

# How to Treat Animals in a Chinese Buddhist Monastery: Daoxuan's Views on Animals in a Monastic Environment

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## Introduction

As is well known, the protection of all living beings, humans and animals alike, is a prerequisite of Buddhist practice. Yet, this seemingly straightforward stipulation becomes much more complicated when it has to be respected in everyday life, even within the confines of a monastery. Some animals – such as mosquitoes and rats – may be unwelcome, uninvited pests. Others may be offered as gifts to individual monastics, or become communal property after a monk or nun has passed away. Finally, the community may acquire certain animals for particular purposes, such as to provide a means of transport. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Buddhism's monastic guidelines contain extensive advice on how animals should be treated. This paper explores what the most influential Chinese *vinaya* master, Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), has to say about animals in the *Liang chu qing zhong yi* 量處輕重儀, *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property* (T no. 1895) – an invaluable source on Buddhist material culture as it discusses many of the items that may be found in a monastery in minute detail.

In all of his works, Daoxuan is heavily reliant on Indian normative sources, and particularly *vinayas* (disciplinary texts), which he then attempts to assimilate to his Chinese context. Several discrete traditions – each defined by its own disciplinary text – came into being during the long development of the *vinaya* rules. There are many similarities across the various *vinayas*, but also some profound differences with regard to particular practices as well as the interpretation of and attitudes toward those practices. There are six full, extant *vinayas* – five in Chinese translation and one in the Pāli language. In

chronological order of translation, the five Chinese *vinayas* are:<sup>1</sup> the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (*T* no. 1435, 23; Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*); the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (*T* no. 1428, 22; Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*); the *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (*T* no. 1425, 22; Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*); the *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (*T* no. 1421, 22; Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*); and the *Genbenshuo-yiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 (*T* nos. 1442–1451, 23–24; Yijing’s 義淨 (635–713) translation of large parts of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*).<sup>2</sup> The first four of these *vinayas* were translated in the fifth century CE, whereas Yijing completed his translation much later, at the beginning of the eighth century. However, by then, a number of influential Buddhist masters had already promoted the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* (*Sifen lü*), and it became the principal reference point for monastic discipline in China from the eighth century onwards.

The above translations provided Chinese Buddhist communities with a large corpus of (sometimes contradictory) guidelines that were widely debated. One of the most prominent *vinaya* masters was Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), who wrote extensive commentaries and accounts in which he meticulously analysed the guidelines and introduced them to Chinese audiences. Although he repeatedly stressed that the *Sifen lü* should be the first point of reference, he also sought out and studied the other *vinaya* translations and urged his readers to do the same (*T* no. 1804, 40: 2b19–20). This advice reflected Daoxuan’s view that the Buddha himself is the ultimate source of each and every guideline, so potential regional differences among the various Indic traditions were not taken into consideration. The same attitude is evident in his *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*, in which he discusses monastic communal property, including animals.

As mentioned above, this paper focuses on Daoxuan’s advice relating to the treatment of animals within monasteries. After introducing his influential text on monastic property, it will present translations of the relevant passages concerning animals, discuss the reasons why he chose to place particular creatures in certain categories and assess the extent to which his views reflect the impact of Indic normative concepts in the Chinese context.

1 For further details, see Yuyama 1979; Clarke 2015.

2 A Tibetan translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* as well as many sections written in Sanskrit are also extant. For details, see Yuyama 1979: 12–33; Clarke 2015: 73–81.

## Title and Structure of Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property

In *Liang chu qing zhong yi* 量處輕重儀, *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*, Daoxuan explains that particular monastic items may be categorized as either “light” (*qing* 輕) or “heavy” (*zhong* 重). According to Huaiyu Chen (2007: 141), for Daoxuan, light property generally meant any item that could be distributed among a monastery’s monks, whereas heavy property belonged to the whole community, the *samgha*. Each item is classified as either *ru zhong* 入重, “it counts as heavy property,” or *ru qing* 入輕, “it counts as light property.” Although the full consequences of this categorization lay beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that it reflects Daoxuan’s deep respect for the *vinaya* traditions and his determination to establish their principles throughout Chinese Buddhist monasticism.

Daoxuan was far from the first Buddhist author to draw a distinction between “light” and “heavy” property. Indeed, this notion, which informs the whole of *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*, is evident in several *vinayas*. For instance, in a passage on the distribution of a particular monk’s possessions after his death, the Pāli *vinaya* explains that his three robes and alms bowl were belonging to the *samgha*, but had yet to be given to those who had cared for the monk during his illness.<sup>3</sup> Light goods (*lahubhaṇḍa*) and light requisites (*lahuparikkhāra*)<sup>4</sup> are distributed

3 Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV: 305. For translations, see Horner 1938–1966, vol. IV: 435–436; and, more recently, Lammerts 2014: 185. When in residence, a monk usually wears two robes: an “upper robe” and an “inner robe”. A third “outer robe” is added when the monk ventures outside. See, among others, Horner 1938–1966, vol. II: 1–2, note 2: “The *antaravāsaka* is put on at the waist, and hangs down to just above the ankles, being tied with the *kāyabandhana*, a strip of cloth made into a belt or girdle [...] The *uttarāsāṅga* is the upper robe worn when a monk is in a residence. It covers him from neck to ankle, leaving one shoulder bare [...] The *saṅghāṭī* is put on over this when the monk goes out. It may be exactly the same size as the *uttarāsāṅga*, but it consists of double cloth, since it is made from two robes woven together.” Schopen 1995: 477, discussing the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, warns that we have to bear in mind that the expression “robe and bowl,” used in discussions on the distribution of goods at a monastic funeral, “was a euphemism that covered a large variety of personal property.” It is likely that this was equally the case in the Pāli and other *vinayas*. See Wu 2020: Table 3 for parallel passages on the distribution of goods to a monk who cared for an ailing colleague. In the Chinese translations: Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, T no. 1421, 22: 139c15–25; Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, T no. 1428, 22: 862a1–b1; Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T no. 1435, 23: 202b22–c12.

4 In her translation, Isaline Blew Horner 1938–1966, vol. IV: 435, uses the terms “few goods” and “few requisites.” Given that the Pāli word *lahu* essentially means “light” (as opposed to *garu*, “heavy”), I have opted for that term, as have Kieffer-Pülz (2000: 333 and 336) and Lammerts (2014: 185). *Bhaṇḍa* is a general term that refers to goods, property

to “the order that is present” (*sammukhībhūta saṃgha*), which is probably a reference to members of the *saṃgha* who are present at a particular time and in a particular place.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, heavy goods (*garubhaṇḍa*) and heavy requisites (*garuparikkhāra*) belong to the “order of the four quarters” (*cātuddisa saṃgha*), which, in this context at least, likely refers to the whole community of monastics throughout history and indeed into the future. Hence, the latter term is used to symbolize the *saṃgha*’s collective ownership of communal property. Monks are prohibited from disposing of these heavy goods or redistributing them among themselves. A comprehensive list of “heavy goods and heavy requisites” – ranging from a whole monastery to individual pieces of furniture and numerous utensils – is provided elsewhere in the Pāli *vinaya*, during a discussion of a monk’s larcenous behaviour.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the text does not include a corresponding list of light goods and requisites.

The distinction between light and heavy goods is also found in the Chinese translations of the Indic *vinayas*, although detailed explanations of the terms tend to be lacking. For example, the Mahīśāsaka *vinaya* mentions “heavy goods” (*zhong wu* 重物) on a couple of occasions, but offers no definition of the term.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, although “light goods” (*qing wu* 輕物) do not feature in the *vinaya* itself, the term does appear in the *Mishasai jiemo ben* 彌沙塞羯磨本 (*T* no. 1424, 22: 223c6–10), a Chinese translation of a Mahīśāsaka *karmavācānā* (i.e. procedural) text.<sup>8</sup> However, once again, no clarification is provided. By contrast, the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* is more helpful as it draws a distinction between “heavy goods” that belong to the “order of the four quarters” (*si fang seng* 四方僧) – and therefore cannot be distributed, sold, or lent – and light goods that may be distributed, presumably among the monks

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or possessions, while *parikkhāra* refers to “all that belongs to anything,” such as requisites, accessories, equipment and so on. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921–1925: 497, s.v. *bhaṇḍa*; 423, s.v. *parikkhāra*.

- 5 In this passage, *sammukhībhūta saṃgha*, “the order that is present,” is contrasted with *cātuddisa saṃgha*, “the order of the four quarters.” The term is not easy to interpret, but in this context it probably refers to monks who live in a specific time and place, as opposed to the more abstract notion of a community of monks in the past, present and future. For further details, see, among others, Hirakawa 1990: 63–64; Wijayaratna 1990: 1–2 and 24–30; Kieffer-Pülz 1992: 26; Kieffer-Pülz 2000: 336.
- 6 Pāli *vinaya*, Vin III: 90; translation Horner 1938–1966, vol. I: 156. A similar list of goods that can be neither discarded nor distributed is enumerated at Vin II: 170 and 17; translation Horner 1938–1966, vol. V: 239 and 241.
- 7 Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, *T* no. 1421, 22: 7a17 and 69a19.
- 8 The translation of this text is attributed to the monk Aitong 愛同 (?–?) and dates to the beginning of the eighth century.

themselves (*T* no. 1425, 22: 478b28–c9). Furniture, utensils and pottery are all classified as “heavy goods.”<sup>9</sup> The Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* includes similar guidelines on goods that should not be distributed (and thus could be termed “heavy”).<sup>10</sup> Again these goods are defined as the property of the “order of the four quarters.” This *vinaya* also contains a list of goods that may be distributed among “the order that is present” (*xianqian seng* 現前僧), including a knife to shave the hair, robes and an alms bowl, seating material, a needlebox and eating implements.<sup>11</sup> In a lengthy passage on the allocation of personal belongings following the death of a member of the monastic community, the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* advises that “the order that is present” should offer the deceased monk’s “six articles” (*liu wu* 六物) to whoever cared for him during his final days and distribute any other “light goods” throughout the rest of monastic community.<sup>12</sup> The text does not itemize the six articles, but we can maybe assume that they comprised the monk’s three robes, alms bowl, mat and water strainer, as in the list of six objects mentioned in the Chinese Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in addition to the familiar proscription against distributing “heavy goods,” the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* provides an unusually precise definition of the term when, in a section on stealing, it suggests that any item worth at least five coins (*qian* 錢) should be classified as such.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Chinese translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* (*Genbenshuoyiqieyou bu pinaiye*) has little to say on the distribution of property following a monk’s death, the extant Sanskrit sections of the same *vinaya* contain some detailed information on the subject. For example, a distinction is drawn between individual private property (*paudgalika*) and corporate – or communal – property (*sāṃghika*).<sup>15</sup> Such private property could be extensive. The *vinaya* illustrates such a situation with an account of a childless, rich layman

9 A detailed list of these heavy goods also appears in a section on stealing earlier in the same text (*T* no. 1425, 22: 245a12–20).

10 Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, *T* no. 1428, 22: 858b20–c3.

11 Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, *T* no. 1428, 22: 858c3–4.

12 Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, *T* no. 1435, 23: 202b22–203a20.

13 See, for instance, Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, *T* no. 1451, 24: 284a6, 285b6–7. See also Muller, <[<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?51.xml+id\(%27b516d-7269%27\)>](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?51.xml+id(%27b516d-7269%27))>, s.v. 六物.

14 Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, *T* no. 1435, 23: 4c1. It is difficult to determine the exact value of a “coin,” but it is clear from the discussion on stealing that five coins was not a large amount of money. For further details, see Heirman 2002: 401, note 94.

15 Schopen 2004: 4. There was widespread debate over who should inherit a deceased monk’s private property, with individual cases often settled in minute detail. For discussions, see, for instance, Schopen 2004; Kinnard 2014: 83–89; Kieffer-Pülz 2000: 336–338.

who wished to enter a monastery so that the *saṃgha* would receive his entire estate after his death. In this way, monastic communities could inherit vast amounts of private property, including servants and domesticated animals (including elephants, horses, camels, donkeys, mules, buffalo, goats and sheep). In general, the items in these substantial legacies could not be distributed as they were considered the communal property of the “order of the four quarters.”<sup>16</sup> However, if a monastery inherited elephants, horses, camels, donkeys, or mules, they were to be offered to the king.<sup>17</sup>

The Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition attracted the attention of the monk Yijing 義淨, who lived and travelled in South Asia between 671 and 695.<sup>18</sup> He studied the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* during a long residence in the city of Nālandā, and later translated large portions of the text into Chinese.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he reflects extensively on *vinaya* matters in his travelogue, *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳, *Account of Buddhism Sent from the South Seas* (*T* no. 2125, 54).<sup>20</sup> This text’s account of the distribution of fellow monk’s possessions after his death (*T* no. 2125, 54: 230a26–c25) is basically a verbatim translation of a passage in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, with the addition of a few sentences.<sup>21</sup> Yijing even credits the source and advises his readers to consult it, too (*T* no. 2125, 54: 230a27). Therefore, his story of a deceased monk was not based on personal experience; rather, he included it in his travelogue to convey an important message to his Chinese colleagues and provide them with a standard to follow.

Yijing wrote his travelogue several decades after Daoxuan’s death, so the earlier master would have had no knowledge of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*’s guidelines on the distribution of legacies when writing his *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*. Instead, careful study of his usual primary source, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, prompted Daoxuan to compile a comprehensive list of an esteemed monk’s potential possessions and then allocate each of these items to one of thirteen categories outlined in the *vinaya*

16 For references, see Schopen 1995: 483–486 and 498–500.

17 See Schopen 1995: 499.

18 For a concise and useful description of Yijing’s travels, see Sen 2006.

19 On Yijing’s study of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* in Nālandā, see, for instance, Wang 1994: 181–183.

20 For an English translation, see Li 2000.

21 See also Schopen 1995: 485–486. At the end of his exposition, Yijing states that it is based on the 大律 *da lü*, “great *vinaya*” (*T* no. 2125, 54: 230c25) – a clear reference to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, which he describes as “great.” Nevertheless, Li 2000: 161 mistakenly interprets Yijing’s source as the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*.

(*T* no. 1895, 45: 840c15–24; *T* no. 1428, 22: 859b12–19).<sup>22</sup> He then considers what should happen to all of this property after the monk’s death by indicating which categories contain goods that belong to the whole Buddhist community, which are the property of the deceased monk’s monastery and which may be distributed among his fellow monastics. The thirteen Dharmaguptaka categories are:

1. monasteries (*saṃghārāma*);<sup>23</sup>
2. vegetable gardens and fruit trees;
3. detached houses (*bie fang* 別房);
4. items belonging to detached houses;
5. copper vessels, copper jars, hatchets and chisels and lampstands;
6. miscellaneous heavy property (*zhu zhong wu* 諸重物; the *vinaya* gives no details);
7. rope beds, wooden beds, mats to lie on, mats to sit on and pillows;
8. carpets (*qushu* 氍毹) made of black antelope leather;<sup>24</sup>
9. people who serve the *saṃghārāma*;
10. vehicles;
11. bathing vessels, staffs (*xizhang* 錫杖) and fans;
12. iron utensils, wooden utensils, pottery, utensils made out of animal hide, knives to shave the hair and bamboo utensils; and
13. robes and alms bowl, mats (*nishitan* 尼師壇; *niśīdana*) and needleboxes.

Although these categories provided Daoxuan with a convenient framework to classify all of the items he considered worthy of discussion in his work on monastic property, he sometimes had to resort to quite liberal interpretations of the categories. For example, he placed all inherited animals in the ninth category of “heavy” goods that belong to the whole *saṃgha*.

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22 For an overview of these categories, see Chen 2007: 142–164.

23 *Sengjialan* 僧伽藍, *saṃghārāma*, is a general term for the monastery and its buildings. For references, see Muller, <<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%83%A7%E4%BC%BD%E8%97%8D>>, s.v. 僧伽藍.

24 “Made of black antelope leather” is a tentative translation of *yiliyan tuo-mao-luo-mao-mao-luo* 伊犁延陀耄耄耄耄羅. *Yiliyan* 伊犁延 is a transliteration of *aiṇeya* (or a similar Indic term) – that is, something obtained from a female black antelope, which in China was equated with a kind of deer. See Muller, <<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E4%BC%8A%E5%B0%B-C%E5%BB%B6>>, s.v. 伊尼延; Monier-Williams 1990: 233, s.v. *aiṇeya*. I was unable to identify the rest of the transliterations, but maybe it refers to antelope leather (*carmāmbara*?).

## Translations of Daoxuan's Guidelines on Animals

The ninth category of monastic goods in both the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* and *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property* is titled “people who serve the *saṃghārāma*” (*shou sengjialan ren* 守僧伽藍人; *T* no. 1428, 22: 859b16–17; *T* no. 1895, 45: 840c19). Yet, in contrast to the *vinaya*, Daoxuan does not limit this category to people as his version contains three subcategories of animals that may also “serve” a monastery.<sup>25</sup> The passage in question (*T* no. 1895, 45: 845b5–6, 845b22–c19) reads as follows:

第九多有守僧伽藍入。律斷入重。其例既多。如下多判。大分爲六 [...] <sup>26</sup>

四謂。畜諸家畜即駝馬驢牛羊等。并鞍轡秦轡羈繫闌圈槽檻等

五謂。畜諸野畜即猿猴麀鹿熊羆雉兔山鷄野鶩鵝雁等類。并以籠架等  
六謂。畜惡律儀即猫狗鴉鴟鷹鷂鼠蠱鼠弩弓檻等。及弓箭五兵機羅殺具者

已前六件前三隨事已明。

第四家畜之中。既是煩慮之元。宜從重攝。故母論。駝馬驢等可與寺中常住僧運致。已外所有乘具。隨所畜之。如有鞭杖苦具。並須焚蕩。以生譏責故也。

第五野畜彌是障道。故僧祇中。若將來施不合受之。令給水草翅成放去。由畜翫妨道。世中多有放鷄猪鵝鴨者。亦自塵染清徒。有畜鸚鵡鳩鳥者。彌是道俗同恥。必有斯鳥獸。可放山林川藪。籠架拘繫之具。總集以火焚之。

第六惡律儀具。事類乃希。時復緣邊塞首中表無知。或加畜用。既事在罪增。並可焚屏。則同瓦屋之非法也。故善見論云。若有施器仗者。僧應打壞。不得賣。若賣與人。前得行殺。賣者同業故。論中其有畜非法之物。衆主破之無捐財咎。正論明斷。準用何疑。亦有養畜猫狗專行殺害。經論斷在惡律儀。同畜便失善戒。出賣則是生類。業障更深。施他還續害心。終成纏結。宜放之深藪任彼行藏。必繫之顯柱更增勞役。但依前判彼我夷然。便息生殺怨家。新樹慈悲聖宅 (其餘鷲鳥例此騰空)。

25 See also Chen 2007: 148–151 and Chen 2009: 35–41 for a discussion of this passage.

26 The first three parts of the category do not relate to animals; rather, they deal with monastic servants and slaves. Hence, I have omitted them from this translation.

Ninth category: He (the deceased monk) possessed many goods that serve the *saṃghārāma*.<sup>27</sup> The *vinaya* defines these as “heavy.” There are many items in this category. To a great extent, they have been classified below. There are six major subsections:

[...]

Fourth: one keeps domesticated animals, such as camels, horses, donkeys, cattle and sheep. [One also has items] such as saddles and saddle cloths, bridles and reins,<sup>28</sup> fenced pens and stables.

Fifth: one keeps wild animals, such as apes and monkeys, river deer and deer, bears and brown bears, pheasants, rabbits, mountain cocks, wild ducks, geese and wild geese. [One also keeps items] such as cages and racks.

Sixth: keeping [some animals] is [a sign of] evil deportment:<sup>29</sup> cats, dogs, owls and hawks.<sup>30</sup> Poison and crossbows [are also used to kill] rats, as are cages and so on. And bows and arrows, five kinds of weapons,<sup>31</sup> traps and snares [are all] instruments to kill.

Of these six items, the first three (on servants and slaves) were already explained above, just after their mentioning.

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27 Rather than *shou sengjialan ren* 守僧伽藍人, “people who serve the *saṃghārāma*” – mentioned as a summary of the ninth category in the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* and earlier in Daoxuan’s text – the introductory line of this passage has *shou sengjialan ru* 守僧伽藍入, which may be roughly translated as “what serves the *saṃghārāma* and enters (this section).” The character *ru* 入, “to enter, to belong to” (which appears again three characters down the same line) might simply be a scriptural error for the very similar character *ren* 人, “people.” However, it is conceivable Daoxuan used it deliberately when he added animals to this category.

28 *Qin pei ji zhi* 秦轡羈繫, lit. “*qin* bridles and reins.” The precise meaning remains unclear, but *qin* might refer to a distinctive regional style of reins.

29 The term *e lü yi* 惡律儀, “evil deportment,” refers to activities considered to be immoral. For a detailed discussion, see Heirman 2021.

30 The phrase *diao xiao ying yao* 鴞梟鷹鵂 may encompass a number of different species, as both *diao* 鴞 (another term for *chi* 鴟) and *xiao* 梟 are general terms for “owl,” while *ying* 鷹 and *yao* 鵂 are general terms for “hawk.” However, in the context of this paper, the important point is that these are all birds of prey that can be domesticated and used to hunt and kill rodents. Following its introduction to China from the west in the final few centuries BCE, hunting with eagles, hawks and falcons (in conjunction with dogs) had become a popular pastime among the Tang elite by Daoxuan’s lifetime. There were even some specialist bird-of-prey markets. For further details, see Schafer 1958; Wallace 2012; De Troia 2020: 153–158.

31 *Wu bing* 五兵, “five kinds of weapons,” is a general term for a list of weapons. All such lists mention daggers, lances and spears, whereas only some also include bows and arrows. See Wu, Huang and Liu 1986: 132, s.v. 五兵.

As for the fourth subsection, the domesticated animals, this is the cause of some difficult considerations. It is appropriate to classify these as heavy goods. In the *Pinimu jing* 毘尼母經 (\**Vinaya-Māṭṛkā-Sūtra*) [it is said] that animals such as camels, horses and donkeys can live in a monastery.<sup>32</sup> The permanent *saṃgha* uses them for transport.<sup>33</sup> Besides these, other means of transport may be kept in suitable places. As for whips, canes and other means of inflicting suffering, they should be burned and disposed of since they incur blame.

As for the fifth subsection, the wild animals, this is an even greater obstacle to the [right] path. Therefore, the Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* says that if [animals] are offered [to the monastic community], it is not fitting to accept them.<sup>34</sup> One should make sure they are offered water and grass. If the wings [of the birds] are intact, one should release them.<sup>35</sup> If one keeps them, one carelessly hinders the right path. In the world, there are many who release chickens, pigs,

32 Daoxuan uses the title *Mu lun* 母論 in reference to the *Pinimu jing* 毘尼母經 (*T* no. 1463), a *vinaya* commentary of uncertain affiliation that was translated into Chinese in the second half of the fourth or the start of the fifth century CE (see Clarke 2004 for further information). This text allows the “permanent *saṃgha*” (see note 33, below) to employ elephants, camels, horses, oxen and donkeys as means of transport (*T* no. 1463, 24: 815b15).

33 Daoxuan explains *chang zhu seng* 常住僧, “permanent *saṃgha*,” in opposition to *xianqian seng* 現前僧, “the *saṃgha* that is present” (*T* no. 1895, 45: 840a15–16). Hence, the “permanent *saṃgha*” equates to the “order of the four quarters,” discussed above. For further details, see Chen 2007: 138–142.

34 The Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya* contains a quite lengthy passage on how to receive wild animals and slaves (*T* no. 1425, 22: 495b17–c8). In the introductory story, a rich householder offers a monastery 500 elephants and 500 slaves and maid-servants (奴婢 *nūbi*), but the monks are unsure whether they should accept his donation. The Buddha advises that no living being may be accepted and provides a few examples: elephants, horses, oxen, water buffalo, donkeys, sheep, roebucks, deer, pigs, parrots, peacocks, chickens, slaves and maid-servants. However, monks are permitted to accept a male attendant (*jing ren* 淨人) – and nuns a female attendant – to assist in the monastery’s affairs. An attendant, *jing ren* 淨人, *kalpiyakāra* (Mahāsāṃghika–Lokottaravāda tradition; see Roth 1970: 216, §192 ff.; Skt. *kalpikāra*; Pāli *kappiya-kāra*), is a layperson who, among other duties, makes potentially problematic situations “pure” (*jing* 淨) – that is, acceptable or permissible – for a monastic. For instance, he or she may accept donations on the monastic’s behalf. For further details, see Kieffer-Pülz 2007: 20–21 (Pāli tradition). If a donor offers animals and adds that he will have to kill them if they are not accepted, he must be instructed to release them, offer them water and food, and ensure that they remain unharmed. The wings of birds should not be clipped and they must not be kept in cages. If they can fly, walk and live independently (*zi huo* 自活), they should be released.

35 In theory, *chi cheng* 翅成 could also mean “when the wings are fully grown.” However, as this passage relies on the above-mentioned Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, which states that birds’ wings should not be clipped and that they should be released only when they can fly, walk and sustain themselves, I have opted for “if the wings are intact.”

[domesticated?] geese and ducks. [These animals] pollute the pure followers (i.e. the lay community) just as much [as wild animals].<sup>36</sup> If monastics and laypeople alike keep parrots, [wild?] geese,<sup>37</sup> doves and crows, they are even more shameful.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, these birds and beasts should be released in mountains, forests, rivers and lakes. Cages, racks and implements to capture them should all be burned in the fire.

As for the sixth subsection, things [connected] to evil deportment, there are not so many in this category. At times, a lack of knowledge is evident in remote as well as central regions. Some people keep and use [such things]. Yet since these things exacerbate the offence [of not protecting living beings], they should be burned and rejected. [Using them] is just as much against the Dharma as a hut made out of mud, [which must be destroyed].<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the *Shanjian lü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 says that if one is offered weapons, the *saṃgha* should destroy them, and one cannot sell them.<sup>40</sup> If one sells [a weapon] to a person before they commit a murder, then the seller's karmic retribution is the same [as the murderer's]. In the commentary [it is said that] if

36 This sentence is problematic as the subject could be either the animals or the people who release them. The listed creatures are all common farmyard animals, in contrast to the wild animals that appear in the next sentence. I have opted for the translation presented here as the whole section advocates the safe release of domesticated animals on condition that they have the capacity to survive safely. I owe special thanks to *bhikkhu* Faling for his invaluable help with this text passage.

37 Although Daoxuan includes 鵝 *e*, “geese,” in both lists, it seems likely that he meant domesticated geese in the first instance and wild geese in the second, given the other creatures in each list.

38 Parrots (*ying* 鸚) were popular pets in medieval China, as Schafer 1959 noted. There are accounts of the release of captive birds, especially doves (*jiu* 鳩), in China from around the third century CE onwards (see Pu 2014: 108–113; Chen 2023: 151–177).

39 Two *vinayas* (Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, *T* no. 1421, 22: 5b1–21; Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, *T* no. 1428, 22: 572b6–c4) prohibit the construction and use of mud huts (*wa wu* 瓦屋, “tile hut”), as does the *Shanjian lü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 (*T* no. 1462, 24: 727b2–c27), a text that Daoxuan mentions in the next sentence.

40 Daoxuan uses the title *Shanjian lun* 善見論 in reference to the *Shanjian lü piposha* (*T* no. 1462, 24). This text is sometimes presented as a direct translation of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, a commentary on the Pāli *vinaya* that is traditionally attributed to the monk Buddhaghosa (see von Hinüber 1996: 103–104 for further information on this attribution and why it may be problematic). The Chinese translation, which was completed in 488–489, is attributed to the monk Saṃghabhadra (?–?), but its relationship to the Pāli text is far from straightforward and has been widely debated (see Pinte 2011 for further details on the Chinese text and its relationship to the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*). The passage that Daoxuan mentions (*T* no. 1462, 24: 762c4–6) discusses fighting implements. If received as gifts, such items must not be used or sold as weapons, but they may be rendered ineffective, repurposed, then sold (see Bapat and Hirakawa 1970: 368 for a translation).

one keeps things that go against the rules, then the monastic managers should destroy them, so neither wealth nor fault increases.<sup>41</sup> The correct position is that [these things] are clearly proscribed;<sup>42</sup> this is doubtless the standard to follow. There are also those who breed and keep cats and dogs, specifically to kill [rats].<sup>43</sup> The *sūtras* and commentaries proscribe this as it is evil deportment. By keeping these [animals for pest control], one diverges from the good precepts. If one sells them, the karmic retribution will be even worse, since they are living beings. If one gives them to someone else, this still perpetuates harmful intentions (*hai xin* 害心) and ultimately results in karmic bondage. It is fitting to release them in the wilderness and allow them to come or hide [as they wish]. The manifest yoke of forced bondage increases their hardship. Only by following the previous determination can we both [i.e. animals and monastics] feel at ease and thus calm the enemy of birth and death and newly establish a holy residence of compassion. (As for birds of prey, they should be dealt with according to the same principle, and released into the air.)<sup>44</sup>

In this lengthy passage, Daoxuan provides what might be considered a valuable insight into the presence of animals within medieval Chinese monasteries. However, some caution is necessary. Although Daoxuan wrote his text with the aim of improving monastic discipline among his contemporaries, it is important to remember that he based many of his guidelines on instructions contained within much earlier Indian texts, written in a context that is very different from the prevailing situation in seventh-century China. This should remind us of what Pierre Bourdieu has pointedly observed, namely that we should

41 In all likelihood, “the commentary” (*lun* 論) is a further reference to the *Shanjian lü piposha* and Daoxuan’s interpretation of that text’s guidelines on weapons. A monastic manager (*zhong zhu* 眾主) probably performed the functions of a quartermaster; the term is sometimes used as a translation of the Indian word *vaiyāprtyakara* (and variants, cf. Edgerton 1985, 511: *vaiyāpatya-*, *vaiyāprtya-*, *vaiyāvṛtya-*), a kind of manager-monk (cf. Silk 2008: 48; see also Hartmann 2010, s.v. *vaiyyāpatya-kara*: “Verwalter”).

42 This translation is highly tentative. One would expect that Daoxuan makes a reference to a text, instead of giving a general remark. In that sense, it is possible that the term *zhenglun* 正論 (translated here as “the correct position”) might actually be an abbreviation of *Apidamo shunzhenglilun* 阿毘達磨順正理論 (\**Nyāyānusāra* n. “legal requirement concerning the rules”, *T* no. 1562, 29; see Collett 1995 for a detailed study), an *abhidharma* text compiled in the late fourth or early fifth century by Saṃghabhadra and translated into Chinese in 653 by the monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664). However, I could not identify a corresponding passage in that text.

43 For a discussion on the monastic cat in medieval China, see, among others, Barrett 2010.

44 Daoxuan expresses these thoughts on birds of prey in a supplementary note.

always bear in mind that patterns of behaviour are shaped not only by the environment where they originate but also by the environment where they are practised.<sup>45</sup> As I have discussed elsewhere, one striking difference between the original *vinaya* texts and Daoxuan's commentaries is the latter's focus on the profound karmic consequences of mistreating animals or even keeping them in captivity.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, he acknowledges that some Chinese monasteries benefit from their cultivation of silkworms and admits that it would be difficult to provide the *samgha* with sufficient food if all agricultural activity were to cease. It is also important to note that many of his remarks are specifically aimed at the few large, wealthy monasteries he knew well, which together comprised no more than a small fraction of China's monastic institutions. Yet, these powerful establishments were revered as normative models that set benchmarks for other members of the *samgha*,<sup>47</sup> so Daoxuan's texts may still be considered as didactic devices that he wrote with the intention of warning the whole Buddhist community of the consequences of developing bad habits. Indeed, *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property* might not always reveal the reality of daily life in a typical seventh-century Chinese monastery, but it is undoubtedly a valuable template for what Daoxuan considered ideal monastic practice. That said, it is safe to assume that most of his readers were familiar with – or at least could imagine – the objects and practices he describes in the text.

