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Early Daoist Ideas on Political Practice: How to Select and Control Government Officials*

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Abstract

This paper is based on material contained in the *Scripture on Great Peace* that was produced in the second century C.E. The paper's argument proceeds from the supposition that the authors of the *Scripture* reflected on and responded to the political and administrative situation of the second century. It is argued that its authors joined in the critique that was put forth by their contemporaries, many of whom deplored the breakdown of the Han empire's institutions and the people's growing misery and despair. The authors of the *Scripture* claimed that a new era of great peace was close at hand but that before its arrival men had to undertake a set of reforms. Certain reforms pertained to the administrative system. The authors suggested to revise the process of appointing officials, to intensify the submission of memorials and reports, and to increase the size and rigidity of penalties for administrative misconduct, based on regular interrogations and on the creation and submission of reports, among them the "Reports Submitted to Heaven, Earth and Men" (*sandao xingshu* 三道行書). These reforms were meant to be in the people's interest and reduce their resentment and opposition. Major points were the suggestion to open access

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to officialdom to a wider range of people and the demand to make more use of outside observers to control the conduct of officials. In developing their argument the authors referred to the laws, the rules, and the will of heaven, which for them represented the highest authority. For the authors of the *Scripture*, times were in rapid change. In their eyes the ideal official combined the virtues of the past with those of the future age of great peace: he was expected to be loyal, responsible, and trustworthy, and he was also expected to make sure that his superior would lead a long, healthy, and carefree life and if possible even transcend death to live among heaven's immortals.

Keywords: *Scripture on Great Peace*; great peace; employment of officials; reports submitted to heaven, earth and men; facing interrogations

This paper is based on a corpus of texts entitled *Scripture on Great Peace* (Taiping jing) that has been transmitted in the *Daozang*, the collection of Daoist scriptures.[1] Judging by its language and content, most of the text of the *Scripture* must be seen as a product of the second century C.E., that is, from the period when Daoists began to live in organized communities. Its content ranges from specific religious topics such as meditation, life after death, and the belief in heaven to issues of social and political thought. While it is long and meandering, all of these topics contribute to the formation of a single, rather coherent doctrine of salvation. The authors of the text argue that, to achieve and maintain a state of great peace, institutions, including basic institutions like family and marriage, must be reformed in their entirety.[2] This paper deals with

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[1] The text is quoted in the edition of Wang Ming 王明, *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979).

[2] Work on the composition and date of the *Taiping jing* is an ongoing process of discussion in which analysis of its contents as attempted in this paper and linguistic analysis play an important role, as there is little if any outside information to rely on. The received text is based on an edition of the *Taiping jing* produced by Upper Clarity (*shangqing* 上清) adherents in the sixth century. Scholars disagree on the amount of old material used for this edition. For a recent addition to this discussion, see Gregoire Espesset, "Les Directives secrètes du Saint Seigneur du Livre de la Grande paix et la préservation de l'unité," *T'oung Pao* 95 (2009), 1–50, 2 and 22, where he reintroduces the figures of Zhang Daoling and a certain Gan Ji as involved in the creation of the *Scripture*'s two main layers (4 and 22).

the *Scripture*'s suggestions for political reform. Its authors discuss how the shortcomings of government and its representatives may be remediated so as to reduce the people's general resentment and anger. For the writers of the *Scripture*, great peace is a promise and an opportunity extended by heaven, and the people's angry mood prevents heaven from fulfilling its promise.

The aim of this paper is to show how, in undertaking this discussion, the authors of the *Scripture* were part of the contemporary discourse. The beginnings of Daoist religious organization were manifold, and the spectrum of its concerns was broad. Existential and metaphysical concerns existed alongside concrete dissatisfaction with the state of society and its institutions. This last was expressed vehemently by the homeless peasants who were organized by proto-Daoist leaders. While they might have been inspired by ideas that are found in the *Scripture*, the received text of the *Scripture* does not show signs of its authors being situated in the neighborhood of rebellious peasants. It contains due expressions of respect for the symbols of the reigning dynasty and, in particular, the phase of fire with the color red. Existing social and political hierarchies are, with some modifications, supported.

Regarding the political presence of Daoist ideas, we know that at the beginning of the Han dynasty in the early second century B.C.E. teachings proposed in the *Laozi* became part of the general discourse. That in the second century C.E. Daoist religious leaders and thinkers confronted well-established institutions of the great Han empire in a constructive manner

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Kristofer Schipper in *The Taoist Canon. A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, ed. K. Schipper and F. Verellen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 277–280, upholds Yoshioka's original position and comes to the conclusion that the text's sixth edition contains only a small amount of material going back to the times of the early Celestial Master movement. This paper has tried to uphold Ofuchi Ninji's position and show that—for large parts of the text—language, composition, and content point to the second century and the social and cultural environment of early Daoist movements; cf. Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 38–43. Cf. also Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō to Bukkyō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Toshima shobo, 1970): 104; Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten. Dōkyōshi kenkyū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1997): 533–539; and Yamada Toshiaki, *Rikuchō Dōkyō girei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōhō shoten, 1999), 140–157, who reiterates Yoshioka's position.

is of less historical relevance, as this confrontation had hardly any impact.[3] The late Han dynasty Daoists remained outsiders. The *Scripture* was written by men who had an alternative educational background, if they had any, and held no official position or only lowly official position. This is reflected in their use of language that has much in common with that of the poorly educated scribes employed in early Buddhist translations.[4]

This explains the limited political vision of the authors. They were observing the Han dynasty state in its local presence and criticizing institutions at a grassroots level. Much of what they say makes sense only when we read it as an account of county (*xian* 縣) or even district (*xiang* 鄉) or commune (*ting* 亭) administration.[5] The text's admonitions are directed to a "lord" (*jun* 君) or "ruler" (*diwang* 帝王) without any further specification. There is some concrete evidence for the strictly local range of the *Scripture*. The only example we have of any policies suggested in the *Scripture* being implemented stems from local

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[3] Cf. Zhou Yong 周勇, "Daojiao de zhengzhi lilun yuanyuan" 道教的政治理論淵源, *Zongjiao xue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 4 (2001), 36–40.

[4] Cf. Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 43 and cf. Eric Zuercher, "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations," *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers' Association* 12 (1977), 177–203 and Hu Chirui 胡敕瑞, *Lunheng yu Dong Han fodian ciyu bijiao yanjiu* 論衡與東漢佛典詞語比較研究 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2002), 5.

[5] According to Bielenstein, in 140 C.E. the number of counties was 1,179, each containing about 10,000 households (Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 99ff.). This was the "lowest unit of local administration to be ruled by an official appointed by the central government" (Rafe de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23–220 AD)* [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007], 1230). In 153 C.E. the number of districts was stated as 3,681 and that of communes as 12,443 (Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 103, quoting the *Dongguan Han ji*). In 140 C.E. the population was roughly 48 million, divided into 99 commanderies and kingdoms. See Michael Loewe, "The Structure and Practice of Government," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 483–485, and Hans Bielenstein, "The Institutions of Later Han," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 507.

administration: the interdiction of female infanticide, which was put into practice in Pei 沛, situated in present-day Anhui, and in Changsha, a commandery in present-day Hunan.[6]

The authors' social background is reflected in their argumentation and rhetoric, which are shaped by religious beliefs and do not reflect classical scholarship. The authors rarely approach a topic in what might be called a direct way. Instead, they use a roundabout way of argumentation that approaches the topic under discussion from a cosmic or celestial point of view. Since they see heaven as the highest being, they take its order or "will" (*xin* 心 or *yi* 意) as the starting point for all argumentation. When criticizing drunkenness, for instance, they argue that it upsets the cosmic balance between Yin and Yang, in that wine is Yin. While this approach is common in Han dynasty writings, the authors of the *Scripture* use it innovatively and often exclusively. Another technique involves an almost personified heaven. The authors of the text argue that heaven, exemplary in all respects, has also established a perfect bureaucracy. Its celestial officials are capable, reliable, and, most important, well supervised. This is clearly not the case for bureaucratic structures set up by humans, who would do well to imitate heaven's way of hiring, controlling, and, if necessary, firing officials.

