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Mit Beiträgen von HUAIYU CHEN, KAI HORSTHEMKE, DAFNI TOKAS, XIE CHAO,
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HUAIYU CHEN

The Other as the Transformed Alliance:

Living with the Tiger in Medieval Chinese Daoism

ABSTRACT: As the apex predators in the ecological system in medieval China, tigers posed a challenge to the local communities and Daoist hermits who lived in rural areas and mountains. Medieval Daoists developed particular discourses and strategies for dealing with the so-called tiger violence problem. These were shaped and reshaped by Daoist textual and doctrinal traditions, daily experiences of living with the natural environment and animals, interactions with the local community, and competition with Buddhists. Exploring medieval Daoist hagiographical sources shows that Daoists regarded tigers as companions, threats, and weapons in their religious and daily lives. Daoist approaches to tiger violence in medieval China illustrate that, on the one hand, Daoists preserved the doctrinal and ethical traditions that were rooted in their cosmology, and on the other hand they developed strategies for responding to new challenges from the natural environment and religious competition.

KEYWORDS: *Daoism, tiger, violence, companion, Buddhism*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to examine the Daoist approaches to wild tigers in nature and how these approaches bridged the gap between traditional Daoist philosophical values and Daoist monastic practices in medieval China. In ancient China, Daoist philosophies developed fruitful discourses on the tiger. Daoist art

and literature often depict the tiger and the dragon as two of the most important symbolic animals. However, with the rise of Daoist monasticism in medieval China, Daoist priests often encountered the real non-human tiger in the natural wilderness and they developed various strategies and techniques for handling

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the tiger in their social and religious lives.¹ As a wild animal, the tiger played various roles in medieval Chinese Daoist apologetic and narrative literature, such as companions to Daoist hermits in the mountains, threats against Daoist practitioners, and weapons used by Daoists against their rivals, such as Buddhists. In the medieval period, the expansion of human activities served to intensify conflicts between humans and animals in China, often disturbing the balance between the social and ecological order. With the constant growth of the Daoist ecclesiastical order, Daoist priests also expanded the scope of their interactions with the natural environment and local society. This paper examines how Daoists wrote about the interactions between the Daoist realm and the natural realm, and between wild tigers and Daoist hermits. Daoist attitudes and approaches to the tiger reflect how medieval Daoists understood and shaped the cosmological, ecological, and social order.

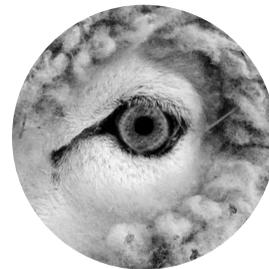
In particular, I will analyze the attitudes and methods of Daoists with respect to handling tiger violence and the ethics reflected in these attitudes and methods based on four elements: daily experiences and cognition vis-à-vis encounters with beasts and the natural environment, cosmological and doctrinal foundations, challenges by and competition from religious peers, and challenges from social and historical reality. Drawing upon medieval materials, I investigate how these

elements shaped and reshaped Daoist philosophical and cultural values.

In terms of sources, focus is placed on medieval Daoist hagiographies that provide numerous cases of how Daoist priests and devoted practitioners interacted with the natural environment, local communities, and other religious and cultural traditions. This provides an opportunity to discuss many cosmological, social, cultural, and ecological elements that might have shaped Daoist understandings of and ways of dealing with the fierce tiger when encountered in nature. First, how Daoists understood, and dealt with, the tiger was governed by doctrines and disciplines, cosmologically and ethically, which can be found in the Daoist textual tradition. Second, Daoists often changed their attitudes to animals by learning from and reacting to conflicts and competition with other traditions, especially Buddhism and Confucianism.² Third, Daoist cognition of animals was shaped and reshaped by daily experiences in both the natural environment and socio-economic life. Many Daoists lived in the mountains and forests, and they were thus regularly faced with the challenge of beasts, including tigers. Furthermore, some Daoists used domesticated animals in their social and economic lives, such as for agriculture and transportation, so conflicts between these domesticated animals and wild beasts also posed an issue.

¹ For a general discussion on the tiger in Chinese history, see Coggins: *The Tiger and the Pangolin*, 51–86.

² Anderson and Raphals: *Daoism and Animals*, 281; Anderson: *Flowering Apricot*, 177; Gernet: *Pitié pour les animaux*, 293–300.



