of the unseen world, and the relationship between the religious and medical spheres.¹¹

¹⁰ See n. 77, below.

¹¹ On various Han and early-Six Dynasties beliefs regarding “life after death,” the beyond, and related matters, see Poo Mu-chou, “Ideas concerning Death and Burial in Pre-Han and Han China,” *AM* 3d ser. 3.2 (1990), pp. 25–62; Poo Mu-chou 蒲慕州, *Zhuxun yiji zhi fu, Zhongguo gudai de xinyang shijie* 追尋一己之福中國古代的信仰世界 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 1995), pp. 195–227; Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Ghosts and Demons, Law and Order: Grave Quelling Texts and Early Taoist Liturgy,” *Taoist Resources* 4.2 (1993), pp. 23–35; Michael Loewe, *Chinese Ideas of Life and Death: Faith, Myth and Reason in the Han Period (202 B.C.-A.D. 220)* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 25–37; Anna Seidel, “Tokens of Immortality in Han Graves,” *Numen* 29 (1982), pp. 79–122; idem, “Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt: Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Graburkunden der Späteren Han Zeit,” in Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl, and Hans-Hermann Schmidt, eds., *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), pp. 161–84; idem, “Post-mortem Immortality – or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body,” in Shaul Shaked, David Shulman, and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, eds., *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions Dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 223–37; Yü Ying-shih, “Life and Immortality in the Mind of Han China,” *HJAS* 25 (1965), pp. 80–122; and idem, “O Soul, Come Back! A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” *HJAS* 47.2 (1987), pp. 363–95. On the bureaucratic facets of the unseen world and man’s judicial dealings with it, see Donald Harper, “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” *Taoist Resources* 5.2 (1994), pp. 13–28; Peter Nickerson, “Taoism, Death, and Bureaucracy in Early Medieval China,” Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 1996), pp. 90–101, 134–74; Anna Seidel, “Traces of

HEAVEN AS A META-EMPIRE

To better understand the issues at stake in *Taiping jing* non-A material, we need first to reconstruct the general worldview that underlies its content. Several excerpts to be quoted in this paper provide a general view of the bureaucratic and anthropomorphic nature of the unseen world.¹² For instance, a passage from *Taiping jing chao*,¹³ which describes the circulation of documents up and down the administrative hierarchy, depicts the transmission of the Heavenly Lord's decrees to a Major god, then to a director of agriculture (*sinong* 司農) who instructs the subordinates in each administrative circumscription. Subordinates have to report to the director of agriculture. Should they fail to do so on time, the director of agriculture would report to the Major god who, in turn, would report to the Heavenly Lord himself.¹⁴ It is worth noting that in this passage no explicit distinction is drawn between the divine and human spheres, and the decrees of Heaven apparently reach down to the regions (*zhou*), commanderies (*jun*), and states (*guo*) of the world of Man (but we should not forget that in the Chinese mind, which was not conditioned by the Platonic legacy, such an absolute distinction was – and still is – not necessary). Such textual elements enable us to reconstruct the bureaucratic hierarchy of the divine instances that rule the celestial world under the supreme authority of the Heavenly Lord, of whom chapter 180 (sect. 7, j. 111) says that he is prescient (*yu zhi* 預知) and spontaneously knows all the secret matters “in Heaven, under Earth, and in the realm of Man.”¹⁵ This omniscient, divine monarch,

Han Religion In Funeral Texts Found In Tombs,” in Akizuki Kan'ei 秋月觀映, ed., *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987), pp. 678–714; and idem, “Early Taoist Ritual,” *CEA* 4 (1988), pp. 199–204. On the influence of the bureaucratic nature of power on religious ideas, see Jean Levi, “Identité et bureaucratie divines en Chine ancienne,” *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 205.4 (1988), pp. 447–65. See also the bibliographic references compiled by Donald Harper in Daniel L. Overmyer, with David N. Keightley, Edward L. Shaughnessy, Constance A. Cook and Donald Harper, “Chinese Religions – The State of the Field (Part I); Early Religious Traditions: The Neolithic Period through the Han Dynasty (ca. 4000 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.),” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54.1 (1995), pp. 152–60. On religion and healing (also the name of a recent research project run at the Academia Sinica, Institute of History & Philology), see Lin Fu-shih 林富士, “Shilun Zhongguo zaoqi Daojiao duiyu yiyao de taidu” 試論中國早期道教對於醫藥的態度, *Taiwan zongjiao yanjiu* 臺灣宗教研究 1.1 (2000), pp. 107–42; idem, *Jibing zhong jie zhe, Zhongguo zaoqi de Daojiao yixue* 疾病終結者中國早期的道教醫學 (Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2001); and Michel Strickmann (Bernard Faure, ed.), *Chinese Magical Medicine* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2002).

¹² See also Yü, “O Soul, Come Back!,” pp. 382–84.

¹³ On this late abstracted, obviously rewritten, rendition of *TPJ* that may date back to the tenth century, see Wang Ming, “Lun Taiping jing chao jiabu zhi wei” 論太平經鈔甲部之偽, *Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 歷史語言研究所集刊 18 (1948), pp. 375–84; and Li Gang 李剛, “Ye lun Taiping jing chao jiabu ji qi yu Daojiao Shangqing pai zhi guanxi” 也論太平經鈔甲部及其與道教上清派之關係, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 4 (1994), pp. 284–99.

¹⁴ *TPJC* 9, pp. 12a–b (*TPJHJ*, p. 710).

¹⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 544.

assimilated to the Polar Star,¹⁶ stands as the celestial, idealized counterpart of the emperor of men: a supreme, divine entity who acts on behalf of Heaven rather than a personification of Heaven itself.¹⁷

Besides our *tianjun*, the *Taiping jing* also contains six references to a “Lord of the Most High,” or “Lords of the Most High” (*taishang zhi jun* 太上之君).¹⁸ One of these occurrences, abbreviated to “*taishang jun*” and simply transcribed as “*tianjun*” 天君 in *Taiping jing chao*,¹⁹ suggests that – at least in the views of the editor of the abridged version – both expressions may be regarded as synonyms.²⁰ The first lines of chapter 193 (sect. 7, *j*. 114) deal briefly with this divine entity (or these divine entities), said to be ranked above the spirits 神靈, to be prescient, and to know what common gods are up to before they speak, and for whom gods as well as men feel reverential awe. Then the text states abruptly that above the “nine sovereigns 九皇,” who remain unexplained, are “nine lords 九君,” who are “relatives of,” or “close to 親,” the Most High. (In the

¹⁶ *Beiji* 北極, the apparent center of the nocturnal sky rather than the circumpolar five-star constellation bearing the same name; see Ōsaki Shōji 大崎正次, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi* 中國の星座の歴史 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1987), pp. 210–16. Thus the divine monarch occupies the astronomical center of Heaven just like the emperor of men embodies the symbolic center of the world. See also n. 23, below.

¹⁷ In *TPJ* the use of the word “*tian* 天” (“Heaven”) and the compound “*tianjun*” (“Heavenly Lord”) clearly follows specific concerns. For instance, though it may occasionally be said to have feelings, Heaven, unlike the Heavenly Lord, is generally not staged as a talking character. On the other hand, the Heavenly Lord, unlike Heaven which is epistemologically inseparable from Earth, has no such cosmological counterpart. Yet what both instances refer to may at times partially overlap, especially as regards moral aspects.

¹⁸ In chap. 182 (sect. 7, *j*. 111; p. 555 of Wang’s edition), an isolated occurrence providing no decisive information; in chap. 192 (p. 594), where the *taishang zhi jun* informs parents and relatives of men of incomparable filial piety 孝 of their conduct; in chap. 193 (p. 594 and 595; see text below); and in chap. 198 (p. 610), where *taishang zhi jun* is said to be kept informed of any evil deed, even minor.

¹⁹ See *TPJHJ*, p. 555, n. 26. For the sake of completeness, it should be added that the author of the abstracted text has also standardized as “*tianjun*” (*TPJC* 5, p. 1a; 6, p. 3a) two isolated occurrences of the compound *tiangong* 天公 (“Heavenly Duke,” or “the Honorable Heaven”) in *TPJ* A-text, both put into the master’s mouth; see chaps. 105 (sect. 5, *j*. 69) and 129 (sect. 6, *j*. 88), *TPJHJ*, pp. 262; 263, n. 1; 334; 335, n. 1. Donald Harper has encountered the graph *tiangong* (“Heaven Sire” in his own translation) in epigraphic material of the 1st-c. AD; “Contracts with the Spirit World in Han Common Religion: The Xuning Prayer and Sacrifice Documents of A.D. 79,” *CEA* 14 (2004), pp. 236–37, n. 28. Harper further emphasizes the similarity of the “structure and function of the spirit world” in both sources (p. 266) and wonders about the possible identity of *tiangong* in both sources, and of the divine entities referred to as *tiangong* and *tianjun* (pp. 257–59).

²⁰ Throughout A-material, *taishang* has an adjectival function and belongs to the common words whereas in the other two strata it may be interpreted as a variant or equivalent of Heaven (*tian*), perhaps with stronger religious and hierarchical implications. It should also be remembered that *Taishang* is one of the three hypostasis of Laozi 老子 in early Heavenly Master Taoism (*Tianshi dao* 天師道), the central one, with *Wushang* 無上 on the left and *Xuanlao* 玄老 on the right. In *TPJ*, the former compound still belongs to the common words (adjectival, i.e. “highest” or “supreme”) while the latter does not appear.

Taiping jing, *qin* admits both readings, often in a compound, but the present, isolated occurrence does not allow us to choose definitely between one or the other.) Each one of them has his own affairs to take care of, and all other gods obey them respectfully. Minor gods may not know the designs of the nine sovereigns, to say nothing of ordinary men. Only those with special qualities (literally: “a saintly heart and good hearing”) “may visualize their (the nine sovereigns’) compositions 文章祿策”: they are just like regular compositions but a “halo” radiates from them,²¹ as their text is written with silver on slips of gold. These divine records are in the private quarters 內 of the Heavenly Lord and duplicates 副 are kept in the Central Pole.²² Back in chapter 180 we read that the Heavenly Lord also has his own “personal registers,”²³ in which are registered men who are destined for divine ascension.

Being the ruler of a bureaucratic world as much as head of a pantheon, our Heavenly Lord reigns over an apparatus of anonymous, numberless “gods 諸神,” also designated as “Heavenly gods 天諸神,” or “天上諸神,” or “諸天神” – but we see further on that there are also chthonian entities – or “multitudes of gods 群神.” In chapter 188 (sect. 7, *j.* 112) we find an evocation of the hastening emissaries of Heaven who get about in chariots made of mist with a flying dragon-drawn carriage, followed by ordered ranks of divine immortals who all carry their account records 簿書.²⁴ Chapter 180 informs us that gods could not exist by themselves, their basic function, as heavenly emissaries, being to submit memoranda 記, or 疏記, on human good and evil deeds to the Heavenly Lord.²⁵ The same chapter adds that heavenly envoys 天遣 dwelling in the human body as “heart gods 心神” are in perma-

²¹ *Jingguang* 精光, literally: “a refined radiance.” For an occurrence of *jingguang* conferred on a newly deified person, see also n. 162 and text, below.

²² *TPJHJ*, pp. 594–95. The “Central Pole 中極” refers to the seeming center of the sky around which all other stars rotate, held to be the highest point of the heavens. See *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (ca. 1028), Zhang Junfang 張君房 (ca. 961–ca. 1042), ed. (*ZD*, fasc. 677–702; *CTT* 1032) 18, p. 3b; 24, p. 1b. Today Gouchen 勾陳 1 (α UMi) but, in Han times, probably the “Pivot of Heaven,” Tianshu 天樞 (GC17443 Cam); see Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, p. 297. On the circular movement of the Celestial North Pole and the identification of the polar star, see also Léopold de Saussure, “Les Origines de l’astronomie chinoise: H. Les anciennes étoiles polaires,” *TP* 20 (1921), pp. 86–116; Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, pp. 210–18.

²³ Here called: “the personal registers of the Heavenly Lord of the Northern Pole 北極天君內簿” (*TPJHJ*, p. 546; on 北極, see n. 16, above). Chap. 198 also mentions “天君內簿” (*TPJHJ*, p. 612).

²⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 574. This lively depiction happens to match a picture appearing in *TPJC* 6, pp. 18a–b, together with a caption. Wang’s edition includes the caption (*TPJHJ*, p. 467) but the picture has been omitted. A similar carriage appears in the scroll picture bearing the number of chap. 162 (sect. 6, *j.* 99) in *TPJ*, with a “Venerable of the Center 中尊” and two “official aides 從官” on board. See the plates appended to Wang’s edition.

²⁵ *TPJHJ*, pp. 544–45; also chap. 201 (*TPJHJ*, p. 619).

nent audiovisual contact with Heaven to scrupulously report all the deeds – good and evil – of their host.²⁶ Such seems to be the function of another divine entity, called the director of fate, *siming* 司命 (whom we meet again, later), who is said to reside permanently in the organ heart of each human being in order to arbitrate his host's rights and wrongs.²⁷ In *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* 太平經聖君秘旨, a collection of stanzas from *Taiping jing* exclusively concerning *shouyi* 守一 (“keeping the One”) meditation and visualization techniques that may date back to the end of the Tang, we even read that in the body “there are permanently six divinities, directors of fate 六司命神, who discuss together the faults of men.”²⁸ As regards such physiological watchdogs, or rather “watchgods,” the following passage from chapter 199 (sect. 7, *j.* 114) deserves to be translated entirely to catch more than a mere glimpse of what may be called the divine condition:

(Through) transformation (gods) exit and enter where there is no aperture, changing their size at will. Ordinary people cannot perceive the gods (but) gods recognize each other spontaneously. (Gods) are entirely made of pneuma (*qi* 氣), how could there be places where they cannot go? There is always a difference of intensity²⁹ between the halo (*jingguang* 精光) of major gods and minor gods. They always enjoy a longevity which is increased ninefold 增九. (When) they are ultimately converted to benevolent conduct, their longevity also is unlimited. They ascend to the highest and descend to the lowest, exit and enter (where) there is no interstice.

²⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 545. Not surprisingly, then, we find in chap. 134 (sect. 6, *j.* 92) that “heart gods” also guarantee men's life. Were they to leave the body, death would ensue (*TPJHJ*, p. 374). Max Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*,” in Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel, eds., *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979), pp. 36–37, has argued that the Heavenly Lord “appears to be identical with the spirit of the heart ... which is present in the interior of the human body.” In my opinion, the passage he refers to does not contain any such statement.

²⁷ See chaps. 187 (*TPJHJ*, p. 572) and 195 (*TPJHJ*, p. 600). So it is the “director of fate” (*siming*) who dwells within a man's heart, not the “director of agriculture” (*sinong*), as wrongly assumed in Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*,” p. 37.

²⁸ See *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* 太平經聖君秘旨 (undated; *ZD*, fasc. 755; *CTT* 1102), 6a (appearing in *TPJHJ*, p. 742). On *shouyi* 守一 practices in *TPJ*, see Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, “*Taiheikyō no shu-itsu shisō to Bukkyō*” 太平經の守一思想と佛教, in *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1976) 3, pp. 315–51; Ding Yizhuang 丁貽莊 and Liu Dongmei 劉冬梅, “*Taiping jing zhong shouyi qianshi*” 太平經中守一淺釋, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 2 (1986), pp. 67–73; in Taoism, see Livia Kohn, “Guarding the One: Concentrative Meditation in Taoism,” in Livia Kohn and Sakade Yoshinobu, eds., *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), pp. 125–58; in Buddhism, see Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, “*Bukkyō no zenpō to Dōkyō no shu-itsu*” 佛教の禪法と道教の守一, in *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* 3, pp. 287–314.

²⁹ *Zengjian* 增減, lit.: “to increase and decrease.”

There is neither exteriority nor interiority³⁰ (for them), as if (they were) in perpetual motion. If they wish to stop or move, they stop or move spontaneously. By breathing they become divine³¹ and they look radiant. From top to bottom (of the hierarchy) there is a schedule, and when it is their turn to move, they must return on time. Also, they cannot act independently, but require superiors and inferiors 尊卑. Each has his commission, each his register with instructions 簿領, each his rank. They must be aware and act with determination without disobeying, clear about what they are doing. Each makes his merit (*gong* 功) manifest, makes proposals about what he knows. They have no private aims, but act as instructed, do not depart from the content of the instructions, dedicate themselves to improvement, without ever resting, and stop (only) when commanded to.³²

There is a sharp contrast between the first part of the quotation, which heightens the freedom of gods as regards the material restraints of the human, mortal condition, and the second part, where this metaphysical freedom dissolves in a bureaucratic system strictly organized into a hierarchy and subject to office work constraints. This hierarchy basically distinguishes between major (*dashen*) and minor gods (*xiaoshen* 小神) – or elsewhere, rather than this well-known, binary classification, a typically *Taiping jing*-style, three-fold scale, including “medium gods” (*zhongshen* 中神).³³ *Dashen*, in some special instances, explicitly refers

³⁰ Possibly reminiscent of such evocations of the Tao as in the opening sentence of *Huainan zi* 淮南子 10, a work edited by Liu An 劉安 (ca. 180–122 BC): “Tao is supremely high and supremely profound . . . (it) envelops the universe but has no exteriority nor interiority”; see D. C. Lau, ed., *A Concordance to the Huainanzi/Huainan zi zhuzi suoyin* 淮南子逐字索引 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press Ltd., ICS series, 1992), p. 82.

³¹ A quotation of *TPJ* from what is probably a Tang-dynasty Taoist work, *Daodian lun* 道典論 (*ZD*, fasc. 764; *CTT* 1130) 4, p. 8b, states that the embryo inhales natural, spontaneous pneuma but, once born, man breathes Yin and Yang pneuma, which are called “dispersing 消息.” Those who successfully revert 反 to spontaneous pneuma will live whereas those who keep on breathing “dispersing pneuma” will die (*TPJHJ*, pp. 699–700). The idea of “perfectly divine breathing” certainly refers to such views. According to the next *TPJ* quotation from the same source (*Daodian lun* 4, p. 9a), “heavenly gods feed on pneuma” (*TPJHJ*, p. 739). On the concept of *qi* 氣, central to Han times cosmology, see Chen Ligui, “Handai de qihua yuzhoulin ji qi yingxiang” 漢代的氣化宇宙論及其影響, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 8 (1995), pp. 248–66.