As with all of the guidelines in *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*, Daoxuan's proscription against harming animals is based on his own interpretation of the *vinaya* texts, all of which classify killing a living creature as a serious offence. For example, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* states:

若比丘故殺畜生命者，波逸提。

If a *bhikṣu* deliberately breaks off the life of an animal, he commits a *pācittika*.<sup>48</sup>

45 Bourdieu 1980: 87–109 (transl. 1990: 52–65).

46 For further discussion, see Heirman 2019, 2020 and 2021.

47 For further details, see Kieschnick 2010: 545–549 and 573–574.

48 Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, T no. 1428, 22: 677a24–25. A *pācittika* (or variants) is an offence that must be expiated (see Heirman 2002: 141–147). Killing an animal is categorized as a *pācittika* offence in the other five *vinayas*, too: Pāli *vinaya*, Vin IV: 124–125; Mahīśāsaka *vinaya*, T no. 1421, 22: 58a15–b9; Mahāsāṃghika *vinaya*, T no. 1425, 22: 377a26–378a26; Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T no. 1435, 23: 110b28–111a26; Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, T no. 1442, 23: 847c18–848a16.

However, Daoxuan goes further and suggests that the karmic consequences of committing such an offence cannot be entirely expunged merely by observing the stipulated *vinaya* protocols. For instance, in his main commentary on the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*, the *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔, *An Abridged and Explanatory Commentary on the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*, he writes (*T* no. 1804, 40: 49a12–14):<sup>49</sup>

故成論害心殺蟻。重於慈心殺人。由根本業重。決定受報縱懺墮罪。業道不除。

Therefore, the *Cheng lun* 成論 (\**Tattvasiddhiśāstra*)<sup>50</sup> [states] that killing an ant with an evil state of mind is worse than killing a person with a compassionate state of mind. Since the karmic effect will be severe, one certainly receives retribution, even if one expiates the *pācittika* offence (*duo zui* 墮罪). The karma will not be annulled.

Here, as throughout Daoxuan's commentaries, intent is paramount. The karmic impact is undiminished because the monk killed the ant *deliberately*, even though he subsequently regrets committing this *pācittika* offence and atones for it by performing the requisite penance. Daoxuan's preoccupation with intent and consequent unavoidable karmic bondage is equally evident in *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property*, where he states that harmful intent (*hai xin* 害心) inevitably has negative karmic consequences.

In addition to urging his readers not to harm animals, Daoxuan suggests that, generally, animals should be released, although he permits a few exceptions. This is another example of his tendency to extrapolate a general rule from the *vinayas'* guidance on a specific issue – in this case the correct procedure for liberating stranded animals, such as insects trapped in water strainers or rats captured in a box.<sup>51</sup> The *vinaya* texts also debate the release of domesticated animals, such as dogs and pigs, as well as prey caught by hunters.<sup>52</sup>

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49 See Heirman 2020: 28–34 for a more detailed discussion on how Daoxuan interprets the proscription against killing animals.

50 Daoxuan uses the abbreviation *Cheng lun* 成論 in reference to the *Chengshi lun* 成實論 (\**Tattvasiddhiśāstra*, *The Treatise that Accomplishes Reality*, *T* no. 1646, 32; translated into Chinese by the monk Kumārajīva (344–409) at the beginning of the fifth century). The passage in question is at *T* no. 1646, 32: 291a11–13.

51 For references, see Heirman 2020: 34–36; Heirman 2021: 5–6.

52 On the historical background of animal release, see, among others, Pu 2014: 101–132. For *vinaya* references, see Heirman 2019: 7–9.

They all reach the same conclusion and prohibit monastics from releasing any animal that belongs to someone else, although some of them downgrade this offence in certain circumstances. Therefore, according to the *vinayas*, domesticated animals should always remain their owners' property because liberating them equates to stealing. Daoxuan agrees that humans – including monastics themselves – may own animals, albeit with the addition of a proviso that these creatures must be well treated, with particular reference to those that are kept in a monastery and used as means of transport, such as camels, horses and donkeys. On the other hand, he advises monastics to release many of their own domesticated animals, including chickens, pigs, geese and ducks, on condition that this will not put the animals' lives at risk. Unfortunately, Daoxuan fails to provide a detailed explanation of how this might be achieved, and to the best of my knowledge he does not reiterate this guideline in any other commentary. That said, there is a clue in his reference to a passage from the *Mahāsāṃghika vinaya*, which not only advocates the release of parrots, peacocks, chickens, sheep, roebucks and deer but insists that they should be provided with assistance to enable them to survive outside captivity (*T* no. 1425, 22: 495c3–6). For example, they should be offered food and water, and protected from potential threats. The obvious implication is that releasing animals does not necessarily entail leaving them to fend for themselves. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore whether “released” animals might enjoy peaceful, free lives within the confines of a monastery, but it should be noted that some of these institutions dug ponds to provide safe habitats for aquatic animals (*fangshengchi* 放生池) around the time when Daoxuan was writing his treatise.<sup>53</sup>

Daoxuan is especially interested in hunting and pest control with dogs, cats and birds of prey, which he classifies as a form of evil deportment (*e lü yi* 惡律儀). Indeed, in the *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* (*T* no. 1804, 40: 23c8–15), he goes so far as to link such practices with the decline of the Dharma:<sup>54</sup>

滅法不久。寺家庫藏廚所多不結淨。道俗通濫淨穢混然。立寺經久。綱維無教。忽聞立淨惑耳驚心。豈非師僧上座妄居淨住導引後生同開惡道。或畜貓狗專擬殺鼠。牛杖馬鞞韁絆卷櫛。如是等類並是惡律儀。雜心云。惡律儀者流注相續成也。善生成論。若受惡律儀則失善戒。今寺畜貓狗。並欲盡形。非惡律儀何也。舉衆同畜一衆無戒。

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53 For an introduction to this practice, see Pu 2014: 130–131.

54 For a more detailed discussion of this passage, see Heirman 2021: 10–11.

[If the aforementioned behaviour continues], the disappearance of Dharma is not far away. The storage rooms and kitchens of monasteries have often not been designated as purified [places] (*jie jing* 結淨).<sup>55</sup> Monastic and laity intermingle [throughout the monasteries], and what is pure becomes indistinguishable from what is dirty. The monasteries were established long ago, but regulations have not been taught. When [monastics] suddenly heard of [the correct procedure for] establishing a purified [storage room and kitchen], they were confused and shocked. Is it not that teachers and senior monks, completely oblivious of the pure life, lead the younger generation on a journey down an unwholesome path? Some keep cats and dogs with the specific intention of killing rats, or they [have] sticks for cattle, reins for horses, halters and pegs. All such acts are evil deportment (*e lü yi* 惡律儀). The *Za xin* 雜心 (\**Samyuktābhīdharmahr̥dayaśāstra*) says that “evil deportment” means that there is a continuous stream [of unwholesome acts].<sup>56</sup> The *Shansheng* 善生 (*Upāsakaśīla Sūtra*)<sup>57</sup> and the *Cheng lun* 成論 (\**Tattvasiddhiśāstra*)<sup>58</sup> [explain that] if one embraces evil deportment, one loses good morality. Now, [though, monastics] have cats and dogs in their monasteries, with the intention of keeping them for their whole lives. If this is not evil deportment, what else can it be? [If] the whole community keeps [cats and dogs], [then] the entire community lacks [*vinaya*] rules.

Here, Daoxuan builds a strong case that killing by proxy with dogs and cats – or indeed birds of prey, as he adds in *Models for Measuring and Handling Light and Heavy Property* – is an evil act.

55 The term *jie jing* 結淨 signifies that a particular location has been officially designated (*jie* 結) as a “purified place” (*jing di* 淨地). In such locations, behaviour that is not ordinarily permitted in a monastery (e.g. storing and preparing food) may be “purified” – that is, made acceptable. For further details, see Heirman 2021: note 58.

56 *Za xin* 雜心 is a reference to the *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論 (\**Samyuktābhīdharmahr̥dayaśāstra*, T no. 1552, 28), a Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* text written by Dharmatrāta at the beginning of the fourth century and translated into Chinese by the monk Saṃghavarman in 434. See Dessein 1999 for an introduction and full translation.

57 *Shansheng* 善生 is a reference to the *Youposai jie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (*Upāsakaśīla-Sūtra*, *Sūtra on Upāsaka Precepts*, T no. 1488, 24), also known as the *Shansheng jing* 善生經 (*Sujāta-Sūtra*), as *Sujāta* is the main character (see Shih 1994: 1). The passage in question is at T no. 1488, 24: 1069c8–1070a2.

58 The passage in question is at T no. 1646, 32: 291a11–13.

## Concluding Remarks

In summary, Daoxuan raises no objections against keeping economically beneficial, domesticated animals, such as those that are used as means of transport, within the confines of a monastery. His only proviso is that their owners should treat them well. Meanwhile, he insists that all captive wild animals should be released in the wilderness, without exception. Therefore, his guidance on these matters is detailed and unambiguous. On the other hand, he is unusually vague on the subject of common farmyard animals, such as pigs. In line with the vast majority of his Buddhist contemporaries, Daoxuan was firmly against the consumption of meat, so we may assume that he believed rearing animals for that purpose was pointless.<sup>59</sup> Yet, he does not explicitly explain in which way such animals should be released. That said, his overriding message is clear: no animal should ever be killed or harmed as the karmic effects of such an act will be severe and unavoidable. Hence, the inference is that farm animals should be released as long as they have the capacity to survive outside captivity. Finally, Daoxuan is much more explicit on the subject of animals that are used to catch and kill other creatures: he insists they have no place in any monastic community. Once again, this reflects his strict adherence to the Buddhist principle that all living creatures – including pests – should be treated with respect and compassion.

## Abbreviations

- T     *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 85 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934.
- Vin    *Vinaya Piṭakam: One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pāli Language*. 5 vols., ed. Hermann Oldenberg. London: Pali Text Society, 1969–1993 [1879–1883].

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<sup>59</sup> For further details, see, among others, Kieschnick 2005; Heirman and De Rauw 2006.

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