

Editing and Translating the *Taiping Jing* and the Great Peace Textual Corpus*

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A hundred years ago, L. Wieger, S. J. (1856–1933) compiled the first Western catalogue of the works included in the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) collection of Taoist scriptures, the fifteenth-century *Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏. The entry therein dealing with the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (Scripture of Great Peace) today shows both disdain and incomprehension: Wieger defined the text as “a sort of summa, almost worthless,” “dealing with the ordinary subjects” and “mostly containing formulae for a peaceful, painless life.”¹ The Jesuit likely did not read much of, nor understand, the text. Without its author realizing it, this scathing judgement also summed up the age-old attitude of the Chinese official sphere toward intellectual production not vetted by the keepers of orthodoxy. This attitude helps understand why the *Taiping jing* is still widely ignored in general accounts on, or anthologies of, Chinese literature and thought, sometimes even religion.

And yet, as an increasing number of works in Oriental as well as Western languages has shown since the early twentieth century, this text clearly reflects ideas deeply rooted in the world-view of the Han 漢 era (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) and, as such, must play a key role in our understanding of the intellectual and social background of the early history of imperial China. As the *Taiping jing* is slowly being reinstated in the place it should occupy in the studies of classical China, critical editions of the text have multiplied, completed by an index, online resources, and, recently, a long-awaited first English translation. Before examining the most prominent of these publications, the following prolegomena will help clarify the nature of the material encompassed by the Chinese trisyllable.

* Parts of this article previously appeared as a book review in *Études chinoises* 26 (2007), pp. 327–36.

¹ Léon Wieger, *Taoïsme. Tome 1: Bibliographie générale* (Hien-hien, Ho-kien-fou: Imprimerie de la Mission, 1911), p. 175, no. 1087. The *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* (on which, see p. 470 below) is mistakenly defined as a “discourse on no. 1087” (*ibid.*, no. 1088).

Defining the Great Peace Corpus

A basic but lasting misunderstanding is to treat the *Taiping jing* as a single text, whereas the Great Peace tradition has actually left a textual corpus. This “Great Peace corpus” is comprised of five documents—four texts from the Taoist Canon, plus a manuscript from Dunhuang 敦煌. All these documents bear no date and are anonymous or, at best, connected with divine intercessors. Two of them (#2 and #4 below) have been tentatively attributed to Lüqiu Fangyuan 閻丘方遠, a Taoist who died in 902, but such a paternity, though possible, has yet to be confirmed.

1. The *Taiping jing* (CT 1101; 642 folios).² The “master text” of the tradition, today fragmentary. Organized into 57 “chapters” (*juan* 卷) numbered 35–37, 39–51, 53–55, 65–72, 86, 88–93, 96–114, and 116–19; subdivided into 129 “sections” numbered 41–48, 50–79, 81–83, 99–111, 127, 129–41, 151–204, and 207–13.³

2. The *Taiping jing chao* 太平經鈔 (Excerpts from the Scripture of Great Peace) (CT 1101, chapters 1–10; 211 folios). A digest of the master text. Its present location in the Taoist Canon, as the opening part of the *Taiping jing* whose chapters 1–34 are missing, has long misled editors and readers into thinking that both were a single text.

3. The *Taiping jing fuwen xu* 太平經複文序 (Postface to the doubled characters of the Scripture of Great Peace) (2 folios). Appended to CT 1101, a definitive Taoist and canonical history of the Great Peace tradition, mostly based on a rewriting of earlier material.

4. The *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* 太平經聖君祕旨 (Secret instructions of the saintly lord of the Scripture of Great Peace) (CT 1102; 7 folios). A short collection of stanzas partly traceable to the *Taiping jing*, focused on meditation and visualization practices.

5. The Dunhuang manuscript Stein (S.) 4226 (London, The British Library, manuscript Or.8210/S.4226/R.1; 14 panels, 347 columns). The single first-hand source of the corpus. Its last panel reads *Taiping bu juan di er* 太平部卷第二 (Great Peace section, second roll), hence the usual title of the manuscript. An almost complete table of contents of a late sixth-century *Taiping jing* unfolds between a diptych of introductory and concluding paragraphs.

Dozens of *Taiping jing* quotations from various sources (mostly Taoist) complement this corpus. While some of these quotations are traceable to the corpus, others constitute original Great Peace material, sometimes with a literary form of their own.

In modern studies, *Taiping jing chao* material is commonly yet mistakenly quoted as genuine *Taiping jing* material, and both are indiscriminately referred to as a Han source. Indeed, according to a few accounts in official dynastic histories, the tradition appeared

² CT # refers to the numbering in *Concordance du Tao-tsang*, ed. Kristofer Schipper (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1975).

³ In order to make references easier, I adopt Hendrischke’s English terms for *juan* (“chapter”) and its subdivision into textual units bearing titles (“sections”).

during the Han era, with two forerunner texts revealed to their promoters by supernatural powers. Because of their unorthodox ideas, both texts were ultimately rejected by the authorities while their promoters, due to their political affiliation or failure to bring forth auspicious events, suffered various judicial penalties. Nothing remains of these two earliest Great Peace texts today, apart from a few scattered allusions. In the context of social unrest and self-help communities of the second and early third centuries, Great Peace undoubtedly played a role in the events which led to the collapse of the Han dynasty—either within a religious group or as inspirational reading for popular leaders. However, since this role is nowhere clearly accounted for, stating as glaringly obvious that the *Taiping jing* “inspired” the Yellow Turbans’ uprising constitutes either an unscientific fantasy or a naïve simplification.⁴ This view meets the orthodox line followed by scholars of mainland China since the *Taiping jing* was, for ideological purposes, acclaimed as the earliest known revolutionary manifesto of the Chinese rural masses.⁵

Alternate titles of later Great Peace texts include *Taiping dongji zhi jing* 太平洞極之經 (Scripture of all-pervading Great Peace), a 144-chapter text purportedly revealed to Zhang Ling 張陵 in 142, which shows the first recuperation of the Great Peace tradition by the early Taoist Church (some scholars believe that the phrase refers to a separate Great Peace text, now lost, while others argue that the expression only echoes the thematic contents of the *Taiping jing*); and *Taiping dao jing* 太平道經 (Scripture of the Way of Great Peace), frequently mentioned in fifth-century Taoist sources, referring either to a single book or to the various writings composed, kept, or made use of, by a Great Peace movement.

During the period of division (third to sixth centuries), the *Taiping jing* was said to be lost, then “rediscovered” by members of the Shangqing 上清 (Upper Clarity) Taoist school. Tales of dubious historicity, strategically calling on the authority of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), recount how Taoists managed to get hold of original parts of the ancient scripture in undefined or remote areas.⁶ In the light of the Dunhuang manuscript, it is assumed that, at this stage, the *Taiping jing* was a voluminous work divided into 10

⁴ Livia Kohn, “Daoism (Taoism): Religious,” in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 223, believes that the *Taiping jing* “was lost after the Yellow Turban rebellion of 184 (which it had inspired).”