2. THE SIGNIFICANCE AND POSITION OF THE TIGER IN DAOIST COSMOLOGY

Why is the tiger significant in Daoist studies? Firstly, ecologically speaking, the tiger was the apex predator in the natural environment and was popularly perceived as a ferocious and mighty animal in medieval China. When Daoist priests entered the wild forest and encountered tigers, they broke what was conceived as the natural boundary between the human and animal realms. Secondly, from a historical and cultural perspective, one of the most notable social problems in medieval China was the imminent threat of ferocious tigers against human lives and livestock. In medieval China, local governments developed rules and regulations for encouraging local hunters to trap and kill tigers.³ Tiger violence was one of the most visible threats to local communities. Thirdly, the tiger occupies a unique position in the Daoist tradition of the Celestial Masters, which can be traced back to the birth of this tradition centered on the legend of Zhang Daoling, the founder of the Daoist tradition of the Celestial Masters. When he was making his Divine Elixir of the Nine Heavens on a mountain in South China, a dragon and a tiger emerged in this place. Referring to lead and mercury, two ingredients for making elixirs, they served as the main metaphors in the Daoist tradition for symbolizing internal and external alchemy.⁴

Fourthly, an important Daoist deity in medieval China, the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu*), has a strong symbolic connection with the tiger that can be traced back to ancient times. As early as the Shang dynasty, people already linked their *mu* deity with »the tiger as a symbolic of the west since Neolithic times, an agent of death and transportation to the spirit world«⁵. In the late Han Dynasty, the Queen Mother of the West was depicted as a goddess under a canopy with a dragon to her left and a tiger to her right. The tiger and dragon respectively signify west and east, *ying* and *yang*, and death and life.⁶

Lastly, though the White Tiger often appears as one of the four cardinal animals symbolizing the west in popular beliefs, it also represents the power of damage and disaster. The White Tiger was regarded as a demon who was thirsty for blood; it is the symbolic animal for the spirit of the Great White Star, the destructive force of autumn. A meeting with this star is a presage of death because it represents a dangerous demon. Thus, it was believed that people who were born in the year of the tiger might bring harm to weddings, pregnancies, and newborn children. The Daoist text *Great Peace Scripture (Taipingjing)* regards the White Tiger as representing the stage of death in the cycle of life.⁷

3 Ikeda: *Chūgoku kodai no mōjū taisaku hōgi*, 611–637.

4 Wu: *Mapping Early Daoist Art*, 82.

5 Cahill: *Transcendence*, 13; Fracasso: *Holy Mothers*, 1–46.

6 Cahill: *Transcendence*, 26; Carter: *China and the Mysterious Occident*, 97–129.

7 Hou: *The Chinese Belief*, 209–219.



Daoism is not a fixed and ahistorical tradition and Daoist attitudes toward the natural environment and animals are mixed and equivocal throughout Chinese history. Early Daoist philosophical works including the *Daode jing* and the *Book of Zhuangzi* laid some foundation for our understanding of nature and the ecological world in ancient China. E. N. Anderson and Lisa Raphals note that early Daoists sharply separated people from animals or humanity from nature. They further suggest that »Early Daoism implies a morality of respect for the inner nature of things, and for the place of all things in the vast, ever-changing cosmic flow«⁸. These attitudes gradually changed with the full establishment of Daoist ecclesiastical order in the medieval period.

Medieval Daoist priests invented new discourses and rituals for overcoming any difficulties they may have faced upon entering the wilderness, including ferocious beasts. They would feel awe and respect toward the Most High Lord of the Dao (*Taishang daojun*) and the prefects, their highest authority of doctrines and their role models for practices. Medieval Daoist priests viewed the collapse of natural ecology as the result of a disorder of the Dao, which means that living beings did not follow the leadership of, and lost their faith in, the Dao. In general, ecosystems, biodiversity, environmental impacts, and sustainability are modern concepts, which cannot be found in medieval Daoist cosmology. Contemporary

emic and etic terminologies were created by modern scientific disciplines. Paul Goldin suggests that the Zhuangzian ideal of living in harmony with the external world could still inspire those people who might have accepted the typical Judeo-Christian way of viewing nature as a place for humanity to dominate.⁹ However, medieval Daoist priests often indicated that they could dominate the natural environment by taming tigers and riding dragons, which reflects the prevailing thinking during that time which regarded priests as the center of concern, rather than the natural environment. The priests, not the natural environment, practiced and embodied the Way.

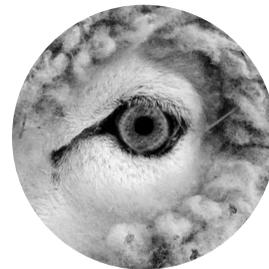
In medieval Daoist cosmology, the Most High Lord of the Dao is the highest sovereign who is responsible for creating and maintaining the cosmic order. In the power structure of this hierarchical order, the Divine figures such as the Most High Lord of the Dao are higher than human beings including Daoist priests, and the Daoist priests are higher than animals. The priests are working toward the status of transcendents (*Xian*). Among priests, the Heavenly Masters as community leaders enjoyed more esteemed positions than common priests. Since the priests could command gods to drive away tigers, it appears that they are more powerful than tigers. Thus, tigers, even though they are regarded as the apex predators in the natural realm, are inferior to human priests.¹⁰ It seems that in medie-

8 Anderson and Raphals: *Daoism and Animals*, 286.

9 Goldin: *Why Daoism*, 76–77.

10 Snarey: *The Natural Environment*, 85–96.

Daoism is not a fixed and ahistorical tradition and Daoist attitudes toward the natural environment and animals are mixed and equivocal throughout Chinese history.



val Chinese Daoism, to ensure the survival of Daoist order, the Most High Lord Lao appeared as a Supreme Deity and authorized the ethical power of Daoist practitioners to justify their attitudes toward the mountains and beasts.¹¹ It is not surprising that Daoist doctrines, rituals, and knowledge about nature, the environment, and animals are all centered on humans and serving humans' physiological, psychological, spiritual, and material needs.

