

Université de Montréal

**Healing Beliefs and Practices of the “Way of Celestial Masters”
During the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D.)**

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SUMMARY

This study is about healing beliefs and practices of the “Way of the Celestial Masters” during the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) in China.

The “Way of Celestial Masters” is the name of the first popular Taoist religious community founded in China during the second century. The founder of this Taoist community was Zhang Daoling, a man seeking longevity and immortality. Zhang Daoling is believed to have received a revelation from Laozi, the founder of the Taoist philosophy, and to have spread Taoist religious teachings. Zhang Daoling founded the “Way of Celestial Masters”, himself being called “celestial master”. Zhang Daoling included significant healing activities in his religious mission. His teachings and practices were succeeded by his son, and his grandson later. Since then, the same Taoist religious community has been continued by Zhang Daoling’s descendants until the present day.

This study attempts to examine healing beliefs and practices of celestial masters during the Eastern Han dynasty and to demonstrate how shamanistic traditions, popular beliefs, Taoist philosophy, and other contemporary philosophies were adapted by early Taoist religious masters and how Taoist religious thoughts applied to healing practices. Celestial masters worshipped *dao*, a philosophical object defined by Laozi as the origin of the cosmos, and they aimed at establishing a religious model of life. Celestial masters governed people through religious disciplines and emphasized self-cultivation, obedience and faith. Their theories of illness were revolutionary and because they believed in sins causing illness, they established confession as an effective healing method. The long term goal of the “Way of Celestial Masters” was to reunify with the eternal *dao* and obtaining immortality.

The first chapter of this study introduces the religious activities of the early Taoist masters with an emphasis on their healing practices. The second chapter examines in

detail the religious thoughts expressed in a Taoist commentary about *Daode jing*, the Taoist philosophical book written by Laozi. The third chapter illustrates two most significant healing practices of celestial masters: the calm room as a common center for confession and the ritual of “hand petitions to the Three Office” for the forgiveness of one’s sins from gods.

In conclusion, unlike some contemporary popular Taoist movements which involved mass rebellions during the second century, the “Way of Celestial Masters” established a peaceful independent religious kingdom which was centered on faith healing, and promoted the idea of immortality .

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude porte sur des croyances et des pratiques reliées à la guérison qui avaient cours dans la communauté de "La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" durant la dynastie chinoise des Han orientaux (25 à 220 de notre ère).

"La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" est le nom de la première communauté populaire religieuse de type taoïste à avoir été fondée en Chine. Cela se passait au deuxième siècle et le fondateur de cette communauté est Zhang Daoling, un homme qui était en quête de longévité et d'immortalité. On croit que les révélations mystiques de Zhang Daoling auraient été inspirées par Laozi, le fondateur du taoïsme philosophique. Créant "La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" et se désignant lui-même "maître céleste", Zhang Daoling consacra sa vie à une mission religieuse marquée par des activités nouvelles et originales de guérisseur. Les enseignements religieux et les pratiques curatives de Zhang Daoling furent transmises à son fils, à son petit-fils, ainsi qu'à tous leurs descendants, si bien que cette communauté religieuse taoïste persiste toujours aujourd'hui.

Les sources historiques utilisées pour cette étude de "La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" peuvent être regroupées en trois catégories principales de documents: 1) registres et archives dynastiques officiels; 2) textes religieux taoïstes rédigés par des adeptes; 3) textes bouddhistes écrits par des moines après la dynastie Han. Par ailleurs, la pensée religieuse de Zhang Daoling est examinée et interprétée en référence au *Laozi Xiang'er zhu*, un document attribué à Zhang Daoling et qui constitue l'une des premières sources manuscrites à avoir été rédigées durant la période Han. Le *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* est une explication commentée du *Daode jing*, le livre philosophique de Laozi. De plus, des textes médicaux anciens sont aussi utilisés afin de définir certaines théories de l'époque concernant la maladie en général et de les comparer aux croyances et pratiques des maîtres célestes.

Cette étude cherche à démontrer comment des traditions issues du chamanisme, des croyances populaires, ainsi que des notions de la philosophie taoïste et d'autres philosophies contemporaines furent adaptées par les maîtres religieux taoïstes et comment les pensées religieuses de ceux-ci s'articulaient à leurs activités de guérison. Ces maîtres célestes rendaient un culte au *dao* (entité philosophique définie par Laozi comme étant l'origine du cosmos) et visaient à établir un modèle religieux de vie. Ils inculquaient aux gens une discipline religieuse mettant l'emphase sur l'autodidactie, l'obéissance et la foi. Les théories étiologiques des maîtres célestes étaient révolutionnaires car elles considéraient les péchés comme des causes de maladie et qu'elles proposaient la confession comme méthode de guérison. L'objectif ultime de "La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" était de recréer l'unité avec le *dao* éternel et d'atteindre l'immortalité.

Le premier chapitre consiste en une présentation des pratiques religieuses des premiers maîtres taoïstes (Zhang Daoling, Zhang Jue, Zhang Xiu et Zhang Lu) ainsi qu'en une comparaison des activités de guérisons ayant cours dans trois communautés taoïstes contemporaines, le Taiping Dao, le Wudoumi Dao et le Tianshi Dao ("La Voie des Maîtres Célestes"). En résumé, les points suivants ressortent dans ce chapitre. Tous ces maîtres taoïstes croyaient que les péchés entraînaient des problèmes de santé. Si certaines méthodes étaient inspirées de celles des chamans, toutes furent d'abord développées à des fins religieuses. Zhang Jue utilisait des bâtonnets comme talismans afin de chasser les démons considérés par les gens comme causes de maladie, il fabriquait une eau magique pour soigner les malades et il leurs demandait de se confesser. Zhang Xiu et Zhang Lu faisaient séjourner les malades dans des salles paisibles afin que ceux-ci puissent se confesser et ils leurs demandaient de participer au rituel des "pétitions manuscrites envers les trois offices" pour demander le pardon des dieux. Zhang Lu pouvait demander en plus qu'un malade prenne part à des travaux publics devant le libérer de ses péchés. Les activités et les méthodes de Zhang Daoling décrites dans le *Shenxian zhuan* étaient similaires à celles de Zhang Lu.

Le deuxième chapitre examine en détail des aspects religieux du *Laozi Xiang'er zhu*, la lecture commentée du *Daode jing* par Zhang Daoling. La pensée religieuse qui est exprimée dans le *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* ne met pas seulement l'emphase sur le culte absolu à vouer au *dao*, mais elle insiste également sur l'importance de la volonté à atteindre l'immortalité par un comportement autodidacte et la fidélité au *dao*. Dans ce contexte, les maîtres célestes rejetèrent les croyances populaires en des démons pathogènes pour considérer les péchés humains comme les principales causes de maladie. En conséquence, la confession se retrouva au centre des méthodes de guérison des trois communautés taoïstes étudiées. De plus, puisque les gens et leurs péchés étaient désormais jugés en termes moraux, des valeurs telles que la vertu, la discipline ou le civisme propre à la vie communautaire furent transmises des gens de lettres vers les masses populaires par l'intermédiaire des pratiques religieuses des maîtres taoïstes. Ceux-ci critiquant les divers cultes populaires, ils visaient aussi à créer une unité des dieux taoïstes.

Au troisième chapitre sont décrites deux des plus importantes méthodes de guérison des maîtres célestes: la salle paisible comme lieu commun de confession individuelle et le rituel des "pétitions manuscrites envers les trois offices" pour demander le pardon des dieux. Initialement inspirées des pratiques du chamanisme, ces deux méthodes comportaient aussi des analogies avec le système politique Han et elles furent transformées à des fins religieuses suivant les interprétations mystiques des maîtres célestes. La salle paisible était un lieu religieux de guérison par la foi qui consacrait l'association entre guérison et confession; son enseignement et sa pratique s'étendirent directement aux masses populaires. Le rituel des "pétitions manuscrites envers les trois offices" fut défini et appliqué par les maîtres célestes comme une façon simple, pour une personne, de demander un pardon unificateur pour ses péchés. Ce rituel s'inscrivait dans le désir des maîtres célestes d'établir une unité des dieux dans les communautés taoïstes, par opposition aux dieux disparates des cultes populaires de l'époque.

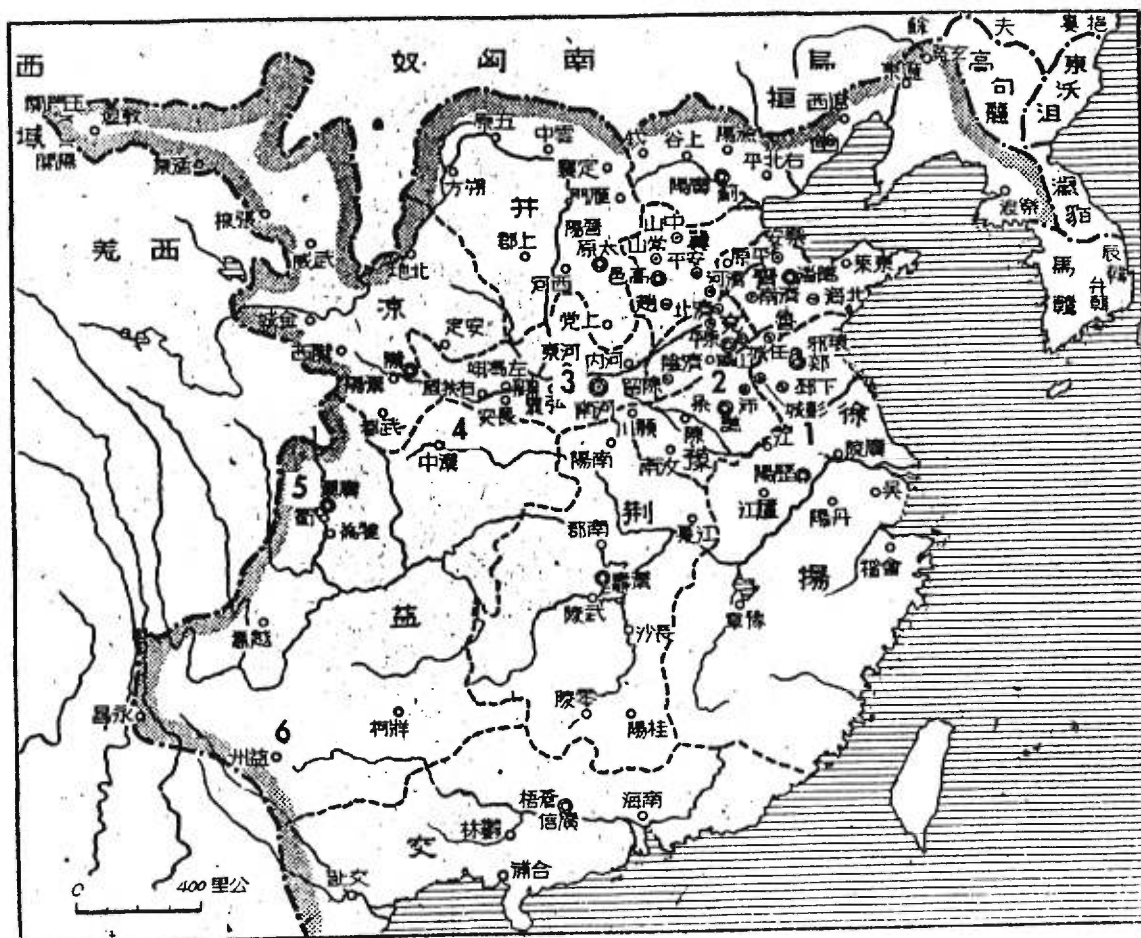
En conclusion à cette étude, on attire l'attention sur le fait qu'à la différence d'autres mouvements religieux taoïstes qui lui était contemporain, "La Voie des Maîtres Célestes" (Tianshi Dao) a réussi à établir un royaume religieux pacifique et indépendant où l'on croyait en la guérison par la foi et en l'immortalité. On demandait aux croyants d'obéir à certaines règles religieuses taoïstes et de réfléchir à leurs péchés afin de redevenir ou de se garder en bonne santé, d'accroître leur longévité et d'assurer leur salut. Ceci constituait un rejet direct des lois impériales officielles et une affirmation de la suprématie des préceptes du *dao*.

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MAP OF THE WESTERN HAN DYNASTY

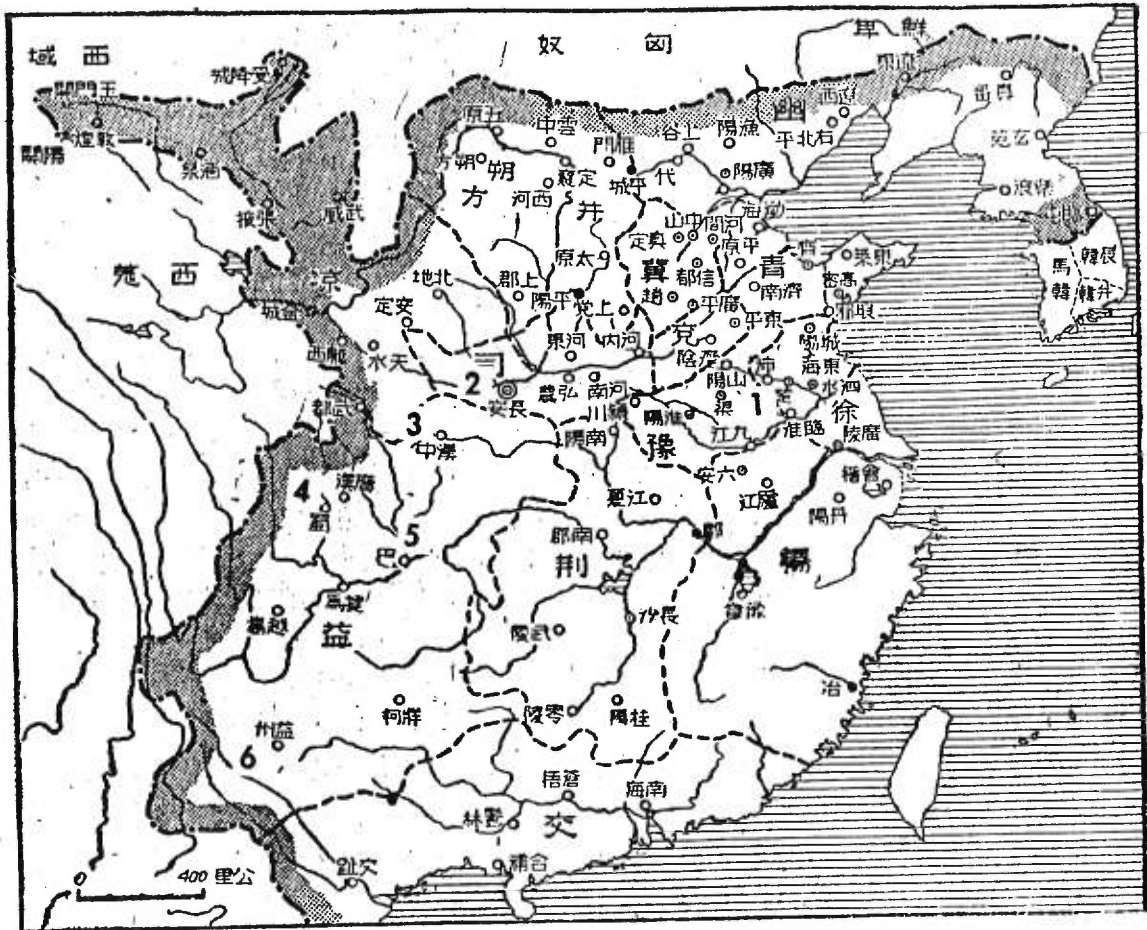
(Adapted from Zhao Songcen, 1955, p.109)



1. Pengcheng 2. Pei 3. Luoyang 4. Hanzhong 5. Shu 6. Yizhou

MAP OF THE EASTERN HAN DYNASTY

(Adapted from Zhao Songcen, 1955, p.110)



1. Pei 2. Chang'an 3. Hanzhong 4. Shu 5. Ba 6. Yizhou

CHAPTER I

The Celestial Masters and Early Taoist Movements

The popular Taoist communities founded in the second century A.D. represented the main stream of mass religious movements of that period. Although these movements were strongly rejected or criticized by the ruling class, the masses were attracted and were involved in these movements in great numbers. The popularity of these Taoist movements was largely due to the healing activities they organized in Taoist communities since these activities met the first needs of the masses. Moreover, these healing activities not only attracted the attention of the masses toward the Taoist religious leadership, but also resulted into the participation of the masses into the religious community life. This chapter is an introductory study to the historical achievements of early Taoist masters and their healing practices.

1.1 Zhang Daoling and the Foundation of the Tianshi Dao

Zhang Daoling

Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (37-155 A.D.), whose original name is Zhang Ling 張陵, is considered to be the founder of the Tianshi Dao 天師道 (“Way of Celestial Masters”), the first Taoist religious community in China. Zhang Daoling’s achievements are poorly recorded in the official historical texts. However, in the Taoist hagiographies¹, Zhang Daoling is described as an immortal and is respected as the first “celestial master”.

¹ For example, the earliest text and one of the most famous is *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 written by the Taoist adept Ge Hong 葛洪 (284-364 A.D.); other famous biographies are: *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑 by Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 A.D.), *Hantianshi shijia* 漢天師世家 written by Zhang Daoling’s descendent Zhang Zhengchang 張正常 and *Xiaoyaoxu jing* 消搖墟經 by Hong Zicheng 洪自誠 during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.).

The earliest Taoist text relating to Zhang Daoling is *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (“Biographies of Immortals”)². This text presents in detail Zhang Daoling’s life and his achievement on founding the Tianshi Dao. It states:

Zhang Daoling, surnamed Fuhan 輔漢, came from Feng 丰 in the state of Pei 沛³. He was a student in *taixue* 太學⁴ and he mastered the five classics. When he got older he realized that all he had learned was not enough for having a long life; so he turned to learn the *dao* 道 (“techniques”) of long life. [...] He heard that the people from the state of Shu 蜀⁵ were honest, easy to teach and that there were many famous mountains in that region; he thus moved into the state of Shu accompanied by his disciples. He lived in Mount Heming 鶴鳴⁶ and wrote twenty four Taoist texts. He concentrated on meditation. One day, “celestial man” (*tianren* 天人) descended from heaven on thousands of horses and carts, [...] they taught [Zhang Dao] Ling the “*dao* of the correct one and brilliant authority” (*zhengyi mingwei zhi dao* 正一明威之道). [Zhang Dao] Ling accepted teachings and became able to heal.

² *Shenxian zhuan*’s author Ge Hong is also well known as an alchemist and physician of the period. He left many works including *Shengxian zhuan*, *Baopu zi* 抱朴子, *Jinkui yaofang* 金匱藥方 and *Zhouhou beiji fang* 肘後備急方.

³ Feng is a place in Pei which belonged to the Yuzhou prefecture during the Han dynasty. There was a big lake in southern Pei where the first emperor of the Han dynasty (Gaozu高祖, r. 202-195 B.C.) killed a white viper according to legends. The state of Pei was set up under the Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 B.C.) and it had a population of 251,393 at the end of the second century (*Houhan shu*, chapter 20 of Zhi, p.1483).

⁴ The highest institution during the Han dynasty. The *taixue* existed since the Eastern Zhou dynasty, there were some thirty thousand students in the *taixue* at the end of Han dynasty.

⁵ Shu region belonged to Yizhou prefecture. It is in southwestern China, today’s Sichuan 四川 province (*Houhan shu*, chapter 23 of Zhi, p.1501).

⁶ Mount Heming belonged to Shu during the Han dynasty and today it is located near the city of Chengdu 成都 in Sichuan province (Ren Jiyu, 1988, pp.155-156). There are two Mount Heming in today’s Sichuan province, but most of the scholars consider the one beside Mount Qingcheng 青城山 (which is also related to Zhang Daoling) to be the place where Zhang Daoling received the revelation and founded the Tianshi Dao (ibid; Wei Fuhua, 1989). However some suggest that another Taoist mountain named Heming is the one where Zhang Daoling founded the Tianshi Dao (Cai Yunsheng, 1993).

Therefore, people called him master and he had thousands of disciples. He then named [some disciples as] *jijiu* 祭酒 (“wine sacrificer”) to govern people and to establish rules, [...] He also asked people to reconstruct roads, those who did not obey would become ill. [...] [Zhang Dao] Ling also liked to teach people by making them feel ashamed instead of punishing them. He established rules demanding the sick to write down their faults and to throw the notes into the water, these [notes] represented their contracts with the gods and their intention to the laws, otherwise they would die. Many people were cured this way. People who were sick would confess their faults first. This made them cured and felt ashamed. So they would not repeat the faults again and became afraid of heaven and earth. Since then, people who used to disobey [the laws] all became good. [...]⁷

It is written that Zhang Daoling and two of his disciples later took the immortal medicine and flew to heaven. This rather detailed text gives us a lot of information on Zhang Daoling’s life, as well as on his Taoist community, but the author did not provide any precise dates for Zhang Daoling’s life.