The authors' approach to political and administrative institutions is dominated by their search for great peace. They argue that, to fulfill the purpose of safeguarding life and welfare, institutions have to be open and integrative, with a communicative, cooperative, and tolerant approach toward the people. Such an approach will in itself reduce abusive practices. Official policy making is expected to take heaven's will, as documented in weather conditions, the mood of the people, and other phenomena, as its guideline.

The figure of the official was crucial for the functioning of the Chinese administrative system. How ruler, officials, and the people should cooperate for the benefit of all was one of the favorite topics in ancient political thought. Risking oversimplification, one might argue that Confucius and his followers—and Mengzi in particular—approached the topic from the perspective of the official or the independent adviser who for them was the expert in all questions of proper government. As opposed to this, Han Fei and other so-called Legalist thinkers looked at

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[6] Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 92ff.

the problem from the perspective of a ruler, whose position, they argued, was always at risk due to the ambition and treachery of officials. The conflict between these positions was revived in late Han dynasty controversies about the role of the state and its institutions.[7] The authors of the *Scripture* chose a third approach by stressing the need for all three parties to cooperate as if they were on a level playing field:

> When lord, officials, and the people (*jun chen min* 君臣民) unite, combine their efforts, and are in agreement, they build one country [that all three have in common].... It would be disastrous if one [of the three] were amiss.[8]

Considering the frequency of popular uprisings in the second half of the second century C.E., the authors of the text have a point.[9] At this historical juncture it could hardly be doubted that the people were an active component of political life, much more so than is envisaged in the *Chun Qiu fan lu*'s remark that the ruler was set up to serve the people, rather than the other way around.[10] The worldview expressed in the *Scripture* creates an appropriate background for social and political integration, in two respects. First, the belief in the dominant role of heaven puts every individual in the role of a subordinate, entitled to address heaven and obey its commands in a personal manner. Second, the strong belief in the power of correspondence ties men at different hierarchical levels together, in that the behavior of subordinates is seen to have an impact on their superiors as well as the other way around. Moreover, within this worldview the traditional linkage between heaven

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[7] See, for example, Rafe de Crespigny, "Inspection and Surveillance Officials under the Two Han Dynasties," in *State and Law in East Asia. Festschrift Karl Bünger*, ed. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1981), 41ff.

[8] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 65.149, and cf. Zhang Weiguo 張偉國, "*Taiping jing* de minzhong zhengzhi sixiang"《太平經》的民眾政治思想, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 9 (1996), 43ff.

[9] B. J. Mansvelt-Beck, "The Fall of Han," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 337.

[10] Su Yu 蘇輿, *Chun Qiu fan lu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 25.220. Su argues that this section, which sees the Qin as legitimate successors to the Zhou, cannot stem from Dong Zhongshu.

and the voice of the people gains ground, which slightly modifies the image of the ideal official, making him more responsible toward the people at large.

In discussing the shortcomings of government institutions, the authors of the text develop their arguments around the system that was actually in place in the outgoing Han dynasty and join forces with others in complaining that certain principles and standard practices were falling into oblivion.[11] We will look at these practices in detail, juxtaposing aspects of the established routine,[12] the educated mainstream critique, and the critical reflections of the authors of the *Scripture*. The practices dealt with are the appointment of officials, reports, and memorials as a means of control and, finally, the meting out of penalties for neglect and misconduct.

Added to this is a short section on the figure of the ideal official. The *Scripture* is long and aims at being comprehensive, so that critique and reform of the system as the authors found it form only one line of argument. The introduction of a new type of great-peace official is another. The list of this official's unusual qualities was in itself a critical response to the situation at hand.

The authors of the *Scripture* always speak in general terms. They never refer to official titles or to the technical names for specific proceedings. Moreover, they refrain from all reference to the names of individuals or locations and therefore never deal with specific cases. The problem this style of writing creates, for the topic at hand, is that the distinction between commissioned and noncommissioned officials is left open. Commissioned officials served under the direction of the central government, wherever they were located. Their career was lifelong and might lead to high rank. Noncommissioned officials, however, were recruited and employed locally, with little chance of gaining influence.

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[11] "Others" for this paper really means mainly Wang Fu 王符, whose *Qian fu lun* 潛夫論 has a lot to say on the subject and is easy to access. Wang Chong 王充, who lived in the first century C.E., shows little interest in politics, as if indeed, as he argues, things were not too bad. Cui Shi's 崔寔 complaints about inadequate salaries (see Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1964], 212 ff.) are not reflected in the *Taiping jing*.

[12] For this point and much of the rest, this paper relies heavily on de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1230–1233.

While some of the authors' critique seems to cover both groups, the focus of their interest and concern is on the fate of the local officials. They can actually be read as having been among the first to suggest removing the big gap between the two groups and allowing the appointment of successful local officials as fully commissioned imperial officials.

The Appointment of Officials

The selection of officials was seen as crucial to the success of government. In an attempt to label different types of government, the authors of the *Scripture* point to what they see as different types of official. In the following passage, a Celestial Master, who is often introduced as the main speaker, responds to queries raised by a group of disciples:

> Now there are four models of governing: heaven's governing, earth's governing, and men's governing. After these three vapors have become exhausted there is the governing by animals and the ten thousand plants.
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> *We would like to know what this means.*
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> Heaven's governing means that the official is old and the lord treats his official as a father or teacher.
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> *Now an official is lowly. For what reason would he be treated as father or teacher?*
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> Although his position is low, men of *dao* and virtue are esteemed and weighty. In treating him as father or teacher the lord treats him as a man of *dao* and virtue. Planning jointly they will give peace to all under heaven.[13]

Thus heaven's model of governing works well. So does that of earth, as here a lord treats his official as friend and coworker. Being on an equal footing with and well trusted by the ruler, an official can create harmony and peace. However, the human model of governing is not acceptable. In this model the official is a young person who is looked down upon by his lord, and thus he will achieve little. The same holds true for the stupid official, who is on a par with a dog or a plant.[14] Another passage

[13] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 79.196.

[14] Ibid., 79.196.

stresses that the country's and the sovereign's fate depends on who is employed,[15] the following four types of official being associated with auspicious signs: the one who daily accumulates benefits for the sovereign 日有益於上, the capable manager 所舉人可任，得成器, the one who sticks to what he has learnt 能影明其師道 (we must assume that this is someone loyal to his mentor),[16] and the trustworthy (*xin* 信) individual. There is another set of four, those who are said to be associated with inauspicious signs: the official who is of no advantage to either sovereign or country, the official who is a poor manager and a fake, the official who rejects "what he has learnt," and the official who is not trustworthy but instead deceives his superior. These criteria are rather concrete. They differ from most descriptions that accompany the system of recommendation and nomination in official language, as documented in the long list put together by Rafe de Crespigny.[17] This list includes being "able to deal in affairs of state" 能從政者 and "putting forward advantageous proposals" 上便宜, but most terms on it point to general moral and, in particular, scholarly excellence. However, it was generally agreed that the country's security as well as the lord's authority and personal well-being depend upon what sort of person is employed. Wang Fu's 王符 (ca. 90–165 C.E.) brief statement sums this up:

> Therefore, the root for a country's continued existence or ruin, the mechanism of good order or chaos lies in nothing but an enlightened selection [of officials].[18]

In Western Han times, the recruitment of officials relied to a large extent

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[15] Ibid., 178.520–178.522. Cf. Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, "*Taiping jing* zhengzhi lilun shuping" 太平經政治理論述評, in *Zhongguo zhengjiao guanxi guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 中國政教關係國際學術研討會論文集, ed. Zheng Liangsheng 鄭樑生 (Taipei: Danjiang daxue lishi xuexi, 1991), 111.

[16] Cf. Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han Social Structure* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 207.

[17] De Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1278.

[18] Peng Duo 彭鐸, *Qian fu lun jian* 潛夫論箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 9.90, and Margaret Pearson, *Wang Fu and the Comments of a Recluse* (Tempe: Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1989), 119.

on formal recommendations from the roughly one hundred commanderies, which by the end of each year sent a group of candidates to the capital, about one candidate for 200,000 inhabitants.[19] With a population of almost 50 million in 140 C.E., this practice led to about 250 new candidates per year. These candidates were called "filial and incorrupt" (*xiao lian* 孝廉), suggesting that they had received a classical education and lived according to the moral injunctions of the texts they had studied. On arrival in the capital each was appointed to a minor position for a probationary period of three years. Additional staff members, often termed "abundant talent," were recruited directly by high-ranking, influential officials and were given a higher rank than the filial and incorrupt. Although sponsors were supposed to be held responsible for their candidates' performance, all was not well. The following lampoon was circulated after 147 C.E. criticizing a high-ranking official for hiring the wrong people:

> If one wishes to find the unbearable, they are the "Abundant Talents" (*maocai* 茂才) [recommended] by the Superintendent of the Imperial Household.[20]

The *Waipian* of the *Baopu zi* quotes people from the times of Emperor Ling (r. 168–189) and Emperor Xian (r. 189–220) as having said:

> Men promoted as flourishing talents (*xiucai* 秀才) don't know how to write things down and men distinguished as filial and incorrupt (*xiao lian* 孝廉) live apart from their fathers.[21]

The *Scripture* has the following passage that refers indirectly to exploitative government officials:

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[19] In 101 C.E. it was ordered that preferential treatment should be given to the sparsely populated areas of the north: see Michael Loewe, "The Conduct of Government and the Issues at Stake," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 298.

[20] *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 61.2040; Donald Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les neuf categories et l'impartial et juste," *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises* 1 (1957): 390.

[21] *Baopu zi* 抱朴子, in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 15.127.

> Now a lord of virtue will often send out trustworthy assistants to ask among the people whether there are individuals with ulcers, sores, or other skin diseases, and if yes, how many. When there are individuals suffering from such a disease the writings that are circulated (*xingshu* 行書) do not fully reach spirits and other superhuman beings. The people have bitter feelings, which indicates that a number of worms are eating men. Worms eating men certainly indicates worms ruling over men. When there are a number of officials and ordinary subjects without *dao* and virtue they are like worms that will in turn eat men.[22]

Aware of such widespread criticism, politicians thought about creating more hurdles for potential candidates,[23] in particular formal examinations that would give an advantage to candidates from the Central Academy for the study of classical texts.[24] Zuo Xiong 左雄 (d. 138) suggested restricting entry to officialdom to men of at least forty years of age, probably with the aim of reducing the power of patronage.[25] Such

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[22] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 127.319ff.

[23] In particular, Zuo Xiong, see de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1183; cf. also the critique by Chen Zhong 陳忠, d. 125 C.E., see Ch'en Ch'i-yün, "Confucian, Legalist, and Taoist Thought in Later Han," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 786, and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 84. Loewe's observation ("Conduct of Government," 294ff.) is pertinent: the fact that the *Hou Han shu* praises officials who recommended candidates based on their ability points to perceived problems.

[24] After 132 C.E. all candidates were supposed to pass written examinations (Bielenstein, "Institutions," 516). The Central Academy was popular, attracting thousands of students. Another rival institution was founded in 178 C.E. (Bielenstein, "Institutions," 517). However, graduation from these institutions did not in itself entitle students to official position.

[25] *Hou Han shu*, 6.261; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1183. On the system of patronage, see Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, 207, and Patricia Ebrey, "The Economic and Social History of Later Han," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 640ff. Ebrey points out that to be recommended entailed such heavy obligations that capable candidates often refused appointment, and Loewe ("Conduct of Government," 307) lists several prominent individuals who did just that. Sun links this refusal to other ways of civil "disobedience" (Sun Jiazhou 孫家洲, "Lun Handai 'bu fengzhao' de leixing ji qi neihan" 論漢代「不奉詔」的類

restrictions were hard to enforce as they were not practical: thus hobbled, the system would not have supplied enough personnel to run the country. As an alternative, Wang Fu suggested a better application of the existing system:

> Those who put forward candidates for positions do not base their recommendations on the candidates' character and ability or weigh their skills and deeds. Instead, they falsely fabricate empty reputations and write completely false statements.[26]

Moreover, he argued that men with great family names were not entitled to preferential treatment, pointing to the historical example of Gaozu's staff, who came from all walks of life, were equipped with various skills, and in the end had succeeded in founding the new dynasty.[27] Wang Fu suggested that candidates who had just one strong point might actually prove to be good officials.[28]

The authors of the *Scripture* agree with Wang Fu. The demand to keep the system open is strongly expressed in the following statement by the *Scripture*'s Celestial Master:

> Once a lord of highest virtue obtains my writings heaven will become the model for the way this ruler employs subordinates. At the top level this includes those who are spirit-like and at the bottom level the poor and humble.... Those who are true, trustworthy, loyal, sincere, and familiar with the true doctrine will wish to come to the assistance of the virtuous lord and will be employed after they have been questioned about their abilities. One must make sure that they are not employed outside of their duties and not inappropriately dismissed. Otherwise this would be a case of confronting those who have shown proper, active concern. Heaven keeps track of men. One must employ everyone in line with his real talent

型及其内涵, *Zhongguo renmin daxue bao* 6 [2005]: 29–34). There is no mention in the *Scripture* of the possibility of refusing to fill an office, indicating that its authors clearly did not belong to the educated strata who had some choice in regard to their career.

[26] Peng, *Qian fu lun jian*, 14.152, translation by Pearson, *Wang Fu*, 124.

[27] Peng, *Qian fu lun jian*, 9.91.

[28] Ibid., 14.158.

> and ask him about his abilities and strong points. Then there will be no place that will not be well governed.
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> It is appropriate for a virtuous lord to conduct exams in order to promote those who consistently provide good results—being careful not to omit anyone—and fire those who do not, as such men are known to play havoc with the offices set up in heaven (*tianguan* 天官). Should conditions not become right for the arrival of the upright vapor [of Great Peace] the fault would lie with such false men.... This is the law authorized by majestic heaven as it is.[29]

In this passage the speaker takes an inclusive attitude, arguing that it is best to give all prospective candidates a chance, as long as their personal conduct looks all right.

To enhance their argument the authors of the *Scripture* refer to the example of heaven's running of its own celestial bureaucracy. They point to a case where the spirits in charge had taken too long to recommend a human being of superior quality for service in the celestial realms. The Lord of Heaven reprimanded them angrily: "No more negligence!"[30] That conscientious officials saw a problem in ignoring talent can be seen from Tian Xin's 田歆 (fl. 140s C.E.) circumspect handling of the task of recommending six filial and incorrupt candidates. As governor of Henan he decided to recommend five candidates from prominent families, as relatives of the imperial consort had instructed him, and to save one position for a talented outsider.[31] Dissatisfaction was also expressed in an edict issued by Emperor Zhang, shortly after his enthroning in 76 C.E., deploring the mediocrity of recommended candidates.[32]

Once recommended and selected, candidates had to be employed properly so that their talent would fit the job, as Wang Fu put it:

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[29] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 152.417; cf. Yu Liming 俞理明, *Taiping jing zhengdu* 《太平經》正讀 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2001), 342.