3. DAOIST TAMING OF THE WILD TIGER IN THE NATURAL WILDERNESS

Contemporary scholarship has paid attention to the role of mountains in medieval Chinese religious life. With the construction of temples and religious sites, many mountains were transformed.¹² While religious practitioners were living in the mountains, encounters with wild animals including tigers became inevitable. However, the study of the roles of wild animals is still underdeveloped. Dealing with wild beasts such as tigers and snakes as well as the wilderness in which they lived became a proximate task for those Daoist hermits who entered the mountains. In *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Baopuzi)*, Daoist master Ge Hong (283–343) noted that many Daoists went to live in the mountains either to practice the Dao and concoct medicines or to escape from war and take shelter—and they should

master survival techniques to protect themselves from tigers, wolves, and poisonous insects.¹³ According to Ge Hong, one such technique involved understanding the calendar of taboos. In the longer and shorter months, there were certain days on which both Daoist practitioners and lay people entering the mountains would encounter these creatures.¹⁴ The image of the wilderness depicted by Ge Hong shares some similarities with that of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which, as Tuan Yi-fu points out, »wilderness is primordial chaos, a howling trackless waste, a dark world inhabited by monsters and evil spirits;« and »Wilderness is primeval chaos and potency, a threat and a lure«¹⁵. Numerous early medieval Daoist texts have noted various spirits and demons in the form of animals or other creatures. For example, ritually killing the snake was one of the most visible practices in early Daoism.¹⁶ Ge Hong provides a medicinal recipe for healing the wounds caused by the claws of tigers and bears. Further, Ge Hong taught ritual techniques which were said to disable tigers from moving.

According to medieval Daoist narratives, Daoist priests practiced the ritual of pacing voidness (*Buxu*) and received talismans from the Most High via the Celestial Masters so they could command demons, deities, and

For example, ritually killing the snake was one of the most visible practices in early Daoism.

11 Tuan: *Discrepancies*, 175–191.

12 Michael: *Mountains*, 23–54; Robson: *Power of Place*, Barrett: *Finding a Place*, 357–374.

13 Ge: *Baopuzi*, 124, 149, 299; von Glahn: *The Sini-ster Way*, 88–90.

14 Ge: *Baopuzi*, 301.

15 Tuan: *Ambiguity*, 420.

16 Chen: *Redemption*.



animals.¹⁷ Therefore, tigers and wolves would not harm them while they walked in the wilderness. For example, an early medieval Daoist text *The Declaration of the Perfected (Zhengao)* stated that Daoist master Ge Xuan (164–244) could ride a tiger and command demons while traveling.¹⁸ It can be discerned from *Traditions of Divine Transcendents (Shenxian zhuan)*¹⁹ that this ability was inherited and transmitted through the generations.

Medieval Daoist sources claim that Ge Xuan bestowed many texts and teachings on his disciple Zheng Siyuan.²⁰ Zheng apparently continued Ge Xuan's legacy of taming the tiger. Daoist writers of later generations praised Zheng for his high morality and virtue that pacified and commanded tigers to serve him.²¹ According to the eleventh-century Daoist encyclopedia *Cloudy Bookcase with Seven Labels (Yunji qiqian)*, Zheng's benevolence was extended to birds and beasts. Zheng once saved a pair of orphaned baby tigers and brought them

back to his mountain residence to feed them. Later, the male tiger came back to look for his cubs and also became a companion to Zheng. Zheng often traveled by riding the male tiger accompanied by the two cubs who bore books and medicines for Zheng.²² Zheng Siyuan's legacy transferred to his disciple Ge Hong. In his writing *Master Who Embraces Simplicity*, Ge Hong wrote that a particular talisman from the Lord Lao would protect him in the forest from the threats of all mountain and water demons, tigers, wolves, and poisonous snakes.²³

Gradually, taming tigers was portrayed as an accomplished skill for many eminent Daoist masters in medieval Daoist sources. According to the tradition of Orthodox Unity, Zhang Sheng's oldest son Zhang Zhaocheng could let his spirit travel out of his body for several hundreds of *li* while he was sitting in his chamber, and he could also tame tigers and leopards.²⁴ A story in the *Biographies of the Learners of the Way (Daoxue zhuan)* compiled by Ma Shu (?–581) in the sixth century notes that Xiao Lianzhen studied the Way and had a tiger as his companion. While he was sleeping, the tiger always crawled in front of his bed, and he had to ask the tiger to leave. He treated the tiger as his dog.²⁵

How could the tiger be tamed? And what does such taming mean for the Daoists? *The Book of Liezi* told a story about how tigers could

17 Anderson and Raphals: *Daoism and Animals*, 275–290.

18 Tao: *Zhengao*, 561. Meulenbeld (*Demonic Warfare*, 86) noted that in late imperial China, Zhao Gongming also posited as a tiger-riding warrior who could command Five Furies represented as five tigers for territory protection.