According to this Taoist text, Zhang Daoling was a knowledgeable man who was educated under Confucian manners. When he got older he focused on practicing techniques for long life. Later on, he moved to the remote region in western China and hid inside mountains to study the *dao*. One day he received revelations from heaven and obtained the power of healing. He was respected by native people and was called the “master”. At last, he succeeded in becoming immortal. Zhang Daoling’s main activity was healing, others included teaching about goodness and establishing religious disciplines for ruling people.

This biography was written during the fourth century by a Taoist adept. Descriptions about Zhang Daoling’s early life -- before the founding of the Tianshi Dao -- do not exist in any historical records, but they are rather similar to Ge Hong’s own life⁸. However, descriptions about his activities related to the foundation of the Tianshi Dao

⁷ This biography is quoted in Qin Xitai, 1994, pp.159-160.

⁸ See Ge Hong’s short biography in Qing Xitai, 1994, vol.1, pp.236-238.

are similar to earlier sources which record the achievements of Zhang Daoling's grandson.

Zhang Daoling and the Tianshi Dao

Regarding Zhang Daoling and the foundation of the Tianshi Dao, there are early historical records written by the court historians before the fourth century. Such historical sources record very little about Zhang Daoling's outstanding achievement in founding the Tianshi Dao⁹. Most official information relating to Zhang Daoling is found in texts about his grandson Zhang Lu 張魯 (?-216) who succeeded him and developed the Tianshi Dao.

The earliest historical record relating to Zhang Daoling in the third century text of "Wei zhi 魏志" ("Treatise of Wei") in *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 ("Treatise of the Three Kingdoms")¹⁰. There is a biography of Zhang Daoling's grandson, Zhang Lu, which states:

Zhang Lu, surname Gongqi 公旗, came from Feng in the state of Pei. His grandfather [Zhang Dao] Ling moved to Shu region and received a revelation in Mount Heming. [Zhang Dao] Ling created Taoist texts and attracted believers. The people who believed in [Zhang Dao] Ling's teachings contributed five bushels of rice, and that is why they were called the "rice bandits" (*mizei* 米賊). After [Zhang Dao] Ling's death his son Heng 衡 succeeded to him; when Heng died, [his son] Lu continued his teachings.

In this text, Zhang Daoling's activities are described very simply and from a negative point of view. The information about his believers having contributed five bushels of rice is rejected in *Shenxian zhuan*. In the "Biography of Liu Yan" from *Hou Han shu*

⁹ It is largely due to the negative point of view of court historians toward mass movements.

¹⁰ *Sanguo zhi* was written by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297 A.D.). After the decline of the Eastern Han dynasty, China was divided into three kingdoms -- Wei 魏, Shu 蜀 and Wu 吳. The period of Three Kingdoms (220-265 A.D.) lasted until the foundation of a new dynasty, the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 A.D.).

後漢書 (“History of the Later Han”)¹¹, we find almost the same information as the above except for the clear indication of the period when Zhang Daoling moved to Shu region -- Emperor Shun’s era (r.126-144 A.D.)

Another important source relating to Zhang Daoling is “Gazeteers of Hanzhong” in *Huayangguo zhi* 華陽國志 (“Gazeteers of the State of Huayang”)¹². Zhang Daoling’s achievements are mentioned also in the paragraph written about Zhang Lu.

At the end of Han [dynasty], Zhang [Dao] Ling from Pei practiced *dao* in the Mount Heming in the Shu region. He created Taoist texts and called himself “the great purity and the origin of heaven” (*taiqing xuanyuan* 太清玄元)¹³ to confuse local people. [Zhang Dao] Ling died, his son Heng succeeded; when Heng died, his son Lu succeeded (...).

This text is written also from a negative point of view regarding Zhang Daoling’s teachings and practices, it provides some hints about when Zhang Daoling founded the Tianshi Dao.

Combining the above sources, there is no doubt that Zhang Daoling was the founder of the Tianshi Dao. He moved from eastern China to the Shu region during 126-144 A.D.. He practiced *dao* in the mountain and received a revelation later. He then called himself “the great purity and the origin of heaven” and wrote some Taoist texts in order to teach his followers. People who believed his teachings contributed five

¹¹ *Hou Han shu* was written by Fan Ye 範曄 (398-445 A.D.).

¹² *Huayangguo zhi* is the earliest local chronicle existing in China. It was written in 374 A.D. by Chang Jū 常據 from the Eastern Jin dynasty (310-420 A.D.).

¹³ “*Taiqing xuanyuan*” (“great purity and the origin of the heaven”) has not been well defined. However, according to Zhang Jiyu, *taiqing* 太清 refers to the purity of *yuanyi* 元氣 (original pneumas) in “*Daoying xun* 道應訓” of *Huinan zi* 淮南子, and *xuanyuan* 玄元 refers to the origin of *sangqi* 三氣 (three pneumas) in *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (Zhang Jiyu, 1990, pp.13-14). The Tang dynasty Taoist adept Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933 A.D.) considers *qing* 清 as “the energy of heaven” (quoted in Qing Xitai, 1994, vol.2, p.274). Ge Hong, in his book *Baopu zi* refers to *xuan* 玄 as “the first ancestor of nature, the grandsire of all the different empiricals” (“*Changxuan juan* 1 暢玄卷一”, translation from James Ware, 1966, p.28). The Han philosopher Yang Xiong 楊雄 considers *xuan* as the “dao of heaven” (quoted in Qing Xitai, 1994, vol.2, p.256). In *Lao zi Xiang'er zhu*, *xuan* is referred to “heaven” (Rao Zongyi, 1991, p.18). Hence, we choose to use the term “heaven” for ‘xuan’.

bushels of rice. Comparing to *Shenxian zhuan*, these historical texts do not mention specifically Zhang Daoling's healing practices, while the healing practices of his grandson Zhang Lu are described in most texts. Nevertheless, we assume that Zhang Lu probably inherited similar healing methods from his grandfather.

Although the term of "Tianshi Dao" is not mentioned in the above historical texts, Zhang Daoling's practices are recognized as belonging to the Taoist school, and his Taoist community is called "rice bandits" because the followers had to supply five bushels of rice. However, the name "Tianshi Dao" seems to have already appeared during the Han dynasty. In *Li xu* 隸續¹⁴, the Song dynasty epigraphy collection, there is a text written by Zhang Pu 張普¹⁵ about his own experiences as a member of the Tianshi Dao during the Eastern Han dynasty. The text states that, during the second year of Xiping 熹平 era (173 A.D.), the "wine sacrificer" Zhang Pu and others received twelve texts and they promised to spread the Tianshi Dao¹⁶. This evidence tells us that Zhang Daoling's Taoist community was already called the Tianshi Dao during the Han dynasty.

There is also a later source mentioning the term "Tianshi Dao", *Shu ji* 蜀記 ("Record of the State of Shu")¹⁷ from the sixth century. It states:

Zhang [Dao] Ling entered Crane Cry (Heming) Mountain and called himself Celestial Master (*tianshi*). In the last year of Splendid Peace (Xiping) [177 C.E.], he was devoured by a python. [...] (translation from

¹⁴ *Li xu* is written by Hong Shi 洪適 during the Song dynasty (960-1279) and is considered to be a reliable source (see Anna Seidel, 1990, p.234).

¹⁵ We can not find more reliable information about this person.

¹⁶ Ren Jiyu, 1988, vol.1, p.148; Rao Zongyi, 1991, pp.159-160; Guo Shusen, 1990, p.27.

¹⁷ *Shu ji* was written by Li Ying 李膺 during the Northern Zhou dynasty (557-581 A.D.), it was already lost. It was quoted in Chinese Buddhist texts such as *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 by Zhen Luan 甄鸞 and *Erjiao lun* 二教論 by Shi Dao'an 釋道安 on 570 A.D.. This text is often quoted by scholars. For instance, Fukunaga Mitsuji, 1987, p.72 and p.119, n.4; Fukui Kojun, 1951, pp.10-13; Guo Shusen, 1990, p.27.

Livia Kohn, 1995, p.77, n.7.)¹⁸

Shu ji was written quite late and is preserved only in some Buddhist texts which indicate negative views toward the Taoist religion¹⁹. Until new sources are found, this text can be seen as a reference supporting the point that Zhang Daoling's Taoist community was called the "Tianshi Dao". Some others still consider that the name "Tianshi Dao" was used only since the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420 A.D.) when it became widely spread and very popular especially among the nobles²⁰.

Zhang Daoling's Healing Methods

The healing practices are probably the most significant activities of Zhang Daoling after the founding of the Tianshi Dao. According to *Shenxian zhuan*²¹, Zhang Daoling is said to have cured people by asking the sick to get involved in public work, to confess their sins to gods, to sign contracts of obedience with gods, and to obey the law established by himself. Those who disobeyed Zhang Daoling's law would be punished through illness or death, while those who obeyed the law would be cured and remain obedient and moral.

Zhang Daoling taught that disobedience to the gods and others faults could cause illness. Thus the healing methods used by Zhang Daoling were for making the sick become good. According to this theory, the cure was possible if the sick confessed their sins. After they corrected their sins and became good, they would receive the external help from the gods to get cured. Therefore, the sick were asked to confess their faults and to feel ashamed. Then they would not repeat the faults again for fear of

¹⁸ This paragraph was quoted in *Erjiao lun*. The same paragraph was also partly quoted in the *Xiaodao lun* (Livia Kohn, 1995, pp.77-78).

¹⁹ Since the third century, the battle between Taoist religion and Buddhist religion was getting more serious. A Taoist adept Wang Fu wrote a text called *Lao zi huahu jing* during 290-306 A.D., saying that Laozi was Buddha and founded the Buddhist religion after he left for the west.

²⁰ Qing Xitai, 1994, vol. 1, p.87.

²¹ One of the reasons that Ge Hong was concerned with Zhang Daoling's healing practices is that Ge Hong himself was a successful physician. In the historical texts, Zhang Daoling's healing practices were not mentioned.

the gods.

Zhang Daoling's role as a healer was not only teaching people what was good and judging what they did wrong, but also organizing the sick to communicate with the gods in order to establish their contracts of obedience. Hence, Zhang Daoling served as an intermediate between the gods and people. The sick got cured by the gods through Zhang Daoling's mediation. The faithful relation that the people built with Zhang Daoling was based on their recognition of Zhang Daoling's position as receiver of the messages from heaven. These messages were recorded by Zhang Daoling in some of his books and became the teachings of the Tianshi Dao community. *Lao zi Xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注 ("The *Xiang'er* Commentary to the *Lao zi*") is said to be such a book which was based on the revelation that Zhang Daoling had received from Laozi 老子, the founder of Taoist philosophy.

Zhang Daoling and Lao Zi Xiang'er Zhu

In the "Commentation on Lao Zi" of *Wei shu* 魏書 ("Book of Wei")²², it states:

[...] The origin of the Taoist philosophy is from Laozi, [...] Zhang [Dao] Ling received revelation at Mount Heming, he also received 1200 texts which he then taught to his disciples. [...].

This text suggests a link between Zhang Daoling and Laozi, hence a link between the Taoist philosophy and the Taoist religion²³. The relation between Zhang Daoling and the Taoist philosophy can be examined through *Lao zi Xiang'er zhu*.

Lao zi Xiang'er zhu (shortened below as the "*Xiang'er* Commentary") is identified as a book being originally written by Zhang Daoling and probably completed by Zhang

²² *Wei shu* was written by Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572 A.D.).

²³ *Wei shu* was written during the South North dynasties (420-581 A.D.) when the Tianshi Dao was reformed by Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 in the north and Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 in the south. Kou Qianzhi was concerned with restricting religious disciplines while Lu Xiujing emphasized establishing institutional system (Qin Xitai, 1994, vol. 1, pp.84-92).

Lu²⁴. However, the book was completed not later than 215 A.D. which makes it the earliest interpretation of *Lao zi* (more commonly known as *Daode jing* 道德經) by Taoist religious masters²⁵. *Daode jing* was written by Laozi during the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.). It is the only book written by Laozi and is one of the most important books of the Taoist philosophy. *Daode jing* defines *dao* as the origin of the world and describes *dao* as invisible but powerful. This mysterious conception of *dao* has caused many different interpretations later on.

The *Xiang'er* Commentary presents rather practical interpretations of *dao* from a religious point of view. According to Rao Zongyi, the term *xiang'er* is not the name of the commentator but the title of the commentary²⁶. *Xiang'er* probably means “reflect” as many scholars have suggested²⁷. *Daode jing* was used as the religious text in the Tianshi Dao community, thus the *Xiang'er* Commentary is the most important source for understanding the religious teachings of the Tianshi Dao.

The religious teachings appearing in the *Xiang'er* Commentary lead to the healing practices of the celestial masters. Such teachings include the redefinitions of *dao* and of the relation between human and *dao*, the dualism of good and evil, and the regulation of people’s behaviors through the establishment of Taoist precepts.

The *Xiang'er* Commentary focuses on redefining the meaning of *dao* as having human characteristics but not as an abstract philosophical term like that described in *Daode jing*. Regarding the relation between human and the *dao*, the commentary emphasizes the unification of *dao* and human. It also establishes a series of religious disciplines --

²⁴ Stephen Bokenkamp, 1997, pp.2-3; Ofuji Ninji, 1991, chapter 3. Rao Zongyi suggests that the commentary was started by Zhang Daoling and completed by Zhang Lu (1991, p.131). Mu Zhongjian assumes Zhang Lu to be the true author (1991, p.393). Other scholars suggest that the commentary was written between the fourth and fifth centuries (Rao Zongyi, 1991, pp.135-136).

²⁵ The original version of *Lao zi Xiang'er zhu* was lost. However, an incomplete manuscript of it was discovered from Dunhuang 敦煌 and is the common source used by researchers today (Kobayashi Masayoshi, 1987).

²⁶ Rao Zongyi, 1991, p.105.

²⁷ Ibid, pp.106-108.

“precepts of *dao*” -- which can lead people toward such an unification. Through these precepts, the accumulation of good deeds is promoted while evil thoughts and actions are rejected. The *Xiang'er* Commentary transfers the idea of self-cultivation, relected in *Daode jing*, into one of self-salvation toward the final goal of life -- immortality.

As for the Taoists for whom becoming immortal has always been the highest goal of one's personal life, the celestial masters believed that the unification with the eternal *dao* can bring individuals to immortality. The *Xiang'er* Commentary reflects the strong belief in immortality, the healing practices of celestial masters were connected with such belief and had a strong orientation toward self-salvation.

1.2. Zhang Jue and the Taiping Dao

Zhang Jue 張角 (?-184 A.D.) was the founder of a popular Taoist community called the Taiping Dao 太平道 (“Way of Great Peace”). In historical records, the Tianshi Dao movement is always associated with the Taiping Dao movement, although the connection between the two cannot be traced. Because Zhang Jue's Taiping Dao movement occurred during the same period as the Tianshi Dao movement, and because the two movements have many similarities regarding their healing practices, Zhang Jue and his Taoist movement become important elements to get a better understanding of the Tianshi Dao movement.

The principal historical source related to the Taoist masters during the Eastern Han dynasty is the “Treatise of Wei” in the *Sanguo zhi*. The following descriptions are notes added by Pei Songzhi 裴松之, a commendator of the Liu-Song dynasty (420-479 A.D.). In chapter 8 entitled “Zhang Lu”, Pei quotes a third century text called *Dianlüe* 典略²⁸:

Dianlüe says: During the Xiping era [172-177 A.D.], evil bandits rose up in great numbers. In the capital [Luoyang], there was a certain Luo Yao 駱曜. During the Guanghe 光和 era [178-183 A.D.], in the eastern

²⁸ *Dianlüe* is said to have been written by Yu Quan 魚豢 who lived from 220 to 280 A.D. during the Three Kingdom period. The text itself has already been lost.

region, there was a certain Zhang Jue; in Hanzhong 漢中, there was a certain Zhang Xiu 張修. Luo Yao taught the people the method for becoming invisible. Zhang Jue followed the Taiping Dao (“Way of Great Peace”). Zhang Xiu followed the Wudoumi Dao 五斗米道 (“Way of Five Bushels of Rice”). (The translation above referred in part to Paul Michaud, 1958, p.78).

According to this text, there were three Taoist communities in eastern and western China during the similar period, the Taiping Dao was led by Zhang Jue in eastern China during the Guanghe era (178-183 A.D.).

Zhang Jue and the Taiping Dao Movement

The Taiping Dao movement took place in eastern China, corresponding to Shandong 山東 province today. Because the Taiping Dao movement led to a mass rebellion later, more descriptions about the Taiping Dao and its leader Zhang Jue are recorded in the historical texts. For example, in the “Biographies of Huangfu Song” from *Hou Han shu*, it states:

Zhang Jue of Julu 矩鹿²⁹ started at that time to call himself the Greatly Virtuous and Excellent Master [*daxian liangshi* 大賢良師]. He served the way of Huang-Lao [*huanglao dao* 黃老道]³⁰. He taught his disciples to kneel down, make obeisance and confess their faults. He used charmed water and magical incantations to cure the sick. Many of those that were sick were cured. The people put their confidence in him and turned to him. [Zhang] Jue thereupon sent eight [of his] disciples to the four regions in order to instruct and convert all the empire by means of the

²⁹ Julu is a place in eastern China (Shandong province today). Julu was a prefecture (also a town's name in this prefecture) belonging to Jizhou 冀州 state and it was established during the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.). Its population at the end of the third century was 600, 000 (*Hou Han shu*, vol. 90, “Zhi 20: Junguo 2: Jizhou: Julu”).

³⁰ *Huang* 黃 indicates the Yellow Emperor, the legendary emperor of China; *lao* 老 indicates Laozi, the Taoist philosopher of the sixth century B.C.. The teaching of Huang-Lao became popular during the Han dynasty. Its central ideas are “quietness and non-action”.

good Tao. [...] Then he [Zhang Jue] established thirty six *fang* 方³¹. (...) [He spread the] false rumor that the Blue Heaven was already dead and that the Yellow Heaven³² should be established. In the year of *jiazi* 甲子 (the first year of the new cycle) there would be great prosperity in the empire. (...) (Paul Michaud, 1958, pp.76-77)

Furthermore, the Taiping Dao organized an uprising in 184 A.D. and occupied many towns and villages. Because the rebels wore yellow turbans on their heads, this rebellion was also called the “rebellion of the Yellow Turbans”. The emperor sent armies to fight against the yellow turbans and killed thousands of them. Zhang Jue was sick and died in the same year. His body was taken out of the coffin by the army, and his head was cut off and exhibited in the capital of the Eastern Han dynasty. At the end of 184 A.D., the Taiping rebellion was suppressed by the imperial armies, while some followers of the Taiping Dao continued to be active in different areas for a few years. However, once the rebellion was over, the Taiping Dao community disappeared from official historical records.

This text describes Zhang Jue’s beliefs in Huang-Lao philosophy, his attempts of reestablishment of the dynasty as well as his shamanistic healing practices.

The Taiping Dao and the Messianic Movements

The Taiping rebellion has been analyzed from different perspectives and it is the most well studied Taoist movement of this period. Early studies emphasize the social economic and political causes of the rebellion rather than its religious background. Some suggest that the rebellion was a consequence of an economic crisis caused by frequent natural catastrophes and epidemics, tensions within a growing population,

³¹ *Fang* means “district”. Zhang Jue organized his followers into thirty six districts. The number thirty six was mysticalized in “Book of Change” (*Ji jing* 易經), which means “change” (Qing Xitai, 1988, pp. 213-214).

³² Yellow was a color symbolizing the earth in the ancient China. According to the theory of the Five Elements, the earth is in the center and the yellow color indicates fortune. Han emperors favored the theory of the Five Elements and chose fire to be the symbol of the court. The establishment of the “Yellow Heaven” expressed that the Taiping Dao desired to replace the Han court (Qing Xitai, 1988, pp.210-211; Wang Qiming, 1992, pp.64-68). The blue color symbolized misfortune and danger in ancient China (Qing Xitai, 1988, p.127).

and insufficient farming land³³.

Other studies consider that since neither the economic conditions during the Han nor the social occupations of Zhang Jue and his adherents were clear, the political crisis at the Han court was the primary reason for the Taiping rebellion but not the social hardship³⁴. For instance, Paul Michaud³⁵ notes that after the year 168 A.D. the eunuchs seized power, they banned the Confucian party and thereby disturbed the political order of the Han court. At the same time, the barbarians bringing danger to the nation, the lack of leadership in the country pushed people towards a religious leader like Zhang Jue. Numerous uprisings took place during the decline of the Han court (especially from 132 to 184 A.D.). However, Michaud points out that one of the main differences between the Taiping rebellion and others (such as the bandits' rebellions) seem to be the religious overtone of the Taiping Dao.

The religious characteristics of the Taiping Dao are studied further by many scholars. For one, Henri Maspero examines the administrative system as well as the collective rituals of the Taiping Dao and emphasizes its Taoist religious characteristics. Maspero writes that "it [the Taiping Dao] had given itself the principal task of bringing the mass of believers to progress in religious life and to lead them gradually to a more and more excellent understanding and practice of the religion" (1988, p. 377).

Recent studies also focus on the religious characteristics of the Taiping Dao, especially its messianic characteristics. Series of messianic movements occurring during the Later Han dynasty could be linked with the Taiping rebellion. Anna Seidel points out that the *Taiping jing* 太平經³⁶, presenting a "saviour" ideology which aimed at a perfect world, largely influenced the Taiping Dao movement. Seidel suggests that because this

³³ Howard Levy, 1956.

³⁴ Paul Michaud, 1958, pp.48-49&74-75. Similar point of views appear in Ofuji Ninji, 1991, pp. 13-19.

³⁵ Paul Michaud, 1958.

³⁶ *Taiping jing* ("Book of Great Peace") was probably written by magicians during the second century. This book was offered to Emperor Shun (r. 129-144 A.D.) by a *fangshi* named Yu Ji 于吉. *Taiping jing* presents some utopian ideas which are in common to the political goals of the Taiping Dao movement.

Taiping ideology was spread among “the masses of dispossessed peasants”, the purpose of the Taiping rebellion was for “a renewal of Han rule” (1969, p. 219). Therefore, she suggests that the Taiping Dao, as well as other rebel leaders, believed in a religious ideal which was transformed into a political purpose during the restoration movements.

According to Max Kaltenmark, *Taiping jing* contains various beliefs among which the most significant are the classical Taoist ideas of returning to *dao* and the quest for immortality. Kaltenmark claims that indeed the *Taiping jing* presents a religious ideal of salvation and this idea was carried by the leaders of revolts whose aim was to establish a universal order rather than to install a government of the “peasant masses” (1979, p.45).

However, we know neither how and why the so-called “Taiping” ideology then spread among the masses nor the attitude of the literati toward this ideology. If we consider that the Taiping ideology was the main source of the Taiping rebellion as well as of other messianic rebellions of the same period, it seems that an ideological transformation from the literate class to the masses took place at the end of the Han dynasty.

Indeed, there are certain studies which suggest the possibility that an ideological transformation took place during the Han period. For example, Yü Ying-shih³⁷ claims that many literati opposed to the idea of immortality presented in the *Taiping jing* while the commoners widely accepted this belief during the Han dynasty. Yü points out that the idea of immortality showed traces of development and transformation during the Eastern Han dynasty. Then, this idea was no longer the privilege of the nobles but spread at the popular level, mainly due to the *fangshi* 方士 (“magician”)³⁸.

³⁷ Yü Ying-shih, 1964.

³⁸ *Fangshi* originated from the shamanistic tradition of ancient time. Since the Warring States period, *fangshi* became the name for a group of professionals who believed in theories of *ying*, *yang* and Five Elements and the idea of immortality. They practiced divination, shamanistic medicines, and actively involved in politics by gaining trusts of emperors (Lü Xichen, 1991, pp.27-33). *Fangshi* is considered to have close relation with the later Taoist religious masters. In some Han texts, the term *fangshi* was often written as *daoshi* 道士 meaning “Taoist adept” (Zhang Longhu, 1988, p.188).

Qing Xitai³⁹ also considers that messianic rebellions were influenced by the changes in the Han political philosophy and this was due to the ideological reform proposed by the literati. Qing writes that during the Eastern Han, especially after the “discussion at the Temple of White Tiger” (*Baihu guan* 白虎觀)⁴⁰, the school of Chanwei gained official support. Thus, the belief in “apocrypha” was not a prerogative of the rebels but was shared by both the literati and the masses. Hence, there were possible connections between the early Taoist religion and the school of Chanwei as well as there was a possible unity of beliefs among the literati and the masses.

The study of the Taiping Dao enhance our understanding of the religious context especially the messianic characteristics of this movement, as well as of other Taoist movements during the same period. Above all, it shows that the Taiping Dao master Zhang Jue should be seen as a religious leader and as a saviour and that Zhang Jue’s soteriological character may be appreciated through his healing practices.

Healing Methods in the Taiping Dao

Zhang Jue’s healing practices are described in *Dianlüe* as well as in *Hou Han shu*. *Dianlüe* states:

The masters of the Taiping Dao hold staves with nine knots as charms and spells. They taught the sick to knock their heads down and reflect on their faults. Thereafter they gave them charmed water to drink. When the sick got cured in a short time, they were said to be believers of the Dao; if they were not cured, then they were said to be unbelievers of the Dao. (Partly adapted from Paul Michaud, 1958, p.78).

Thus, Zhang Jue’s healing methods included traditional talismans and charms, as well as confession.

³⁹ Qing Xitai, 1988, pp.192-222.

⁴⁰ The Confucian school was led by two opposite groups of thinkers (the conservatives and the reformers) during the Han dynasty. The discussion at the Temple of White Tiger was organized by the emperor Liu Zhang 劉章 (r. 75-88 A.D.) in 79 A.D., to declare an official support to the reformist ideas (also called the ideas of *chanwei*) which emphasized mythical interrelations between the five elements. For more details see Yin Falu & Xu Shu’an, 1990, pp.241-246.

The traditional talismans and charms are said to have appeared before the Eastern Han dynasty. These were traditionally used by shamans and were adopted by the Taoists during the Eastern Han dynasty⁴¹. In the book of *Zhou li* 周禮 (“Rituals of Zhou”)⁴² and *Shi ji* 史記 (“Records of History”)⁴³, many references state that talismans and charms were widely used since the Eastern Zhou dynasty⁴⁴. However, as it can be seen in ancient medical texts, the talismans were not used for healing until Zhang Jue’s time since shamans were mainly using them to communicate with the gods, while the charms were not only used for cults but were adopted by physicians for healing purposes⁴⁵. The use of talisman and charms as healing tools by the Taiping Dao masters shows that people then believed in supernatural causes of illness.

One other healing tool was used for the first time in medical practices by the Taiping Dao masters, the “stave with nine knots”. Such tool is primarily considered to be a religious tool for calling gods or eliminating demons. The number “nine” symbolizes the changes between *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽; the Taoists believed that gods belong to *yang*, demons belong to *yin*⁴⁶. Besides, the stave seems also to have had political meanings. During the Han period, it usually symbolized social and political power and it was always carried by the elders of local communities⁴⁷. The use of the stave is an additional indication that there certainly were then popular beliefs of illness being caused by supernatural power such as the demons. Moreover, in comparison to

⁴¹ Zeng Shaonan, 1994, pp.305-310.

⁴² *Zhou li* is a book recording rituals and customs of the Zhou dynasty (1066-221 B.C.). It is said to have been compiled during the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.).

⁴³ *Shi ji* is a historical work written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 between 104 B.C. and 91 B.C.. It records history from the time of Yellow Emperor to the time of Emperor Wu 武 of the Western Han dynasty, that is for a total of 3000 years.

⁴⁴ Li Yuanguo, 1991, p.22.

⁴⁵ Li Yuanguo, 1991, p.25. Such texts include *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問, *Zhuyou shisanke* 祝由十三科. Also *Wushier bingfang* (Donald Harper, 1982, pp.67-105).

⁴⁶ Qing Xitai, 1988, p.215. Some references about the “stave with nine knots” are introduced in *Shenxian zhuan* (“Biographies of the Immortals”).

⁴⁷ Ofuchi Ninji, 1991, p.88.

talismans and charms which were probably widely used by physicians and magicians, the stave was carried only by leaders of the Taiping Dao. Thus, it also symbolizes their privileges of mastery over natural powers.

Above all, Zhang Jue engaged into a much more significant healing method -- confession. He asked the sick to kneel down and reflect on their faults in order to get cured. It seems that people believed in illness being caused not only by supernatural powers but also by human faults. Therefore the correction of human faults and the virtuous life could result in a better health for those who wanted⁴⁸. Moreover, kneeling down indicated obedience to a certain authority, although the object of such confession was the gods or the Taiping Dao masters is not indicated clearly.

The idea that virtuous behavior could result into a longer life span and that of retribution being mentioned in *Taiping jing*⁴⁹. Meanwhile the strong belief in heaven is also expressed in *Taiping jing*. The Taiping Dao masters connected illness to faults and cure to confession delivered to heaven. Confession became the most important process in the healing practices of the Taiping Dao.

1.3 Zhang Xiu and the Wudoumi Dao

Zhang Xiu is introduced in the text of *Dianlüe* as the founder of the Wudoumi Dao ("Way of Five Bushels of Rice"), one of the three Taoist movements, in Western China -- Hanzhong region -- during the same period as Zhang Jue and Zhang Lu. Zhang Xiu had similar practices to those of Zhang Jue as *Dianlüe* suggested.

Zhang Xiu's Wudoumi Dao is constantly confused as another name of the Tianshi Dao, thus Zhang Xiu's religious activities are also included as part of the Tianshi Dao. However, the Wudoumi Dao and the Tianshi Dao were merged after 184 A.D.. It is important to clarify the importance of the Wudoumi Dao as an independent Taoist

⁴⁸ Similar ideas already appeared in *Mo zi* 墨子, written by Mo Di 墨翟 (468-376 B.C.). The book describes ideas that attentive gods prolong the lives of those who are virtuous (Paul Unschuld, 1985, p.124).

⁴⁹ Yü Ying-shih, 1965.

religious movement, meanwhile, since the Wudoumi Dao appeared after Zhang Daoling founded the Tianshi Dao, it was possibly influenced by the Tianshi Dao. Especially considering the healing practices of the Wudoumi Dao, there are many similarities with that of Zhang Daoling's Tianshi Dao described in *Shenxian zhuan*.

Zhang Xiu's Wudoumi Dao

Dianlüe states:

[Zhang] Xiu practiced similar methods as that of Zhang Jue. [Zhang] Xiu established the "calm room" [*jingshi* 靜室] to let the sick confess their faults. Xiu also named *jianling* 姦令 ("officers against evil") and *jijiu* 祭酒 ("wine sacrificers"). The *jijiu* were in charge of teaching *Daode Jing*⁵⁰ to people. The *jianling* and *guili* 鬼吏 ("officers against spectres") were in charge of praying for the sick. The methods consisted in writing wrote three copies of the name of the sick and their confessions, and then to send up one copy to heaven from a hill, to bury another one in the ground and to throw the last one in the water. These three papers were called "hand petitions to the Three Offices" (*sanguan shoushu* 三官手書). They [Zhan Xiu and his officers] regularly asked the families of the sick to bring five bushels of rice. So [Zhang] Xiu was called the "master of five bushels of rice". [Zhang] Xiu did not really cure any sick, but people were blind and trusted him. Then [after the rebellion of 184 A.D.] Zhang Jue was punished and [Zhang] Xiu disappeared. (This translation refers in part to Paul Michaud, 1958, p.78)

However, there is no evidence showing the connection between the Taiping Dao and Zhang Xiu's Wudoumi Dao. We assume that they are two independent Taoist movements⁵¹.

The data about Zhang Xiu in *Hou Han shu* are unreliable. The name of Zhang Xiu appears a few times but we are unsure if it refers to the same person. However, in the

⁵⁰ *Daode jing* is the earliest Taoist philosophical book and it is believed to have been written by Laozi during the Warring States period (475-376 B.C.). See more details on p.8 of this chapter.

⁵¹ See for example, Paul Michaud, 1958, pp.76-81.

“Biography of Emperor Ling (r.168-189)” from *Hou Han shu*, there is a short information about a person named Zhang Xiu. It states:

[...] In the seventh month of autumn, an evil shaman named Zhang Xiu from Ba 巴⁵² prefecture rebelled and occupied some villages[...]⁵³

This “shaman” Zhang Xiu was probably the same person described in *Dianlüe*, where it is stated that at almost the same period when Zhang Jue rebelled there was a certain Zhang Xiu who led a Taoist community called the Wudoumi Dao. The differences between the two sources are minor. For example, the place where Zhang Xiu rebelled was Hanzhong in *Hou Han shu* and Ba prefecture in the *Dianlüe*. Hanzhong and Ba prefectures both belong to Yizhou prefecture and were two regions side by side. The time of Zhang Xiu’s rebellion in *Hou Han shu* was the first year of Zhongping 中平 era (184 A.D.), in *Dianlüe* it was the middle of Guanghe era (between 178 and 183 A.D.) when Zhang Xiu practiced the Wudoumi Dao.

More studies show that Zhang Xiu is a historical figure and that he was the person who practiced the Wudoumi Dao and led it to a religious rebellion during the same period as Zhang Jue. Thus Zhang Xiu is a key figure since he lived in the same period as Zhang Jue and Zhang Lu and since his religious practices were, if not the same, closely related to that of Zhang Daoling’s Tianshi Dao. After Zhang Xiu disappeared, his followers were converted by Zhang Lu who continued the same practices. Hence, Zhang Xiu should not be considered a misspelled name as the commetator Pei Songzhi suggested; he was the leader of the Wudoumi Dao and rebelled during the same period as Zhang Jue⁵⁴.

The source also indicates that after the failure of Zhang Xiu’s rebellion, Zhang Lu took over Zhang Xiu’s community and absorbed his teachings and practices.

⁵² Ba was a large commandery set up during the Qin dynasty. It was six hundred *li* 里 west of Shu. It belonged to the Yizhou prefecture. Its population was 1,086,049 (*Hou Han shu*, chapter 23 of Zhi, p.1501).

⁵³ *Hou Han shu*, chapter 8, pp.133-148.

⁵⁴ Li Gang (1984) discusses in more details that Zhang Xiu’s contribution as the leader of Wudoumi Dao.

Healing Methods in the Wudoumi Dao

In *Dianlüe*, it is said that Zhang Xiu followed similar religious practices as those of Zhang Jue and especially mentioned Zhang Xiu's healing practices. Zhang Xiu's healing methods are more complex than that of Zhang Jue. Zhang Xiu established the "calm room" for the sick to confess their faults, as well as the officials would pray for the sick and deliver "hand petitions to the Three Offices" (heaven, earth and water). All these practices served for faith-healing and were the most important religious activities in the Wudoumi Dao.

As Zhang Daoling did, Zhang Xiu also asked the family of the sick to bring five bushels of rice to the community. The use of the rice have been defined differently. We generally consider that *wudou mi* 五斗米 -- five bushels of rice -- was a sort of taxation⁵⁵ or fees of healing⁵⁶ in the Tianshi Dao community. There is also a hypothesis suggesting that the term "wu-dou" is a symbolic number related to the Chinese ancient belief in five stars in the north (*beidou* 北斗), but not a unit of measurement⁵⁷.

Another hypothesis is that *wudou mi* could be used for medical reasons. In the ancient medical text *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方 ("The Fifty-two Ailments")⁵⁸, there are medical recipes referring to *wudou mi*⁵⁹. In the category of "treating vipers' bite", a recipe suggests:

⁵⁵ See for example, Zhang & Zen, 1994, p.84; Ofuchi Ninji, 1991; Qin Xitai, 1988, p.146.

⁵⁶ Mu Zhongjian, 1993, p.389.

⁵⁷ It is written in Rao Zongyi (1993, p. 142) that Shen Meisou mentions that *wudou* should be the five stars but not a unit of measurement. There is *Wudou jing* 五斗經 ("Book of Five Stars") in *Dao zang* (vol. 341). It contains eight texts (total thirty-two chapters) explaining the popular beliefs that human life corresponds to five stars located in five different directions. These texts are said to have been received from Laozi by Zhang Daoling. But according to Ren Jiyu (1993, pp. 449-453), the dates at which these texts were written are identified as between the seventh and tenth century (the Tang and Song dynasties).

⁵⁸ It is an ancient medical text which was discovered in a Han dynasty tomb dated as 168 B.C..

⁵⁹ Rao Zongyi, 1993, p. 142. Rao quoted one recipe from *Wushier bingfang*.

Make congee with blue choice millet. Use fifteen parts water to one part of grain to produce five dou of congee [*wudou mi*]. Take it out, let the steam blow off, and fill a new pottery water jar with it. Cover the mouth with three [layers] of heap cloth. Then apply sealing mud two cun thick. Incinerate it until the mud is completely fired and drink it. The wound will subside. (Donald Harper, 1982, p. 259)

There is another recipe for treating skin rash caused by lacquer⁶⁰. It says:

“[...] Cook five dou of rice [*wudou mi*] using wood kindling. ...” (ibid, p.558).

These medical recipes might explain why Zhang Xiu asked five bushels of rice from the family of the sick but not from everyone in the community.

1.4 Zhang Lu and the development of the Tianshi Dao

Zhang Lu

Much more sources are available about Zhang Lu (?-216)⁶¹. According to the Taoist hagiographies, Zhang Daoling was succeeded by his son Zhang Heng 張衡 and his grandson Zhang Lu, that is the second and third generation of celestial masters.

There are very few descriptions of Zhang Heng’s contributions in ancient sources. In hagiographies written by the Taoists, Zhang Heng was added into the legends of the Zhang family as the oldest son of Zhang Daoling. Zhang Heng studied and practiced the *dao* from a very young age and he lived isolated from the world. He refused the emperor’s invitation to serve as an official and he taught his son Zhang Lu the true doctrine of *dao*. Zhang Heng then climbed to heaven with his wife just as his father did⁶². Zhang Heng’s Taoist hermit like lifestyle and his interest on *dao* was described

⁶⁰ Donald J. Harper, 1982, p.551, n. 1 states that “the inclusion of a category for lacquer rash in Fifty-two Ailments reflects the importance of the lacquer industry in the region of Chang Sha”.

⁶¹ Some studies suggest that Zhang Lu died on 220 (Isabelle Robinet, 1987).

⁶² Extract from *Hantianshi shijia* in *Dao zang* (vol.57: 46707-8); *Lishi zhenxian tidaotongjian* also in *Dao zang* (vol.8: 6327).

very similar as Zhang Daoling's life according to *Shenxian zhuan*. However, Zhang Heng left almost no trace in the historical records and occupied a less important position as celestial master than his father Zhang Daoling or his son Zhang Lu.

Zhang Lu was an important figure in the continuation and development of the Tianshi Dao organization. He is not only listed in the hagiographies of the Zhang family in *Dao zang* 道藏 (in which his biography occupies much longer paragraphs than that of his father), but he is also mentioned in several important historical texts. In the "Treatise of Wei" from *Sanguo zhi*, there is a biography of Zhang Lu saying that,

Zhang Lu, surname Gongqi, came from Feng in the state of Pei. [...] After Ling's death his son Heng succeeded; Heng died, [his son] Lu continued his teachings. The chief of Yizhou 益州⁶³, Liu Yan 劉焉, named [Zhang] Lu as a general. Liu Yan then sent Lu and an other general, Zhang Xiu 張修, to fight against the official of Hanzhong⁶⁴. [Zhang] Lu killed [Zhang] Xiu and converted [Zhang] Xiu's followers. After Liu Yan died, his son [Liu] Zhang succeeded. [Liu] Zhang being angry at [Zhang] Lu's disobedience, he killed [Zhang] Lu's mother and his family. [Zhang] Lu then took over Hanzhong region and taught *guidao* 鬼道 ("demon ways") to the local people. [Zhang] Lu called himself the Master. People who came to learn from him were named *guizu* 鬼卒 ("demon soldiers"); people who adhered to his teachings were named *jijiu* ("wine sacrificers"); administrators [in Zhang Lu's community] were named *zhitou-dajijiu* 治頭大祭酒 ("head officials of parish"). The followers were told to be honest and not to cheat. The sick should confess their faults. These teachings were similar to those of the Yellow Turbans. Every *jijiu* established *yishe* 義舍 ("free hostel") [...]. They offered free meals in the *yishe* and met the needs of the travellers. The travellers should not take more than their needs, otherwise evils

⁶³ Yizhou was an independent kingdom called Dian 滇 in the south of China before the conquest by the Han emperors. The Yizhou prefecture was set up by the Emperor Wu (re. 141-87 B.C.). Its population was 110,820 then. It had large minerals resources such as iron, silver, copper and lead (*Hou Han shu*, chapter 23 of Zhi, p.1500).

⁶⁴ Hanzhong was a commandery belonging to the state of Yizhou. It was set up during the Qin dynasty. Its population was 267,420. It was a region rich in iron and tin (*Hou Han shu*, vol.90: "Zhi-twentythree: Junguo 5: Yizhou: Hanzhong").

would make them ill. People who opposed the law were forgiven three times and then they would be punished. Only *jijiu* administrated the people. People were pleased and [Zhang] Lu occupied Ba and Han [Hanzhong] regions for thirty years (...)

Two more paragraphs describe how Zhang Lu controlled Ba and Hanzhong region for thirty years and how many people went to seek refuge in his country. It is said that when Cao Cao 曹操⁶⁵ invaded Hanzhong region, Zhang Lu surrendered to Cao Cao and received a title of “General Protector of the South”⁶⁶.

However, this text does not mention in detail Zhang Lu’s healing practices. It only mentions that Zhang Lu taught people to be honest and asked the sick to confess their faults. The text also states that evils would make ill those who took more food than they needed. The teachings of Zhang Lu show continuity with those of Zhang Daoling and also some similarities with those of Zhang Jue, and Zhang Xiu.

Dianlüe mentions more in detail about Zhang Lu’s religious practices,

[...] Later Zhang Lu occupied Hangzhong region, he managed to take [Zhang] Xiu’s followers. Since people believed in [Zhang] Xiu’s teachings [in this region], Zhang Lu adapted these teachings [in his organization]. Zhang Lu established *yishe* (“free hostel”) and offered free meals to travellers. He asked people who had minor faults to repair hundred steps of road in order to release their sins. Zhang Lu followed the calendar to forbid killing during spring and summer and he also banned alcohol. Those who lost their home and stayed temporarily in Zhang Lu’s regime, all obeyed his orders. (Adapted from Paul Michaud, 1958, p.78).

This text tells us that Zhang Lu adapted Zhang Xiu’s teachings and asked the people who committed sins to repair roads. Zhang Lu also set up certain rules to regulate killing and drinking.

⁶⁵ Cao Cao (155-220 A.D.) was a general who was involved in eliminating the Yellow Turbans at the end of Han dynasty. He later reunified Northern China by fighting against other generals after the political crisis of the Eastern Han dynasty.

⁶⁶ In 215 A.D.

In the “Biography of Liu Yan” found in *Hou Han shu*, the descriptions are almost copies of those in *Sanguo zhi*, except that the information was rearranged and some descriptions about Zhang Lu’s mother were added. It states,

Zhang Lu was from Pei country. His mother was pretty and an expert of *guidao* (“evil ways”). She was invited very often by [the governor] Liu Yan. [...]

This source gives us an important information about Zhang Lu’s mother who was an “expert of the *guidao*”, very likely a shaman.

It is evident that the two texts about Zhang Lu in *Sanguo Zhi* and *Hou Han shu* are based on the same sources. The same sources were also used *Huayangguo zhi*⁶⁷. These sources are clearly different from those in *Dianlue*. The possible connection between Zhang Lu and Zhang Xiu’s Taoist communities need to be traced here.

Zhang Lu and Zhang Xiu

First, are the two Zhang Xiu described in *Hou Han shu*, and *Sanguo zhi* and *Dianlüe*, the same person?

In the text of *Sanguo zhi* and *Hou Han shu*, it is said that Zhang Lu killed a general named Zhang Xiu and collected his troops. Zhang Xiu was the general working for Liu Yan and he cooperated with Zhang Lu to conquer the Hanzhong region. The text of *Dianlüe* says that Zhang Lu managed to take over Zhang Xiu’s followers and continued to practice the Wudoumi Dao. Zhang Xiu was a shaman and the leader of the Wudoumi Dao. Hence, Zhang Xiu, the general, and Zhang Xiu, the master of Wudoumi Dao, are obviously not the same person.

Secondly, who was the leader of the Wudoumi Dao? Was Zhang Xiu one of the chiefs of Zhang Daoling’s organization in Ba region⁶⁸? Or was Zhang Xiu the real founder of the Wudoumi Dao, killed later by Zhang Lu who took over his territory and

⁶⁷ *Huayangguo zhi*, vol.2, “Theatise of Hanzhong”.

⁶⁸ Qing Xitai, 1988, p.178; Stephen R. Bokenkamp, 1997, p.34, p.67: n.16; Ofuchi Ninji, 1991, pp. 46-49.

followers?⁶⁹

These controversies regarding the leader of the Wudoumi Dao are mainly due to the contradictions between the texts in *Sanguo zhi* and *Dianlüe*. The problem seems to come from the fact that Zhang Xiu and Zhang Lu both collected “five bushels of rice”, which is considered to have begun with Zhang Daoling. In *Sanguo zhi*, Zhang Lu was the successor of Zhang Ling’s organization, “the people who believed Zhang Daoling’s teachings contributed five bushels of rice”; in *Dianlüe*, Zhang Xiu was the leader of the Wudoumi Dao which “regularly asked the families of the sick to bring five bushels of rice”. Thus, there seem to be two groups which were called the Wudoumi Dao.

However, *Sanguo zhi* itself never mentions that Zhang Daoling’s organization was called the Wudoumi Dao. The text only says that the people who believed Zhang Daoling’s teachings contributed five bushels of rice and that is why they were called the “rice bandits”. But in *Dianlüe*, it is clearly written that “Zhang Xiu followed the Wudoumi Dao”.

In *Hou Han shu* we see similar texts describing that Zhang Lu asked people to bring five bushels of rice. And in *Huayangguo zhi*, it states:

...[Zhang Lu] asked for five Bushels of rice, so people called it [Zhang Lu’s teaching] as the Mi Dao 米道 (“Way of Rice”)[...]⁷⁰

Similarly, in both documents, the term *wudoumi dao* does not appear. Consequently it is possible that Zhang Xiu’s Wudoumi Dao was not necessarily the same as Zhang Lu’s, but both were related to the Tianshi Dao founded by Zhang Daoling.

Dianlüe preserved more complete record about Zhang Xiu who was the leader of an independent religious group at the same period as Zhang Jue and Zhang Lu. Meanwhile, it was an important evidence proving that religious healing was practiced by three different Taoist masters in three different regions. Since Zhang Xiu’s

⁶⁹ Mu Zhongjia, 1991, p.389.

⁷⁰ *Huayangguo zhi*, vol.2, “Threatise of Hanzhong”.

community was located between the locations of the Taiping Dao and the Tianshi Dao, similar healing beliefs and activities of the three groups showed a certain uniformity of the popular beliefs relating to illness from the western to the eastern region.

Indeed, who was the real founder of the Wudoumi Dao is not the crucial point of this study. The important point is that Zhang Xiu's teachings and practices were absorbed by the Tianshi Dao master Zhang Lu after 184 A.D.. We consider that the healing practices of Zhang Xiu were preserved by Zhang Lu in the Tianshi Dao community.

Healing Methods in the Tianshi Dao

Zhang Lu was not only a leader of a religious group but also a faith healer. His basic healing method is similar to that of Zhang Jue and Zhang Xiu: let the sick confess their faults.

The same healing rituals as that of Zhang Xiu took place in the Tianshi Dao community. The sick were isolated in "calm rooms" in order to reflect on their sins, then the "wine officers" would ask them to write down three copies of their sins. These copies, called the "hand petitions to the Three Offices", are delivered to the offices of heaven, earth and water, as well as the contracts with the gods for not repeating the sins. These healing rituals were organized for confession, a sort of faith healing through the power of gods, and the celestial masters played intermediate roles between the gods and human.

Meanwhile, Zhang Lu asked the sick to do community work such as repairing public roads. It was a practice for accumulating good deeds and obeying religious disciplines of the Tianshi Dao.

Summary

In this chapter, we have introduced the Tianshi Dao movement founded by Zhang Daoling and continued by his grandson Zhang Lu, the Taiping Dao movement led by Zhang Jue, and the Wudoumi Dao movement led by Zhang Xiu during the second century. These three Taoist movements have some similarities, especially regarding the healing practices performed by Taoist masters. These healing practices are sometimes traditional and popular, but they reflect more or less certain innovative religious ideas of celestial masters.

However, comparing the healing practices of these early Taoist masters, we note that Zhang Jue's healing practices mixed popular beliefs and religious ideas while Zhang Daoling, Zhang Lu and Zhang Xiu's practices are more innovative and religious. Because demons or evils as causes of illness were largely believed in since ancient times, the staves and magic water used by Zhang Jue clearly reflect these traditional beliefs. Meanwhile, Zhang Jue asked the sick to kneel down to reflect on their faults in order to get cured; this shows the characteristic of faith healing.

Zhang Daoling, Zhang Lu and Zhang Xiu's healing practices are more innovative and religious since they did not involve practices such as expelling demons. They asked the sick to confess their sins to the gods in an isolated space -- the calm room. They also asked the sick to note their sins on paper and offer it to the gods. In this case, the gods had the absolute authority, which is the power to cure the sick. Zhang Xiu and Zhang Lu acted not only as intermediates between the gods and human, but also as instructors teaching people in the community about goodness.

In order to understand the religious thoughts behind the faith healing practices performed by these Taoist masters, we shall pay attention to the important book used as the religious text inside the Tianshi Dao community, *Daode jing*. The thoughts of Laozi expressed in this book have been studied in great detail. Here we will not touch this subject. We simply study how the Tianshi Dao masters interpreted *Daode jing* and what were the consequences of their interpretations. The *Xiang'er* Commentary that Zhang Daoling devoted to *Daode jing* is a perfect source for such needs since it illustrates the main religious teachings of the Tianshi Dao during the Eastern Han dynasty and the beliefs that led the celestial masters to the healing practices.

CHAPTER II

The Religious Teachings in *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu*

There are many studies examining *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注 (as “*Xiang'er Commentary*” below) from different aspects. Some are concerned with the organization that religious disciplines are promoted in the *Xiang'er Commentary*. Rao Zongyi¹ comments that the *Xiang'er Commentary* is a book teaching how to follow the Taoist precepts and to accumulate good deeds. Sunayama Minoru² points out that the *Xiang'er Commentary* defines *dao* as a shapeless “pneuma”, criticizes the evil teachings and promotes the Taoist precepts in order to obtain immortality. Ofuji Ninji³ also thinks that the *Xiang'er Commentary* is mainly a book setting Taoist precepts in order to regulate behaviors of the Taoist adherents.

Other studies of the *Xiang'er Commentary* focus more on its popular religious aspect contributing to the popularity of the Tianshi Dao. Mu Zhongjian⁴ argues that the *Xiang'er Commentary* is the first book to interpret *Daode jing* 道德經 from a theological point of view and which thus begins a Taoist religious tradition of re-interpreting the Taoist philosophical books for religious uses. Mu suggests that the *Xiang'er Commentary* is indeed the earliest book combining Laozi’s philosophy with beliefs in immortality and other popular beliefs. Mu summarizes the characteristics of the *Xiang'er Commentary* as a document that redefines *dao* as the absolute God, promotes ideas of immortality and beliefs of retribution, absorbs certain Confucian ideas, concerns the life of the mass, and uses the Taoist precepts to justify the internal and external relations of the Tianshi Dao community. Considering the early Tianshi Dao as a mass religion, Mu concludes that the *Xiang'er Commentary* presents the

¹ Rao Zongyi, 1991.

² In Fukui Kojun, 1992, vol.2, pp.1-15.

³ Ofuji Ninji, 1991, chapter 3 & 4.

⁴ Mu Zhongjian, 1991.

practical religious ideas of the Tianshi Dao and it promotes heaven while restraining the power of kingship.

Other studies consider the ideas of political reform that appear in the *Xiang'er Commentary*. Stephen Bokenkamp writes that the *Xiang'er Commentary* is more concerned with a “practical metaphysics” and that it provides “a concrete description of how the Dao functions in the world and how humans should act to accord with it” (1997, p.37). Bokenkamp compares the *Xiang'er Commentary* with two other commentaries of *Daode jing* written by Heshang Gong 河上公⁵ and Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249 A.D.), and argues that both commentaries concentrate on the ideas of self-cultivation and “non-being”, both agree that “the sage is first and foremost someone who transcends ordinary mortals in understanding and ability”, thus their approaches on *Daode jing* belong to the privileged social class⁶; the *Xiang'er Commentary* is concerned with “remaking society on the model of the Dao” which “each person must be in complete accord with the Dao in order for society, and indeed the cosmos, to function perfectly” (1997, p.39).

Qing Xitai (1988) suggests that the religious thoughts in the *Xiang'er Commentary* reflect the political ideas of the Tianshi Dao masters. Qing argues that the promotion of immortality is not simply individual salvation, but a collective way for realizing the “great peace” (*taiping* 太平) in the human world. Concerning the idea of immortality, Ofuji (1991) suggests that the one described in the *Xiang'er Commentary* being different from those in traditional beliefs since it is presented as a reward from *dao* for being good, a tool for convincing people to follow the teachings of *dao*.

In this chapter, we discuss the specific characteristics that the *Xiang'er Commentary* gives to *dao*, the nature of the Taoist precepts which regulate people’s behaviors in the Taoist communities, and the causes of illness and cure which appear in the *Xiang'er Commentary*.

⁵ Date of the Heshang Gong Commentary is not identified yet. Some say that this Commentary is made during the second century (Stephen Bokenkamp, 1997, p.38; Rao Zongyi, 1991, pp.79-82); others consider that the Heshang Gong Commentary was completed during the Jin period (265-420 A.D.) (Fukui Kojun, 1992, pp.24-25).

⁶ Stephen Bokenkamp, 1997, p.39.

2.1 Interpretations of *Dao*

Dao is interpreted in the *Xiang'er* Commentary as having human characteristics and being immortal. *Dao* is first humanized and then transformed into a savior image who can save and protect those seeking it. Meanwhile, *dao* is considered as having absolute authority and judging human behaviors. This understanding leads people to beliefs that *dao* can judge good or evil, can reward the good by long life but punish the evil by death.

Humanities of Dao

Dao, in *Daode jing*, is described as a mysterious entity -- the origin and law of the universe -- which has no beginning, no end and even no shape, no trace or word. The Heshang Gong commentary interpretes *dao* as the “original pneuma” (*yuanqi* 元氣) which exists in all creatures and gives them the energy of life⁷. In the *Xiang'er* Commentary, *dao* is humanized and is described as having spirits, authority and being immortal.

In the *Xiang'er* Commentary, “I” from the original text is interpreted everywhere as *dao*⁸. For example, *Daode jing* states,

Do you know whose child I am? My image preceded the Thearchs.
(Bokenkamp, 1997, p.81)⁹

The *Xiang'er* Commentary interpretes,

‘I’ refers to the Dao . (Ibid, p.81)

Daode jing states,

The reason I suffer great injury is because I have a body. (Ibid, p.94)

The *Xiang'er* Commentary interprets,

⁷ Qing Xitai, 1988, vol.1, p.76; 1994, vol. 2, pp.79-80.

⁸ For example, Rao Zongyi, 1991, p. 7, p. 15 & 16.

⁹ All the translations of the *Xiang'er* Commentary to which I refer in this chapter are from Stephen Bokenkamp (1997).

The first-person pronouns refer to the Dao (Ibid, p.94).

Hence, *dao* is specified as having human characters.

However, the *Xiang'er* Commentary does not go far beyond what has been originally introduced in *Daode jing*. On the one hand the *Xiang'er* Commentary believes that *dao* is invisible and states,

The Dao's inspiration is to be without body. It wants to nourish the spirits; that is the only reason it has a "body". (Ibid, p.94)

On the other hand, the *Xiang'er* Commentary gives this "shapeless" *dao* a spirit or consciousness which can be transferred to human beings,

The Dao is of the highest worthiness. Hidden away in its subtlety, it has no shape or physical image. Since it cannot be seen or known, one can only follow its precepts. (Ibid, p.96)

Thus, *dao* is transformed to an imaginative religious existence who has absolute authority above people including the emperors and nobles. Moreover, *dao* is described as having conscious, having the privilege to observe the human world, and its teachings become popular when the world reaches disorder,

The Dao is both exalted and spiritual. It will never obey humans. Thus, it releases spirits and perversities and causes all sorts of transformed oddities to spread as an admonition and warning. The Dao then hides away to observe. When disorder reaches its apex, order invariably returns; the will of the Dao inevitably prevails. This is why the archical king and the great ministers have no choice but to earnestly and carefully investigate the Dao. (Ibid, p.137)

In this case, *dao* appears as the savior who can save the world from destruction¹⁰. Therefore, people have to follow *dao*'s teachings and correct their bad behaviors since they fear *dao*'s spirit, and punishment,

¹⁰ Ofuji Ninji argues that the *dao* is not a savior but a teacher since it does not "save" people but gives orders to people (1991, p.356). I think that the definitions and the images of *dao* in the *Xiang'er* Commentary are not always concordant, in some cases *dao* does appear as a savior.

When the king practices the Dao, the people will proceed to him. They will all delight in the Dao. Knowing that the spirit luminaries cannot be deceived, they will fear the celestial spirits, not laws and regulations, and will not dare to commit wrong. (...) (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.138)

The fear leads to the worship of *dao*, people have to follow its teachings,

Not one of the words of the Dao may be discounted. Those who achieve Transcendence¹¹ do so by simply honoring the words of the Dao. In all cases, accomplishment follows. (Ibid, pp.103-104)

Once the teachings of *dao* are followed, people become good,

In high antiquity, when the Dao was employed, all people were human and responsible. All were of the same type so that the benevolent and dutiful were not distinguished from others. (...) (Ibid, p.104)

The proclaimed absolute authority of *dao* is established because of its immortality having been declared in *Daode jing*. In the *Xiang'er Commentary*, the author -- Zhang Daoling -- emphasises *dao's* immortality through comments on heaven,

The reason heaven is able to provide enduring life is that it patterns itself on the Dao. (Ibid, p.102)

on sages,

The Sage, patterning himself on the Dao, thinks only of accumulating good deeds in order to achieve physical longevity. (...) (Ibid, p.117)

and on people,

If people are able to pattern themselves on the Dao's intentions, they will be able to endure. (Ibid, p.102)

Despite that Zhang Daoling opposes to the inequality of people caused by wealth and power, he illustrates that obtaining an enduring life has also hierarchical orders and that immortality is used as a standard to measure the greatness of being. *Dao* is seen as the greatest since it is eternal. For example, Laozi says in *Daode jing* that "the Dao is

¹¹ "Transcendents" indicate those who become immortals in Taoist term.

great, heaven is great, earth is great, and life is great”, Zhang Daoling interprets,

Among these four great things, which is greatest? The Dao is greatest.
(Ibid, p.121)

Heaven and earth are said to be great since they pattern themselves on *dao*. The sages are said to achieve immortality by communicating with heaven who patterns itself on *dao*.

(...) Transcendent nobles of ancient times were able to keep faith with the subtle and marvelous and were in communication with heaven. (Ibid, p.97)

People, in this case, are said to copy any of these in order to achieve longevity.

However, the result of this chain of patterning is the same -- obtainment of immortality. Zhang Daoling does not always refer to the hierarchical order between the greatest. *Dao*, in the *Xiang'er Commentary*, is often described as similar to heaven and earth, without definite distinction between each of them. Moreover, *dao* can sometimes transform into human corps, appearing as Laozi himself.

The One is the Dao. (...) The One disperses its form as pneuma and gathers in its form as the Most High Lord Lao, whose permanent rules is on Mount Kunlun. (...) (Ibid, p.89)

Thus *dao* can be united with heaven and the “Most High Lord” (*taishang laojun* 太上老君) Laozi. This exceptional unity (without hierarchy) shows three different dimensions that Zhang Daoling gives to *dao*: “dao” or “one” which is the mysterious existence described in *Daode jing*; the heaven which is worshipped as absolute power since ancient times; as a person who discovers the existence of *dao*, Laozi himself. *Dao* is finally humanized in this last dimension which is the closest one to the human world. In this dimension *dao* is defined in a much more concrete way, implying that all values related to *dao* can certainly apply to human beings.

Values of Dao

Giving humanity to *dao* is a very significant contribution of the *Xiang'er Commentary* since it simplifies the abstract explanations in *Daode jing*, it interpretes *dao* by

approaching it with practical concepts rather than with mysteriousness. These concepts are presented in the *Xiang'er Commentary* as the only correct values for the human world and as the standards of judgment of *dao*.

The most important of these values is the goodness which is the contrary to the evil,

Heaven and earth are patterned on the Dao. They are humane to all those who are good, inhumane to all those who do evil. (...) (Ibid, p.81)

and *dao* does not prefer the evil deeds,

“Flaws are evil deeds, those things in which the Dao is not pleased. You should cleanse and purify your whole body and, in your actions, ensure that you do not evil. (Ibid, p.90)

This dualism of good and evil is one of the most significant characteristics of the *Xiang'er Commentary*.

Other values are described as having harmony ,

The Dao values the centrally harmonious. (...) You should not flood over, for this is a transgression of the precepts of the Dao. (Ibid, p.79)

spirits,

The Dao teaches people to congeal their essences and form spirits. (...) (Ibid, p.87)

The Dao's aspiration is to be without body. It wants to nourish the spirits. (Ibid, p.94)

as well as clarity and stillness,

That which is “self-sufficient” is the Dao. It delights in clarity and stillness. (Ibid, p.117)

The Dao is ever without desire. It delights in clarity and stillness. (...) (Ibid, p.141)

These values are promoted by the Taoist philosophers from earlier time. The *Xiang'er Commentary* also gives examples of rejections of *dao* saying that *dao* excludes improper desires toward fame,

The Dao does not delight in those who strenuously seek after status and honor. (...) (Ibid, p.94)

selfishness,

What the Dao means by being without self-interest is that one should have few desires for the vulgar things of this world. (Ibid, p.109)

and glory,

The Dao is of the highest worthiness, yet it constantly fears injury and does not dare to seek glory, since concentration on such desires injures the body. (...) (Ibid, p.94)

These precepts establish the highest values for people and remind them about the absolute authority of *dao*. Teaching these values occupies the most important content of the *Xiang'er* Commentary. Learning these values is strongly recommended since it is the unique way to reunify with *dao*, hence becoming immortal. These values are not the same as the emperor's law, indeed Zhang Daoling suggests that the imperial law should be replaced by the rules of *dao*,

(...) Knowing that the spirit luminaries cannot be deceived. They [people] will fear the celestial spirits, not laws and regulations, and will not dare to commit wrong. (...) The king's law will no longer cause harm to anyone. Corporal punishments (...) will be no more. Thus the people will be easily ruled and the king will enjoy happiness. (Ibid, p.138)

However, Zhang Daoling does not consider the emperors to be powerless since they are still the rulers of the human world. The *Xiang'er* Commentary gives the message that the emperors have to follow the law of *dao* as well.

Justice of Dao

According to the *Xiang'er* Commentary, the highest value after all is the goodness and *dao* has its absolute judgment on what is good and what is evil. *Dao* is regarded as the symbol of justice which equals to the law of heaven,

(...) The correct law of heaven does not reside in offering foodstuffs and praying at ancestral shrines. Thus the Dao has prohibited these things and

provides heavy penalties for them. (...) (Ibid, p.119)

and this law is contrary to the evil teachings or practices,

When the true Dao is hidden away, deviant writings emerge. Those mortals who commonly practice false arts proclaim them as the teachings of the Dao, but it is all fraud and may not be employed. (...) (Ibid, p. 104)

Dao is said to honor the good but excludes the evil. The strictest punishment is sending the evil to death,

The Dao establish life to reward the good and death to threaten the evil. (...) (Ibid, p.110)

or sending the unfaithful people to death,

Those who practice the Dao live; those who lose the Dao die. (Ibid, p. 119)

Thus, for those who want to be alive and to have longevity, the only way is to be faithful to *dao* and practice the good deeds,

The crux for seeking Transcendent longevity and heaven's blessing resides in keeping faith with the Dao. (...) (Ibid, p.119)

When one keeps faith with the Dao and practices good, there is no trace of evil. (Ibid, p.122)

(...) All will be like those who keep faith with the Dao; all will achieve Transcendent longevity. (...) (Ibid, p.128)

otherwise, they would be harmed,

(...) [Dao] observes alike all of those raised to high position by the world, so that what they should not do, they dare not do. How then can people, in their ignorance, overcome the Dao? If they try to, they will be injured. (Ibid, p.127)

The evil practices and unfaithful toward *dao* are considered as serious sins,

The crux for seeking Transcendent longevity and heaven' blessing

resides in keeping faith with the Dao. One should keep the precepts in good faith and refrain from committing transgressions or contrary acts, for sins will be tallied up among the celestial officers. (...) (Ibid, p.119)

Consequently, by being faithful to *dao* and practicing good deeds, people would be protected,

This is a case of natural response. When one practices good, the Dao ensues. When one practices evil, injury results. (Ibid, p.128)

It is strongly recommended showing to evil people the correctness of *dao* in order to help them to become good,

Ever performing good deeds, the Sage, seeing evil persons, does not forsake them but approaches to instruct them by means of the precepts of the Dao. (...) (Ibid, p.124)

Hence, on the one hand the *Xiang'er* Commentary teaches people not only to be good for themselves but also spreading goodness to others, while on the other hand contents of the goodness are defined in ambiguous way, thus the simplest and safest way of being good is to be faithful to *dao*.

2.2 The Dualism of Good and Evil

Teaching the distinctions between good and evil is one of the main themes of the *Xiang'er* Commentary. Zhang Daoling points out that evil actions and thoughts are sins which cause natural catastrophes, social instabilities and pestilences. More importantly, sins should be excluded through regulating one's behavior. The *Xiang'er* Commentary also emphasizes educating each individual to accumulate good deeds in order to reunify with *dao* and these efforts would eventually serve for becoming immortal.

In the *Xiang'er* Commentary we find many interpretations related to the outcomes of good and evil. Here is an example of the descriptions about the differences between good (*shan* 善) and evil (*e* 惡):

Those who do not yet know still doubt and question, wanting to know

how the difference between the pleasing and the repellent compares with the difference between Dao and deviant learning. (...) “Pleasing” refers to moral goodness. It is a living force and thus belongs to heaven, just as the repellent is death and belongs to earth. (Ibid, p.110)

Once again the connection between good=life and evil=death is established. In general, being good means having virtues while evil thoughts or actions means deviant teachings. More specifically, the dimensions of good and evil are summarized below.

Goodness

The *Xiang'er* Commentary recommends virtues like having harmony, clarity, few desires and above all returning to *dao*. Such recommendations underline the essence of goodness as follow:

1. Modeling one’s actions on the newborn baby:

The newborn does not act willfully and is thus joined with the Dao. This is simply because infants are unaware of self-control. But their knowledge gradually increase and so they eventually reach old age. This passage means that if you wish to become supple and bring pneumas into your body, you should model yourself on the young child. (Ibid, p.90)

2. Patterning oneself on the water:

The excellence of water is that it is able to remain supple and weak. In this it images the Dao. (...) People should model themselves on water, constantly delighting in goodness and kingness. (Ibid, p.86)

3. Ignoring emotion:

When one’s emotions are unmoved and one’s joy and anger do not issue forth, the five visera harmonize and are mutually productive. This is to be of one radiance and of one dust with the Dao. (Ibid, p.81)

4. Maintaining simplicity as “unworked wood”:

(...) Such a person, (...) would maintain simplicity, entirely in accord with the will of the Dao. (Ibid, p.95)

(...) “Unworked wood” (i.e., simplicity) refers to the original pneumas

of the Dao. When proper practice the Dao and revert to this state, they join with the Dao. (Ibid, p.126)

5. Remaining humane,

(...) Those who are sincere by themselves will naturally be rewarded by heaven, and those who are not will naturally be punished by heaven. Heaven's scrutiny is even more thoroughgoing than any human beings. It [Heaven] knows fully who reveres the Dao and fears heaven. All humaneness and duty will thus be sincere. (...) (Ibid, p.108)

6. Being faithful to *dao*.

(...) Transcendent nobles fear death, but they keep faith with the Dao, maintaining its precepts and thus joining with life. (P.110)

Most of these good deeds are concerned with limiting one's desires and are described in *Daode jing* itself. The *Xiang'er* Commentary especially emphasizes that being faithful to *dao* is the best achievement for Taoists.

Evil

According to the *Xiang'er* Commentary, evil thoughts or actions can be classified into three categories: those relating to human desires, those relating to disobedience to *dao* and those relating to deviant beliefs. The last two categories being more evil than the first one.

In the first category, desires such as unstableness, anger and being unconscious of one's faults are considered bad,

(...) Do not allow your heart to be moved. If it is moved, restrain it. (...) But if you follow the wild promptings of your heart, the Dao will leave for good. (Ibid, p.78)

When the heart produces ill-omened and evil conduct, the Dao departs, (...) (Ibid, p.78)

The "sharp edge" refers to the heart as it is plotting evil. "Vexations" means anger. Both of these are things in which the Dao takes no delight. When your heart wishes to do evil, blunt and divert it; (...) (Ibid, p.80)

(...) [People] merely copied this practice [of the Yellow Emperor] without reforming their evil hearts. This is certainly a great evil. (Ibid, p.82)

These desires, however, are criticized as well in *Daode jing*, but are not considered as transgressions. The interpretations in the *Xiang'er Commentary* clearly distinguish these acts as being evil.

In the second category, desobeying *dao* is meant to be an evil action, hence being condemned to death. Being faithful to *dao* becomes an important action connecting closely to life,

Those who practice the Dao live; those who lose the Dao die. (...) (Ibid, p.119)

Daode jing also encourages people to be faithful to *dao*, but no death penalty is suggested for those who are not faithful. The *Xiang'er Commentary* classifies this second kind of behaviors as being much more sinful than the first one.

In the third category, any other teachings except for Taoists and Confucians are regarded as evil teachings,

When the Dao is cut off and does not circulate, deviant writings flourish and bribery arises. (...) (Ibid, p.79)

When the true Dao is hidden away, deviant writings emerge. Those mortals who commonly practice false arts proclaim them as the teachings of the Dao, but it is all fraud and may not be employed. What are these deviant writings? Of the five scriptures¹², a goodly half is deviant. Beyond the five scriptures, all of the writings, biographies, and records are the creations of corpses. These are completely deviant. (Ibid, p.104-105)

Evil acts, such as offering food and praying at ancestral shrines, are said to be popular cults during that time¹³. Zhang Daoling strongly prohibited these actions as one of the most sinful ones,

Those who practice Dao live; those who lose the Dao die. The correct law

¹² Stephen Bokenkamp notes that the term “five scriptures” refers to the five classics supposedly approved by Confucius, as designated during the Han period (1997, p.105).

¹³ This subject is discussed in Rolf A. Stein (1979).

of heaven does not reside in offering foodstuffs and praying at ancestral shrines. Thus the Dao has prohibited these things and provides heavy penalties for them. (...) (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.119)

Other evil teachings, such as denying that people can gain longevity by practicing *dao*,

They place themselves first and do not encourage people to individually strive in the practice of goodness so that, through the true Dao, the people might themselves obtain the longevity of Transcendents. On the contrary, such “sages” say that Transcendents already have their fates inscribed in their bones and that this is not something one might achieve through deeds. (...) They cause great harm to humanity, even to the extent that those who come later study do not keep faith with the Dao. (Ibid, pp.107-108)

The criticism against this above evil teachings reflect the ideas of equality in the *Xiang'er Commentary*.

Thus in the *Xiang'er Commentary*, Taoist and Confucian teachings are promoted while popular cults and individual inequality are strongly criticized. This kind of behaviors being not described in *Daode jing*, the interpretations in the *Xiang'er Commentary* are consequently the author's point of view.

Being good or evil is set in the Commentary as the condition of life or death. However, being good or evil is not something definitive, the evil behaviors can be corrected through religious disciplines thus everyone can eventually benefit longlife. Consequently, Zhang Daoling establishes a series of disciplines – the so-called “precepts of *dao*” (*daojie* 道誡) -- for people to give up evil behaviors and return to goodness.

2.3 Some Precepts of *Dao*

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, teaching and spreading Taoist values becomes very essential in the *Xiang'er Commentary*. Zhang Daoling does not only teach people what is good but also establishes the precepts for people to achieve goodness, hence the unification with *dao* and obtaining immortality. The precepts of *dao* are based on

maintaining goodness and restricting the evil. These precepts acted as the essential teachings of the Tianshi Dao community. The precepts constitute a path for self-salvation, which demands primarily one's obedience to *dao* and the self-consciousness of good and evil.

The term "precepts of *dao*" is frequently mentioned in the *Xiang'er* Commentary, while the contents of the precepts are not clearly categorized. We can find "nine precepts" and "twenty-seven proscriptive precepts" from the texts in *Dao zang* 道藏 ("Taoist Canon")¹⁴. The nine precepts listed in three lines are:

Practice lacking falseness, practice flexibility and weakness, practice maintaining the feminine, do not initiate actions.

Practice lacking fame, practice clarity and stillness, practice good deeds.

Practice desirelessness, practice knowing how to cease with sufficiency, practice yielding to others¹⁵.

These precepts are considered as the oldest and might have been used in the early time of the Tianshi Dao¹⁶. Later on, the precepts have been increased to one hundred eighty¹⁷. However, the *Xiang'er* Commentary contains embryonic forms of the precepts¹⁸, some of which we examine below with the reasons why these precepts

¹⁴ See "Daode zunjing jie 道德尊經誡" in *Taishang Laojun jinglü* 太上老君經錄 collected in *Dao zang*, vol. 562. The date of the text is not yet identified (Ren Jiyu, 1991, p.566).

¹⁵ Translated by Stephen Bokenkamp, 1997, p.49. The original Chinese phrases are quoted in Rao Zongyi, 1991, p.104; Ofuji Ninji, 1991, pp.254-255.

¹⁶ Rao Zongyi, 1991, p.104; Ofuji Ninji, 1991, pp.251-252; Qing Xitai, 1994, vol.2, pp. 346-350.

¹⁷ See "Laojun baibashi jie 老君百八十誡" in *Taishang Laojun jinglü* collected in *Dao zang*, vol. 562.

¹⁸ Stephen Bokenkamp (1997, p.50) lists 27 precepts extracted from the *Xiang'er* Commentary: 1) Do not delight in deviance. Delight is the same as anger. 2) Do not waste your essences and pneumas. 3) Do not injure the ascendant pneumas. 4) Do not consume beasts that contain blood, delighting in their flavor. 5) Do not envy the achievements and fame of others. 6) Do not practice false arts or point to any shape and call it the Dao. 7) Do not neglect the law of the Dao. 8) Do not act recklessly. 9) Do not kill or speak of killing. 10) Do not study deviant texts. 11) Do not covet glory or seek it strenuously. 12) Do not seek fame. 13) Do not be deceived by your ears,

were established¹⁹.

Maintaining Central Harmony

The *Xiang'er* Commentary states,

The Dao values the centrally harmonious. You should practice it in inner harmony. Your will should not flood over, for this is a transgression of the precepts of the Dao. (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.79)

Central harmony (*zhonghe* 中和) is one of the original pneumas (*yuanqi*)²⁰. In the *Xiang'er* Commentary it is considered to be related directly to the traditional beliefs of health, and such beliefs are to be respected. For example,

(...) The five viscera are injured when the five pneumas [which fill them] -- those of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth -- are rendered inharmonious. When these are harmonious, they give birth to one another; when they clash, they attack one another. (...) It issues from one of the viscera and then attacks the others. The victorious pnuma will then form an illness and kill you. (...) (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.80)

The *Xiang'er* Commentary believes that disharmony can form illness and cause death to the person. Thus, for health reason, maintaining central harmony becomes a considerable precept for the celestial masters.

eyes, or mounth. 14) Place yourself in a humble position. 15) Do not slight [the Dao] or become agitated. 16) Consider carefully all undertakings and do not be flustered. 17) Do not pamper your body with good clothes and fine foods. 18) Do not allow [your emotions and vital forces] to overflow. 19) Do not, through poverty, seek strenuously after wealth. 20) Do not commit any of the various evil acts. 21) Do not overly observe the interdiction and taboos. 22) Do not pray or sacrifice to demons and spirits. 23) Do not be obstinate. 24) Do not consider yourself inerrant. 25) Do not contend with others over right and wrong. When you meet the contentious, flee them. 26) Do not proclaim [yourself to be a] Sage or contribute to the fame of the mighty. 27) Do not delight in arms.

¹⁹ These precepts are summarized by myself, the choice of the precepts serves to the purpose of my research on the healing practices of the celestial masters.

²⁰ Rao Zongyi writes that *yuan qi* (original pneumas) has three forms: *tai yin* 太陰 (extreme yin), *tai yang* 太陽 (extreme yang) and *zhong he* 中和 (central harmony) (1991, p.61).

Maintaining Clarity and Stillness

Clarity and stillness (*qingjing* 清靜), which are the important values for the Taoists, constitute a precept for those who want to practice *dao*.

Daoist should value their essences and spirits. Clarity and stillness are the basis. (Ibid, p.121)

Hence, maintaining clarity and stillness are primary practices for those who seek enduring life,

When those who seek long life are given something, they do not decline it; when something is taken from them, they have no rancor. They do not follow the common run of people in their shifts and turns. Instead, their thoughts are perfectly directed toward the Dao. While they are learning to be clear and still. (...) (Ibid, p.99)

The main reason why clarity and stillness are established as a precept is because only in the status of clarity and stillness one can reform oneself returning to simplicity,

The Master has established these teachings concerning morning and evening [practices aim at] clarity and stillness as the most essential. Though heaven and earth might slip from their courses, these events merely serve as admonitions for the people. They will always be able to restore themselves, returning to the simplicity of the Dao. (...) (Ibid, p.99)

and returning to simplicity means to restore one's life,

When the pneumas of the Dao return to the root, it is even more important to maintain clarity and stillness. (...) Knowing how to treasure the root in clarity and stillness is the constant method of restoring one's life. (Ibid, p.101)

Indeed, this precept also serve for returning to originality and becoming immortal.

Giving Up Evil

Giving up evil (*gai'e* 改惡) is the first step toward self-salvation. The *Xiang'er* Commentary teaches that giving up evil conciously can lead one toward the unification to *dao*. For example, it says that,

You should cleanse and purify your whole body and, in your actions, ensure that you do no evil. (Ibid, p.90)

If one drives off the misfortune and evil in the heart, the Dao will return to it (...). (Ibid, p.79)

Unlike the previous two precepts, giving up evil is not based primarily on health reasons but on the fear of *dao*. *Dao*, as the *Xiang'er* Commentary describes, is “inhuman to all those who do evil” and giving up evil is the only way to avoid punishments of *dao*. However, the notions of “evil” and “punishment” do not appear in *Daode jing*, the *Xiang'er* Commentary interpretes “acts not forcefully” (*wuwei* 無為) as “does not perform evil deeds” (*bu wei'e* 不為惡) to emphasize goodness as natural and evil as forceful²¹.

Accumulation of Good Deeds

Goodness is the most important notion in the precepts, and consequently “accumulation of good deeds” (*ji shangong* 積善功) is the most important precept for the Tianshi Dao.

The most significant reason for such a precept is that Zhang Daoling believes that accumulation of good deeds is a way for practicing one’s spirit (which is the essence of one’s life) in order to seek help from heaven²² and to become immortal. For example,

(...) Thus people should accumulate meritorious actions so that their essences and [internal] spirits communicate with heaven. In this way, when there are those who wish to attack and injure them, heaven will come to their aid. (...) (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.82)

(...) Keeping the precepts of the Dao, we amass good deeds, which accrue merit and assemble our essences to form [internal] spirits. Once the spirits are formed, we enjoy the longevity of the Transcendents. In this way, we find our bodies

²¹ Rao Zongyi, 1991, p.78; Stephen Bokenkamp, 1997, p.140.

²² Spirits, essences and energy were considered to be the most important elements for health during that time. The belief in responses between heaven and human also appeared during Spring and Autumn period (Jia Dedao, 1979, pp.24-27 & pp. 33-34).

treasured. (...) (Ibid, p.95)

The essences and internal spirits are explained as the most important vital elements of all lifes including *dao*,

Within its vast precincts are the essences of the Dao. These are apportioned out to the ten thousand things so that the essences of the ten thousand things all have a single root. (Ibid, p.113)

These [essences] are the officials of life and death. Since the essences are fully realized, you should treasure them. (Ibid, p.113)

(...) essences is a variant form of the pneumas of the Dao. It enters into the human body as the root and the source. (Ibid, p.113)

Such interpretation addresses maintaining essences as an important aspect for accumulating goodness and being faithful to *dao* becomes the first thing to do for not losing essences,

The ancient Transcendent nobles treasured the essences to gain life. Today's people lose the essences and die. These are [the Dao's] eminent tokens of good faith! (Ibid, p.113)

Consequently, accumulation of goodness can also help maintaining essences,

Whoever desires to treasure the essences needs to practice one hundred sorts of actions and accomplish ten thousand sorts of merit. One should harmonize the five phases and banish all joy and anger. (...) (Ibid, p.114)

while lack of goodness can cause death,

Grand Darkness is the palace where those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms. (...) The profane are unable to accumulate good deeds, so when they die it is truly death. They are taken away in service of the Earth Offices²³. (Ibid, p.102)

The link between essences, health, goodness and *dao* is established in the *Xiang'er*

²³ Stephen Bokenkamp notes that the Earth Offices are one branch of the tripartite spiritual bureaucracy of Celestial Master Daoism, the other two being the offices of Heaven and of Water (1997, p.102).

- Commentary, and the essences are believed to be nourished through accumulation of good deeds.

The other aspect of accumulation of goodness is to spread the good teachings to those who seek the *dao*,

Seeing those who pursue goodness and understand the intentions of the Dao, you may draw near to them. Seeing those who study goodness and labor diligently, you may approach them and praise them. You should further instruct them, urging them to exert themselves in service of the Dao, spreading its teachings. (Ibid, p.103)

as well as to evil persons,

When you observe evil persons, admonish them concerning their willfulness and explain good actions to them. Those who listen will submit. They may then be instructed and reformed. Draw near to them and explain to them the admonitions of the Dao, terrifying them with the awesome might of heaven so that they will reform themselves. (Ibid, p.103)

Teaching each other about being good is strongly recommended,

People should constantly instruct one another in goodness and should be trustworthy. (Ibid, p.86)

These teachings are undoubtedly beneficial for those who seek longevity and are practical for community life. The precepts became the base for the collective consciousness of the adherents of the Tianshi Dao.

Maintaining Unity

“Unity”, also known as the “One”²⁴, is another name of *dao*, and maintaining unity (*shouyi* 守一) means following the precepts of *dao* (*shou daojie* 守道誠) and become unified with *dao*,

The unity is the Dao, which has established the precepts. The Sage,

²⁴ “The One is the Dao”, explained in the *Xiang'er Commentary* (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.89).

through practicing the precepts, embraces this unity. (...) (Ibid, p.116)

(...) Now that the precepts of the Dao are spread abroad to instruct people, those who keep the precepts and do not transgress them have maintained Unity. Those who do not practice the precepts will lose this unity. (Ibid, p.89)

Keeping the precepts of *dao*, meaning being obedient to *dao*, is the effective method for gaining enduring life,

Whenever human beings wish to undertake some action, they should first gauge it against the precepts of the Dao, considering it calmly to determine that the principles of their action do not contravene the Dao. Only then should they gradually pursue it, so that the Dao of life does not depart from them. (Ibid, p.100)

After all, most of the precepts are oriented towards increasing longevity and becoming immortal since the highest value for the celestial masters is clearly the immortality. The outcomes of these precepts seem to be a sort of moral codes while the essential religious thoughts demand the absolute faith to *dao* for the goal of reaching immortality.

The immortality is interpreted as the disappearance from the human world but the rebirth in another dimension,

Grand Darkness is the place where those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms. When there is no place for them to stay in the world, the worthy withdraw and, feigning death, pass through Grand Darkness to have their images reborn on the other side. This is to be “obliterated without perishing.” (Ibid, p.102)

However, goodness is the condition for immortality, the *Xiang'er* Commentary is a book teaching about the dualism of good and evil and the way of self-salvation through self-cultivation.

2.4 The Causes and Cure of Illness

The causes of illness are described in the Commentary as lack of essences, disharmony between five pneumas, and human transgression. The first and second causes are based on the traditional theories of illness as we can find in ancient sources, we call these the internal causes. The third cause is newly interpreted by Zhang Daoling, we call it the religious cause. This religious theory of illness underlines the faith healing activities of early Taoist masters. Although religious cause is not as systematic as other theories in any traditional medical texts, it reflects the central religious ideas of the *Xiang'er* Commentary.

Bases on religious theory of illness, the cure of illness introduced in the *Xiang'er* Commentary is centered on self-cultivation, on being faithful to *dao*, and above all on confession.

Causes of Illness

The *Xiang'er* Commentary adapts some traditional theories of illness, such as lack of essences,

The essences might be compared to the waters of a pond and the body to the embankments along the sides of the pond. Good deeds are like the water's source. If these three things are all complete, the pond will be sturdy. If the heart does not fix itself on goodness, then the pond lacks embankments and the water will run out. If one does not accumulate good deeds, the pond is cut off at its source and the water will dry up. If one breaches the dike to irrigate fields as if it were a river or stream, then, even though the embankments hold, the original flow will leak off too and the pond will empty. When the bed of the pond becomes scorched and cracked, that is the various illness all emerging. If one is not cautious about these three things, the pond will become an empty ditch. (Ibid, p.114)

and disharmony of five pneumas,

The five viscera are injured when the five pneumas [which fill them] -- those of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth -- are rendered inharmonious. When these are harmonious, they give birth to one another; when they

clash, they attack one another. When you give vent to anger or follow your emotions, one of these pneumas will always issue forth. It issues from one of the viscera and then attacks the others. The victorious pneuma will then form an illness and kill you. (...) (Ibid, p.80)

Both theories appeared also in a classical medical text, *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (“Internal Text of the Yellow Emperor”)²⁵. Until Warring States (475-221 B.C.) period, people believed that every creature is formed by *qi* 氣 (“pneuma”), and essences were believed to be the origin of *qi*²⁶. In *Huangdi neijing*, essences are considered to be the origin of life and human organs. For example, essences are said to be the origin of life²⁷, and before the birth of a person, essences must be formed before the brain being formed²⁸. Also in *Huangdi neijing*, essences are considered to be stored in the five viscera and it is thus very important to maintain the health of the five viscera²⁹.

The causes of illness in *Huangdi neijing* are described as internal causes such as mental instability, and external causes such as uncontrolled life style and the changes of climate or environment. These problems result into lack of essences, allowing the evil energy to enter human bodies or disturb the balance of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, thus causing illness³⁰. Regarding the theories of illness in *Huangdi neijing*, one of the revolutionary approaches is that internal conditions of the person combined to the external causes resulting illness. This approach emphasizes maintaining internal

²⁵ The author is unknown, the date of the text is said to be between the fifth century B.C. and third century (from Warring States to Eastern Han period).

²⁶ Such beliefs appeared in the books such as *Zhuang zi* 莊子, *Yi jing* 易經, *Guan zi* 管子 and *Huainan zi* 淮南子 (Jia Dedao, 1979, pp.24-25).

²⁷ See *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問, “Jinkui zhenyan lun 金匱真言論”.

²⁸ See *Huangdi neijing lingshu* 黃帝內經靈樞, “Jingmai pian 經脈篇”.

²⁹ See *Huangdi neijing lingshu*: “Benzang pian 本藏篇” & “Benshen pian 本神篇”.

³⁰ Jia Dedao, 1979, pp.61-62.

balance in order to prevent illness³¹.

The *Xiang'er Commentary* promotes theories of essences and five pneumas, this shows the similar point of view as *Huangdi neijing* that illness can be prevented if one takes care of one's essences and five pneumas. This being an active way of maintaining healthy.

However, the *Xiang'er Commentary* does not give specific categories for the kinds of illness. Quite a contrary, illness is appeared as a very general term for anything related to one's unhealthy status. Illness becomes rather a symbol of being evil. Thus, besides believing in some traditional causes of the illness, human transgression is described as one cause of illness,

All harm associated with disastrous celestial transformations and anomalies (...) is brought about through human transgression. [Under the good king,] the five planets will follow their appointed courses and invading "guest starts" [i.e., comets] will not flare forth. Pestilential pneumas of all sorts will cease. (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.138)

As we examined in the previous sections of this chapter, that *dao* dislikes human transgression and it punishes those who commit sins. So illness should be regarded as a punishment from *dao*.

In *Taiping jing* 太平經, human faults are also considered as causes of illness since it believes that heaven punishes human faults by giving them illness. For example, *Taiping jing* states,

Heaven knows of all failings, whether grave or minor. For each year of life it has accounts, in which all good and evil actions are recorded. Each individual day and month are examined, and in accordance with the evaluation, units [of three days] are deducted [from the originally fixed life span], and the length of life is decreased. (Translation from Paul Unschuld, 1985, p.124).

It is not rare to find such thinking in *Taiping jing*, and ideas, such as that illness

³¹ Ibid, p.62.

caused by retribution and that curing illness by confession, are also expressed³². *Taiping jing* reflects a strong belief in heaven while the *Xiang'er* Commentary worshippes *dao* as the absolute authority. The similar beliefs in causes of illness appearing in the two books result similar healing practices by the Taiping Dao and the Tianshi Dao masters.

Cure of the Illness

The *Xiang'er* Commentary is not a manual for physicians, it contains almost no description linked directly to the cure of illness. However, we can find some methods related to healing in the *Xiang'er* Commentary, most of them being concerned with how to maintain a healthy and long life. These methods are exclusively suggested to the sick ones. Indeed, the passage to the cure of illness is more or less a passage of faith healing.

Two types of methods can be found in the *Xiang'er* Commentary, one being self-justification and the other being cure by heaven through accumulating good deeds.

Self-justification includes maintaining central harmony, emotional stability, rejecting aggressions and returning to simplicity and clarity. It also includes self-questioning of one's faults and being humble. This demands the self consciousness of the sick, and it is a sort of self-healing.

For those who accumulate good deeds, their spirits are said to be connected to heaven, and that heaven saves them from any danger, destruction or illness. This suggestion seems to be passive, while it primarily demands self-consciousness and being faithful, so it is a way of faith healing.

The two types of methods are complementary rather than independent. Self-healing is based on the faith to *dao* and the absolute obedience to the law of *dao*; and faith healing is based on one's self-consciousness and self-control of behaviors. These methods do not apply specifically to certain illness caused by one of the reasons described above, they apply to any kind of illness.

The *Xiang'er* Commentary clearly emphasizes one's own control on health while it

³² See for example, Zhong Zhaopeng, 1981, p.81.

rejects completely the traditional popular beliefs -- demons and spirits as causes of illness. Spirits causing illness was believed since the ancient Shang 商 period, ghosts of the ancestors who are ignored by their descendents are considered as evil spirits disturbing one's health³³. As for the cure of illness caused by spirits, making declarations to ancestors during the period of ill was often engaged³⁴. Beliefs about demons causing illness were popular during the Zhou 周 dynasty, where offering sacrifices was the main method for cure³⁵. During the Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 B.C.), beliefs of demons and ancestors' ghosts causing illness were still popular³⁶. Expelling or worshipping demons through shamans as methods of cure were widely adapted³⁷. The author of the *Xiang'er Commentary* strongly criticizes and rejects building ancestral halls and offering sacrifices to satisfy demons.

Summary

In this chapter, we analyze the religious aspect of the *Xiang'er Commentary* with a specific concern for its religious thoughts related to the healing practices performed by celestial masters. From this point of view, the *Xiang'er Commentary* defines the meaning of *dao* as having human characteristics and focuses on the connection between morality and immortality.

The *Xiang'er Commentary* is indeed a religious textbook teaching not only about what is good and evil, about giving up evil and returning to good, but also being faithful to *dao*. In comparison to *Daode jing* which favours self-cultivation, the *Xiang'er Commentary* represents a point of view for self-salvation. The masters established a series of religious disciplines to restrict people's behaviors, such disciplines were

³³ The beliefs about illness caused by spirits are said to have appeared during Shang dynasty (1600 B.C. -1066 B.C.) (Jia Dedao, 1979, p.12; Donald J. Harper, 1982, p.70; Paul Unschuld, 1985, pp.26-28).

³⁴ Donald Harper, 1982, p.70.

³⁵ Donald Harper, 1982, p.71; Paul Unschuld, 1985, pp.35-36.

³⁶ Liu Lexian, 1994, pp.445-451.

³⁷ Ibid, pp.445-451.

equal for everyone who seeks *dao* including royalties. These disciplines are called the “precepts of *dao*” and they appeared for the first time in the Taoist religious teachings. Zhang Daoling concludes that through self-cultivation, people could reach self-salvation meaning unifying with *dao* and obtaining immortality.

The *Xiang'er* Commentary establishes the absolute authority of *dao*, which replace that of the emperors and their laws. In the eyes of Zhang Daoling, everyone should be considered as equal and people should be judged according to their morality but not according to their wealth or social ranks. Such judgment can only be given by *dao*. The political thoughts related to equality are expressed through the religious interpretations of *dao* in the *Xiang'er* Commentary.

Practically, the Taoist masters engaged into healing activities in order to apply the above thoughts and politics to the Taoist communities. Taoist masters adapted some traditional theories of illness and, meanwhile, developed a revolutionary approach toward causes of illness -- sins causing illness -- and the cure of illness through confession. The popular beliefs of the illness and the intellectual values were mixed with each other in the popular Taoist communities, this being showed especially through faith healing practices.

How did the celestial masters, also as religious healers, lead their followers toward a passage of faith healing? What were their roles and practices concerning healing? These are the central questions of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

Some Healing Practices in the “Way of Celestial Masters”

The *Xiang'er* Commentary contains the religious teachings which were widely spread within the Wudoumi Dao and the Tianshi Dao communities. From it we know that morality was strongly recommended as the way to gain health, while transgressions against *dao* were considered sins which could cause illness. The celestial masters associate their religious teachings with healing practices, and confession (*hui* 悔) became the most important healing method in that context.

Confession would occur in calm rooms (*jingshi* 靜室) established by the Taoist masters, and the ritual of handing the “hand petitions to the Tree Offices” (*sanguan shoushu* 三官手書) would be the final step, the completion of the confession process. In this chapter, we discuss the origins of the confession used as a healing method, of calm rooms and of the “hand petitions to the Three Offices”.

3.1 Confession

For the Taoist masters, confession seems to be the most important of their healing methods. Confession is thus a key point to understand the revolutionary approach of the Taoist masters toward religious healing practices.

Many scholars have shown that the idea of sins causing illness and death was not new in the Han dynasty ¹. Such an idea can be found in the Moist thoughts in the Warring States period². The idea of sins causing illness appeared certainly among the intellectuals before the Han dynasty. Unfortunately we can not trace back and examine

¹ Ofuji Ninji, 1993; Paul Unschuld, 1987.

² Moism is a philosophy founded by Mozi 墨子 (468-376 B.C.) who was an artisan during the Spring and Autumn period. Mozi's philosophy promotes universal love, quality and mutual benefit, while it is opposed to exploitation, destiny, band of lineage and warfare. Mozi's democratic ideas are considered as in opposition to Confucianism.

whether this idea was passed to masses, since there is almost no written documents allowing such work.

Through the study of the *Xiang'er* Commentary, it is clear that the Taoist masters absorbed the idea of sins causing illness into their religious teachings. Therefore, this idea could have been learned by people who participated to the Tianshi Dao movement. Moreover, the faith healing practices performed by celestial masters were effective ways for spreading their religious ideas and values directly to the masses.

Knowing that early Taoist masters were related to shamans, it is very interesting to consider the fact that the healing practices which were taking place in the Taoist communities during the second century were different from that of the physicians and shaman during the same period³.

Physicians and Shamans

It is astonishing that three Taoist organizations, the Taiping Dao, the Wudoumi Dao and the Tianshi Dao, oriented all their activities around religious healing, despite the fact that none of the Taoists masters were called physicians. They were regarded rather negatively as bandits or shamans, but never as professional physicians.

Physicians are known to have been active since the Warring States period. “Yi 醫 (“physician”) was the title of the specialist in the art of healing”, as Donald Harper points out⁴. The origin of Chinese physicians goes back to the shamans and the term *wuyi* 巫醫 or *fangyi* 方醫 (“shaman-physician”) referred to a single medical profession during the Warring States and Qin-Han dynasties⁵.

In the book of *Zhou li* 周禮, physicians were recorded in a separate category from *wu* 巫 (“shamans”) who were mainly involved in divination and cults. At the same time

³ See for example in the *Houhan shu* 後漢書, “Biographies of *fangshi*”. Only two physicians were mentioned in this section and they were both using medications and alchempantures. Three shaman-physicians were mentioned, but no remarks about their techniques. The rest were experts of divination, astrology, geomancers and prophets.

⁴ Donald Harper, 1982, p.44.

⁵ Ibid, p.44.

physicians were requested to apply shamanistic techniques such as using talismans, charms and prayers⁶. Although the professional separation between shaman and physician had occurred at the end of Warring States period, physicians did not yet completely reject shamanistic techniques in their medical practices⁷. Peter Nickerson suggests that the shamans served “not only as mediums but also as diviners and doctors” in ancient time, and that the transition of the shamans from being mediums, diviners and doctors to specialists of mediums had occurred only after the medieval times⁸. Although the time line suggested by Nikerson seems to be rather vague, we know that the professional distinction between physician and shaman was not definitive and complete at least until the end of Han dynasty. In other words, shamans were actively involved into medical practices and shared with the physicians some theories, methods and patients.

However, there are certainly some differences between shamans and physicians regarding their medical practices. Harper indicates that in several cases the term “shaman” alone denotes a medical profession during the Han and that the healing methods of shamans were fundamentally different from that of physicians, for the shaman relied on magical incantations and rituals while the physician specialized in drugs and other therapy⁹.

During the Eastern Han dynasty, physicians mainly involved in medical activities for the need of emperors and royalties, while the so-called shaman-physicians applied their medical techniques mainly at a popular level¹⁰. So did Taoist masters during the same period. Shaman-physicians and Taoists were not practicing the same techniques, but both groups were involved with masses through healing practices. The magical medicine practiced by shaman-physicians was not the same as the religious healing performed by Taoist masters. An important difference is that shaman-physician would

⁶ Li Ling, 1993, p.311.

⁷ Yoshimoto, 1992, p.204; 1988, p.77-79.

⁸ Peter Nickerson, 1994, p.45.

⁹ Donald Harper, 1982, p.46.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.45.

mainly treat the sick individually while Taoists masters would apply their methods on a larger scale and even organized collective rituals for healing purposes.

Collective healing rituals were taking place uniquely in Taoist religious communities during the Eastern Han period. The reasons for organizing such rituals might be, as Paul Unschuld points out, that religious medicine contained “the new element of a churchlike organization, which establishes norms for individual conduct in the collective and thus confronts demons as a representative of this collective”¹¹. But above all, the essential difference between shaman-physicians and Taoist healers is that, the former has certain characteristics of the physicians who had more complex theories about the illness and much more complex methods of cure, while the Taoist masters were religious healers whose primary goal for healing was to pass the religious teachings to the masses. For Taoist healers, the causes of illness were associated mostly to sins and treatments operated through confession.

In the *Xiang'er* Commentary demons are not believed to be causes of illness, on the contrary, the Commentary completely rejected such beliefs and taught people that “demons” were not from external but internal: the results of transgressions. Thus confession was seen as an effective way of cure.

Some Origins of Confession

Regarding the origins confession in the Eastern Han dynasty, there are intellectual or philosophical ones as well as those rooted into popular beliefs.

The Buddhist influences on the religious ideas (especially the idea of confession) of the Tianshi Dao have been pointed out in some early studies¹². Recent studies are more concerned with Chinese philosophical origins of confession. For example, Ofuchi Ninji argues that the idea of confession is found in early Chinese philosophy such as Moism and that the use of confession by the Tianshi Dao and Taiping Dao

¹¹ Paul Unschuld, 1984, p.128.

¹² Fukui Kojun, 1952.

masters was an evolutionary step toward being more religious¹³. Such arguments are sometimes criticized because despite the Moist philosophy presents some ideas similar to confession, the special religious rituals of the Tianshi Dao (e.g. giving the sick magical water, establishing calm rooms and creating the “hand petitions to the Three Offices”) can not be found in ancient Chinese sources¹⁴.

The concept of confession can be found in ancient Chinese philosophies, but it seems to have been practiced very limitedly, on an individual basis, before the establishment of calm rooms by celestial masters. Moreover, confession was not used as a method of healing before the Taoists.

The shamanistic origins of confession can be pointed out through some magical practices of *fangshi* 方士 (“shaman-magicians”) during the Eastern Han period¹⁵. Among these magical practices, one is called *jiechu* 解除. For the *fangshi* of the Eastern Han dynasty this term seems to mean “confess”¹⁶. It seems that the practice of *jiechu* by *fangshi* was adopted by the Taoists later, since a specific practice of the Tianshi Dao called *mumen jiechu* 墓門解除 is mentioned in some Buddhist sources¹⁷. There is no explanation yet about the meaning of this practice. However, because *mumen* 墓門 means “entrance of the tomb”, this practice was probably related to assisting the deads to confess in their tombs. The reason for such confession had probably to do with some popular beliefs about death, since the practice of *mumen jiechu* have been popular in the countryside even before the foundation of the Tianshi Dao¹⁸.

In recently excavated tombs dating from the Eastern Han, many funeral objects called

¹³ Ofuchi Ninji, 1991, pp.159-163.

¹⁴ Fukui Kojun, 1990, p.44-45.

¹⁵ Qing Xitai, 1988, vol. I.

¹⁶ *Houhan shu*, vol. 60: “Biography of Cai Yi”, quoted in *ibid*, p.150.

¹⁷ See *Erjiao Lun* 二教論.

¹⁸ Liu Zhongyu, 1993, pp.219-220.

jiechu ping 解除瓶 (“bottles for confession”) have been found. These bottles were dated before the founding of the Tianshi Dao. The characters like *shengshu chang’an* 生屬長安 (“life belong to Chang’an”) ¹⁹, *sishu taishan* 死屬泰山 (“death belong to Taishan”) ²⁰ were engraved on the surface of the bottles. These bottles were probably used by shamans in rituals for the deads, and such rituals seem to be popular during the Han dynasty. These bottles may be related to the origin of *mumen jiechu* (“confession in the tomb”) practiced by Taoist masters later on.

The “bottles of confession” having been found only in tombs, the practices of “confession in the tomb” were most likely also used for the deads. However, the term *jie* 解 could also simply mean eliminating demons or sins from the deads ²¹, but there are also other explanations. For example, according to Anna Seidel, there are registers of life and death in those tombs and only the virtues of the deads were registered in the funeral texts. Hence, the term *jie* refers to the wish of transfer the dead body to another world ²².

However, belief in reborn into different shapes was existed in ancient time. People used to believe that human beings could change forms after death just like snakes or cicadas, and described such situation as *shijie* 尸解 (“transformaton of body”) ²³. In the *Xiang'er* Commentary, we can also find similar descriptions,

Grand Darkness is the place where those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms. When there is no place for them to stay in the world, the worthy withdraw and, feigning death, pass through Grand Darkness to have their images reborn on the other side. This is to be “obliterated without perishing.” The profane are unable to accumulate good deeds,

¹⁹ Chang’an was the capital of the Western Han dynasty (206-23 B.C.)

²⁰ Taishan is a famous mountain in the middle of Shandong 山東 province. Many emperors, including those of the Han dynasty, performed rituals for the worship of heaven and earth at the top of the mountain Taishan.

²¹ Donald Harper, 1985.

²² Anna Seidel, 1987.

²³ Noguchi Tetsuro, 1994, p.221.

so when they die it is truly death. They are taken away in service of the earth Offices²⁴. (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.102)

Moreover, it emphasizes virtues as conditions of being reborn. Those who accumulate good deeds do not die, they simply disappear to go in another world. This is probably why there were only records about virtues of the deads written in the funeral texts. Thus, according to the beliefs shown in the Han funeral texts, confession was not just a way of cure, it could also be a way of obtaining immortality after the death of one's body.

3.2. The Calm Room

In the Taiping Dao, the confession process required that the sick bow their heads, reflect on their misgivings and confess their sins. In the Wudoumi Dao and the Tianshi Dao, the sick withdrew in “calm rooms” (*jingshi* 靜室) and confess their sins. Actually in the latter two communities the calm room became a public center of faith healing and provided a unique place for confession.

The Calm Room in the Xiang'er Commentary

The term “calm room” is not mentioned in the *Xiang'er* Commentary, but the idea of “being calm” certainly appeared among the important values promoted by celestial masters.

“Maintaining clarity and stillness” (*qingjing* 清靜) was one of the precepts in the Tianshi Dao community. Moreover, it is mentioned that celestial masters would organize certain rituals to help people return to “clarity and stillness”, hence returning to the unity with *dao*. For example,

When those who seek long life are given something, they do not decline it; when something is taken from them, they have no rancor. They do not follow the common run of people in their shifts and turns. Instead, their

²⁴ Stephen Bokenkamp notes that “the Earth Offices are one branch of the tripartite spiritual bureaucracy of Celestial Master Daoism, the other two being the Offices of Heaven and of Water” (1997, p. 102).

thoughts are perfectly directed toward the Dao. While they are learning to be clear and still, their thoughts will temporarily be as if confused and muddy; but since they are confused and muddy, they have maintained simplicity and are about to reach their goal. Finally, in clarity and stillness, they will be able to observe all of the subtleties. (...) Though constantly striving after clarity and stillness, the dews of morning and evening will ascend and descend [within them] and the pneumas of the human body will consequently be uniformly distributed. The Master has established these teachings concerning morning and evening [practices aiming at] clarity and stillness as the most essential. Though heaven and earth might slip from their courses, these events merely serve as admonitions for the people. They will always be able to restore themselves, returning to the simplicity of the Dao. (...) (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.99)

The calm room was described as a place for deep reflection, for releasing everything while remaining simple for the unification with *dao*.

The calm room seems to have various other functions and different historical origins. The calm room developed from a place for deep reflection of individuals to a place for the sick to confess, indeed, a place for faith healing. Some of its original functions can be traced back below²⁵.

The Functions of the Calm Room

In the ancient medical text *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (“The Internal Book of the Yellow Emperor”) the causes of illness were divided into internal and external ones. Among the external causes is *zeifeng* 賊風 (“evil wind”) which refers to the changing atmosphere of nature during different seasons. Thus, isolating a sick person in a closed space was considered to be helpful. For example:

Ch’i Po answered: “The utmost in the art of healing can be achieved when there is unity.” The Emperor inquired: “what is meant by unity?”
Ch’i Po answered: “When the minds of the people are closed and

²⁵ Some scholars demonstrate different aspects of the functions of the calm room, such as Henri Maspero (1980), Fukui Kojun (1952), Rolf A. Stein (1963), Qi Xitai (1988), Ofuchi Ninji (1991).

wisdom is locked out they remain tied to disease. Yet their feelings and desires should be investigated and made known, their wishes and ideas should be followed...(Translated by Wong & Wu, 1932, p.151)

The term “calm room” is not mentioned in *Huangdi neijing*, but the idea of being “calm” in order to resist the disease is clearly present. For example:

In the most ancient times the teachings of the sages were followed by those beneath them; they said that weakness, noxious influences, and injurious winds should be avoided at specific times. They [the sages] were tranquilly content in nothingness and the true vital force accompanied them always; their vital (original) spirit was preserved within; thus how could illness come to them?” (Ibid, p.98)

Hence, for the physicians, putting the sick into calm rooms had two reasons: isolating the sick physically and psychologically. Physical isolation would prevent the sick to be influenced by any possible external causes of illness; while psychological isolation would revive the power of self-recovering.

Despite the medical uses of the calm room during ancient times, it had later been developed to have more religious functions, especially during the period of popular Taoist movements in the second century.

Such development is examined in Yoshikawa Tadao’s study²⁶. Yoshikawa demonstrates that the “calm room” was a place for the sick to reflect their sins in the Tianshi Dao community, and that later the calm room turned into a religious place where the Taoists prayed and confessed, as well as practiced special Taoist rituals²⁷. Until the fifth century, the calm room had become a formal place in the Taoist community. In the Taoist text *Lu xiansheng daomenkelue* 陸先生道門科略 (“Abridged Codes of Master Lu for the Taoist Community”)²⁸, it is stated that

²⁶ This is a monograph about the “calm room” by Yoshikawa Tadao, 1987.

²⁷ See later historical records, for example, in chapter 80 “Biography of Wang Xizhi” of *Jin shu* 晉書 (“History of Jin”, compiled in Tang dynasty) and in chapter 96 “Biography of Sima Rui” of *Wei shu* 魏書 (“History of Wei”, written between 550-557 A.D.).

²⁸ *Lu xiansheng daomenkelue* was written by a Taoist adept Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (420-479 A.D.), collected in *Dao Zang* 道藏 (“Taoist Canon”), vol.41.

everybody who believed in *dao* had to build a calm room in his house; the calm room had to be simple, clean and quiet in order to serve gods. However, it seems that during the fifth century this tradition was gradually forgotten and that most of the houses had no calm room²⁹. In the sixth century, another Taoist adept Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536 A.D.) described in *Zhengao* 真誥 (“Declarations of the Perfected”) that calm rooms were built inside mountains where the Taoists practiced meditation, confessed sins, and above all performed special religious rituals³⁰. The religious functions of the calm room in the Taoist religious community seem to have been stabilized by then.

The changing functions of calm rooms reflect different aspects in the development of the Taoist religion. Yoshikawa interprets the original function of the calm room as a place for meditation, which remained so until the Han dynasty. It became a public place for confession only after the establishment of the Tianshi Dao at the end of second century. Yoshikawa claims that this kind of change indicates a transition from individual Taoism (mainly philosophical) to collective Taoism (mainly religious)³¹. More precisely, before the founding of the Taoist religion the calm room was an isolated place reserved for the Taoists to practice techniques of longevity. With the early Taoist community, the calm room became a center for faith healing. Later, when the Taoist religion stabilized, the calm room turned into a place for every Taoist believer to pray and practice meditation and religious rituals at home. Hence, The calm room changed from an isolated or individual place for professional Taoists to a public and collective confession room for the sick, and then to an obligated pray room in private houses of Taoist believers.

This changing process of the calm room shows on the one hand the religious characteristics being established by celestial masters, and later being strengthened and stabilized. On the other hand the calm room was build originally to be a sacred place where the Taoists could individually communicate with gods, it was socialized in order to apply to masses practicing religion after the founding of the Tianshi Dao.

²⁹ See *Dao zang*, vol.41, p. 33121.

³⁰ Ishii Masako, 1987.

³¹ Yoshikawa Tadao, 1987, p.131.

The social functions of the calm room have been studied more in detail by Yoshikawa. The fifth century Taoist text *Taishang dongyuan senzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經³² records that the building of calm rooms was accompanied by the establishment of *zhi* 治 (“district” or “parish”)³³. In another Taoist text, *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (“Treasures of the Three Caverns”)³⁴ from seventh century, it is written that, according to Taoist precepts houses of commoners were called *jing* 靖 (“calm”), houses of celestial masters were called *zhi*³⁵. In these texts, calm rooms are described as administrative units and are indicated to be used as a part of the district system of the Tianshi Dao.

However, the calm room has longer historical roots than being founded during the second century. The religious and social functions of the calm room were developed during the Tianshi Dao movement of the second century, from its original uses as a place of meditation or deep reflection, while the medical function of the calm room already existed before the Han dynasty. Many studies have suggested possible roots of the calm room, and showed how the meaning of the calm room has changed during the second century.

The Origins of the Calm Room Concept

The origins of the calm room can be examined through its social and religious aspects.

Some scholars think that the calm room was established during the Tianshi Dao movement. For instance, Fukui Kojun suggests in an early work that *jingshi* (“calm room”) was the original name for the “district” which was enlarged later and became a general name for Taoist temples³⁶. Fukui claims that the calm room was *zhi*

³² This text was compiled by several people during the fifth and tenth centuries. It is collected in *Dao zang*, vol.170-173.

³³ Zhang Lu established 24 parishes in his religious kingdom. The source is quoted by Yoshikawa Tadao, 1987, p.131.

³⁴ Quoted by Yoshikawa Tadao, 1987, p.127. *Sandong zhunang* was compiled by Wang Xuanhe 王懸河 in Tang dynasty, collected in *Dao zang*, vol.780-782.

³⁵ In *Dao zang*, vol. 781.

³⁶ Fukui Kojun, 1952, pp.57-58.

(“district”) and was first founded in the administration of the Tianshi Dao³⁷. Other scholars suggest earlier roots of the calm room. Miyakawa considers that the calm room was originally a part of common houses, it was later changed into a place for prayer after the founding of the Tianshi Dao³⁸.

However, the concept of the calm room seems to have a longer historical root. Rolf Stein traces back the concept of the calm room in a larger context and argues that it was a place of meditation for the Taoists as well as for the Confucianists until the Han dynasty. Stein suggests the origin of the calm room as that it was the place where emperors rested during their journeys before the Han³⁹. From this point of view, calm rooms have been originally used only by royalties or literati for being isolated from external world or for intellectual cultivation.

We can compare the concept of the calm room with some healing methods used by shamans during the Han since the popularity of shaman-physicians during this period. The shamanistic healing methods might influenced that of the Taoist masters. Some ancient medical texts, found in Han tombs in Mawangdui 马王堆, reveal many shamanistic methods of healing. One such method is called *huadi* 画地 (“delineate the land”). The shaman would define a square on the ground and then put a sick person inside it in order to defend that person from demons and other evils⁴⁰. The relation between the calm room and this method may not be evident, but the original idea of isolating the sick physically in order to heal is similar. A fundamental difference is that the shamanistic method demands assistances from shamans for the sick would passively wait for shamans to expel demons causing illness, while the calm room set by celestial masters is for self-reflections and confession, the sick would actively expel evil thoughts (=sins) by themselves.

³⁷ Fukui Kojun refers to *Taishang laojun jinglu* 太上老君經錄, in *Dao zang*, vol. 562. According to Ren Jiyu, the author of this text is unknown and the date of writing should be before the seventh century (1988 p.566).

³⁸ Quoted by Ishii Masako, 1987, p.138.

³⁹ Rolf A. Stein, 1963, pp.70-71.

⁴⁰ The text is *Yangxin fang* 養心方 (“The Ailments of Nourishing the Heart”). Quoted in Li Ling, 1993, p.317.

The early work done by Henri Maspero⁴¹ and Howard Levy⁴² consider that the establishment of the calm room was to provide a method for faith healing. They call the calm room a “prison” for gathering the sick. Yoshikawa developed this concept in his monograph and examined the concept of calm rooms in *Han shu* 漢書 (“History of Han Dynasty”). Yoshikawa found that the Han imperial codes referred to a sort of prison called the *qingshi* 請室 (“room of forgiveness”) or *qingshi* 清室 (“pure room”), where criminals confessed their crimes. Yoshikawa thus suggests a possible connection between the Taoist “calm room” and the juridical “room for forgiveness”.

It seems that celestial masters copied the function of the calm room from the Han imperial codes. The “calm room” and the “room of forgiveness” are paired as one religious and the other political. They presented two types of confession: the one for confessing moral sins and the other for judicial crimes⁴³. In the Taoist communities of the second century, the term “crime” was defined as “sin” and physical illness was put into relation with moral uncorrectness. Indeed, the *Xiang'er* Commentatry strongly rejects the imperial law, it stated that,

(...) Knowing that the spirit luminaries cannot be deceived. They [people] will fear the celestial spirits, not laws and regulatioons, and will not dare to commit wrong. (...) The king’s law will no longer cause harm to anyone. Corporal punishments (...) will be no mare. Thus the people will be easily ruled and the king will enjoy happiness. (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.138)

The imperial law was ignored and people were encouraged to reflect on their faults and promise to gods of being good. This was the only correct way to rule according to celestial masters. The celestial masters attempted to replace imperial laws by the precepts of *dao*. Hence, in practices of faith healing, the “room of forgiveness” became the “calm room” -- room for conffesion, people reflected on their sins according to the teachings of good and evil. The calm room became a religious model for self-judgments but not for punishments.

⁴¹ Henri Maspero, 1980, p.375.

⁴² Howard Levy, 1956, p.271.

⁴³ Yoshikawa Tadao, 1987, p.156.

3.3 The Hand Petitions to the Three Offices

The “hand petitions to the Three Offices” (*sanguan shoushu* 三官手書) was used in the Tianshi Dao as records of the sins committed by the sick and as contracts with gods for not repeating the same sins. In the text of *Dianlüe* 典略, presented in chapter I, it is stated:

The *jianling* 姦令 and *guili* 鬼吏 (“officers against spectres”) were in charge of praying for the sick. The methods consisted in writing three copies of the name of the sick and their confessions, and then to send up one copy to heaven from a hill, to bury another one in the ground and to throw the last one in the water. These three papers were called “hand petitions to the Three Offices” [*sanguan shoushu*] (...).

The Taoist masters of the Wudoumi Dao and the Tianshi Dao asked the sick to confess their sins and then to record them on three copies of *sanguan shoushu*, which were later offered to the three offices of heaven, earth and water.

Sanguan, the Three Offices, is said to indicate the offices of heaven, earth and water⁴⁴. Regarding the roles of the Three Offices in popular religious beliefs, it was traditionally believed that “the agent of heaven gives happiness, the agent of earth pardons sins and the agent of water protects from misfortune”⁴⁵. The beliefs related to the Three Offices and the definitions of their roles were very likely clarified after the Han dynasty. However the meaning of the term *sanguan* was quite obscure in the period of the Tianshi Dao movement, although the ritual of the *sanguan shoushu* was clearly described in *Dianlüe*. We shall determine the meaning of the Three Offices in the *Xiang'er* Commentary as well as some early sources.

Sanguan in the Xiang'er Commentary

In the *Xiang'er* Commentary the term *sanguan* 三官 was not mentioned. The word

⁴⁴ There are also other translations of the term “san-guan”, such as three rulers, three agents, three governors or three officials.

⁴⁵ Henri Maspero, 1980, p.158; Qing Xitai, 1988, p.169. Such beliefs can be found in *Taiping jing* 太平經. We do not know whether there are earlier texts mentioning such beliefs.

diguan 地官 (“earth Offices”) was mentioned as being related to a place where the dead people having not accumulated good deeds were supposedly going. For instance:

Grand Darkness [*taiyin* 太陰] is the place where those who have accumulated the Dao refine their forms. When there is no place for them to stay in the world, the worthy withdraw and, feigning death, pass through Grand Darkness to have their images reborn on the other side. This is to be “obliterated without perishing.” The profane are unable to accumulate good deeds, so when they die it is truly death. They are taken away in service of the earth Offices. (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.102)

The meaning of the “earth offices” is not clearly defined in this paragraph. It is probably opposite to the world where the sages go after death, the *taiyin* (“Grand Darkness”). As described in the above paragraph, *taiyin* is a place where the good people would be reborn. Thus, the earth offices were likely places like hell where nobody could come out or revive.

The *Xiang'er* Commentary mentions neither the term *tianguan* 天官 (“heaven offices”) nor *shuiguan* 水官 (“water offices”). However, the term *guan* 官 (“office”) was mentioned once in the *Xiang'er* Commentary and it seems to refer to the essences of life and death:

The Dao is subtle. Since it is invisible, we can comprehend it only obscurely. One should not slight the Dao because it is invisible. In its midst are the great spirit pneumas [*jing* 精]; that is why it is likened to a bellows’ sack. Within its vast precincts are the essences of the Dao. These are apportioned out to the ten thousand things all have a single root. These are the officials of life and death [*shengsi zhi guan* 生死之官]. Since the essences are fully realized, you should treasure them. [...] (Bokenkamp, 1997, p.113)

Thus, the *Xiang'er* Commentary states that essences (or “great spirit pneumas”) are the officials of life and death. Here, the meaning of the term *guan* is quite obscure, it could mean something related to *jing* (“essence” or “spirit”) rather than “offices”. Therefore, offices of heaven, earth and water might be metaphors indicating essences of heaven, earth and water.

The Three Offices are also described in later Taoist texts; the heaven offices as response to life and the earth offices as response to death⁴⁶. Moreover, according to the later Taoist text *Zhengao*, *taiyin* is a place for the *zhenren* 真人 (“True Human”, indicating sages or immortals) to refine their forms, while *sanguan* is defined as a place for the *zhenren* to change their external appearances⁴⁷. These explanations about the Three Offices are probably derived from the concept of “earth Offices” given in the *Xiang'er* Commentary. Hence, *sanguan* did not originally seem to indicate offices or officials who were in charge of heaven, earth and water. It rather related to a process that lead dead people to revive with completely different appearances.

However, as the belief in Three Offices developed later, the term *sanguan* became the origin of the Taoist term *sanyuan* 三元 (“three origins”)⁴⁸ which appeared during the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 A.D.). The belief in Three Offices were established by then⁴⁹.

Although the belief in *sanguan* is obscure in the *Xiang'er* Commentary, the healing ritual of handing the “hand petitions to the Three Offices” marked a beginning of the worship of Three Offices in the Taoist religion, and this ritual has remained a fundamental basis for the Taoists until today⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Shi Yanfeng, 1987, p.16. Shi uses sources written later than the Han dynasty. The distinctive roles of the Three Offices are described in many Taoist texts after the Han. For instance, one such text is *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞淵靈寶授度儀 written by Lu Xiujing (406-477 A.D.).

⁴⁷ This text is in *Zhengao* (chapter 4), quoted by Rao Zongyi, 1992, p.70; Shi Yanfeng, 1987, p.18.

⁴⁸ “San-yuan” is the abbreviation for “shang yuan 上元”, “zhong yuan 中元” and “xia yuan 下元”. These have different interpretations. For instance, “san-yuan” indicates the sun, the moon and the stars; or essences, pneumas and spirits; or the great *yang*, central harmony and great *yin*.

⁴⁹ Noguchi Tetsuro, 1994, pp.206-207. The belief in “san-yuan” became so popular that festivals of “san-yuan” appeared as the birthday celebration of the “san-guan” as three gods. However, the Buddhist influences on the “san-yuan” festivals are also claimed in some studies .

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.203; Peter Nickerson, 1994, pp.41-42.

Some Origins of the Sanguan Shoushu Concept

Although the term *sanguan* appeared as the earliest one in *Dianlue* and the ritual of *sanguan shoushu* did not exist before the establishment of the Tianshi Dao, beliefs in three gods (*shen* 神, or *di* 帝) is said to originate in ancient Chinese traditions⁵¹.