⁵ Yang Kuan 楊寬, “Lun *Taiping jing*: wo guo di yi bu nongmin geming de lilun zhuzuo” 論《太平經》——我國第一部農民革命的理論著作, *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊, 1959, no. 9, pp. 26–34.

⁶ See Yamada Toshiaki 山田利明, “Rikuchō ni okeru *Taiheikyō* no denshō” 六朝における『太平經』の傳承, *Tōyō daigaku Chūgoku tetsugaku bungakuka kiyō* 東洋大學中國哲學文學科紀要 46, no. 1 (1993), pp. 17–41; Maeda Shigeki 前田繁樹, “Saishutsu bon *Taiheikyō* ni tsuite: rikuchō matsu dōkyō shoha no naka de” 再出本『太平經』について—六朝末道教諸派の中で, in *Dōkyō bunka eno tenbō* 道教文化への展望, ed. Dōkyō bunka kenkyūkai 道教文化研究會 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha 平河出版社, 1994), pp. 153–79.

“parts” (*bu* 部), 170 chapters, and 366 sections. Suspicion about its authenticity was voiced in Buddhist ranks.⁷

Mentions of the title of the Great Peace master text were progressively standardized by the time of the imperial reunification and the trisyllable “*Taiping jing*” asserted itself in sources from the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) onwards. By this time, the text had entered the Taoist Canon as an orthodox, acknowledged Taoist scripture purged of its rebellious past. The fate of the Great Peace texts was henceforth bound to that of the successive editions of the Canon, which were to suffer many hardships until the completion of the Ming Taoist Canon in 1445.⁸ This process of textual disintegration took away no less than two thirds of the Shangqing “re-edition” of the scripture.

Although the transmitted Great Peace corpus appears in the fifteenth-century collection of Taoist scriptures, it is more and more widely accepted among Sinologists that, despite editing and possible interpolations during the period of division, the master text at least “does contain much old material” (Schipper, in *The Taoist Canon*, p. 280). In primary sources, the earliest quotations of the *Taiping jing* date back to the fifth or sixth century. Since the latest quotations which do not tally the extant text date to the end of the twelfth century, we may assume that the *Taiping jing* available during the mid-Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279) period still included material which came to be lost afterwards; in other words, that the fragmentary text preserved in the Ming Canon had still not reached its present shape at this time, whether the process of textual disintegration had already started or not.

Relying exclusively on the literary form (*wenti* 文體), Xiong Deji 熊德基 distinguished several “textual layers,” or “strata,” in the content of the *Taiping jing*.⁹ At least parts of the *Taiping jing chao* would seem to fit into this textual stratigraphy. However, dating these layers proved almost as controversial as dating the scripture as a whole. In fact, it is not possible to rely on the rhetoric format as the sole criterion for dating the Great Peace material, since both the literary form and thematic contents are heterogeneous. For instance, the fact that several passages were shown to be rhymed tetrameter and heptameter

⁷ Dao Shi 道世 (d. 683), in his *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (668), 55.703a–b (in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 [Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切經刊行會, 1924–35], vol. 53, no. 2122), states that the *Taiping jing* is a forgery made up of various Buddhist sutras during the Daye 大業 era (605–618) of the Sui 隋 dynasty. According to this polemicist, there is but one single authentic scripture among “more than one thousand scrolls” of Taoist texts—the *Daode jing*.

⁸ For the history of the Taoist Canon, see Kristofer Schipper, “General Introduction,” in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, ed. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 5–40.

⁹ Xiong Deji, “*Taiping jing* de zuozhe he sixiang ji qi yu Huangjin he Tianshi dao 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, 1962, no. 4, pp. 8–25.

verses must now be taken into full consideration.¹⁰ Moreover, apart from its textual content, the *Taiping jing* includes four sections entirely written in indecipherable glyphs called “doubled characters” (*fuwen* 複文), and illustrations probably of later origin.¹¹

Editing the Great Peace Corpus

Even though, throughout the twentieth century, the most prominent *Taiping jing* specialists worldwide were to be found in Japan,¹² *Taiping jing* scholarship in mainland China must be given credit for the compilation and publication of all the available critical editions of the corpus, some of which include more or less reliable translations in vernacular Chinese.

1. *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校, ed. Wang Ming 王明 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1960; 2d ed., 1979); in traditional characters. The earliest critical edition of the Great Peace corpus did not include the Dunhuang manuscript, whose first transcription was still unpublished by 1960; but the 1979 reissue contains 4 references to it. Wang’s major achievement was to complement the master text with excerpts from the *Taiping jing chao* and quotations from 25 sources, mostly from the Taoist Canon, for a total of 181 sections (the canonical version contains 129 sections). The *Taiping jing hejiao* remained the single critical edition of the canonical Great Peace corpus for more than thirty years. Despite its weaknesses, among which is an unreliable punctuation, it is still widely used, and has served as *materia prima* for every critical edition subsequently published.¹³

2. *Taiping jing* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, “Zhuzi baijia congshu” 諸子百家叢書, 1993); photocopies of the four Great Peace texts from the *Daozang* with superimposed punctuation marks. Although Wang Ming’s edition is not mentioned, the Shanghai editors, following in his footsteps, have inserted section titles in the table of contents (pp. 1–2) of chapters 2 (10 titles) and 10 (15 titles) of the *Taiping jing chao*.

¹⁰ Wu Weimin 伍偉民, “*Taiping jing yu qiyan shi de chuxing*” 《太平經》與七言詩的雛形, *Shanghai dao jiao* 上海道教, 1989, nos. 3–4, pp. 34–40; Wang Jian 王建, “*Taiping jing zhong de qiyan shi*” 《太平經》中的七言詩, *Guizhou shehui kexue* 貴州社會科學, 1995, no. 3, pp. 82–84, 100.

¹¹ As suggested by Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, “Sixiangshi yanjiu shiye zhong de tuxiang: guanyu tuxiang wenxian yanjiu de fangfa” 思想史研究視野中的圖像——關於圖像文獻研究的方法 (Paper delivered at the conference *Di san ci liang’an guji zhengli yanjiu xueshu yantaohui* 第三次兩岸古籍整理研究學術研討會, Taipei, 18–19 April 2001).

¹² See bibliographical references in *Dōkyō kankei bunken sōran* 道教關係文獻總覽, ed. Ishida Kenji 石田憲司 (Tokyo: Fukyōsha 風響社, 2001), pp. 84–85, items B0710–B0741.

¹³ The *Taiping jing hejiao* is now fully digitalized on various websites, e.g. Academia Sinica’s 中央研究院 free access database *Scripta Sinica / Chinese Text Retrieval System* 漢籍電子文獻, at the following URL: <http://www.sinica.edu.tw/~tdbproj/handy1/>. The single flaw of this otherwise useful tool is that Wang’s footnotes numbers have been merged in the text, with the result that any multi-character occurrence containing such a footnote number remains undetected by the search engine.

3. “*Taiping jing shidu*” 太平經釋讀, ed. Yang Jilin 楊寄林, in *Zhonghua dao xue tongdian* 中華道學通典, ed. Wu Feng 吳楓 and Song Yifu 宋一夫 (Haikou 海口: Nanhai chuban gongsi 南海出版公司, 1994), pp. 267–656; in simplified characters. The first critical edition to include Wang Ming’s 1965 transcription of the *Taiping jing*’s table of contents from S.4226,¹⁴ plus explanatory notes (*neirong tishi* 內容提示) before each of the 181 sections.¹⁵ Re-edited as *Taiping jing jin zhu jin yi* 太平經今注今譯, 2 vols. (Shijiazhuang 石家莊: Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 2002). Also in simplified characters, the reissue includes a 142-page introductory essay by Yang on the thematic contents and history of the text, plus a modern Chinese translation.

4. *Taiping jing zhuyi* 太平經注譯, 3 vols, ed. and trans. Luo Chi 羅熾 (Chongqing 重慶: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe 西南師範大學出版社, 1996); in simplified characters. Many section titles from S.4226 have been inserted, for a total of 231 sections, and the critical apparatus includes philological notes, an index to the philological notes—but not to the text itself—and a short bibliography. The modern Chinese translation often repeats the classical text.

5. *Taiping jing quanyi* 太平經全譯, 3 vols., ed. and trans. Long Hui 龍晦 et al. (Guiyang 貴陽: Guizhou renmin chubanshe 貴州人民出版社, 1999); in simplified characters. The 181 sections numbering and titles are similar to that of Yang Jilin’s edition. Long has not only retained Wang’s collating notes, but also provides the reader with a full translation in modern Chinese and substantial explanatory notes (*tijie* 題解) similar to Yang’s own.¹⁶

6. *Taiping jing zhu zi suo yin* 太平經逐字索引 (A Concordance to the *Taipingjing*), 2 vols., ed. D. C. Lau 劉殿爵, The ICS Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, Philosophical Works no. 44 (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2000); in traditional characters. The long-awaited index includes a critical edition of CT 1101 and a concordance. As in the other volumes of the series, an appendix displays the lexical field of the text (*quanshu yongzi pinshu biao* 全書用字頻數表, pp. 1945–50). If an index is undoubtedly welcome, the critical edition, on the other hand, is quite disappointing. Although Wang’s collating notes have been transcribed, none of the quotations collected by him has been kept; all the sections of *fuwen* glyphs, illustrations, and the *Taiping jing fuwen xu* have been ignored; and section titles from the Dunhuang table of contents have been dismissed. Awkwardly, since the *Taiping jing chao* excerpts inserted by Wang on pp. 646–51 of his edition have been rejected, the sections in the Hong Kong edition are even less numerous (179) than in Wang’s edition. As a result, this edition is certainly the most conservative of all the critical editions of the *Taiping jing*.

¹⁴ Wang Ming, “*Taiping jing mulu kao*” 《太平經》目錄考, *Wenshi* 文史 4 (1965), pp. 19–34.

¹⁵ Yang’s single addition to the structure of Wang’s edition is the title of section 128, which Yang extracted from the Dunhuang manuscript’s table of content. Yang’s introduction to his work was published earlier as “*Taiping jing shidu qianyan*” 《太平經釋讀》前言, *Hebei shiyuan xuebao* 河北師院學報, 1993, no. 2, pp. 131–32.

¹⁶ Long Hui’s preface had appeared previously as “*Taiping jing zhu xu*” 《太平經注》序, *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 7 (1995), pp. 165–74.

7. *Taiping jing zhengdu* 太平經正讀, ed. Yu Liming 俞理明 (Chengdu 成都: Ba-Shu shushe 巴蜀書社, 2001); in traditional characters. In many respects, Yu's work deserves to be singled out as the best currently available edition of the Great Peace corpus. Not only is Yu the first editor who clearly distinguishes between (presumably) genuine *Taiping jing* material and later additions (such as chapter 1 of the *Taiping jing chao*), he also thoroughly revised Wang's punctuation, corrected erroneous characters, and restored the disyllabic lacunae materialized by occurrences of “口口” in the *Daozang* text. About 80 per cent of the section titles from S.4226 are now located in the transmitted corpus, with a total number of 293 titles. Other parts of S.4226 are given a separate appendix, and bibliographical references to other critical editions and a few recent studies are included.

8. Volume 7 of the recently published *Zhonghua daozaang* 中華道藏 offers critical editions of all the five Great Peace texts—plus, oddly enough, of Wang Ming's own critical edition, for a total of six texts—with endnotes and punctuation marks. The single original import of this disappointing volume is that it contains the first critical edition ever of the *Taiping jing chao* as an independent text. The critical apparatus provided for the four *Daozang* texts does not exceed four endnotes for the *Taiping jing chao* (pp. 244c, 260c, 317b); six for the *Taiping jing* (pp. 18c, 73a, 83a, 183c, 223c, 229c); two for the *Taiping jing fuwen xu* (p. 13c); and not a single one for the *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi*, whose edition is faulty (398 characters out of 1,771 are missing). Moreover, three of these twelve endnotes simply refer the reader to Wang's edition. Only the Dunhuang manuscript is given a decent critical treatment (116 endnotes).¹⁷

A recent fruitful trend of linguistic studies of the *Taiping jing* in mainland China now supplements these critical editions.¹⁸

¹⁷ “001 *Taiping jing* mulu (ni)” 太平經目錄(擬), “002 *Taiping jing fuwen xu*,” “003 *Taiping jing*,” and “004 *Taiping jing chao*,” ed. Wang Ka 王卡; “005 *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi*,” ed. Wang Ming; “006 *Taiping jing (hejiao ben)*,” ed. Wang Ming, rev. Wang Ka, in *Zhonghua daozaang*, vol. 7, ed. Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe 華夏出版社, 2004).

