

The Black Tiger Cult in Anze:
A Local History of Tigers, Humans, and Gods in Late Imperial and Modern China

by

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the Black Tiger Cult in Anze, Shanxi from the 17th to the 21st century and explores changing human-tiger relationships as well as the localization of canonical traditions. Drawing upon local gazetteers, scholar-officials' petitions, canonical texts, stele inscriptions, and temple murals in the area, this study sheds new light on relations among animals, humans, and gods through the deification of the black tiger. While the harsh natural environment intensified conflicts between humans and tigers, the rise of the Black Tiger Cult in local communities helped ease these ecological and social conflicts during the late-imperial era. As the cult gradually established its presence to serve spiritual and practical needs of local people, its practice complemented the mainstream religious communities and state-sponsored sacrificial rituals. The Black Tiger Cult brought together communities and the state power by providing them a space to express and negotiate their spiritual, political, agricultural, and cultural interests. This study also offers a comparative perspective on the Black Tiger Cult in North China and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan during modern times. Different levels of connections between these cults and the historical memory of human-tiger conflicts may contribute to the reinvention of the deified tiger and its relationship with contemporary people. This study argues that the deification of tigers did not elevate the position of animals higher than that of human beings. The establishment of Black Tiger Temples likely changed the local distribution of tigers. Moreover, although traditions of tiger gods vary in different regions and times, they share similar cultural elements that have been interwoven with local human-tiger/animal relationships.

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to my “tiger” parents, Su Xianzhen 蘇憲珍 and Zhang Zhongxiao 張中曉, who pushed and supported me through this decade-long journey across the globe.

To my little feline friend Pippin, who shares the same age as this dissertation and helped me understand human-animal relationships better. I was indeed “drawing a tiger using a cat model” 照貓畫虎.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Hector Trevino II for his love, patience, and hours of time spent on editing my writing. I cannot imagine my life without you.

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INTRODUCTION

Nature was both metaphor and reality.

–Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*

On April 23rd 2021, villagers in the rural area of the Mishan 密山 City, Heilongjiang 黑龍江 Province found a wild Siberian tiger in their neighborhood. For almost an hour, the tiger lay cautiously still under the inspection of the curious villagers. After the police’s arrival, the bystanders were evacuated, and the tiger was still at large. During the process to capture this unexpected intruder, the startled animal smashed the window of a nearby car and attacked a farmer in the field. The farmer was sent to the hospital with an arm injury while the tiger was anesthetized and sent to the feline breeding center in Hengdaohezi 橫道河子 for further examination. The tiger turned to be a male, between 2 and 3 years old, and weighed 225 kg (496 lbs.). Since it was found in the Mt. Wanda 完達山 area, it was officially named as “Mt. Wanda No. 1.” On May 18th, the tiger was released back to its natural habitat.

As the news flooded Chinese social media with pictures, videos that were taken on the scene, and interviews with the participants, heated online discussions of the incident resurrected the memory and trauma of historical human-tiger conflicts, which soon became overpowered by the positive implication of environmental improvement. According to Xianhuanet’s report on April 24th, 2021, this tiger incident signified the extension of the tiger territory and the increase of their population. It also demonstrated the improvement

of the local ecological environment after halting the commercial logging and the establishment of the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park.¹

The symbolism of the tiger has transformed as human-tiger relations have shifted from time to time. While a tiger's presence was extremely dangerous to residents and considered, according to the Confucian traditions, to be an omen of failing governance in the pre-modern times, modern people now regard it as an indication of successful environmental policies. This kind of conceptual transformation has also taken place in local cults² that were rooted in canonical literature and popular folklore, but not as strictly regulated by the state or mainstream religious communities, such as Buddhists and Daoists. In the past, the deified tiger reflected people's instinctive anxiety toward threats in the wilderness, awe for the powerful, and hope to gain total control of nature. The tiger image has been adapted, reimaged, and sometimes diminished as this tradition of the deified tiger has continued. The tiger not only tells a history of local ecology, but also serves as an indication of the survival and spread of the spiritual traditions.

My study will focus on the Black Tiger Cult in Shanxi 山西, specifically Anze 安澤 County. Shanxi once was populated by wild tigers due to its mountainous landscape and

¹ 黑龍江野生東北虎進村追蹤：不到半年出現數次，“大王”為何頻頻“下山”？ (Tracing the Wild Siberian Tiger's Entering the Village in Heilongjiang: Having Showed Up Several Times within Half a Year, Why Would the “Grand King” Frequently “Descended from the Mountains”?) Accessed on April 30th 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-04/24/c_1127370571.htm

² I would like to adopt Paul Katz's definition of “cult” as “a body of men and women who worship a deity and give of their time, energy, and wealth in order for the worship of this deity to continue and thrive.” He also pointed out that “a single cult may exist only in one locale, but it can also spread to cover a province, parts of a number of provinces, or even all of China.” Paul R. Katz, *Demon Hordes and Burning Boats: The Cult of Marshal Wen in Late Imperial Chekiang*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 3.

large vegetation coverage. Despite speculation about regional extinction of tiger species in modern times, there has been a rich cultural presence of tigers, especially so in the southern area where Anze is located. The Black Tiger Cult in Anze draws my attention for the following three reasons. First, the rise and fall of the Black Tiger Cult indicated ecological changes in this area since most of the Black Tiger Temples were originally built to protect locals from tiger attacks. Second, many extant Black Tiger Temples established and renovated since the 17th century in Anze offered rich visual and textual information on the cult and its local context. Third, the Black Tiger Cult flourished during the Ming-Qing era and is still around in modern times. Traditions of the Black Tiger God have spread and become localized in many places in Mainland China and Taiwan. Although contemporary scholarship often briefly touched upon the Black Tiger Cult in Anze, new approaches and new materials in this study shed new light upon this topic. This is especially so from the perspective of human-animal relationships in closely examining the changing identity and spiritual narratives of the Black Tiger God, the sophisticated relationships between tigers, humans, and gods, and a cultural network among other traditions of deified tigers in modern Mainland China and Taiwan.

My study of the Black Tiger Cult intends to join conversations with human-animal studies, religious studies, and historical studies. The attempt of this study is to seek an answer to the following questions: How was the black tiger deified? What were the cultural and social forces that brought the Black Tiger Cult to life in canonical and local narratives? What were the Black Tiger Cult's relations to local religious communities and the state power? What ecological and social stories could be found in the process of establishing and renovating the Black Tiger Temples? How do different communities in Mainland

China and Taiwan preserve traditions of the tiger god and transform them in response to the local needs?

1. Subject and Significance

My study of the Black Tiger Cult in the Anze area benefited from the rise of animal studies tremendously. Animal studies or human-animal studies have grown rapidly in recent decades due to environmental challenges brought by record-breaking industrialization process and population growth, which has raised political, social, ethical and intellectual awareness. Back in the 1960s, Lynn White Jr. expressed doubts that “disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology.” Although animal studies scholarship mostly focused on modern and contemporary issues, many scholars that worked on traditional sources attempted to study the historical roots of contemporary problems. Focusing on the ecological crisis in the discourse on the Christian theology, White pointed out the problematic “dualism of man and nature” and suggested that we should “find a new religion, or rethink our old ones.”³ In the past several decades, contemporary scholarship has largely focused on animals in Christian tradition. However, a strong interest in animals in non-Christian religious traditions have recently blossomed. For example, some scholars have turned to study the three major teachings in traditional China, namely Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Many scholars such as Christopher Chapple,⁴ Mary Tucker, John

³ Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” in *Science* 155: 3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

⁴ Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

Berthrong,⁵ Ian Harris,⁶ and Chengzhong Pu⁷ have done extensive research on Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism from the perspective of human-animal relationships and argued that these traditions promoted non-violent treatment of animals and thus pursued “ecocentrism” in contrast to “anthropocentrism.”

However, based on the human-animal binary, I am more inclined to the idea where roles and images of animals in Chinese religious texts mainly served as rhetorical devices for either didactic purposes or the construction of cosmology. To prove my point, I will explore a local cult where a deified animal was the center of the spiritual narrative, which will offer a more straightforward perspective of how local communities perceived certain animals and mobilized these animals to fulfill human spiritual needs.

In the field of historical studies, the “animal turn” in the past decades was part of the efforts of historians who attempted to draw attention to underrepresented groups, including animals, by decentering the position of the conventional historiography. According to Natalie Davis, the marginalized history of the repressed and silenced is drawing more attention from scholars.⁸ However, the problem is, as pointed out by Erica Fudge, that animals are unable to write their history from their perspective, and the animal

⁵ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, ed., *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 1998).

⁶ Ian Harris, “A Vast Unsupervised Recycling Plant: Animals and the Buddhist Cosmos,” in Kimberley Patton and Paul Waldau, eds., *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁷ Chengzhong Pu, *Ethical Treatment of Animals in Early Chinese Buddhism: Beliefs and Practices*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World,” in *History and Theory*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May 2011), pp. 188-202.

history turns into the history of human perception of animals. Fudge further identified three approaches, namely what she called “intellectual history” (animals’ values for humans), “humane history” (animal ethics and welfare), and “holistic history” (the interactions and relationships between humans and animals).⁹ Based on Fudge’s theory, Mark Elvin’s highly acclaimed study of the socio-historical transformation of China from the perspective of elephant’s migration was a good example of the third historical approach.¹⁰

Similarly, my research on the Black Tiger Cult intends to recover a local history by focusing on the entanglements between spiritual representations of tigers and environmental issues centered on tigers. By analyzing a local cult related to the tiger in Chinese local communities, I attempt to bring the discussion of animals and religion into the conversations with history. Specifically, I will pinpoint the time of the establishment and renovation of Black Tiger Temples, and then compare these dates with the timeframe of tiger activities recorded in local gazetteers and other historical records. In this way, we can begin to restore the local history of human-animal relationships.

Focusing on relationships among tigers, humans, and gods, my study of the Black Tiger Cult intends to join conversations with human-animal studies, religious studies, and historical studies. More specifically, my study discusses the deification of the black tiger based on canonical narratives and popular beliefs, changing purposes of Black Tiger

⁹ Erica Fudge, “A Left-handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals,” in *Representing Animals: Theories of Contemporary Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 3-18.

¹⁰ Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Temples and representations of tiger gods in different time periods and locations, and local tiger history and ecological stories that still impact modern society.

The theoretical foundation of my study is animal symbolism. In 1980, John Berger examined the evolution of human relationship with animals and as the title of his article “Why Look at Animals” suggests, “animals are always the observed.”¹¹ This observation of animals reminds people that they themselves are also observed by their surroundings. Animals are metaphorically, a mirror to reflect human anxiety and desire, especially when they are a part of spiritual narratives. Being considered deities or in close association with gods, animals are generalized and worshiped since the species itself is immortal regardless of the mortality of its individuals. This objectification of animals taps into the symbolization of animals. Based on Jacques Lacan’s three orders of experience—the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic, Alan Bleakley introduced three realms or orders of experience with animals: the biological (literal), the psychological (imaginal), and the conceptual (semiotic, symbolic and textual).¹² While Bleakley’s theory describes the transformation process of the animal image from physical to symbolic, Huaiyu Chen 陳懷宇 further elaborated on three domains that the animal images live in, namely cultural (reading and visualizing cultural products), historical-physical (actual contact between humans and wild animals), and psychological-cognitive (imagined animals perceived from the previous two encounters). He stressed that these three kinds of animal representation

¹¹ John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?” in *About Looking*, (New York: Vintage International, 1992).

¹² Alan Bleakley, *The Animalizing Imagination: Totemism, Textuality and Ecocriticism*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), pp. 38-40.

are interrelated and should not be separated from each other.¹³ My research will trace the interrelation among tiger images in these three domains and explore the impact of psychological-cognitive tiger images on modern human-animal relationships.

2. Literature Review and Sources

Regarding tiger studies in the Chinese context, there are three areas related to this research: Tiger representations in Chinese politics and religions; ecological impact of human-tiger relationship; and the worship of deified tigers in popular traditions.

Firstly, regarding the tiger representations in Chinese politics and religions, Huaiyu Chen viewed the transmission and localization of Buddhism in medieval China as being based on the employment of tiger imagery in hagiographies and its connection to the traditional Chinese ideal where the pacification of tigers and other vicious animals was a sign of good governance.¹⁴ In addition to tiger images, Chen also conducted a study of tiger motifs in medieval Chinese narratives where he suggested the transformation between tigers and humans was based on the theory of Five Phases before the arrival of Buddhism and then the Buddhist concept of reincarnation thereafter.¹⁵ In his latest scholarship, Chen

¹³ Huaiyu Chen, “The Road to Redemption: Killing Snakes in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” in *Religions* 10 No. 4 (2019): 249-278.

¹⁴ Huaiyu Chen, *Dongwu yu zhonggu zhengzhi zongjiao zhixu* 動物與中古政治宗教秩序 (Animals and Political Religious Orders of the Medieval Times) (Shanghai: Shanghai gujichubanshe, 2012). Moreover, Chen and Xing Zhang discussed the transformation of the Buddhist titles from lion to tiger to accommodate the Chinese perception of kingship and power. See Xing Zhang and Huaiyu Chen, “From Lion to Tiger: The Changing Buddhist Images of Apex Predators in Trans-Asian Contexts,” in Rotem Kowner, Guy Bar-Oz, Michal Biran, Meir Shahar, and Gideon Shelach-Lavi, eds., *Animals and Human Society in Asia: Historical, Cultural and Ethical Perspectives*, (Cam, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

¹⁵ Huaiyu Chen, “Yazhou huren chuanshuo zhi wenhua shi bijiao yanjiu” 亞洲虎人傳說之文化史比較研究 (Comparative Cultural-Historical Study on the Weretiger Legends in Asia), *Cheng Kung Journal of Historical Studies*, 58(June 2020): 21-55.

expanded his research to Confucian and Daoist engagements with tigers in ancient and medieval China. Daoist hagiographies portrayed tigers as companions, threats, and weapons to address the challenges from the natural environment and religious competition.¹⁶

Although previous scholarship on tiger representations in Chinese politics and religions has already been well-established, the topic of the black tiger and its spiritual position is still barely touched upon, especially regarding its profound cultural presence in places like Shanxi. The deification of the black tiger along with its humanization had its religious references in Chinese Daoism and Buddhism. Based on the canonical portrayal of the black tiger, folklore and traditions in Shanxi either concentrated on specific characteristics of a spiritual figure or created new details about it. The localization of spiritual narratives gives us the opportunity to discover the connection between the Black Tiger Cult and the spiritual needs in the area.

Secondly, regarding the ecological impact of human-tiger relationships, contemporary scholars have studied tigers in many regions in China, including Shanxi. However, most studies focus on tigers in South China. Chris Coggins provided a short history of nature conservation by analyzing human-tiger encounters in Southeast China. He noticed that conflicts between humans and wildlife were associated with human migration, settlement, and resource exploitation. Western influences in the early twentieth century and the cultural images of tigers in folklore and traditional medicine shaped the

¹⁶ Huaiyu Chen, *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes: Living with Animals in Medieval Chinese Religions*, (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

methods of wildlife management.¹⁷ In China, Cao Zhihong 曹志紅 has done a series of studies on human-tiger relationships and human influences on the distribution and migration of wild tigers in China, particularly in Xinjiang 新疆, Hunan 湖南, Fujian 福建, and southern Shaanxi 陝西. Her research methods included examining historical records and archaeological discoveries as well as analyzing data and statistics through GIS.¹⁸ Additionally, Wang Xiaoxia 王曉霞 investigated the tiger calamity and human-tiger relationships in the Ankang 安康 and Shangluo 商洛 areas during the Ming-Qing era based on local gazetteers, stele inscriptions, and genealogical records.¹⁹ As for the tigers in Shanxi, Cheng Sen 程森 went through a considerable amount of historical records from pre-Qin era (prior to 221 BCE) to the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) on tiger activities and calamities in Shanxi; thereupon, he concluded that the decrease of the local tiger population was directly caused by humans.²⁰ Furthermore, based on local gazetteers, Wu Pengfei 吳朋飛 and Zhou Ya 周亞 focused on the tiger distribution and human-tiger conflicts within

¹⁷ Chris Coggins, *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture, and Conservation in China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Cao, Zhihong 曹志紅, “Laohu yu ren: Zhongguo hu dili fenbu he lishi bianqian de renwen yingxiang yinsu yanjiu” 老虎與人：中國虎地理分佈和歷史變遷的人文影響因素研究 (Tiger and Human: A Study of Human Factors that Influenced the Chinese Tiger’s Geographical Distribution and Historical Changes). PhD. Dissertation, Shaanxi Normal University, 2010; Hou Yongjian 侯甬堅, Cao Zhihong, Zhang Jie 張潔, Li Ji 李冀, eds. *Zhongguo Huanjing shi yanjiu (Lishi dongwu yanjiu)* 中國環境史研究 (歷史動物研究) (Studies of Chinese Environmental History [Studies of Historical Animals]) (Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing chubanshe, 2014).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cheng Sen 程森, “Lishi shiqi Shanxi diqu hu yu huhuan de fenbu bianqian” 歷史時期山西地區虎與虎患的分佈變遷 (Distribution and Changes of Tigers and Their Disaster in Shanxi during the Period of History), *Tangdu Journal* 唐都學刊 Vol. 28 (3) 2012: 78-83.

the Ming-Qing timeframe in Shanxi. They argued that tiger presence in Shanxi did not decrease from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to the Qing dynasty; on the contrary, the area of reported tiger calamities expanded from 16 counties to 27.²¹ As much as Wu and Zhou tried to point out a factor overlooked by other scholars, their approach might be considered a little problematic. More recorded tiger activities in various counties of Shanxi do not necessarily contradict the shrinking tiger population—it only proves that tigers were more scattered, not to mention the socio-political meaning of tigers in historical writing might impair the credibility of these accounts. Most scholars attempted to find as many sources as possible to piece together a comprehensive image of the tiger in historical accounts. My study will provide a temporal perspective on the spiritual purpose of Black Tiger Temples in a certain area, which reflects the of local human-animal conflicts.

Thirdly, the worship of tiger gods is the main interest of my research, focusing on the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan and the Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China. As one of the most common animal gods in the temples, the Tiger Lord or Huye 虎爺 in Taiwan has been put in the academic spotlight. In 2017, an international conference on the worship of the Tiger Lord and animal gods was held in Tainan 臺南 by the Temple of Avalokitesvara 祖廟大觀音亭, the Xingji Temple 興濟宮, and the National Cheng Kung University. Among the attendees, Shu-Ju Lee 李淑如 tried to build the connection between animal gods and the God of Wealth through folklore and tales of god's efficacy. She specifically

²¹ Wu Pengfei 吳朋飛 and Zhou Ya 周亞, "Ming Qing shiqi Shanxi hu de dili fenbu ji xiangguan wenti" 明清時期山西虎的地理分佈及相關問題 (Distribution of Tiger in Shanxi Province in Ming and Qing Dynasties and Related Questions), *Journal of Jingtangshan University (Social Sciences)* 井岡山大學學報 (社會科學版) Vol. 34 (2) 2013: 127-36.

analyzed the Black Tiger General's connection to the Martial God of Wealth Zhao Gongming 趙公明 and ritual practices in Wude Temple 武德宮 in Beigang 北港.²² As for the Tiger Lord Cult in Hsinchu 新竹, Welin-Lin Chen 陳惠齡 surveyed six temples that enshrined the Tiger Lord. She explained the worship was established upon the sublimity of the tiger and its spiritual position as the genius loci.²³ Kuei-Wen Hsieh 謝貴文, however, was more concerned with the marginal status of the Tiger Lord compared to standardized gods and ghosts in Taiwan.²⁴ These studies not only covered a great deal of information about Tiger Lord traditions and ritual practices in Taiwan, but also introduced some very interesting topics. However, these studies more or less isolated the Tiger Lord Cult from the Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China, even though they have shared similar, if not the same, cultural origins.

The Black Tiger Temples can be found in many Chinese regions, and they deserve a more comprehensive study due to the current limitations of ethnographical scholarship.

²² Shu-Ju Lee 李淑如, “‘Caishenye de shizhe: Heihu, Jinkongque’ de dongwu shenzhi chuanshuo yanjiu—jianlun Dongxing miao Tuyegong chuanshuo” 財神爺的使者：黑虎、金孔雀的動物神祇傳說研究—兼論東興廟兔爺公傳說 (A Study on the Tales of the Animal Gods: the Envoys of the God of Wealth: the Black Tiger and the Golden Peacock—with a Discussion of the Tale of the Rabbit God), in Yi-yuan Chen 陳益源, ed., *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita* 台灣虎爺信仰研究及其他 (Studies on Tiger Lord Worship and More in Taiwan) (Taipei: Lirensheju, 2017), pp. 311-339.

²³ Welin-Lin Chen 陳惠齡, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guan cha” 台灣虎爺信仰的“崇高美學”及其作為“地方精靈”義涵—兼及新竹市區虎爺崇祀觀察 (The “Sublimity” of the Tiger Lord Worship in Taiwan and Its Meaning of Being the “Genius Loci”—Including the Observation of the Tiger Lord Worship in the Hsinchu City), in *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita*, pp. 159-183.

²⁴ Kuei-Wen Hsieh 謝貴文, “Shen, gui yu biao zhun hua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guan cha” 神、鬼與標準化：台灣虎爺信仰的一種觀察 (God, Ghost and Standardization: An Observation of the Tiger Lord Worship in Taiwan), in *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita*, pp. 1-26.

The Research Association of Zhao Gongming at Zaolin in Zhouzhi County 周至縣棗林趙公明研究會 claimed that Zaolin Village was the origin of the Black Tiger God Zhao Gongming and argued that his image as the God of Wealth was promoted later by Xu Zhonglin's 許仲琳 (ca. 1560- ca. 1630) *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義) in the Ming dynasty.²⁵ Ding Kexi 丁克西 introduced the modern ritual practices in the Black Tiger Temple in Lijia Village 李家村.²⁶ While the previous two studies were about the Black Tiger Cult in Shaanxi and Qinghai 青海, Liu Xinyang 劉鑫陽 explored it in Anze. After the examination of the environmental dynamics and stele inscriptions during the Ming-Qing period, Liu concluded that the building of the Black Tiger Temples and the emergence of the Black Tiger Cult were particular to that area because of a vast population of tigers and their frequent conflicts with human activity.²⁷ Liu's article discussed the topic of the Black Tiger Cult and its relation to the environmental history in southern Shanxi by examining two stele inscriptions found in the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao 北三交 Village and in local gazetteers. I extend Liu's research subject to other Black Tiger Temples in Anze to reveal the historical development of the Black Tiger Cult and human-

²⁵ Research Association of Zhao Gongming at Zaolin in the Zhouzhi County 周至縣棗林趙公明研究會, "Zhao gong yuanshuai caishen xingxiang yu minjian chuanshuo de yuantou—yi Shanxi Zhouzhi Zaolin cun wei hexin de minsu kaocha" 趙公元帥財神形象與民間傳說的源頭——以陝西周至棗林村為核心的民俗考察 (Marshal Zhao's Image as the God of Wealth and the Origin of the Folklore—A Folkloristic Investigation on the Zaolin Village in Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), *New West* 新西部, 9(2012): 94-96.

²⁶ Ding Kexi 丁克西, "Heihumiao zhong de minjian jisi" 黑虎廟中的民間祭祀 (The Popular Sacrifices of the Black Tiger Temple), *Cultural Monthly* 文化月刊, Z1(2014): 68-71.

²⁷ Liu Xinyang 劉鑫陽, "Mingqing shiqi Anze beike zhong de heihushen xinyang yu shengtai huanjing" 明清時期安澤碑刻中的黑虎神信仰與生態環境 (Black Tiger God Worship in the Stele Inscriptions of Anze and Ecological Environment during the Ming-Qing Era), *Youth Literator* 青年文學家, (12) 2010: 43.

animal relationships in the area, and I will build the case of Anze, not in isolation in Shanxi, but as a part of a Chinese tradition that has branched out into other regions of Mainland China and Taiwan. Liu considered that local worship of the Black Tiger God was a form of tiger totemism originated from pre-historic times; moreover, it seemed that the concept of the Black Tiger God was not particularly distinguished from any tiger deities. I will take a closer look at the Black Tiger God and find other canonical and local references that contributed to his image and enshrinement. Mao Qiaohui 毛巧暉 also surveyed the Black Tiger Cult in Anze as a part of her study on the local culture. Based on the geographical conditions, historical documents, legend and folklore as well as traditions of tiger worship, Mao argued, “the Black Tiger Temples and the Black Tiger Cult originated from people’s psychological needs—they hoped that the Black Tiger God could relieve disasters, expel evil, grant people’s wishes and protect them from harm.”²⁸ On the one hand, Mao’s approach to the Black Tiger Cult in Anze was similar to Liu Xingyang’s—in that they both treated the worship system relatively independent of other traditions and religious teachings, and their interpretation of spiritual figures relied heavily on empirical evidence. For example, Mao explained that the black tiger represented “the numinous power acquired by the evil demons and deviant cults” since “[the color] black indicated horror in mythologies.”²⁹ Mao mentioned the connection between Zhao Gongming and the black

²⁸ Mao Qiaohui 毛巧暉, “Duoshen gongcun yu shenghuo suqiu: Shanxi Anzexian heihu xinyang chanshi” 多深共存與生活訴求：山西安澤縣黑虎信仰闡釋 (Multi-god Existence and Life Needs: Interpretation of the Black Tiger Faith in Anze County of Shanxi Province), *Journal of Guizhou Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Science)* 貴州民族大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 2016 (01): 42-51; *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong* 記憶、表演與傳統——當代文化語境下安澤文化尋蹤 (Memory, Performance and Tradition—Exploring the Culture of Anze in the Contemporary Discourse) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2016).

²⁹ Mao, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong*, p. 133.

tiger and expressed the fluidity of the Black Tiger God's identity in different temples. I also seek to further decode the identity of the Black Tiger God and his spiritual narratives by tracing his cultural presence religious literature, gazetteers, and temple murals. On the other hand, I would like to explore the interrelationship between the social/environmental dynamics and the spiritual position/efficacies of Black Tiger Temples in the area over time. In this way, the study of Black Tiger Cult will be established temporally and spatially.

I will mainly look at four kinds of primary sources: local gazetteers, Buddhist and Daoist texts, stele inscriptions, and visual materials (i.e., temple statues and murals in local areas). In addition to the geographical and climate information, tiger calamities, and other major local disasters that previous studies have touched upon, my research will analyze textual accounts regarding local tiger stories in order to identify and contextualize the Black Tiger God and other deified tigers based on local gazetteers. Most of the extant gazetteers were compiled since the Ming dynasty, and they have covered a wide historical timeframe to get a bigger picture of how local people perceive tigers and the manner of their interactions. I will also conduct a detailed study on stele inscriptions to gain insight into more specific scenarios where Black Tiger Temples were initially built, sponsored, renovated, celebrated, and managed. Recorded stele inscriptions are usually found in a temple's vicinity, and the majority of which were dated between the 1500s and the 1900s. While most previous scholars overlooked primary sources in religious texts and visual materials in their research on the Black Tiger Cult in Shanxi, I find them crucial for understanding the localization of religious figures and their spiritual narratives. Religious literature will help to trace the canonical origin and adaptation of the Black Tiger God's spiritual narratives in a certain area. Visual materials in Black Tiger Temples will provide

visual clues to the identity of the enshrined and possibly their relationships with local animals and people.

In order to collect some of the primary sources mentioned above, my informants³⁰ made a trip to Anze in late November 2020 and took a number of high-definition photos and videos of the temples. The fieldwork also included interviews with temple staff and village residents to probe into temple rituals and local traditions. I will discuss local perceptions and deification of the black tiger, the connection between the Black Tiger Temple and local human-tiger conflicts, and the modern adaptation of the tradition. This study will thus approach the Black Tiger Cult temporally and spatially. The temporal approach focuses on the consistency and transformation of the Black Tiger God's efficacies, representations, and ritual practices in Anze over time; the spatial approach compares the Black Tiger Cult in Anze with that in other parts of Mainland China and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan to find out the localization of traditions involving tiger gods.

3. Historical Background of Human-Tiger Interactions in Late-Imperial Shanxi

The deification of tigers was based on human perceptions of tigers during human-tiger interactions. Generally speaking, there were three roles tigers played: natural resources, opponents or companions, and manipulators or executors. As natural resources, tigers were primarily identified with their practical values for human use either as medicine or talismans according to Chinese traditional *materia medica*. These values directly

³⁰ Due to Covid-19 restrictions in China, I was not able to conduct the field research in person. I asked my father and his two friends to visit Anze and collect information. Although my informants did not have a research background, they graciously accepted this task and followed my instructions in taking pictures and interviewing locals.

reflected the animal's physical and biological characteristics, and at the same time were culturally shaped. The spiritual aspect of tigers was also developed in anomalous narratives 志怪 and hagiographies. Based on tiger accounts in local gazetteers in Shanxi, some tigers were regarded as opponents or companions to humans. These seemingly conflicting roles mirrored both reality and imagination: the fear of their apex predatory instincts did not turn people away from the fantasy of converting tigers into companions. Other tigers in Shanxi folklore were portrayed as manipulators or executors, which fell into the literary trope that tigers could exercise a certain level of control over ghosts and even the living. Through these physical and cultural human-tiger interactions, the belief that tigers and their activities were associated with a higher authority above the human realm was popular in late-imperial Shanxi.

1) Tigers as Natural Resources in Medicine and Cultural Life

Traditionally, tigers have always been viewed as valuable sources for human consumption. The *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi Compiled in the Guangxu Reign* (*Guangxu Shanxi tongzhi* 光緒山西通志) recorded two stories about tiger meat as a kind of panacea. Liu Qing 劉清, a native of Xiangling 襄陵 (in modern Xiangfen 襄汾 County, Shanxi), dreamed of a god telling him that tiger meat could cure his ailing father. Born in the year of the tiger, Liu thought to himself that his own flesh might be equivalent to the tiger meat. Thereupon, he cut off a piece of his thigh flesh and served it to his father. His father then recovered.³¹ A similar story happened to Wang Sanpin 王三聘, a native of

³¹ Zeng Guoquan 曾國荃, et al., comps., *Guangxu Shanxi tongzhi* 光緒山西通志 (The Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi Compiled in the Guangxu Reign), 1892, *juan* 139, pp. 41a-b.

Pingshun 平順 (modern Pingshun County, Shanxi) who could not obtain tiger meat and used his thigh flesh instead.³² This popular motif emphasized on the ultimate filial piety by having the protagonist overcome the danger of acquiring tiger meat or the pain of self-mutilation. In this way, the value of the tiger meat was compared to that of one's flesh. Besides, the tiger meat was usually prescribed by a god, which indicated the spirituality of the animal itself.

Although early medical use of tiger body parts was mentioned in the *Agriculture God's Canon of Materia Medica* (*Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經) written approximately in the 3rd century, a more comprehensive record can be found in the *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目) compiled by Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593). In this compilation, the medical functions of tiger body parts were joined by their numinous power as well in this compilation. For example, tiger meat, although having a sour and earthy taste, could be used to address digestion problems. On a spiritual level, it could eliminate thirty-six different spirits and demons, and scare off tigers in mountains.³³ Other body parts of a tiger, such as claws³⁴ and skin³⁵, or even its feces³⁶ were considered useful to expel deviant spirits and demons. The idea of a tiger's power in

³² Ibid., *juan* 141, p. 13a.

³³ Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Compendium of Materia Medica), *Qinding siku quanshu* edition, *juan* 51, p. 5b.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 8a.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

controlling ghostly entities arose from the traditional theory of Five Phases 五行. The *Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores (Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義)* by Ying Shao 應劭 (140-206) read, “A tiger is a being of *yang* 陽物 and the leader of hundreds of beasts. It can catch [prey], bend weapons, and devour ghosts and demons.”³⁷

If the medical and spiritual efficacies of a tiger mentioned above mostly acknowledged its superiority and rarity compared to other animals, the selection and preparation of a tiger’s body parts, however, subjected the king of beasts to the values and uses of humans. Killing tigers was not just for self-defense but also for profit. No matter how powerful and fierce these predators were, they became a rare and exotic ingredient in the medicine market, nevertheless. From a tiger carcass to ready-to-use medicine, common process procedures included crushing tiger bones or burning them into ashes, collecting the marrow, marinating tiger eyes with goat blood and then grounding them into powder after dehydration, cooking tiger meat with specific spices, etc. During the preparation procedure, the tiger body was carefully dismembered and sorted for different organs; moreover, in order to achieve certain efficacy each organ was further broken into smaller pieces, seasoned, cooked, and mixed with other ingredients. In the end, the tiger identity was no longer visually perceivable and diminished into conceptual elements that could help to build the human body and spirit. Tigers became universally appraised goods.

2) Tigers as Opponents or Companions in Human Social Life

³⁷ Ying Shao 應劭, *Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義校註 (Annotated Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Mores)*, annotated by Wang Liqi 王利器, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 368.

While alive, a tiger's basic survival depends on abundant food (i.e., other animals), plenty of water, and considerably large territories with minimum human interference. Even though presumably there are no wild tigers roaming about Shanxi now, in the pre-modern time, tigers were rather active on the Shanxi plateau. As agricultural development, wars, and other human activity accelerated the deforestation and expansion of villages and cities since medieval times, human-tiger conflicts became more severe, and tigers that threatened the lives of people and livestock became one of the major threats to residents.

Some tigers in Shanxi folklore were portrayed as ultimate rivals. Song Qifeng's 宋起鳳 (fl. 1651-1662) *Unofficial Accounts (Baishuo 稗說)* mentioned: "There were a lot of tigers in the mountains of Lingqiu 靈丘 in Datong 大同, and they formed packs of a dozen to devour people in daylight. The general stationed at Lingqiu often grazed army horses at the foot of the hill. From time to time, tigers attacked and ate horses, and then left. The army and people were aware but could not catch them."³⁸ Lingqiu is located at the mountainous area of Mt. Taihang in the north of Shanxi. Judging by the information in Song's narrative, tigers were no longer sneaking a bite in the dark but bold enough to display their power and provoke the horror of the ultimate insecurity in people's mind. One tiger could already cause some serious damage; yet here, more than ten of them had become an army that could not be defeated by human military forces. Eventually, a mythical creature called "ma hua" 馬化 showed up and killed all the tigers, which again emphasized

³⁸ Song Qifeng 宋起鳳 (fl. 1651-1662), *Baishuo 稗說* (Unofficial Accounts), in *Mingshi ziliao congkan 明史資料叢刊* (A Collection of Historical Records of Ming Dynasty), vol. 2, (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1982), p. 26.

that humans were no rival to tigers, for they could only be subjugated by otherworldly beings.

Although the human-tiger conflict in Shanxi was intense, people intended to redefine their relationships by projecting human morality onto tiger images. One of the examples would be the legend from Xiaoyi 孝義 (Filial piety and righteousness) located in the south rim of Shanxi basin and the east slope of Mt. Lüliang.³⁹ Recorded in Wang Youding's 王猷定 (1598-1662) *Compilation of the Sizhao Chamber* (*Sizhaotang ji* 四照堂集), the story was about a woodcutter, a native of Xiaoyi, who accidentally fell into a tiger's den, but was saved by the tiger; after the woodcutter returned home, the woodcutter kept his promise and rewarded the tiger with a pig to show his gratitude. The pavilion where the woodcutter offered a pig to the tiger was named "the Pavilion of Righteous Tiger" 義虎亭.⁴⁰

Being able to share human sentiments and morals, tigers in folklore could also transform themselves into human forms and live in human households. Various literary works based on the story of Scholar Cui and his tiger wife⁴¹ were recorded in local

³⁹ Li Kui 李奎, "Shanxi sheng hushen xinyang diaocha yu yanjiu" 山西省虎神信仰調查與研究 (A Survey of the Tiger God Worship in the Shanxi Province), in Yi-yuan Chen 陳益源, ed., *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita* 台灣虎爺信仰研究及其他 (Studies on Tiger Lord Worship and More in Taiwan) (Taipei: Lirenshe, 2017), p. 564.

⁴⁰ Wang Youding, *Sizhaotang ji* 四照堂集 (Compilation of the Sizhao Chamber), in *Yuzhang congshu (Jibu 11)* 豫章叢書 (集部十一) (Encyclopedia of Yuzhang · Collection 11) (Nanchang: Jiangxijiaoyuchubanshe, 2007), p. 120. For more information about the righteous tiger, see Charles Hammond, "The righteous Tiger and the Grateful Lion," *Monumenta Serica* 44, No. 1(1996): 191-211.

⁴¹ For the topic of were-tiger and human-tiger transformation in medieval narratives, see Huaiyu Chen, "Yazhou huren chuanshuo zhi wenhua shi bijiao yanjiu" 亞洲虎人傳說之文化史比較研究 (Comparative Cultural-Historical Study on the Weretiger Legends in Asia), in *Cheng Kung Journal of Historical Studies*, 58(June 2020): 21-55.

gazetteers such as the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi* (*Shanxi tongzhi* 山西通志), the *Gazetteer of Lu'an* (*Lu'an fuzhi* 潞安府志) and the *Gazetteer of Xiangyuan* (*Xiangyuan xianzhi* 襄垣縣志). In the story, Scholar Cui who spent the night at Chiting 禊亭, or the Pavilion of Skinning (near the modern Xiangyuan County in the Changzhi City, Shanxi), was tempted by the beauty of a tiger woman. Cui stole her tiger skin to stop the tiger woman from turning back into her animal form. After being married to the tiger woman for years, Scholar Cui finally lowered his guard and returned the tiger skin back to his wife. Upon putting it on, she immediately turned into a tiger and left. Qu You 瞿祐 (1347-1433), a novelist during the Ming dynasty, wrote a poem to comment on this event: “The encounter in the inn was not an accident, [since] there are bad nuptial causes and conditions in the human realm. The scholar indulged in lust despite the risks to his life, and he turned out to be sleeping with a tiger for three years.”⁴² The scary man-eating tiger was associated with the dangerous sexuality of a woman, both of which could doom a man.

In terms of human-tiger companionship, we can find a lot of such records in a religious discourse, for example, hagiographical literature where eminent Buddhist monks or Daoist priests tamed tigers with their spiritual power and even turn them into guardians of religious teachings and properties. In Shanxi, the title “Fuhu Chanshi” 伏虎禪師 (The

⁴² Li Zhongbai 李中白, Zhou Zaixun 周再勳, and Yang jun 楊峻, *Lu'an fuzhi* 潞安府志 (Gazetteer of Lu'an), 1659, *juan* 15, pp. 73a-b; Yao Xuejia 姚學甲, Zhang Shuqu 張淑渠 and Yao Xueying 姚學瑛, *Lu'an fuzhi*, 1770, *juan* 39, p. 17b.

Chan Master Who Could Subdue Tigers)⁴³ was bestowed on religious figures that had the ability to subdue tigers or other vicious animals.

3) Tigers as Manipulators or Executors in Human Spiritual Life

There were already many folklore and anomalous tales since the Tang dynasty which tied tigers to mysterious and spiritual powers. Tigers were believed to be able to manipulate their victim's ghost to set them free from traps and lure other victims.⁴⁴ Tigers might also function as matchmakers to bring separated couples back together.⁴⁵ Both motifs gave the impression that tigers with their indubitable dominance over the other beings could manipulate humans and change the course of their life.

In some cases, tigers could be the executor of god's will. Take the story of Li Rang 李讓, a native of Li 黎 (the modern Licheng 黎城 County in the Changzhi City, Shanxi), for instance. God sent a tiger to eat Li because he disobeyed his parents. Even though he died of illness before the punishment was carried out, the tiger still managed to dig Li's body out of the grave and destroy it. This story also reminded the author about another

⁴³ Liu Mei 劉梅, Mu Ersai 穆爾賽, *Shanxi tongzhi* 山西通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi), 1681, *juan* 25, p. 11b; Yao Xuejia 姚學甲, Zhang Shuqu 張淑渠, Yao Xueying 姚學瑛, *Lu'an fuzhi* 潞安府志 (Gazetteer of Lu'an), 1770, *juan* 10, p. 16a; *ibid.*, *juan* 24, p. 67a.

⁴⁴ See the story of "Bishi" 碧石 (Green Stone). This story originally came from the *Great Book of Marvels* (Guangyi ji 廣異記) by Dai Fu 戴孚 (fl. 757-771). A version of the story was collected in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (The Extensive Records of the Taiping Era) compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), et al., (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1961), vol. 9, p. 3476; also see Fan Zhen 范鎮 (1007-1088), *Dongzhai jishi* 東齋記事 (Chronicle of the East Chamber), Shoushange congshu 守山閣叢書 edition, *juan* 5, p. 4a.

⁴⁵ See "Ye Ling Nü" 葉令女 in Li Fuyan's 李復言 (fl. 840) *Continued Records of Mysterious and Remarkable things* (*Xu Xuanguailu* 續玄怪錄). See Niu Sengru 牛僧儒 (780-848), Li Fuyan, *Xuanguai lu* 玄怪錄·續玄怪錄 (*Records of Mysterious and Remarkable things/ Continued Records of Mysterious and Remarkable things*) (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 2006), pp. 188-90. The story was also named as "Lu Zao" 廬造 in *Taiping guangji*, p. 3485.

account from the *Comprehensive Examination of Documents* (*Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考) compiled by Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254-1323). In that story, a tiger was killed because it failed to carry out god's punishment.⁴⁶ Being the executor granted tigers the right and position to control human lives, but at the same time, they were not the ultimate authority.

The deification of tigers fundamentally provided cultural support to the deification of black tigers. However, I will show that it is important to explore the individual development and cultural standing of the black tiger, which set it apart from tigers in general and other tiger images such as the white tiger. Moreover, the black tiger's spiritual narratives in various traditions, locations, and time periods showcased human-tiger relationships and their transformation.

4. Human-Animal Conflicts in Late-Imperial Anze

Many of the Black Tiger Temples in Anze were originally built to address human-animal conflicts. As one of the areas in Shanxi that historically witnessed tiger activities, Anze, or formerly a part of Yueyang 岳陽 County (modern Anze and Guxian counties),⁴⁷ faced geographical challenges that not only made local people's life uneasy, but also

⁴⁶ Li, Zhou, and Yang, *Lu'an fuzhi*, *juan* 39, p. 35a.

⁴⁷ The Modern Anze County is located in the northeast of Linfen City, which is in Southeast Shanxi. County Magistrate Zhao Wen 趙溫 (appointed in 1731) briefly introduced that was the location where Yu 禹 managed to mitigate the Great Flood in the ancient time; it was made a prefecture during the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE); its administration was frequently changing after the Han dynasty (202 BCE - 220 BC); during the Song (960-1276) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, it was governed by Hedong 河東. During the Ming (1368-1644)-Qing (1644-1912) era, this area along with the modern Guxian County was named "Yueyang," which was governed by Pingyangfu 平陽府. See Chang Xun 常遜 and Zhao Wen 趙溫, *Yueyang xianzhi* 岳陽縣志 (Gazetteer of Yueyang), Yongzheng edition (1735), *juan* 2, pp. 25b-26a.

contributed to the traumatic memory of wild animals and the sense of urgency to seek spiritual help. According to the gazetteer published during the Yongzheng reign:

Yue[yang] County has many mountains and only a few fields. The *yinqi* (cold air) is dominant. Seasons here are slightly different from the calendar. For example, when the sun moves from *shixiu* 室宿 to the *bixiu* 壁宿 in the sky, the *Rites* said that the East Wind would dissolve the frost, and the hibernating bugs would start to rise. In this county, however, it happens after *jingzhe*. The sowing season is a bit late. Because of the topography, the frost withers many [plants].⁴⁸

岳邑山多地狹，陰氣較重，凡節候視曆日稍差，如日躔嫩訾之次。《禮》稱東風解凍蟄虫始振。本邑則於驚蟄後得之。播種稍遲，多被霜萎地，勢然也。

The later revised gazetteer added:

Though within the same county, different regions cool down or warm up at different times. Villages in the south of the county get warm a day or two earlier than the ones in the east and west of the county; villages in the east and west get warm a day or two earlier than the ones in the north. Only the Beiping area (in the north of modern Guxian County) has fewer warm days and more cold days. Three towns in the east, the west, and the south respectively usually suffer from drought, but the one in the north sometimes

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 32b.

suffers from excessive rain. These phenomena are caused by climate and topography.⁴⁹

即一邑，論早晚寒暖已自不同。縣南諸村視縣東南諸村早煖一二日；縣東西諸村視縣北諸村又早煖一二日；惟北平一帶則煖少而寒多。東西南三鄉常苦旱，北鄉有時則苦雨。地氣與地勢然也。

With Mt. Taiyue 太岳 in the north and the Qin River 沁水 running from the north down through the middle, the Anze area is more elevated in the north. Due to the crustal movement, the east and west areas are also raised.⁵⁰ The altitude and the mountainous landscape did not make it easy for the local agricultural production or people's life in general hundreds of years ago.

Local scholar-officials in the Qing dynasty documented several social problems caused by the poor geographical condition in their literary compositions: "Yueyang's location is remote; mountains and forests are deep and dangerous there. Tigers and leopards are howling; bandits and outlaws are hiding in the caves. It is more urgent than other places to build city walls as barriers."⁵¹ Written by County Magistrate Zhu Liangcai 朱亮采 in the twenty-fifth year of the Kangxi 康熙 reign (1686), this short passage explained why it was so important to build and renovate the city walls around the Yueyang County seat. It illustrated the frustration the commoners and officials alike had experienced when constantly disturbed by wild animals and criminals in the wilderness. Almost a decade

⁴⁹ Wang Xizhen 王錫禎, Wang Zhizhe 王之哲, Yang Shiyong 楊世瑛, Shi Biaoqing 史標青, *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi* 重修安澤縣志 (Revised Gazetteer of Anze), Republican edition (1932) (Taipei: Chengwenchubanshe, 1968), p. 81.

⁵⁰ Mao, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong*, p. 24.

⁵¹ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, p. 1057.

before Zhu Liangcai took office in 1684, Magistrate Zhao Shike 趙時可 was already deeply troubled by the devastating natural and social environment of Yueyang after arriving here in the fourteenth year of the Kangxi reign (1675). He left a fair number of literary compositions in forms of proses and poems to express his compassion for this land and its people as well as his helplessness as an official. Zhao wrote in a preface to a series of ballad-styled poems: “So sad! How extremely poor and barren Yueyang is! I have held office for three years already, yet there is no improvement at all. Although my governance is poor and my abilities are lacking, the time and location should still take the blame.” He described eight aspects of the local struggle in his ballad-styled poems: living in caves, eating trees, declining population, tiger calamities, tax compensation, tax recovery, food shortage, and cloth shortage.⁵² While some of the problems were caused by the heavy taxation from the central government, some were specifically related to the infertile soil and the disturbance by predatory beasts. In his penta-syllabic ancient poem “Yueyang tan” 岳陽歎 (Signing for Yueyang), Zhao again mentioned the same problems he saw where people “dug a hole in the dirt as a home, and ate grass for food; neighbored monsters and spirits from the mountains, and gave birth to children just to offer them to tigers and vicious beasts.” The barren land also gave rise to bandits and frequent conflicts. Many people died, and the rest would “carry hoes to work in the field, struggling to dig out rocks.” As a result of the harsh environment, “wheat plants could not exceed one foot tall, and millet ears could not reach an inch.” Zhao noticed that the biggest problem was that “although local officials were trying to appease [distressed locals], their action was still just a drop in the

⁵² Ibid., pp. 1129-1131.

bucket.” Drowned in his agony, Zhao wrote: “When commoners were suffering, they could flee the area, but when government officials were suffering, whom should they blame?”⁵³ Regardless of the results of his local relief plans, Zhao’s insight into local commoners’ lives and his deep sympathy for them earned him the reputation of “being good at mollifying distressed people.”⁵⁴

Literary works written by Yueyang officials in the Qing dynasty confirmed local human-nature conflicts, especially that between humans and tigers. Social issues that bothered local officials the most were agricultural production and people’s safety. Farmers’ endeavor to plow the fields and grow the crops was not fruitful due to the complex landscape, extreme climate, and sterile soil. The poor harvest led to famine and financial struggles. As many people fled the area, the lack of labor further damaged the agricultural production. Meanwhile, villagers that dwelt in the rural areas were exposed to the vast wilderness and had to deal with the danger from the deep forests in order to survive. Zhao pointed out in one of his poems that people living in mountain caves already got used to fighting vicious tigers and strong wolves, and this was the hardship they had to endure here. He also wrote a denouncement of tigers since their population was so large that they started attacking people in the broad daylight. Zhao issued a threat: If the tigers should continue to commit any transgressions, the officials of Yueyang would treat them with bows and arrows or blades and saws.⁵⁵ His literature shed light upon measures the county

⁵³ Ibid., p. 1117.

⁵⁴ Chang and Zhao, *Yueyang xianzhi*, *juan* 6, p. 5a.

⁵⁵ Ibid., *juan* 10, p. 19a; Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, p. 1111.

government was willing to take to terminate the tiger calamity. The confrontation between humans and tigers was elevated to a political level where tiger calamities were traditionally believed to be a sign of immorality and corruption of local officials. Consequently, people regardless of their social status held a grudge against these evil carnivores; moreover, besides fighting for survival, some also gave orders to hunt down tigers to maintain a positive political image. In addition to being slaughtered by residents, the gazetteer compiled in 1932 suggested that the deforestation eventually led to the extinction of tigers in the area: “At first, Anze suffered from frequent tiger calamities since remote mountains and deep forests could easily shelter these ferocious beasts at that time. Now that axes had already hacked everything down, the tigers were nowhere to be found.”⁵⁶ From the point of too many to nearly none, the downfall of local tiger species reflected the changing dynamics of the natural resources in the area.

The decline of the tiger population might have caused other ecological issues. According to both editions of the gazetteer, there were two major tiger calamities during the Qing dynasty: one happened in the fifty-fifth year of the Kangxi reign (1716) and the other one happened in the eighth year of the Yongzheng reign (1730).⁵⁷ A century later, in the seventeenth year of the Daoguang 道光 reign (1837), wolf calamities threatened the four towns in the four directions.⁵⁸ In the fifth year of the Guangxu 光緒 reign (1879), a significant number of wolves and mice swarmed the area and caused a lot of damage. The

⁵⁶ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, p. 154.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 909, 910; also see Chang and Zhao, *Yueyang xianzhi*, *juan* 9, pp. 44b, 45b.

⁵⁸ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, p. 914.

same thing happened the very next year (1880).⁵⁹ The earlier tiger calamities seemed to happen without any direct connection to other natural disasters according to gazetteer records, but all the wolf incidents took place during or after locust plagues and drought. For instance, from the second to the fourth year of the Guangxu reign (1876-1878), Yueyang had extremely poor harvests due to drought. It was historically known as the “Ding-wu Disaster” 丁戊奇荒. Hunger took many lives and cannibalism could be seen everywhere.⁶⁰ Food shortage drove wolves and mice out of their territories in the wilderness to feed on anything edible in the villages, which devastated the local society and economics even more. Historians Wu Pengfei and Zhou Ya’s study of the tiger distribution in Shanxi during the Ming-Qing era pointed out that in order to survive, tigers in the wild required a good amount of food supply, water, and vegetation coverage, so they were very sensitive to environmental changes. Based on records of tiger activities in local gazetteers, Wu and Zhou concluded that most tiger calamities in Shanxi occurred during fall and winter when food sources were scarce, and tigers were in estrus—they would attack humans and livestock for food.⁶¹ It is noteworthy that the two documented cases of tiger attacks in Yueyang County both occurred in a summer with no recorded drought or flood. Admittedly, these gazetteers could not cover all the historical events big or small, but from these limited textual materials, we may presume that these two major human-tiger conflicts signified the tigers’ struggle to maintain their territory. These records also implied that

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 917.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 916.

⁶¹ Wu and Zhou, “Ming Qing shiqi Shanxi hu de dili fenbu ji xiangguan wenti,” p. 134.

natural resources in these forests and mountains could barely support tiger—even in relatively peaceful years. Afterwards, tigers had disappeared from the list of natural disasters in local gazetteers. Within almost two centuries (the late 17th century to the early 20th century), tiger presence appeared to have dropped so drastically that they could neither threaten locals nor draw attention from officials. Even during the Ding-wu Disaster when other smaller predators like wolves were forced to hunt outside of the wilderness, tigers were still missing from the record. This was probably a crucial moment that indicated the extinction of wild tigers in the area. Additionally, since the third year of the Guangxu reign (1877), mountain pigs⁶² were overpopulated, and they damaged a significant amount of crops. After the Ding-wu Disaster, these boars started to be spotted in heavily vegetated areas and deserted fields in remote mountains near the southeast and northeast parts of the county. Farmers would ambush them and consume their meat, but they reproduced quickly.⁶³ The extreme drought compelled the boars to seek food in farmers' fields, which might have led their predators—wolves out of forests too. Despite being hunted by local people, the population of wild boars was growing out of control for several decades. Boars' invasion of the human territory was not simply because of natural disasters—the absence

⁶² The authors of the Republican gazetteer referred to the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) and the *Guihai Yuheng zhi* 桂海虞衡志 (Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea) for the identification of these “mountain pigs”. While a “mountain pig” was also known as a porcupine, the authors thought it was more similar to the “lazy wife” 懶婦—a kind of smaller wild boar. In the *Nan Yue biji* 南越筆記 (Notes on Nan Yue [Modern Guangdong Province]), a “lazy wife” was defined as a kind of mountain pig that the males with a pair of six- or seven-inch long tusks were big and powerful. See Li Tiaoyuan 李調元, *Nan Yue biji* 南越筆記 (Notes on Nan Yue), 1777 edition, *juan* 9, pp. 6b-7a. The modern edition of the *Anze xianzhi* 安澤縣志 (Gazetteer of Anze) also explained that a boar or *sus scrofa* was commonly called a “mountain pig” in this place. See Lu Dingyi 逯丁藝, *Anze xianzhi* 安澤縣志 (Gazetteer of Anze) (Taiyuan: Shanxirenminchubanshe, 1997), p. 55.

⁶³ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, et al., *Chongxiu Anzhexian xianzhi*, pp. 924-25.

of predators could be considered as a major factor as well. Although wild tigers were gone, they were still ironically worshiped, alongside cats, in the Bazha 八蠟 Temple for their ability to eliminate wild boars and mice that potentially threatened the harvest of crops. As for the wolves, they were targeted by hunters during the Ding-wu Disaster. In places such as Yushe 榆社, Qinzhou 沁州, Linfen, and Liaozhou 遼州, local governments rewarded people for killing wolves.⁶⁴ Human interference consequently reduced the nature's ability to withstand natural disasters and restore the balance, and humans dealt with the aftermath of their previous exploitation of nature. As tigers played a remarkable role in the eco-history in Yueyang, the Black Tiger Temple became a monument of this challenging and constantly shifting relationship of not only between human and tigers but also between humans and nature.

5. Outline of Chapters

This dissertation will explore the Black Tiger Cult in Anze in four aspects, namely, the conceptualization and deification of the black tiger, the Black Tiger Cult and its relationship to local religious communities and the government in late-imperial Shanxi, Black Tiger Temples and interrelationships among humans, tigers, and gods in Anze in the 18th and 19th centuries, and a comparative study of the modern Black Tiger Cult in Shanxi and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan.

⁶⁴ Hao Ping 郝平, “‘Ding-wu qihuang’ bingfa zaihai shulüe” “丁戊奇荒”並發災害述略 (Brief Discussion of the Concurrent Disasters of the “Ding-wu Disaster”), in *Jinyang xuekan* 晉陽學刊 vol. 1(2003), p. 88.

Based on historical and literary texts mainly from the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chapter One examines the deification of the black tiger and differentiates the black tiger from a generalized tiger god. This chapter seeks answers to these questions: What was a black tiger? What did the black tiger represent in the late-imperial period? What were the religious and cultural sources that contributed to the deification of the black tiger? In contrast to tigers in other colors, the black tiger seemed more numinous and prominent in the spiritual life of ancient China, given its frequent appearance in religious narratives, especially in Daoist narratives. I further survey the black tiger as a god and compare it with the white tiger in traditional Chinese thought. With its association with deities such as Zhao Gongming and the Xuantian Shangdi 玄天上帝 (the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven) in the Daoist traditions and popular beliefs, the Black Tiger God, as it inherited the legacy of the deification of tigers in general and the cultural images of the white tiger in particular, was attached to established gods and even became the symbol of these gods, which paved the way for the functions and efficacies of the Black Tiger Cult in Anze as well as its relation to other local religious communities.

Chapter Two aims to explore the Black Tiger Cult's relationships with local religious communities and the government between the 16th century and the early 20th century by analyzing locally produced historical sources, such as stele inscriptions and gazetteers. Based on these textual materials, I argue that the Black Tiger Cult conceptually and physically shared resources with the Buddhist and Daoist communities and in some cases became a site of merging religious traditions and institutions; though the Black Tiger Temple was not qualified to earn a place on the list of state supported temples, it was still recognized by the local government for its religious efficacies. This chapter consists of two

parts: (1) The detailed establishment, renovation, and temple management of the Black Tiger Temples in Shanxi from the Ming dynasty to the early era of Republic, (2) Local governments' and religious communities' attitudes toward the Black Tiger Cult in comparison to another cult involving a tiger god—the Bazha 八蠟 Cult. On the one hand, Black Tiger Temples in late-imperial Shanxi seemed to be related to the Buddhist and Daoist communities as attached religious sites and even occasionally occupied the central position in local monastery complexes. On the other hand, the local governmental authority recognized the efficacies of the Black Tiger Temple in resolving human-tiger conflicts and the ability of the Black Tiger God to bring justice. From both religious and governmental perspectives, the Black Tiger Cult became a tradition of blurred boundaries where communities and the state power expressed and negotiated their spiritual, political, agricultural, and cultural interests.

Following the previous discussion of the Black Tiger Temples, Chapter Three specifically surveys the Black Tiger Temples in Anze County in the 18th and the 19th centuries and attempts to find answers to these questions: Who did people worship in the Black Tiger Temples and why? What was the relationship among tigers, humans, and gods? How did the local human-tiger relationships impact the cult *per se* and how did it evolve over time? Based on the sources found in the temples, my main purpose is to gain an insight into the origin, spiritual narratives, and social relevance of the black tiger in the Black Tiger Temples. This chapter first examines the social and spiritual functions of the Black Tiger Temples by tracing local political culture of tiger subjugation and analyzing petitions composed by Qing scholar-officials in Shanxi. Titled as “Petitions on Offering Sacrifices to Tigers” 祭虎文 or “Petitions to Chase Away Tigers” 驅虎文, these essays revealed the

gods to which local officials would turn for tiger issues and the power dynamics among tigers, humans, and gods. The second part focuses on the initial purposes for building these temples, the representations of the black tiger or tiger in the temples, and the shifting spiritual power of the temples based on stele inscriptions, murals, and wall writings found in the extant Black Tiger Temples in Bangou, Yingzhai, Zhangjiagou, and Xinzhuang—four villages hidden in the mountains of Anze County. This case study of Black Tiger Temples in Anze shed some light upon the localization of the Black Tiger God and the history of human-animal relationships in this area during this time.

Chapter Four is a case study of the history, modern beliefs, and the ritual practices of the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village (on the border of Anze County and Guxian County). I intend to build a network of the Black Tiger tradition in Mainland China and Taiwan. By comparing the Black Tiger Cult in Beisanjiao Village and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan, this chapter intends to explore the impact of locality and modern imaginations of human-tiger relationships. How does the local human-tiger relationships impact spiritual images of the tiger in temples? In turn, how do modernized tiger images in spiritual sites create new memories of the tiger? This chapter contains three parts: The first part investigates the modern Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village by examining stele inscriptions, temple statues, and spiritual traditions. The second part attempts to build connections among the Black Tiger Cults across Mainland China to shed some light upon the status quo and relevancy of the black tiger traditions in the modern context. Lastly, the third part offers a comparative perspective on the Black Tiger Cult in Beisanjiao Village and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan in terms of tiger presentation in the temples, the origin, efficacy and taboo of the tiger god, and the modern ritual and reception of the tiger god.

There are extended studies on Tiger Lord traditions in Taiwan, and I will find their similarities to Black Tiger traditions in Shanxi while exploring their unique developments under different local impacts.

CHAPTER ONE
FROM TIGER TO GOD: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION AND DEIFICATION
OF THE BLACK TIGER

Introduction

In the *Gazetteer of Zhenjiang* (*Zhenjiang zhi* 鎮江志) compiled in 1863, an entry on local beasts under the category of “Tiger” read as follows: “Black tigers showed up in Mt. Mao 茅山. They were uncommon and probably numinous beings.”⁶⁵ Mt. Mao was the birthplace of the Shangqing 上清 (Upper Clarity) School and thus became one of the most celebrated Daoist sacred mountains. The written records about the appearance of black tigers in Mt. Mao suggested a Daoist perception of the black tigers. Being described as *buchang* 不常 or uncommon, these black tigers seemed to be extraordinary and otherworldly, which led to the belief that they were the manifestation of gods. The literary description of the black tiger in a local gazetteer, on the one hand, implied possible presence of wild tigers inhabited in remote mountainous areas such as Mt. Mao. On the other hand, however, the unique coloration of the black tiger might indicate its connection to unusual events in the human realm, given the already-internalized traditional idea of Heaven-human correlation 天人感應. In this chapter, I will examine the dual images of the tiger, with a focus on the Black Tiger God, as both a wild beast and a numinous deity.

Contemporary scholarship has briefly touched upon the cultural origin and representation of the Black Tiger God. Some scholars traced the origin of the Black Tiger

⁶⁵ Yu Xilu 俞希魯, *Zhenjiang zhi* 鎮江志 (Gazetteer of Zhenjiang), 1863, *juan* 4, p. 45a.

God to the worship of tiger totem in pre-historic times.⁶⁶ In this chapter, I will differentiate the Black Tiger God from a generalized tiger god 虎神 by deciphering images of the black tiger in local historical accounts, religious traditions, and localized spiritual narratives. This chapter will shed light upon the core of the Black Tiger Cult—the black tiger—and seek answers to these questions: What was a black tiger? What did the black tiger represent in the late-imperial period? What were the religious and cultural sources that contributed to the deification of the black tiger?

This chapter will first examine natural and cultural images and meanings of the black tiger in ancient literature and analyze cultural roles of the black tiger during the Ming-Qing era in traditional Chinese records. In contrast to tigers of other colors, the black tiger seemed to be more numinous and prominent in the spiritual life of pre-modern Chinese people, given its appearance in religious narratives, especially in Daoist literature. I will further survey the black tiger as a god and compare it with the white tiger in traditional Chinese narratives. In particular, I will analyze the black tiger and its association with established Daoist deities, namely, Zhao Gongming and the Xuantian Shangdi 玄天上帝 or the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven (also known as the Dark Thearch 玄帝, the North

⁶⁶ See Liu Xinyang 劉鑫陽, “Mingqing shiqi Anze beike zhong de heihushen xinyang yu shengtai huanjing” 明清時期安澤碑刻中的黑虎神信仰與生態環境 (Black Tiger God Worship in the Stele Inscriptions of Anze and Ecological Environmental during the Ming-Qing Era), *Youth Literator* 青年文學家, (12) 2010: 43; Mao Qiaohui 毛巧暉, “Duoshen gongcun yu shenghuo suqiu: Shanxi Anzexian heihu xinyang chanshi” 多深共存與生活訴求: 山西安澤縣黑虎信仰闡釋 (Multi-god Existence and Life Needs: Interpretation of the Black Tiger Faith in Anze County of Shanxi Province), *Journal of Guizhou Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Science)* 貴州民族大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 2016 (01): 42-51; *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong* 記憶、表演與傳統——當代文化語境下安澤文化尋蹤 (Memory, Performance and Tradition—Exploring the Culture of Anze in the Contemporary Discourse) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2016).

Thearch 北帝, and Zhenwu 真武) in Daoist traditions and popular beliefs. Because it inherited the legacy of the deification of tigers in general and cultural images of the white tiger in particular, I argue that the black tiger was attached to established gods and even became the symbol of these gods; therefore, this process will be shown the functions and efficacies of the Black Tiger Cult in Anze and in relation to other local religious communities.

1. The Black Tiger in Traditional Literature and History

Since the first century, Chinese literature and history has been portraying and conceptualizing the black tiger. Ancient writers paid special attention to the black coloration of the tiger and speculated certain cultural symbolism and implications in it. In this section, I will examine the ancient writings on the black tiger from the perspectives of philology and cultural history.

In ancient China, vocabulary on the black tiger was very rich. According to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhai jing 山海經)*, a dark-blue-colored tiger-like beast that dwelt on an island in the Northern Sea was called “*luoluo*” 羅羅.⁶⁷ Moreover, there were many black tigers, or “*xuan hu*” 玄虎, along with other black-colored animals in the mountains of Youdu 幽都 (the Underworld).⁶⁸ One character, instead of a disyllabic word,

⁶⁷ Yuan Ke 袁珂, Guo Pu 郭璞, anno., *Shanhai jing jiaozhu 山海經校註* (The Annotated Classic of Mountains and Seas) (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992), p. 294-95. The *Journal of Tianzhong (Tianzhong ji 天中記)* by Chen Yaowen 陳耀文 (1573-1619) recorded that the indigenous people in Yunnan 雲南 still referred to tigers as “*luoluo*.” See Chen Yaowen, *Tianzhong ji 天中記* (The Journal of Tianzhong), Qinding sikuquanshu edition, *juan* 60, p. 54b.

⁶⁸ Yuan Ke, Guo Pu, anno., *Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, pp. 525-26.

could signify the animal in early Chinese texts. In the *Erya* 爾雅, an ancient lexicon, the character for the black tiger was “*shu*” 𧇧.⁶⁹ In addition to “*shu*,” the *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字) by Xu Shen 許慎 of the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220) introduced another character “*teng*” 騰 that also referred to the black tiger.⁷⁰

Later exegetists provided more information about black tigers in their annotations to these ancient texts. For example, Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324) mentioned in his annotation to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* that the so-called “*hei hu*” 黑虎 (black tiger) in the mountains of Jingzhou 荊州 (modern Hubei 湖北 Province and Hunan 湖南 Province) were actually black leopards.⁷¹ In his annotation to the character “*shu*” in the *Erya*, Guo recorded an incident that happened in the fourth year of the Yongjia 永嘉 reign (310): A black tiger was trapped and captured in Zigui 秭歸 County (modern Zigui County, Yichang 宜昌 City, Hubei Province). The animal looked like a small tiger with black fur, and there were dark patterns in its coat as well.⁷² Guo Pu’s annotations indicated that the areas around

⁶⁹ Guo Pu 郭璞 and Xing Bing 邢昺, anno., *Erya zhushu* 爾雅註疏 (Annotations to *Erya*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), p. 324.

⁷⁰ Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (The Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985), p. 156.

⁷¹ Yuan Ke, Guo Pu, anno., *Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, p. 204.

⁷² Guo Pu and Xing Bing, anno., *Erya zhushu*, p. 324.

the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River might regard black leopards as black tigers in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The literary usage of “*shu*” or “*teng*” to signify the black tiger in Chinese texts seemed rather uncommon, yet they sometimes appeared in rhapsodies in the Han dynasty. For example, in a 3rd-century literary composition the “Rhapsody of the Wu Capital” (Wudu fu 吳都賦),⁷³ Zuo Si 左思 (250-305) illustrated a scene where all kinds of animals were disturbed and chased by the extravagantly equipped hunting party. In order to demonstrate a variety of exotic game and appeal to contemporary aesthetic taste in literary wording, Zuo used a number of fancy, yet uncommon, animal names including “*shu*.” Thus, the black tiger was considered a fantastic image.

In the Southern Song dynasty, there were more detailed descriptions of the black tiger. For example, Luo Yuan 羅願 (1136-1184) noted in the *Wings to Erya*, or the *Erya yi* 爾雅翼 that “*shu*” was especially vicious in comparison to tigers of other colors. Luo cited a farmer’s saying that a yellow tiger would wait for its chance to steal people’s goats and pigs, while a black tiger would take whatever it saw, and a white tiger would sit around and eat the food of idleness instead of hunting for prey itself. Therefore, people suspected that yellow tigers were immature, black tigers were in the prime of their lives, and white tigers were old.⁷⁴ This entry suggested tigers could be categorized based on different colors,

⁷³ Xiao Tong 蕭統 comp., Li Shan 李善 anno., *Wenxuan* 文選 (The Selections of Refined Literature) (Changsha: Yuelushushe, 2002), p. 153.

⁷⁴ Luo Yuan 羅願, *Erya yi* 爾雅翼 (Wings to Erya), in *Congshu jicheng xinbian* 叢書集成新編 (New Edition of the Collected Series of Collectanea) (Taipei: Shin Wen Feng Print Co., 2008), vol. 37, p. 744.

and each color might be a different kind of tiger or one at a different life stage; either way, the black tiger was always regarded as the strongest and boldest of all other tigers.

Many gazetteers compiled in the Ming-Qing era depicted black tigers as threats to the local people. In the twentieth year of the Hongwu 洪武 reign (1387), a black tiger calamity took place in Dehua 德化 County (modern Dehua County, Quanzhou 泉州 City, Fujian 福建 Province). A group of black tigers ate people by the window in broad day light and devoured families behind closed doors at night, so local people either died or fled. Houses were vacant and the fields were deserted.⁷⁵ Another case was found in De'an 德安 County (modern De'an County, Jiujiang 九江 City, Jiangxi 江西 Province) in the fifty-seventh year of the Kangxi 康熙 reign (1718). The county jailor, Zhu Dingchen 朱鼎臣, prayed to the City God and set up cross bows and traps for a man-eating black tiger. That night, people captured a 400-*jīn* 斤 tiger. Tigers stopped bothering local residents thereafter.⁷⁶ In the first year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign (1796), there was a tiger in Dexing 德興 County (modern Dexing City, Jiangxi Province) that went into a village and killed three people. Jiang Jingyuan 蔣敬源, the county magistrate, sent Lu Dongyu 陸東玉 who captured a black tiger whose hair was as long as 6 *cun* 寸.⁷⁷ These records indicated that black tigers were usually found in the southeast of China. In addition to their vicious nature

⁷⁵ Wang Bichang 王必昌, Lu Dingmei 魯鼎梅, *Dehua xianzhi* 德化縣志 (Gazetteer of Dehua), 1747 edition, compiled by Gazetteer Compilation Committee of Dehua County, Fujian Province, 1987, p. 536.

⁷⁶ Cheng Jingzhou 程景周, Shen Jianxun 沈建勳, *De'an xianzhi* 德安縣志 (Gazetteer of De'an), 1871, *juan* 15, p. 13a.

⁷⁷ Yang Zhongya 楊重雅, *Dexing xianzhi* 德興縣志 (Gazetteer of Dexing), 1872, *juan* 10, p. 9b.

to prey on humans, these black tigers were also described as huge and longhaired beasts that sometimes traveled in packs and sometimes alone.

Modern and contemporary records have offered some scientific descriptions of the black tiger. In the early modern time, Tan Bangjie 譚邦傑 documented several black tiger encounters within the first three decades of the twentieth century in his book the *Rare Birds and Exotic Beasts in China* (*Zhongguo de zhenqing yishou* 中國的珍禽異獸). In 1990, some villagers from southeastern Sichuan 四川 Province reportedly spotted a black tiger in the forest. Based on witnesses' description, the black tiger looked exactly like a common tiger except for the color.⁷⁸ In modern India, L. A. K. Singh published a book on the black and melanistic tiger in 1999. Besides showing actual cases of some uncommon colorations in tigers, Singh explained the reason for the color variations. While a tiger's coat displays a combination of white, yellow, and black, some may experience the absence of any of the three colors or genetic suppression of the colors' effects that eventually lead to various intensities and portions of the color combinations.⁷⁹ For Singh, melanistic tigers "have a preponderance of black color on the body," and "the back gives a crude appearance of yellow stripes on black background,"⁸⁰ whereas black tigers "have been defined to be those

⁷⁸ Zhou Shiqi 周士琦, "Gudai de heihu" 古代的黑虎 (Ancient Black Tigers), in *Daziran* 大自然, 4(1995): 18-19.

⁷⁹ L. A. K. Singh, *Born Black: The Melanistic Tiger in India*, (New Delhi: World Wide Fund for Nature-India, 1999), p. 36.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

which are completely black—the darkest version of the unstriped or faintly striped tigers.”⁸¹

According to the modern descriptions and explanations in Singh’s study, regardless of the differences between Indian and Chinese tiger species, the black tiger portrayed in ancient Chinese texts could be real. As Singh observed, black tigers are usually diminutive in size and more agile,⁸² which matched the physical appearance of the black tiger or black leopard captured in Zigui during the fourth century. However, it is also noteworthy that Singh’s speculation of the black tiger does not match the ones recorded in the gazetteers of De’an and Dexing where the black tigers were big and longhaired. Despite the possibility of a lesser-known tiger species, the black tiger could be a fictitious character with cultural significance. Specifically, black tiger images in traditional Chinese narratives were built upon the foundation of cultural perceptions of tigers and their extraordinary nature manifested in their unusual color variation.

Compared to tigers in general, the black tiger served as a more personalized and specific metaphor for the accompanied person’s physical features, personality, or moral/spiritual capacity. Take Liu Yingtian 劉應田, an achieved general during the Ming dynasty, for instance. Liu’s mother dreamed of a black tiger entering the room shortly

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁸² Ibid., p. 52. In *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 (The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores), Ma Huan 馬歡 (1380-1460) described black tigers from Malacca: smaller than Chinese yellow tiger; dark-haired with inconspicuous patterns. It was similar to Singh’s observation. See Ma Huan, Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 anno., *Yingya shenglan jiaozhu* 瀛涯勝覽校註 (Annotations to *Yingya shenglan*) (Shanghai: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1935), p. 25. For the English translation, see J. V. G. Mills trans. and ed., Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

before giving birth to him. This experience resulted in his nickname becoming “Black Tiger.” He had a square-shaped forehead and dark complexion. His voice was like striking a huge bell. At the age of 15, his valor was already peerless, and when he grew older, his reputation was even bigger. Later he won many battles and was given the title “Guerrilla General.”⁸³ Companionship with a black tiger in Liu’s case was more internal and conceptual, for Liu was resembled to a black tiger on multiple levels. The prenatal dream implied that Liu was probably endowed with a black tiger spirit, which explained his dark skin tone and incomparable courage. Liu also became the personification of a black tiger; once a colleague mistook him for a crouching tiger while he was asleep. The black tiger turned out to be a personalized symbol for Liu Yingtian and his military talent.

The black tiger companion visually indicated an otherworldly relationship between the animal and the accompanied person; thus, black tigers were distinguished from common tigers as natural predators. According to the *Gazetteer of Xianyang* (*Xianyang Xianzhi* 咸陽縣志), on the night Li Lin 李麟 (fl. 1679-1723), a future general during the Kangxi reign, was born, there was a tiger roaring near his family’s house. Later when Li was on a military campaign in the west, he rode his horse charging in the vanguard toward Mt. Zhuozi 棹子山 (in the east of the modern Wuhai 烏海 City, Inner Mongolia 內蒙古自治區), and the troops behind him saw a black tiger following his horse.⁸⁴ From the tiger roaring at his birth to the black tiger running behind him, Li was destined to achieve glory

⁸³ Li Tu 李圖, Wang Dalun 王大鏞, Bao Zhong 保忠, Wu Ci 吳慈, *Chongxiu Pingduzhou zhi* 重修平度州志 (Revised Gazetteer of Pingduzhou), 1849, *juan* 18, pp. 13a-b.

⁸⁴ Zang Yingtong 臧應桐, *Xianyang xianzhi* 咸陽縣志 (Gazetteer of Xianyang), 1836, *juan* 22, p. 12b.

in the battlefield due to the conventional view that tigers were the embodiment of strength, valor, and authority. The specific coloration of the tiger running behind his horse suggested that the beast was not preying on General Li but fantastically manifesting Li's valor. The black tiger might be Li's guardian and follower, or possibly a visualization of Li's strength, courage, and determination. Even though the anecdote was so brief that it mentioned nothing about Li's characteristics, the presence of the black tiger implied all this. The metaphorical use of the tiger image was very common in describing great warriors or generals. The tradition could also be reflected in the tiger-shaped metal tallies 虎符 (used since pre-Qin times) and the title of "hu bi" 虎賁 (since the Han and Wei dynasties)⁸⁵ that represented imperial authority and ability to command troops. The black tiger in these two stories made the historical figures more specific and extraordinary.

The motif of tiger companion was very popular in religious literature, especially in hagiographies. To show the spiritual power of religious figures, they were occasionally portrayed as tiger-whisperers or tiger-tamers with the ability to convert these carnivorous beasts into their mounts or guardians. For example, Chen Taihe 陳太和, a Daoist layman during the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1735-1796), had financial difficulties while building the Tower of the Jade Emperor 玉皇閣. Therefore, he often asked for donations day and night followed by a black tiger.⁸⁶ In this case, the black tiger made the legendary figure more

⁸⁵ For more information of the "hu bi" system and political representations, please see Huaiyu Chen, *Dongwu yu zhonggu zhengzhi zongjiao zhixu* 動物與中古政治宗教秩序 (Animals and Political Religious Orders of the Medieval Times) (Shanghai: Shanghai gujichubanshe, 2012), pp. 258-313.

⁸⁶ Jiao Shiguan 焦世官, Hu Guanqing 胡官清, Lin Yiming 林一銘, *Ningshan tingzhi* 寧陝廳志 (Gazetteer of Ningshanting), 1829, *juan* 3, pp. 16b-17a.

prominent. The spiritual hierarchy between common tigers and black tigers was highlighted in this next account. Zhang Shiyuan 張士元 (1755-1824), the eighteenth Celestial Master, had been living in Mt. Yingtian 應天山 (in the southeast of modern Shangqing 上清 Town, Jiangxi) for forty years. There were many tigers in the mountain, and people did not dare visit the area. When it was windy and rainy, Zhang could be seen riding a black tiger back and forth among the peaks.⁸⁷ Based on the short story, there could be some speculations regarding the relation between the black tiger and the other tigers in the mountain. The black tiger could be the leader or the strongest of the tiger pack, and its submission to Zhang guaranteed his safety in the mountain. The black tiger could be enlightened or converted by Zhang, and it became a “super-tiger” that overcame its bestial instincts and severed ties to the tiger pack. The black tiger mount not only indicated its superiority over the other tigers, but also manifested Zhang’s spiritual power.

In addition to companionship, black tigers could function as executors of god’s will as well in traditional Chinese narratives. Because of its singularity, the black tiger became a clue to the character’s identification. An example is the story of the old lady from Fujian 福建 documented in the *Rewritten Gazetteer of Guangze County* (*Chongzuan Guangze xianzhi* 重纂光澤縣志).⁸⁸ The witness was a man called Yong 傭, who was staying in the Peaks of Baiyun 白雲峰 (in modern Guangze 光澤 County, Nanping 南平 City, Fujian

⁸⁷ Tao Cheng 陶成, Yun Hesheng 惲鶴生, Xie Min 謝旻, *Jiangxi tongzhi* 江西通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Jiangxi), 1732, *juan* 104, p. 23b.

⁸⁸ Gao Pengran 高澎然, Sheng Chaofu 盛朝輔, *Chongzuan Guangze xianzhi* 重纂光澤縣志 (Rewritten Gazetteer of Guangze), 1870, *juan* 29, pp. 18b-19a.

Province). As a filial son, Yong financially supported his mother and moved her closer, so he could visit her several times a month. One day when he was napping during the day, Yong dreamed of a god handing him a gown and a notebook, while saying, “Wear this and do as the notebook says.” Yong looked at the gown, and it was dark green. On the notebook, there were names of people that would be consumed by a tiger. Yong was in extreme shock and started to weep. Kowtowing nine times, Yong respectfully declined the request by expressing his wish to take care of his old mother. The god was touched by Yong’s filial piety and thus took an illiterate old lady as the replacement. She took the gown and was sent away. On that day, a local old lady found a dark green gown in her vegetable garden. She became sick immediately after putting on the gown and lay in bed quietly, refusing to eat meals. Her daughter-in-law smelt blood and heard chewing sound from where she lay, and meanwhile words spread that a black tiger was killing people. Yong went over and collected the names of those who were eaten—they matched the list on the notebook. Thereupon, the black tiger was killed by a crossbow and disappeared. At the very moment, the old lady also died with an arrow wound in her ribs. The dark green gown went missing.

Three points are remarkable in this story: moral virtues such as filial piety could impress gods and save people from trouble; the black tiger was sent by the god to kill certain people; and the god was not always wise. Besides expressing political criticism of incompetent law enforcement officers abusing their power, the story tapped into the popular narratives where a tiger played the role of the executioner appointed by a Higher Power⁸⁹ and the motif of human-tiger transformation via an outfit (i.e., tiger skin or

⁸⁹ There were many accounts depicting a person turning into a tiger to kill certain victims on behalf of gods. The most famous one would be Zhang Feng’s 張逢 story. See Niu Sengru 牛僧儒 (780-848), Li Fuyan 李復言 (fl. 840), *Xuanguai lu Xu xanguai lu* 玄怪錄·續玄怪錄 (*Records of Mysterious and*

gown).⁹⁰ Stories like these often engaged readers with clues that linked the person to the man-eating tiger. In other cases where the person was transformed into a common tiger, the way to convince the audience that such metamorphosis really took place was having the son of the victim of the tiger confirm the person's story. However, this story of the old lady dropped many hints about her connection to the black tiger, including one of the most important pieces of evidence—the dark green gown, which came with the god's mission and disappeared after the death of the black tiger. At the end of the story, people considered the event numinous. Comparing to a common tiger, the black tiger itself already visually indicated a god's involvement.

The black tiger's role as the executor of a god's was also reflected in the way it interfered with one's life. For instance, a black tiger facilitated Feng Yunzhong's 馮允中 (1457-?) career success. In Feng's early years, though he was big-hearted, magnanimous, brave, and resourceful, he was unemployed and living with his uncle's financial support. Once he realized that he could not live like this forever, Feng wanted to join the army in another town. In the middle of the night, he put on his uncle's shoes and left. His uncle woke up and chased him to a tree. All of a sudden, a black tiger showed up and made Feng's uncle step back. Feng said, "After I establish my achievements in the battlefield I

Remarkable things/ Continued Records of Mysterious and Remarkable things (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 2006), pp. 184-86.

⁹⁰ Huaiyu Chen's study on were-tiger in Asia noted that the human transformation into tiger in medieval China was mainly caused by people's violent nature muddled the *qi* of Metal Essence 金精之氣. This concept was also adopted by Buddhists and combined with the Buddhist thought of reincarnation. See Huaiyu Chen, "Yazhou huren chuanshuo zhi wenhua shi bijiao yanjiu" 亞洲虎人傳說之文化史比較研究 (Comparative Cultural-Historical Study on the Weretiger Legends in Asia), in *Cheng Kung Journal of Historical Studies*, 58(June 2020): 21-55. In this case, the transformation was perpetuated by god's will and power.

shall reward Uncle with embroidered clothes.” The uncle replied, “I was trying to catch you and give you some travel expenses since you did not bring any.” Feng left without looking back.⁹¹ Eventually, Feng succeeded and became a famous general. From a storytelling perspective, the purpose of placing the black tiger at that moment was to separate Feng and his uncle, and make it look like it was predestined for him to pursue a military career by cutting ties with his previous lifestyle. Therefore, the black tiger between Feng and his uncle could be easily taken as the means to carry out the Heaven’s will. At this point, the black tiger was more of a symbol than the actual animal. Without any description of animalistic reactions such as attacking or fleeing when encountering humans, the calm and sitting beast represented Feng’s determination and the mysterious turning point of one’s life. All of these abstract concepts were manifested through the image of a black tiger in an unquestionable and unchallengeable manner. Even though Feng’s leaving was accompanied by sorrow and pain, in the long run it was a wise decision; thus, the story changed the black tiger’s image from a ferocious threat to a representative instrument of an ultimate authority.

The roles of the opponent/companion of people and the executor of gods’ will were all combined in the black tiger figure in the story of Yi Sitang 易思堂, who lived during the Kangxi reign. Yi was unrestrained and very fond of wine when he was young. One day, he got drunk and became lost. When Yi returned after a considerably long time, he stated that he had encountered an extraordinary person on Mt. Emei 峨嵋山, one of the four

⁹¹ Zheng Juzhong 鄭居中, Ling Shu 麟書, *Fugu xianzhi* 府谷縣志 (Gazetteer of Fugu), 1783, *juan* 4, pp. 36b-37b.

sacred Buddhist mountains that located in the middle of modern Sichuan Province. People would not believe him. At that time, there were many tigers in Mt. Jinlan 金蘭山 (in modern Xinxian County 新縣, Henan 河南 Province).⁹² Yi volunteered to go and solve the tiger calamity there. When he returned, Yi was riding a tiger while holding an iron whip in his hand. Within one year, Yi captured eighty tigers and was thus given the title of “Tiger Transcendent” 虎仙. Yi was not happy about it: “I have been solving tiger calamities for you misters not because I hate tigers. You may call me ‘Wine Transcendent’ 酒仙 instead.” For more than ten years thereafter, Yi just drank wine daily. There was an outbreak of tiger issues, and many people were killed. Yi refused to go. People intentionally got him drunk with wine and forced him to deal with the tiger problems. Yi said, “I have already caught a hundred and nineteen tigers. Now I am old and tired and would like to retire now. You have often not sympathized with me. I bid you farewell.” Before he left, Yi respectfully drank several *dou* of wine and then mounted a black tiger which ran swiftly as if flying. When Yi dismounted the tiger, the beast hurt his left arm, which eventually led to his death three days later. On the day he died, the black tiger came back and roared at his door.⁹³ The story implied that Yi Sitang had gained some superpower during his drunken encounter with a god in Mt. Emei. Therefore, he could single-handedly subdue tigers and even tamed one to be his mount. The black tiger was first introduced with its special coloration on Yi’s last ride, i.e., after he declined the request to pacify the tigers. It seemed that the black tiger,

⁹² Indian Buddhist monk Bodhidharma 達摩祖師 (483-540) allegedly lived in Mt. Jinlan temporarily.

⁹³ Peng Yulin 彭玉麟, Luo Qingxiang 羅慶蕪, *Hengyang xianzhi* 衡陽縣志 (Gazetteer of Hengyang), 1874, *juan* 7, pp. 177a-b.

probably on behalf of the god, murdered him for not helping with the local tiger outbreak. This appeared to be the case because of the way the black tiger killed him was different from a tiger attack: The attack was controlled and calculated. Unlikely to be fatally wounded, Yi's death from an arm wound was more of a punishment from Heaven. The black tiger represented god's blessing for and recognition of Yi's heroic deeds. However, when he refused to use his superpower for its right purpose, it backfired.

One thing that I would like to specifically point out in the story of Yi Sitang is the way he rode the black tiger. The iron whip he used to train his mount, on the one hand, suggested the great strength of the tiger and its rider. On the other hand, it echoed the spiritual narrative of Zhao Gongming, who was also described as a black tiger rider with an iron whip in his hand according to popular traditions and beliefs during the late-imperial era. Were there any folklore or canonical sources that contributed to the construction of black tiger images? The next section will explore spiritual identities of the black tiger and black tiger gods.

2. Spiritual Identities of the Black Tiger

The religious literature conceptualized the tiger image in relation to traditional Chinese theories of cosmology.⁹⁴ Regardless of some inconsistencies caused by different traditional theories,⁹⁵ the tiger was generally a symbol of danger, earth (or netherworld),

⁹⁴ For more information about the significance and position of the tiger in Daoist cosmology, see Huaiyu Chen, "The Other as the Transformed Alliance: Living with the Tiger in Medieval Chinese Daoism," *Polylog: Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*, 45(2021): 4-22.

⁹⁵ For example, the tiger's feminine nature *yin*, specifically described with the word *pin* 牝, could be a reference to the direction of north according to the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. See pointed out that "the land of *pin* was the land in the north," quoting the annotation in the *Imperial Reader of the Taiping Reign (Taiping*

and *yin* 陰 energy. These impressions of the tiger conditioned more specific identities of the white tiger and the black tiger. With respect to the white tiger, it was one of the Four Symbols 四象 of the Chinese astrology⁹⁶ and stood for the seven constellations in the west. The white tiger's fundamental position in traditional Chinese cosmology further developed the cultural symbolism of the tiger, and thus played into the spiritual narratives of the black tiger and black tiger god.

The spiritual construction and deification of the black tiger can be observed based on its connection to the white tiger and the black tiger's spiritual identities.

1) Images of the White Tiger and Their Connections to Images of the Black Tiger

As Ching-lang Hou pointed out, the white tiger was naturally associated with the destructive force of autumn, the color of mourning, and the stage of death in the life cycle of all creatures.⁹⁷ In many traditional narratives, the white tiger was often portrayed as the leader or king of all the other tigers. For instance, there was an anomalous tale recorded in the *Chronicles of Huayang* (*Huayangguo zhi* 華陽國志) by Chang Qu 常璩 (ca. 291-ca. 361) regarding the way to resolve the white tiger calamity during the time of King

yulan 太平御覽). However, according to Hou Shanyuan's 侯善淵 (12th century) Daoist poems in the *Anthology of the Great Mystery of Upper Clarity* (*Shangqing taixuan ji* 上清太玄集), tiger was associated with the central position 中央, which represented Earth and so the color yellow. See Zhang, *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 27, p. 242.

⁹⁶ The Four Symbols are the Azure Dragon 青龍 of the East, the Vermillion Bird 朱雀 of the South, the White Tiger 白虎 of the West, and the Black Tortoise 玄武 of the North. They were constellation names given to the four directions. