

Transforming Beasts and Engaging with Local Communities:

Tiger Violence in Medieval Chinese Buddhism

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ABSTRACT: In medieval China, with an increasing human population, local villagers, government administrators, Daoist priests and Buddhist monks living in the forests, faced the problem of tiger attacks. While local government officials ordered the elimination of tigers to protect the villagers and their livestock, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism developed their respective strategies and rhetoric in responding to this challenge. Based on the correlative theory in Confucian political discourse, local governments addressed the issue of tiger violence by developing a rhetoric of virtuous governance to drive violent tigers away. Meanwhile, Daoist priests used their talisman and magic to avoid attacks by tigers, while medieval Chinese Buddhism offered a completely different alternative. Buddhist hagiographical accounts developed the image of eminent monks who could tame and convert violent tigers with their wisdom and compassion. These Buddhist narratives served as the rhetorical tool to develop the image of Buddhist “saints” that finds parallels in medieval Christian hagiographies.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism; social history; monks; tiger; local community

Between the seventh and the tenth centuries, with rapid expansion in human population in China,¹ people living in villages encountered wild animals such as the tiger with more frequency. While the lion had been the most visible animal symbol in Asian Buddhist culture, in medieval China this was replaced by the tiger being frequently referenced in hagiographical accounts.² In ancient Chinese sources, the tiger is given

such names as the Lord of a Hundred Beasts or the King of the Forests. Two main species of tiger were found in the mountains across the Chinese empire in the mediaval period: the north-east China tiger, often called the Siberian tiger or Amur tiger, and the south China tiger.³ Chinese sources including official histories, religious hagiographies, and the encyclopaedic collections from the third to the tenth centuries, quote numerous accounts of tiger attacks against travellers and livestock in local villages, and such events became generally known as “tiger violence” (hubao 虎暴).

As a threat to the social order at the village level, tiger violence became a major concern for the central court in the Chinese empire where laws were passed and local government officials were instructed to control and eliminate the beast. Often, these government employees announced rewards for local hunters to bring down tigers to protect the villagers. The Buddhist monastic order also responded to the needs of the villagers and Buddhist monks took this opportunity to develop a new narrative of how eminent monks with advanced learning and practice could pacify violent tigers. This new narrative is found in numerous stories in mediaval Chinese hagiography where monks transformed wild animals into their disciples and companions. Tigers appear more often in these Buddhist sources than do other animals. The present study aims to investigate these stories to understand why tigers became one of the most important animals in Buddhist accounts and how monks lived with and wrote about them.⁴

Mediaval Chinese Buddhist hagiographies document animals playing significant roles in the lives of monks. Sometimes, creatures were said to surround the tombs of deceased monks to mourn them and to pay tribute to them; other stories recount how some animals converted to Buddhism and could understand the preaching of eminent monks. Historically, stories of animals as mourners cannot be authenticated and may therefore be read as Buddhist folk tales. However, some accounts of how animals lived with monks may be real and may be examined from multiple perspectives.⁵ This new narrative can be

found in numerous legends in mediaval Chinese hagiography which served as the rhetorical tool for developing the image of Buddhist “saints”.⁶

As Alan Bleakley suggests, animals may be understood according to three dimensions of human experience. First, humans encounter animals in nature, which reflects the biological experience. Second, humans imagine animals as psychological experience based on their culture. Third, humans create animals as symbols through writing, which constitutes the conceptual experience of animals.⁷ While discussing animals in mediaval Chinese Buddhist writing, especially tigers, it is important to analyse the role of animals through the application of these three experiential dimensions of Chinese monks. Some monks did encounter real tigers in their solitary lives on mountains where they practiced their faith.⁸ Sometimes, tigers appear as imagined creatures in the cultural and psychological experiences of these monks when they practiced meditation and entered a deeper state of consciousness where they encountered imagined tigers. Some famous cases may well have been the creation of Buddhist writers where the tiger was a symbol of Buddhist power.

For instance, in Confucian political and social discourse, the tiger appears as an animal symbol of the strong and cruel ruling class, especially the powerful local clans and administrators who took the life and property of the people they ruled over with force, just as tigers took local villagers. Sometimes, law enforcement officials directly dispatched from the central government also received the nickname “hu 虎 (tiger)”, symbolising their service as the claws and teeth of the Emperor that literally grasped officials engaged in corruption and unjust practices. According to Confucian theory, if a local administrator, especially a prefect, practised benevolent and virtuous governance the strong local clans would diminish in influence and not be able to deprive the villagers of their lives and property. Virtuous governance was also believed to generate auspicious events, such as tigers no longer crossing the river to disturb the well-governed area. In this sense, the political ideal of Confucian discourse was to

control the cruel local clans who were as dangerous to rural people as the violent tiger. Interestingly, Chinese Buddhism developed an alternative discourse for taming tigers and protecting the property and lives of local people.

Handling Tiger Violence in Medieval China

During the Han and Tang periods, attacks by tigers became far too frequent, affecting livestock and taking human lives in villages. Many dynasties had specific laws and regulations for handling such attacks. Ikeda On 池田温 made a significant contribution to the study of policies for dealing with beasts in ancient China. He points especially to tigers that posed a huge threat to daily life in ancient China. Local civil officials strived to eliminate this threat and made policies for handling beasts. In the Han and Jin codes, there were regulations for granting handsome rewards to anyone hunting down tigers and maintaining order in local communities. According to the Han code, taking one tiger captive could mean a payment of three thousand coins, and in the Jin code, the ransom for hunting down one tiger was three-pi 匹 silk. According to Ikeda, the tiger problem became less serious in the Song dynasty, and the ransom was accordingly decreased.⁹ Yet, during the Han and Tang periods, eliminating tiger violence remained an important task for local administration and government policies toward tigers indicate that tigers were rampant.

At the end of the Yixi period (405–419), it is said that in the Yangxin 陽新 county (modern Huangshi 黄石, Hubei 湖北) tiger attacks became severe. Yangxin was located in central China, and in the early fifth century, it suffered severe tiger violence. In this county, there was a large shrine, a divine temple constructed under a big tree, with hundreds of residential houses built around the temple that formed a village. Almost every evening, tigers came out to take the lives of one or two local residents. One of Huiyuan's 慧遠 disciples, Fa'an 法安, once travelled to this county and, in the evening, as he entered this village, he found the doors of all houses closed. Local residents were so afraid of tigers that they retired early evening and

since they did not recognise Fa'an, they refused to offer him shelter.¹⁰

If we turn to medieaval Chinese Buddhist literature, tigers are often listed together with either wolves or wild buffalo. This information may suggest that tigers, wolves, and wild buffalo were equally big threats to people's lives. Legends about monks being attacked and eaten often mention the disposal of their corpses in the forest. One story from Daoxuan's *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳) reports on Huixian 慧顯 (c 569–627), a monk from Baekje 百濟, who took to monastic life in his childhood and focused on the recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*. After he passed away, fellow monks disposed of his body in a stone cave. Soon afterwards, tigers ate his body leaving only his tongue, which to most locals signified how consecrated his recitation of scripture was.¹¹ It is also indicative of the solitary lives of monks and the omnipresence of tigers in the forests. In early 841, Zongmi 宗密 (784–841), a famous Buddhist master in the late Tang period, indicated to his disciples that after his passing his body could be offered to birds and beasts and the bones could be cremated and disposed of.¹² The words to his disciples illustrate that beasts in the natural world could endanger monks in life and in death.

However, more evidence demonstrates that Buddhist communities in medieaval China approached the problem of tiger violence in a way different from that of the local administration or even the villagers. While village people often engaged in hunting down tigers or capturing them for ransom, Buddhist communities attempted to tame and pacify tigers. From a medieaval Chinese Buddhist perspective, taming and pacifying tigers became a symbolic way for a monk to demonstrate his cultivation and eminence through morality and wisdom since compassion towards beasts and not taking life was a part of their holy tenet. Therefore, taming or hunting down a tiger established a boundary between Buddhist and non-Buddhist practices and communities. It also established the new narrative of exemplary Buddhist monks because it was believed that

if a monk had cultivated himself and reached a certain level of consciousness, he could transform a tiger into his disciple and companion.¹³

Medieval Chinese Buddhist legends abound of how monks protected tigers and how tigers saved monks in return. For instance, in the late Tang dynasty, monk Yancheng 彦偈 (c 821–920) resided at a ruined Buddhist temple with crumbling walls. One night, a tiger suffering from a wound caused by the arrow of a hunter crawled under the pavilion of this temple and rolled around in great pain. Yancheng felt pity, took a light with him and stepped down from the pavilion but as he was about to remove the arrow from the tiger, his disciples stopped him. So Yancheng waited till all the disciples fell asleep that night. When he crept out to attend to the tiger and removed the arrow from its wound, the tiger licked the blood off the arrow, turned around to see Yancheng, and closed its eyes. The next day, the hunter came to the temple looking for the tiger. Yancheng showed him the arrow. The hunter was remorseful and as a result gave up hunting.¹⁴ This story not only reminds readers that the monk Yancheng had compassion for the wounded tiger but also indicates that a compassionate monk could persuade a cruel hunter to give up hunting tigers.

Other legends in the biographies of eminent monks describe how tigers saved monks from danger. In the *Biographies of Propagating and Praising the Lotus Sutra* (Hongzan Fahua zhuan 弘讚法華傳), a monk called Fa'ai 法愛 was pursued by bandits and ran into a forest for shelter. He saw two young tigers and told them that he did not intend to invade their space and disturb them, but he was being pursued by a group of bandits. The two tigers jumped out of the trees and scared the bandits away, saving Fa'ai.¹⁵ Fa'ai was a monk who devoted himself to reciting the *Lotus Sutra*, so the account establishes how devoted recitation could develop extraordinary ability to communicate with tigers. Another story reports on Huida (c 354–436), a devoted Buddhist monk working on the *Lotus Sutra*. In 398, he was digging licorice root in the wilderness when, all of a sudden, he was captured by a group of the Qiang 羌 people who were so hungry

they had resorted to hunting humans for food. The Qiang group locked him up with other captives and ate the captives one by one, picking the fattest of them first. Huida kept reciting the *Lotus Sutra* chapter on Guanyin and also prayed to the Guanyin Bodhisattva. Eventually all captives but Huida and a young boy were eaten, and the Qiang group was about to eat them the next day but, when they came for Huida, a tiger suddenly jumped out of the grass and kept the Qiang people away, so Huida and the young boy were saved.¹⁶ This story attempts to show the power of reciting the *Lotus Sutra* but also points to how tigers could save human beings to repay their kindness.

Transition of Attitudes Towards Tigers from Early Buddhism to Chinese Buddhism

The ability of eminent monks to tame tigers seems to be a theme invented in mediaval Chinese Buddhist literature. In early South Asian Buddhist literature and early Chinese translations of Buddhist literature, the tiger was portrayed as an evil animal. First, in *Jatakamala* stories, the tigress was described as a cruel beast who ate Prince Mahāsattva and consumed his blood and flesh to feed her cubs.¹⁷ Second, in early Buddhist literature, tigers often appear as violent beasts that endangered human life in the wilderness. Third, in early Buddhist literature, tigers are considered to be the reincarnation of people who had committed bad deeds. However, in all these accounts from the early examples of Buddhist Vinaya literature such as the *Mahāsāṃghika-Vinaya*, killing tigers was prohibited. The *Jatakamala* story was well known to ancient Chinese Buddhists, and appeared in many entries of a Chinese Buddhist encyclopaedia in early sixth century titled *Differentiated Manifestations of Scriptures and Laws* (*Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相) that was compiled by Baochang 寶唱 (c 495–528). The story of Prince Mahāsattva being eaten by a tiger has many versions, one of them portraying him as a Bodhisattva who sacrificed himself to save other sentient beings such as tiger cubs.

In some mediaval Chinese translations of Buddhist texts such as the *Treatise Spoken by the Buddha on the Abhidharma for Living in This World* (*Foshuo lishi apitan lun* 佛說立世阿毘曇論),

tigers are listed with lions, leopards, bears, and other beasts as attackers who would take the lives of other sentient beings. This was understandable to Chinese readers since, in medieaval China, once travellers entered the wilderness, especially the ancient forests across the country, an encounter with wild beasts was imminent. As for the conflict between the animal world and the human world, there was not much difference between South Asian and Chinese literature since at that time, at least in China, there was a vast wilderness for animals to live their lives in peace with little interaction between animals and humans. In Buddhist cosmology, the tiger was from the animal realm, one of the six realms, and travelling across realms was possible. For instance, if a human committed bad deeds, his *karma* could be affected adversely, and eventually he or she could be downgraded and reborn as a tiger in the next life. According to another highly popular medieaval Chinese Buddhist encyclopaedia, *Pearl Forest in the Dharma Grove* (Fayuan zhulin 法苑珠林), a sentient being could fall into three evil realms if he or she had done something terribly wrong. Even if they had a body from the heavenly (*deva*) realm, once their life came to an end, they could be reborn in the realm of animals as a lion, tiger, wolf, elephant, horse, or cow, to be hunted for life. The sentient beings who consumed large amounts of meat were also likely to be reborn as animals.

Interestingly, some legends in the *Pearl Forest in the Dharma Grove* suggest that human beings may be reborn as tigers as a consequence of a strong ego and a stubborn attitude. A Buddhist manuscript discovered from Dunhuang, *Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Cause and Effect of Being, Kindness and Evil* (*Foshuo shanè yinguo jing* 佛說善惡因果經), echoes this view. It suggests that medieaval Chinese readers accepted the idea that tigers and stubborn people shared one feature: a strong ego, implying that the latter could be reborn as the former because of sharing this bad trait. At the time, people had a number of opportunities to observe tigers in the wild and they may have witnessed the fury of tigers that affected their daily experience, to be recorded as cultural memory in the Buddhist writings of

the period. The story of the tiger eating the Bodhisattva and thereby helping him achieve the ultimate goal of compassion was well known to mediaval Chinese Buddhists. Many legends in Chinese Buddhist hagiographies portray monks following the paths of Prince Mahāsattva and imitating his behaviour by renouncing their bodies in succumbing to tigers, which clearly manifests the early Buddhist heritage of *Jatakamala* in mediaval Chinese Buddhism. For instance, an early eleventh-century monk Xingming 行明 was a native to Changzhou 長洲 (modern Suzhou), in the Wu prefecture. He once told his fellow monks that he would not like to be cremated on a wooden pyre as many others, or end up as Qu Yuan 屈原 (who ended his life as fish food in a lake) but that he had made a vow to learn from Prince Mahāsattva and had overcome numerous *kalpas* to eventually achieve the 'holy fruit'. He often mentioned his will to fellow monks, yet nobody took him seriously. One day, this young monk surrendered himself to a group of tiger cubs who immediately devoured his body. After his corpse was cremated, the relics were retrieved.¹⁸ In this case, Xingming sacrificed his life to tiger cubs like the Buddha in a previous life. It appears that the mediaval Buddhist community acknowledged him as an enlightened monk since his ashes were retrieved after cremation and venerated as a relic. However, mediaval Chinese hagiographies also note that some monks survived attacks from beasts in the mountains.

A monk called Xichen, a native from Bingzhou 并州 (modern Shanxi), once offered himself to wolves and tigers in a mountain valley. Some beasts approached him yet shied away after smelling him.¹⁹ There is no way to authenticate the account but it may be that the monk looked and smelled like a beast, hence other beasts did not eat him because he was one of them. In mediaval Chinese Buddhist miraculous literature, some legends depict the transformation of human beings into tigers. For instance, in a collection titled *Records of Equality and Harmony* (Qixie ji 齊諧記), it is said that in Taimo 太末, county of Dongyang 東陽 prefecture (modern Longyou, Zhejiang Province 浙江龍遊), in 408 a person called Wu Daozong

吳道宗 lost his father as a child and lived with his mother. One day when he left the house, neighbours heard a strange noise coming from the house. They went in to inspect the house and found a black-striped tiger inside but Wu's mother was absent. The neighbours were worried that the striped tiger had harmed his mother and recruited more people to try and save her. When they entered Wu's home again, they found the mother sitting calmly and she spoke with them as though nothing unusual had happened. The mother had once told her son that a person would transform into a tiger if he or she had been guilty of wrongdoing in a previous life. Later, Wu's mother disappeared again and reports came in from Taimo County where a black-striped tigress had been spotted. Local residents had gathered and attacked this tigress, wounding her severely, but she was returned to Daozong's home where the tigress eventually died on the mother's bed without changing back into her human form. Wu Daozong realised that the tigress was his mother and buried it honourably.

There are similar legends about people transforming into tigers from other areas that carry the same message. These legends confirm that a human who committed a crime would suffer immediate consequences in this life and turn into a tiger or tigress, rather than being reborn as a tiger or tigress in the next life.²⁰

Avoiding, Transforming, and Converting: Multiple Layers of Compromise to Tiger Violence

Many legends record that medieaval monks could survive encounters with beasts such as lions and tigers. In Chinese Buddhist literature, monks from other lands were the first to demonstrate this power of being able to tame tigers. As early as in the fifth century, tales of how monks survived encounters with tigers became increasingly common. One of the earliest cases was that of Buddhayaśas (Fotuo yeshe 佛陀耶舍, circa fourth to fifth centuries), a monk from Kashmir. He turned to monastic life at the age of 13 years and often travelled with his master. Once, Buddhayaśas and his master encountered a tiger in the wilderness and when the master tried to find shelter,

Buddhayaśas assured him that the tiger would not attack them since he looked like he had just had a meal and was satiated. The tiger did in fact leave them and walk away.²¹ In this story, Buddhayaśas did not tame the tiger but understood the nature of the beast and could make a judgment about its behaviour. Yet another story is recounted about Gunavarman (Qiuna bamo 求那跋摩, 367–431), a monk from Kashmir. As an outstanding student and diligent monk, he recited millions of words out of Buddhist texts after receiving his full ordination. He once travelled to Java where he was gifted a house by the king who referred to him as the master. In Java, tigers were rampant in the mountains and often attacked local villagers. Gunavarman understood the problem and told the king that he would like to move into the mountains. Upon his arrival, the tigers apparently calmed down and stopped harming villagers.²² It appears that Gunavarman helped the local people to pacify the tigers. A third monk from Kashmir was Dharmayaśas (Tanmmo yeshe 曇摩耶舍, circa fifth century) who was believed to have mastered scripture and *vinayas* even as a young boy. When he grew up, he often travelled alone in the mountains but tigers never attacked him.

Chinese narratives have portrayed these three monks from Kashmir as eminent for their ability to pacify tigers without being harmed, yet there is no way to establish if they carried this extraordinary ability from their training in Kashmir or if they developed it after they arrived in China. At least one thing is clear: around the late fourth and early fifth centuries, some foreign monks' extraordinary abilities to keep tigers pacified was recorded in mediaeval Chinese literature. Some Chinese monks of the time have also been credited with having had this ability, for example, a monk called Fawu 法晤 (411–489) who practiced solitary ascetic cultivation.²³ He often recited the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*. While traveling around mountains and marshes, he was not afraid of tigers and wild buffalo.²⁴ Another monk from Gaochang (modern Turfan), Faxu 法緒 (circa fifth century), observed his precepts strictly and practiced vegetarianism as well as meditation. He later entered the Sichuan region, where

he found a mountain valley for his *dhuta* practice, where tigers and wild buffalo did not harm him. He often recited the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, and the *Golden Light Sutra*.²⁵ Tanchao 曇超 (419–492), a monk from Qinghua 清河 (modern Qinghe, Hebei), travelled to the Shixing 始興 area in south-east China, and found shelter under the trees on the land he owned. It is recorded that beasts such as tigers never disturbed him. Huimi 慧彌 (439–518), a monk from Hongnong 弘農 (modern Sanmenxia 三門峽, Henan), devoted himself to solitude. He entered the Zhongnan Mountains and it is said that tigers never attacked him.²⁶ In the sixth century, a monk from Kuaiji 會稽, Dazhi 大志, also practiced solitary, ascetic cultivation and offered himself to tigers but they turned away. While he lived in the mountains he survived on wild vegetables.²⁷

It is noteworthy that many of these legends from mediæval Chinese Buddhist hagiographies follow a distinct narrative pattern. Some of them reflect on the daily activities of mediæval Chinese monks. Others are more generic and rhetorical and not based on actual fact. As for hagiographies of the first kind, these comprise biographies of monks who either lived alone in the forests or mountains by cultivating their ascetic practice and were thereby more likely to have encountered tigers. As for hagiographies of the second kind, tigers and wild buffalo are often mentioned here too, which may be indicative of a generic description. The reason these animals appear in monastic biographies is more complex. First, tigers were regarded as a major threat to local communities, and local residents and monks had to deal with this constant threat. Second, the tiger was considered the king of the animal kingdom in East Asia. For mediæval Buddhists, if a monk could deal with a ferocious tiger, he thereby demonstrated his ability to handle any other beast. Third, tigers and wild buffalo looked mighty and arrogant to mediæval people and using them as metaphors could attract readers beyond the Buddhist community to convert them.

It is to be noted that regional differences are found in the narratives of Buddhist hagiographies. Many legends associated

with tigers and wild buffalo talk about the experiences of monks who travelled or lived in south China, while legends told by monks in north China often enlist tigers, wild dogs and leopards.²⁸ For instance, in the seventh century, a monk called Puji 普濟 from Yongzhou 雍州 (modern Xi'an, Shaanxi) often wandered in the wilderness but was always successful in avoiding wild dogs and tigers. He was a devoted monk who studied the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, and recited this text once every two days. His biography indicates his extraordinary ability to survive while living among wild dogs and tigers due to his dedicated study of this text.²⁹ Another monk Pu'an 普安 (circa sixth century) was from Jingyang 涇陽 (modern Jingyang, Shaanxi) who cultivated *dhuta* practice and pretended to die in the wilderness, and although he tried to offer his body to wild dogs and tigers, they would only smell him and turn away.³⁰ These two legends come from what was commonly known as the Guanzhong 關中 area (the area within the pass, Tongguan 潼關) in the medieaval period.

Even though we should be careful concerning the authenticity of these monastic legends, they reflect some part of the reality of the time, such as monks living and travelling in the wild for long periods of time, how they may have appeared and smelled like animals, and so on. One legend in medieaval Chinese Buddhism is about a monk from Silla, Wuxiang 無相 (679–756), who lived in the mountains but did not sleep on a bed. Instead, he often slept on the ground. Since he lived in the mountains for so long, his robes became tattered, and his hair grew very long. A hunter once caught sight of him and, considering him an exotic animal, he was about to shoot him when he stopped because he realised Wuxiang was a human being.³¹ This story seems to suggest that Wuxiang looked like a beast in the eyes of another man. It does not mention what Wuxiang smelled like.

Gunavarman was probably the first monk in early medieaval Chinese Buddhist narratives believed to possess the ability to tame tigers. According to his biography, while traveling in daytime or at night, wherever he encountered a tiger he would

pacify it by touching the head of the tiger with a Buddhist sceptre.³² Gunavarman was a monk from Kashmir, and his story is not found in Central Asian sources. This may be because Chinese writers attempted to trace the genealogy of this tradition to Central Asia for Chinese readers. They had some reason to believe this too. First, tigers were not sighted in Central Asia with such frequency and, second, they were not dangerous, man-eating tigers. So legends of monks taming tigers would not go down well in Central Asia where the lion remained a more feared beast. Besides, mediaeval Chinese Buddhists struggled to legitimise Buddhism as a tradition indigenous to China, divorcing it from its South Asian and Central Asian roots. After Gunavarman, many Chinese monks were portrayed as masters able to tame and pacify tigers by lecturing on the *dharma*, bestowing the precepts of the Three Refuges, reciting scripture, and even imitating Prince Mahāsattva by giving up on their lives and sacrificing their bodies.

As early as in the fifth century, a monk called Tancheng 曇稱 was believed to have developed a reputation for compassion. At the end of the Liu Song period, in the Pengcheng 彭城 area, tigers were active in Jia Mountain 駕山 and constituted a serious threat to local villagers. Tancheng decided to sacrifice his body to prevent tiger attacks. He told local villagers that if he was eaten by tigers, the tragedy would come to an end. The villagers tried to stop him but he sat alone on the grass and chanted: “I use my body to placate your hunger and thirst and mitigate your willingness to cause harm, and in the future you shall only eat high dharma food”. At midnight, tigers came out to eat Tancheng, leaving only his head. Local villagers built a memorial mound to house his head and it is held there were no tiger attacks in this area after his sacrifice.³³

Over time, legends grew of the mere presence of eminent monks driving away the tiger. Other methods of pacifying tigers included setting up Vegetable Feasts (zhaihui 齋會), Walking the Path (xingdao 行道), and Bestowing Precepts (shoujie 授戒). Zhikuan 志寬 (565–643) was a monk who travelled to Sichuan where hundreds of tigers attacked villages and harmed livestock and humans. One tiger was apparently the leader of this group.

The military governor of Suizhou, 遂州 Zhang Xun 張遜, heard that Zhikuan was a compassionate monk whose devotion was well known, so he dispatched a messenger to invite Zhikuan to resolve the crisis. Zhikuan taught local people how to set up Vegetable Feasts, to Walk the Path, and to observe Eight Restrictions. It is recorded that by the evening, tiger violence disappeared.³⁴ Many other legends convey the benevolent influence of eminent monks. In medieaval Chinese Buddhist rhetoric, their virtues produced supernatural power that prevented tigers from disturbing the local area. Daochan 道禪 (457–527), a monk from Jiaozhi 交趾 (modern Vietnam), had a reputation for observing monastic precepts. He moved to reside and practice in a temple in Xianzhou Mountain 仙洲 (modern Wuyishan 武夷山, Fujian) where tiger violence was a huge problem for the local community but upon his arrival it dissipated.³⁵

In medieaval Chinese Buddhist texts, while the tiger was regarded as an animal, its reputation had grown beyond that. The tiger could appear with mountain spirits and demons in interaction with men from the monastic order, even sometimes as the mountain spirit itself, a concept from traditional Chinese cosmology and not from the Buddhist tradition. Medieaval Chinese monks had to deal with both beasts such as tigers and mountain spirits in their daily life. According to the biography of an eminent monk, Hongming 弘明 (402–486), was a native of Shanyin 山陰, Kuaiji 會稽 (modern Shanyin, Zhejiang) who went into the monastery at a young age. He practiced reciting the *Lotus Sutra* in the Cloud-Gate Temple (Yunmensi 雲門寺) in Shanyin and also practiced meditation and confession rituals. Each morning, as he sat down to meditate, he found his water vase full. Curious to find out who was doing him this service, he realised that the water was offered by heavenly beings (*devas*) who were moved by his sincere devotion. Once, a tiger entered his chamber while he was meditating and crouched beside his bed. It is written that the tiger did not leave but observed Hongming for a long time. Later, Hongming moved to the Shilao Temple (Shilaosi 石姥寺) in Yongxing 永興 (modern Xiaoshan 蕭山, Zhejiang) for further meditation,

but he was disturbed by a mountain spirit. Hongming captured this mountain spirit and immobilised it with his rope belt, whereupon the spirit confessed and requested to be freed. So Hongming released it, and it never appeared again.³⁶ This story seems to show that monks could deal with at least two sorts of sentient beings, beasts from the Buddhist tradition and mountain spirits from the Chinese tradition.³⁷

There are other examples of this. In the Sui dynasty, Zhenhui 真慧 (535–607) was another monk able to get along with the tiger and the mountain spirit. He practiced in the cave of a tiger during the summer and, as a result, the tiger evacuated the cave. When fall arrived, he left the cave and the tiger returned. When he was meditating, the mountain spirit helped him keep the time and alerted him whenever he was behind schedule. This story illustrates that both tiger and mountain spirit could interact with a monk during meditative practice.³⁸ Some other examples show that mountain spirits and tigers accepted Buddhist teaching and converted. One case was that of Yu Falan 于法蘭 (circa fourth century). While living in a mountain cave, a tiger came to his stone chamber and turned into a domesticated animal. His biography also states that some mountain spirits came to accept his teaching because his virtue could move these spirits and other sentient beings. Zhidun 支遁 (314–366) wrote a eulogy praising his virtue and achievements.³⁹ Daoxing 道行 (751–820), a monk who was ordained in the Southern Marchmount 南嶽, went to Fengyang 豐陽 (modern Fengxian 豐縣, Hunan) to build a wooden chamber to serve as his residence. Tigers and leopards from the mountain crouched on his bed and chairs. His biography indicates that local mountain deities and spirits helped him with the construction of the chamber. In the mid-Tang dynasty, a monk Weikuan 惟寬 was also skilful in taming a tiger in the Kuaiji area in 791 and bestowed the Eight Precepts to a mountain spirit in 792.⁴⁰

In Korea, mountain spirits were often depicted in literature as wearing yellow robes and walking with a tiger. The tiger was regarded as the lord of the mountain and also the spirit of the

mountain; therefore, it was worshiped by local villagers. The Chinese concept of mountain spirits protecting the monastic community and the state while helping monks in caves had an impact on medieaval Korean culture.⁴¹ In medieaval China, sometimes the mountain spirit was portrayed in yellow robes and turned out to be a tiger, the king of the forest. A monk called Sengda 僧達 (circa sixth century) grew up in Daibei (modern Datong, Shanxi). He had made a thorough study of Vinaya teachings and travelled from Luoyang to Jiankang 健康 (modern Nanjing, Jiangsu) where he received respect and patronage from the Liang Emperor Wudi 梁武帝. He settled in the famous Tongtai Temple 同泰寺. With the fall of the Liang regime, he returned to north China and entered the city of Ye 鄴城. The Northern Qi Emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝 constructed the Honggu Temple 洪谷寺 in Mount Linlü 林慮山 for him. One day, as Sengda climbed a mountain, a ferocious tiger blocked his path. He explained to the tiger that he had come to the temple to benefit all sentient beings and the tiger yielded the way to him. Later, the tiger transformed into a mountain spirit wearing a yellow robe to visit him and requested to be called by the spirit's true name and to receive blessings. Then Sengda asked his disciple to recite the *Golden Light Sutra*. However, one day the tiger was caught in the act of eating a dog and Sengda realised that his disciple had been lazy and failed to recite the Buddhist scripture to bless the tiger. He interrogated his disciple who confessed that he had recited the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* rather than the *Golden Light Sutra*. He asked his disciple to worship the Buddha and to burn incense and explained to the tiger that reciting the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* was enough to bring blessings. The tiger then released the dog into the temple.⁴²

This story clearly shows that in medieaval Chinese Buddhist hagiography, tigers could understand different Buddhist scriptures and knew which sutra brought blessings. The tiger could transform into the mountain spirit to communicate with an eminent monk and perhaps even had the intelligence to converse with revered monks.

Practice, Ritual, and Rhetoric: Taming Tigers as Buddhist Power

Taming beasts, especially tigers, gradually came to be regarded as one of the most important credentials of an eminent monk. As Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) noted in his “Preface to Inner Scriptures” (Neidian xu 內典序), eminent monks often changed their bodily appearance and marks to tame wild buffalo and tigers.⁴³ Non-Buddhist medieaval Chinese literature rarely discusses how to tame a tiger. It may have been possible for a villager or a hunter not to be afraid of a tiger, yet actively taming or taking a tiger as a disciple seems to be relegated to the eminent monks, according to medieaval Chinese Buddhist hagiographical narratives. For these monks, taming tigers was not a technique similar to the skills of a modern-day lion tamer, because the monks relied on Buddhist wisdom and practiced high virtue. These were three kinds of practices: precepts, concentration, and wisdom. It appears that monks could interact with violent tigers in multiple ways such as driving them away, taming them and transforming them into a companion, and so forth.

Major techniques used by monks to tame tigers included employing the power of the *dharma sceptre*, reciting Buddhist scripture, and bestowing them with precepts. In medieaval Chinese Buddhist discourse, when a monk’s meditation and cultivation reached a high level, he could use his consciousness to transform the surrounding environment into a forest of virtue and merit, which became a consecrated ritual space keeping beasts and demons away. If beasts and birds entered this space, monks could use their power to tame them and transform them into disciples. The *dharma sceptre* was a powerful tool for taming tigers in medieaval Chinese Buddhist writings. Benru 本如, who was a master in lecturing on the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Nirvana Sutra*, the *Golden Light Sutra*, and the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*, saw a tiger sleeping in the south-western corner of his temple. He used his sceptre to touch the head of the tiger and told it that the temple was not the right place for sleep.⁴⁴ The tiger woke up

and left immediately. Later, a pavilion was constructed in the place where the tiger was sleeping, which later became known as the famous Tiger-Creek Pavilion 虎溪亭 of the White Lotus Temple 白蓮寺.⁴⁵ This story suggests that the power of Benru's mace followed from his long-term lecturing on many important scriptures.

Another monk, Faxiang 法響 (553–630), left his parents at the age of 16 and became the disciple of Master Zhiyi 智顛. He recited the *Lotus Sutra* and constructed a dharma-lotus hall beside the Qixia Temple 棲霞寺. Without telling the others, he also practiced the *samādhi* confession ritual and achieved enlightenment. The area where he lived was threatened by frequent tiger attacks and one day, local villagers set up a Vegetable Feast to pray for release from the terror of the tiger. Suddenly, a tiger appeared at the assembly and caught one person in its jaws. Faxiang called out to the tiger that the feast had been set up for it and requested the tiger to leave that person alone. The tiger then released the captive. Later, a group of tigers came to join in the feast and participants were afraid and started to run away. Faxiang came up and used his mace to touch the heads of these tigers and lecture them on the dharma. After the feast, the village never experienced tiger attacks again and all tigers moved away from this village.⁴⁶

Besides using the dharma mace to tame tigers, mediaval monks also used their hands to caress their head and back, or to bestow precepts to tigers. Benjing 本淨 (circa eighth century) helped tame a group of tigers in the mountain by caressing the head of the leader, who left without blocking the path of the woodcutters.⁴⁷ According to these narratives, bestowing The Precept of Three Refuges to tigers could also tame them. Facong 法聰 (468–559) resided in the Sangai Mountain 傘蓋山 in Xiangyang 襄陽 where he had constructed a small house to cultivate his mind. In his house, two tigers often stayed with him. The Liang Prince of Jin'an 晉安王 Xiao Fangzhi 蕭方智 (543–558) came to visit him and was afraid of the tigers but Facong told the tigers not to harm his friend. Xiao asked Facong for help in stopping tiger attacks in his area and Facong

responded by immediately going into meditation upon which 17 large tigers entered his house. Facong bestowed The Precepts of Three Refuges on these tigers and commanded them not to harm local villagers. It is said, the tigers accepted his demand and left the area.⁴⁸

According to mediieval Chinese Buddhist hagiographies, tigers not only converted to Buddhism but also studied it by listening to sutra recitation. Sengsheng 僧生 (circa fourth to fifth centuries) was a monk from the Sichuan area who became the head of the Sanxian Temple 三賢寺 in Chengdu 成都. He had a reputation for reciting the *Lotus Sutra* and his meditation was exemplary. It was said that he once went to the mountain to recite the *Lotus Sutra* which attracted tigers to listen.⁴⁹ Although taming tigers by reciting sutras was a Chinese convention, the tradition of reciting sutras to beasts can be traced back to early Chinese Buddhist literature. Faxian 法顯 (337–422), the famous Chinese pilgrim who travelled to South Asia, once encountered lions and recited sutras to avoid being harmed by them. When he journeyed to Rāja-gr̥ha 王舍城, he was told by monks in a nearby temple that, along the way, he may encounter the black lions. Faxian insisted on continuing his journey and arrived at a mountain. He burned incense and was praying at midnight when three black lions came to attack him. As Faxian carried on reciting the sutras and also kept taking the Buddha's name, the lions were enticed to lie down at his feet. Faxian touched their heads and said, "If you want to harm me, please allow me to finish the recitation". Soon after he finished the recitation, the lions left.⁵⁰ This story is not supported by other sources and may well have come from Faxian's memoir. There is no evidence to verify whether Faxian recited the sutras in Sanskrit or in a local dialect of Central Asia, or even in the Chinese language, but whatever language he used, the three black lions seemed to have understood his recitation.

The legends in the previous discussion also indicate that many popular Mahāyāna texts were an important part in this narrative of monks taming tigers in China. The *Lotus Sutra* was one of the most important of such texts. Other texts include the *Avataṃsaka*

Sūtra, the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Golden Light Sutra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. The *Diamond Sutra* became more popular in the late Tang dynasty. Daoyin 道蔭 (circa ninth century) was a monk devoted to reciting the *Diamond Sutra*. In the early ninth century, he encountered a tiger who jumped out in front of him during a walk. He was scared and began reciting the *Diamond Sutra* for protection. The tiger withdrew and crawled back into the grasses without making any aggressive move.⁵¹ Many biographies of monks in medieval China record incidents where eminent monks verbally communicated with tigers and that is how they could live together. An Indian monk, Zhu Fodiao, 竺佛調 (circa fourth and fifth centuries) resided in the Changshan Temple 常山寺 for several years. On a lone trip to the mountains, he was stalled by a snowstorm and entered a cave where a tiger resided. When the tiger came back in the night, Fodiao talked to the tiger and explained why he was there: the tiger was not angry and left him alone.⁵² Fashi 法施 (circa seventh century) was a monk who lived in the Dhuta Temple near Jiangling 江陵 (Modern Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei). A tiger served as an attendant in his room. When a guest came to visit Fashi, he spoke to the tiger and asked him to close his eyes to avoid scaring the guest. He referred to the tiger as “the Buddhist gentleman” (fozi 佛子). Once the tiger understood the directive, he lowered his head and closed his eyes. Fashi treated this tiger as a family pet.⁵³

Three other biographies mention how eminent monks could communicate with tigers. Fachong 法沖 (circa early seventh century) was a native of Chengji 成紀, Longxi (modern Tianshui 天水, Gansu). He was in the mountains when he found a cave under a huge cliff but it belonged to a tiger. So he verbally asked permission of the tiger for a place to sleep and the tiger understood and allowed him to stay.⁵⁴ Daocheng 道澄 (date unknown–circa 803) was practicing a summer retreat in the Yunyang Mountain 雲陽山 (modern Chaling 茶陵, Hunan) when a tiger accidentally ran into his room. He talked to the tiger, who shook his tail and left.⁵⁵ The third story is about Huiwen 慧聞 (circa seventh century) who used his mace to touch a tiger and a leopard and talked to them while traveling. Interestingly, all these legends

illustrate that the communication was one-way and it was only the monks who spoke to the tigers.⁵⁶ It is quite possible that several eminent monks dwelled in the mountains for long periods of time and became familiar with the habits of beasts and were thus able to communicate with them. In Chinese Buddhist literature, the first translator, An Shigao, was said to be able to master the sound of birds and beasts, besides his other miraculous abilities and knowledge in medicine, astrology, and other skills.

In mediieval Chinese Buddhist legends, monks seem to have kept tigers as companions and pets. A monk Huiyong 慧永 (332–414) had a tiger as his companion in his meditation chamber at the top of a peak on Mount Lu. His patron was Tan Fan 陶范, the prefect of Xunyang 潯陽, who offered a house and converted it into a temple on Mount Lu for Huiyong. If a guest came to find shelter in Huiyong's meditation chamber, Huiyong usually moved a tiger out and evacuated the room for the guest. Fajin 法進, a monk who lived in the Jade Maiden Temple 玉女寺 in Mianzhu 綿竹 county near Yizhou 益州, meditated in the bamboo forest behind his temple. Four tigers often accompanied him.

One story describes a tiger that served as the travel guide for nuns. A nun named Minggan 明感 from Gaoping 高平 attempted to find a place to practice ascetic cultivation within the mountains, but lost her way. She then encountered a tiger who was only a few feet away from her. At first, she was frightened until she noticed how the tiger walked ahead of her and guided her for several days till she finally reached Qingzhou 青州. As she entered the village, the tiger disappeared.⁵⁷ There are other stories about how tigers guarded and observed the practice of nuns. Jingcheng 靜稱 was a nun who lived alone in a mountain area. A tiger always stayed beside her and observed her while she meditated. There was a nunnery in the area where those who had taken their vows and yet violated the precepts went to confess. The tiger became restless when the nun did not confess soon enough but showed his joy when she did so quickly.⁵⁸

According to legend, Huizhong 惠忠 (683–769), the sixth patriarch of the Ox-head School, was also protected by tigers. In a village with a grain barn for storing the monastery's food supplies, bandits came to steal the food one night. It turned out that one tiger that served Huizhong jumped out of the bush and roared, frightening the bandits away and waking up the guard. The local magistrate Zhang Xun 張遜 came to visit Huizhong and asked him if he could meet some of his disciples. Huizhong replied that he had between three to five disciples and then tapped his bed three times. Three tigers jumped out from around him to prove that Huizhong actually considered these tigers to be his disciples.⁵⁹

A Chan master, Shanjue 善覺, who resided in the Hualin Temple 華林寺 in Tanzhou 潭州 (modern Changsha 長沙, Hunan) was said to have two tigers as his servants. The Observer of Hunan (Hunan *guan*cha shi 湖南觀察使) Pei Xiu 裴休 (791–864) came to visit him. Pei asked the master if he had any servants and Shanjue answered yes and called out their names “Big Emptiness 大空” and “Little Emptiness 小空.” Two tigers jumped out to meet them, taking Pei by surprise. Shanjue eventually asked the tigers to leave, and they roared and left. In the Song dynasty, a Chan master Fazhong 法忠 (1084–1149) was believed to have the power to summon dragons to bring rain, and to ride tigers in his daily life.

According to his biography, Fazhong was from Siming (now the eastern region of Zhejiang Province) and began to study the Tiantai tradition after he received his full ordination at the age of nineteen. He then travelled to visit eminent Chan masters for further learning and practiced asceticism in the Lu Mountain where he lived with snakes and tigers. During the Xuanhe period (1119–1125), the Xiangtan area experienced extreme drought. Local residents prayed for rain to no avail till Fazhong decided to help and summoned the dragon that brought rain. He lived in the South Marchmount (Nanyue) for a while and often rode a tiger to go from place to place. Whenever local Confucians and Buddhists saw him, they paid homage to him.⁶⁰

Conclusion

This paper illustrates how the taming of tigers by eminent monks who saved village peoples from their attacks became the prime narrative surrounding medieaval Chinese Buddhist hagiography and helped it grow roots in Chinese culture by competing with Confucianism and Daoism. This narrative originated in ancient China which had a long history of priests talking to animal and mountain spirits. In this sense, the medieaval Chinese Buddhist narrative on taming tigers was a hybrid of traditional Chinese thought on communicating with animals and Buddhist thought regarding compassion toward beasts as sentient beings.

Medieaval Chinese Buddhist narratives are highly selective when it comes to species of animals. The monks only interact with the tiger, the king of the animal realm and the ruler of all beasts, to demonstrate supreme control over nature. From a Buddhist perspective, violent and cruel tigers could harm livestock and humans so they were destructively powerful and uncivilised sentient beings. Taming them meant converting them to Buddhism which was not only the responsibility of monks but also the requirement for moving toward final enlightenment. Broadly speaking, the encounter of monks with tigers produced three levels of relationships in medieaval China. First, the monks may not have been afraid of tigers, or they simply did not run away from tigers, since they knew that the power of their wisdom and virtue would prevent tigers from harming them. When tigers met these monks, they just walked away without further interaction. Second, when the monks encountered tigers, they made friends and turned them into companions. Third, the monks converted tigers into Buddhist disciples and transformed the space where tigers lived into the realm of Buddhist teaching.

This paper interprets the taming of tigers in medieaval Chinese Buddhist hagiographies as rhetoric and cultural trope that transformed the practice of Chinese Buddhism. First, the narrative of taming tigers made prominent monks different from common monks in creating a new hierarchical order within the

monastic community with exemplary figures and role models. Second, the narrative of taming tigers made Buddhism different from other religious, cultural, and political Chinese traditions. In particular, it created a boundary between Buddhism and Confucianism where eminent monks did not hunt down or simply move away from tigers, but tamed and converted the tigers. Third, the narrative of taming tigers also made Chinese Buddhism distinct from early South Asian Buddhism. Finally, this narrative made the human world different from and superior to the natural world because eminent monks could tame and transform beasts from the natural world. By taming tigers, Buddhist monks extended their purview over the wilderness. Only distinguished monks could perform the ritual of taming tigers, thereby linking the eminence of monks to their social efficacy.

Notes

1. In this paper, the mediaval period refers to the seventh to tenth centuries.

2. Hagiographical sources in mediaval Chinese Buddhism refer to the biographies of eminent monks compiled by Huijiao (497–554), Daoxuan (596–667), and Zanning (919–1001). For the study of these biographies as hagiographies in Chinese Buddhism; see John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monks: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

3. On the tigers in Chinese history, see Guo Fu 郭琿, Joseph Needham, and Cheng Qingtai 程卿泰, *Zhongguo gudai dongwuxue shi* 中國古代動物學史 (Beijing : Kexue chubanshe, 1999); Weng Junxiong 翁俊雄, “Tangdai hu xiang de xingzong: Jianlun Tangdai hu xiang jizai zengduo de yuanyin 唐代虎、象的行蹤—兼論唐代虎、象記載增多的原因,” *Tang Yanjiu* 唐研究, vol. 3 (1997): 381–394; on the living environment of animals in mediaval China, see Xu Tingyun 徐庭雲, “Sui Tang Wudai shiqi de shengtai huangjin 隋唐五代時期的生態環境,” *Guoxue yanjiu* 國學研究, vol. 8 (2001): 209–244.

4. Contemporary scholarship has briefly touched on the issue of tigers in mediaval Chinese literature; see Edward H. Schafer,

The Vermilion Bird: Tang Images of the South (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 228; Charles Hammond, “An Excursion in Tiger Lore,” *Asia Major* 4, no. 1 (1991): 87–100; idem., “The Righteous Tiger and the Grateful Lion,” *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1996): 191–211.

5. The roles and images of animals in Chinese religions have been examined in many works, such as Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Ancient China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002); Rodney Taylor, “Of Animals and Humans: The Confucian Perspective,” in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton, eds. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 293–307. Timothy H. Barrett briefly mentions that tiger in medieval Chinese Buddhism played similar roles as lion in medieval Christianity; see “The Monastery Cat in cross-cultural Perspective: Cat Poems of the Zen Masters,” in *Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia: Places of Practice*, James A. Benn, Lori Meeks and James Robson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2010), 116–117.

6. For a discussion on the making of Buddhist ideals of eminent monks, see Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monks*, 139–145. It may be understood in comparison with a similar case being made for “sainthood” in medieval Christian hagiographies.

7. Alan Bleakley, *The Animalizing Imagination: Totemism, Textuality and Ecocriticism* (New York, NY: St. Martin Press, 2000), 38–40.

8. Lambert Schmidhausen points to different religious traditions within Buddhism diverging over tensions between human beings and nature, see *Maitrī and Magic: Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude Toward the Dangerous in Nature* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 9.

9. Ikeda On, “Chūgoku kodai no mōjū taisaku hōki 中国古代の猛獣対策法規,” in *Ritsuryōsei no shomondai: Takikawa Masajirō Hakushi beiju kinen ronshū 律令制の諸問題：瀧川政次郎博士米寿記念論集 Takikawa Hakushi Beiju Kinenkai*, ed. (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1984), 611–37.

10. T. no. 2122, vol. 53, 428c. Jacques Gernet mentions this story. See his *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 255.

11. T. no. 2060, vol. 50, 687c.

12. T. no. 2037, vol. 49, 821c.

13. Some monks became cultic heroes in local regions for their ability to tame tigers. For instance, in Southeast China, the monk who tamed tigers was worshiped by local people, along with the Light Buddha and Guanyin Bodhisattva; see John Lagerwey, "Dingguang Gufo: Oral and Written Sources in the Study of a Saint," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998): 77–129.

14. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 809b.

15. *T.* no. 2067, vol. 51, 23a.

16. *T.* no. 2068, vol. 51, 76b. Many legends in medieval Chinese Buddhist literature demonstrate the power of reciting the *Sutra of Guanyin* (Guanyin jing). As in the story about Tanwujie 曇無竭 who often recited the *Sutra of Guanyin* and practiced asceticism. Along with his 25 disciples and followers, he went to the Western Regions to look for the Buddhist Kingdom. Along the long way, they overcame numerous difficulties. When they reached Śrāvastī, they encountered a group of mountain elephants. Tanwujie began to recite the *Sutra* and prepared to die. At this moment, a lion came out of the forest and the elephants were scared away. Then a group of wild cattle came and looked threatening. Tanwujie again prepared to die, but a huge eagle flew in and the cattle ran away. So Tanwujie and his followers survived. See *T.* no. 2068, vol. 51, 66a.

17. On legends of offering bodies as gifts in early Buddhist literature, see Reiko Ohnuma, "The Gift of the Body and the Gift of Dharma," *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (1998): 323–359; on the analysis of the tigress story, see Reiko Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9–14. Numerous Jataka stories have appeared in Buddhist caves along the Silk Route, in Kizil (caves 8, 13, 17, 34, 38, 47, 114, 184), Dunhuang (caves 254, 428, 301, 302, 419, 85, 72), and some other places; see Alexander P. Bell, *Didactic Narration: Jataka Iconography in Dunhuang with a Catalogue of Jataka Representations in China* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000), 141–143. The story of the tigress was also found in the old Uyghur literature; see Simone-Christine Raschmann and Ablet Semet, "Neues zur alttürkischen 'Geschichte von der hungrigen Tigerin'," *Aspects of Research into Central Asian Buddhism: In Memoriam Kōgi Kudara*, Peter Zieme, ed. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), 237–275.

18. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 857b.

19. *Ibid.*, 857c.

20. In these narratives, tigers were still regarded as sentient beings in the animal realm and, in the Buddhist sense, they were inferior to human beings. The tigers have no spiritual dimension and they could not communicate with human beings spiritually. Paul Waldau suggests that in early Buddhism, animals were still considered inferior to human beings, which reflects the anthropocentrism of these stories; see Paul Waldau, *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapters 6 and 7; idem., “Buddhism and Animals Rights,” in *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, Damien Keown, ed. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 85–105.

21. *T.* no. 2145, vol. 55, 102a.

22. *Ibid.*, 104b.

23. In Chinese Buddhist context, it is called the “Dhuta Practice (tou-tuoxing 頭陀行)”. For the discussion on this practice in mediaval Chinese Buddhism, see Jamie Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Heresy* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 26–27.

24. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 399c.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 408c.

27. *T.* no. 2060, vol. 50, 682b.

28. Chris Coggins briefly discusses encounters between humans and tigers in Southeast China; see his *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture, and Conservation in China* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 51–86.

29. *T.* no. 2073, vol. 51, 165b.

30. *T.* no. 2060, vol. 50, 681a.

31. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 832b.

32. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 340.

33. *Ibid.*, 404a.

34. *T.* no. 2060, vol. 50, 543b.

35. *Ibid.*, 607b.

36. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 408a.

37. The mountain spirit is sometimes also called mountain demon; see Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 78–97. He cited Dai Fu’s 戴孚 *Guanyi ji* 廣異記 and suggested that the mountain spirits were often friends of tigers and other beasts. The discussion on the legends about the tiger in *Guangyi ji*

can be found in Glen Dudbridge's *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China: A Reading of Tai Fu's Kuang-I Chi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 219–20. The interactions between mountain spirits and tigers can be found in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 3480–3483.

38. Kieschnick has noted that eminent monks could communicate with spirits; see his *The Eminent Monk*, 96–109.

39. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 350a.

40. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 768a.

41. David A. Mason, *The Spirit of the Mountain: Korea's San-Shin and Traditions of Mountain Worship* (Seoul: Hollym, 1999).

42. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 522c–523a.

43. *T.* no. 2103, Vol. 52, 231b.

44. For the discussion on the dharma scepter, see John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 113–115; Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Honolulu, HA: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 105–107.

45. *T.* no. 2035, vol. 49, 553.

46. *Ibid.*, 199a.

47. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 847c. A layperson Li Tongxuan 李通玄 could do the same thing, according to his biography; see *Ibid.*, 853a.

48. *T.* no. 2060, vol. 50, 555b. Huimin 慧旻 (circa seventh century) also bestowed the precept of Three Refuges to beasts, including the tigers in his house, so the beasts did not harm anyone. *T.* no. 2067, vol. 51, 19c. His biography in the *Xu gaosengzhuàn* (juan 22) does not mention his bestowing the Three Refuge precept to tigers. It seems that in Pali Buddhist literature, some animals were said to observe Five Precepts, but precepts did not help them in the progress toward enlightenment; see James P. McDermott, “Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 32, no. 4 (1989): 269–270.

49. *T.* no. 2067, vol. 51: 27b. According to *Tales of Miraculous Retribution* (Mingbao ji 冥報記), a layperson could also attract tigers to listen to the recitation of the sutra. Wei Zhonggui 韋仲珪 (circa sixth and seventh centuries) was a lay Buddhist. He was also a filial son and was well respected in his hometown. After his father passed away, he sent his wife and concubine away and lived alone beside his father's tomb. He often recited the *Lotus Sutra*. One night a tiger came to listen to his recitation. See Tang Lin 唐臨, *Mingbao ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 21.

50. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 337.

51. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 871b.

52. *T.* no. 2059, vol. 50, 387c.

53. *T.* no. 2060, vol. 50, 663c.

54. *Ibid.*, 666a.

55. *T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 806b.

56. In ancient Egypt, it said that some animals could speak and understand the human language and they could even react based on their understanding of human commands; see Billie Jean Collins, ed., *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 253–55.

57. *T.* no. 2063, vol. 50, 935c.

58. *Ibid.*, 940a.

59. *T.* no. 2036, vol. 49, 601c.

60. *T.* vol. 49, no. 2036, 687b, Nianchang 念常 ed., *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖历代通载, juan 20; *X.* vol. 79, no. 1559, 391a-b, Zhengshou 正受 ed., *Jiatai pudenglu* 嘉泰普燈錄, juan 16, Longxingfu Huanglong Mu'an Fazhong chanshi 隆興府黃龍牧庵法忠禪師; *T.* vol. 50, no. 2062, 920a. One of the most popular legends about riding the tiger in medieaval Buddhist hagiographies was that of Fenggan 封幹, who was a Chan monk living the Guoqing Temple 國清寺 in Tiantai Mountain. His biography appeared in Chapter 19 of the *Song gaoseng-zhuan* (*T.* no. 2061, vol. 50, 831b). His story is often depicted in the paintings of the Song and later dynasties; see Hou-mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press and Cincinnati, OH: Cincinnati Art Museum, 2009), 137, 142.

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