[30] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 198.612; cf. Gregoire Espesset, "Criminalized Abnormality, Moral Etiology, and Redemptive Suffering in the Secondary Strata of the *Taiping jing*," *Asia Major* (third series) 15, no. 2 (2002): 33.

[31] *Hou Han shu*, 56.1826, and Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, 206ff.

[32] *Hou Han shu*, 3.133, and Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 137.

> Therefore, [following from a quotation of the *Book of Documents*] when the former kings selected someone for office they made sure that they understood his talent (*cai* 才).[33]

To help, directly or indirectly, people to be appointed to positions they were not fit for was actually doing them a disservice: "Employ someone to cut who cannot yet handle a knife: the injury done is really great."[34] Here Wang Fu went back to the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, where Zichan 子產 warned against employing a favorite for a job that was beyond him, an appointment that did in the end cause the favorite's failure and downfall.[35]

The authors of the *Scripture* express this idea in the following way:

> Now if someone is dealing with others as parent or as lord and assigns an official or a son a task that is not geared to what they are good at, he virtually murders them. Not only will they be unable to fulfill their commitments in an orderly manner. Their futile efforts will play havoc with the office and cause the population at large to suffer bitterly. With the office in uproar, ordinary subjects and officials alike will call to heaven in their distress to voice their resentment and will move heaven to send even more disasters and other anomalies. That is why, in their desire to find favor with heaven, the wise and worthy of old were doubly careful in filling offices. They were always in accord with men's wishes and thus were able to fulfill heaven's wishes.[36]

In other words, individuals must always be employed according to their nature.[37] This is more fully explained in the following passage:

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[33] Peng, *Qian fu lun jian*, 8.82. The *Huainan zi* (Liu Wendian 劉文典, *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 [Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1969], 20.15a) also stresses the need to employ men according to their talent.

[34] Peng, *Qian fu lun jian*, 8.85, and Pearson, *Wang Fu*, 116.

[35] James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 562 and 566 (Duke Xiang, thirty-first year).

[36] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 65.153.

[37] Ibid., 81.206; cf. Qing Xitai 卿希泰, "*Taiping jing* de zhiren shanren sixiang qianxi" 《太平經》的知人善任思想淺析, *Sixiang zhanxian* 思想戰線 2 (1979): 44ff.

> People need only follow the direction of events and rely on their hearts and minds. They will then succeed through their talent and ability, without daring to attempt by force what they are unable to do. Thereby everyone will obtain what they want and if this is the case they will not resent and hate each other.... [However,] in the realms between heaven and earth we tend to let men ignore their [true] ability and force them to do what they cannot achieve. We then find fault with the fact that they cannot do it. Sometimes we might even watch them being unable to do or say things and not show sympathy or explain things to them.[38]

These observations are important for the context of the *Scripture*, as resentment was said to reduce the likelihood of people reaching great peace. The authors suggest that, when employing officials, the candidates' strong and weak points should be clarified in an interview,[39] and they should then be employed appropriately, just as fish were meant to swim in deep water while dragons were meant to rise up into the sky.[40] This was in agreement with actual practice. Upon arrival at court, candidates, while still on probation, were supposed to be investigated and employed according to their ability.[41] Xun Yue 荀悦 argued that "enlightened merit examinations" for officials were one of the most important political activities.[42] Particularly at the county level, where recruitment was fairly direct, was there room for interviews and direct examination.[43]

Regarding the recruitment of officials, we may conclude that the authors' suggestions fit in with other critiques of the system of recommendation as the basis for official employment. The authors demand more openness. Their interest lies with the local appointees and noncommissioned staff at the lower levels of the bureaucratic apparatus. Their concern is the efficiency of the system and the well-being of the

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38 Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 81.202.

39 Ibid., 81.204.

40 Ibid., 81.205.

41 De Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1230.

42 *Shen jian* 申鑑, in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 2.8; for translation see Ch'en Ch'i-yün, *Hsün Yüeh and the Mind of Late Han China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 126.

43 Bielenstein, "Institutions," 517.

individual candidate, as can be seen from their demand that candidates be scrutinized with a twofold aim: to make sure that they have some ability and to guarantee that the task assigned to them will not be too much for them.

The Submission of Memorials and of Reports

For the authors of the *Scripture*, writing is an essential tool of communication, particularly communication between government and the people. The authors take particular interest in reports on local mismanagement, natural disasters, and other worries originating from the lower strata of the administration or from among the people. They lay enough stress on this issue to allow us to conclude that they have observed problems with the transmission of such reports. They are ardent about the need for low-ranking officials and the people in general to make their voice heard, as they see this as heaven's way of communicating its will:

> Disasters and abnormal phenomena, whether big or small, are to be reported, without the slightest omission.... All trespasses, whether big or small, must be made known. Good and bad deeds, big or small, must also be made known, in their entirety. The good must be rewarded for their merit.... "Reporting" means that abnormal phenomena, disasters, and diseases whether big or small in size and scope, irregularities of wind and of rain, as well as the great and small sufferings of the people and the ten thousand plants and beings, are all collected and discussed and then reported.... This is the art of establishing great peace. By properly applying it, the ruler will approach the model set up by the heart of heaven.... Since the division between heaven and earth, the disaster of inheriting evil has been growing. This is because such reporting of events has been inadequate.[44]

For a lord ruling over others to lose contact with the grassroots is termed blockage or rupture, which, wherever it occurs, is deemed disastrous. It

[44] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 127.324; Barbara Hendrischke, "The Daoist Utopia of Great Peace," *Oriens Extremus* 35, no. 1–2 (1992): 75.

prevents cosmic forces from functioning properly, as for instance rain falling at the right time.[45]

At another level, as if exemplifying the general cosmic outlook, the submission of memorials is seen as crucial to a network of mutual supervision and control:

> Now what this means is this: A leading local official is indeed afraid of the people revealing his affairs; by means of the six vital points of inspection the official obtains the people's trust. The people are also afraid that the county official will see through their manipulations so they will try to be trustworthy. The county official and the local people are both afraid of travelers who, having understood the local manipulations, may submit memorials in other places, and they will both try to be trustworthy. Travelers when submitting memorials are in turn afraid that the county official and the local people will understand their manipulations, and they, too, will try to be trustworthy. The more they are afraid of each other, the less will they dare to speak carelessly. Moreover, nothing can be hidden. Therefore, as there are the three places for submitting memorials, that is, the county official, the local people, and travelers, and moreover, as [memorials] are all compared with each other, nothing will be omitted.[46]

The "six points of inspection" (*liukao* 六考) can be understood only as referring to the Han bureaucracy's "six articles" (*liutiao* 六條) that listed the questions to be raised by an outside inspector in charge of controlling the government of commanderies and kingdoms.[47] A main concern of these articles was the integrity of government officials when facing local power holders and their interests. The authors of the *Scripture* argue that fear of this inspection and fear of reports submitted by other parties helped to keep local officials honest. They raise this point repeatedly: local officials will submit reliable reports that mention problems that might damage their careers only when they

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[45] Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 203ff.

[46] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 127.328.

