

# **Steal Holy Food and Come Back as a Viper: Conceptions of Karma and Rebirth in Medieval Daoism**

**Livia Kohn  
Boston University**

## **Karma and rebirth in the Chinese context**

The doctrine of karma and rebirth was among the first unusual features the Chinese noticed about Buddhism when it was transmitted in the first and second centuries C.E. They typically reacted either with astonishment and disbelief, saying “The Buddhists say that after a man dies he will be reborn. I do not believe the truth of these words” (Jan 1986: 147), or with fear, with “a feeling of fright from which there was no escape” (Tsukamoto and Hurvitz 1985: 42).

The karma doctrine itself, part of Indian religion since the Upanishads, states that all actions have inevitable consequences which, after a period of maturation, revert to their perpetrator. As the individual’s soul or *ātman* is the carrier of this load, it must continue to be embodied in a physical form to receive the rewards and punishments necessitated by its former actions. Thus the notion of rebirth, including that in non-human and hellish states, became a close correlate to the idea of personally created and suffered-through karma (Mahony 1987: 262). While in Hinduism and Jainism karma was thought to be created predominantly through actions, and imagined as an almost physical substance that clung to an eternal soul, in Buddhism it was understood much less physically. Created primarily through good and bad intentions of the mind, it was transmitted in “consecutive moments of a psychic continuum,” like the light of a candle, without the necessity of an eternal or substantial soul underlying the process of life (Mizuno 1987: 267). In all cases, however, karma was entirely centered within the individual and could be neither worsened nor improved by the actions of others.

This notion was later challenged by the Mahāyāna, whose followers claimed that good karma in the form of merit accumulated over long periods of time could serve not only as a positive inspiration to others, but also be transferred to improve their lot. This gave rise to devotional cults toward savior figures or bodhisattvas, to rituals that would transfer merit for the sake of one’s ancestors, and to the swearing of so-called bodhisattva vows. The latter placed

the practitioner immediately on a high level of karmic attainment and gave him a “karmically protective coding” (Mizuno 1987: 267), with the help of which he or she could fulfill the spiritual goal of universal salvation and compassion for all that lives. Placing a strong emphasis on the community of all beings, Mahāyāna practitioners believed that the karmic activities of each being had an influence on all, and that the country and even the world would benefit from the religious activities of the people. The king, therefore, participated to about one sixth in the merit or demerit created by all his subjects (Mizuno 1987: 268), and society as a whole became a forum for karmic and religious unfolding.

The Chinese, finding the intensely personal responsibility of the basic karma doctrine not only surprising but even abhorrent, could accept the more socially-centered reciprocity dimension inherent in its Mahāyāna developments. Focusing on the latter, they successfully linked the Buddhist vision with their indigenous views, thus continuing a development of ethical thinking that can be described as having occurred in three phases.

The first of these is the ancient indigenous view. It focused on the notion of reciprocity both within society and in a larger, supernatural, context. People’s deeds, if they harmed other beings or natural forces, were thought to be judged by a celestial administration and brought back to them to cause them suffering. While this placed the responsibility for one’s good or bad fortune plainly on one’s own actions, there was also the simultaneous belief that people had certain inborn qualities or “fate” (*ming* 命) that would direct their lives whatever the circumstances or the deeds they committed. Human life in ancient China was thus understood as unfolding through a combination of self-induced good and bad fortune and the inborn character or fate one received from heaven at birth.<sup>1</sup>

In a second phase, this already complex understanding was expanded by the early Daoists to include three further factors: the belief that fate could be inherited from one’s ancestors, the notion that the celestial administration had supervisory and punishing agents deep inside the human body, and the attachment of numerical values to good and bad deeds which would result in specific additions or subtractions from the life span. The individual’s position in the universe was thereby tightened, both in a supernatural family network and

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<sup>1</sup> For studies of the early system, see Hsü 1975; Yü 1987; Brokaw 1991: 25–30.

through closer interaction with the cosmic bureaucrats, and fate became more calculable as deeds and days were counted with great exactness.<sup>2</sup>

Buddhism, then, was the key factor of the third phase. Although vaguely present and exerting some influence from the second century onward, its notions of karma and rebirth became an active factor in the Chinese understanding of fate only after big waves of translations both in north and south China around the year 400 brought more, and better understood, materials. With this, four new factors entered the system: the belief in rebirth and retribution for sins or good deeds accumulated during one's own former lives, added to those committed by oneself in this life and to those of one's ancestors; the vision of long-term supernatural torture chambers known as "earth prisons" (*diyu* 地獄) or hells, as well as of punishments by being reborn in the body of an animal or hungry ghost; the trust in the efficacy of various forms of ritual, such as rites of repentance and the giving of offerings, to alleviate the karmic burden; and the increasing faith in savior figures, such as bodhisattvas, gods, and the perfected, who would use their unlimited power and compassion to raise people from the worldly mire.<sup>3</sup>

Daoists of the Numinous Treasure (Lingbao 靈寶) school, which rose to prominence in the fifth century (see Kobayashi 1990), embraced the Buddhist vision especially heartily. Their predilection, in accordance with the overall Chinese tendency, was for lay, bodhisattva-oriented, practice, and most of the rules they established were for the devotional activities of the common people, such as the performance of repentance, the giving of charity, and the sponsorship of festivals. These rules were often rather vague in nature and provided more a general moral guideline than specific behavioral instructions (Zürcher 1980: 130–31).

Still, the new vision did not join the older tradition entirely without conflict. As Erik Zürcher points out, there were three areas of special difficulty: first, the

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<sup>2</sup> For Daoist ideas of fate and body gods, see Homann 1978; Maspero 1981; Hendrischke 1991; Kohn 1995a.

<sup>3</sup> The Buddhist impact has been studied by Zürcher (1980) and Jan (1986). For a similar model of developmental stages, see Akizuki 1964. The three stages outlined here are not unlike the Western unfolding of ethical thinking from defilement (cosmic) through sin (social) to guilt (individual), as outlined by Paul Ricoeur (1967), and applied to China in Lai 1984. For studies of more recent (late imperial and modern) Chinese notions, see Eberhard 1967 and 1971; Yamazaki 1957: 459; Yoshioka 1970: 163–79; Brokaw 1991.

notion of ancestral inheritance was blurred in the light of one's own former rebirths, raising the question of who really was to blame; the traditional clear-cut distinction of the afterlife into heaven and the underworld was confused, a third alternative in the form of rebirth now being available; and the sense of communal unity and collective guilt was disturbed by the strong individualism of Buddhism (Zürcher 1980: 138).

While texts of the early Numinous Treasure school still were highly conscious of these discrepancies and addressed them variously, by the sixth century a more thorough integration of teachings had taken place, and the rebirth doctrine was firmly entrenched in Daoist thinking. Its *locus classicus* is the *Yinyuan jing* 因緣經 (Scripture of Karmic Retribution), contained in the Daoist canon and found variously in manuscripts from Dunhuang. The text, in ten chapters, is dated to either the early or the late sixth century, and contains, in its first several sections, a number of detailed lists that outline which mode of behavior results in what form of rebirth or, vice versa, which present state of life comes from what kind of former existence. These lists, both in content and phrasing, can be traced to ancient and Chinese Buddhist models, a comparison with which reveals not only certain typical features of the medieval worldview, but also certain unique characteristics of the various traditions—aside from providing an insight into the social realities, classification patterns, and religious concerns of people in medieval China

The following presentation will first describe the *Yinyuan jing* and its views of karma and rebirth, then indicate its early and Chinese forebears, and conclude with a comparison between the two and an evaluation of medieval Daoist notions of rebirth and fate.

### **The scripture of karmic retribution**

The *Yinyuan jing* has the full title *Taishang dongxuan lingbao yebao yinyuan jing* 太上洞玄靈寶業報因緣經, or “Scripture of the Causes and Condition of Karmic Retribution, Contained in the Mystery Cavern of Highest Numinous Treasure.” It is a late offspring of Numinous Treasure and continues the active integration of Buddhist teachings typical for this school. Its edition in the Daoist canon (DZ 336, numbers after Schipper 1975) consists of ten scrolls of about fifteen pages each, on average. In addition, large portions of many chapters were also found at Dunhuang (see Table 1), which attests to the importance and popularity of the text under the Tang.

**Table 1**  
**Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Yinyuan jing***  
**with matching passages in the Daoist canon**

Taipei 4721 (Öfuchi 1979: 147-49) = 1.1a-5b  
 S. 4963 (Öfuchi 1979: 150-51) = 1.5b-8a  
 S. 3008 (Öfuchi 1979: 151-52) = 1.11a-13b  
 P. 2551 (Öfuchi 1979: 153-54) = 3.3b-6b  
 S. 5732 (Öfuchi 1979:155) = 4.3a-4a  
 P. 3353 (Öfuchi 1979: 155-57) = 4.6b-10b  
 P. 3775 (Öfuchi 1979: 157) = 5.1a-2a  
 Choshi 95 (Öfuchi 1979: 158) = 5.3b-5b  
 P. 2387 (Öfuchi 1979: 159-63) = 6.1a-13a (end)  
 P. 2757 (Öfuchi 1979: 164-65) = 7.3b-7b  
 P. 3050 (Öfuchi 1979: 165) = 7.11b-12a  
 Kyoto 252 (Öfuchi 1979: 166-70) = 8.1a-10a (end)  
 S. 1645 (Öfuchi 1979: 171) = 9.3ab  
 S. 861 (Öfuchi 1979: 172) = 9.11b-12a  
 P. 3026 (Öfuchi 1979: 172) = 9.18a-b

In content, the *Yinyuan jing* details the rules of karmic cause and effect, beginning in its first two scrolls (sects. 1-4; see Table 2 for headings) with the basic law of karma and retribution. It focuses particularly on listing desirable good deeds that will bring salvation and possible bad deeds that will cause people to go to hell and suffer in innumerable ways. The central part of the text, the middle six scrolls (sects. 5-17), concentrates on the active practice of the Dao, dealing mainly with lay followers but also including certain items of monastic practice. Everyone is urged to attend rites of repentance, receive and honor the precepts, hold purifications, chant the scriptures, and sponsor or perform rites to the Dao. Monastics, in addition, have to swear pledges and vows, while lay followers are to develop a cheerful attitude and give amply in charity. All should nurture compassionate attitudes and pray to the Ten Worthies Who Save From Suffering. The last three scrolls (sects. 16-27) deal predominantly with cosmology, describing the rules of merit and virtue, impulse and response, and the role of human life and the human body in the larger scheme of things. They also discuss the creation of the world, the various kalpas it passed through, the salvific activities of the Daoist gods, and the manifestation and benefits of the Daoist teaching in the world. A discussion of the text's

worldview, beginning with cosmology and moving through the various practices, has been provided by Nakajima Ryūzō (1984).