In the book of *Yili* 儀禮 (“Rituals and Customs”)⁵², rituals of worshipping heaven, earth, mountains and rivers in ancient China were recorded⁵³. Such rituals reflect the ancient beliefs in natural gods. Thus, most of the studies treat the beliefs of *sanguan* as worshipping the natural gods of heaven, earth and water, and the “hand petitions to the Three Offices” as contracts with these three natural gods.

The form of the *sanguan shoushu* is considered to be a record of sins, as well as a contractual commitment passed between the believers and the gods of heaven, earth and water, and leading to a virtuous life,. In *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, it is stated that Zhang Daoling “wrote letters and threw them into the water, making contract with the gods (*shen* 神)”⁵⁴. The *sanguan shoushu* seems to have been religious and to reflect Taoist worship of natural gods who were placed later in the Taoist pantheon⁵⁵.

There are different opinions regarding the origins of the *sanguan shoushu* concept. For instance, Ofuchi suggests formal resemblances between the *sanguan shoushu* and the system of tax-declaration during the Han dynasty. Ofuchi claims that this type of declaration was usually written by the village leaders, while in the Tianshi Dao community the *sanguan shoushu* was written by the *jijiu* 祭酒 (“wine sacrificers”)⁵⁶.

⁵¹ Qing Xitai, 1988, p.169; Shi Yanfeng, 1987, p.15.

⁵² *Yili* is a classical book about royal rituals during the Zhou dynasty (1066-221 B.C.). It is said to be corrected and commentated by Confucius (551-479 B.C.).

⁵³ Shi Yanfeng, 1987, p.15.

⁵⁴ See “Biography of Zhang Daoling” in *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, quoted by Zhang Jiyu, 1990, p.21.

⁵⁵ These gods are called “san-guan da-di 三官大帝”, they were established by the Taoists during the Northern Wei dynasty (Noguchi Tetsuro, 1994, p.203).

⁵⁶ Ofuchi Ninji, 1991, p.151.

We see again here a connection between gods and the rulers of the human world. The *sanguan shoushu* contract also reflects the ruler-ruled relation between the religious leaders and the masses. Stein suggests that *sanguan* represented three administrations in which the ruler of heaven represented the emperor⁵⁷. Regarding the relation between religious and political hierarchies, recent studies show that indeed the Han administrative structure was itself based on a pre-existing religious model⁵⁸.

On the one hand, *sanguan* is considered as gods of nature and the *sanguan shoushu* is considered as contract between people and gods -- the imaginative rulers of the religious world. On the other hand, because the concepts of *guan* described in the *Xiang'er Commentary* were related to the essences (e.g. of *dao*, of life and death), the creation of the *sanguan shoushu* could possibly have been a symbolic step in the individual process toward regaining health through being faithful.

As a healing method, why was the *sanguan shoushu* considered to have positive effects on healing? The term *sanguan shoushu* only appeared in *Dianlue*, while in other Taoist texts written during or after the second century there was no such “hand petitions” for healing.

Indeed, the *sanguan shoushu* was probably used in association with the popular shamanistic tools -- talismans and charms -- during the Han dynasty. Talismans and charms were used for cure by shaman-physicians as well as Zhang Jue in the Taiping Dao community. However, talismans and charms were constantly mentioned as healing tools of the Taoists in many Taoist religious texts⁵⁹. Thus the *sanguan shoushu* could have been a sort of charm or talisman used for healing.

Charms usually were made of paper with some characters written on it⁶⁰. As healing tools, charms were often burnt and its ashes were dissolved in water or wine, then were ingested by the sick. The same type of practice can be found in the case of the

⁵⁷ Rolf A. Stein, 1963, p.41.

⁵⁸ Anna Seidel, 1990, pp.255-256.

⁵⁹ For example, *Taiping jing*, *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 and *Baopu zi* 抱朴子.

⁶⁰ Wong & Wu, 1932, p.56.

Taiping Dao. However, charms were not offered directly to gods during the Han period. The Tianshi Dao ritual of handing the *sanguan shoushu* to heaven, earth and water was possibly influenced by another healing ritual, which was used by shamans before the founding of the Tianshi Dao, the “praying cure”.

The “praying cure” is an ancient shamanistic method of healing, known as *zhuyou* 祝由 (“praying cure” or “healing through etiological incantations”). The method itself is also quite mystical. In general, it contains healing process including praying to gods, spelling incantations and writing on talismans and charms⁶¹. Some sources describe the method of “praying cure” as follow:

According to the *Praying Cure*, the following legend is told about the origin of charms and spells. In ancient times medicine was divided into thirteen branches, praying cures being one of them. Huang Ti [Yellow Emperor] devised charms and mystic writings for the treatment of all diseases. Any illness which could not be cured by the ordinary methods, such as drugs and acupuncture, would be benefitted by charms which also had the virtue of warding off evil influences and expelling devils. Those who were sick prayed to heaven and explained the cause of their illness, hence the term “praying cures”. Ordinary medicine is handed down and known to all, but this special method is seldom seen or heard of; consequently the uninitiated think that it is quackery and mysticism, not knowing that it is in reality one of the forgotten branches of ancient medicine... (Wong&Wu, 1932, pp.55-56)⁶²

The “praying cure” method is also mentioned in *Huangdi neijing*. It is stated that in ancient times *zhuyou* was a way to cure the mind of the sick through prayers⁶³. The prayers are mainly offered to different gods, such as heaven, the Yellow Emperor, the God of the East, and the Taishan, as well as some demons who were considered to be

⁶¹ Noguchi Tetsuro, 1994, p.251.

⁶² The classical sources of this paragraph is not indicated. We thus have no way to confirm the date of the text. It should be seen as a complementary reference.

⁶³ See *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問, “Yijing bianqi lun 移精變氣論”.

the causes of illness⁶⁴.

However, the “praying cure” would undoubtedly happened only between healers and the sick, while the ritual of “hand petitions to the Three Offices” would be taken place in a collective context. The two healing rituals might have been related originally, but the needs for the latter were more complex than physical cure.

Sanguan Shoushu and “Excessive Cults”

According to Stein, the need for the initiation of the *sanguan shoushu* ritual may have stemmed from the rise of “excessive cults” (*yinsi* 淫祀) among the masses during the second century⁶⁵.

Qing Xitai examines certain texts in the *Dao zang* that are considered being written by Zhang Daoling⁶⁶ and suggests that Zhang Daoling attempted to eliminate popular beliefs in demons which might have been called the gods of heaven, earth and water. For example, *Zhengyi fawen jingzhang guanpin* 正一法文經章官品⁶⁷ states: :

Heaven send the general of Baihu (“white tiger”), who led a hundred thousand soldiers, to eliminate those demons who claimed themselves as the three rulers of heaven, earth and water (...)⁶⁸

Qing argues that although Zhang Daoling was influenced by the beliefs in three natural gods, he rejected the traditional worship of these gods⁶⁹. In the *Xiang'er* Commentary, it is also stated that the orthodox law of heaven is neither worship nor prayer.

⁶⁴ Li Ling, 1993, p.318.

⁶⁵ Rolf A. Stein, 1979. “Excessive cults” indicates the mass worship toward different popular gods without the permission from the government.

⁶⁶ Qing Xitai, 1989, p.169; also Rao Zongyi, 1992, pp.92-98. Rao considers that all the texts entitled “zheng-yi” were written by Zhang Daoling.

⁶⁷ In *Dao zang*, vol.47.

⁶⁸ This paragraph is quoted by Qing Xitai, 1988, p.169.

⁶⁹ Qing Xitai, 1989, pp.169-170.

Isabelle Robinet also suggests that Taoist masters along with Confucians were against many popular religious beliefs, such as worship of local gods, belief in miracles, demonic possessions of mediums, and animal sacrifices⁷⁰. The attitude of Taoists toward popular beliefs was probably more complicated than what the Taoist texts show. For instance, Robinet claims that “on the one hand they [the Taoists] inherited and took over the ancient powers of the *wu* [shamans] while on the other hand, they [the Taoists] set themselves off from them [shamans] in the eyes of the literate by battling against popular beliefs and practices that were actually very close to their own”⁷¹.

Hence, the *sanguan shoushu* ritual used as a healing method could have been a challenge for celestial masters against “excessive cults” of the masses. Both the Taoists and the Confucianists criticized these “excessive cults”. The *sanguan shoushu* may have been the means to impose a measure of ritual unity in the early Taoist communities.

Summary

The calm room and the ritual of “hand petitions to the Three Offices” were primarily practical healing methods of celestial masters who were influenced originally by shamanistic techniques. Both healing methods show some similarities with the Han political system and were transformed into religious uses by celestial masters according to their religious interpretations and thoughts.

The calm room of the Tianshi Dao communities was a religious place for faith healing. The association between healing and confession was then established for spreading religious teachings directly to the masses. The “hand petitions to the Three Offices” were clarified by the celestial masters as unified objects for the forgiveness of one’s sins. The needs for establishing a unity of gods in the Taoist communities can be seen as opposite to the mass worship of various popular gods.

⁷⁰ Isabelle Robinet, 1997, pp.63-65.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.64.

CONCLUSION

Through my research, I have tried to examine closely the healing beliefs and practices in the Tianshi Dao community during the Eastern Han dynasty. Although not exhaustive, my study has allowed to make links between pieces of information that are important for understanding better this subject.

The healing practices of the Tianshi Dao were compared with that of the Taiping Dao and the Wudoumi Dao. The main healing methods in these three Taoist communities can be summarized as follow: Zhang Daoling's healing practices were described in *Shenxian zhuan* as asking the sick to confess their sins and to make contracts with gods, these practices are believed to be continued by Zhang Lu. Zhang Jue used "staves with nine knots" as talismans to eliminate demons who were popularly believed to be causes of illness, and prepared magical water to cure the sick. He also asked the sick to confess their misgivings. Zhang Xiu established calm rooms for the sick to confess their sins, and they created the ritual of "hand petitions to the Three Offices" to ask forgiveness from gods. Zhang Lu absorbed Zhang Xiu's practices as well, in addition, he ordered the sick to do public work to be relieved from their sins. All these early Taoist healers believed that sins caused illness.

These healing methods showed shamanistic origins, although they were developed by celestial masters for religious uses. Similarly to shamans, early Taoist masters were actively involved in mass movements and attempted to realize new religious models of life, either through extreme anti-governmental rebellions like the Taiping Dao, or by establishing peaceful independent religious community like the Tianshi Dao.

The early Taoist masters, represented by Zhang Daoling, Zhang Jue, Zhang Xiu and Zhang Lu, all had shamanistic backgrounds. This can be seen from their involvements in mass movements, their healing techniques, and especially from their strong belief in immortality. The celestial masters chose to promote ideas of longevity and immortality expressed in Laozi's philosophical thoughts.

The religious thoughts in *Lao zi Xiang'er zhu* not only emphasise the absolute worship towards *dao* but also express a strong will for obtaining immortality through self-cultivation, obedience and being faithful to *dao*. In this context, popular beliefs in

demons causing illness were rejected by celestial masters, while human sins became to be the most important causes of illness. Consequently, confession turned to be used as the main method of healing in all three Taoist communities. Sins were judged according to morality. Thus some values of the literati, such as virtues or a disciplinary community life, were transferred by the Taoists to the masses through their religious practices. Meanwhile, the Taoists criticized various popular cults and attempted to create a unity of gods.

The religious thoughts of celestial masters applied very well to their healing practices. Two most significant healing practices, the establishment of the calm room and the ritual of “hand petitions to the Three Offices”, were rooted in shamanistic traditions while they were initiated and stabilized by celestial masters for religious purposes. The calm room was transformed to a center for confession in the Tianshi Dao community; it complemented faith healing. The “hand petitions to the Three Offices” were created for the forgiveness of ones sins; they later became the origin of the Taoist worship toward three gods.

These healing practices were both religious and political. The Taoist believers were asked to obey certain Taoist precepts, for them to regain health and longevity through self-reflections on their sins. This was a way of self-salvation proceeding through faith healing, and also a way of self-ruling proceeding through the rejection of imperial laws but through absolute obedience to the precepts of *dao*.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EARLY TAOIST RELIGION¹
(Including pre-Han Periods)

B.C.	
1025	Beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty, capital nears today's Xi'an.
841	Beginning of dated history
771	Beginning of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, capital was moved to today's Luoyang.
722	First year of the Spring and Autumn period.
551	Traditional birthday of Confucius. Laozi is assumed to live during the sixth century.
486-482	Construction of a canal connecting Yangzi River to southern Shandong.
479	Traditional date of Confucius death.
476	End of the Spring and Autumn period.
475	Beginning of the Warring States period.
468	Traditional birthday of Mo Di (Mozi), founder of the Moist philosophical school.
376	Death of Mo Di.
369	Traditional birthday of Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi), the Taoist philosopher.
350	Oldest catalogue of the stars.
318-316	Kingdom of Qin advanced into Sichuan (was called then Shu)
286	Death of Zhuang Zhou.
298-280	Expedition by Kingdom of Qin into eastern Sichuan and Yunnan.
230-221	Kingdom of Qin conquered other six kingdoms.
221	Unification of China and the foundation of the Qin dynasty.
221	Expeditions to Fujian, Guangzhou, Guangxi and northern Vietnam.
220	Construction of networks of imperial roads. Reconstruction of the Great Walls.
219	The First emperor of Qin, Shihuang, held a ritual in Mount Tai. <i>Fangshi</i> Xu Fu was sent to search for legendary mountains of Three Gods and drugs for immortality.
215	Qin Shihuang sent <i>fangshi</i> Lu Sheng to search for immortals, <i>fangshi</i> Han Zhong, Hou Gong and Shi Sheng to search for drugs of immortality. "Techniques of Immortality" became very popular.
214	Expeditions to southern Yue (region of Guangdong and Hanoi). Transferring of 500,000 criminals to southern Yue.

¹ Refers to chronological tables in Qing Xitai, 1991, vol.1; Jacques Gernet, 1982. Also refers to *Hou Han shu*; Zhang Longhu, 1988; Ren Jiyu, 1981, vol.1; Eric Zürcher, 1972.

212	Qin Shihuang called himself <i>zhenren</i> (a Taoist term meaning "true human").
213	Qin Shihuang ordered to burn all classics except those about medicine, divination, agriculture and historical annals of Qin, and to bury alive 460 <i>fangshi</i> and Confucians.
208	Peasant rebellion led by Shen Sheng.
206	End of the Qin dynasty.
203	Xiang Yu and Liu Bang divided the empire into Chu to the east, and Han to the west.
202	Liu Bang eliminated Xiang Yu and proclaimed himself emperor of the Han dynasty. Beginning of the Western Han period.
200	Liu Bang set his capital at Chang'an, the present Xi'an in Shenxi province.
191	The most rigorous laws of the Qin were abolished.
187	More penal laws of the Qin abolished.
167	Mutilation as a punishment disappeared from the penal code. Creation of the sentence of hard labour.
140	First Chinese book on alchemy. Beginning of Emperor Wu's reign. He worshipped gods and demons, officialized Confucianism.
136	Start of the exploration of the roads through Sichuan to Burma and India.
135	Prince Liu An gathered <i>fangshi</i> and intellectuals to write a collective work about Taoist philosophy -- <i>Huainan zi</i> .
133	Dispatch of <i>fangshi</i> in search of the Isles of the immortals; Emperor Wu ordered <i>fangshi</i> Li Shaojun extracted immortals drugs from alchemy.
131	Construction of a road between Sichuan and Guizhou.
129	Construction of a canal 150 km long between Shenxi and Henan.
109	Search for the Isles of the immortals by <i>fangshi</i> .
93	Discovery of manuscripts of the classics in old characters.
73	Beginning of Emperor Xuan's reign. He promoted "Techniques of Immortality".
46	Recruitment of specialists in <i>yin&yang</i> and portents.
41	The number of students at the Academy was raised to 1000.
33	Beginning of Emperor Cheng's reign.
14	Peasant revolts.
8	The number of students at the Academy is raised to 3000.
6	Beginning of Emperor Ai's reign.
3	Amulets of the Queen Mother of the West circulated among the lower classes in Shandong.
2	Oral adaptation of the Buddhist text <i>Futu jing</i> .
1	Start of the power of Wang Mang, the queen's brother.

A.D.	
2	First known census: 12,366,470 families and 57,672,400 individuals.
7	Wang Mang's money reform; rebellions against Wang Mang.
9	Wang Mang founded the Xin dynasty; "nationalization" of land.
10	The old Han nobility was reduced to the status of ordinary private citizens.
17	Spread of peasant revolts.
23	Xin was swept away by mass revolts and rebellions of the old imperial nobility.
25	Liu Xiu proclaimed himself emperor. Beginning of the Later Han or Eastern Han dynasty, capital was Loyang.
36	Reconquest of Sichuan.
37	Birthday of Zhang Daoling according to <i>Hantianshi shijia</i> .
39	Beginning of Emperor Ming's reign.
39-57	Wang Fu wrote <i>Laozi shengmu bei</i> .
44	Zhang Daoling began to learn "Techniques of <i>dao</i> " according to <i>Hantianshi shijia</i> .
56	Liu Xiu promoted the school of Chanwei.
57	Beginning of Emperor Zhang's reign.
57-75	Translation of Buddhist text <i>Sishier zhangjing</i> by someone unknown.
65	First mention of Buddhist worship by Prince Liu Ying in Pengcheng, Jiangsu.
66	Liu Ying was abolished and committed suicide.
69	Beginning of Emperor He's reign.
79	The "Discussion at the Temple of White Tiger" was held.
105	Death of Emperor He and beginning of Emperor Shang's reign.
114	Death of Emperor Shang and beginning of Emperor An's reign.
125	Death of Emperor An and beginning of Emperor Shun's reign. The power of the eunuchs began to increase.
125-144	Zhang Daoling moved into Shu region according to <i>Houhan shu</i> . A <i>fangshi</i> Yu Ji offered the book <i>Taiping jing</i> to the emperor.
127	Fan Ying, a specialist in esoteric sciences, was called to the court.
142	An alchemical work, <i>Zhou'i cantongqi</i> .
144	Zhang Daoling founded the Tianshi Dao.
145	Death of Emperor Shun and beginning of Emperor Chong's reign.
146	Death of Emperor Chong and beginning of Emperor Zhi's reign.
147	Death of Emperor Zhi and beginning of Emperor Huan's reign.
147	Arrival of Buddhist monk Zhi Chan (from Dayue, west of China) in Luoyang.

147-189	Zhi Chan translated over 14 volumes of Great Vehicle texts.
148	Arrival in Luoyang of the Parthian Prince-monk An Shigao, the best known translator of Indian Buddhist texts.
148-172	An Shigao translated over 34 volumes of Buddhist texts (mainly Little Vehicle).
155	Zhang Daoling expired, according to <i>Hantianshi shijia</i> .
157	Census: 56,486,856 individuals.
165	Bian Shao wrote <i>Laozi ming</i> . Emperor Huan sent ministers to Laozi's home country to build a temple for worshipping Laozi. Confucious was also worshipped in the same temple.
166	Emperor Huan worshipped the Yellow Emperor and Laozi in the court; first mention of the Buddhist ceremonies at the court of Luoyang. Xiang Kai reported rumors that Laozi went to the west and founded Buddhism.
168	Beginning of Emperor Ling's reign.
172-177	Luo Yao rebelled at the capital Luoyang.
172-181	Zhang Jue and his brothers established the Taiping Dao in eastern China, Zhang Xiu established the Wudoumi Dao in western China.
175	The eunuchs gained more power.
184	Great rebellion of the Taiping Dao ("Yellow Turbans") whose troops numbered over 300,000; Zhang Xiu led the Wudoumi Dao to respond the rebellion. Zhang Jue died and Zhang Xiu disappeared.
188	Zhang Lu practiced the Tianshi Dao. Arrival of another Parthian monk An Xuan who translated Great Vehical Buddhist texts. An Xuan's co-translator Yan Fodiao is the first Chinese monk.
189	Massacre of the eunuchs.
190	Beginning of Emperor Xian's reign. Beginning of the power of Cao Cao.
191	Zhang Lu was sent to conquer Hanzhong; he absorbed Zhang Xiu's Wudoumi Dao.
191-215	Zhang Lu established an independent Taoist religious kingdom at Hanzhong.
193	The first Buddhist temple built by Zuo Rong in Pengcheng, northern Jiangsu.
194	Big earthquake and severe drought; big famine.
197	Plague of locusts and innodation; continuous famine.
201	Cao Cao became the practical master of all north China.
215	<i>Lao zi Xiang'er zhu</i> was completed. Zhang Lu surrendered to Cao Cao.
216	Death of Zhang Lu. Cao Cao forced habitants of Hanzhong moved to the north. The Tianshi Dao thus spread to other regions.
217	Biggest ever epidemic.
220	Death of Cao Cao. His son assumes the title of emperor of Wei. End of the Han dynasty.