³² *TPJHJ*, pp. 613–14.

³³ The occurrence of the generic, plural expression “*zhu dashen* 諸大神” (i.e. major gods) in chaps. 179 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 529; 537; 539), 183 (*TPJHJ*, p. 559), 184 (*TPJHJ*, p. 560), and 197 (sect. 7, j. 114; *TPJHJ*, p. 607), should be set apart from all other occurrences of *dashen* (“Major god”) as a single instance (on which, see below). The expression “*dashen xiaoshen*” 大神小神 appears in chaps. 193 (*TPJHJ*, p. 595) and 199 (*TPJHJ*, p. 613) of *TPJ*. *Taiping jing chao* refers twice (*TPJC* 8, pp. 16a, 18b) to “*dashen*,” “*zhongshen*” and “*xiaoshen*,” which can be reached by the adept trying to obtain the Tao (*TPJHJ*, p. 696) or meditating on different kinds of pneuma related to the “monthly marker 月建,” i.e. the direction the Northern Dipper (*beidou* 北斗, i.e. Ursa Major) is pointing at each month (*TPJHJ*, p. 698); and once to “*dashen*

to a single divine entity who is under the Heavenly Lord's direct command. A quotation of *Taiping jing* in the fifth- or sixth-century *Daoyao lingqi shengui pinjing* 道要靈祇神鬼品經 compares the Major god with "a lawful minister of the State" and his position with "a public office of governmental assistant." As such he is not permitted the slightest privacy, otherwise the Heavenly Lord would demote him, nor does he dare to abandon himself to laziness.³⁴ The following passage of *Taiping jing chao*, which I assume to correspond to the title of chapter 290 (sect. 9, j. 146) in Dunhuang MS S. 4226,³⁵ tells us more about that celestial worthy:

The High Sovereign, the most venerable of divine beings, calls himself Duke of accumulated pneuma 委氣之公.³⁶ He is also called Major god (*dashen*). He stands permanently to the Heavenly Lord's left and presides over the management of the writing of documents of the Hall of Brightness (*mingtang* 明堂).³⁷

Further in the same passage, this Heavenly Lord's right hand man who stands on his left (in accordance with Chinese logic) is said to be "the supreme commander of all divinities," a kind of chief executive-officer "in charge of all gods, each with his own department 部."³⁸ We learn from chapter 180 that the Major god has "assistants" (*fuxiang* 輔相) – an office said to be similar to that of "State minister" (*gongqing* 公卿) in human society – of mortal origin, men of great saintliness and virtue who have ascended to Heaven and act as trustworthy managers of the documents transferred to the Hall of Brightness,³⁹ and from chapter

xiaoshen" (*TPJC* 9, p. 13a; *TPJHJ*, p. 711) to express the hierarchy of divine officials attending the audience of Heaven 朝天.

³⁴ See *Daoyao lingqi shengui pinjing* (*ZD*, fasc. 875; *CTT* 1201), pp. 1b–2a (*TPJHJ*, p. 737).

³⁵ *Weiqi dashen sheng shang mingtang wenshu* 委氣大神聖上明堂文書 (col. 249).

³⁶ The expression "accumulated pneuma" refers to both the subtle corporeality of these dematerialized beings and their dietary habits. See also n. 31, above.

³⁷ *TPJC* 9, p. 11b (*TPJHJ*, p. 710). On the Hall of Brightness, see Léon Vandermeersch, "Le régime rituel: Le Palais des lumières," in *Études sinologiques* (Paris: PUF, 1994), pp. 191–208; Hwang Ming-chong 黃銘崇, "Ming-tang: Cosmology, Political Order and Monuments in Early China," Ph.D. diss. (Harvard University, 1996). In *TPJ* the cosmological symbolism of the Hall of Brightness shows, for instance, through chap. 60, where the *mingtang* is the second of six positions occupied by Penal Laws 刑 and Virtue 德 during their twelve-month cycle of expansion and withdrawal (*TPJHJ*, pp. 105–6); for a detailed review of the *xingde* system from this chapter of *TPJ*, see Yu Tao 于濤, "Taiping jing xingde tushi de yixue biaoqian ji qita" 太平經刑德圖式的易學表現及其他, *Zhouyi yanjiu* 周易研究 42.4 (1999), pp. 43–48; on the history of *xingde* cycles, see Marc Kalinowski, transl. Phyllis Brooks, "The *Xingde* 刑德 Texts from Mawangdui," *EC* 23–24 (1998–99), pp. 125–202. A fragment of *TPJC* also alludes to the *mingtang* in astro-calendrical context; *TPJC* 4, p. 7a (*TPJHJ*, p. 213).

³⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 710.

³⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 544.

183 (sect. 7, *j.* 111) that men of superior knowledge are brought before the Major god to “carry out missions for him,” that is, to become his personal emissaries.⁴⁰ As for the “minor gods,” their purpose is probably best summed up in this excerpt from chapter 180: “the Major god sends minor gods with orders.”⁴¹ Minor gods are the lesser civil servants of Heaven, divine pencil-pushers sent down to the world of men to deal with the daily tasks of the bureaucratic routine. All these divine bureaucrats are expected to embody the public realm 公 of idealized human civil service – total devotion to and identification with their duty – and no doubt the same attitude is expected from the Emperor’s subjects here below.

This Heavenly sphere is not irremediably foreign to mankind, at least to its cosmic elite. According to *Taiping jing chao*, individuals of the eighth rank of that nine-fold hierarchy seemingly peculiar to the Great Peace texts⁴² (former ordinary men who, by studying ceaselessly, successfully made their way to the highest reaches and eventually transcended their mortal condition) reside in the Purple Palace of the Northern Pole,⁴³ that is, “they belong to the same constellation as the Emperor in Heaven 與天上帝同象.”⁴⁴ Here again, we find the divine realm associated with the nocturnal, astronomic sky, a standard

⁴⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 557.

⁴¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 546.

⁴² *Jiuren* 九人, expounded – with notable variants according to textual origins – in *TPJ*, chaps. 53 (sect. 3, *j.* 40), 56 (sect. 3, *j.* 42), and 108; *TPJC* 4, pp. 14b–16a; and in a quotation of *TPJ* from the 5th-c. *Zhengyi fawen taishang wailu yi* 正一法文太上外籙儀 (*ZD*, fasc. 991; *CTT* 1243), 4a. The nine grades may be summarized as follows (upwards): 1. slaves (*nubi* 奴婢); 2. benevolent, or good, people (*shanren* 善人, or *liangmin* 良民), or common people (*fanmin* 凡民, *minren* 民人); 3. wise men (*xianren* 賢人); 4. Saints (*shengren* 聖人); 5. men of the Tao (*daoren* 道人); 6. Immortals (*xianren* 仙人); 7. Real Men (*zhenren* 真人); 8. (major) Divine Men (*shenren* 神人, or *da* 大 *shenren*); and 9. Divine Men of accumulated pnuma (*weiqi shenren* 委氣神人). The *Hanshu* 漢書 (92 AD), edited by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD), describes a similar ninefold human classification stretching from 上上 down to 下下 by combining two threefold classifications (*shang*, *zhong* 中, and *xia*); a table names four of these nine grades as “saints” (*shengren* 聖人, ranked 上上), “humane people” (*renren* 仁人, ranked 上中), “sages” (*zhiren* 智人, ranked 上下), and “ignoramuses” (*yuren* 愚人, ranked 下下), while the five remaining grades are left unnamed; see *Hanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 20, pp. 861–63. Compare also with the system of nine grades of official rank (*jiupin* 九品) which, according to Donald Holzman, “Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les Neuf Catégories et l’Impartial et Juste 九品中正,” in *Mélanges publiés par l’Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises* (Paris: PUF, 1957) 1, p. 395, n. 2, may actually have been put to practice for nearly three centuries, between the Han and Tang dynasties.

⁴³ *Beiji zigong* 北極紫宮. The designation “Purple palace,” typical of Han times astronomical nomenclature, refers to the circumpolar region of the sky, which came to be called the *ziwei yuan* 紫微垣 from the Jin 晉 dynasty onwards (see Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, p. 29). *Beiji zigong* appears also in chap. 54 (sect. 3, *j.* 40; see *TPJHJ*, p. 81), but *ziwei* seems foreign to *TPJ*.

⁴⁴ *TPJC* 4, p. 15b (*TPJHJ*, p. 222). This is the single occurrence, unfortunately unexplained, of the expression “*tian shang di*” in the *TPJC* as in the whole *CTT* 1101. All other occurrences of “*shangdi* 上帝” throughout the text probably refer to the Emperor of men here below.

feature of Han beliefs, with its astro-calendrical cult to gods associated with stars.⁴⁵ Not only are circumpolar constellations a reflection of the prominent figures of the Imperial Court as the astral nomenclature implies, but the entire administrative organization of Heaven is modeled on the human world. For instance, chapter 199 describes its postal network in the following way, obviously drawing inspiration from actual regulations presiding over imperial mail:

Postal relay stations 傳舍⁴⁶ in Heaven have their own registers with instructions (*buling*). Those who ought not to stop (at postal relay stations), let them not stop. This is a case of not permitting carelessness with regard to the Heavenly Lord's constant instructions, for fear that clerks responsible for the delivery (of official documents) use the prestige of their position abusively. There are high and low officials, and it is not permitted to claim a high position by force or deceit for the purpose of claiming a long stop. Postal relay station clerks⁴⁷ always take orders from the Heavenly Lord, and whenever (divine officials) pass through postal relay stations, they submit their name and the administrative position they come under. Concealed fraud is not possible.⁴⁸

From Han first-hand official records (in which postal relay stations are referred to as *zhuanshe*, as in our text, above), it is possible to infer some of the analogous rules that presided over the proper handling of imperial documents in the Han empire, as well as some of the penalties provided for in case of late or inaccurate delivery.⁴⁹ Such archeologi-

⁴⁵ Notably to Taiyi 太一 (also written 太乙, or 泰一), name of a star close to the "Left Pivot," Zuoshu 左樞 (α Dra), and which may have been regarded as polar (if then observable) around 2500 BC. See de Saussure, "Les Origines de L'Astronomie chinoise," pp. 521-23; Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, pp. 167-68.

⁴⁶ I use the translation from Charles Oscar Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1985; hereafter cited as *Hucker*), p. 186, no. 1487, according to which *zhuanshe* is a Han variant for *youting* 郵亭 (see n. 50, below).

⁴⁷ *Zhuanshe li* 傳舍吏, emending Wang Ming's punctuation accordingly, as suggested by Donald Harper (private correspondence).

⁴⁸ TPJHJ, p. 614.

⁴⁹ For a concrete example of mail delivery, see Dunhuang Han slip 1291, in Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 甘肅省文物考古研究所, ed., *Dunhuang Han jian* 敦煌漢簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991) 1, pl. 115; the most complete transcription is to be found in Zhongguo jian du jicheng bianji weiyuanhui 中國簡牘集成編輯委員會, ed., *Zhongguo jian du jicheng, biao-zhu ben* 中國簡牘集成標註本 (Lanzhou: Dunhuang wenyi chubanshe 敦煌文藝出版社, 2001) 4, p. 19. For an occurrence of *zhuanshe*, see slip 1304 (*Dunhuang Han jian*, pl. 117; transcription in *Zhongguo jian du jicheng*, p. 21). For various delivery rules and penalties, see "Er nian li ling 二年律令," slips 264-76 (dated 186 BC), from Zhangjia Shan 張家山, Hubei, tomb no. 247, in Zhangjia Shan ersiqi hao Han mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 張家山二四七號漢墓竹簡整理小組, ed., *Zhangjia Shan Han mu zhujian, ersiqi hao mu* 張家山漢墓竹簡二四七號漢 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001), pl. 29-30; transcriptions, pp. 169-71.

cal material provides us with an extra illustration of the way the divine sphere was modeled on human society and, further, strengthen our conviction that the ideas and beliefs expressed throughout the *Taijing jing* date back to the early-imperial era.

This anthropomorphic modeling of the divine world also shows through parallel sentences in *Taijing jing chao* that boldly state that there are official residences 官舍 and postal relay stations 郵亭 in Heaven, as on Earth⁵⁰ – in the central part of the surface of the Earth as well as in the eight outlying regions.⁵¹ Such an administrative circuit converges on the astronomically significant Hall of Brightness which, at least in *Taijing jing* non-A-material, stands as the central administrative organ under the jurisdiction of the Major god where all documents submitted by the divine officers are gathered to be “collated 拘校” then transmitted to the Heavenly Lord, who issues orders in response.⁵² A stanza from *Taijing jing shengjun mizhi*, in which adepts of meditation are warned that in case of severe internal disorder, frightened bodily gods will leave their host to report to the Hall of Brightness, thus causing the death of the material body,⁵³ matches this concept of the Hall as a divine, central administrative organ – to be compared with an earthly version of the Hall, especially designed to ensure a favorable circulation of seasonal pneuma and to collect extraordinary compositions from all parts of the world, some practical rules for the actual construction of which are still to be found in a fragment of *Taijing jing chao*.⁵⁴ Towards the

⁵⁰ Though not appearing in *Hucker, guanshe* is common to Chinese historical sources as early as *Hanshu*; e.g., *Hanshu* 66, p. 2886, where *guanshe* is the definition provided for *guan* 館, i.e. “an official residence.” *Youting* is also a Han term; see *Hucker*, p. 587, no. 8085.

⁵¹ *TPJC* 8, pp. 17b–18a (*TPJHJ*, p. 698). The passage goes on to parallel the official residences of four planes: Heaven, Earth, the underground 地下, and the space between Heaven and Earth 天地間 (an interesting four-fold, vertical structure somewhat alien to the usual Heaven-Earth-Central Harmony/Man three-fold pattern of *TPJ*, where there are said to reside respectively “divine immortals 神仙人,” “saints and wise men 聖賢人,” “benevolent gods and manes of Great Yin 太陰善神善鬼,” and “human immortals of refined spirits 精神人仙 who still have not been able to ascend to Heaven and dwell between the Kunlun and the North Pole, among clouds and winds” (*TPJHJ*, p. 698). We see, below, that “the underground” refers to the realm of the dead.

⁵² On “collating,” a key concept of *TPJ*'s epistemological agenda, see Espeset, “Revelation,” pp. 83–85. On the administrative work in the Hall of Brightness, see chaps. 180 (*TPJHJ*, p. 544), 186 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 568–70) (where it is called “*taiyang mingtang* 太陽明堂”; p. 568), and 199 (*TPJHJ*, p. 614) of *TPJ*, and the long passage of *TPJC* dealing with the administrative routine of Heaven (*TPJC* 9, pp. 11b–14a; *TPJHJ*, pp. 710–2). Astronomically, the Hall formerly was the central star (α Sco) of the 3-star Xin 心 (Heart) Mansion, later on a full 3-star constellation (τ Leo, υ Leo, 87e Leo). See Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, pp. 304, 311. For further astronomical – and physiological – correspondences, see *TPJ* chap. 193 (*TPJHJ*, p. 596).

⁵³ See *Taijing jing shengjun mizhi*, p. 6b (*TPJHJ*, p. 742), a passage to be emended following Yu Liming 俞理明, ed., *Taijing jing zhengdu* 太平經正讀 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2001), p. 563.

⁵⁴ *TPJC* 5, p. 8b (*TPJHJ*, p. 304).

same period as that of the emergence of *Taiping jing*, the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to Laozi's 老子 *Daode jing* 道德經 also alludes, in the context of human subtle physiology and the preservation of vital principles, to the Hall of Brightness (seemingly referring to the organ heart), as well as unspecified heavenly bureaus 天曹 and anonymous officials of life and death 生死之官.⁵⁵

From its name, we may assume that the Bureau of Calculation (Jicao 計曹) deals with general accounting in the divine realm, as suggested by a passage from *Taiping jing chao* alluding to the use of calculation chips 籌 by this office's divine civil servants to perform arithmetical tasks – which, notably, relate to “sums of money and precious things.”⁵⁶ The same passage goes on to explain that all divine administrative calculations are to be centralized at the Bureau and submitted to a director of agriculture who, on a daily basis, transmits in turn this bulk of collected material to the Major god in the Hall of Brightness.⁵⁷ From fleeting allusions in chapters 188 and 195 (sect. 7, j. 114), we grasp that the functions of the director of agriculture involve the supply of both food – through an institution called the Heavenly Granaries (*tiancang* 天倉), with an astronomical counterpart – and garments to all divine civil servants who prove efficient,⁵⁸ and to the newly ascended members of the moral elite.⁵⁹ We also infer that this director of agriculture and another bureaucrat, the official in charge of sacrifices,⁶⁰ are two key links in the transmission chain

⁵⁵ *Laozi dao jing, shang, xiang'er* 老子道經上想爾 (undated; London: The British Library, MS Stein 6825). I refer to the transcription of the MS provided in Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaojian* 老子想爾注校箋 (Hong Kong: Tong Nam Printers & Publishers, 1956), pp. 6–51. The Hall of Brightness, heavenly bureaus and officials of life and death appear on p. 29. For the physiological value of *mingtang* in the *Xiang'er* commentary, see Rao's own commentary on p. 80. On the *Xiang'er* commentary, see also Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Laozi Xiang'er zhu de xingcheng ji qi dao jiao sixiang” 老子想爾注的形成及其道教思想, *Dongfang zongjiao yanjiu* 東方宗教研究 NS 1 (1990), pp. 149–80.

⁵⁶ *TPJC* 9, p. 12a (*TPJHJ*, p. 710).

⁵⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 710. Chap. 179 seems to indicate (*TPJHJ*, p. 534) that the reason for centralizing their work was to check it. This director of agriculture was *sinong* 司農, my literal translation; cf. *Hucker*, p. 453, no. 5729. We will see that the divine *sinong* matches his earthly equivalents, usually in charge of the National Treasury – with varying responsibilities throughout historical periods. See also n. 62, below.