19 Ge: *Shenxian zhuan*, 50; Bokenkamp: *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 180.

20 Wang: *Dunhuang*, 86–90, 146; Kamitsuka: *Rikuchō*, 1–46.

21 This echoes the Confucian way of using morality and virtue to transform the behaviors of animals. See Sterckx: *The Animal and the Daemon*, 123–163.

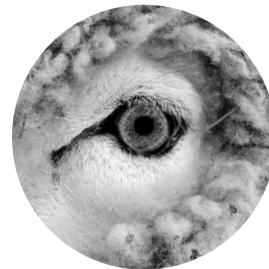
22 Zhang: *Yunji qiqian*, 2401.

23 Ge: *Baopuzi*, 308. Pregadio: *Great Clarity*, 91–92.

24 Zhang: *Zhonghua*, 346b.

25 *Ibid.*, 253c–254a.

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be reared. This book was probably compiled in the fourth century, though it was attributed to Lie Yukou, a scholar who was active in the fifth century BCE. Its second section states that the groom of King Xuan of Zhou had a slave named Liang Yang who was skillful in rearing beasts and birds. He tamed some savage animals including tigers, wolves, eagles, and ospreys. So, the King ordered Mao Qiuyuan to become Liang's apprentice to learn his skills. Liang told Mao that, »Although tigers are a different species from man, when they fawn on the man who rears them it is because he lets them get their way; and likewise when they kill him, it is because he thwarts them. That being so, how would I dare to make them angry by thwarting them? But I do not please them by giving them their way either. For when joy passes its climax we are bound to revert to anger, and when anger passes its climax we always revert to joy because in both cases we are off-balance. Now since in my heart I neither give them their way nor thwart them, the birds and animals regard me as one of themselves.«²⁶

Liang Yang emphasized observing the natures of beasts and birds. One should seek the balance between thwarting them and giving them their way. One should make oneself become one of these beasts or birds by earning their trust. In 741, Tang Emperor Xuanzong issued an imperial order to establish a nationwide Daoist school system. Daoist schools were created across the empire and students

in these public schools had to study Daoist classics, such as the *Daode Jing*, the *Book of Zhuangzi*, the *Book of Liezi*, and the *Book of Wenzhi*.

In this context, to tame means to transform savage beasts into companions, servants, disciples, guardians, or animals that could be used in the social and economic lives of humans. As many other stories in the medieval period reveal, tigers could serve as religious practitioners' companions while they cultivated themselves as hermits deep in the mountains, appearing as servants carrying books, and guardians protecting their lords. The tamed or domesticated animals must serve the social, cultural, spiritual, and economic needs of humans. Taming is a display of human dominance, either through ethical or ritual power. Taming itself is a cultural tool invented by humans. Two foundations seem to support the Daoist taming of the violent tiger. One is the teaching of co-habiting with wild animals in nature which can be found in early Daoist philosophical writings. The other is the ethical rules of not killing animals in the discipline texts of early Daoism, such as *The Precept Scripture of the Highest Lord Lao (Taishang laojun jiejing)*,²⁷ *The Redpine's Almanac of Petitions (Chisongzi zhanglü)*,²⁸ and *The Rules and Precepts of Worshipping the Dao (Fengdao kejie)*.

It should also be noted that there were interactions between the Daoist discourse of taming the tiger and medieval Chinese polit-

One should make oneself become one of these beasts or birds by earning their trust.

26 Graham: *Lieh-Tzu*, 42–43.

27 Lai: *The Demon Statutes*, 251–281.

28 Verellen: *The Heavenly Master*, 291–343.



ical philosophy. In the Western Wei dynasty (535–551), Chen Baochi studied with Master Wang and Lu Jingzhen to receive mysterious teachings. Every morning when he practiced worshipping, a tamed white tiger accompanied him. When a group of bandits approached, a horde of tigers would knock a tree to alert him. If a violent tiger came, these tigers would also knock the tree in alarm. So, the Western Wei Emperor Wendi invited Chen to his court and asked him about how to tame and govern a tiger. He used tigers as a metaphor to rule his subjects. For him, tigers were the same as subjects. If human beings treated tigers well, then tigers would not be a threat to humans. If the ruler tortured subjects, then subjects would resent him. This also applied to tigers.²⁹ In this story, the violent tiger was regarded as being in the same category as the bandits that could endanger Chen Baochi, the Daoist practitioner. However, the tamed tigers could serve as Chen's guardians. The tamed tigers stood with Daoists, while the untamed wild tiger stood beside the bandits. A similar story appeared in the biography of Guo Wen, a native of Luoyang. He lived in a stone cave with a tamed tiger, who often accompanied him. The Emperor of the Jin dynasty invited him and asked about his method of taming the tiger. He said just being natural, which means that, if human beings were not willing to harm the tiger, then the tiger would not harm humans. This was the same as governing subjects. If the ruler treated his subjects well,

then the subjects would respect the ruler. If the ruler tortured subjects, they would resent him.³⁰