[47] De Crespigny, "Inspection and Surveillance Officials," 48ff.; Luo Chi 羅熾, *Taiping jing zhuyi* 太平經注譯 (Chongqing: Xi'nan shifan daxue chubanshe, 1996), 562.

are afraid that the local people or travelers might do so.[48]

For this reason the *Scripture* contains detailed advice on how to submit reports so that the local administration will not be able to suppress the information or get back at the writers for the trouble they are causing. Informants are advised to leave their own hamlet, district, county, commandery, and even province to deliver their reports elsewhere to avoid the threats and intervention of local officials, notwithstanding the heavy penalties that were to be applied for officials who interfered with such communication.[49] Moreover, once properly instructed, the ruler would

> ... in all provinces and commanderies, reaching into distant border regions, have a well constructed building set up in each county and district center. It is to be placed in the market of towns at the crossings of major roads. It must be thirty feet high and thirty feet wide, with openings in each of the four directions that a person can easily access. These openings are to have room for hands to be stretched in and to be taken out. The door is to be securely locked so as to not allow men to enter as they choose. A notice is to be hung up outside ... which clearly states the following: The ruler will take note of good men's precious texts and rare recipes, good sayings, and oral advice. What people keep in their breast can be put into words. It must all be reported in writing and placed in this building, putting down one's own family name and style.[50]

The non-Chinese living in border regions were to be integrated into this information network.[51] The authors of the *Scripture* have a point when

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[48] See also Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 167.467. This passage is from the *Taiping jing chao* 太平經鈔, a digest of the whole of the *Taiping jing* that allows a glimpse at those two-thirds of original text's 170 *juan* that have not come down to us. Judging by its rendering of *Taiping jing* sections that have been transmitted, the quotations and short paraphrases from the *Chao* are close to the original text. The *Chao* is attributed to Lüqiu Fangyuan 閭丘方遠, a Daoist hermit who died in 902 C.E. Wang Ming's edition includes references to or the text of the *Chao*, juxtaposed to the text of the *Taiping jing*.

[49] Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 110; Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 127.317ff.

[50] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 129.332.

[51] Ibid., 129.333.

they mention that the common people might have problems submitting written messages. In Han times, only officials were permitted to use the postal service for such submissions; commoners were not.[52] Emperors repeatedly saw the need to actively encourage the submission of information. Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 B.C.E.) reestablished the old "post for speaking evil and criticizing" (*fei bang zhi mu* 誹謗之木), where people could jot down complaints. He also attempted to abolish laws "against speaking evil, criticizing, and monstrous talk" (*fei bang yao yan* 誹謗訞言).[53] Emperor Xuan (r. 74–49 B.C.E.) stipulated that he was to see memorials personally before they had been scrutinized by an assistant, and he changed his personal name to a rarely used character so that in writing subjects would find it easier to respect the taboo surrounding an emperor's name.[54] Emperor Ming (r. 57–75 C.E.), worried about the decreasing number of memorials, changed the submission procedure so that memorials would be accepted on all days, be they lucky or unlucky

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[52] Yuan Lihua 袁禮華, "Handai limin shangshu zhidu shulun" 漢代吏民上書制度述論, *Qiusuo* 求索 10 (2006), 204.

[53] Yuan, "Handai limin shangshu zhidu shulun," 205, and *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 4.118; Ban Gu 班固, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty, by Pan Ku. A Critical Translation, with Annotations, by Homer H. Dubs*, trans. Homer H. Dubs, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938), vol. 1, 244. Dubs gives an account of the legends surrounding this post for speaking evil, which is supposed to go back to Emperors Yao or Shun.

[54] *Han shu*, 8.247ff. and 256. Cf. An Zuozhang 安作璋 and Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基, *Qin Han guanzhi shigao* 秦漢官制史稿 (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2007), 882. The Han dynasty government worked at times with submitting memorials in two copies, one to be read by an official: "The person who had charge of the office of palace writers would first open the seal on the duplicate copy, and if he did not approve of the contents of the letter would put both copies aside and not allow the matter to come before the emperor" (*Han shu*, 74.3135, translation by Watson: Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, 2 vols. [Hong Kong: Renditions–Columbia University Press, 1993], 177). This is mentioned in the biography of Wei Xiang 魏相, who in 68 B.C.E. managed to persuade the emperor to have this custom abolished. We are not told for how long. This problem is addressed in the *Scripture* only in general terms when it is stated that memorials must not be held up.

(*fan zhi* 反支).[55] As the authors of the *Scripture* put it,

> The [virtuous] ruler will issue clear instructions and good directives, which will state that from now on all petty officials and ordinary subjects must remain in their place and try hard to submit memorials that list every good and wicked deed, to enlighten the ruler's government, and to spread heaven's vapor and that it is not permissible to intercept [reports].[56]

The fact that there were problems in communication between regions and the central authorities in the second century C.E. is supported by the decrease in officially recorded disasters. This decrease can be accounted for only by the fact that fewer disasters, observed locally, were mentioned in the reports that were sent upward.[57]

Memorials were a major tool of control and supervision. For the *Scripture*'s Celestial Master all were welcome. This leads to the question of how to distinguish trustworthy reports from those that are not. The *Scripture* mentions several methods. One is to "wait and see," as suggested below, where a three-year period is mentioned. Another is to seek truth in quantity and to trust in the veracity of an observation that is mentioned in ten reports rather than in only one.[58] It is characteristic of the environment of the *Scripture*, situated at the lowest edge of the literate world, that the identity of the person making a report was not seen as related to its trustworthiness. The historical fact that memorials were a major tool in power struggles within the leading strata was of no concern to the authors of the *Scripture*.[59] For them, memorials have no other function than to prevent blockage.

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[55] Yuan, "Handai limin shangshu zhidu shulun," 205, based on Peng, *Qian fu lun jian*, 18.221.

[56] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 65.152.

[57] Hans Bielenstein, "Han Portents and Prognostications," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 56 (1984): 97–112.

[58] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 127.326ff.

[59] Yuan, "Handai limin shangshu zhidu shulun," 206; cf. also the fate of Xiang Jie 襄楷, see *Hou Han shu*, 30B, and Rafe de Crespigny, *Portents of Protest in the Later Han Dynasty. The Memorials of Hsiang K'ai to Emperor Huan* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies and Australian National University Press, 1976).

The *Scripture* reserves the title "reports addressed to heaven, earth, and men" (*sandao xingshu* 三道行書) for submissions that unveiled malpractices:

> What has the character of heaven is texts that are spread in heaven, on earth, and among men (*sandao tongwen* 三道通文). Heaven has three patterns (*wen* 文), whose brightness is that of the three sources of light, namely the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sun scrutinizes Yang [all that is in the light], the moon Yin [all that is in the shade], and the stars what lies in between. That is why reports addressed to heaven, earth, and men undertake to provide explanations. Writings directed to the authorities must give only the name of the author. There is no need to ask who has conveyed them.[60]

This last suggestion is another attempt to encourage the submission of memorials by making it easier and safer.

The following passage points to the time lag between receipt of a memorial and its effect, which is an important component in making a memorial useful:

> Writings that are circulated in heaven, on earth, and among men in all eight directions as well as the sayings of the people and of officials of lower and higher rank must not be held back. Those that are urgent are to be dealt with immediately. Those not urgent are to be dealt with in the due course of all beings and things between heaven and earth: that is, in the seventh month everything is finished, in the eighth month examined, in the ninth month put into order and in the tenth month a decree is issued in response. Having submitted reports that are found to be trustworthy and sincere for three years in a row a person will be approached with an offer of employment. Such a person will then act as an honest official for the country, with an accurate ear and a sharp eye.[61]

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[60] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 79.198, and Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 322ff. For the translation and understanding of *sandao xingshu* cf. Max Kaltenmark, "The Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*," in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 26.

[61] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 81.206; cf. Yu, *Taiping jing zhengdu*, 172; cf. also Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 65.315.

The final sentences in this passage depict the submission of reports as a legitimate procedure through which noncommissioned officials can draw attention to their own expertise. In a short article on the submission of memorials in Han dynasty times, Yuan Lihua shows that, according to regular practice, those who submitted acceptable memorials could indeed expect promotion or entry into officialdom, as if they had been formally recommended.[62] When a submission concerned an uprising, the rise in rank was considerable. However, no cases seem to have been recorded where a commoner would have profited from a submission.