¹⁸ See Wang Yunlu 王雲路, “*Taiping jing shici*” 《太平經》釋詞, *Gu Hanyu yanjiu* 古漢語研究, 1995, no. 1, pp. 46–52; idem, “*Taiping jing yuci quanshi*” 《太平經》語詞詮釋, *Yuyan yanjiu* 語言研究, 1995, no. 1, pp. 15–19; Lian Denggang 連登崗, “*Shi Taiping jing zhi ‘xianru,’ ‘shanru,’ ‘yimi’*” 釋《太平經》之「賢儒」、「善儒」、「乙密」, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文, 1998, no. 3, pp. 222–23; idem, “*Taiping jing ciyi bianxi* (3)” 《太平經》詞義辨析(三), *Gansu gaoshi xuebao* 甘肅高師學報, 2000, no. 1, pp. 101–3; Gao Ming 高明, “*Jianlun Taiping jing zai zhonggu Hanyu cihui yanjiu zhong de jiazhi*” 簡論《太平經》在中古漢語詞匯研究中的價值, *Gu Hanyu yanjiu*, 2000, no. 1, pp. 81–85; Huang Jianning 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, 2001, no. 1, pp. 62–66; Wang Minhong 王敏紅, “*Taiping jing yuci bushi*” 《太平經》語詞補釋, *Shaoxing wenli xueyuan xuebao* 紹興文理學院學報, 2001, no. 4, pp. 49–51; idem, “*Taiping jing ciyu shiling*” 《太平經》詞語拾零, *Yuyan yanjiu*, 2002, no. 1, pp. 95–96.

Translating the Great Peace Corpus

Apart from the translations in modern Chinese included in some of the critical editions dealt with above, one should mention a translation into modern Chinese of 60 sections of the *Taiping jing* in a book for the general public, which also features a unique, full translation of the *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi*.¹⁹ As for Japanese and Western languages, translations of the *Taiping jing* and *Taiping jing chao* are dispersed in papers and always concern a limited choice of passages. Until recently, only incomplete and tentative English translations of the *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi*, *Taiping jing fuwen xu* and Dunhuang manuscript S.4226 were available.²⁰

Barbara Hendrichske née Kandel (born 1940) joined the Great Peace studies during the 1970s, when she published in Germany the first book ever entirely devoted to the master text in a Western language: *Taiping jing: The Origin and Transmission of the "Scripture on General Welfare": The History of an Unofficial Text*, Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, no. 75 (Hamburg: OAG, 1979). Following this essay, her numerous papers have built a heuristic edifice unparalleled in Western Sinology²¹ and, as a result, Hendrichske's mastery of the *Taiping jing* is now widely acknowledged, even by

¹⁹ "Taiping jing shengjun mizhi," ed. and trans. Wang Juncai 王俊才, in *Wenbai duizhao daojiao shisan jing* 文白對照道教十三經, ed. Ning Zhixin 寧志新 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 1010–20.

²⁰ Translation of about one third of the *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* (1a–3b) in Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 194–97; paraphrase with intermittent translation of the *Taiping jing fuwen xu* and manuscript S.4226 in B. J. Mansvelt Beck, "The Date of the *Taiping Jing*," *T'oung Pao* 66, nos. 4–5 (1980), pp. 149–82; full French translation of the manuscript S.4226 in Grégoire Espeset, "Le manuscrit Stein 4226 *Taiping bu juan di er* dans l'histoire du taoïsme médiéval," in *Études de Dunhuang et Turfan*, ed. Jean-Pierre Drège with Olivier Venture (Geneva, Switzerland: Droz, 2007), pp. 189–256; full French translation of the *Taiping jing shengjun mizhi* in Espeset, "Les Directives secrètes du Saint Seigneur du Livre de la Grande paix et la préservation de l'unité" (forthcoming).

²¹ "How the Celestial Master Proves Heaven Reliable," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien. Festschrift für Hans Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl, and Hans-Hermann Schmidt (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), pp. 77–86; "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the *Taiping Jing*," *East Asian History* 2 (1991), pp. 1–30; "The Daoist Utopia of Great Peace," *Oriens Extremus* 35 (1992), pp. 61–91; "The Dialogues between Master and Disciples in the *Scripture on Great Peace (Taiping jing)*," in *A Daoist Florilegium: A Festschrift Dedicated to Professor Liu Ts'un-yan on His Eighty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Lee Cheuk Yin and Chan Man Sing (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2002), pp. 185–234; "The Place of the *Scripture on Great Peace* in the Formation of Taoism," in *Religion and Chinese Society*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Medieval China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press and École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), pp. 249–78.

Chinese scholars. Her latest book, based on a translation of the first chapters of the master text, stands as the *magnum opus* of a career extending over more than three decades. This superb translation should quickly become a must-read for every student and scholar involved in the intellectual history of early imperial China, and demanding readers will soon expect the book to take the place it deserves among the basic reference works of their institution or library. Even though it is not labelled “volume 1,” *The Scripture on Great Peace* looks like the first of a series whose subsequent volumes should henceforth be eagerly awaited. It is hoped for that this talented translator will take up the challenge of completing the first full Western translation of the *Taiping jing* ever and ensure a publishing follow-up to this praiseworthy work.

Before turning to the translation, let us first look into the voluminous critical apparatus, which takes up no less than 70 per cent of the total book pages. Despite years of familiarity with the text, Hendrischke nonetheless offers an occasionally ambiguous vision of the basic material. She writes, so as to justify her dropping the chapter numbering, that “each section typically deals with a single topic, and the sections assembled in one chapter often have little in common” (Conventions, p. ix), but adds immediately, as a justification for her retaining the section numbering: “the *Taiping jing* is a long scripture, and yet I have observed that its internal logic is remarkable” (p. x). To assume that each textual unit in the *Taiping jing* deals with “a single topic” somewhat misses the point, for only the shortest sections resist the temptation to digress (for mere lack of space). Quite often, the “topic”—either imposed by the master or stemming from a disciple’s question, as Hendrischke explains towards the end of her book (p. 348)—hardly constitutes more than a starting point and, as the dialogue develops, the speaker and his audience are led to tackle a variable range of themes. The phenomenon called by our translator “random change of topic” (p. 45) is not unfamiliar to the seasoned *Taiping jing* reader. If sections seemingly unrelated sometimes occupy the same chapter, the contrary is also frequent; e.g., sections 44 and 45 (chapter 36); 47 and 48 (chapter 37); 52–54 (chapter 40); 56–58 (chapter 42), etc. The extant canonical text results from a literary history pervaded by uncertainty but known to have been long and eventful, and its literary structure is far more complex than what its apparently random organization may suggest at first sight. At the very least, the section numbering is no more and no less “irrelevant” than the chapter numbering.