As a religious monasticism, medieval Chinese Daoism developed a set of rituals for constructing the Daoist cosmological order, within and beyond Daoist communities, working with both residents and animals. Daoist hermits, who resided in wild mountains, were required to deal with beasts on a daily basis. According to Ge Hong, three talismans were designed for protection while entering a mountain, including »The Lord Lao's Talisman for Entering a Mountain (*Laojun rushan fu*)«, »The Talisman for Entering a Mountain and Removing the Tiger and Wolf (*Rushan pi hulang fu*)«³¹, and a talisman carved on a two-inch block of jujube wood for worshipping and wearing to prevent hundreds of demons, snakes, tigers, and wolves from harming the wearer.³² All three talismans could be hung up around the pens of domesticated animals such as cattle, sheep, and pigs for protection against tigers and wolves.³³

In the fifth and sixth centuries, a ritual manual that was allegedly compiled by the noted Daoist priest Tao Hongjing (456–536) taught methods for making five different talismans, aiming to control the body of the tiger, which reflects the Daoist understanding of the

30 Du: *Du Guangting*, 767.

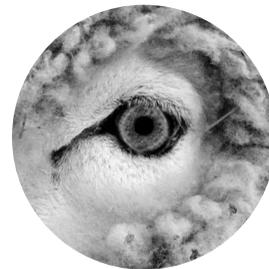
31 Ge: *Baopuzi*, 310.

32 Ibid., 311.

33 Ibid., 313; Bokenkamp: *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 15–20.

29 Zhang: *Zhonghua*, 603c.

As a religious monasticism, medieval Chinese Daoism developed a set of rituals for constructing the Daoist cosmological order, within and beyond Daoist communities, working with both residents and animals.



animal body and its materiality. This ritual text entitled *Rituals Transmitted and Bestowed by Lord Tao* (*Tao gong chuanshou yi*) survived in the Dunhuang manuscript (S. 3.750, P. 2.559, and BD 11.252 and S. 6.301). Its second section is called the »Talisman Seal of Prohibiting Mountains«, which teaches how to deal with beasts in the mountains.³⁴ Interestingly this passage offers very detailed guidelines for how to control different parts of the tiger's body, such as its gallbladder, eyes, and five organs. A Daoist priest is instructed to invoke and command different deities to control different parts of the tiger. He will have to receive divine talismans and seals from his master to control tigers. The passage indicates that a Daoist priest equipped with talismans and seals could survive an attack by a ferocious tiger without getting hurt, but it does not say that the Daoist priest could bestow Daoist precepts on a tiger so a tiger could become a Daoist, as was noted in Buddhist writings. Other sources state that skilled Daoists, both male and female, could use their power to pacify the wild tiger.

4. DAOIST APPROACHES TO TIGER VIOLENCE AGAINST THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In medieval China, both religious and non-religious sources portrayed tiger violence as an imminent threat to the local communities and villages. Confucianism, as the state ideology, advocated virtuous governance that provided

local communities with the safety of being free from tiger violence. Confucian political philosophy taught that the local administrators could drive the violent tiger away by their Confucian virtue. Both Buddhist and Daoist literature attempted to demonstrate that their clergies could help local communities stop tiger violence to serve their social interactions for expanding their religious interests. Buddhist monks claimed that they could tame the tiger and convert it to Buddhism by bestowing Buddhist precepts and ordaining the tiger. The Daoist priests took a similar approach to dealing with the tiger violence issue by performing certain rituals.³⁵ The Daoist community transformed how it dealt with tiger violence into religious rhetoric that manifested the power of Daoism. Handling tiger violence was an important means for the Daoist priests to interact with local communities and contribute to the safety and stability of local villages. Furthermore, they could increase their religious capital by resolving tiger violence and not taking rewards from the local government. Their social engagement would help the spread of Daoism and the acceptance of Daoist ideology in local areas.

It seems that the threat of the tiger explicitly appeared as the »tiger disaster« in early medieval Daoist literature, which illustrates that early medieval Daoists accepted the discourse of »tiger violence« that was endorsed by the Confucian state ideology. An important Daoist manual of petitions, *Master Red-*

Confucian political philosophy taught that the local administrators could drive the violent tiger away by their Confucian virtue.

34 Wang, *Daojiao*, 331–332; Lü: *Tang*, 63.

35 Kleeman: *Daoism*, 68.



As a Daoist, Ge Hong valued his cattle more than the tiger, so he protected them against the threat posed by this animal.

pine's *Almanac of Petitions*, preserved a text entitled »Petition for Stopping and Eliminating the Tiger Disaster«. According to this text, villagers often dealt with attacks by tigers and wolves. On one occasion, these beasts ate humans and harmed six domesticated animals. The villagers sought help from a Daoist priest. The Daoist priest summoned many deities and their attendants such as the Lord of the Northern Darkness and his soldiers, as well as the Lord of Protecting Capital and Pacifying the North and his soldiers, and asked them to work with the lords and deities of local mountains, rivers, earth, and grain to eliminate the harm from tigers and wolves.³⁶ This method appears to illustrate that the Daoist priests also commanded some heavenly deities to work with local deities on the disaster issue. The priests did not engage in the elimination of tiger attacks in person; while Daoist ritual empowered them to summon various deities from the heavenly realm, it did not help them gain the ability to handle savage beasts themselves. This is a very different approach from the Buddhist practice of stopping tiger attacks.

In early medieval Daoist literature, the tiger was portrayed as an intruder that troubled the local community. Ge Hong's story shows that the tiger harmed livestock, such as cattle, in his era. A Daoist text entitled *Secret Words of Embracing Simplicity* (*Baopu mijan*) perhaps from the Eastern Jin dynasty, the *Marvelous Essence Scripture of Eight Thearches of the Cavern of Spirit* (*Dongshen baji miaojing jing*), illustrated a

particular method of stopping tiger violence used by Ge Hong.³⁷ Ge Hong invoked the lord of the mountains by performing a fasting ritual, and then he commanded the lord of the mountains to kill the tigers and restore order in the mountain region and local community.³⁸ Ge Hong did not deal with the tiger violence in person by taming or killing these animals; instead, he commanded local deities to do the job. Also, Ge Hong taught a technique for preventing the tiger from harming domesticated animals. He taught that using the blood of a green goat and a red hen to make a cinnabar colored pigment and smearing it on the foreheads of cattle, sheep, and other domesticated animals would shield them from plague and illness, as well as from harm from the tiger and leopard.³⁹

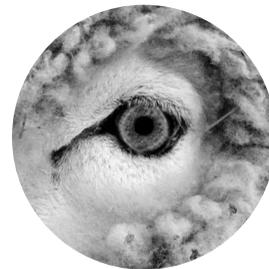
As a Daoist, Ge Hong valued his cattle more than the tiger, so he protected them against the threat posed by this animal. The cattle appeared as Ge Hong's private property that could serve his social and economic needs. The tiger appeared as a savage beast that could damage his property. The protection of a Daoist for his cattle could even cost the tiger its life. Ge Hong's understanding and practice of social justice seem to be based on his social and economic interests, rather than the ecological order of the animal realm in the natural environment.

36 Zhang: *Zhonghua*, 643a-b.

37 Wang: *Dunhuang*, 220–230.

38 Zhang: *Zhonghua*, 488b-c.

39 Ge: *Baopuzi*, 292.



In Ge Hong's Daoist hagiographical collection *Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (*Shenxian zhuan*), many Daoist priests and laypeople were portrayed as transcendents who could prevent tigers from harming humans. Ge Yue, whose Daoist name was Yellow Hut Master (Huangluzi), could put prohibitive spells on tigers, wolves, all manner of noxious vermin, and flying creatures to prevent them from moving. Under his prohibitive spells, even the water of the river would reverse its course for one or two *li* (in vol. 4).⁴⁰ Mao Ying, a native of Xianyang, went to Mount Heng to practice Daoism at the age of 18. He finished his Daoist studies at 38. Later, he moved to Mount Juqu in south China. In the place where he lived, due to the power of his virtue, there were no disasters such as floods, droughts, plagues, disease, locusts, and so forth, and in the local mountain, there were no threats from thorn grass, poisonous trees, tigers, or wolves.⁴¹

Stopping tiger violence to help the local community appeared in both Buddhist and Daoist sources in medieval China, which suggests that there was a competition between these two religions in terms of generating cultural and religious capital for maintaining and expanding their influence. After all, the winner of the competition would demonstrate superior religious power. Many stories depicted eminent Buddhist monks and Daoist priests either driving away violent tigers or eliminating tiger violence. Two stories seem to share a

similarity in terms of the titles for the accomplished masters in both Buddhism and Daoism. In the Tang dynasty (618–907), a Daoist master Pei Haozhong resided in the Huadao Abbey in Yuntai, Langzhou (modern Langzhong, Sichuan). It is stated that he was more than 100 years old, and he often took pollen branches to cultivate the pneuma (*qi*). While he was holding his breath and closing his eyes during this process of cultivation, a tamed yet ferocious tiger often served beside him. The tiger would also walk up to the cliff together with him. Since the local area suffered from tiger violence, villagers made images of Pei to shield themselves from the attacks of tigers. As a result, he received the venerable title of the »Honored Master of Taming Tigers (*Fuhu zunshi*)«. Besides his talent for taming tigers, he could also command dragons to make rain.⁴² This ability to tame tigers and command dragons can also be found in medieval Chinese Buddhist narratives; in the Song dynasty, Chan masters Zhifeng (909–985) and Fazhong (1084–1149) both earned the title »Chan Master of Taming the Tiger«. ⁴³ The later appearance of this Buddhist title might suggest that it was a variant phrase borrowed from Daoism.

Besides taming the tiger, some medieval Daoist narratives state that Daoist priests could use force to attack the tiger and befriend beasts. According to the *Record of Mar-*

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40 Zhang: *Zhonghua*, 34.