⁵⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 579. Mention of the granaries (*tiancang*) is the single occurrence of this compound in both *TPJ* and *TPJC*. On the *cang* 倉 institution, see *Hucker*, p. 519, no. 6899; also p. 471, no. 6042, which says they were state grain supplies in Han times, under the jurisdiction of the *da sinong* 大司農 (for which *sinong* was a common variant). Its astronomic correlation is a six-star constellation (ι Cet, η Cet, θ Cet, ζ Cet, τ Cet, 57 Cet); Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, p. 326.

⁵⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 601.

⁶⁰ *Ciguan* 祠官 (5 occurrences). I use the translation in Petersen, “*Taipingjing* and Clepsydra Reform,” p. 142, which cites Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965) 10A, p. 422, to say it was the title of “an official employed in the local state cults . . . that was abolished in [105 AD].” Petersen uses the occurrence of this title to support his theory that C-material from the extant *TPJ* was composed between 102 and 105 AD (*ibid.*).

of the periodical reports of the offenses 犯 of men to the subterranean instances, as we shall see.⁶¹ But here, the director of agriculture alluded to may be interpreted as belonging to the officialdom of the divine realm as much as that of the empire below, as elsewhere in the same chapter 188.⁶² The same may probably be said of the official in charge of sacrifices, at least in chapter 196 (sect. 7, *j.* 114), which expounds the proper funerary attitude to observe as long as the coffin has not been buried.⁶³ But the reader may assume to be back to the divine sphere in chapter 203 (sect. 7, *j.* 114), where one reads that when the spirits (*shenling*) are pleased by the way filial children perform the ancestral cult, they inform 白 the civil officers in the departments of the director of fate and the official in charge of sacrifices above.⁶⁴

With the director of fate, we meet perhaps the so-called god of death of early Chinese culture sought after by some Western sinologists.⁶⁵ But, once again, we are given scarce information, especially in non-A-material:⁶⁶ an isolated, brief statement from a non-dialogue passage in *Taiping jing chao* confirms the central role played by the director of fate in the transmission of administrative documents up to the Heavenly Lord.⁶⁷ It is also worth emphasizing that, like most of his colleagues, the director of fate was granted stardom (so to speak) by Chinese astronomers.⁶⁸

Hucker, who omitted *ciguan*, provided an entry for *cisi* 祠祀 (“Sacrificer”), also a Han term, which appears once in chap. 196 of *TPJ* (*TPJHJ*, p. 605) and once in a *TPJ* quotation from a Tang source, Zhu Faman’s 朱法滿 (died 720) *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔 (*ZD*, fasc. 204-207; *CTT* 463), *j.* 14, p. 1b (*TPJHJ*, p. 216). See Hucker, p. 559, no. 7570.

⁶¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 579.

⁶² The *sinong* mentioned in the following context is obviously a human official: “in a state that is empty, no grain is stored in the granary, meat is scarce, no money is stored, year after year it gets worse, there is nothing to give to the court” (*TPJHJ*, p. 575).

⁶³ *TPJHJ*, p. 605.

⁶⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 626.

⁶⁵ On the *siming*, see Eduard Erkes, “The God of Death in Ancient China,” *TP* 35 (1940), pp. 185-210 (p. 186 for the expression “god of death”).

⁶⁶ By way of comparison, occurrences of “*siming*” in A-material are more numerous, the expression being often used in a rhetorical manner, as in chap. 137 (sect. 6, *j.* 93), in which the master states that Man is the “divine director of fate” (*siming shen* 神) of the six domestic animals, because their life and death depend solely on him (*TPJHJ*, p. 383); a similar use is to be found in *TPJC* 8, p. 19b, which also tells of the power of local governmental representatives and the awe they inspired: “the superior clerks 長吏 are the director of fate of the people” (*TPJHJ*, p. 699; on *zhangli*, see Hucker, p. 110, no. 153). Also in *TPJC* 6, p. 9b, northwest is said to be “the director of fate of earth” because it is the sector where Yin peaks (*TPJHJ*, p. 466). Perhaps more interesting for our main concern is the following occurrence from a typical A-stratum dialogue on longevity in chap. 41 (sect. 3, *j.* 35), in which the master allusively tells one of the disciples: “the director of fate will modify your records” (*TPJHJ*, p. 34). Obviously, the master needs not dwell on the topic to be understood by the disciple.

⁶⁷ *TPJC* 4, p. 7b (*TPJHJ*, p. 214).

⁶⁸ The fifth star (15f UMa) of the Wenchang 文昌 constellation; Ōsaki, *Chūgoku no seiza no rekishi*, p. 301.

The management of the human lifespan devolves on a Bureau of Longevity (Shoucao 壽曹), also called Bureau of Extended Longevity (Changshou zhi cao 長壽之曹).⁶⁹ This department archives data relating to men who, mainly owing to their moral conduct, are promised a longer life: as we learn from chapters 195 (sect. 7, *j.* 114) and 203, a special file from the dossier of men of high moral value who will be granted extra lifetime, called their “fate record 命籍,” is transferred (轉 or 移) to the Bureau.⁷⁰ Here also are recorded the date (including hour) of the ascension of those who are destined for ultimate deification before their birth⁷¹ – this is why the Bureau’s primary concern, according to chapter 199, is life itself 生爲第一.⁷² We may logically assume that these fate records (*mingji*) were originally managed by another administrative organ mentioned in chapter 179 (sect. 7, *j.* 110), the Bureau of Fate (Mingcao 命曹), also in charge of the final verification of the case of moral culprits, as we shall see. From chapter 182 (sect. 7, *j.* 111), we grasp that this bureau receives orders directly from the Heavenly Lord himself.⁷³ Finally, the specific administrative handling of human deeds is certainly dealt with by two mirror-organs, the Bureau of Benevolence (Shancao 善曹) and the Bureau of Malevolence (Ecao 惡曹), jointly referred to in chapter 182 (a single occurrence each).⁷⁴ These bureaus bring us to the sanction of Man’s conduct by celestial authorities and its eventual consequences.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Like their Christian counterparts, men of ancient China basically enjoy free will, as stated in chapter 199 (sect. 7, *j.* 114):

Each man has a will, has his own thoughts, has his own achievements; his plans are not identical (to those of others); each one has

⁶⁹ On *cao* 曹 (“Bureau”), see *Hucker*, p. 520, no. 6916. *Shoucao* occurs in chaps. 180 (*TPJHJ*, p. 546) and 182 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 549; 551); *changshou zhi cao* in chaps. 179 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 531; 534), 195 (*TPJHJ*, p. 602), and 203 (*TPJHJ*, p. 625).

⁷⁰ See chaps. 195: “only (those) who are able to meditate on the running of the affairs of Heaven, to get the essential words of heavenly gods and put their precepts to practice, and whose behavior arouses meditation, may have their fate record altered 易 and transmitted to the Bureau of Extended Longevity” (*TPJHJ*, p. 602); 203 (*TPJHJ*, p. 625); and 179 (*TPJHJ*, p. 534).

⁷¹ See chap. 179 (*TPJHJ*, p. 531; “Saints of High Antiquity” is the ideal human profile referred to here) and further (*TPJHJ*, p. 532; referring to “men who obtained the Tao in High Antiquity”). A similar statement is to be found in *TPJC* 9, p. 11b (*TPJHJ*, p. 710).

⁷² The rest is a matter of self-calculations (*TPJHJ*, p. 613). That is to say, Heaven has control over human life (i.e. life duration and fate after death, as we shall see) but all other human affairs depend on men themselves.

⁷³ *TPJHJ*, p. 552.

⁷⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 552.

his own way of seeing things, his own productions, his own aspirations, and knows what his own mind is able to understand.⁷⁵

On this basis, the extant *Taiping jing* material does not develop a theory of secular law but rather variously alludes to “taboos 忌諱,” “prohibitions” and “proscriptions” (防禁, 禁忌 and 禁戒), especially in *Taiping jing* A-material.⁷⁶ Concerning non-A-material, chapter 179 emphasizes that people should not dare to infringe the taboos and prohibitions of the Tao 道 and “have high regard for proscriptions” (as men of High Antiquity did),⁷⁷ and that, although numerous, proscriptions and prohibitions may not be forgotten.⁷⁸ In chapter 203, as in *Taiping jing* A-material, people who live without taboos are denounced.⁷⁹ And chapter 203 clearly states that the primary characteristic of benevolent conduct consists in not transgressing “the proscriptions 禁 of Heaven and Earth, the four seasons, the five agents, the sun and moon, the stars, and all the gods.”⁸⁰

What are these dreadful guidelines for proper moral, political, and cosmic behavior? Turning to A-text chapter 211 (sect. 7, j. 118), for instance, we read that to delight in killing, hunting and fishing (acts contrary to the Heavenly Tao and benevolence) constitutes an offense.⁸¹ Dialogue-style (but not strictly *Taiping jing* A-material) chapter 108 (sect. 5, j. 71) mentions, as another example of proscription, “to keep the mouth closed so that (gods of the body) will not disperse.”⁸² We owe to

⁷⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 613; reading *neng* 能 for *nai* 乃, a common usage throughout *TPJ*.

⁷⁶ Disciples often admit to a fear that their answers or questions will infringe (觸, also 犯) the taboos of the master; see chaps. 53 (*TPJHJ*, p. 78), 60 (*TPJHJ*, p. 104), 61 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 112; 124), 62 (sect. 3, j. 46; *TPJHJ*, p. 129), and 209 (sect. 7, j. 118; *TPJHJ*, p. 668). This is why they want to learn “what the gods of Heaven and Earth constantly regard as great taboos” (chap. 61; *TPJHJ*, p. 112). Further on in the same chapter, the master tells them that it is Heaven who makes them ask their questions, because Heaven “fears that, among ignorant people, offending (*fan*) the taboos of Heaven and Earth may never stop” (*TPJHJ*, p. 125), preventing the advent of Great Peace itself. (See also chap. 211; *TPJHJ*, p. 672.) Among several other defects, men of later generations are said “to have no taboo,” chap. 103 (sect. 4, j. 6); *TPJHJ*, p. 245. According to chap. 127, old people who are getting close to the end of their life do not have taboos any more (*TPJHJ*, p. 327), and chap. 154 blames ignoramuses for not following the Tao or respecting any taboos, thus offending Heaven and Earth (*TPJHJ*, p. 434).

⁷⁷ “High antiquity” was a prestigious, archetypal embodiment of superior moral qualities. In *TPJ*, history goes through three declining ages (*sangu* 三古): a golden age of High Antiquity (*shanggu*); Middle Antiquity (*zhonggu* 中古), an age of decline; and Low Antiquity (*xiagu* 下古), an age of disorder. Some passages of the text suggest that Low Antiquity is the period contemporaneous with the author(s) of *TPJ*, or with the master from A-material chapters. Combined with the four declining governmental principles of Sovereignty 皇, Emperorship 帝, Kingship 王, and Hegemony 霸, the *sangu* scheme also serves the purpose of duodecimal taxonomy, e.g. in chap. 103 (sect. 4, j. 66).

⁷⁸ *TPJHJ*, pp. 525; 528; 529; 537. The same chapter also alludes to “current prohibitions 所行防禁” (*TPJHJ*, pp. 533; 539).

⁷⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 625.

⁸⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 625.

⁸¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 672.

⁸² *TPJHJ*, p. 286.

Max Kaltenmark a good overview of the way the spiritual advisers who produced the *Taiping jing* expected their followers to behave as regards such issues as filial piety, the killing of newborn girls, the proper way men and women should couple, the respectful attitude mortals should have towards Earth, and so on.⁸³ Such guidelines suggest to the modern reader several domains of deviance (regarding behavior, belief, privacy, sexuality) and their corresponding sociopathic types: the individualist, who keeps Tao and Virtue for personal benefit; the miser, who hoards up the cosmic heritage of humanity; the libertine, who turns away from the teachings of the Tao; the parasite, voluntarily unemployed; the anarchist, who disregards hierarchy and the rules of precedence; the continent, who refrains from procreating; the heretic indulging in shameful practices; the alcoholic (drinking alcohol strengthens agent Water to the detriment of agent Fire); the beggar; the evildoer; the infanticide. This colorful crowd, which lumps together nonconformists, freethinkers, potential delinquents, and criminals, also circumscribes by default the narrow path of normality leading to social acceptance, on the side of which watchful mentors, keepers of orthodoxy, are on the lookout for any trespassers. The ethical creation of normality takes shape on the vague borders of social alienation and legal sanction, in early imperial China as elsewhere.⁸⁴

Concerning Earth proscriptions, the extant chapter 61 (sect. 3, *j.* 45) (also A-stratum) may have inherited fragments of five chapters of *juan* 154 from non-extant section 10 (*gui bu* 癸部), as indicated on MS S. 4226,⁸⁵ for its content strikingly matches four of their titles precisely:

1. "Prohibitions on offending the soil" 禁犯土, title of chapter 319 (sect. 10, *j.* 154);
2. "To take (no more than) three feet of soil" 取土三尺, chapter 321 (sect. 10, *j.* 154);
3. "To order the soil (i.e. construct) brings men disease" 治土病人, chapter 322 (sect. 10, *j.* 154); and
4. "The soil may no longer be offended" 土不可復犯, chapter 323 (sect. 10, *j.* 154).

The chapter itself, which compares Earth with a nourishing 養 mother and Heaven with a father, provider of life, urges men to venerate Earth instead of hurting her with "great construction and earth-

⁸³ See Kaltenmark, "Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*," pp. 33-38.

⁸⁴ For 17th-c. and 18th-c. western Europe, see Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), pp. 176-78.

⁸⁵ MS S. 4226, col. 265-66.

works 大興起土功,” or “excavations 穿鑿,” which reach down to the Yellow Springs 黃泉; all these are not minor faults 小罪.⁸⁶ Further on, the master explains that laying out the ground inflicts Earth skin disease (*chuangyang* 瘡瘍); that increasing the number of wells 井 is like cutting Earth’s veins (*xuema* 血脈) open, for water is Earth’s blood; that canals obstruct the circulation of the “pure pneuma of Great Harmony 太和純氣”; and, once again, that excavating Earth reaches down to the Yellow Springs.⁸⁷ Soil-related prohibitions and taboos were undoubtedly common in Han times.⁸⁸ For instance, the chapter “Jiechu pian” 解除篇 (“On Exorcism”) by Wang Chong 王充 (27–ca. 100) in his *Lunheng* 論衡 contains the statement that common people, whenever carrying out earthworks, have to perform “*jietu* 解土,” a disyllabic compound glossed as “to appease and ask the soil gods for forgiveness 解謝土神,” an expression possibly implying both exorcist and thanksgiving rituals.⁸⁹ *Hou Han shu* also alludes to “soil proscriptions 土禁,” unfortunately without further information.⁹⁰

Such taboos may be either of heavenly or chthonian origin,⁹¹ but the task to propagate 施 them among people devolves on “divine men” (*shenren*), a category that we may safely assume to include the master

⁸⁶ *TPJHJ*, pp. 114–15, a passage “abstracted” in *TPJC* 3, p. 11a (*TPJHJ*, pp. 115–16). On the Yellow Springs, see below.

⁸⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 118–19.

⁸⁸ For some prohibitions and taboos related to construction and the soil in Han times, see Chang In-Sung 張寅成, *Zhongguo gudai jinji* 中國古代禁忌 (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe 稻鄉出版社, 2000), pp. 53–59; 87–96.

⁸⁹ See D. C. Lau, ed., *A Concordance to the Lunheng/Lunheng zhuzi suoyin* 論衡逐字索引 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press Ltd., 1996), 75/321/7; Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-Hêng: Philosophical Essays of Wang Ch’ung* (1907; rpt. New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962) 1, p. 535, has “appeasing the earth.” See also Rolf A. Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” in Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel, eds., *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979), p. 74; Peter Nickerson, “The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints,” in Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1997), pp. 242–44; and Nickerson, “Taoism, Death, and Bureaucracy,” pp. 112–17.

⁹⁰ *Hou Han shu* 15, p. 591. In his own commentary, Li Xian 李賢 (654–84) also mentions “*jietu*” (*Hou Han shu* 41, p. 1411). Six-Dynasties sources mentioning proscriptions related to the ground appear in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, edited by Li Fang 李昉 (925–995) in 982 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960) 267, p. 1378a; 735, p. 3259a. For 9th and 10th cc., the importance of ground-related proscriptions in calendars from Dunhuang was recently noted by Alain Arrault; see Arrault and Jean-Claude Martzloff, “Calendriers,” in Marc Kalinowski, ed., *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale: Étude des manuscrits de Dunhuang de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et de la British Library* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003), pp. 106–7 and 114–17 (graph, p. 117). Present-day Chinese almanacs still include several daily prescriptions (宜, “right, proper,” or 忌, “prohibited, taboo”) related to construction and the ground, with categories involving such activities as the beginning of construction work (literally “to stir the soil 動土,” or “to break the soil 破土”), the building of foundations 起基, the drilling of wells 開井, etc.

⁹¹ For allusions to the heavenly origin of some prohibitions, see chaps. 184 (*TPJHJ*, p. 560),

(*shi* 師), or Heavenly Master (*tianshi*), of A-stratum.⁹² Not surprisingly, the ideal medium to bring these guidelines to the attention of mortals is writing.⁹³ Chapter 199 argues that “all common people 俗人 in this world, even uncultivated, own written documents 文書 on proscriptions and taboos,” and that “the texts 文 relating to admonitions, which cover more than one scroll, should be taken great care of.” As we have seen, special gods produce memoranda to report men’s evil deeds, the names of the culprits are entered on divine registers and the Heavenly Lord, being informed, will reduce the life span of culprits accordingly, possibly down to death. This is why the wise men who respect the proscriptions should bring out such written documents and get the common people to know them, warning them that not following their content will prevent them from fulfilling their life mandate and that their “records of evil deeds 惡籍” will accumulate day after day and seldom decrease – hence the necessary lethal consequences of the infringement (*fan*) of the admonitions revealed by such documents.⁹⁴ In chapter 108, the death penalty 誅死 is explicitly promised those who infringe prohibitions 觸防禁.⁹⁵

HUMAN LIFE SPAN AND THE REGISTRATION OF MORTALS

The clinching argument of the authors of the *Taiping jing* is simply that of the death threat coming from above. Indeed, if life is a recurring theme throughout the text, so is its fragility. We read, for instance, that though “the mandate of longevity is impermanent,”⁹⁶ some individuals “do not value their mandate (of life) and believe that once dead, it is possible to live again” (chapter 195),⁹⁷ while, indeed, “natural longevity is hard to get and, once lost, it cannot be restored” (chapter 179).⁹⁸ You only live once. On that major concern, we are offered, in chapter 188, the following unparalleled allegory – possibly a later reflection of early Chinese cosmological concepts of “cosmic trees”:⁹⁹

190 (*TPJHJ*, p. 582), and 212, where the master urges the disciples “to bring out these proscriptions from Heaven above and not to conceal (them)” (*TPJHJ*, p. 668). For allusions to the proscriptions promulgated by chthonian entities, see chap. 186 (*TPJHJ*, p. 567).

⁹² *TPJHJ*, p. 565.

⁹³ See chap. 199 (*TPJHJ*, p. 614); also Espeset, “Revelation,” pp. 78–82.

⁹⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 614–15, for these passages on written documents of “common people” and their rules.

⁹⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 288. On the legalistic value of *zhu* 誅, see A. F. P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Han Law, Vol. 1: Introductory Studies and an Annotated Translation of Chapters 22 and 23 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 109, 121 (“to execute”).

⁹⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 600.

⁹⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 601.

⁹⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 529.

⁹⁹ For various sets of four, or five, cosmic trees, see Hwang, “*Ming-tang*,” pp. 328–402.

Each man has one tree of fate 命樹 growing in the soil of Heaven: a mulberry tree 桑¹⁰⁰ for those born during the three months of spring, a jujube or plum tree (*zaoli* 棗李) for those born during the three months of summer, a catalpa or *geng* tree 梓梗¹⁰¹ for those born during the three months of autumn, and a locust tree or cypress (*huai bai* 槐柏) for those born during the three months of winter.¹⁰² These are what ordinary people (*suren*) depend on. All (these trees) are supervised by officials in charge of trees. When the end of one's mandate (of life) is getting near, his or her tree is half alive; when the mandate is exhausted, the tree withers and its leaves fall, and the official in charge fells it.¹⁰³

Under such conditions, no wonder that one of the disciples concludes a lesson (in A-material chapter 178 [sect. 7, *j.* 109]) by declaring, to the satisfaction of the master, that he will “never dare to infringe (*fan*) any proscription.”¹⁰⁴ The effective duration of the life span depends on moral conduct, as chapter 203 explains: “good deeds 善 attract life and evil deeds 惡 bring precocious death,” and this is why “the texts of benevolent men should be shown to the living so as to have them understand longevity and what provokes the auspicious and the inauspicious 吉凶.”¹⁰⁵ Not only will the benevolent fulfill their “mandate of years” while the malevolent suffer life span abridgment, but “repeated malevolence will bring disaster upon the unborn” (that is, descendants) who “will be ill-fated and will not bring their count (on which, see below) to its end” – that is, will die an untimely death.¹⁰⁶ This pertains

¹⁰⁰ Chap. 181 also alludes to “the soil of Heaven 天土” and “the soil of Earth 地土,” which grow their own plants and produce their own worthy individuals (*TPJHJ*, p. 547; a passage to emend after Yu, ed., *Tai ping jing zheng du*, p. 405). On the symbolism of the mulberry tree in early Chinese mythology, see Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 27–58.

¹⁰¹ The jujube and plum trees belong to the same botanical family. I am unable to find a common Western equivalent for the *geng* tree.

¹⁰² *Huainan zi* 5 (“Shize xun” 時則訓 [“Treatise on Seasonal Rules”]), which belongs to the Monthly Ordinances (*Yueling* 月令) genre, expounds a twelvefold association of trees with months, but the seasonal correspondences are different from those in *TPJ*: the plum (*li*) is related to the third month, i.e. the last month of spring; the catalpa (*zi*) to the sixth month, i.e. the last month of summer; the locust (*huai*) to the ninth month, i.e. the last month of autumn; and the jujube tree (*zao*) is related to the eleventh month, i.e. the middle month of winter. The mulberry (*sang*), *geng*, and cypress (*bai*) trees of *TPJ* do not appear in this nomenclature (see Lau, ed., *A Concordance to the Huainanzi*, pp. 39–47). A complete translation of *Huainan zi* 5 appears in John S. Major (with an appendix by Christopher Cullen), *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 1993), pp. 224–68. Major provides a useful table of the general twelvefold correlates of the passage, including English translations of names of the trees; *li* is rendered as “Pear,” *zi* as “Hazel,” *huai* as “Sopphora,” and *zao* as “Jujube” (*ibid.*, p. 222).

¹⁰³ *TPJHJ*, p. 578.

¹⁰⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 522.

¹⁰⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 625.

¹⁰⁶ Chap. 181 (*TPJHJ*, p. 549). For a similar statement, see also chap. 196 (*TPJHJ*, p. 604).

to the same logic as the theory of “inherited burden 承負” developed elsewhere in *Taiping jing* and seemingly proper to this text, which sees present human suffering and cosmic disasters as the consequence of the accumulation of evil deeds by ancestors and, although men of today are not responsible for its production, devolves on them the responsibility for dispelling it.¹⁰⁷

The documents that record individual human conduct are called “records of good deeds and evil deeds 善惡之籍,” as chapter 179 explains. These records are fed by the reports emanating from gods sent by Heaven, gathered to be collated (*jujiao*) on a yearly, daily, and monthly basis. A certain number of years is then deducted from each individual’s life span allotment accordingly.¹⁰⁸ But the computation of human life duration, its variations and, ultimately, its inevitable exhaustion, is performed by means of “registers of fate 命簿,” “records of fate 命籍,” or “account books 簿文.”¹⁰⁹ As a basic unit for measuring human life span allotment, officials of the divine administration use the “count 算,” also called “longevity count 壽算,” or “heavenly count 天算,” initially granted to each mortal by Heaven. This numerical datum, which is subject to computation,¹¹⁰ corresponds to the actual duration (perhaps in years) of one’s life span, and the termination of life when one’s count comes to its end is, as pictured in chapter 131 (sect. 6, *j.* 90), as ineluctable as the sun setting at the end of the day after having risen at dawn.¹¹¹ Once one’s count has been exhausted and physical death has occurred,

¹⁰⁷ On the theory of *chengfu*, see Kamitsuka Yoshiko 神塚淑子, “Taiheikyō no shōfu to taihei no riron ni tsuite” 太平經の承負と太平の理論について, *Nagoya daigaku kyōyōbu kiyō* 名古屋大學教養部紀要, A-32 (1988), pp. 41–75; rpt. idem, *Rikuchō Dōkyō shisō no kenkyū* 六朝道教思想の研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1999), pp. 301–37; Hendrischke, “Inherited Evil,” pp. 8–29; Xing Yitian 邢義田, “Taiping jing dui shan’er baoying de zai kending, chengfu shuo” 太平經對善惡報應的再肯定承負說, *Guowen tiandi* 國文天地 87.8–3 (1992), pp. 12–16; Liu Zhaorui 劉昭瑞, “Chengfu shuo yuanqi lun” 承負說緣起論, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 62.4 (1995), pp. 100–7; Lin Huisheng 林惠勝, “Chengfu yu lunhui, baoying lilun jianli de kaosuo” 承負與輪迴報應理論建立的考索, in Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, ed., *Haixia liang’an Daojiao wenhua xueshu yantaohui lunwen* 海峽兩岸道教文化學術研討會論文 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng 臺灣學生, 1996), pp. 263–93; and Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 39–44. On its relationship with the classical idea of retribution, see Yang Lien-sheng, “The Concept of *Pao* as a Basis for Social Relations in China,” in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1957), p. 299. Its specificity as regards the idea of retribution has aptly been pointed out in Xing, “Taiping jing dui shan’er baoying,” p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 526.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., chaps. 186: *mingbu* (*TPJHJ*, p. 568); 188, 197, and 198: *buwen* (*TPJHJ*, pp. 579; 607; 610); 195 and 203: *mingji* (*TPJHJ*, pp. 602; 625).

¹¹⁰ *Ji* 計. See chaps. 181 (*TPJHJ*, p. 549) and 184 (*TPJHJ*, p. 562). On the idea of a “count,” e.g., *TPJ*, chaps. 181: *tiansuan* (*TPJHJ*, p. 549), and 182: *shousuan* (*TPJHJ*, p. 552); and *TPJC*, *j.* 6, pp. 7a–b: *tiansuan* (*TPJHJ*, p. 464). *Suan* is also written “算” twice, presumably without alteration in the meaning, in (A-text) chap. 41: *tiansuan* 天算; *zeng suan* 增算 (*TPJHJ*, p. 34).

¹¹¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 341.

one will enter the subterranean realm of the dead. As we shall see, this ill-fated end contrasts with divine ascension, the prelude to which is “the fulfillment of one’s count 滿算,”¹¹² that is, without suffering any year deletion penalty (chapter 184 [sect. 7, *j.* 111]).

Though we may assume it to be initially set in accordance with calendrical computations, as suggested in chapter 181 (sect. 7, *j.* 111) that expounds a method for determining human fate according to the date (day, month, and year) of birth,¹¹³ one’s count may in fact be “decreased 減.” The decreasing of one’s life span 減年 is technically performed by deleting 除 or subtracting 奪 count units, basically as a function of one’s evil deeds. For instance, we read in chapter 211 that severe 重 transgressions will entail indictment, and minor 小 transgressions a decreasing of life span, performed by subtracting count units 減年奪算.¹¹⁴ Chapter 185 (sect. 7, *j.* 112) adds that a reduction of one’s life span by Heaven (here rather to be understood as “heavenly officials”) may be accompanied by lasting suffering and sickness that doctors and shamans 醫巫 are unable to cure, for there is no doubt that the registers 錄籍 of these sick persons are already closed, in other words, their death has become inevitable.¹¹⁵ Chapter 201 (sect. 7, *j.* 114) also criticizes doctors and shamans, and religious specialists called “*shenja*” 神家 (probably priests of various unofficial, or popular, cults), for only seeking money and invoking false 詐 gods of illness to cure credulous people’s ailments. All these “specialists” are incompetent as regards illness provoked by one’s misconduct because one’s name records 名籍 are out of their reach.¹¹⁶ However, in some cases, the shortening of life span may be directly inflicted by oneself on one’s body, seemingly without regard for the count. For instance (chapter 183), Heaven abhors “hidden knowledge and concealed talent 隱知藏能,” those valuable individuals who refuse to be promoted, an obvious allusion to recluse scholars. Not only will such individuals never enter the records of longevity 壽籍, their essence 精 will leave their body and be lost, spoiling their life span in turn.¹¹⁷

¹¹² *TPJHJ*, p. 561. On the count as “exhausted,” generally 算盡, see chaps. 179 (*TPJHJ*, p. 526), 186 (*TPJHJ*, p. 568), and 187 (*TPJHJ*, p. 572).

¹¹³ See Penny, “System of Fate Calculation.”

¹¹⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 672. For similar instances, see also chaps. 178, 179, 186, and 188: *chusuan jiannian* 除算減年 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 522, 526, 579); *duo rensuan* 奪人算 (*TPJHJ*, p. 543); *chu suan* 除算 (*TPJHJ*, p. 568).

¹¹⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 566.

¹¹⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 620. On *luji* 錄籍 (“registers”) and *mingji* 名籍 (“name records”), see also n. 137, below.

¹¹⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 558.

This account of human life span is not specific to *Taiping jing*. In Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343) *Baopu zi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (ca. 320), we are told that “in Heaven and Earth, there are gods who are in charge of transgressions and subtract (units) from men’s count according to the gravity of their offenses. As one’s count decreases, one becomes impoverished and sick, and repeatedly encounters hardship. When the count comes to exhaustion, one dies.” Ge Hong proceeds to evoke the “three corpses 三尸,” who dwell in the human body, do their best to have their host die early, and “on each *gengshen* 庚申 day, ascend to Heaven to inform the director of fate of men’s transgressions and faults. Moreover, each night of the last day of the lunar month, the God of the Stove 灶神 also ascends to Heaven to report men’s sins. Major ones entail the subtraction of one *ji* 紀, that is, 300 days; minor ones entail the subtraction of one *suan* 算, three days.” Ge admits having been unable to appreciate the reality of this matter.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, Ge, though mentioning a “*Scripture of Great Peace* in fifty *juan*” (“*Taiping jing wu shi juan* 太平經五十卷”) in his inventory of his master’s library (chapter 19),¹¹⁹ draws here on other sources.

The third *juan* of the Six Dynasties or early-Tang demonography *Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律 deals with the lifespan penalties incurred for behaving improperly and offending the “proscriptions of the statutes of the Tao 道律禁忌.” Twenty-two “precepts of benevolence 善戒” spoken by a Heavenly Master detail, with many repetitions, the number of count units Heaven will delete (*chu*) or subtract (*duo*), amounting from 13 units (Precept 2) to 30,000 (Precept 19), the arithmetical average penalty exceeding 2,500 units (but the value of one unit remains unspecified).¹²⁰ In Precept 9, for instance, aimed at those who roam through the country to engage in sexual orgies, provoking perverse disorder which prevents the removal of calamities, deadly calamities hitting seven generations of descendants 死殃流七世 are added to an already severe deletion of 13,000 count-units.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ *Baopu zi neipian* 6, pp. 5a–b. See Wang Ming, ed., *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1981; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 125. This and similar passages from Ge Hong have been translated and analyzed in Robert F. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2002), pp. 48–52.

¹¹⁹ Wang, *Baopu zi neipian jiaoshi*, p. 333.

¹²⁰ See *Nüqing guilü* (ZD, fasc. 553; CTT790) 3, pp. 1a–3b. On the problematic nature and dating of the text, see Lai Chi-tim, “The *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* and the Problem of the Bureaucratization of the Netherworld in Early Heavenly Master Daoism,” *TP88.4–5* (2002), pp. 251–81; pub. in Chinese as “*Nüqing guilü yu zaoqi Tianshi dao dixia shijie de guanliao hua wenti*” 女青鬼律與早期天師道地下世界的官僚化問題, in Lai Chi-tim 黎志添, ed., *Daojiao yanjiu yu Zhongguo zongjiao wenhua* 道教研究與中國宗教文化 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), pp. 2–36. For a survey of its content, see Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 80–87.

¹²¹ *Nüqing guilü* 3, p. 2a.

Finally, we may mention the late Northern Song 北宋 (961–127) moral guidebook *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇, still popular and still widely spread in Taoist as well as Buddhist temples today. It has perpetuated for centuries this belief in the otherworldly accounting of the human life span, in terms similar to those of the passage of *Baopu zi* just quoted.¹²² In its opening sentence the ineluctability of the retribution for deeds is compared with “the shadow following the body 如影隨形,”¹²³ an analogy that is more than mere euphemism, considering the everlasting presence of divine warders inside every human body.¹²⁴

Hopefully, and contrary to both the *Baopu zi* and *Nüqing guilü* which do not mention that possibility, we read at several places in *Tai-ping jing* that one’s count may be “increased 增.”¹²⁵ *Tai-ping jing chao* shows how this is done: “every human life gets such a heavenly count that obeys constant laws, but, as many men cannot bring their count to its end (that is, their death occurs in an untimely manner), an incalculable quantity of unused heavenly counts piles up. This is why men of benevolence get their count increased: all (such men’s counts) are increased by this ‘residual count 餘算.’”¹²⁶ A similar statement is to be found in another fragment of *Tai-ping jing chao*, which obviously corresponds to the title of chapter 231 (sect. 8, j. 130) in S. 4226,¹²⁷ and adds that such a “residual count” of “one year per count (-unit)” is set aside in Heaven to be granted to the benevolent who behave just like the orator’s text 吾文 instructs them to.¹²⁸ This is certainly what chapter 195 alludes to when it states that one’s records of fate may be altered

¹²² On *Taishang ganying pian*, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), pp. 36–43.

¹²³ See *Taishang ganying pian* (ZD, fasc. 834–39; CTT 1167) 1, pp. 2b and 4a–10b, with commentaries by Li Changling 李昌齡 (937–1008) and Zheng Qingzhi 鄭清之 (1176–1252); English translations (without the commentaries) in James Legge, transl., *The Texts of Taoism*, vols. 39–40 of *Sacred Books of the East* (London: Oxford U.P., 1891; rpt. New York: The Julian Press, 1959), pp. 675–76; Paul Carus and Suzuki Teitaro, *Tai-Shang Kan-Ying P’ien: Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution* (La Salle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 51–52. On this text, see also Brokaw, *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*, pp. 36–43.

¹²⁴ Also attested in chap. 188 of *TPJ*: “gods remain in the middle (of the body), watching men’s good and evil deeds” (*TPJHJ*, p. 577).

¹²⁵ See *TPJ*, chaps. 63 (sect. 3, j. 47): *zengshou yisuan* 增壽益算 (*TPJHJ*, p. 133; an expression simply rendered as “*zeng shou*” 增壽, “to increase longevity,” in the corresponding abridgment from *TPJC* 3, p. 13b), 103 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 250; 252), and 129 (*TPJHJ*, p. 334). *Zeng suan* also appear in *TPJC* 6, p. 7b (*TPJHJ*, p. 464); 9, p. 16a (*TPJHJ*, p. 713).

¹²⁶ *TPJC* 6, pp. 7a–b (*TPJHJ*, p. 464).

¹²⁷ “Xiang wen xing zeng suan” 象文行增算, “To behave just like the (master’s) text (instructs) increases (one’s) account” (cols. 221–22).

¹²⁸ *TPJC* 8, pp. 14b–15a (*TPJHJ*, p. 695). On the expression *wu wen*, see n. 163, below. The term “set aside” is read *ge* 闕 (here to be understood as *ge* 闕) for *ge* 格, as suggested by an analogous passage from chap. 181 (*TPJHJ*, p. 549).

and transferred to the Bureau of Extended Longevity.¹²⁹ The residual count is unused life span, promised as extra lifetime allotment to those who comply with the moral guidelines of Great Peace, a gift of extra longevity which descendants of the benevolent will also enjoy (providing that they do not stray from the straight and narrow) for, as chapter 203 of *Taiping jing* claims in reference to a 120-year “great longevity 大壽,” the residual count granted to their ancestors will equally affect their own life duration.¹³⁰ Interestingly, the *Xiang'er* commentary on Laozi, though not dwelling on the matter, also refers in passing to the idea of residual count 算有餘數.¹³¹ Thus in what we may assume to reflect Chinese pre-Buddhist religious ideas, merit and guilt were seen as collective and hereditary, rather than individual and perpetually reactivated through a cycle of rebirth.

But the accounting of life span is not the single purpose of the documents kept by divine officialdom in the *Taiping jing*. On the one hand, we learn from a passage of dialogue towards the end of chapter 182, between the Heavenly Lord and the Major god, that ordinary people (*suren*) are originally not recorded but, providing they blame themselves for their mistakes 自責過 and show superior benevolence, they may be noticed by divine instances and gain their place in Heaven’s registers.¹³² This statement partly matches chapter 213 (sect. 7, *j.* 119), which, after having discussed the three moral qualities – which are also cosmic principles – of Tao, Virtue (*de* 德), and humaneness (*ren* 仁),¹³³ goes on to state that the three kinds of people who embody these qualities – corresponding to Yang, Yin and central harmony respectively – are entered on registers (*luji*) while those who do not behave like them are not, but then says no more on this topic.¹³⁴ And in chapter 184, which deals with a special class of men whose family and personal names are already registered *before* their birth, we read that mortals who have been entered on registers (*luji*) will experience divine ascension.¹³⁵ On the other hand, chapter 181 informs the reader that each time a child is born, there is a “*sihou*” 司候 nearby (perhaps an “official in charge of observations”) who enters the event in a regis-

¹²⁹ Quoted in n. 70, above.

¹³⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 625. See also chap. 189 (*TPJHJ*, p. 580).

¹³¹ See Rao, *Laozi Xiang'er*, pp. 29, 78.

¹³² *TPJHJ*, p. 551.

¹³³ One of the many characterizations of the triadic ideology of *TPJ*; see Grégoire Espeset, “À vau-l’eau, à rebours ou l’ambivalence de la logique triadique dans l’idéologie du *Taiping jing* 太平經,” *CEA* 14 (2004), pp. 93–95.

¹³⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 681. Yet it should be noticed that this chapter, though appearing in section 7 like *juan* 110, 111, 112 and 114 (all non-A-material), belongs, at least formally, to stratum A.

¹³⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 561.

ter (*luji*) so that no one may be omitted.¹³⁶ From the context, it is not clear whether we are still dealing here with an otherworldly document kept by a divine official or with an actual “parish register” such as the “diocesan registers 治錄籍” of Six Dynasties Taoism, which were to be updated on the occasion of each one of the three yearly diocesan assemblies (*sanhui* 三會), as expounded in the “abridged codes” assumed to derive from a work by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477).¹³⁷

Other supernatural documents include the files in which appear the names of “saints and sages who seek divine immortality,” referred to in chapter 190 (sect. 7, *j.* 112) by the conjunct expressions “account registers” and “parish registers 簿書錄籍.”¹³⁸ Chapter 190 mentions “rolls of divine immortals 神仙之錄” in the Northern Pole (the center of the sky), which is connected with mount Kunlun 崑崙, on the top of which are Real Men (*zhenren* 真人), who regularly ascend and descend, presiding over men whose family and personal names follow each other on the registers.¹³⁹ Thus we are facing a wide range of administrative documents, some more or less synonymous, some specifically designed for a technical purpose – census, recording of human deeds, accounting of human life span, listing of immortals, etc. – but collectively witnessing this close divine watch and registration which starts within man’s own body, as we learned from chapter 195.

Among all these administrative documents, records of life and

¹³⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 547. On *sihou*, see *Hucker*, p. 446, no. 5628, who renders it “Chief of Attendants.” Though such a title appears in historical sources as early as *Hou Han shu* 30B, p. 1065, *Hucker*’s entry relates to the Jin and Yuan dynasties only. According to Yu, *Taiping jing zhengdu*, pp. 6, 430, 431, and 460, most of the occurrences of this compound in *TPJ* are verbal (“to watch,” “to observe”) rather than nominal (see *TPJHJ*, pp. 580; 582; 622; 722). Chap. 188 provides one possibly nominal occurrence in the context of physiology (*TPJHJ*, p. 577) and chap. 190, in astronomic context (*TPJHJ*, p. 581, where *jiheng* 機衡 is a synecdoche for the Big Dipper). For official titles including the character *hou* 候 with the nominal meaning of “observer,” see *Hucker*, pp. 225–26, no. 2207, 2208, 2210, 2212, 2215, 2216, 2217, and 2221.

¹³⁷ See *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 陸先生道門科略 (*ZD*, fasc. 761; *CTT* 1127), p. 2a. These diocesan registers seem to be similar to the “name records” (*mingji* 名籍) mentioned in the context of *sanhui* 三會 by another code, the *taizhen ke* 太真科, quoted in Zhu Faman’s *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 11, p. 11a (I am indebted to Ian Chapman for drawing my attention to this material). Wang Ming’s edition of *TPJ* contains 23 occurrences of the expression *luji*, 21 of which (more than 91%) appear in *juan* 110, 111, 112 and 114 of the *TPJ* (all non-A material). In modern usage, *luji* still refers to one’s place of birth, i.e. where one is registered, somewhat like the parish registers in the Christian West.

¹³⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 584.

¹³⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 583. On the *beiji*, see n. 16, above. A passage of *TPJC* 9, p. 11b, seems to indicate that this “roll of the divine immortals” (*shenxian lu* 神仙錄; *TPJHJ*, p. 710; I emend Wang’s punctuation here), contains the names of those who, before their birth, are already promised to divine ascension and deification. The “roll of real, divine immortals,” *zhen shenxian lu* 真神仙錄 (*TPJHJ*, p. 565), which chap. 185 mentions in passing, likely refers to the same document.

death should be of foremost concern to all mortals who care about their postmortem fate.¹⁴⁰ Chapter 195 states that “there are life records (*shengji*) in Heaven which are desirable, and death records (*siji*) in Earth which are appalling.”¹⁴¹ And, according to chapter 188, “irrevocably not being recorded for long life” is meant to be the most dreaded of all possible doomsday scenarios.¹⁴² As usual, specific divine officials are in charge of these records: for instance, in chapter 183, gods in charge of life records are ordered by the Heavenly Lord to check their registers and definitely fulfill the life span of men whose names appear on them, without omitting a single year or month.¹⁴³ The same chapter stated earlier that only those among mortals who are determined enough to meditate with all their strength and earn merit (*gong*) will have the text of their death records revoked 轉 and regain a short lifetime 小生;¹⁴⁴ and chapter 196, that life records may be obtained if one practices the writings (of Heaven, which men of Antiquity already knew) without any doubts 疑, but if one has doubts and does not practice them, “the day of his or her death will be fixed 死日有期.”¹⁴⁵ Of analogous nature are, probably, the “records of non-dying 不死之籍,” in which, according to chapter 182, will first be registered men of uppermost benevolence (a human moral class defined by a dozen traits) when obtaining longevity, before finally entering the “rolls of long life 長生之錄.”¹⁴⁶ The crucial life or death alternative thus materializes as two antithetical groups of administrative documents which all mankind shares according to moral criteria. In chapter 179, this binary alternative is expressed in the following way: “the benevolent shall ascend 上, the malevolent shall suffer penal laws 刑.”¹⁴⁷ This is, of course, the well-known, classical binary opposition between reward and punishment 賞罰 in Chinese law, both being commonly regarded as “response,” or “retribution 報.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ See chaps. 155 (sect. 6, j. 97): *siji* 死籍 (TPJHJ, p. 436); 180: *siji zhi wen* 之文 (TPJHJ, p. 546), *sheng luji* 生錄籍 (TPJHJ, p. 546); 182: *shengji* 生籍 (TPJHJ, p. 556); 183: *shouji* 壽籍 (TPJHJ, p. 558), *shengji* (TPJHJ, p. 559); and 196: *shengji* (TPJHJ, p. 606).

¹⁴¹ TPJHJ, p. 602.

¹⁴² TPJHJ, p. 576.

¹⁴³ TPJHJ, p. 559. Wang Ming's punctuation in this passage is not satisfactory: the character *shen* 神 should be read in connection with *wei wei* 唯唯 (a recurring formula expressing acquiescence, or agreement, in the TPJ) as, for instance, in the concluding sentence of the first paragraph of chap. 182: *dashen weiwei* 大神唯唯 (TPJHJ, p. 552).

¹⁴⁴ TPJHJ, p. 546.

¹⁴⁵ TPJHJ, p. 606.

¹⁴⁶ TPJHJ, p. 554, and *changshou zhi wen* 長壽之文 (TPJHJ, p. 532). See also chap. 192, about men of filial piety (*xiao* 孝): “Heaven fixes their registers (*luji*) and has them placed among the non-dying (*busi*)” (TPJHJ, pp. 593–94).

¹⁴⁷ TPJHJ, p. 525. Compare the following hierarchical and bureaucratic expression of that binary alternative from chap. 189: “the mandate of life may be the subject of reports; the benevolent shall ascend (*shang*), the malevolent shall recede (*tui* 退)” (TPJHJ, p. 580; Wang's punctuation should be emended here as indicated in Yu, *Taiping jing zhengdu*, p. 429).

¹⁴⁸ On Chinese Law, see Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris, *Law in Imperial China: Ex-*

ASCENSION AND DEIFICATION

The ultimate event in the mortal life of a man belonging to the moral elite is “ascension to Heaven in broad daylight 白日昇天,”¹⁴⁹ the fate which was experienced by Zhang Daoling 張道陵 himself, the patron saint of the earliest Taoist church, according to Taoist hagiography.¹⁵⁰ This extremely rare outcome involves less than one out of one million people – those who manage to perform deliverance from the corpse 尸解 amounting to one out of one million precisely.¹⁵¹ As we already have learned from chapter 180, the names of the chosen ones who will take part in the government of Heaven appear in the Heavenly Lord’s personal register.¹⁵² Such men, according to chapter 193 (sect. 7, j. 114), are said “to have a natural aptitude for benevolence, a heart naturally luminous, a will which is not perverted by heresy, disregard for what relates to material profit, crude clothing hardly covering their body,” and “do not covet the great ventures and wealth of the mundane world.”¹⁵³ Nonetheless, men who “eat dung and drink urine 食糞飲小便” will never be granted such a blissful fate.¹⁵⁴

The third paragraph of chapter 179 is concerned with the physical

emphified by 190 Ch'ing Dynasty Cases (Translated from the Hsing-an hui-lan): With Historical, Social, and Juridical Commentaries (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 1967), pp. 3–51. On retribution, see Yang, “Concept of *Pao*.” Classically, the alternation of reward and punishment corresponds to the cycle of seasons – spring and summer, autumn and winter respectively – and thus partakes of general cosmological views.

¹⁴⁹ An expression peculiar to *juan* 111 and 114 (five occurrences). Also *shengtian* 昇天, in chaps. 193 (*TPJHJ*, p. 596) and 208 (sect. 7, j. 117; *TPJHJ*, p. 661), or *shengtian* 升天, in chap. 208 (*TPJHJ*, p. 665); and *TPJC* 6, p. 18a (*TPJHJ*, p. 467). On “ascension in broad daylight” as one in a hierarchy of religious achievements, see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, pp. 75–80.

¹⁵⁰ See Camille Imbault-Huart, “La Légende du premier pape des Taoïstes et l’histoire de la famille pontificale des Tchang,” *JA* 8.4–3 (1884), p. 436; Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, pp. 349–56; and Franciscus Verellen, “The Twenty-four Dioceses and Zhang Daoling: The Spatio-Liturgical Organization of Early Heavenly Master Taoism,” in Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, eds., *Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), p. 49. On the topic of divine ascension and deification, see also Yü, “Life and Immortality,” pp. 87 ff; Stephen Bokenkamp, “Death and Ascent in Ling-pao Taoism,” *Taoist Resources* 1.2 (1989), pp. 1–20; and Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 2002).

¹⁵¹ The figures come from chap. 193 (*TPJHJ*, p. 596). A passage from chap. 182, which explains in passing the meaning of *shijie*, confirms the superiority of divine ascension over immortality obtained through “deliverance from the corpse” (*TPJHJ*, p. 553).

¹⁵² *TPJHJ*, p. 546. See also chap. 197, where men of “improved benevolence” (*jin shan* 進善) promised to divine ascension “are recorded inside registers, under (the heading) ‘ascension to Heaven in broad daylight’” (*TPJHJ*, p. 607).

¹⁵³ *TPJHJ*, p. 596.

¹⁵⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 661. The third of four conducts which insult Heaven (chap. 208): no. 1, not to show filial piety; no. 2, not to indulge in regular sexual intercourse nor to conceive offspring; and no. 4, begging (*TPJHJ*, p. 655). Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei liang jin Nanbei*

preservation of the individual destined for ascension. The suppleness of his or her limbs and joints 支節 will be put to the test repeatedly and medicine 藥 will be administered to him or her, in order to keep his or her “bones and joints 骨節” (the whole body) fit.¹⁵⁵ For, according to a passage preserved in *Taiping jing chao*, the body of the ascended-to-be is to be “transformed” (*hua* 化),¹⁵⁶ that is, deified, as we shall soon see. Such instances bear witness to the combination of the classical belief in the pursuit of physical immortality with that of moral immortality achieved through benevolent deeds. The same passage of chapter 179 informs us that all the documents relating to the ascension should be submitted during the one hundred preceding days and that, should some document not match 不相應 some other one, the Bureau of Calculation would interrupt the administrative procedure of ascension. Further, if the future divine official formerly had “inherited burden” (*chengfu*), the Heavenly Lord will order gods to have it purely and simply “blotted out 解除.”¹⁵⁷ Chapter 188 informs us that eventually, at the time for ascension, the gods who preside over registers as well as those who protect the individual will return and receive instructions from the heads of bureaus.¹⁵⁸

In chapter 198 (sect. 7, *j.* 114), the administrative procedure of ascension of a man who has earned merit (*gong*) occasions the following scene:

The Heavenly Lord says: “Inform the civil officers of the bureaus and the appropriate subordinates not to wait any longer and to send gods to examine him¹⁵⁹ from above.” The Bureau declares: “Let emissaries be sent below, as the Heavenly Lord has instructed.”

chao Fojiao shi 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938; rpt. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 73–80 (followed by Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the *Tai-p’ing ching*,” p. 35) regarded these four categories as attacks against early Buddhist practices. Counter-arguments have been put forward by a Buddhist monk, according to whom they rather refer to practices of *fangshi* 方士 and hermits; see Ju Zan 巨贊, “Tang zhu Fojiao shi guanyu ‘Taiping jing yu Fojiao’ de shangtui” 湯著佛教史關於太平經與佛教的商兌, *Xiandai Foxue* 現代佛學 6 (1962), pp. 13–6. See also Zhang Mantao 張曼濤, ed., *Han Wei liang Jin Nan bei chao pian* 漢魏兩晉南北朝篇, vol. 1: *Zhongguo Fojiao shi zhuanji zhi yi* 中國佛教史專集之一 (Taibei: Dacheng wenhua 大乘文化, *Xiandai Fojiao xueshu congkan* 現代佛教學術叢刊, vol. 5, 1977), pp. 301–4 (Tang’s answer to Ju) and 304–7 (Ju’s answer to Tang’s). For a criticism of the whole argument as lacking historical grounds, see Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, “Taiheikyō to Bukkyō” 太平經と佛教, in Kan Gi bunka kenkyūkai 漢魏文化研究會, ed., *Uchuno hakushi kan-reki kinen, Tōyōgaku ronshū* 內野博士還曆紀念東洋學論集 (Tokyo: Kan Gi bunka kenkyūkai, 1964), pp. 89–111; rpt. in *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* 道教と佛教 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1970) 2, pp. 136–61, especially pp. 136–39.

¹⁵⁵ *TPJHJ*, pp. 532–34.

¹⁵⁶ *TPJC*, j. 9, p. 11b (*TPJHJ*, p. 710).

¹⁵⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 534.

¹⁵⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 577.

¹⁵⁹ In the first, non-dialogue half of this chapter, minor gods have been found guilty of negligence in reporting the exceptional moral qualities of a mortal deserving to ascend to Heaven

The Heavenly Lord commands the Bureau to also tell the Major god to examine this document¹⁶⁰ and to have it brought to the attention of all gods. The Bureau shows the document to the Major god (and), in the departments below, each (divine civil servant) lives up to his duty, seeing if there are (men of) merit and benevolence, (for) men who yearn for promotion must be promoted. All previous matters (relating to such men) are reported and made known. The Heavenly Lord commands the Major god, saying: “As soon as you have observed such a man, check whether he corresponds to what the emissary gods have said or not.”¹⁶¹

Then the text provisionally returns to the issue of the negligence of minor gods who failed to report in time such a man of superior qualities, before going on with the procedure for the divine ascension of the chosen one:

The envoy gods 遣神 conduct the transformation 化 of this individual and make him become a god, adorn him with a halo,¹⁶² and proceed to the examination of the archives 簿籍 to have him ascend 上. If (this man) is not (archived), they note down his family and personal names, and send him above. The Major god, having received instructions, returns to the Bureau, examines if the family and personal names of this (man) appear in the registered files, tells the Bureau that such information¹⁶³ appears in the documents and asks permission to check the personal registers 內簿¹⁶⁴ of the Heavenly Lord to know whether they correspond to them or not. The Heavenly Lord takes out his documents and examines them (and, as) they are similar to the external documents 外書, he decrees that it is proper (for the man) to ascend. The Major god says: “I am not sure whether the life span (of this man) is already fulfilled or not. I ask permission to check this again.” The Heavenly Lord exclaims: “Major god, (you) have been appointed to a surveillance position,¹⁶⁵ but you have not examined him thor-

(the concrete penalty for such negligence will be described below). In *shi zhi* 視之, the particle *zhi* refers to the man they failed to report.

¹⁶⁰ Probably the written document bearing the orders formerly spoken by the Heavenly Lord.

¹⁶¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 612.

¹⁶² *Zeng qi jingguang* 增其精光, literally: “increase his refined radiance.”

¹⁶³ *Ci wen* 此文, literally: “this text” (used alternately with 此書, “these writings” or “this book”), here to be distinguished from similar occurrences in A-material referring to the (undefined) master’s own text or writings – also referred to as 吾文 (“my text”) and 吾書 (“my writings”) in the master’s sermons; see Espeset, “Revelation,” pp. 88–93.

¹⁶⁴ Literally: “inner registers,” on which see n. 23, above.

¹⁶⁵ *Ermu* 耳目, literally: “ears and eyes,” which should be interpreted in the light of *Hucker*, p. 510, no. 6721.

oughly and you say that (you want to) check again?” The Major god apologizes, pleading the duties of his charge. The Heavenly Lords says: “Quickly check (this problem) and promptly come back!” The Major god then checks this man (and finds out that his) life span is already fulfilled. The punishment incurred for failing to inform by omission cannot be appealed and must be a death sentence. The Heavenly Lord says: “(You have) all the more to take care of this duty since (you hold) a high position! No more negligence! Now summon this man, send him above without delay, test his efficiency (by appointing him to) a lesser charge 小職 and know the merit achieved by his service.” “Yes. I ask permission to do as the Heavenly Lord will instruct.” “Agreed, Major god.” “I will send this man up, appoint (him) to a lesser charge, and watch his behavior. After a short time, I will ask permission to establish the facts anew. If the newly ascended person has proved highly reliable and sincere, and if there are vacancies, he will be appointed to an office where he will fill a vacancy.” The Heavenly Lord says: “Do as¹⁶⁶ you have told, Major god, and let there be no negligence!” The Major god says: “Yes. I ask permission to send emissary gods to examine him from above.” The Heavenly Lord says: “Good.”¹⁶⁷

This lively rendition of the strictly hierarchical and occasionally conflictual relationship of two prominent divine officials probably also tells us a lot about the popular judgment passed on the flaws of Chinese centralized administration during the early imperial era.

PENAL DEATH AND THE SUBTERRANEAN JURISDICTION OF GREAT YIN

Divine ascension and subsequent deification being such a rare gift, common people should naturally feel much more concerned about the fate of mortals of average, not to say lower, morality. They would learn from chapter 202 (sect. 7, j. 114) that when numerous reports on their misconduct reach the Hall of Brightness to be collated, their names are entered in registers; officers 司官 are informed about the burden of their transgressions and, in turn, inform the officials of Great Yin (*taiyin* 太陰).¹⁶⁸ These officials then summon the culprits’ ancestors, interrogate

¹⁶⁶ Reading 如 for 知, as suggested by Yang Jilin 楊寄林, ed., *Taiping jing jinzhu jinyi* 太平經今注今譯 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2002), p. 1398.

¹⁶⁷ *TPJHJ*, pp. 612–13.

¹⁶⁸ “Officials of Great Yin:” the text, first, has simply “*taiyin*” but the administrative context is implicit, as the next sentence shows: “*taiyin zhi li*” 太陰之吏, “officials of Great Yin”

考 and lambast 掠 them by way of punishment,¹⁶⁹ and order them to return 歸 home to curse their descendants for trying to escape from that burden. If their misconduct does not cease, disease 病 will eventually be sent to the moral deviants.¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere, in chapter 186 (sect. 7, j. 112), they would read that “when men’s transgressions pile up, officials of Great Yin issue accusations 狀. All transgressions, heavy or slight, are recorded in accordance with the laws and, without men knowing of it, numerous records (*luji*) and gods circulate between the Hall of Brightness of Great Yang 太陽明堂 and the heads of departments.”¹⁷¹ Then “the divine departments of Heaven pronounce death (sentences) and the years of life of the culprits decrease until the annihilation of their life span,” that is, physical death.¹⁷² Put in a more physiological way, in chapter 188, they would be told that after all the “observers” in the “residences 舍宅” (that is, gods in men’s bodies) have checked the transgressions of people and submitted their periodical reports, the Judicial Bureau of Great Yin (Dayin facao 大陰法曹) calculates the burden which has been accumulated by each individual 所承負 and deducts years from each man’s account accordingly.¹⁷³ In all instances, the evildoers are doomed to a lethal outcome, whether the accounting of life span is alluded to or not.

Classically, Great Yin is symbolically associated with Earth, the North, winter, the agent Water, the moon, and death, as opposed to the vital force of Yang associated with Heaven, the South, summer, the agent Fire, and the sun. In *Tai ping jing*, the astronomical and astro-

(*TPJHJ*, p. 624). These officials are also mentioned in the *TPJC* 4, p. 7b: “*taiyin siguan*” 太陰司官 (*TPJHJ*, p. 214). On the title *siguan*, see Hucker, p. 450, no. 5677: “officials of Bureaus.”

¹⁶⁹ For the legalistic meaning of *lüe*, see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 76 (“bastinado,” “beating”).

¹⁷⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 624. *Gui*, just above, suggests that ancestors return as “revenants” (ghosts), *gui* 鬼; Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 73–74. In chap. 196 also, if the living fail to make proper offerings to their ancestors, the ancestors’ ghosts will be ordered to return 歸 home under escort by an official in charge of sacrifices (on which, see n. 60, above) to inflict disease upon the living restlessly (*TPJHJ*, p. 605).

¹⁷¹ “Hall of Brightness” – in a formulaic antithesis of the compound Great Yin appearing in the former sentence. The “Palace of Darkness” (*xuangong* 玄宮), the obscure counterpart of the *mingtang*, is also known to have astronomical correspondences: it is an alternative name for the Shi 室 (House) Mansion; see Gustave Schlegel, *Uranographie chinoise: Ou preuves directes que l’astronomie primitive est originaire de la Chine, et qu’elle a été empruntée par les anciens peuples occidentaux à la sphère chinoise: ouvrage accompagné d’un atlas céleste chinois et grec* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1875), p. 280 (asterism no. 97); it is mentioned in the title of chap. 332 or 333 (sect. 10, j. 156) from MS S. 4226: *Chaguan xuangong* 差官玄宮 (col. 270).

¹⁷² *TPJHJ*, p. 568. This passage should be emended following Yu, *Tai ping jing zhengdu*, p. 420.

¹⁷³ *TPJHJ*, p. 579. The disyllabic *taiyin* 太陰 in transmitted sources is frequently rendered as *dayin* 大陰 in epigraphic material.

calendrical correspondences of Great Yin (or peaking, or pure, Yin) are also well documented.¹⁷⁴ But postmortem Great Yin, also mentioned twice in the *Xiang'er* commentary and in Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (456–536) *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (dated 499), turns our attention to the subterranean gloom.¹⁷⁵ According to *Taiping jing chao*, this bureaucratic Gehenna, just like Heaven, is symmetrically conceived as a replica of the empire of the human realm, with, for instance, “official residences (*guanshe*) to accommodate benevolent gods and manes.”¹⁷⁶ Chapter 202 alludes to a bureau in charge of evil (*zhu xiong'e zhi cao* 主凶惡之曹), an underground administrative organ to which Heaven transmits documents relating to evildoers.¹⁷⁷ But the compound “*sibu*” 死部 (the “Department of Death”) may refer to the subterranean apparatus devoted to the passing away of mortals as a whole rather than to a specific administrative organ: chapter 188, for instance, refers to human demise as “entering 入” entirely the Department of Death and returning 歸 to the Yellow Springs,¹⁷⁸ and a matching formula emphasizing the symbolic value of *sibu* as a synonym for death is offered in chapter 198: “To yearn for the ‘Tao of life 生道’ and to get away from the Department of Death.”¹⁷⁹ Transposed into cosmological terms, this antithetic diptych naturally takes in the bipolarity of Yin and Yang, as in chapter 185: “The living

¹⁷⁴ For examples of such correspondences in *TPJ*, see chap. 188: “Therefore, each one of the four directions has three successive sites (literally: ‘the first, second, and third months’ of the corresponding season, i.e. twelve sites in all), successively occupied one after the other; this is called ‘Great Year’ (*taisui* 太歲). Great Yin is behind” (*TPJHJ*, p. 578; on the astro-calendrical cycle of *taiyin* which shifts annually from branch to branch – following the Twelve Branches cycle – in correlation with the cycle of *taisui*, see Kalinowski, “The *Xingde* Texts from Mawangdui,” pp. 145–54); and *TPJC* 5, p. 9b: “Therefore, sovereign pneuma (*diwang qi* 帝王氣) rises from Lesser Yang (*shaoyang* 少陽) and Great Yang (i.e. East/spring and South/summer), and constantly keeps to the direction the handle of the Northern Dipper is pointing at (*doujian* 斗建); death pneuma (*siwang qi* 死亡氣) rises from Lesser Yin (*shaoyin* 少陰) and Great Yin (i.e. West/autumn and North/winter), and constantly keeps to the ‘head’ of the Dipper (*doukui* 斗魁, i.e. the opposite direction of *doujian*)” (*TPJHJ*, p. 304). Here *diwang qi* and *siwang qi* refer to the cycles of rise and decline of pneuma; for analogous phases, see Marc Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne: Le Compendium des cinq agents (Wuxing dayi, VIe siècle)* (Paris: EFEO, 1991), pp. 203–7; 209–13. The “head” of the Dipper (*doukui*) refers to the four stars of the Dipper arranged into a square (see Schlegel, *Uranographie chinoise*, p. 503). By way of comparison, see also A-material chap. 101 (sect. 4, j. 65): “The West and the North, Lesser Yin and Great Yin, make punishments and disasters (*xing huo* 刑禍), which preside over harm and death; so beings suffer from aging and decline in the West, and pass away in the North” (*TPJHJ*, p. 231).

¹⁷⁵ See Rao, *Laozi Xiang'er*, p. 22; and *Zhen'gao* (*ZD*, fasc. 637–40; *CTT* 1016) 4, pp. 14b–17b. The typically Heavenly Master Taoism Three Offices (*sanguan* 三官) mentioned in the same passage (pp. 16a–b) are totally foreign to the *TPJ*.

¹⁷⁶ *TPJC* 8, p. 18a (*TPJHJ*, p. 698).

¹⁷⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 622.

¹⁷⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 576.

¹⁷⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 610. See also chap. 179: “not to communicate with the pneuma of Great Yang for a long time but to be at the Bureau of the ranks of death (*siwu zhi bu* 死伍之部)” (*TPJHJ*, p. 528); *siwu* is a metaphor for death.

is enhanced by Yang pneuma. ... Whatever Yin pneuma enhances is inevitably in the Department of Death.”¹⁸⁰

Though the present study focuses on non-A-material from *Taiping jing*, we should consider as well A-material chapter 52 (sect. 3, j. 40), which also deals with morals and the afterlife. We learn from the master’s own lips that when the newly deceased reach the subterranean realm of the dead, they are interrogated 問 on their lifetime deeds and experience,¹⁸¹ in order to have their “name records” (*mingji*) fixed according to their lifetime deeds, and to be punished on this basis.¹⁸² In a similar fashion, non-A chapter 179 warns mortals who persist in misbehaving that they will soon see the Gate of Ghosts 鬼門.¹⁸³ Then Earth spirits 地神 will interrogate (*wen*) them, in order to check the correctness of their conduct records. If their answers and their records differ, severe ghosts will inflict punishment on them repeatedly until they admit 服 their wrongs.¹⁸⁴ Their names will then be transmitted to the Bureau of Fate (Mingcao) for a final verification and, their life allotment coming to exhaustion, they will “enter earth 入土.” Then their misdemeanors will transfer to their descendants 殃流子孫.¹⁸⁵ The chthonian gods responsible for this judicial interrogation belong to a specific administrative organ called the Office of the Soil (Tufu 土府). Chapter 181 (sect. 7, j. 111), in which, as we have seen, human fate is determined in accordance with calendrical computations (see above), links “men born from the Earth” (ordinary mortals) with this Office of the Soil.¹⁸⁶ Back to chapter 188, we learn that once the Judicial Bureau of Great Yin has calculated the *chengfu* and reduced each man’s account accordingly (as quoted above), one’s account comes to exhaustion. “Yin gods of the Earth” together with officers from the Office of the Soil are then summoned to collect the bones of the material body of

¹⁸⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 565.

¹⁸¹ *Suo geng* 所更 is rendered as “the times he has repented” in Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the *Tai-p’ing ching*,” p. 36.

¹⁸² *TPJHJ*, pp. 72–73.

¹⁸³ Through which the dead come from and return to the unseen world, located at the northeast angle of the world, also the northeast angle or sector of the altar in Taoist liturgy; see John Lagerwey, *Wu-Shang Pi-Yao: Somme taoïste du VI^e siècle* (Paris: EFEO, 1981), p. 75. “They will soon see the Gate of ghosts:” they will soon pass away.

¹⁸⁴ For *fu* in Han legalistic terminology, see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 77 (“to submit,” i.e. “to admit the truth of the accusation”). As to “earth spirits,” in *TPJ* chthonian entities are also called *di lingqi* 地靈祇 (chap. 182; *TPJHJ*, p. 554), or “the rulers of the Earth,” *dizhu* 地主 (chap. 179; *TPJHJ*, pp. 528, 534), or again “the rulers of the soil,” *tuzhu* 土主 (chap. 187; *TPJHJ*, p. 572).

¹⁸⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 526. See also chap. 185: “Once those who are not benevolent reach the underground, their misdemeanors transfer to their descendants (*yang liu zisun*)” (*TPJHJ*, p. 564).

¹⁸⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 548.

the person newly passed away and to interrogate (*kao*) his or her ethereal spirits (*hun shen* 魂神).¹⁸⁷ An analogous warning is to be found in chapter 199: when malevolence does not cease, one will be connected with the death records 死籍 and one's name transmitted to the Office of the Soil, where one's bones will be kept. One's ethereal spirits (here 精魂, "essential *hun*") will then be imprisoned 拘閉 and interrogated (*wen*) for information on their host's lifetime deeds. Should their statements differ, they would be beaten by way of punishment (*lüezhi* 掠治) – just like one's ancestors, in an excerpt quoted earlier – and suffer a great deal.¹⁸⁸ Chapter 194 (sect. 7, *j.* 114) promises malevolent people themselves such a fate: after an untimely death 早死, they will be beaten (*lüezhi*) underground and reprimanded for their deeds, and will endure hardship for the pain they inflicted, without enjoying a single moment of happiness.¹⁸⁹ Thus were metaphorically interpreted the decomposition of the corpse after burying and assumed to be painful the fate of the perverted when the time for judgment has come.

We have already met the Yellow Springs in A-material, in the context of proscriptions relating to the Earth. The Yellow Springs also appear in the cosmological context of the opposing cycles of blossoming and decline of penal laws 刑 and virtue 德 described in chapter 60 (sect. 3, *j.* 44): "on the eleventh month, '*dade*' 大德 (that is, virtue as a cosmic principle) dwells under earth, '*de*' 德 (individualized Virtue) is indoors, and the living beings, complying with virtue, enter below the Yellow Springs."¹⁹⁰ But in non-A text, where this damp and dull place is specifically associated with the malevolent, the Yellow Springs become a penal institution for *postmortem* confinement, an afterlife jail for mortals convicted of offending conduct who have been sentenced to death. Chapter 106 (generally classified as A-material though of dubious dialogue form, as we have seen) opposes the mandate of life of the benevolent, which is subordinated to Heaven, to the mandate of life of the malevolent, which is subordinated to Earth,¹⁹¹ and adds that the malevolent will eventually "return (*gui*) to the Yellow Springs below."¹⁹² Chapter 185, in an analogous, binary formula, contrasts the

¹⁸⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 579. See also chap. 195: "When many accumulated transgressions have piled up, they are sent down to the bureau in charge (i.e. the Office of the Soil), which recalls the ethereal spirits (*hun shen*) of this man (i.e. the culprit) and interrogate (*kaowen*) them on (the culprit's) deeds" (*TPJHJ*, p. 600).

¹⁸⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 615. *Luezhi* here is "imprisonment and torture" in Yü, "O Soul, Come Back!", p. 390.

¹⁸⁹ *TPJHJ*, pp. 598–99. ¹⁹⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 105. On *xingde* cycles, see also n. 37, above.

¹⁹¹ Chap. 185 compares those whose mandate of life (*ming*) "is linked to the soil" with "grass and trees, birds and beasts," i.e. plants and animals (*TPJHJ*, pp. 564–65).

¹⁹² *TPJHJ*, p. 279.

benevolent, who will enjoy extra lifetime, with the malevolent, who will “enter (*ru*) the Yellow Springs below.”¹⁹³ And chapter 194 adds that, in their subterranean penal exile, dead evildoers will become malevolent ghosts 惡鬼 and forever be refused a share of the bliss of benevolent manes 善鬼.¹⁹⁴ From chapters chapter 189 (sect. 7, *j.* 112) and chapter 202,¹⁹⁵ we grasp that one of their tasks will be to cooperate with otherworldly authorities in tracing 隨 evildoers still alive but already doomed to an imminent penal sentence due to their misconduct. Another case of former delinquents going into service with the very institution which sealed their fate?¹⁹⁶

GUILT, INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND PROSPECTS FOR REDEMPTION

The idea that one should regard one’s own behavior as the single causal factor of the auspicious or inauspicious events one encounters, a theme tackled more than once by the authors of *Taiping jing*, belongs to classical Chinese views and, of course, is in no way unique to this document.¹⁹⁷ Yet in the context of the transitional ideology of the *Taiping jing*, its formulation offers a curious compromise between the realm of religious belief and what Western philosophy, since the Age of the Enlightenment, would call “rationalism,” as exemplified by the final part of chapter 188 (sect. 7, *j.* 112) which, in order to promote individual realization of self-responsibility as regards the hazards of human existence, shifts from the legalistic sphere of divine retribution to the sphere of human law:

Some reports (on human misdeeds) are not due to Heaven, (in which case) ghosts,¹⁹⁸ gods, and ethereal creatures 鬼神精物 may

¹⁹³ *TPJHJ*, p. 566.

¹⁹⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 599. By way of comparison, see also A-material chaps. 103: “Thus, (those) who do not become benevolent men naturally become bandits (*daozei* 盜賊) and, once dead, will become malevolent ghosts” (*TPJHJ*, pp. 250–1); and 52, which defines three kinds of *gui*: “manes who roam about delightedly” (*leyou gui* 樂遊鬼), resulting from men who have stuck to benevolent studies (*shanxue* 善學) during their life time; “distressed ghosts” (*chouku gui* 愁苦鬼) from those who have been distressed; and “malevolent ghosts” (*egui*) from malevolent men (*TPJHJ*, p. 73) – a threefold taxonomy on the same wavelength as the general ideology of the stratum.

¹⁹⁵ Respectively, *TPJHJ*, p. 580 (to be emended after Yu, *Taiping jing zhengdu*, p. 430); and *TPJHJ*, p. 622.

¹⁹⁶ For a similar phenomenon in Western European society around 1800, see Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 307–8.

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g., various sources quoted in Erkes, “God of Death,” pp. 205–6, n. 2.

¹⁹⁸ This passage obviously responds to the belief that the dead may file complaints in the other world to harm the living (there are evidences that, since the earliest stage of Chinese civiliza-

not inflict disease on men. The cause (of such reports) always lies in the investigations of one another and the denunciations of one another. Major transgressions entail the death [penalty]. Up and down [the punishment scale, culprits] are condemned to build bridges spanning rivers, [or to work in] mountains or by the sea,¹⁹⁹ each one in accord with the gravity of the case, each one according to one's deeds, and no one is omitted. Civil officers in charge of postal relay stations (*youting*), in each prefecture (*fu* 府) and district, will investigate the cases according to the laws. Do not wrongly hold ghosts, gods, and ethereal creatures responsible for (your) misfortune!²⁰⁰

Similarly, we read in chapter 189 that, inasmuch as auspicious or inauspicious happenstance proceeds from human will, there is no reason to blame divine emissaries (who report men's deeds to Heaven) for what one incurs because of one's own intentions and conduct, nor to have resentment.²⁰¹

Human behavior being loaded with such potentially irretrievable consequences, occasional as well as habitual offenders may be anxiously looking for partial remission at least, if not all-inclusive pardon like their more fortunate Christian counterparts. By following to the letter the writings which expound prohibitions, one may hope to have one's minor transgressions blotted out 救解,²⁰² but how could major ones be ever forgiven 贖, asks the unnamed narrator in chapter 199.²⁰³ In chapter 182, the authors take the case of a "supremely benevolent man 太上善人" – another highly idealized moral example – whose merit will be calculated and transgressions removed 除 by the divine officials in charge. But, unsurprisingly, such a perfect individual is said to conform to righteousness and the burden of his or her past transgressions to be insignificant.²⁰⁴ Notoriously incorrigible villains cannot expect to benefit from this hopeful way out.

tion, ancestors were viewed as responsible for the hardship incurred by their descendants); see Nickerson, "Great Petition"; and Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 13–20.

¹⁹⁹ For matching examples of Han "hard labour" sentences, see Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, pp. 128–32.

²⁰⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 579. On *youting*, see n. 50, above. For *fu*, *Hucker*, p. 216, no. 2034.

²⁰¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 580.

²⁰² On the blotting out (*chujie* 除解) of minor wrongs by means of repentance, see also chap. 182 (*TPJHJ*, p. 552).

²⁰³ *TPJHJ*, p. 615.

²⁰⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 556. The impossibility to have excessively accrued transgressions blotted out is also clearly expressed in chaps. 179 (*TPJHJ*, p. 535) and 182 (*TPJHJ*, p. 550).

Against such a bureaucratic and moral background of constant recording of acts, the widest range of liberating prospects is perhaps offered by the concept of *jiechu* 解除, “to remove, annul, cancel, blot out” – significantly, a compound still used as a common as well as legalistic term in modern Chinese – or *chujie* 除解, a quasi-synonym of *jiechu*.²⁰⁵ In the “Jiechu” chapter of *Lunheng*, Wang Chong criticizes the lack of rationality in the logic and purpose of *jiechu* exorcist rituals (and of other sacrifices as well) and states twice that “all depends upon man, and not on ghosts.”²⁰⁶ But, in both A- and non-A-material from *Taiping jing*, the indications of this panacea go far beyond the boundaries of localized exorcism or individual responsibility.

To begin with A-material (chapter 51 [sect. 3, *j.* 35]), not only is a disciple congratulated by the master for correctly answering that the way to distinguish between right and wrong is to check whether the effectiveness of an action allows the removal (*jiechu*) of any contracted disease²⁰⁷ – another case of “response” or “retribution” – but, furthermore (chapter 212 [sect. 7, *j.* 119]), the questions of the disciples to the master are specifically aimed at substituting for the words of Saints (*shengren* 聖人) created by Heaven who failed in their mission to have its maladies removed (*jiechu*).²⁰⁸ In chapter 154 (sect. 6, *j.* 97), the catechism of the master will cancel out (*jiechu*) the lasting social disorder, wrath of Heaven, and distress of the Emperor caused by the perversion of those who oppose “the true Tao and mysterious Virtue 真道祕德.”²⁰⁹ As for the specific pneuma responsible for the ruler’s distress, it may be dispelled (*jiechu*), according to chapter 206 (sect. 7, *j.* 116), and the state of Great Peace attained subsequently, by musical performance and singing in accordance with the cosmic principles.²¹⁰ Chapter 127 (sect. 6, *j.* 86) states that one may even remove (*chu*) the maladies of Heaven by meditating on Heaven and, by meditating on a prince of Virtue, dispel (*chujie*) calamities and appease the princely person.²¹¹ Similar occurrences are to be found in *Taiping jing chao*.²¹² By way of contrast, in non-A-material, where *jiechu* never appears, the occurrences of *chujie* relate twice to the dispelling of “inherited burden” (*chengfu*); once, to the removal of minor transgressions; and once,

²⁰⁵ On allotropy cases (AB/BA-pattern disyllabic compounds) in *TPJ*, see Huang Jianing 黃建寧, “Taiping jing zhong de tongsu yixu ci” 太平經中的同素異序詞, *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* 四川師範大學學報 28.1 (2001), pp. 62–66.

²⁰⁶ Forke, *Lun-Hêng* 1, pp. 535, 537.

²⁰⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 71.

²⁰⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 675.

²⁰⁹ *TPJHJ*, p. 434.

²¹⁰ *TPJHJ*, p. 635.

²¹¹ *TPJHJ*, p. 314.

²¹² *TPJC* 4, p. 9b: one of the numerous aims of the much-needed renewal of cosmic order is to dispel (*jiechu*) the disasters provoked by the resentment of Heaven and Earth, have the distress of the Emperor terminated, people loving each other, and each one of the ten thousand beings back in its place (*TPJHJ*, p. 216; from a non-dialogue fragment); *TPJC* 8, p. 13a:

to the removal of human suffering.²¹³ They attest to the possibility of permanent remission.

Undoubtedly, the most effective way to forgiveness is “to reflect on (one’s) transgressions 思過” in order “to blame oneself 自責” and “to feel remorse for (one’s) transgressions” (悔過, or 自悔, literally “self-remorse”), an idea expressed throughout our material by various compounds combining these characters, sometimes into full sentences such as “to reflect on (one’s) transgressions and to blame oneself 思過自責,” or “to blame oneself and to feel remorse for (one’s) transgressions 自責悔過,” or again “to blame oneself for the burden of (one’s) transgressions 自責過負.”²¹⁴ Sparse occurrences of “to confess transgressions 首過,” “to knock the ground with the forehead 叩頭,” and “to beat, or slap, oneself 自搏” remind us of the practices of early Heavenly Master Taoism.²¹⁵ As a useful support for completing successfully this moral introspection, one may use “reiterated admonitions” as well as “the texts in Heaven above.”²¹⁶ The theme of repentance is central, but not peculiar, to chapter 182, precisely entitled: “The life span of men of benevolence and humaneness who blame themselves (for their transgressions) is at the Bureau of Longevity.”²¹⁷ Thanks to repentance,

Heaven has instructed the master to produce his text with the intention of “removing (*jiechu*) the maladies of Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang, the Emperor, the people and the ten thousand beings,” i.e. all cosmic and social dysfunction (*TPJHJ*, p. 694).

²¹³ See chaps. 179 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 536; 551; 552) and 192 (*TPJHJ*, p. 591). In A-material, the liberation from *chengfu* is usually termed *jie* 解, literally “to untie, unfasten”; e.g., chaps. 48 (sect. 3, j. 37; *TPJHJ*, p. 57, five occurrences; p. 61), and 66 (sect. 3, j. 49; *TPJHJ*, p. 163, two occurrences; p. 165).

²¹⁴ For combinations including *hui*, *ze*, *guo*, etc., see *TPJ*, chaps. 66, 179, 180–83, 186–87, 190, 196–97, and 200–1 (all, except 66, strictly non-A): *zihui* 自悔 (8 occurrences, not counting those in other compounds); *huiguo* 悔過 (6, not counting those in other compounds); *zize huiguo* 自責悔過 (4); *zize guofu* 自責過負 (3); *siguo zize* 思過自責 (2); *ziguo ze* 自過責 (2); and (1 each): *zize ziguo* 自責自過, *zize zihui* 自責自悔, *zi zehui* 自責悔, *zi zeguo* 自責過, *zi keze* 自剋責, and *zi huize* 自悔責. *Zize* 自責 and *siguo* 思過 also appear in several chaps., A (7 each) as well as non-A (*zi ze*: 23; *si guo*: 4). See also *TPJC* 4, p. 6a (*zize*); 5, pp. 6b–7a: (*huiguo*; 4 occurrences) – both passages probably originating from non-A-material.

²¹⁵ All three compounds appear in strictly non-A material. See chaps. 182, 195–196, and 201: *shouguo* (3 occurrences); *koutou zibo* 叩頭自搏 (3); and *zibo koutou* 自搏叩頭 (1). Apart from the previous expressions, the disyllabic compounds *koutou* (2 in A-material, 3 in non-A-material) and *zibo* (1 in non-A-material) also appear by themselves. On the meaning of *zibo*, see the following passage of a ritual described in Tao Hongjing’s *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (ca. 493; *ZD*, fasc. 193; *CTT* 441) 3, p. 8a: “then, facing North, one prostrates oneself twice, slaps oneself three times, and says 次北向再拜訖三自搏曰” (after the German translation from Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung des liturgischen Materials im dritten chüan des *Teng-chen yin-chüeh*,” Ph.D. diss. (Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg, 1987), p. 116: “Dann wendet mann sich nach Norden, verneigt sich zweimal, versetzt sich selbst drei Schläge und spricht”).

²¹⁶ See chaps. 187 (*TPJHJ*, p. 573) and 190 (*TPJHJ*, pp. 584–5).

²¹⁷ *Shanren ren zize nian zai shoucao* 善仁人自責年在壽曹 (*TPJHJ*, p. 549). The original title has *gui* 貴 in place of *ze* 責, but the correct reading is suggested by 8 occurrences of the compound

one's dossier may be transferred to a safer place, for "the malevolent capable of self-repentance will have their names transferred to the Bureau of Benevolence" – conversely, "the benevolent who swing over to malevolence will have (their names) transferred back to the Bureau of Malevolence."²¹⁸ Repentance may also enable culprits to return to a state of unabridged life span allotment.²¹⁹ And, as one requisite among several others, repentance may contribute to the recovery of human fertility.²²⁰ The Heavenly Lord highly values mortals who repent. He declares, in chapter 180, that when men are capable of blaming themselves and of repenting of their transgressions, he orders gods in charge of the registers of life to transfer the names of these men to the Bureau of Longevity, to grant them extra lifetime up to 120 years,²²¹ and to provide them with descendants. It is worth specifying for the attention of those who may feel interested that the beneficiary of the Heavenly Lord's indulgence is said to have been repenting "round the clock, for several years."²²² Heaven undoubtedly likes mortals to confess their transgressions (*shouguo*; see, for instance, chapter 196).²²³ But chapter 195 warns us that, should the statements made by the one's *hun* spirits while interrogated underground differ from the facts recorded in Heaven, this persistently deceptive attitude would prevent the faults of the deceased from being remitted 貸, even if a full confession of transgressions (*shouguo*) eventually occurs.²²⁴

But, if a primary requisite for sincere, fruitful repentance is time, fear 恐 certainly constitutes its psychological root. For, as a result of the constant watch which is exerted on them as in an Orwellian nightmare,

size throughout this chapter: see *TPJHJ*, pp. 550 (2 occurrences); 551 (2); 555; 556 (3).

²¹⁸ *TPJHJ*, p. 552.

²¹⁹ See chaps. 185 (*TPJHJ*, p. 566), 188 (*TPJHJ*, p. 575), and 181 (*TPJHJ*, p. 549).

²²⁰ See chap. 188 (*TPJHJ*, p. 575; one requisite among others, which include the reading of undefined documents).

²²¹ According to four passages from *TPJC*, 120 years is either the longest of three orders of longevity (120, 80, and 60 years respectively; see *TPJC* 2, pp. 11b–12a; 10, pp. 5a–b), or the longest of five (120, 100, 80, 60, and 50 years respectively; see *TPJC* 6, p. 7a), or the second of three (130, 120, and 100 years respectively; see *TPJC* 8, pp. 14b–15a).

²²² *TPJHJ*, p. 546. For variations on this theme, see also chaps. 179: "not daring not to reflect on (one's) transgressions a single moment" (*TPJHJ*, p. 538); 182: "self-remorse from morning till night" (*TPJHJ*, pp. 550–51); plus, also put in the Heavenly Lord's mouth: "I heard that this man has been blaming himself and has been feeling remorse for his transgressions for years" (*TPJHJ*, p. 551), or, in the Major God's mouth: "this man has been blaming himself for a very long time" (*TPJHJ*, p. 551); "to reflect day and night on the burden of (one's) transgressions" (*TPJHJ*, p. 555); 197: "to blame oneself and to feel remorse for (one's) transgressions, for numerous days" (*TPJHJ*, p. 606); and 199: "to blame oneself, regardless of (the passing of) mornings and nights" (*TPJHJ*, p. 613).

²²³ *TPJHJ*, p. 605.

²²⁴ *TPJHJ*, p. 600.

mortals live in continuous fear of the burden of their transgressions never being removed but rather reported by numerous gods; fear of the content of registers – even the slightest evil deeds – being brought to the attention of the highest divine authorities; fear of the sanction of the unseen judges for their past deeds; fear of the decreasing of their count; and, ultimately, fear of death – so overwhelming a fear that the miserable sinners often shed tears on their past misdeeds.²²⁵ Chapter 192 (sect. 7, *j.* 114): “speaking while frequently shedding tears, they ask Heaven to forgive them their transgressions, slapping themselves (*zibo*) and begging for pity, and towards Earth, knock the ground with their foreheads (*koutou*), without avoiding splinters of stone, in the middle of filth.”²²⁶ But, adds chapter 201, if one sins anew once forgiven, knocking the ground with one’s forehead will prove fruitless.²²⁷ And, once transgressions rashly perpetrated have brought their daring author to a lethal outcome, no *via lacrimae* will lead the belated penitent to redemption.²²⁸ The mercy of the Heavenly Lord has limits and should not be gambled with nor indefinitely postponed.

MORALIZED COSMOLOGY AND IMPOSED DISEASE

My earlier analysis of the epistemological content of the *Taiping jing* pointed out the central position occupied by writing in A-material, which stages a Heavenly Master urging the compilation of a compendium of orthodox knowledge while advertising the revelations bestowed upon him by Heaven.²²⁹ But, in non-A *Taiping jing* material, writing is not emphasized as the ideal vehicle of Truth – nor is there any master dealing with some compendium to be edited by a conclave of enlightened men, submitted to the Throne, then distributed to men all over the world. Now writing, as purely administrative documents unattainable by mortals, rather embodies the restless recording, reporting, and archiving of human deeds by omniscient divine officials of the unseen world, unbeknown to men. From *Taiping jing* A- to non-A-material, in terms of Western philosophy, the reader witnesses a complete shift of focus from the sphere of epistemology to that of morals. Both views, of course, are far from being incompatible. For instance, they both pertain to religious belief, and Taoist communities will needfully draw on

²²⁵ See chaps. 179 for tears (*TPJHJ*, p. 528) and fear (*TPJHJ*, p. 529), 180 for tears (*TPJHJ*, p. 546), 182 for tears and fear of death (*TPJHJ*, pp. 551; 556), and 198 for fear of the burden of transgressions not being removed but reported by gods (*TPJHJ*, p. 610).

²²⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 591.

²²⁷ *TPJHJ*, p. 621.

²²⁸ Chap. 66 from A-material (*TPJHJ*, p. 160). A similar statement appears in the *TPJC* 5, p. 14b (*TPJHJ*, pp. 309–10).

²²⁹ See Espeset, “Revelation,” pp. 82–93.

both of them to establish the prevalence of their revealed scripturary corpus (writing as vehicle of Truth) and ensure social order within the parishes (writing as administrative records).

Remarkably, despite centuries of Buddho-Taoist mutual influences in the Chinese mainland, Taoist rituals in present-day Taiwan still perpetuate this early belief in a bureaucratic otherworld and in the contractual nature of the bonds that link mortals to it – subterranean judges dealing with the matters brought to their court; otherworldly treasurers cashing in the repayment of debts incurred by mortals; filling in, by the officiating priest and his assistants, of numerous administrative forms, some of which are to be delivered to the nether world by a mounted emissary whose journey is theatrically performed – rituals which follow procedures modeled on the protocol of the early imperial court.²³⁰ *Taiping jing chao* documents this contractual nature of the relationship between men and gods: men of High Antiquity were bound to numerous gods by contracts 約書, and the Heavenly Lord himself, before issuing his written orders, has to consult his own contracts so as to clarify the documents submitted to him.²³¹ Then, no wonder that a legalistic term like “to interrogate 考問,” or “to ask in examination,”²³² occurs several times in *Taiping jing* – whether in this-worldly or other-worldly context: interrogation of the deceased by subterranean book-keepers; interrogation of bodily entities on their host’s behavior; and heavenly interrogation of “perverse, or heterodox, gods 邪神” invoked by so-called religious specialists who use them to get hold of the wealth of credulous sick people.²³³

In my former analysis of the triadic scheme which pervades most of *Taiping jing* (and *Taiping jing chao*) A-stratum, I pointed out the absence of moral value in the cosmological threefold pattern of Yang/

²³⁰ See John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 49–237, and Patrice Fava’s documentary video on funerary rituals; Patrice Fava, author, director and producer, “Les dieux de la Chine: Le livre des morts,” 16-mm video film, CNRS AV (SERDDAV), 1977. On the contractual nature of bonds between men and gods, see also Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China: How Ordinary People Used Contracts: 600–1400* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1995), pp. 147–229 (“Part II: Contracting with the Gods”).

²³¹ *TPJC* 4, pp. 5b–6a (*TPJHJ*, p. 212).

²³² These translations follow Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 74. However, in *TPJ* A-stratum, this disyllabic means “investigation,” “judicial inquiry” rather than “interrogation” (though, in some cases, there may be only a fine line between the former and the latter). See chaps. 51 (sect. 3, j. 39): investigation into the reliability of ordinary affairs (*TPJHJ*, p. 71); 127: investigation by sages into the origins of abnormal phenomena (*TPJHJ*, p. 326), judicial inquiry by superior subalterns into people suspected of leaking State secrets (*TPJHJ*, p. 328); and 137: investigation, on the orders of the Emperor himself, into local robbery cases (*TPJHJ*, p. 385). See also *TPJC* 5, p. 7a, “to interrogate” (*TPJHJ*, p. 302).

²³³ See chaps. 186 (*TPJHJ*, p. 569), 195 (*TPJHJ*, p. 600), and 201 (*TPJHJ*, p. 620); and A-

Heaven, Yin/Earth, and Central Harmony/Man, the synthetic product of their conflation, an ideology which recognizes the existence of both good/Yang and evil/Yin as necessary principles of universal equilibrium and allows the existence of a third principle of harmonious dynamism.²³⁴ But, in non-A-material, a strongly negative moral judgment is passed on evil, still associated with Yin (especially paroxysmal Yin, that is, the subterranean Hades for persisting evildoers) but unequivocally condemned and rejected, while the triadic notion of harmony and cosmic equilibrium is discarded in favor of a strictly ethical, dualistic Yang/Yin radicalism.

In this strongly moralistic worldview, good deeds and evil deeds now draw a clear line between innocence and guilt, and human post-mortem fate is ultimately decided by judges of the bureaucratic unseen world. But the benevolent who are awarded ascension to Heaven and allowed to mingle with its divine inhabitants are still subject to constant watch, like all the other gods. A passage of the résumé provided by *Taiping jing chao* where chapters 56–64 of *Taiping jing* are now missing alludes to their fearing faults being entered in surveillance records.²³⁵ In chapter 187 (sect. 7, j. 112), those guilty of negligence incur “a personal punishment in the world of Man” (on Earth): to sell vegetables on the market of the capital, decked out in an ugly, despicable exterior, a degrading task lasting for forty, thirty, or ten years according to the gravity of the fault, before being reinstated as a divine emissary.²³⁶ Or elsewhere (chapter 198), for failing to report in time the existence of men of merit: to sell medicinal drugs and to heal disease for ten years in the capital Luoyang, but without being allowed to receive much money from the sick, and when the punishment is over, to return and

stratum chap. 46 (sect. 3, j. 36; *TPJHJ*, p. 51). See also *TPJC* 5, p. 9b (*TPJHJ*, p. 304), for a judicial analogy in the context of the cycles of pneuma.

²³⁴ E.g., *TPJC* 9, pp. 1b–2a: “The nature of the universe is half Yang, half Yin (*ban yang ban yin* 半陽半陰)... The nature of the universe is half good, half evil 半善半惡” (*TPJHJ*, p. 702; for the extended quotation, see Espeset, “À vau-l'eau, à rebours,” p. 70). Yet, in several instances, A material shows a clear preference for Yang, and not only by contrast with Yin: the threefold pattern itself, when interpreted as a temporal, “cosmogonical” process, turns radically into a descending logic of dispersal and decline in which only Yang/Heaven (phase 1) retains original, unaltered perfection, while Yin/Earth (phase 2) and Central Harmony/Man (phase 3) sink deeper and deeper into a general and irreparable corruption. This alternative triadic ideology paves the way for the idea of a necessary reversion to the origin, to the One, and for its latent totalitarian repercussions: one Truth, one single knowledge (orthodoxy), one single ruler (the Emperor). As long as Yin and Yang partake of a general cosmological worldview, however, they share the same legitimacy, albeit in a somewhat Manichaeic way.

²³⁵ *TPJHJ*, p. 212. An incomplete translation of this fragment of *TPJC* 4, pp. 5b–8a (*TPJHJ*, pp. 212–14) appears in Petersen, “*Taiping jing* and Clepsydra Reform,” pp. 143–45.

²³⁶ *TPJHJ*, p. 570.

report to their bureau, be put to the test for one year, then reinstated in one's charge.²³⁷

In A-material, the universe itself suffers from maladies provoked by the social and political dysfunction of the human sphere, and one of the primary purposes of the revelations bestowed upon the master by Heaven is to have these maladies permanently removed.²³⁸ Illness, associated with disasters, gives evidence that the time is right to have the master's writings published: "If the appearing (of these writings) makes people sick 病, then Heaven wants them to be concealed 藏; if hiding 逃 them makes people sick, then Heaven wants them to appear and be circulated," states chapter 176 (sect. 7, j. 108).²³⁹ The following catalogued etiology from the *Taiping jing chao* reflects this well-known belief in the absolute interdependence of macrocosm and physiological microcosm:

Numerous [cases of] headache [mean that] heavenly pneuma (*qi*) are not content. Numerous [cases of] pain in the legs [mean that] earthly pneuma are not content. Numerous [cases of] pain in the five organs mean that the pneuma of the five agents are fighting. Numerous [cases of] disease in the four limbs [mean that] the pneuma of the four seasons are not harmonious. Numerous [cases of] deafness and blindness [mean that] the three luminaries have lost their regularity. Numerous [cases of] chill and high temperature [mean that] Yin and Yang pneuma are wrangling. Numerous [cases of] pathological dizziness [mean that] the ten thousand beings have lost their place. Numerous [cases of] disease [caused by] ghostly creatures [mean that] the divine entities of Heaven and Earth are angry. Numerous [cases of] lethal pathological heat [mean that] the pneuma of Great Yang are baneful. Numerous [cases of] lethal pathological cold [mean that] the pneuma of Great Yin are harmful. Numerous [cases of] sudden death [mean that]

²³⁷ TPJHJ, p. 611. See also p. 612 in the same chapter.

²³⁸ See Lai Chi-tim, "The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the *Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibilities for the Maladies of Nature*," in N. J. Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan, eds., *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2001), pp. 95–111. This paper originally appeared in Chinese as "Cong Taiping jing de zhonghe sixiang kan ren yu ziran de guanxi, tiandi jibing yu ren de zeren" 從太平經的中和思想看人與自然的關係天地疾病與人的責任, in Zheng Zhiming 鄭志明, ed., *Daojiao wenhua de jinghua, di er jie haixia liang'an Daojiao xueshu yantaohui lunwen ji* 道教文化的精華第二屆海峽兩岸道教學術研討會論文集 (Dalin, Taiwan: Nanhua daxue zongjiao wenhua yanjiu zhongxin, 2000) 1, pp. 49–75.

²³⁹ TPJHJ, p. 514. In the subsequent sentences of the passage, *tao* is associated to *cang*, "to bury, to conceal."

the pneuma of punishment are too rash.²⁴⁰ Numerous [cases of] pathological inflation of pneuma or diminishing of pneuma [mean that] the eight conjunctions are conflicting and disorderly. Now among Heaven and Earth, and Yin and Yang, everything has lost its place, and disease and harm are inflicted on the ten thousand beings.²⁴¹

This portrayal of cosmic disorder and its specific pathological consequences does not take into account external or internal incidental pathogenic factors. An etiology deep-rooted in symbolism and universal in the fullest sense of the word, it does not, as such, take into account any localized distinctive characteristics, neither does it give any specific cure, but we may assume that only the restoration of cosmic harmony and equilibrium will guarantee total recovery.

By contrast, sickness, as one of the facets of localized human suffering, loses its cosmological impact in the moralized worldview of non-A-material. While the master explained, in A-text chapter 136 (sect. 6, j. 92), how disease may be expelled by ingesting glyphs written with ink the color of cinnabar 丹 (“doubled characters 複文, or 重複之字”),²⁴² sickness now remains incurable (as far as ordinary doctors and heterodox religious practitioners invoking false gods of illness are concerned). Moreover, associated with lifetime abridgement, illness is now to be regarded as the necessary penalty for men’s misbehavior, imposed by superhuman bureaucratic forces as a response to the ignorance of, or deliberate disregard for, the specific applications of cosmic principles mentioned above: breach of soil proscriptions, improper offerings to the ancestors, absence of filial piety, blatant malevolence. To complete this moral and legalist cause-and-effect scheme of conviction/illness and remission/healing, divine punishment may involve an active and desinterested contribution to the healing of other people in the world of man, as we have just seen – a world reportedly ravaged by repeated epidemics throughout the second century and till the end of the Han.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ I.e., punishments are imposed in the wrong time (see n. 148, above).

²⁴¹ *TPJC* 2, p. 12a–b (*TPJHJ*, p. 23). *Bajie* 八節, eight conjunctions, or tropic nodes, designate solstices, equinoxes, and the first day of each season.

²⁴² *TPJHJ*, p. 380. The extant *TPJ* still contains four *juan* (104–7) of such “doubled characters.” *TPJC* states that therapeutic “heavenly symbolic glyphs” (*tianfu* 天符, also written in cinnabar, are to be ingested and visualized in the stomach (*fu* 腹) for a very long time in order to have “heavenly medicine” (*tianyi* 天醫) descend into the adept’s body, dispel all kinds of disease, and ensure longevity; see *TPJC* 6, pp. 2b–3a (*TPJHJ*, p. 330).

²⁴³ Historical sources report fifteen epidemics during the Eastern Han, thirteen of which took place between 119 and 217 AD, inclusive; see Yoshimoto Shōji 吉元昭治, *Dōkyō to furō*

In early-imperial China, collective responsibility was still a standard feature of penal law.²⁴⁴ The *Tai ping jing* itself, not surprisingly, attests to such conceptions.²⁴⁵ But within this text we are witnessing a shift from a cosmic responsibility of Man viewed as collective, hereditary and cumulative, for dispelling the present consequences of the past deeds of ancestors (the idea of *chengfu*, mostly, but not strictly, appearing in A-material), to a more religious, moral, and individual responsibility for one's own deeds in one's lifetime 過負, the burden of one's transgressions, mostly in non-A-material).²⁴⁶ For instance, while A-material seems somewhat skeptical about the effectiveness of remorse and rather values a collective reflection on ancestors' past transgressions with the aim of removing the ancestors' *chengfu* and their lasting consequences today,²⁴⁷ individual repentance of one's personal transgressions, as we have seen, is emphasized throughout non-A-material. Significantly, in A-material, people who lack self-responsibility wrongly blame the Emperor for their misfortune,²⁴⁸ rather than Heaven, or unseen entities such as ghosts, in non-A-material. So, where mankind as a whole was

chōju no igaku 道教と不老長壽の醫學 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1989), p. 27; Lin, *Jibing zhong jie zhe*, pp. 179–81. It is now well established that repeated epidemics and famine strongly contributed to the development of organized religions and to the social climate of unrest and the emergence of self-proclaimed emperors which culminated in the collapse of the Han; see Lin Fu-shih, “Dong Han wanqi de jiyi yu zongjiao” 東漢晚期的疾疫與宗教, *Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 66.3 (1995), pp. 695–745; Hans Bielenstein, “Wang Mang, the Restoration of the Han Dynasty, and Later Han,” in Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 1, The Ch'in and Han Dynasties: 221 B.C.-A.D. 220* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1986), pp. 223–90; Burchard J. Mansvelt Beck, “The Fall of Han,” in *ibid.*, pp. 317–76; also Etienne Balazs, “La crise sociale et la philosophie politique à la fin des Han,” *TP* 39.1–3 (1949), pp. 83–131.

²⁴⁴ See Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 8: “another characteristic of the archaic mode of thought which continued to prevail was the undivided responsibility of the group for acts committed by its members” (about Qin and Han law); also Léon Vandermeersch, *La formation du Légisme: Recherche sur la constitution d'une philosophie politique caractéristique de la Chine ancienne* (Paris: EFEO, 1965), pp. 184–200.

²⁴⁵ See chap. 189: “when superior subalterns have heard of an ignoramus who is called a malevolent son” (*ezi* 惡子) because of his misdeeds, “their subordinate officials arrest him and promptly inflict punishment on him (*xing qi shen* 刑其身); this misfortune extends to (his) close and distant relatives, who share the blame for his fault” (*TPJHJ*, p. 580).

²⁴⁶ Strikingly, the single occurrence of *guofu* in A material (out of nine in the whole text) designates the series of errors made by the disciples during their catechist's lecture (chap. 151 in sect. 6, j. 96; *TPJHJ*, p. 405), not the burden of accumulated moral transgressions.

²⁴⁷ See chaps. 66: “feeling remorse once one has been convicted of a fault (*zui ding* 罪定) is not being cautious, for it is useless (*wu yi* 無益)” (*TPJHJ*, pp. 164–65); 164 (sect. 6, j. 101, a non-dialogue passage since appended to a picture, but generally treated as A-material): “there is no coming back, even feeling remorse is useless (*wu yi*)” (*TPJHJ*, p. 458); and 103: “each one personally reflects on transgressions to remove the punishment of the ancestors' *chengfu*” (*TPJHJ*, p. 255).

²⁴⁸ See chap. 152 (sect. 6, j. 96): “ignoramuses do not personally reflect on their own faults but shift all the blame for their transgressions onto the Emperor” (*TPJHJ*, p. 418).

formerly called upon by the master to put an end to general cosmic disorders caused by the persisting effects of the ancestors' misconduct (A-material), the adept now stands alone with his or her own consciousness, facing his or her own sins and their consequences on the duration of his or her own life span and fate after death (non-A-material).

This individualization of human responsibility shows through in such passages as the following excerpt from chapter 179, in which the repetition of *shen* 身 (one's person, the individual) and *zi* 自 (oneself) emphasizes the importance of individual realization:

(Inasmuch as your) life mandate depends closely on your person, why beat your breast and invoke Heaven? If you do not personally purify 清 yourself, who will you purify? If you do not personally love 愛 yourself, who will you love? If you do not personally perfect 成 yourself, who will you perfect? If you do not personally meditate 念 on yourself, who will you meditate on? If you do not personally put the blame 責 on yourself, who will you put the blame on? Reflect on these words repeatedly, and do not resent ghosts (*gui*) and gods (*shen*).²⁴⁹

Thus we may interpret this moralization and individualization of guilt in non-A-material of the *Taiping jing* as closely following a general, wider phenomenon – the moralization of cosmology.²⁵⁰

If the penal emphasis of law is a well-established feature of Chinese culture and history,²⁵¹ the penal emphasis of some Chinese religious ideologies, to my knowledge, has never been pointed out. It is no accident that, in modern Chinese usage, the word *zuirén* 罪人 designates both a criminal and a sinner, and *fanzui* 犯罪 designates sin as much as (legal) offense. In this regard, the *Taiping jing* offers perhaps one of the earliest explicit testimonies of the moral penalization of human behavior, outside of the Judeo-Christian world yet, in many ways, remarkably similar to its guilt complex or morbid taste for redemptive self-induced suffering through mortification. Further, the semiological definition by the authors of non-A-material of a series of human moral types – or rather, as modern legislators have put it, “psychological profiles” – which logically end up superseding the technical definition of guidelines for proper moral conduct and the objective application

²⁴⁹ *TPJH*, p. 527.

²⁵⁰ Also noticed, in other Han sources, by Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000), pp. 129–72.

²⁵¹ As noted in Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, e.g., pp. 3–4, 28.

of relevant penalties to convicted offenders, strikingly matches Foucault's formula of a "*homo criminalis*."²⁵² Once again, morality and the state agree on the control and standardization of individuals and their mind, for, in such a logic of intentions, each individual in a disciplined society is a potential delinquent or criminal, and each soul belongs to a potential sinner.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CTT</i>	Schipper, ed., <i>Concordance du Tao-tsang: titres des ouvrages</i>
<i>Hucker</i>	Hucker, <i>A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China</i>
<i>TPJ</i>	<i>Taiping jing</i> 太平經 (<i>ZD</i> , fasc. 748-55; <i>CTT</i> 1101)
<i>TPJC</i>	<i>Taiping jing chao</i> 太平經鈔 (<i>ZD</i> , fasc. 746-47; <i>CTT</i> 1101)
<i>TPJHJ</i>	Wang Ming, <i>Taiping jing hejiao</i> 太平經合校
<i>ZD</i>	<i>Zhengtong daoze</i> 正統道藏

²⁵² Originally applied to 18th-19th-c. French society in Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p. 104.