The *Scripture* also pays attention to the system of reporting that was in place between the different echelons of government. This system's ancestry is impeccable, as the Great Yu is said to have advised Emperor Shun to use it to control his ministers.[63] Once a year, officials were expected to submit a performance report:

> In autumn everything is ready, and in winter it is all stored, as decided by heaven's vapor. Plants have ripened by the eighth month of mid autumn, so yields can be divided up. Thus according to the model set by heaven and earth one must start in the eighth month to divide things up and inspect them in detail. In the ninth month heaven's vapor has come to an end. By this month, plants are prepared to die. So in the ninth month our inspections are concluded and we understand good and bad points. Ten is the last figure. When plants reach the tenth month they return to the beginning.... So in the tenth month results are verified and transmitted to subordinates.... Should there be no verification of any sort [this means that] the aim has not been achieved.... If we make petty officials and ordinary subjects think critically about all they did wrong, they will not dare to do it again. In the years to come they will show more respect and everything will turn out well. If results are not passed down and mistakes are not reflected on, ordinary subjects and low-ranking officials will stubbornly ignore directions. Their hearts will not change unless they see for themselves the mistakes that they have made.[64]

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[62] Yuan, "Handai limin shangshu zhidu shulun," 205.

[63] Legge, *The Shoo king* 書經, "Yih and Tseih" 益稷, *Chinese Classics*, 83. This is quoted by Wang Fu in the chapter "Kaoji" 考績 (Examining Merit) as a reminder of how things should be.

[64] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 65.153ff.; cf. Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 316ff.

In the scenario depicted here officials write a yearly report, after the harvest, regarding harvest figures, the number of households, the size of fields, and the occurrence of banditry, along with other information,[65] and this report is then verified or audited by higher levels within the bureaucracy. According to Han dynasty administrative rules, this would indeed have taken place between the county and the commandery levels of administration.[66] Officials in charge of commanderies would then, in the twelfth month, before the beginning of the new lunar year, submit their reports to the central administration.

We may conclude that the authors of the text saw the system of communication between government officials and outsiders, and within government itself, as a process of the highest political importance. They surrounded the actual system of reporting with an ideal aura. They took this as far as juxtaposing the production and management of written reports with heaven's arrangement of stars. Both were *wen* 文 (patterns) and meant to serve as orientation.

Meting Out Penalties

In the Han dynasty political setup, punishing officials for wrongdoing was, to put it simply, a point where traditions as well as interests clashed. So when, in 132 C.E., Zuo Xiong suggested a lifelong proscription for dishonest officials, he remained isolated.[67] The demotion of incompetent officials was not automatic. If it had been, Xun Yue (148–209) would have had no need to take up the case in detail:

> The minor (小) [officials] who have proven themselves competent in office should ultimately be promoted to high-ranking posts (大). Then those in lower ranks (下位) will nurture a competitive spirit. The senior officials (大) who have failed in their assigned duties should be demoted to lower posts; then those in high ranks will be more prudent. When the

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[65] Wang Xianqian 王先謙, as quoted in An and Xiong, *Qin Han guanzhi shigao*, 887, and cf. An and Xiong, *Qin Han guanzhi shigao*, 892–895.

[66] Masakazu Kamiya, "The Staffing Structure of Commandery Offices and County Offices and the Relationship between Commanderies and Counties in the Han Dynasty," *Acta Asiatica* 58 (1990): 84.

[67] De Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1183.

> sacred tripod overturns the [broken leg which was the cause of the overturning] should be liable to statutory punishment. Why should [those in authority] be reluctant to demote [such officials]?[68]

In any case, to address openly the misconduct of an official was risky. Such accusations were rather frequent in the second century C.E., when government was divided into different political factions and accusations often led to the violent end of the accuser. In general terms, greed, corruption, nepotism, and partiality were topics often addressed by high-ranking politicians. However, even for them the mentioning of names and details was risky. The authors of the *Scripture* tackled the problem by removing the scene far away to the world of spirits. The following passage directly juxtaposes the conduct of spirits with that of officials:

> Heaven considers fifteen days a small unit and thus the moon after fifteen days turns backwards in its small cycle. Heaven considers one month a medium and one year a large division. In order to earn a living, all spirits between heaven and earth must help heaven to nourish the twelve thousand beings and plants so that they may grow properly, in the same way as officials and worthies live by helping the ruler raise the people and the ten thousands beings and plants. They take heaven as their model: on the fifteenth of each month a short response (*dui* 對)[69] is due, a medium-sized

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[68] *Shen jian* 申鑑, 2.9, translation by Ch'en, *Hsün Yüeh and the Mind of Late Han China*, 130. Cf. *Zhou Yi yinde: fu biaojiao jingwen = A Concordance to Yi ching* (Taipei: Chengwen and Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1966), 31.50, on the broken tripod.

[69] The term *dui*, or rather *shangdui* 上對, is used once more in the *Scripture* as it is used here, referring to an official note addressed to one's superior, see Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 179.526: "The names are submitted to the bureau of fate. According to the submitted response, when the points of life are used up a man must enter earth" 上名命曹上對算盡當入土, cf. Yu, *Taiping jing zhengdu*, 390; for the context of this passage see Espesset, "Criminalized Abnormality," 36. *Dui* points to a particular type of memorial written in response to an edict. Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 is said to have been good at writing *dui* (*Han shu*, 58.2617). In the same section (151), the *Scripture* has the expression *jiandui* 見對 "to be interrogated," see note 79 below. In both passages the reading in this paper follows Luo, *Taiping jing zhuyi*, 701 and 703. *Jiandui* does not occur elsewhere in the text.

> one at the end of the month, and a full response at the end of the year. In this way someone who deserves promotion will get it and someone who does not will be asked to retire or will be penalized.... Thus the evil spirits will be penalized and so will their clients, in the same way as the bad conduct of rebellious, evil officials is a crime that extends to their clients.[70]

The reference to "clients" (*ke* 客) is interesting in that in the human world officials did indeed rely on personal retainers to help with the collection of taxes and application of penalties, two activities that left much room for paying and receiving bribes. In the outgoing Han empire, the informal and private relationship between patron and client gained importance as official and public connections lost relevance.[71] This passage presents heaven as a careful and circumspect supervisor of its officialdom.

However, the juxtaposition of the spirit and human worlds is not always presented clearly. In the following case we can assume only that the argument reaches beyond the healing of illness to the taking of bribes in general. In cases that were known to be hopeless this was considered to be a crime. The authors accuse perverse spirits and their human spokesmen of committing that crime by accepting huge offerings from people who have fallen ill due to their own misconduct and who will return to health only through repentance and moral reform. The spirits and their human spokesmen know they can do nothing for such people:

> Perverse spirits, pretending to be true spirits, act wildly and cut human beings down, killing them whether they are the right person or not. Crimes, resentment, and litigations reach up to heaven. The Lord of Heaven puts things in order by killing the specialists who serve such spirits and imprisoning their sons and grandsons. These specialists seek good luck for their patients, wishing to restore them to life but their calls go unheard, and instead they bring their patients bad luck. A specialist serving perverse spirits will say of himself: "The spirits [I serve] are true spirits and instruct me in what to put forth." When would perverse spirits and ghosts ever have dared to appear before the Lord of Heaven to beg for a

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[70] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 151.407ff.

[71] Sadao Nishijima, "The Economic and Social History of Former Han," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 641.

> human being? These specialists only use up people's wine, dried meat, dried fruit, and cakes. When someone falls ill and is cured despite the specialists who serve perverse spirits, we may say that this patient is among those not expected to die. Someone whose actions are not yet recorded as trespassing can indeed be cured, as heaven itself will cure that person. How can the specialists who serve perverse spirits boast that they have often cured illnesses? And yet they demand the nice things people have. After their actions have attracted attention, perverse spirits are called upon to be investigated for the crime of corruption (*cangzui* 藏罪, for *zangzui* 贓罪). When there has been a lot of it and on a large scale they don't get away alive.[72]

As I read it, this passage is directing accusations at spirit specialists who make use of perverse spirits and also at these spirits themselves. The argument is that illness is caused by a patient's wrongdoing and can therefore be healed only by confession. The *Scripture* shows how a figure titled Lord of Heaven puts these spirits and their human spokesmen to death as soon as knowledge of their misdeeds reaches him.

The authors of the *Scripture* pay particular attention to officials of low rank at the bottom of the bureaucratic hierarchy who have direct dealings with the common people. The following complaint is not directed at anyone in particular but seems to depict a situation in which officials might have been involved:

> That is why the wise and worthy of old esteemed the use of *dao* and virtue and won people over through benevolence and love. It was not deemed right to oppress others through severity, punishments, and terror. Should

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[72] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 201.620ff., layer B; for the composition of the *Taiping jing* and the characteristics of what has been termed layers A and B cf. Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 44–53. The authors of layer B take a keen interest in bureaucratic processes. For the context of the passage cf. Donald Harper, "Dunhuang Iatromantic Manuscripts: P.2856 Rº and P.2675 Vº," in *Medieval Chinese Medicine. The Dunhuang Medical Manuscripts*, ed. Vivienne Lo and Christopher Cullen (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 156, and Masaaki Tsuchiya, "Confession of Sins and Awareness of Self in the *Taiping jing*," in *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual*, ed. Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 46.

> someone continue to overawe, intimidate, and subdue others by such crooked means, the highest majestic vapor of great peace wouldn't come to support his reign. Since this is so, those over whom he ruled would not agree with him. Grief stricken, they wouldn't dare to speak up from fear, just as men whose clothes have been stolen by a robber might not dare to speak up, even though they know the culprit quite well. Instead, they may use fine words and call the robber "general" and "supreme ruler." Or people may be too weak to appeal on their own account and do not dare to speak up.[73]

This passage warns against the consequences of the popular resentment that oppressive behavior is bound to cause; resentment prevents the arrival of great peace. The following passage shows that officials can also cause damage by being neglectful. We here meet with a human being whose good conduct has enabled him to gain appointment as a celestial clerk. His task is to write reports dealing, we might add, with the conduct of fellow celestial officials and also of human beings. This task entails considerable responsibility and is of some consequence, as human beings who become the subject of a negative report suffer illness or death:

> In antiquity, as the words of spirit-like and wise men never strayed from the guidelines, rules and laws developed naturally.... Keep this always in mind and you might become a celestial spirit. Even in this transformation you must not stray from the guidelines, just as the vapors of the four seasons must not be offended. Once you have become a spirit you must make sure not to be so careless as to allow things to become unclear. When heaven undertakes an investigation (*zhan* 占), spirits assist as clerks. They must not report carelessly. If they are all right, they will retain their livelihood. If not, they will be banished and sent to sell vegetables in the market in a disgraceful manner, an ugly sight, looked down upon by other spirits and despised by the common people. When they have trespassed severely and the banishment is long, it will be forty years before they can again rise up to act as spirit clerks. For a middling crime it is thirty years and for a lesser crime ten.[74]

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[73] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 64.144ff.

[74] Ibid., 187.570; cf. Espesset, "Criminalized Abnormality," 45.

The assurance that heaven will "undertake an investigation" is seen as threatening and also as promising. The authors of the *Scripture* expect a lot from such investigations, as a high-ranking official arriving on the scene might indeed set things right:

> Now for each being there is a lord who is in charge (*junzhang* 君長), even for humble and lowly people in distant regions, at the four edges of the world, and also for wicked men who are down below on the ground, countless, as are ants, far beneath the supreme ruler. If someone should without cause hurt these thousands of ordinary people, a complaint will come forth from the house of the victim. A report will be submitted to the ruler, who will, when he hears of it, become very angry and by imperial edict command an investigation of this matter, which will become a big issue in provinces, commanderies, and counties. More than one person involved in these proceedings will perish.[75]

While it is left open whether those indicted are commoners or officials, it is clearly expected that such an investigation will right a wrong. Here the control over officials leads to the control that heaven exercises over all beings, including its spirit officials. Heaven maintains and uses records—"Reports addressed to heaven, earth and men"—of all wrongdoing.[76]

In the passages dealt with above, the authors of the *Scripture* document trust in someone holding the highest authority, be that heaven or a human ruler. Once someone in authority gets involved, things will be all right. While this perspective resembles that of the narrators of fairy tales, there is a realistic kernel. The *Scripture* describes one such investigation that took place in a village and was meant to stop the activities of a group of local bandits.[77] Here the arrival of an outside official appears to have been a well-prepared and powerful event that had a good chance of leading to practical success.

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[75] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 137.385.

[76] Ibid., 211.672ff.

[77] Ibid., 43.40ff. and cf. Kaltenmark, "Ideology of the *T'ai-p'ing ching*," 32ff. on the sociopolitical relevance of this passage.

The Characteristics of the Great-Peace Official

The question of what an ideal official is like transcends the institutional lineup that has so far been the focus of this paper. As was customary in writings that took their clue from Confucius's sayings, the authors of the *Scripture* treated this question as an integral part of the more general issue of human goodness and morality. For them morality had two facets. To be good meant to follow the accustomed norms of filial piety, benevolence, and trustworthiness. It also meant to follow heaven's newly revealed instructions: A good person was one who served heaven, cherished and protected life, and prevented resentment and suffering among men and women. The person of a great-peace official was expected to be good, in this sense, and was also meant to be his lord's servant, in a traditional manner. As there were aspects of the real late–Han dynasty situation and of a future world of great peace in the world depicted in the *Scripture*, the qualities of great-peace officials covered a wide spectrum. In a world of great peace, officials could expect to serve a lord who was virtuous and followed *dao*. In a world preparing for great peace this was not necessarily the case, and obedience on the part of officials had a touch of the complexity which Meng zi and other thinkers have dealt with. Since the authors of the *Scripture* depict how the future world will grow from the present world, officials are expected to be versatile.

In defining loyalty as an official's main virtue, the authors stress the need for this loyalty to extend to criticizing and reproving one's superiors, an activity that in their view was of similar cosmic relevance as the free flow of memorials and reports dealt with above:

> So it is in unison with the nature of heaven and earth that subordinates reprimand their superiors and that superiors reproach their subordinates. Each has strong points as well as shortcomings.[78]

The authors' frequent complaints about a lack of loyalty and trustworthiness allow us to conclude that in their observation all was not right. They back up these complaints by using their new vision of heaven and its means of control to utter threats. The *Scripture* presents a scenario

[78] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 59.102.

of the tortures suffered after death by unfilial sons, disobedient disciples, and disloyal officials. They are said to face regular interrogation:

> Regularly during the early hours of the day, at the beginning of a new moon, they will be interrogated (*jiandui* 見對) by heaven to give proper order to Yin and Yang and high or low rank to spirit officials. This procedure greatly distresses (*chou* 愁) the *hun* and the *po* soul of a person. It comes to an end only with complete extinction.[79]

The untrustworthy or "deceitful" (*qi* 欺) risk similar punishment since they have committed an offence against heaven:

> That a son deceives his father and mother, an official his lord, and a subordinate his superior is what we call deceiving heaven and a crime too big to be excused.[80]

These passages show that, in demanding loyalty and trustworthiness in a traditional sense, the authors of the *Scripture* enhanced their arguments with cosmological and religious elements. Other passages point to a new problem in that the strong presence of heaven was seen to add another hierarchical level beyond that of political or social superior and inferior.

The belief that heaven was in direct contact with all human beings and could therefore be approached by everyone made it tempting to complain to heaven about one's superiors. However, the authors of the *Scripture* argue that this temptation must be resisted:

> When father and mother bring forth children they want them all to be worthy and good. How should they take joy in their children's evil conduct? If children were to accuse father and mother of crimes, they would be seen as disobedient and unfilial children. Now a lord takes joy in the good deeds of those whom he calls officials. When should he ever have instructed them to do evil? And yet, ordinary subjects and officials undertake enough cruel and evil deeds to make heaven and earth send disasters. These men then turn around and blame their lord for the sufferings the people have to endure. In this way certain treacherous petty

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[79] Ibid., 151.406. This leads to the proposition that not just the culprits mentioned here but all spirits are thus interrogated, as discussed above, note 69.

[80] Wang, *Taiping jing hejiao*, 103.249.

> clerks bring forth accusations to heaven. We call this an act of rebellious disobedience performed by ordinary subjects and officials and a crime that cannot be excused. To accuse one's lord is extreme, and amounts to great trouble making.[81]

This passage shows that the belief in heaven contains elements that could unsettle hierarchical structures. The authors stress that it is unethical for subordinates to make use of this. However, the problem reappears in the belief in the cosmic interconnectedness of all beings and events, as this had repercussions in the relationship between a lord and his dependents. In a world of great peace, the conduct of officials could set an example for the conduct of their superiors:

> Once petty officials and ordinary subjects change their minds and become good, they find favor with heaven, and someone in superior position must become even better. Once they change a great deal, there is bound to be a lot of good. [But] should they stubbornly stay as they are and refuse to change, their superior will remain stubborn. Should [petty officials] not stop being wicked, their superior will become even more so. When petty officials and ordinary subjects make heaven quite angry by trying to deceive it, someone in a superior position is bound to become even more deceptive.[82]

In a world of great peace, officials and the people carry a new responsibility. The system of correspondences is said to be effective in all directions, and therefore the conduct of superiors can be seen to depend on that of their subordinates.

Moreover, once great peace arrives, paradisiacal kindness and harmony will prevail. Officials will then be confronted with new demands:

> This is the conduct of officials and ordinary subjects who excel in goodness. Always, day and night, they feel concern for their sovereign. They want him to be secure and in their hearts they feel what pains him. They are always pleased to watch how he lays down his official insignia and government occurs on its own.[83]

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[81] Ibid., 152.418ff.

[82] Ibid., 65.154.

[83] Ibid., 63.132ff.

In the same tenor, great-peace officials are said to be obliged to help their lord achieve longevity, as officials supposedly did in early antiquity:

> Many officials of early antiquity were transcendent and lived long lives. They could thus help their lord to long life. In middle antiquity many knew how to hold on to *dao* and virtue. They could thus help their lord to live without any worries. In late antiquity, there were many fools who didn't know the true *dao* and made their lord become quite foolish.[84]

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the authors of the *Scripture on Great Peace* took a critical interest in matters of government and bureaucracy. They observed particular problems in the process of selecting and controlling officials. Up to a certain point their concerns and suggestions were similar to those of mainstream thinkers of the outgoing Han era. What made their approach distinctive was the populist tendency that pervaded their argumentation. Their suggestions were aimed at giving more social and political space to the common people: officials must be chosen from a wide range of people rather than from the select families who held central power; the border between career officials and minor locally recruited officials must be made porous; the border between officials and commoners must be made porous by integrating commoners in the supervision of officials; officials who offended against regulations must be reduced to commoner status. When they argued that officials should be selected from a wide range of people, they referred more to attitude and moral standards than to qualifications. If someone lacked sufficient skill, it was his superior, who had obviously set a task that was too hard for him, who was to blame. To thus fault a superior who expected too much rather than the inferior who could not do as he was told curtailed elitist expectations. However, in no way did the authors of the *Scripture* oppose hierarchical social and bureaucratic order; they demanded only that it become more open and that more attention be paid to the interests of those at the lower end. In their view the free flow of information and ongoing communication were meant to serve similar ends. Such

[84] Ibid., 155.436.

communication was needed between different levels of the administration and also between government representatives and the population at large as it might provide the common people some recourse against the misdemeanors of local officials. In outlining the characteristics of an ideal official the authors stressed the official's role as that of a loyal but intellectually independent advisor as envisaged by Confucius and his followers.

These suggestions may have stemmed from observing actual malpractice. They have points in common with other critiques of the political situation of the outgoing Han dynasty, when the traditional elites were in disarray and popular uprisings were frequent. The populist tendency we have observed is rooted in the context of the great-peace teachings that the *Scripture* presents in much detail. These teachings proclaim that heaven will send great peace only after political leaders have alleviated the people's sufferings. Thereby the well-being of the common people becomes crucial for the salvation and indeed the physical survival of humankind. The authors of the *Scripture* were not analyzing political practice in isolation. This is documented in principle in the role they attributed to the common people. It is also documented in details of their argumentation. This argumentation involves heaven in several functions. Heaven is seen to inflict punishment on human culprits, for instance disloyal officials, beyond the penalties men might design for them, as heaven's punishments continue after death. Heaven is also important as hierarchically supreme. Situated above humankind's political leaders, its existence is a powerful reminder of the need for mutual cohesion and responsiveness in the human world. Moreover, heaven serves as a model for human activity. A close description of the rigid way heaven deals with neglect and corruption among its own servants seems to support the instruction for human leaders to act likewise in their own realm. Here the escape into a superhuman world may have relieved the authors of the *Scripture* of the risky task of suggesting retribution against corrupt officials in their own sphere.

In proposing that the authors of the *Scripture* observed and reacted to the social and political situation of the outgoing Han era, this paper has attempted to show that their observations fit aspects of the historical reality and of the discourse of that period. It can thereby be seen as strengthening the thesis that much of the *Scripture on Great Peace* goes back to the late Han dynasty. As this was also the period of the beginnings of religious Daoism we may conclude that, at this stage,

certain Daoist thinkers had a keen interest in saving the Han empire, notwithstanding their search for longevity, belief in heaven and its spirits, and practice of intense methods of meditation. After the empire had ended, Daoists moved on to concerns about "how to select and control" the libationers in charge of religious communities, rather than government officials.

早期道教實踐：官員的任用和管理

芭芭拉・亨德施克（Barbara Hendrischke）

摘 要

本文以公元二世紀的著作《太平經》為背景材料，假定其作者對當時的政局及行政狀況進行了反思和回應，並就此展開論述。文章認為，《太平經》的作者參與了同一時代人提出的評論，這批人大多譴責漢王國機構的瓦解和每況愈下的人民生活。《太平經》的作者稱，太平的新時代即將來臨，人們需要通過系列的改革為迎接新時代做好準備，這其中就涉及到行政體制的改革。他們建議修改官員任用的流程，加速議事及報告的提交，加重對行政瀆職的懲罰。這一過程主要通過常規審訊和撰寫及提交報告來執行，此類報告中包括《三道行書》。這些改革旨在以民眾利益為先，減輕人民的怨恨和反抗。 建議的重點在於放寬官員選拔範圍，並利用外在的監督機制控制官員行為。《太平經》作者就法律、制度，以及代表最高權威的天意等方面進行了論述。在他們看來，時代充滿着飛速的變化，理想的官員應該集先人的美德和後世太平的特點於一身：要忠誠，可靠，富有責任感，同時要能確保上級健康長壽、安枕無憂，如果可能的話，甚至超越死亡，上天成仙。

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