41 *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 37.

42 This story was cited from *Yeren xianhua* (compiled by Jing Huan in 965), *Ibid.*, 305b-c.

43 *T.* 49, no. 2036, 20; *X.* 77, no. 1524, 7: 419c-420a, J. 33, no. B277, 23: 180a; Chen: *Dongwu*, ch. 4.



vels (*Luyi ji*), a Daoist text compiled by Du Guangting (850–933), Jing Zhiguo was a person who obtained the Way. During his stay on Doutu Mountain, he lived with tigers and leopards and tamed them so that their behavior resembled domesticated dogs. Sometimes crows and vultures would sit on his shoulders and limbs. A giant snake came out and then fled under his command. Several tigers fought with each other in the court of the abbey. Jing Zhiguo attacked them, and the tigers just disappeared.⁴⁴

Although in the early medieval period, Daoist precepts often prohibited Daoists from taking the lives of animals, Daoist narratives show that on very rare occasions, a Daoist killing a tiger to stop its attack on domestic livestock could be justified. This shows a tension between Daoist ethical principles and practical realities. Stopping tiger violence was a crucial theme in the *Record of the Numinous Efficacy of Daoist Teachings* (*Daojiao lingyan ji*) compiled by Du Guangting.⁴⁵ In most cases, Daoists summoned local deities to handle savage tigers. Yet one case from Sichuan was an exception because it presents a justification for killing tigers in medieval Daoism. This case appeared in a story told by He Yifan, who served Gao Pian (821–887), a highly acclaimed general in the late Tang dynasty. When Gao was the military governor in Chengdu (r. 875–879), a sly fox spirit often disturbed his military

brothel by throwing tiles and stones and displaying transformations of exotic forms. Gao tried some talismans and prayers, but nothing worked. He Yifan then told him a story about Ge Hong who resolved the problem of tiger violence. When Ge Hong found a tiger had harmed cows in his residential region, he followed the method taught in the *Inner Writ of the Sovereign of Earth* (*Dihuang nei wen*) to summon a deity to handle this tiger violence. The next day, two dead tigers were found in the forest nearby. So, He Yifan recommended that Gao try the *Inner Writ* method. Then He helped Gao kill an old sly fox.⁴⁶ Combining the tiger and fox together in this medieval context, it seems that both animals were demonized as evil spirits – no longer merely animals – and they were subject to be conquered by Daoist priests via rituals, which means that non-human spirits rather than non-human animals were eliminated.

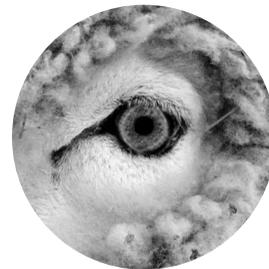
In comparison with medieval Chinese Buddhism, it is striking that Daoism endorsed this act of killing tigers. Killing an animal was not regarded as an option for Buddhist monks when they faced a violent beast according to both medieval Buddhist monastic rules and the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*. Medieval Chinese Buddhism often classified and handled animals in three ways: keeping them as monastic property on the monastic premises if they were domesticated, releasing them if they were wild, or raising them prior to release if they were wild but currently

44 Du: *Du Guangting*, 31.

45 Miyazawa: *Dōkyō*, 1–38; Arao: *To Kotei Dōkyō*, 20–36.

46 Du: *Du Guangting*, 263.

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too young.⁴⁷ While discussing the Daoist regulation text entitled *One Hundred and Eighty Precepts*, Kristofer Schipper suggested that »Daoism developed institutions and regulations with the purpose of protecting the environment and to ensure that its natural balance would not be destroyed.«⁴⁸ But he noted that in Daoism, killing living beings was allowed provided that it was not for consumption, eating, suicide, or murder.

Medieval Daoism not only justified the killing of the tiger, but also justified mobilizing tigers to kill Buddhist monks, by which it portrayed the tiger as a weapon for protecting Daoist property from non-Daoist political and religious powers. The appearance of the brave tiger warrior was leveraged as a sign of the efficacy of Daoism against Buddhism. One piece of textual evidence shows that the Daoist Calamus Abbey in Guangzhou in the Tang dynasty used to be a popular tourist destination for its medical store, elixir well, and ancient pine tree but it was once occupied by a group of Buddhist monks who built the Chan temple. However, a local elder warned the monks that they should not take it over from the Daoists because if they did, they risked being harmed by tigers and leopards. At first these monks did not believe what the elder said. Then a month later a tiger killed more than ten monks and forced the rest of this Buddhist group to flee. So, this place again became a Daoist abbey, and Daoists enjoyed

tigers as their companions.⁴⁹ Another piece of textual evidence relates that in the Southern Marchmount, the Transcendent Platform of Lady Wei was created on a giant rock in front of the central peak for Daoist transcendents. One night, a group of Buddhist monks tried to push the platform but could not move it. They left with frustration. Suddenly a tiger killed nine of these monks and only the one who had not intended to push the platform survived.⁵⁰ Again, medieval Daoist priests acknowledged the physiological strength of the tiger and its mighty symbolic power that could prevent Buddhist monks from interfering with or taking away Daoist property and even kill the monks. Daoist priests mobilized the tiger and transformed it into a guardian animal in Daoist narratives. In these narratives, a new social order was established for maintaining the ascendancy of Daoism, which can be regarded as a new development of Daoist apologetics. In this order, Daoist priests appeared to have greater power for taming and even killing the tiger, and the tiger was stronger than the Buddhist monks.