The long introduction (pp. 1–66) preceding the translation is not intended for the specialist (see p. 54, n. 5) but rather for students in Chinese studies or the lay reader. Divided into nine unequal paragraphs, it is a very complete but rather conventional synthesis of what has already been published on the topic in many languages and by a great number of scholars. It is to her credit that Hendrischke straightaway casts doubt on the abusive label “Taoist,” which has been attached to the *Taiping jing* since it was incorporated into the Taoist Canon centuries after the emergence of the Great Peace tradition (p. 3). The first paragraph (THE NOTION OF GREAT PEACE, pp. 4–13) situates the theme of “Great Peace” (*Taiping*) in the intellectual and literary context of China from the third century B.C. to the end of the Later Han 後漢 dynasty (25–220), usefully reminding

the reader that the theme was originally not specific to any given school or current (p. 5). The second paragraph (THE PEACE THAT WILL SAVE THE WORLD, pp. 13–16) emphasizes the peculiar value given the same notion in the *Taiping jing*, in contradistinction to contemporary usage. According to the translator, the ideology of the text challenged the very permanence of Han rule and heralded the messianic movements which were to characterize the period of political division (p. 16). But we must add that the views of the *Taiping jing* did absolutely not call into question the monarchical regime, which was seen as the ideal model, both socially and politically, because of its conformity to universal order. This is why, as Hendrischke rightly writes further on, the *Taiping jing* cannot be regarded as a “revolutionary” text (p. 40), but rather as a “conservative” one (p. 98, n. 2).

The next two paragraphs (THE TAIPING MOVEMENT, pp. 16–24; THE MOVEMENT OF THE CELESTIAL MASTERS, pp. 24–30) sum up the available data concerning the two major mass movements of the end of the Han era. The single flaw of these pages is the total assimilation of the A.D. 184 movement, known as the “Yellow Turbans” rebellion, to a “Taiping (or Great Peace) movement.” This assimilation might induce the unprepared reader to believe that there is a clear historical connection, scientifically established, between this so-called “Great Peace movement” and the *Scripture of Great Peace* of which one is about to read the translated parts. In fact, the expression *taiping dao* 太平道 appears only once in the dynastic histories, in a fifth-century quotation of a source written less than a century after the events took place, but today lost.²² This *locus classicus* happens to be our unique source concerning the religious activities of the group—which, interestingly, is not referred to using the usual pejorative nickname of official sources (“yellow turban bandits”) in this quotation. On the other hand, Taoist sources never associate the phrase “*taiping dao*” (or *taiping zhi* 之 *dao*) with the name of Zhang Jue 張角, the historical leader of the A.D. 184 insurgents. Linking Zhang Jue’s name to a Great Peace text was first done by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) in his *Hou Han shu*, a work completed in 445, i.e. more than two and a half centuries after the rebellion. The text mentioned by Fan Ye bears the title “*Taiping qingling shu*” 太平清領書, not “*Taiping jing*.” Even if we re-examine every facet of the problem, it is bound to remain insoluble unless, for instance, a first-hand Great Peace text dating back to the Han is discovered in archaeological context. Rather than constantly writing virtually the same things all over again, we should bear in mind that most of the relevant primary sources were produced several centuries after the events they reported took place, and therefore, we should question the historicity of what has come to be accepted as established facts.

²² The *Dianlüe* 典略 (c. 270) by Yu Huan 魚豢, cited by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451) in his commentary (completed 429) to the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志; taken up in the commentary written by Li Xian 李賢 (651–684) and his collaborators to the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 between 675 (date of Li’s accession to the status of Heir Apparent) and 680 (date of Li’s imprisonment). Famously, Li Xian’s commentary mentions and quotes the *Taiping jing* four times.

In this respect, reading the fifth paragraph (THE *TAIPIING* MISSIONARY PROJECT, pp. 30–31) will prove useful to any reader who failed to distinguish between Yellow Turbans, Celestial, or Heavenly, Masters 天師 (the early Taoist Church), and the promoters of Great Peace. In these pages, Hendrischke translates the same word *zui* 罪 as “crime” in the Celestial Master context and as “sin” in the *Taiping jing* context, then uses this difference in translation to claim for Zhang Lu’s 張魯 rule a “theocratic” nature. (See also, p. 26, about Zhang’s state in Hanzhong: “China’s first, and for a long time its only, theocracy.”) I wonder if the different English renderings are not misleading. Should we not rather emphasize the fact that the Chinese language resorts to a single term (*zui*) to cover both our Western concepts, including in current usage (*zuiren* 罪人 means “culprit” as well as “sinner”)? For this suggests, with other pieces of evidence whose discussion would be inappropriate here, that the very nature of political power is intrinsically religious in China. Hence Zhang Lu’s rule was no more and no less “theocratic” than the rule of any “Son of Heaven.”²³

The sixth paragraph (HISTORICAL STAGES OF A SCRIPTURE ON GREAT PEACE, pp. 31–38) recapitulates the literary history of the texts named after Great Peace, and tries to relate them as much as possible to the ever-changing political context of the relevant centuries. As other specialists of the *Taiping jing*, Hendrischke relies on late, isolated occurrences to justify the retrospective identifications conveniently offered to fill in disturbing gaps. This paragraph illustrates the historian’s struggle between, on the one hand, the acknowledgement of the intrinsic limitations of documentary evidence and, on the other hand, the continual temptation to indulge in historical novel writing.

The following paragraph (THE ORIGIN OF THE TPJ, pp. 38–43) leaves these fragments of an uncertain literary history and turns to the text itself. In spite of her conviction that “the TPJ [*Taiping jing*] as we have it today goes back to the sixth century,” Hendrischke goes back to the Han era—the social and mental background against which the ideology of the text seems to have been formed, even if she admits that a thorough examination of the text enables one to restore but a “vague” picture of this cultural environment (p. 41). This dual estimation of the date of the text is summed up in one of the notes supporting the translation (p. 102, n. 4), where Hendrischke discusses the possible presence of references to, or borrowings from, Buddhism in the text: “But since we [in contrast to 1960s Chinese scholars from the PRC] are free to admit that the received text has reached us in an edited version . . . we may say that the TPJ is a second-century text, stating at the same time that it reveals some familiarity with certain Buddhist points of view and practices.” Thus are settled the complex and interlinked issues of dating and historicity in the Great Peace corpus.

The eighth paragraph (LANGUAGE AND STYLE, pp. 43–47) brilliantly shows the peculiarity

²³ For more arguments, see my paper on “Later Han religious mass movements and the early Daoist church,” in *Religion in Early China*, vol. 1, *Shang to Han*, ed. John Lagerwey (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, forthcoming).

of the text within Chinese literature and discusses the array of characteristics suggesting a vernacular origin: the occurrence of numerous disyllabic and trisyllabic compounds; the specific usage of particles; the unusual length of the sentences; the verbosity and redundancy of expression. Contrary to what we are told (p. 44), however, the *Taiping jing* marks the plural when necessary, by prefixing the character *zhu* 諸, for instance in the expression *zhushen* 諸神, “the deities” or “the gods” (36 occurrences in Wang’s edition).

Concerning the issue of composition, Hendrischke’s views have changed. Although she used to be convinced of the rhetorical function of the dialogue style and, therefore, its artificiality, she seems now inclined to accept—at least rhetorically speaking—the existence of a sort of proto-material made out of raw notes taken by an audience of pupils or disciples. Even though Hendrischke makes a rather good case for her theory (see pp. 89–90, n. 38, for textual references), it is hardly compatible with the most basic principles of methodology. Great caution is required whenever, basing ourselves on style, we construct an interpretative model supposed to extend beyond the boundaries of literary form. The fact that the *Taiping jing* comes from a milieu of which almost nothing is known allows one to believe this milieu to have been radically different from the rest of the contemporary social fabric, but absolutely does not offer any proof that the main part of the extant text underwent only the slightest editorial alteration during the centuries separating the production of the earliest Great Peace writings from the integration of a text called “*Taiping jing*” into the Ming Taoist Canon. And, needless to say, the dialogue form as a literary style appeared in China long before the formation of the scriptural tradition of Great Peace.

The last paragraph (THE SCRIPTURE’S MESSAGE OF SALVATION, pp. 47–54) presents a thematic selection from the supposed “program” of the authors of the *Taiping jing*, particularly as regards their social views. One wonders if this last paragraph was really necessary, given that, first, it does not present anything new, and second, the translation of each section is preceded by a notice, which plays the same role.

If simply duplicating the original text whenever it was obviously not understood is a trick usable by “translators” in modern Chinese, any Western translation is of course above suspicion. Hendrischke’s major achievement in this regard is the superb English translation, without question a scholarly *tour de force* (pp. 67–342). Hendrischke had earlier contributed the translation of two textual units from the *Taiping jing* to an anthology recently published.²⁴ This preliminary work is naturally included in the present volume, with minor adjustments (pp. 136–52). Hendrischke wisely chose to translate the first 25 sections of the text in reading sequence, from sections 41 (chapter 35) to 66 (chapter 49), thus encompassing the first 14 chapters out of 57 of the canonical text. As the translation covers some 20 per cent of the canonical text (15 per cent if the *Taiping jing chao* is to be included), a huge step has been made towards a full English translation.

²⁴ See *Hawai’i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, ed. Victor H. Mair, Nancy S. Steinhardt, and Paul R. Goldin (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), pp. 225–30.

Although Hendrischke's reference edition questionably remains Wang's *Taiping jing hejiao*, she has wisely corrected the location of some of the quotation marks used by Wang to indicate a change of speaker in the dialogue (e.g., p. 86, n. 27; p. 103, n. 10) and has "occasionally replaced [Wang's punctuation] by that used in more recent editions" (see Conventions, p. ix). To these critical editions, enumerated in the appended bibliography (pp. 373–74), the translator could usefully have added a few Chinese and Japanese research papers.²⁵

Each translated section opens with a note introducing its topic and summarizing its content. Hendrischke's careful remarks on the ideological consistency of the text from section to section often prove rewarding. After each introductory note, the translation of the corresponding section unfolds, followed by dense endnotes. Setting the dialogue alternately in normal style (the master's part) and in italics (the disciple's part) proves to be the right editorial choice, while the fluency of the style helps recreate the deliberate spontaneity of the verbal exchanges. As a result, the dialogue comes to life. Regrettably, a warning in the opening pages of the book (p. 4) about the length of the notes—a caution seldom found in scholarly publications—now takes on its full meaning: numerous and often long, the endnotes somewhat interfere with the reading. This is not to say that these notes fail to improve our understanding of the text. A few lines are essential to explain peculiar concepts and to point out textual emendations; however, digressions filling several paragraphs or pages will end up confusing rather than enlightening the reader. Such may be said of the following notes: n. 22 (pp. 82–83), on the concept of central harmony (*zhonghe* 中和); n. 29 (pp. 86–88), on the symbolic division of the world; n. 3 (pp. 98–100), on the advent of Great Peace; n. 4 (pp. 100–102), on chastity (*zhen* 貞); n. 9 (pp. 147–50), on maintaining unity (*shouyi* 守一); n. 14 (pp. 162–63), on agent Fire and colour red; n. 12 (pp. 203–4), on the concept of all-pervasiveness (*dongji* 洞極); and n. 6 (pp. 211–13), on the nine-fold human hierarchy.

Considering the singularity of the *Taiping jing*, it is not surprising that translation choices are occasionally questionable. Needless to say, the following remarks are but minute details, which should entail no reappraisal of the work's overall quality.

1. One may object to the justification of the English title *Scripture "on" Great Peace* (pp. 4–5) that it seems to imply that Great Peace is restricted to the thematic content of the scripture. Since Great Peace is a cosmic revelation of which the scripture is an integral part, *Scripture of Great Peace*, or even *Great Peace Scripture* following the original syntax, are preferable renderings.

²⁵ Takahashi Tadahiko 高橋忠彦, "Taiheikyō gōkō no hiōten ni tsuite" 『太平經合校』の標點について, *Tōkyō gakugeidai kiyō: jinbun kagaku* 東京學藝大紀要(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, 1994, no. 3, pp. 25–28; idem, "Taiping jing hejiao buji" 《太平經合校》補記, *Wenxian* 文獻, 1994, no. 4, pp. 219–28; Yu Liming, "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, 2002, no. 1, pp. 88–90.

2. Due to a misinterpretation of the structure of the text's section titles, most of their translations are inaccurate: *fa* 法 ("method" or "model") and *jue* 訣 ("instruction," written 決 in S.4226) do not belong to the thematic statement of the titles, but function as "section tags" preceding the section numbering.²⁶ Consequently, adding at the beginning of the translation of section titles the phrases "how to" (sections 41, 43, 44, 47, 52–55, 57, and 64), "how" (sections 56 and 60), and "on" (sections 58, 61, and 66), presumably to render *fa* and *jue*, is superfluous. In addition, the noun "method" added in the middle of section title 45 in an attempt to render *fa*, and the personal pronoun "you" inserted at the beginning of section title 46, do not exist in the corresponding Chinese titles.

3. The theological, physiological and cosmological notions of *shen* 神, *jing* 精 and *qi* 氣 and their combined use are complex but the process of translation into a Western language is prone to betray this complexity. Choosing to render *shen* mostly as "spirit" throughout the book gives birth to awkward occurrences, including "spiritlike man" (*passim*) for *shenren* 神人 (divine man), while the Controller of Fate (*siming* 司命), also a *shen*, and also present in the human body, has earned the right to be called a "deity" (p. 90, n. 39). The same word in the plural ("spirits") is also used to render compounds, such as *minggui* 明鬼 (p. 58, n. 104) and *shenqi* 神氣 (p. 239, n. 21). By choosing to render as "vital spirits" the compound *jingshen* 精神 (p. 97; p. 148, n. 9; p. 160), let alone the single word *jing* 精 (p. 236), the translator also opens herself to criticism, all the more since the text also mentions *shengshen* 生神, "life-giving spirits" in her translation (e.g., p. 81, n. 20). The same may be said of "vital *qi*" for *jingqi* 精氣 (p. 233; p. 238, n. 12), a translation arguably too close to "life's *qi*," as *shengqi* 生氣 is rendered (p. 249). The equation of the compound *tian jing* 天精, unsatisfactorily translated as "heaven's vital beings," with *tian jingshen* 天精神 remains unconvincing (p. 232; p. 237, n. 6), as is the tentative translation of *weiqi* 委氣 ("bending *qi*") based on a late source (p. 210, n. 5).

4. Besides designating a quintessential principle or cosmic entity, *jing* 精 also refers to a mental state (concentration); the phrase 是其精思之至誠也 is misinterpreted as: "[t]his is what is meant by the completely sincere way in which vital energy thinks" (p. 239, n. 17).

5. First rightly translated as "orthodox" (p. 29), the adjectival *zheng* 正 is subsequently rendered as "standard" throughout the book (for a notable exception, see p. 240, n. 29). But "standard" lacks impact to encapsulate the strong opposition of the Chinese word, in the text, to *xie* 邪, "perverted" or "unorthodox"—a binary opposition as fundamental as that between *zhen* 真 (authentic) and *wei* 偽 (counterfeit), or *shan* 善 (good) and *e* 惡 (evil). Thus *zhengdao* 正道 means "orthodox" (rather than "standard") doctrine or Tao (p. 140, n. 4); *zhengwen* 正文, "orthodox" or "correct" (rather than "standard") text (p. 158); and, for *zhengqi* 正氣, "upright *qi*" is preferable to

²⁶ In the *Taiping jing*, section titles generally follow the pattern: thematic statement / section tag / numbering; e.g., 三急吉凶 / 法 / 第四十五. See Espeset, "Le manuscrit Stein 4226 *Taiping bu juan di er* dans l'histoire du taoïsme médiéval," pp. 196 and 244, Annexe II, Tableau A.

“standard *qi*” (both are used on p. 178, n. 8).

6. As a noun, in the compound *sanzheng* 三正, the same character *zheng* designates “(calendar) norms” rather than “orders” (p. 305, n. 4). The noun “standard” seems now exceedingly technical (p. 342, n. 30).

7. Similarly, “appropriate” for *dashun* 大順 (p. 279, n. 3) is too weak, considering the strong opposition of the compound, in the *Taiping jing*, to *dani* 大逆, a compound which is aptly translated as “great contrariness” (p. 290; p. 298, n. 22). “Great compliance” would come closer to the original meaning of *dashun* and, together with the translation provided for *dani*, would form a strong, clear-cut pair of opposites.

8. The mortal body is usually designated by *xing* 形 in the language of the *Taiping jing*, not *shen* 身, as mistakenly stated on p. 211, n. 5. The word *shen* refers to the “person,” as it is correctly translated elsewhere (e.g., p. 148). “Corporeal *bo* souls” for *xing bo* 形魄 would be more concise and accurate than “the *bo* spirit, which has form” (p. 134, n. 21).

9. *Dushi* 度世 is mostly rendered as “to transcend the world” in the book (p. 120, n. 18; p. 211, n. 5; p. 229, n. 17) and once—groundlessly—as “to redeem oneself” (p. 101). The compound is defined in the *Taiping jing chao* as to live past the limits of standard human lifespan (see the second quotation of that source on p. 150, n. 10).

10. “Embellishments” for *duan* 端 (p. 117; p. 120, n. 18; p. 123; p. 181; p. 184, n. 4) is an interesting suggestion, but it is not entirely supported by the material. Notably opposed to unity (*yi* 一), the word would rather seem to evoke the multiplicity and complexity of all phenomena, which divert human beings from primordial simplicity and their cosmic root.

11. The compounds *youke* 郵客 and *fangshi* 方士 are respectively rendered as “men travelling in government service” (pp. 165–66, n. 25) and “experts in vitality techniques” (p. 32; p. 154; p. 159; p. 166, n. 25; p. 297, n. 20). The former apparently refers to a government courier, unless we read *guan* 官 for *ke* 客 and get *youguan* 郵官, “postal official” (Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985], p. 586, no. 8060). As regards the latter, the translation seems both interpretative and restrictive, given the array of arts reportedly mastered by these “experts”—immortality, alchemy, divination, medicine, astrology, physiognomy, etc. Interestingly, the compound may have originated from a Zhou 周 dynasty official title (Hucker, p. 209, no. 1912).

12. The compound *neifu* 內附 is generally understood as meaning “to make one’s submission to,” or “to pay homage to,” rather than “authority” (p. 247; p. 253, n. 23).

13. As regards the phrase *jianling* 姦令 from a *Dianlüe* quotation, the translation “to control evil” (p. 27) seems grammatically incorrect; it has been suggested that the phrase refers to the illegitimacy of the concerned officials.²⁷

²⁷ According to Terry Kleeman, “Community and daily life in the early Daoist church,” in *Religion in Early China*, vol. 2, *The Period of Division*, ed. John Lagerwey (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, forthcoming).

Translation consistency problems include “talismans” (pp. 24, 34), then “spells” (p. 159), for *fu* 符 (esoteric glyphs); “charts” (p. 34), then “maps” (pp. 235, 294), for *tu* 圖 (esoteric diagrams revealed by the Yellow River); and “non-purposive action” (p. 6), then “without falsity” (p. 211, n. 5), for *wuwei* 無為 (non-interference, alternately a cosmic quality, a philosophical concept, and a government principle).

Besides translation problems, the dense commentarial apparatus is not totally free from inaccurate or misleading statements. The proper marital behaviour expected from the ruler is not “a marginal point” (p. 96) mentioned in passing at the end of section 42; on the contrary, this final part of the master’s speech should be considered the apex of the lecture, seeing that the ruler stands as the ideal, ultimate recipient among the text’s audience—at least in the main textual stratum. In section 50, South is not “the direction fire comes from” (p. 165, n. 24) but the sector of the symbolic space corresponding to Fire in the Five Phase correlative matrix; the long endnote (pp. 165–66, n. 25) devoted to *xuanjia* 玄甲 remains quite confused. Stating that the *Taiping jing* is “rather a manual on how to lead a *dao*-oriented life” (p. 283) at the beginning of section 63 is, at best, an unfortunate simplification, given the thematic richness of the material and its socio-political as well as universal finality. And, in section 65, the fundamental notion of a universal “threefold cooperation and interaction” 三合相通 is indeed conveniently illustrated by “the structure of the family” (embodied by the father-mother-child 父母子 pattern) but hardly “derived” from it (p. 307).²⁸

The bibliography (pp. 373–91) and index (pp. 393–410) are preceded by an appendix (THE COMPOSITION OF THE TPJ, pp. 343–72) in which Hendrischke addresses specialists. This closing essay was perhaps initially intended to introduce the translation, because it returns to most of the issues already dealt with in the opening part of the book—the peculiarity of the language (p. 346); the lack of internal organization of the canonical text, the fact that each section deals with a single topic “or at least with interconnected topics” (the admission would be welcome at the beginning of the book), and the reason for retaining only the section numbering (p. 347); the dialogue form and its alleged origin in genuine notes taken during sessions of religious instruction (pp. 348–49), etc. Despite these duplications, this essay on the textual history and literary structure of the *Taiping jing* raises the right questions and offers well-documented and often convincing elements of answers. Why does this partly redundant essay appear at the end of the book? Integrating it into the introduction and deleting repetitions would have profitably reduced the critical apparatus—which is already overloaded with 961 endnotes filling one third (140) of the total pages—and allowed extra sections to be included in the translation, which is confined to 30 per cent of the available space.

²⁸ See Grégoire Espeset, “À vau-l’eau, à rebours ou l’ambivalence de la logique triadique dans l’idéologie du *Taiping jing*,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), pp. 61–95.

In this appendix, slightly more “technical” than the introduction, Hendrischke’s commendable caution gives birth to a number of sequential hypotheses, embodied at the discursive level in a recurrent conjectural vocabulary (“may assume,” “must assume,” “must expect,” “seem,” etc.). This tangle of hypotheses allows little room for historically established facts. An ingenuous sentence perfectly expresses the methodological problems faced by any modern approach to the text: “The external appearance of the TPJ conforms to what we can conjecture about its origin” (p. 346). Given that those conjectures are mainly based on the current appearance of the text, it is certainly no wonder that the extant text seems to “conform” to them. Wouldn’t it rather be that the “external appearance” of the text dictates how we reflect upon its origin?

Hendrischke rightly draws our attention to the titles located at the end of some sections and chapters, which she interprets as “one-line summaries.” Generally ignored by scholars and dealt with in less than one page here (pp. 345–46), this material indeed requires a full study, which would allow us first to check if these end titles were as badly transmitted as we are told, to the extent that they are now “often corrupt beyond any hope of emendation” (p. 345). Is textual corruption not always conveniently adduced whenever reading problems fail to be solved? (The expression “corrupt beyond hope of emendation” returns on p. 210, n. 4.) Perhaps such a study would also allow us to verify if the initial titles may be safely attributed *en bloc* to Taoist editors of the sixth century, and the end titles (the so-called “summaries”) to a different and necessarily earlier editorial intervention. At any rate, the end titles are an integral part of the transmitted master text, and there is no reason to confine their English translation to the closing endnote of each translated section.

Equally delicate is the issue of the textual layers or strata. Hendrischke makes the point that the stylistic variations are very often coupled with thematic differences (p. 348) then, once again, maintains that the dialogic material (her layer A) stems from original “note taking” (p. 349). But, when two extra layers (A’ and B’) are added to her basic three-layer (A, B, and C) division, one begins to wonder if the concept of textual stratum as a heuristic tool is really effective. Would a notion of thematic field not be more relevant? It is no accident that Hendrischke eventually adopts a thematic approach to defend the validity of her division into layers (pp. 351–52), casting doubt on her own method and confessing the comparative obscurity of her exposé (pp. 352–53: “Clearly, what has been presented here is not a thorough method of dividing the text. . . . Moreover, an argument based on certain isolated language elements cannot replace a full-fledged linguistic analysis. . . . No joint characteristics can be established for layer C. . . . A rough overview of the received text might clarify some of what has been said here”). This discussion of the textual stratification of the material ends with a long table (pp. 354–62) minutely defining her own tentative division into layers, following the structure of Wang Ming’s critical edition, together with remarks or documentary evidence supporting her division (about a hundred extra endnotes, pp. 365–72).

Conclusion

It is today virtually impossible to pay tribute to hundreds of works written by hundreds of scholars in some of the major languages of the Far-East (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean)²⁹ and the West (English, French, and German).³⁰ Recent reviews of Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarship confirm that the actual content of the surviving Great Peace corpus has less absorbed scholarly attention than its literary history.³¹ Partly responsible for this situation are the size of the corpus and its disconcerting heterogeneity, which induce investigations to focus on selected passages or isolated themes rather than on the corpus as a whole. Consequently, *Taiping jing* scholarship so far has seldom had groundbreaking impact in the field of Chinese studies. In order to do so, and while the remaining 80 per cent of the *Taiping jing* now await a scholarly translation, emphasis should be put on all-embracing studies of the corpus and comparative, interdisciplinary approaches.

²⁹ I am grateful to Jung Jae-seo 鄭在書 for kindly providing me with some of his published work on the *Taiping jing* in Korean and Chinese, and for pointing to me Yoon Chan-won's 尹燦遠 1992 Ph.D. thesis in Korean on the same text (English title: "A Study of Taoism in *Tai-ping-ching*"; published in 1998). Yoon has also published papers in Chinese on the *Taiping jing*.

³⁰ The best available collection of bibliographical references relating to the Great Peace corpus (303 items) is to be found in *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 1912–1996* 兩漢諸子研究論著目錄：1912–1996, ed. Chen Ligui 陳麗桂 (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin 漢學研究中心, 1998), pp. 391–407, items #5227–431, and *Liang Han zhuzi yanjiu lunzhu mulu 1997–2001*, ed. Chen Ligui (Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2003), pp. 391–407, items #2421–518. These volumes do not claim to be exhaustive, and a few errors and misprints punctuate the lists; for an example of erroneous item, see p. 394 of the first volume, item #5262. The database compiled by Chen can be consulted online via the website of the Center for Chinese Studies, at the following URL: http://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/pub_e.html.

³¹ See Barbara Hendrischke, "Chinese Research into Daoism after the Cultural Revolution," *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 38, no. 1 (1984), pp. 25–42; Lee Feng-mao 李豐楙, "Dangqian *Taiping jing* yanjiu de chengguo ji zhanwang" 當前《太平經》研究的成果及展望, in Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, *Daojiao xinlun* 道教新論 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju 臺灣學生書局, 1991), pp. 325–34; Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅, "Études japonaises sur les religions de la Chine: passé et présent," *Tōyō no shisō to shūkyō* 東洋の思想と宗教 8 (1991), pp. 1–26; Lai Chi Tim 黎志添, "Shiping Zhongguo xuezhe guanyu *Taiping jing* de yanjiu" 試評中國學者關於《太平經》的研究, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 (Journal of Chinese Studies), n.s., 5 (1996), pp. 297–317; Zhang Guangbao 張廣保, "Dalu xin daoia jueqi zhi fenxi: jinnian lai daoia daoia sixiang yanjiu zongshu" 大陸新道家崛起之分析——近年來道家、道教思想研究綜述, *Zongjiao zhexue* 宗教哲學 3, no. 2 (1997), pp. 87–108; Lin Fu-shih 林富士, "Shilun *Taiping jing* de zhuzhi yu xingzhi" 試論《太平經》的主旨與性質, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 69, pt. 2 (1998), pp. 208–11.