**Table 2**  
**Section headings of the *Yinyuan jing***

1. Understanding salvation (1.1a–13b)
2. Rewards for good deeds (2.1a–4a)
3. Retribution for bad deeds (2.4a–14a)
4. Receiving punishment (2.14a–23b)
5. Confession and repentance (3.1a–15b)
6. Honoring the precepts (4.1a–5b)
7. Upholding the purifications (4.5b–14b)
8. Reciting and chanting (5.1a–3a)
9. Performing rites to the Dao (5.3a–5b)
10. Extending pledges (5.5b–7b)
11. Swearing vows (5.7b–10a)
12. Singing praises (5.10a–11a)
13. Giving charity (5.11a–16b)
14. Compassionate attitudes (6.1a–3a)
15. Rescue from suffering (6.3a–13a)
16. Merit and virtue (7.1a–8b)
17. Response and impulse (7.9a–11b)
18. Rewards of blessedness (7.12a–13b)
19. The birth of the spirit (8.1a–10b)
20. Encompassing rescue (9.1a–11a)
21. Proof in fact (9.11a–14b)
22. Controlling the causes (9.14b–16b)
23. Creation and transformation (9.16b–18b)
24. The cosmic network (10.1a–1b)
25. Encountering perfection (10.1b–4a)
26. Explaining the teaching (10.4a–6b)
27. Continuous pervasion (10.6b–10a)

While all scholars agree that the *Yinyuan jing* dates from the sixth century, some place the text in the Liang (502–56), and others in the Sui dynasty (581–618). The latter period is the *terminus post quem non*, because the text is cited in a fragment of the *Xuanmen dayi* 玄門大義 (Great Meaning of the Gate of All

Wonders, DZ 1124; Yoshioka 1976: 133), which is definitely a Sui text. The *Yinyuan jing* also contains a section on purifications (*zhai* 齋; section 7) that is very similar to a passage in the *Xuanmen dayi* (14b–15b). In addition, the *Yinyuan jing* is very close to the *Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒 (Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao, DZ 1125), not only in that the latter cites sections 2 and 3 in great detail but also in other similarities, such as a list of items of monastic organization in section 7, a survey of classical practices of devotion in section 8, and a description of the karmic effects of the making of images in section 10 (see Akizuki 1965: 57, 61–62).

Numerous expressions and key technical terms are used commonly in both texts. These include: “widely produce scriptures and sacred images” (*dazao jingxiang* 大造經象, 1.7b), “the holy body of an ordained monk or nun” (*chujia fashen* 出家法身, 1.8a), “worship the Dao and uphold the precepts” (*fengdao chijie* 奉道持戒, 1.9b), “all Daoists, whether male or female” (*daoshi nüguan* 道士女官, 4.5b), “each depends on the relevant present circumstances” (*ge zai shiyi* 各在時宜, 4.8a), “express one’s cinnabar sincerity” (*yibiao dancheng* 以表丹誠, 6.4b), “the holy altar in a numinous monastery” (*lingguan xuantan* 靈觀玄壇, 6.5b), “turning and reciting this scripture” (*zhuan song cijing* 轉誦此經, 6.5b), “widely establish fields of blessedness” (*guangjian futian* 廣建福田, 6.5b), and so on.

Following the assumption that the *Yinyuan jing* is part of the same environment and lineage as the *Fengdao kejie* and predates it by about twenty years, scholars date the text in accordance with their preference for the latter’s date. Thus both Yoshioka and Kobayashi place the *Yinyuan jing* in the reign of the Liang emperor Wu, around the year 520 (Yoshioka 1976: 133; Kobayashi 1990: 236). Nakajima, in his early article on the worldview of the text, follows their lead (1984: 335), but has since revised his opinion in favor of the late sixth century (in Noguchi et al. 1991: 177). Other scholars, notably Akizuki and Ōfuchi, prefer a Sui date for the text (Akizuki 1965: 443; Ōfuchi 1964: 256; see also Ren and Zhong 1991: 254–55). My own contention is in favor of a later date for both texts, and I have argued the case of the *Fengdao kejie* elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The *Yinyuan jing*, more specifically, contains several features of Daoist doctrine that only begin to appear in the literature from the seventh century onward. If dated prior to the Sui, the text would constitute a very odd case indeed by being a document that anticipates various doctrinal, devotional, and

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<sup>4</sup> In a paper entitled “The First Handbook of Monastic Daoism: The Date and compilation of the *Fengdao kejie*,” forthcoming.

stylistic developments by about a century. There are, to be precise, five such developments.

The first is the use of a bodhisattva-like figure as main interlocutor of the deity. In the *Yinyuan jing*, the character is Puji zhenren 普濟真人, the Perfected of Universal Rescue. Typically such figures appear in Daoist texts from the early Tang onward, as for example, Haikong zhenren 海空真人, the Perfected of Ocean Emptiness, in the *Haikong zhizang jing* (Collected Wisdom of Haikong 海空智藏經, DZ 9; see Nakajima 1981; Sunayama 1987). Before, even as late as the mid-sixth century, interlocutors were classical Daoist figures, such as Zhang Daoling 張道陵 in the *Shengxuan jing* (Scripture of Ascension to the Mystery 昇玄經, DZ 1122; see Kohn 1995: 210) or Taiji zhenren 太極真人 (Perfected of Great Ultimate) in various Numinous Treasure texts. The *Benji jing* 本際經 (Scripture of Original Juncture, ed. in Wu 1960; Ōfuchi 1979: 291–352) of the early seventh century even has a mixture of the two, featuring traditional Daoist sages, such as Zhengyi zhenren 正一真人 (Perfected of Right Unity) and Tianzhen huangren 天真皇人 (Sovereign of Heavenly Perfection) together with bodhisattva types, such as Pude miaoxing 普德妙行 (Universal Virtue, Wondrous Practice; Ōfuchi 1979: 296, 302, 292).

In addition, Puji, the interlocutor in the *Yinyuan jing*, is probably an adaptation of the bodhisattva in the last chapter of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮花經 (Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Law, T.262, 9.1a–63b),<sup>5</sup> entitled “Puxian quanfa pin” 普賢勸法品 or “The Admonitions of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra [Universal Sage]” (Murano 1974: 306–10; Hurvitz 1976: 333–37). As in the *Yinyuan jing*, this chapter describes the good and bad karmic effects of worshipping or, alternatively, doubting the efficacy the *Lotus sūtra*, naming some of the same karmic punishments, such as leprosy, decaying teeth, and crooked bones, and stressing the bad fortune that will haunt any violator or critic of the text. The *Lotus sūtra*, and especially its last chapter, can thus be considered a forerunner of the *Yinyuan jing* (Yoshioka 1964: 797). This in itself is not surprising, as the *Lotus sūtra*, translated by Kumārajīva in the early fifth century, was a major work of Chinese Buddhism. However, the text gained increased popularity and a higher devotional status in the late sixth century, when Zhiyi 智顛 elevated it to the status of the central sūtra of the Tiantai 天台

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<sup>5</sup> Texts in the Buddhist canon are cited after the Japanese Taishō Tripitaka edition (abbreviated T.), giving the serial number, the volume, and the page.



School. It may well be that this increase in the sūtra's popularity contributed to the new Daoist custom of using bodhisattva-like figures in their texts.<sup>6</sup>

A second point of doctrinal discrepancy is the prominent mention of the Ten Worthies Who Save From Suffering (*Jiuku tianzun* 救苦天尊) in the *Yinyuan jing*. Belief in this group developed through the adaptation of the Buddhist concept of the buddhas of the ten directions, which appears in Mahāyāna scriptures from an early time (see Mochizuki 1936, vol. 4: 4439), and the idea of savior bodhisattvas, such as Guanyin 觀音, Dizang 地藏, and Wenzhu 文殊 (Yūsa 1989: 19). From Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850–933) *Daojiao lingyan ji* 道教靈驗記 (Record of Daoist Miracles, DZ 590; see Verellen 1992) it is clear that the belief in the ten played an active part in Daoist practice under the Tang, but most scriptures specifying their iconography and ritual date from the Song (see Yūsa 1989).

The ten are identified variously in the literature. There is an early list of ten names, which are still rather Buddhist in nature, including titles such as “Great Compassion,” “Universal Rescue,” and “Wisdom Transformation.” This list is found in the *Yinyuan jing* (sect. 15, 6.4a–b) and in one Song ritual text (DZ 514), making the *Yinyuan jing* the earliest source for the Ten Worthies (Yūsa 1989: 30). A second list of names, more Daoist, which later became the standard version, appears first in the *Fengdao kejie* (sect. 15, 6.1a–b), showing a development and increased Daoization of the cult in the early Tang. A third list, only found after the Tang, links the Ten Worthies with the ten kings of hell, while still including the second set of names. The latter group of deities, designated saviors who save specifically from the tortures of hell, is then worshiped in memorial services for the salvation of the dead (see Teiser 1994: 226–27, after DZ 215).

A cult that is well documented in the Tang and develops to its fullest under the Song, the belief in the Ten Worthies Who Save From Suffering is another

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<sup>6</sup> Aside from the *Lotus sūtra*, as Yoshioka points out (1964: 797), the *Yinyuan jing* also follows several other early Buddhist texts—one on the general rules of karma, and another on the worship of sacred images. Yoshioka specifically cites the *Ayu wang xi huaimu yinyuan jing* (Sūtra on the Karmic Causes of King Asoka's Heir's Ruined Eyes 阿育王息壤目因緣經, T.2045, 50.172–83), translated by Dharmanandi from Tukhara, who arrived in Chang'an in 384; and the *Guanxi fo xingxiang jing* (Sūtra on the Washing of Buddhist Images 灌洗佛形像經, T.695, 16.796–97), translated by Faju 法炬, who lived in Luoyang around the year 300 (Yoshioka 1976: 134–35).

Buddhist-inspired facet of the Daoist religion that emerged under increased Buddhist influence around the time of unification. It would be very odd if there were only a single trace of it before that time, which could be found solely in the *Yinyuan jing*. This suggests a date for the text under the Sui, in the late sixth or early seventh century.

A third odd point in the *Yinyuan jing* is the listing of the so-called ten days of uprightness (*shizhi* 十直). These are a form of purification (*zhai*) which was followed on ten days of every month, the 1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 28th, 29th, and 30th. On these days, lay devotees observed eight instead of the regularly followed five precepts; that is, in addition to not killing, stealing, lying, misbehaving sexually, and intoxicating themselves, they also abstained from indulging in personal adornments or entertainments, from sleeping on high beds, and from eating after noon (Soymié 1977: 2; Zürcher 1980: 130).

As Michel Soymié has shown, the custom of these ten days probably developed from the ancient Indian monastic assemblies, called *uposatha*, “when the members of the community recited the rules and publicly confessed their sins” (1977: 1). This happened twice a month, on either the 14th or the 15th and the 20th or the 30th. Later, two further days, the 8th and the 23rd, were added to make the ritual weekly. All these six dates were then used by Buddhists in China, as documented in the *Shi tianwang jing* 十天王經 (Sūtra of the Ten Kings, T. 590, 15.118–19), an apocryphal work of the early fifth century (Soymié 1977: 2). The justification given for the special purifications was that on these days various deities in the heavens dispatched envoys to earth to examine and judge humanity’s behavior (Teiser 1994: 53).

Developed from the six days of increased precept observation, the ten days of uprightness in Buddhism appear first in the early Tang dynasty (Soymié 1977: 3). At this time there are also several Daoist texts that present them in a context highly similar to that of the *Shi tianwang jing* (Soymié 1977: 6–9). Among others, they are listed in the *Yinyuan jing* (sect. 7, 4.10a–b), which if dated to the early sixth century would represent the “most ancient source” (Soymié 1977: 6) of the ten days and their rites, thus again being the odd one out.

A fourth point which suggests that the *Yinyuan jing* dates from later rather than earlier in the sixth century is argued at length by Akizuki Kan’ei in connection with the date of the *Fengdao kejie*. According to him, specific festivals were held at the days of the Three Bureaus (heaven, earth, and water) in the first, seventh, and tenth months from an early age in Daoist practice. However, these were not called festivals of the Three Primes (*sanyuan* 三元)

until after the Buddhist ghost festival (*Ullambana*, see Teiser 1988) was integrated with them in the late sixth century. However, they appear as such in the *Yinyuan jing* (4.9a), thus once more indicating a late sixth-century origin for the work (Akizuki 1965: 437–42).

Fifth, and finally, there is the use of the expression “throwing all five limbs on the floor, as if Mount Tai were collapsing” (*wuti toudi ru taishan beng* 五體投地如泰山崩) to indicate a particularly submissive form of penance. This expression, as Yang Liansheng has pointed out, does not appear commonly in the literature until after the Sui (1962: 277), although Yoshioka finds some rare occurrence of it before that time (1976: 139). Again, it is used in the *Yinyuan jing* (sect. 5, 3.9a), making the text either an oddity in relation to all other sources or suggesting a post-unification date.

All these points, therefore, indicate that the *Yinyuan jing* was compiled under the Sui dynasty in the late sixth century and represents a stage of Daoist doctrine typical for the time around, or shortly after, unification, a stage that laid the foundation for the Daoist thought and worldview of the Tang dynasty.

### Karmic rewards and punishments

The *Yinyuan jing* begins with a description of the Heavenly Worthy (*Tianzun* 天尊), Highest Lord of the Dao (*Taishang daojun* 太上道君), the key revealing deity of Numinous Treasure Daoism, holding court in the Heaven of Blessed Virtue (*Fude tian* 福德天). He is seated on a throne of seven jewels and surrounded by a divine host of wondrous perfected. One member of this host, the Perfected of Universal Rescue (*Puji zhenren*), addresses the Lord, asking to be shown the karmic causes of good and evil in the innumerable worlds so as to better understand the fate of men as determined in the past, present, and future (1.1a). The Worthy responds favorably and issues a nine-colored light that “subtly illuminates the hundreds of millions of worlds in all the heavens” (1.1b), allowing all that exists to appear “clear and stark as if spread out on one’s palm.” With the help of this light, the Perfected and the host of divine beings then inspect the world, seeing the good and bad deeds of all beings in the various states of existence, beginning with the celestial paradises above and ending with the depths of hell below.

The presentation divides the world according to different types of beings, beginning with the celestials (2a), and moving on to kings (*guowang* 國王, 3a), queens (*huanghou* 皇后, 5a), princes (*wangzi* 王子, 5b), high ministers (*dachen* 大臣, 6a), the host of officials (*baiguan* 百官, 6b), Daoist priests/monks

(*daoshi* 道士, 6b), Daoist priestesses/nuns (*nüguan* 女官, 7b), wise people (*xianzhe* 賢者, 8a), and women (*nüren* 女人, 9a). In each case, positive forms of devout behavior are described, typically including the generous giving of charity, the provision of devotional objects (scriptures and images) as well as of physical space and buildings for the religion, the observance of the precepts and attendance of rites of repentance and purification, as well as the maintenance of personal purity and development of the wish to become a monk or nun. Daoists, in addition, maintain a compassionate attitude toward all beings, exert themselves to explain the teaching and convert people to the Dao, give support to the poor, and heal the sick (6b). Ordinary men, moreover, are filial and loyal in their behavior, while women make an effort to sew ritual vestments as a form of charity and remain pure of desires and all forms of jealousy (9a).

In reverse, negative forms of behavior, specified according to kings, queens, princes, ministers, and “men and women” (*nannü* 男女, 9b–11a), include killing, stealing, cheating, lying, engaging in lust and debauchery, intoxication and impurity, destroying Daoist institutions and sacred objects, and in general the lack of compassion and pity and the creation of much karmic sin. This, in turn, as observed by the divine host through the nine-colored light, causes people to be deaf, blind, ill, crippled, impoverished, orphaned, unloved, sick to the point where they are neither able to live nor able to die, mad, stupid, filthy, and die all sorts of violent deaths (11b). In addition, they find themselves in the hells, being tortured by the mountain of swords, the tree of knives, the pool of blood, the iron pillar, and so on (12a), or reborn in a highly undesirable form of life, such as in the body of a hungry ghost, a domestic animal, a barbarian, a slave, a sick or handicapped person, a poisonous snake, a wild beast, or even a worm living in mud or excrement (13a). Puji and his divine colleagues see all this and realize that people’s lives and fates are not at all the same. They accordingly develop the wish to know the reason for this discrepancy—which duly leads to the details of karmic causes and the various forms and reasons of rebirth described in the next chapter.

The beginning of the text thus provides an integrated, almost “virtual vision” of the world as seen through the lens of the divine light. It reveals the realm of good Daoist behavior as a happy land, where people are content and hale, enjoying earthly or celestial bliss in peace and harmony, and then starkly contrasts this vision with the reality faced by all those who sin and go against the compassion and goodwill prescribed by the Dao. Anyone reading or listening to the text and finding themselves, as most people do, not entirely in the realm of bliss and good fortune, immediately will be curious to learn how to

emerge from their predicament and attain the blessed state of at least wisdom, if not becoming a Daoist or a high official.

The answer to this question is provided in the lists of the next two sections, which are also cited, slightly abbreviated and in reversed order, in sections 1 and 2 of the *Fengdao kejie* (compared in Yoshioka 1976: 117–27). Here we have first forty items of good fortune, beginning with a description of which deeds result in what social position (1–17), then moving on to explain the causes for positions presently held (18–40, see Table 3). In terms of language, the first part follows the pattern, “Whoever does such-and-such will be born in such-and-such a body” (. . . *zhe sheng* 者生 . . . *shen* 身), while the second has the formula “such-and-such comes from having done such-and-such” (. . . *zhe cong* 者從 . . . *zhong lai* 中來). For example,

Whoever respects and honors the Three Treasures, loves to give in charity and aids the poor, accumulating merit and virtue and being free from stinginess, will be born in the Middle Kingdom in the body of a long-lived, noble, and rich person. (2.2b)

Life as a bright, perceptive, and exceedingly wise person comes from having delighted in reciting the scriptures and the divine law and having been able to uphold them always. (2.3a)

**Table 3**  
**Good deeds and their rewards in the *Yinyuan jing***

no.	activity	position in life
1	erecting monasteries	emperor
2	reciting scriptures	empress
3	worshiping Sanbao	prince
4	faith in law	rich/noble
5	honoring precepts	bright/perceptive
6	ditto for 7 lives	monk or nun
7	setting up blessedness	preceptor
8	faith in Sanbao	pure/long-lived
9	giving to monks	long-lived/upright
10	sponsoring monastery	wealthy/noble
11	faith in Dao	unimpaired/contented
12	faith in precepts	noble/respected

13	giving charity	noble/rich
14	honoring precepts	long-lived/contented
15	chanting scriptures	monk or nun
16	giving to monks	pure/upright
17	compassionate to all	noble/high-ranking

<b>no. position</b>	<b>past activity</b>	
18	emperor	set up blessedness for kalpas
19	empress	set up blessedness for generations
20	prince	cultivated goodness for kalpas
21	long-lived	honored precepts
22	wealthy, fruitful	gave offerings to Dao
23	harmonious family	was yielding and peaceful
24	high rank/rich	set up blessedness
25	noble/superior	had faith in Sanbao
26	wealthy/opulent	gave much charity
27	bright/perceptive	recited scriptures
28	upright body	gave offerings to monks
29	monk or nun	proselytized teaching, kept precepts
30	wealthy/noble	gave charity, blessedness
31	venerated/respected	gave charity, kept precepts
32	pure in body/mind	protected teaching
33	happy/no disasters	aided living beings
34	clean in body	no alcohol, meat, or smelly vegetables.
35	wealthy, fruitful	gave charity, blessedness
36	woman with healthy sons	devoted mind at Dao center
37	clear voice	chanted scriptures
38	cheerful disposition	was sincere about Dao
39	erect/cheerful	gave offerings to monks
40	much clothing	gave gifts of vestments

Generally, continuous honoring of the precepts, giving of charity, faith in the divine law (*fa* 法; dharma), and sincere devotion to the religion as manifest in the Three Treasures (*sanbao* 三寶)—the Dao, scriptures, and masters—results in longevity, wealth, and honor, in rebirth as a monk or nun, or in high aristocratic or even imperial status. The highest possible rebirth is as an emperor, accessible only to one who

generously produces scriptures and sacred images, erects monasteries and sponsors ordinations, gives charity and honors precepts and purifications, prays for the dead and helps save the living, who furthermore universally rescues all beings, greatly spreads happiness and goodness, and works to benefit the multitude of all. (2.1a)

Thereafter follow rebirth as an empress, a prince or princess, an aristocrat, a literatus, a monk or nun, a preceptor, a long-lived and pure person, a long-lived and upright person, a wealthy and noble person, and an unimpaired and contented person—reflecting the social values of medieval Daoism that placed monks above ordinary people but clearly below the aristocracy and the ruling family.

Evil deeds, listed in the following section, consist of a total of eighty-seven items. They can be divided into three groups (see Table 4):

**Table 4**  
**Evil deeds and their rebirth consequences in the *Yinyuan jing***

no.	activity	consequence
1	desecrating Sanbao	hell, leprosy
2	cursing scriptures	hell, wild beast, rotting tongue
3	slandering monks	leprosy, domestic animal
4	desecrating altar	body rot, hell, snake
5	no respect for monks	stupidity, domestic animals
6	no faith in retribution	blind and deaf, wild beast
7	no faith in karma	slave, barbarian
8	contempt for monks	crippled, pig or dog
9	defiling Sanbao	foul body, filth
10	ravishing monk or nun	orphaned/widowed, excrement
11	debauchery	insanity, sow or boar
12	steal Sanbao goods	poverty, slave or domestic animal
13	steal monastery goods	insanity, domestic animal
14	steal four ranks goods	madness, lunatic
15	eating holy fruit	hunger, tiger or snake
16	steal purified food	demon, snake, hungry ghost
17	steal holy objects	slavery/starvation, dog/snake
18	steal statues' objects	leprosy, hell
19	cursing monk	epilepsy, mad dog

20	shaming monk	prison, fly or maggot
21	breaking precepts	disasters, hornets, deaf, blind
22	breaking purifications	choking sickness, tiger
23	killing	short life, prison, domestic animal
24	eating meat	diseases, wild deer
25	drinking wine	insanity, mud/dirt
26	eating smelly vegetables	foul body, filth
27	no control over mind	monkey, boiling cauldron

**no. consequence**

28	broken hands
29	crippled hands
30	blind in both eyes
31	nasty disease
32	rotting tongue
33	dumbness
34	no smell
35	body rot
36	eyebrows/hair fall out
37	rotting lips/bad teeth
38	crooked hips
39	insanity
40	red eyes, crooked nose
42	stupidity
43	meeting robbers
44	drowning
45	burning
46	snake bite
47	snake poison in mouth
48	killed by tiger
49	hungry/cold
50	no family
51	poverty
52	slave
53	object of hatred
54	lasciviousness
55	alcoholism
56	meat eating

**activity**

not worshipping Sanbao
not venerating Sanbao
no faith in law
lazy in worship
cursing teaching
speaking badly about Sanbao
eating smelly vegetables.
desecrating Sanbao
slandering Sanbao
desecrating Dao-space
cheating Sanbao
no faith in karma/retribution
ridiculing monk
cheating on Sanbao
steal Sanbao goods
being rude to Sanbao
wasting Sanbao wealth
harming monk
cursing
plotting evil
steal monastery goods
jealousy/adultery
breaking precepts
stealing
arrogance/pride
former pig, dog
former fish, turtle, frog
former poisonous insect, wild beast



57	foul smelling	former tadpole, worm
58	foul in habits	former pig, dog
<b>no. animal</b>		<b>former activity</b>
59	domestic animal	killing
60	wild animal	meat eating
61	poisonous snake	jealousy
62	hungry tiger	robbery
63	excrement worm	debauchery
64	shrimp, frog	no worship for Sanbao
65	fish, turtle	no respect for scriptures
66	insect, ant	violating teaching
67	wild dog, pig	abandoning Dao
68	swallow, sparrow	criticizing teaching
69	pigeon, dove	doing things not according to law
70	eagle, hawk	breaking precepts
71	no family, poor	harming monk
72	ugly body	ridiculing Sanbao
73	insanity	accepting charity without giving
74	big belly, thin neck	debauchery near altar
75	prison	slandering holy group
76	whipped	no compassion
77	cat, otter	near altar after eating meat
78	flea, louse	near altar after eating smelly vegetables
79	jackal, wolf	stingy, no charity
80	raccoon, fox	lying/deceiving
81	rat, weasel	devouring holy leftovers
82	centipede, millipede	poisonous thought, jealousy
83	bee, dragonfly, viper	cursing monk or nun
84	gecko, chameleon, jelly-fish, cricket	cheating Sanbao
85	spider, earthworm	stinginess, greed, theft
86	mosquito, gadfly, flea	despising law and Dao
87	border barbarian	killing, debauchery, no faith

Items 1–27 name a crime, a consequence in this life, and a negative form of rebirth, using the pattern “anyone who does such-and-such, in this life will experience such-and-such; having passed through this, he will be born among

such-and-such” (. . . *zhe jianshi* 者見世 . . . *guoqu sheng* 過去生 . . . *zhong* 中), e.g.,

Anyone who greedily devours the fruits and vegetables of the Three Treasures in this life will suffer from pathological hunger and thirst. Having passed through this, he will be born among the hungry tigers and poisonous snakes, beaten and hunted by people. After suffering from this punishment for a long time, he will be reborn among humanity but suffer from pathological thirst. (2.5b)

Items 28–58 focus on the causes for present situations, tracing various forms of bad fortune back to specific evil deeds in the past. These can be further subdivided into three groups: those dealing with bodily impairments (28–42), with forms of death (43–49), and with troubles in life (50–58). All items follow the format: “Being such-and-such in this life comes from having done such-and-such” (*shengshi* 生世 . . . *zhe cong* 者從 . . . *zhong lai* 中來), e.g.:

Being blind in both eyes in this life comes from not having believed in the divine law of the scriptures and having treated the Three Treasures with contempt. (2.6b)

Craving alcohol and being mad in this life comes from having been a fish, turtle, shrimp, or frog before. (2.8a)

Items 59–87 retain the format of the second group but specify births taken in the form of various animals or unhappy people, from the six domestic animals through wild snakes and tigers to all manner and forms of tadpoles, spiders, insects, and barbarians. For example,

Life as a fierce dog or wild pig comes from having turned one’s back on the teachers and abandoned the Tao. (2.8b)

Life as a border barbarian with bald head, stubble hair, sunk eyes, a long nose, and a foul-smelling body comes from having killed living beings, engaged in debauchery, and lacked faith in the law of karmic causes (2.9b).

In general, the crimes are directed against the goods and honor of the Three Treasures, and thus of the monastic and priestly establishment of the religion. Desecration of sacred objects, verbal defilement (cursing, slander) of religious institutions or persons, and disbelief in the teachings are the worst sins, and are listed first. They carry punishments of hell and leprosy, blindness and rebirth among wild beasts. Next comes defiling behavior, especially of a sexual nature, which leads to physical repulsiveness now and rebirth in filth and excrement later. A long list covers stealing various objects, from goods of the institution and its inhabitants to consecrated food and objects surrounding the sacred scriptures and images, usually punished by madness or pathological hunger and a later rebirth among slaves, hungry ghosts, or mangy dogs. Punishments for harming the holy person (*fashen*) of a monk or nun are described next, to be followed, finally, by a list of negative results for breaking the precepts in a wider social setting. The craving for alcohol, for example, is said to result in madness and an affinity for burning, while the eating of strong-smelling vegetables, such as onions, garlic, and ginger, leads to a smelly body and a rebirth in mud and filth.

### Deeds and rebirth in ancient Buddhism

Both the positive and the negative forms of karmic retribution and rebirth, as they are formulated in the Daoist scripture, go back to Buddhist models, ancient and Chinese. The ancient Buddhist precursors were first described in the Pali canon, notably the *Majjima-nikaya* or “Middle Length Sayings.” According to the *Cula-kamma-vibhanga-sutta* (Discourse on the Lesser Analysis of Deeds),

Brahman youth, here some woman or man is one that makes onslaught on creatures, is cruel, bloody-handed, intent on injuring and killing, and without mercy to living creatures. Because of that deed, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourne, the Downfall, Niraya Hell. But if . . . he comes to human status, then wherever he is born (in a new existence) he is of a short life-span (Horner 1967: 249–50).

This links killing, the breaking of the first precept, with a sojourn in hell and a later rebirth as someone with a short life. Similarly, in the paraphrase of David Kalupahana:

A person who refrains from taking life tends to be longlived. A person who harms living creatures tends to be sickly, while a person who refrains from harming living creatures tends to be healthy. A person who is irritable tends to be ugly, while a person who is not irritable tends to be handsome.

A person who is jealous tends to be weak, while a person who is not jealous tends to be powerful. A person who is miserly tends to be poor, while a person who is liberal tends to be rich. A person who is humble tends to be reborn in a good family, while a person who is haughty tends to be reborn in an evil family. A person who does not consult the religious teachers for advice on what is good and bad tends to be ignorant, while a person who does so tends to have great wisdom (Kalupahana 1975: 129).<sup>7</sup>

This early description of karmic rewards and punishments thus relates various human actions and attitudes to specific positive and negative results, in each case describing the sinner as having to undergo a period in hell, then being reborn afflicted by the same kind of nastiness he committed earlier, while the pious person enjoys longevity, good looks, wealth, wisdom, and purity.

The same idea, in a slightly more detailed version, also appears in another Pali work, the *Telakataha-gatha*. According to this text, someone who kills will go through a lengthy period in hell or as a lower form of being; then, “if born again as a man he may be infirm, ugly, unpopular, cowardly, divested of

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<sup>7</sup> Similar information, especially on the karmic effects of killing and its prevention, is also contained in the *Maha-kamma-vibhanga-sutta* (Discourse on the Greater Analysis of Deeds; Horner 1967, vol. 3: 257–61. The *Anguttara-nikaya* or “Gradual Sayings,” moreover, contains a description of the gradual disintegration of the sinner. It says:

Monks, there are five disadvantages to one who has walked in evil. What five? The self upbraids the self; with knowledge the wise dispraise him; an evil rumour of his worth goes about; he dies a lunatic; and on the breaking up of the body after death, he arises in the wayward way, the ill way, the abyss, hell (ch. 25, no. 241, Hare 1973, vol. 3: 395).

companions, subject to disease, dejected and mournful, separated from the company of loved ones, and unable to attain ripe age” (Saddhatissa 1970: 89). Similarly, someone who steals and is, after a long time of suffering, “reborn as a man would lack possessions in this new state. He would be unable to acquire wealth, or if he did so he would be unable to keep it, and would be subject to danger from kings, murderers, floods and fire, He would be unable to enjoy sensual pleasures and would be discontented and despised by the people” (Saddhatissa 1970: 101–102).

The karmic consequences as described in these early sources focus especially on activities within larger society, and detail the physical and social benefits of good deeds and the painful suffering in life as a result of bad deeds. They still lack the emphasis that was placed later on deeds in relation to monastic and religious institutions, and the various forms of animal rebirth. The latter, however, is found among the *Majjima-nikaya*, in the *Bala-pandita-sutta* (Discourse on Fools and the Wise). According to this, sinful people are first made to suffer in the Niraya Hell, then come back as animals in the very place where the evil deed took place before. As the text has it, “Monks, that fool who formerly enjoyed tastes here, having done evil deeds here, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in companionship with those beings that are ... [such-and such animals]” (Horner 1967, vol. 3: 213).

These animals, moreover, are divided into four categories:

1. grain eaters: horses, cattle, sheep, deer;
2. dung eaters: cocks, pigs, dogs, jackals;
3. creatures of the dark: beetles, maggots, earth worms;
4. creatures of the water, living in rotting fish, rotting carcasses, rotting rice, or in dirty pools by the village (Horner 1967, vol. 3: 213–14).

This classification matches the Daoist selection of rebirth animals, which associates the six domestic animals (horses, cattle, sheep) with stupidity and insanity, poverty and enslavement; pigs and dogs with lasciviousness and the eating of excrement; insects with the darkness of prison, the helplessness of disasters, blindness and deafness; and rebirth in “manure and filth” with foul habits and defiling activities. The Chinese text only adds the category of man-eaters, represented by hungry tigers and poisonous snakes, which are associated with hunger and cold, and thus greed and aggression.

## Chinese Buddhist adaptations

The *Cula-kamma-vibhanga-sutta* and the *Bala-pandita-sutta*, as part of the *Majjima-nikaya*, were translated into Chinese by Sanghadeva (in the *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, T.26, 1.703c–8a), an Abhidharma specialist from Kashmir who arrived in Chang’an around 381, then visited various sacred sites, and eventually settled in Jiankang (modern Nanjing) in 398 (Zürcher 1959: 202–203). While their content, basic outlook, and elementary systematization of karmic consequences are similar to the later Daoist system, their phrasing and amount of detail are still rather different, more expansive and convoluted and, of course, as yet free from any Mahāyāna influence.

Three texts in the Buddhist canon represent the Chinese Buddhist adaptation and transformation of the early model, developing a pattern that is strikingly similar to, and in places even identical with, the lists presented in the *Yinyuan jing*. They are the *Baoying jing* 報應經 (Sūtra on Retribution, T.747, 17.562b–63b and 17.563b–64c), translated by Gunabhadra (394–468), a brahmin from India who arrived in Canton in 435 and settled in Jiankang in 443 (Demiéville et al. 1978: 252); the *Yinguo jing* 因果經 (Sūtra on Cause and Effect, T.2881, 85.1380b–83b), a manuscript of the Nakamura Collection; and the *Zuiye yingbao jing* 罪業應報經 (Sūtra on Retribution for Sinful Actions, T.724, 17.450c–52b), ascribed to An Shigao of the Later Han but probably a later Chinese apocryphon. What they all have in common are lists and formulations that are basically very similar to those found in the *Yinyuan jing*, yet also differ in a number of key points.

Looking at these texts more closely, the first work, the *Baoying jing*, has the full title *Foshuo zuifu baoying jing* 佛說罪福報應經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha on Retribution through Suffering and Good Fortune) and is also known as *Foshuo lunzhuan wudao zuifu baoying jing* (. . . during Transmigration Through the Five Destinies 佛說輪轉五道罪福報應經). It consists of two pages in the Buddhist canon and dates from the early fifth century (Ōno 1980, 4: 44b). In content it follows the *Majjima-nikaya* of the ancient Pali canon in that it is placed in a mainstream Buddhist setting, with the Buddha emerging from a retreat in Kapilavastu and sitting down under a wonderful tree, twenty Chinese miles (*li*) high, whose branches shade an area of sixty miles and which bears thousands of wonderfully sweet fruit that fall to the assembled 2,510 monks who have come to hear the enlightened one preach (17.562b18). Ānanda, the Buddha’s close follower and right hand, gets up to ask about the rules of fortune as inherited from former lives. The Buddha first compares karma to the tree

under which he sits—“Originally one plants one single seed, gradually it grows bigger and bigger, until its bounty is without limit” (17.562b23)—then explains the what and whence of karma in a series of five lists:

1. A list of nine good social situations, from that of the emperor through the aristocracy to the long-lived, upright, sweet-voiced, and clean, which come from having undertaken various forms of pious actions, such as paying obeisance to the Three Treasures, giving freely in charity, upholding the precepts, being patient and yielding, chanting the sūtras, and developing a compassionate heart. It uses the formula: “Having taken human birth as such-and-such a person comes from having done such-and-such deeds” (*weiren* 為人 . . . *zhe cong* 者從 . . . *zhong lai* 中來; 17.562b24–c5).

2. A list of ten unpleasant physical characteristics, such as being short, ugly, stupid, dumb, deaf, or blind, that come from having despised others, never studied, or failed to honor the Three Treasures and listen to the sūtras. Here the pattern is: “Having taken human birth as such-and-such is caused by such-and-such” (*weiren* 為人 . . . *yi* 以 . . . *gu* 故; 17.562c5–11).

3. A list of six animals, barbarian countries, and types of body, rebirth into which was caused by negative things done to others in the past, and following the same pattern as the previous list except that “human birth” (*weiren* 為人) is replaced with “taking birth” (*sheng* 生) or with “having a body” (*youshen* 有身; 17.562c11–15). The list is followed by a statement of the general rule that “if in this life one is joyful and blessed, then in a former life one made others joyful and blessed; if in this life one is not joyful and blessed, then in a former life one failed to make others joyful and blessed” (562c15–16).

4. A list of twelve sequences, beginning with an action in this life, describing its negative effects in the afterlife (hell, hungry ghosts), and concluding with forms of rebirth on the human or animal plane. The pattern does not have a fixed beginning but centers on “the one who” (*zhe* 者) and commonly contains the phrase “later will be born” (*housheng* 後生; 17.562c18–563a9).

5. A list of eight personality types with descriptions of which animals they arose from, again following the scheme of the first list (17.563a9–16).

After finishing his exposition on the various forms and patterns of rebirth, the Buddha emphasizes the positive activities people can undertake to avoid suffering and karmic punishments, such as burning incense, providing food for purifications, chanting the sūtras, and giving ample donations to the monastic community. He stresses that “suffering and good fortune follow people as the shadow follows the body” (17.563a25), and encourages all to vigorously plant

good seeds and establish fields of blessedness. Then he chants a concluding gatha to give further impetus to people's piety (17.563b1–4). The sūtra ends with the several hundred monks in the audience attaining enlightenment, dragon kings assembling under the Buddha's tree, and 2,000 lay men and 6,000 women paying their respects with great enthusiasm (17.563b14).

The second work, the *Yinguo jing*, has the full title *Foshuo shan'e yinguo jing* 佛說善惡因果經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha on the Cause and Effect of Good and Bad [Deeds]) and consists of four pages in the canon. A manuscript found at Dunhuang, it is the longest, most detailed, and most systematic account among the three. Its date is unclear, but it has been listed in catalogs since the sixth century and was widely used in both China and Japan, where it has received various commentaries (Ōno 1980, vol. 6: 368b).

As in the *Baoying jing*, so here the setting follows the mainstream Buddhist model with the Buddha residing in Kapilavastu and surrounded by a large crowd of monks and lay followers. Like Puji in the *Yinyuan jing*, Ānanda begins the dialogue with a question about the differences apparent among human fates. The Buddha's explanation once again takes the form of lists, using the same formulas as found in both the *Baoying jing* and the Daoist *Yinyuan jing*. He has:

1. A list of fifty personality types and situations of life, together with the activities or attitudes that caused them, using the pattern, "having taken human birth as such-and-such a person comes from having done/been such-and-such" (85.1380b16–1381a20). In both this and several of the following lists (esp. nos. 2 and 5), the canon's punctuation tends to be off in certain places, putting "having taken birth" (*weiren* 為人) at the end instead of the beginning of each item.

2. A list of supplementary information on animal rebirth in fifteen items, following the pattern "one who during human life likes to do such-and-such, at death will do so-and-so" (1381a20–b2).

3. A list presenting highly similar information, but changing the time sequence so that the cause goes from the past to the present instead of from the present to the future. This consists of twenty-five items, following the pattern: "formerly having done such-and-such, in this life one will be such-and-such" (*xian* 先 . . . *zhe jin zuo* 者今作 . . . ; 1381b2–17).

At this point Ānanda takes the floor again to ask specifically about deeds that relate to monastic institutions. The Buddha distinguishes two kinds of attitudes, a positive and a negative one, and lists them both—from paying obeisance through chanting the scriptures and giving charity to desecration,



contempt, cursing, and theft. Asked to be more specific about what results in what, he resorts again to lists. He has:

4. A list of twenty-five items on what sinful action will lead to what kind of suffering in what kind of hell, using the formula: “One who in this life does such-and-such after death will fall into such-and-such a hell” (*jinshen* 今身 . . . *zhe sizhui* 者死墜 . . . *diyu zhong* 地獄中; 1831c3–32a8).

5. Seventeen items on different characteristics of people and their origins in certain types of past behavior, using again the pattern of the first list (1832a8–26).

6. A list of twenty long and detailed items that have four parts each: actions in the present (especially those harmful to the monastic institution), hells after death, rebirth as an animal for a long stint of suffering, and the final outcome “if s/he again attains human birth” (*ruo de renshen* 若得人身). The full formula is maintained in the initial items, but the wording gets shorter as the text proceeds (1382a27–b25).

7. A list of the ten bad deeds of Mahāyāna Buddhism and their karmic consequences both in hell and in rebirth (1382b26–c23).

8. A list of twelve positive effects—from being born as an emperor through being rich and noble to being handsome and well respected—to be gained from pious actions, such as the establishment of monasteries, the proselytizing of the teaching, and the donation of lamps, food, and other necessities. This follows the pattern: “Who in this life does such-and-such, in the future will inevitably be such-and-such” (*jinshen zuo* 今身作 . . . *zhe weilai bizuo* 者未來必作 . . . ; 1382c24–83a23).

The text concludes with a eulogy on itself, specifying rewards for chanting it and punishments for disbelieving and slandering it. The final act of the Buddha, again answering a question of Ānanda, is the naming of the sūtra (1383a28), upon which there is a great rejoicing among the assembly and many followers experience great joy and devotion (1983b5).

The third text of the Chinese Buddhist group is the *Zuiye yingbao jing*, ascribed to the translator An Shigao (安世高 fl. 148–170) but most certainly a later Chinese apocryphon. A possible date in the fifth or early sixth century is suggested by a text having a highly similar title, with the words *ying* 應 and *bao* 報 reversed, that is cited in chapter 4 of the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (Collected Records of Translating the Tripitaka, T.2145, 55.1–115) of the year 518 (Ōno 1980, 4: 43c–44a). This would make the work a clear precursor of the Daoist *Yinyuan jing*.

Its full title is *Foshuo zuiye yingbao jiaohua diyu jing* 佛說罪業應報教化地獄經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha on Retribution for Sinful Actions and the Religious Transformation of these in Hell); it has three pages in the canon. Although similar in content to the other two works, it is different in a number of formal points, one of which is the high emphasis it places on filial piety. “Not serving one’s parents with proper piety” (*buxiao fumu* 不孝父母) appears a number of times, often right next to major sins, such as not believing in the Three Treasures (451a1), destroying temples and pagodas (451a5), and being disloyal to one’s lord (451a12). In terms of positive admonitions, behaving properly toward one’s parents comes even before serving one’s teacher, taking refuge in the Three Worthies, and diligently giving donations to the religion (452b13). This emphasis on filial piety may place the text in connection with the *Fumu en nanbao jing* 父母恩難報經 (Sūtra on the Difficulty of Repaying One’s Parents’ Kindness, T.684, 16.778–79; also found in T.2887, 85.1403b–4a), another sixth-century apocryphon that is ascribed to An Shigao and focuses specifically on the love and respect children owe their parents, and which was very influential in Tang China (Ch’en 1973: 36–43). This work, not unlike the various texts on karma and rebirth, also spawned a Daoist version, the *Bao fumu enzhong jing* 報父母恩重經 (Scripture on the Importance of Repaying One’s Parents’ Kindness, DZ 662), revealed by the deified Laozi.<sup>8</sup>

Another point in which the *Zuiye yingbao jing* differs from the other Buddhist texts, and where it is also closer to the Daoist *Yinyuan jing*, is its Mahāyāna setting. It begins like the earlier works with the Buddha residing in an ancient Indian city (Śrāvastī) and surrounded by a huge crowd of followers. But the followers here are not only monks, nuns, and lay devotees but, in proper Mahāyāna fashion, also bodhisattvas, dragon kings, and gods. The interlocutor for the assembly, moreover, is not the historical figure Ānanda but an otherwise unknown bodhisattva named Xinxiang 信像.

When he puts his initial question about the karmic condition of humanity, the Buddha, again in accordance with the new ideal and very much like the Lord of the Dao in the *Yinyuan jing*, does not answer immediately but first looks around while radiating a bright light from between his eyebrows to illuminate

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<sup>8</sup> A still later, Song-dynasty, variant of the same text is the *Xuantian shangdi shuo bao fumu en zhong jing* (. . . Revealed by the Highest Emperor of the Dark Heaven 玄天上帝說 . . . , DZ 663), which centers on the god Xuanwu 玄武, the Dark Warrior. For comparative studies of these versions, see Akizuki 1966, Xie 1984.

the universe. For this time, all suffering and pain cease on earth and even in the hells (17.450c22). All living beings, however much steeped in sin, are touched by the light, turn to face it, pay obeisance to the Buddha, and pray for their liberation.

A third unusual feature in this work is the format in which the information is given. Instead of one initial question that elicits a number of lists of sins or forms of good fortune, the bodhisattva here asks twenty questions about various negative forms of rebirth, which the Buddha duly answers. For example,

No. 10. Again, if one among living beings suffers from exposure in the mountains, the cold wind blowing, and his skin and flesh getting cut and torn, wishing for death but unable to die, what sin brought him to this?

The Buddha said: "This is because in a former life he was a robber obstructing the road, cutting and tearing the clothes off people and leaving others to die from exposure in the cold months of winter. He will be reborn again as an ox or sheep, suffering unbearable pain from the cutting of its skin. Thus be warned and abstain from this sin!" (17.451b)

In addition, all twenty questions deal with negative forms of rebirth, not discussing positive rewards for good deeds at all. At the same time, fourteen out of the twenty are, in basic content and occasionally even in actual wording, very close to items found in the *Yinyuan jing*. Like many of those in the other two Buddhist texts, they can be said to represent a classical core of karmic lore that was shared by all religious believers in medieval China.

### Typical patterns

Examining the various texts presented thus far, we find that one can, despite the lack of authenticated dating, detect a clear development of setting and concepts among them. The *Baoying jing*, translated in the fifth century, is clearly closest to mainstream Buddhist doctrine as expressed in the *Majjima nikaya*. The *Yinguo jing*, recovered in manuscript form and possibly also of the fifth century, is already closer to the Daoist text, especially in the heightened emphasis it places on imperial rebirth, but it still maintains the mainstream Buddhist format and continues the concepts of the *Baoying jing*. The third, the

*Zuiye yingbao jing*, maybe from the early sixth century, is most similar to the Daoist *Yinyuan jing*, both in terms of its overall Mahāyāna-style setting, in its choice of phrasing, and the particular items of its negative retribution. Certain classical crimes, typical punishments, hierarchies of socially desirable ranks and benefits, patterns of making similar links in different kinds of lists, as well as the standard language formulas in which the karmic rules are presented can all be found equally in both groups of texts, and were thus shared by both Buddhists and Daoists in medieval China.

In particular, all texts agree that killing leads to a period in hell and a short life during rebirth, slander of the Three Treasures results in dumbness and the inability to speak, and a lack of faith in the laws of karma causes blindness in both eyes.<sup>9</sup> In addition, three out of the four state that leprosy goes back to a lack of faith in, or desecration of, the Three Treasures; being born as a pig or other excrement eater comes from having engaged in debauchery and lasciviousness; an ugly body is the result of no respect for the teaching; and insanity in this life goes back to an addiction to alcohol before. Moreover, enslavement and lowly status come from stealing, a prison sentence from cruelty, a big belly and thin neck from pilfering food, and a lascivious nature and foul habits from having been a pig or dog before.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Yinyuan jing*: nos. 1, 6, 23, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 40; *Baoying jing*: T.17.563a15, 562c8, 562c9; *Yinguo jing*: T.85.1382b29, 1380a24, 1382b4; *Zuiye yingbao jing*: T.17.451b6, 451a21, 451a16.

<sup>10</sup> The sources for these items are as follows:

rebirth in	YYJ no.	T.747	T.2881	T.724
leprosy	1	—	85.1381a13	17.451a2
excrement	10	17.562c26	—	17.451a10
ugliness	38	—	85.1381a1	17.452a14
insanity	25	17.563a1	—	17.45c
enslavement	12	17.562c9	85.1381a11	—
prison	20	17.562c17	—	17.451c3
big belly	74	—	85.1381a2	17.451c21
foulness	54	17.563a9	85.1381a16	—

In addition to these basic common points in the negative list, the *Baoying jing* shares three items about stealing and six items on former animals with the *Yinyuan jing*, while the *Yinguo jing* has five items on theft, five items on

In terms of positive effects, there is agreement among all texts that nobility comes from faith in the Three Treasures, long life from compassion and observance of the precepts, wealth from generous donations, brightness from devotion to the scriptures, a handsome and clean body from not drinking alcohol or eating smelly food, and a melodic voice from avid chanting of the holy texts. These items are found equally in the *Yinyuan jing* and the first two Buddhist texts. Among the latter, the *Baoying jing* describes which position or good fortune in life comes from what past deeds, in all-but-one item matching corresponding information in the second part of the *Yinyuan jing* list (Table 3), while the *Yinguo jing* has a more future-oriented set that specifies which current actions will have what beneficial effect. It is not a close match, but highly similar to a number of items in the first section of the *Yinyuan jing* list.<sup>11</sup>

With the exception of the third Buddhist text, which only lists negative results and presents those in a question-and-answer format, the texts typically have lists of both negative and positive forms of karmic retribution, and divide these in turn into two kinds: lists that describe the results of actions committed in the present life (whereto), and those that indicate the causes that have led to one's present predicament or position (wherefrom). These two are expressed in the two major language formulas, either "Whoever does such-and-such will be

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poverty, cleanliness, and slander, as well as seven similar characterizations of animals in common with the Daoist text.

<sup>11</sup> In particular, the items in the *Baoying jing* (T.17.562b24–c5) and *Yinyuan jing* match as follows:

<i>BYJ</i>	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
<i>YYJ</i>	8	30	21	28	38	27	37	32–33

The only item in the Buddhist text that does not match here is the practice of meditation, which will lead to much enthusiasm and absence of laziness in a later life. The matches between the *Yinguo jing* (T. 85.1382c27–83a5) and the *Yinyuan jing*, of similar rather than identical statements, are:

<i>YGJ</i>	1	2	3	4	7	8	9
<i>YYJ</i>	1	17	10	4	16	15	12

As regards the non-matching items, 5 (*YGJ*) and 6 (*YYJ*) are food centered, specifying that by being generous in food donations now, one will not suffer from lack of sustenance in later lives, while 10 (*YGJ*) and 12 (*YYJ*) focus on actions within the larger society, such as the provision of wells and trees, the spreading of the teaching to the wider populace, and the building of bridges and roads for people.

born in such-and-such a body” or “Such-and-such [rebirth or situation] comes from having done such-and-such.” They represent significant differences in outlook, the first noting a potential result of what might happen if one did such-and-such or continued in such-and-such behavior, the second providing an explanation for people’s present situation, inspiring either repentance or compassion, depending on whether one applies the law to oneself or to others.

The relationship between the two kinds of lists, moreover, establishes a circle of karmic cause and effect. For example, someone who supports monasteries and is charitable over many kalpas ends up being born as an emperor. After death, he goes to heaven as an immortal, from where he may be reborn again as a sage, thus giving more support and charity to the religion, thus quite possibly becoming an emperor yet again. In a less fortunate case, someone may desecrate a temple or statue, as a result of which he falls into hell and is eventually reborn as a leper. Being an outcast and disgusting to all people, he may develop anger and again come to desecrate a holy object, which causes him to enter the same cycle once again. Similarly, lack of respect for the scriptures causes one to be reborn as a fish. Fish, as everyone knows, drink, so one comes back into the world as an alcoholic. This alcoholism leads to insanity and a rebirth in mud and filth, as a result of which one may again show disrespect for the scriptures and come back once more as a fish. Stealing the goods of the Three Treasures, in an analogous cycle, one is reborn in a state of abject poverty or as a slave. Being destitute already, one is yet subject to robbery by brigands; thus driven to further extremes, one may well again steal from the opulent tables of the religious institution.

Looked at from this perspective, the karmic development of the individual appears like a vicious circle, in which the whereto becomes time and again the wherefrom, where cause and effect interact in continuous mutual dependence. The very appearance in both lists of some of the same connections, e.g., stealing–enslavement/hunger–stealing, or no faith–madness–no faith, presents a terrifying picture of the endlessness of the karmic law. This serves to give people strong encouragement to kick their bad habits and overcome their sinful tendencies, to actively support and generously give to the religious institutions.

In addition, in terms of typical connections established, the obverse of the Golden Rule applies: What you do to another in one lifetime will be done to you the next! Thus people who kill, cutting short the life of others, will themselves be punished with a short life; those who steal, taking away the nourishment of others, will themselves be short of supplies; those who despise others will be short of stature, while those who respect their fellow beings will be tall and

upright. Similarly, typical characteristics of animals were associated with particular forms of human behavior ever since the ancient Buddhist canon, creating a sense life's continuity throughout the different types and species of existence. Pigs and dogs are thus linked with lasciviousness and debauchery, foulness and excrement; wild beasts with hunger and cruelty; deer with fear and terror; and insects with the darkness of prison and the helplessness of disasters. With all these potential pitfalls lurking to draw people in, not to mention the hells and the realm of the hungry ghosts, human birth becomes a precious commodity that must not be squandered with sensual pleasures or addictions to lust and drink. As all actions moreover have their particular effects, taking good care of intention and behavior becomes an essential aspect of the religious life.

### Unique points

Despite the numerous commonalities among the four texts, they are yet not identical. The most important difference between the three Buddhist texts and their Daoist counterpart is that, even while establishing very similar karmic links, the former describe behavior patterns within the larger realm of society whereas the latter focuses almost entirely on people's behavior toward the Three Treasures. Thus the second list of the *Baoying jing* gives a number of physical characteristics that come from certain attitudes toward people in general, making some of the same connections as the *Yinyuan jing* but in no case limiting the behavior to the monastic institution (T.747, 17.562c5–11). For example, it states that an ugly and common appearance comes from anger and violence against others in a past life. The *Yinyuan jing*, in comparison, lists ugliness as the result of swearing at the Three Treasures (Table 4, no. 40), presenting the same karmic result on the basis of behavior specifically toward the religious institution. The same holds true for the links made between dumbness and slander or speaking badly about others/the Three Treasures (no. 33) and between enslavement and taking the property of others/the Three Treasures (no. 52). The only fully identical item in this list is the connection drawn between blindness and a lack of faith in the divine law and the scriptures (no. 30).

The same pattern is also found in the fourth list of the *Baoying jing*, which has twelve sequences that begin with an action in this life, result in negative effects in the afterlife (hell, hungry ghosts), and move on to rebirth on the human or animal plane (17.562c18–563a9). The patterns described are again similar to those found in the *Yinyuan jing*, such as, for example, the link

established between stealing and enslavement (item 6 = Table 4, no. 12) and that between alcohol and madness (9/25). Many of the sins, moreover, are identical, including greed for food (3/16), killing (5/23), debauchery (7/11), and slander (8/3), reflecting once again the basic precepts common to both religions. However, the object of the various sins is much wider in the Buddhist text, including the people of the society at large, while the Daoist work again limits its specifications to actions vis-a-vis the religious community.

This also has certain consequences for the vision of the resulting karmic state. Thus lasciviousness and debauchery in Buddhism lead to rebirth as a duck, an animal known for its fidelity, while the inclination to pick marital fights brings a new life as a pigeon or dove (items 7 and 10). The Daoist text, rather than remedying irresponsible social behavior by making people reappear as highly spouse-centered animals, focuses on the impurity and shame involved in debauching a religious person and thus has its sinners come back as pigs (no. 11). Then again, the Buddhist work has social sins that the Daoist text leaves out completely. These include coveting the strength of others, which will lead to rebirth as an elephant (item 11), and the ruthless exploitation wreaked by an official on the people, which causes him to be reborn as a water buffalo, pulled along by a ring in his nose and cruelly beaten with a stick (item 12).

The second Buddhist text, the *Yinguo jing*, in its long first list also shows the same characteristics. Among its altogether fifty items, which represent a broad cross-section of karmic causes and effects popular in medieval China, only a very few focus on the interaction of people with religious institutions or persons. These, however, are highly specific: a snake-type body comes from taking donated garments off a statue of the Buddha; a dark, swarthy complexion is caused by placing such a statue in a dark, smoky corner; a crooked back comes from turning one's back on it; a thin neck is the result of the failure to prostrate oneself to it properly; and being despised by others is the effect of a lack of respect for the Buddhist masters (items 20–25; T.2881, 85.1380c28–81a3). In addition, certain general rules in regard to the teaching are expressed, such as low social standing coming from disrespect for the divine law (no. 7); a dark complexion resulting from shading the Buddha (no. 9); and thin lips being the effect of stealing holy food (no. 10).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In the same vein, wealth and honor, moreover, come from the generous giving of charity (no. 33); the possession of a horse and carriage are the result of a matching donation earlier (no. 34); the haleness of one's senses depends on one's previous observation of the precepts (no. 35); being bright and intelligent



All remaining items in this list are strictly about behavior toward other people and even other living beings, linking, for example, birth in a crippled body with cruelty to animals in a former life (no. 39), the failure to have children with an earlier killing of animal fledglings (no. 29), and the loss of one's teeth to taking delight in eating meat (no. 15). Blond people, moreover, might wish to know that their extraordinary hair color is due to having been a pig before (no. 18), while those who suffer from asthma and a stuffy nose used to dislike incense in an earlier existence (no. 15), and people who catch frequent colds now were prone to feed cold food to others in the midst of winter (no. 28).

The same general tendency of the Buddhist texts to describe karmically relevant actions in a wider social spectrum is again present in the second and fifth lists of the *Yinguo jing* (85.1381a20–b2; 1832a8–26), as well as in the fifth list of the *Baoying jing* (17.563a9–16). They all relate certain forms of behavior with rebirth in animal form, the second list of the *Yinguo jing*, like the first corresponding section of the *Yinyuan jing*, noting the activities in this life and consequences after death (whereto), while its other list and the one contained in the *Baoying jing*, similar to the third section of the *Yinyuan jing*, describe various animals and the former activity that led to being reborn as such (wherefrom).

The animals are largely the same, with the list of the *Baoying jing* being the closest to its Daoist counterpart in that it speaks of pigs, dogs, sheep, monkeys, fish, snakes, foxes, and tigers, among which only sheep do not occur in the latter. The second list of the *Yinguo jing* in addition has geese and ducks (as above, linked with marital fidelity), long-tailed insects (linked with people fond of wearing fancy long-trained robes), and owls (linked with nasty gossip), while its fifth list also mentions camels (unclean), donkeys (loud braying), lions (meat eating), badgers (egoistic), and wild geese (chattering).

Whereas the *Baoying jing* list largely matches the general items listed in the *Yinyuan jing* (nos. 54–58), the *Yinguo jing*, although it may have the same animals, frequently gives significantly different causes for their emergence. According to its second list, for example, one comes back as a pig if one engages continuously in the activities of sleeping and eating; Daoists reserve the same rebirth for those who abandon the Dao (8/67). Similarly birth as a fox is caused by gossip about the misfortune of others in the Buddhist work but by deceiving a religious institution or person in the Daoist text (11/80). According

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is caused by an avid study of the sūtras (no. 42); and a short tongue comes from cursing the religious leaders (no 50).

to the fifth list of the *Yinguo jing*, moreover, life as a tiger comes from living always in hatred and jealousy, while the *Yinyuan jing* links it with a tendency to rob the Daoist institution (6/62); wolves are associated with lasciviousness as opposed to a lack of charity for the religion (9/79); rebirth as a pigeon is the result of a tendency to gossip as opposed to failure to comply with the divine law (12/69); and life as a rat comes from stealing the goods of other people as opposed to the devouring of holy leftovers (17/81).

There is, therefore, a profound difference in general outlook among the Buddhist versus the Daoist materials, the latter limiting karmically relevant activities to the interaction of people with religious institutions and the monastic community, while the Buddhists find the application of karmic laws everywhere in society. This not only shows the more central role and essential application of the karma doctrine in the Buddhist teaching but also says something about the self-understanding of Daoists as members of society who are of a special, celestial status, so that interaction with them carries a much more severe and significant impact on the individual's health and fate than that with ordinary people or even with officials. The doctrine of karma and rebirth, although integrated deeply into the Daoist teaching at this time, thus is still special enough to apply particularly to the Daoists themselves and not be part of everybody's daily life. There, in continuation of earlier visions, inherited ancestral evil and the judgment of the celestial administration still hold sway, followers of the Dao being subject to a variety of fateful factors, depending on their activities and partners of interaction.

In addition to this most important and pervasive difference in outlook, there are a number of lesser differences to be noted. For one, the Daoist text leaves out a great deal of specific hell information, limiting itself to general statements such as "will fall into [the eighteen] hells," or mentioning merely the boiling cauldron. The Buddhist texts, on the other hand, notably the *Yinguo jing* and the *Zuiye yingbao jing*, have long lists of which sin exactly will plunge one into what kind of hell (T.2881, 85.1381c3–82a8; T.724, 17.452b11–25). Also contained in the same lists, the Buddhist texts provide details of social and natural harm, such as the various forms of killing animals (by net, arrow, knife, etc.), which the Daoist text leaves out. Nor does it have any item describing the size or functionality of a man's sexual organ, such as the notion that an underdeveloped penis arises due to the raising (and gelding) of livestock in a former life (T.2881, 85.1381a19; T.724, 17.561c21–24), and that a situation where "the body is very small and the stores of yin energy [testicles] are very large . . . causing great hindrance whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying

down” is because in a former life the person took advantage of others and relieved them of their justly acquired goods (T.724, 17.561c16–20).

On the other hand, the Daoists reveal a different social awareness in their inclusion of monks and nuns among the socially desirable positions, below the aristocracy and above those who are long-lived, upright, handsome, and wealthy. The Buddhist texts, too, emphasize that pious actions carry good karma in the form of social advancement, but their monks and nuns are clearly beyond the ladder, striving not for rebirth as an aristocrat or emperor but for complete dissolution into nirvana. Along the same lines, the assurance that the emperor will ascend to heaven as an immortal is basically Daoist, although Buddhists have used similar stratagems by declaring the ruler a living Buddha.

Another point of difference is the high frequency with which food-related crimes and punishments are mentioned in the Daoist text: eating holy fruit (Table 4, no. 15), stealing the purified food of the monastics or snatching holy food laid out for offerings (no. 16), devouring leftovers from ceremonies (no. 81), and eating defiling foods (no. 26) all may lead to various sorts of nasty events, from the encounter of numerous disasters, to rebirth as a viper and being foul-smelling and unclean if reborn in human form. In the same vein, food is also prominent as a form of karmic punishment. Thus, an existence as a worm in the toilet or as a “pig or dog, where urine and excrement are one’s constant food and drink” (no. 8) comes from having ill-treated or ravished a monk or nun, while being reborn as a slave in a situation of constant hunger and cold, never being able to secure sufficient food and clothing, comes from “stealing objects used for offerings or purification ceremonies” (no. 12). Especially dogs and snakes in this context are associated with greed and hunger, tearing and devouring everything they can get at.

Another item that is mentioned specifically in the Daoist text is the eating of the five strong-smelling vegetables (*wuxin* 五辛), i.e., leeks, scallions, onions, garlic, and ginger. Originally part of the diet of Daoist hermits and immortals (Yamada 1989), they were not encouraged by Daoist communal practitioners because of their socially disruptive tendencies, as is made clear in the *Laojun yibai bashi jie* 老君一百八十戒 (180 Precepts of the Venerable Lord, DZ 786, no. 10), a fourth-century collection of Celestial Masters’ precepts (Hendrischke and Penny 1998: 22). In the *Yinyuan jing* of the sixth century, they are linked with the drinking of alcohol and the eating of meat (no. 44) and typically cause either a stuffy nose that prevents the person from “smelling either fragrance or stench” (no. 34) or a lascivious and uncontrolled nature, which will cause much harm to one’s karma (no. 58). Also, eating these

vegetables may result in death by drowning (no. 44) or in rebirth in an unclean and foul-smelling body, be it human or of animal form (no. 26). At the worst, approaching the Three Treasures after having partaken of these noxious foods will cause one to be reborn as a flea or wood louse (no. 78).

This change in evaluation of the five strong-smelling vegetables is a striking example of the ongoing dynamics of Buddhist-Daoist interaction in medieval China. First prohibited by the Celestial Masters in the fourth century, they were proscribed by Buddhists in the fifth, as evident in the fourth among the secondary commandments of the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (*Brahmajāla sūtra*, T.1484, 24.997a–1010a), an apocryphon dated to around the year 450 (DeGroot 1969 [1893], 42).<sup>13</sup>

Next, they show up in the *Yinyuan jing*, linked with karmic consequences and with a loss of control either due to lasciviousness or intoxication. This same interpretation is then again adopted by Tang Buddhists, who prohibit them in the *Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 (*Śuraṅgama sūtra*, T.945, 19.105–55), compiled around the year 700, giving as a reason not their smelly nature but their aphrodisiac and anger-inducing qualities (19.141c; Ch'en 1973: 98). The Buddhist position thus continues the line taken by the *Yinyuan jing*, which in turn adopts its interpretation of an ancient Daoist prohibition from Buddhist preoccupations and karmic thinking.

### Conclusion

Sharing the same fundamental worldview and many of the same specific items, the medieval texts on karma and rebirth testify to a close interaction of Buddhism and Daoism, which resulted in a wide-spread popular culture that can be described as Buddho-Daoist without, however, causing either religion to completely lose its identity. This reconfirms and strengthens findings from earlier studies that despite the philosophical and doctrinal discrepancies between the two creeds—despite even their intense debates at court and strong competition for political influence—there existed a broad, underlying level of cooperation and integration. As Erik Zürcher puts it, the doctrinal and philosophical differences among the religions may only be the “tops of two pyramids,” while it is quite possible “that at a lower level the bodies of the pyramids merged into a much less differentiated lay religion, and that at the

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<sup>13</sup> For more recent notes on this text, see Kusuyama 1982; Yoshioka 1961; Groner 1990.

very base both systems largely dissolved into an indistinct mass of popular beliefs and practices” (1980: 146).

These popular beliefs are strongly documented in the works on karma and rebirth presented above, as is the active integration and merging of the two belief systems at the base of the doctrinal pyramids. They reconfirm findings in studies of both moral rules and artistic activity in north China around the same time that in a very similar way show the active integration of the two systems on the popular level. One such study involves the five basic precepts of Buddhism, which in the apocryphal *Tiwei boli jing* 提謂波利經 (Sūtra of Trapusa and Bhallika), written in north China between 446 and 452 by the monk Tanjing (Lai 1987: 13), are linked with the five basic Confucian virtues (the five constancies, *wuchang* 五常), and the five phases of Chinese cosmology, thus creating an integration of a basically alien notion with established Chinese concepts.

The very same connection also appears in a Daoist text of the late fifth century, the *Taishang laojun jiejing* (Precepts of the Highest Venerable Lord 太上老君誡經; DZ 784), which purports to record the instructions given by Laozi to the border guard Yin Xi 尹喜 on his emigration to the west (Kohn 1994: 179). This Daoist text not only places Buddhist precepts in a central position, and emphasizes the same Confucian and cosmological connections drawn already in the *Tiwei boli jing*, it also further integrates the system by linking it with Daoist cosmic lore and the teachings of Chinese medicine. As a result, “the five precepts in heaven are the five planets, . . . on earth they are the five sacred mountains, . . . and in the human body they are the five inner organs” (Kohn 1994: 203–204). Consequently, “the precept to abstain from intoxication,” for example, is said to

belong to the south and the phase fire. It embodies the energy of Great Yang and supports all beings in their full growth. People who indulge in drink will receive corresponding poison in their hearts [the organ of yang, fire, and the south] (Kohn 1994: 203).

Both the Buddhist and Daoist texts, moreover, actively emphasize notions of karma and rebirth, the *Tiwei boli jing* in particular defining the five evils in a highly this-worldly and practical manner that yet involves hells and rebirth. They are: to have disharmony, frequent quarrels and material losses in one’s family; to have much trouble with the authorities, living in steady fear of higher taxes and persecution; to be cheated by others and encounter bad people; to die

and go to the hell in Mount Tai; and to be born again from the Taishan hell as a bird or beast (Makita 1968: 179).

The same intense merging of different doctrines and practices into an integrated system of popular religion can also be observed from devotional and artistic activities of the same period. As documented most clearly in inscriptions on statues unearthed from north China, the popular concern then was “above to honor the emperor, below to support the ancestors and relatives for seven generations” (Kamitsuka 1993: 254; 1998: 77). They express wishes for peace on earth and stability in the country, for the successful transfer of the ancestors into the heavens of the immortals and the accompanying improvement of good fortune for living family members. Still, even here, the belief in hell and rebirth is present, and prayers are made for all possible fates of one’s ancestors:

May the ancestors forever be separated from  
The suffering of the dark hell prisons,  
And ascend to the Southern Palace,  
The true home of the immortals!  
Should they, again, be reborn as humans,  
May they have lords and kings for their fathers!

(Stele of Yao Boduo 姚伯多; Kamitsuka 1993: 258; 1998:76)

The active mixture of concerns for political peace and stability, this-worldly success and harmony in the family, ancestral and personal ascent to the heavens of the immortals, and support of deceased family members in the hells, as animals, or hungry ghosts, coupled yet with prayers for the liberation and happiness of all living beings is typical of the kind of popular religion dominant in the Chinese middle ages. It is the same worldview that also carries the belief in karma and rebirth, yet another highly integrated feature that characterizes the special religious dynamic of medieval China.

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Trl.: Gradual Sayings

- Full: same  
 Ed.: Pali Canon  
 Date: third century B.C.E.
- Ayu wang xi huaimu yinyuan jing* 阿育王息壤目因緣經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Sūtra on the Karmic Causes of King Asoka's Heir's Ruined Eyes  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: T. 2045, 50.172–83  
 Aut.: trl. by Dharmanandi (fl. 384)  
 Date: fourth century
- Bala-pandita-sutta*  
 Trl.: Discourse on Fools and the Wise  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: Majjima nikaya, Pali Canon  
 Date: third century B.C.E.
- Bao fumu en zhong jing* 報父母恩重經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Scripture on the Importance of Repaying One's Parents' Kindness  
 Full: *Taishang laojun shuo bao fumu en zhong jing* 太上老君說報父母  
 恩重經 (Scripture on the Importance of Repaying One's Parents'  
 Kindness, Spoken by the Highest Venerable Lord)  
 Ed.: DZ 662, HY 663, fasc. 345  
 Date: early Tang
- Baoying jing* 報應經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Sūtra on Retribution  
 Full: *Foshuo zuifu baoying jing* 佛說罪福報應經 (Sūtra Preached by the  
 Buddha on Retribution through Suffering and Good Fortune)  
 Ed.: T. 747, 17.562b–63b; 17.563b–64c  
 Aut.: trl. by Gunabhadra (394–468)  
 Date: circa 450
- Benji jing* 本際經, in 10 scrolls  
 Trl.: Scripture of Original Juncture  
 Full: *Taishang zhenyi benji jing* 太上真一本際經 (Highest Perfect Unity  
 Scripture of Original Juncture)  
 Ed.: Dunhuang manuscripts, edited in Wu 1960; Ōfuchi 1979: 291–352  
 Date: early Tang
- Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集, in 55 scrolls  
 Trl.: Collected Records of Translating the Tripitaka  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: T. 2145, 55.1–115

- Aut.: Sengyou (僧祐 445–518)  
Date: 518
- Cula-kamma-vibhanga-sutta*  
Trl.: Discourse on the Lesser Analysis of Deeds  
Full: same  
Ed.: *Majjima nikaya*, Pali Canon  
Date: third century B.C.E.
- Daojiao lingyan ji* 道教靈驗記, in 15 scrolls  
Trl.: Record of Daoist Miracles  
Full: same  
Ed.: DZ 590, HY 590, fasc. 325–26  
Aut.: Du Guangting (杜光庭 850–933)  
Date: circa 900
- Fanwang jing* 梵網經, in 2 scrolls  
Trl.: Sūtra of the Brahma Net (*Brahmajāla sūtra*)  
Full: same  
Ed.: T. 1484, 24.997a–1010a  
Date: fifth century
- Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒, in 6 scrolls  
Trl.: Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao  
Full: Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (Practical Introduction to the Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao of the Three Caverns, Contained in the Mystery Cavern of Numinous Treasure)  
Ed.: DZ 1125, HY 1117, fasc. 760–61  
Date: early Tang
- Fumu en nanbao jing* 父母恩難報經, in 1 scroll  
Trl.: Sūtra on the Difficulty of Repaying One's Parents' Kindness  
Full: same  
Ed.: T. 684, 16.778–79; T. 2887, 85.1403b–4a  
Date: sixth century (?)
- Guanxi fo xingxiang jing* 灌洗佛形像經, in 1 scroll  
Trl.: Sūtra on the Washing of Buddhist Images  
Full: same  
Ed.: T. 695, 16.796–97  
Aut.: trl. by Faju 法炬 (fl. 300)  
Date: early fourth century
- Haikong zhizang jing* 海空智藏經, in 10 scrolls



- Trl.: Collected Wisdom of Haikong  
 Full: *Taishang yicheng haikong zhizang jing* 太上一乘海空智藏經  
 (Scripture of the Collected Wisdom of Haikong of the Highest Single Vehicle)  
 Ed.: DZ 9, HY 9, fasc. 20–22  
 Date: early Tang
- Laojun yibai bashi jie* 老君一百八十戒, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: 180 Precepts of the Venerable Lord  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: part of DZ 786, HY 785, fasc. 562  
 Date: fourth century
- Mahā-kamma-vibhanga-sutta*  
 Trl.: Discourse on the Greater Analysis of Deeds  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: *Majjima nikaya*, Pali Canon  
 Date: third century B.C.E.
- Majjima-nikaya*  
 Trl.: Middle Length Sayings  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: Pali Canon  
 Date: third century B.C.E.
- Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮花經, in 28 scrolls  
 Trl.: Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Law  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: T. 262, 9.1a–63b  
 Aut: trl. by Kumārajīva (350–413)  
 Date: early fifth century
- Shengxuan jing* 昇玄經, in 9 scrolls  
 Trl.: Scripture of Ascension to the Mystery  
 Full: *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shengxuan neijiao jing* 太上洞玄靈寶昇  
 玄內教經 (Scripture of the Esoteric Teaching on Ascension to the  
 Mystery Contained in the Mystery Cavern of Highest Numinous  
 Treasure)  
 Ed.: DZ 1122, HY 1114, fasc. 759 (= ch. 7); Dunhuang manuscripts, edited  
 in Yamada 1992; Ōfuchi 1979: 251–90  
 Date: Sixth century
- Shi tianwang jing* 十天王經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Sūtra of the Ten Kings

- Full: same  
 Ed.: T. 590, 15.118–19  
 Date: early fifth century
- Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經, in 10 scrolls  
 Trl.: = *Śuranigama sūtra*  
 Ed.: T. 945, 19.105–55  
 Aut.: trl. by Paramitti (fl. 700)  
 Date: eighth century
- Taishang laojun jiejing* 太上老君誡經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Precepts of the Highest Venerable Lord  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: DZ 784, HY 783, fasc. 562  
 Date: circa 500
- Tiwei boli jing* 提謂波利經, in 2 scrolls  
 Trl.: Sūtra of Trapusa and Bhallika  
 Full: *Foshuo tiwei boli wujie jing bing weiyi jing* 佛說提謂波利經五戒經并威儀經 (Sūtra of the Buddha Explaining the Five Precepts and Related Observances to Trapusa and Bhallika)  
 Ed.: S. 2051; Tsukamoto 1942; Makita 1968, 1971  
 Aut.: Tanjing 曇景  
 Date: 446–52
- Xuanmen dayi* 玄門大義, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Great Meaning of the Gate of All Wonders  
 Full: *Dongxuan lingbao xuanmen dayi* 洞玄靈寶玄門大義 (Great Meaning of the Gate of All Wonders, Contained in the Mystery Cavern of Numinous Treasure)  
 Ed.: DZ 1124, HY 1116, fasc. 760  
 Date: Sui
- Xuantian shangdi shuo bao fumu en zhong jing* 玄天上帝說報父母恩重經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Scripture of the Importance of Repaying One's Parents' Kindness, Spoken by the Highest Emperor of the Dark Heaven  
 Full: same  
 Ed.: DZ 663, HY 662, fasc. 345  
 Date: Song
- Yinguo jing* 因果經, in 1 scroll  
 Trl.: Sūtra on Cause and Effect

Full: *Foshuo shan'e yinguo jing* 佛說善惡因果經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha on the Cause and Effect of Good and Bad [Deeds])

Ed.: T. 2881, 85.1380b-83b (Nakamura Collection)

Date: sixth century

*Yinyuan jing* 因緣經, in 10 scrolls

Trl.: Scripture of Karmic Retribution

Full: *Taishang dongxuan lingbao yebao yinyuan jing* 太上洞玄靈寶業報因緣經 (Scripture of the Causes and Conditions of Karmic Retribution, Contained in the Mystery Cavern of Highest Numinous Treasure)

Ed.: DZ 336, HY 336, fasc. 174–75

Date: sixth century, either Liang or Sui

*Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, in 60 scrolls

Trl.: Middle Length Sayings (= *Majjima nikaya*)

Full: same

Ed.: T. 26, 1.703c–8a

Aut.: trl. by Sanghadeva (fl. 383–98)

Date: third century B.C.E.; trl. fourth century

*Zuiye yingbao jing* 罪業應報經, in 1 scroll

Trl.: Sūtra on Retribution for Sinful Actions

Full: *Foshuo zuiye yingbao jiaohua diyu jing* 佛說罪業應報教化地獄經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha on Retribution for Sinful Actions and the Religious Transformation of These in Hell)

Ed.: T. 724, 17.450c–52b

Aut.: anon., ascribed to An Shigao (安世高 fl. 148–70)

Date: circa 500

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