The competition between Buddhism and Daoism began from the very beginning in the 1st century A.D. when Buddhism laid the foundation for its first urban stronghold in Luoyang. The alleged burning of scriptures to attest both authenticity and magic power was the first legend that was used as evidence of religious power in both Buddhist and Dao-

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47 Chen: *Buddhist Classification*, 31–51.

48 Schipper: *Daoist Ecology*, 79.

49 Du: *Du Guangting*, 170.

50 *Ibid.*, 168, 173.



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ist textual traditions. In the medieval period, competition with respect to images, rituals, and practices became more intensive. This paper argues that Daoism and Buddhism also engaged in the contest for hegemony in ruling wild nature by taming the ferocious tiger, the so-called king of all beasts in East Asia.

CONCLUSIONS

Medieval Chinese Daoist monasticism developed a strong anthropocentric tradition. More broadly, there are debates in contemporary scholarship on the anthropocentrism of religious traditions. Lynn White Jr. holds the anthropocentrism of Christianity and other religious traditions accountable for the destruction of Nature/ecosystem.⁵¹ In fact, there is a long tradition of Abrahamic religious anthropocentrism. Some scholars turn to the ancient sources of Asian traditions for environmental-friendly ideas, and many scholars agree that the religious traditions of South, East, and Southeast Asia, seem to promote responsible behavior toward the natural environment. These traditions often generally show a sense of the numinous in nature and the perception of sacred mountains, forests, groves, and rivers.⁵² They appear to support the idea that the boundary between humans and nature is blurry. Some traditions believe

in animism and the interdependence of all creatures.

Medieval Daoist narratives show that Daoists otherized animals as nonhuman species. Animals could not thoroughly understand the Way (*dao*) through their own self-cultivation due to their inferior moral agency and intelligence without the guidance and instructions of Daoists. Unlike some domesticated animals such as pigs, horses, and sheep, tigers, as wild animals, are not natural resources to be used for labor or food in human economic life. Nor are tigers pets for daily companionship. The tiger, symbolizing the highest power of animals in East Asian culture, served as cultural capital for Daoist priests to maintain their image as superior moral cultivators who have religious power and dominance. Medieval Daoist narratives developed religious rhetoric that eminent Daoist priests could mobilize the power granted by the Lord of the Dao to commanding deities and demons to fight with the beasts.

Although tiger attacks on local villagers and livestock in medieval China might have been caused by human expansion and invasion into the realm of the tiger, Daoists, following the definition in medieval Chinese society at the governmental and local levels, defined the attacks as tiger violence. By accepting this definition, some Daoist priests engaged in competition with the local government and Buddhist community to pacify this violence. On the one hand, Daoist engagement could indeed help the local community by resolving the problem of tiger attacks. On the other

⁵¹ White Jr.: *The Historical Roots*, 1203–1207.

⁵² Taylor: *The Greening*, 268–305; Miller: *China's Green Religion*.



hand, Daoist priests reaped cultural capital by exemplifying religious power. Even though a Daoist priest might not directly take the life of a tiger, by mobilizing demons and deities as proxy executors, the tiger was killed. Killing is an act of violence that has to be justified when it appears in the Daoist account from the cosmological and ethical perspectives of Daoism. Furthermore, the Daoist monastic community also transformed the ferocious tiger to become its ally and protect its property against Buddhist threats.

Medieval Daoist narratives make a distinction between the violent tiger and the tamed tiger, which was based on the needs of the Daoist priests and community; this distinction serves the Daoist rhetorical strategy of responding to the competition from medieval Buddhist monks, and to the challenge from local villagers. Tamed tigers could serve the social, cultural, economic, and spiritual needs of Daoist priests and local villagers. In

medieval Daoist narratives, the tiger could be portrayed as the guardian, the companion, and the disciple of the Daoist hermits in the mountains and forests. The violent tiger was portrayed as the dangerous enemy, and in such cases killing this enemy was justified, though traditional Daoist philosophical principles and early Daoist precepts did not endorse killing. Killing the violent tiger seems to illustrate that in medieval Daoist narratives there was still a clear boundary between wild and untamed nature and the civilized world of the Dao. The latter is part of human society and governed by the principles of the Dao. Killing a violent tiger is a disturbance of the ecological order of wild nature, but it benefits the local village or the civilized world more generally. So, in this sense, medieval Daoist narratives value human society more than nature. Therefore, this distinction between the violent tiger and the tamed tiger is still a manifestation of anthropocentrism.

... medieval Daoist narratives value human society more than nature.



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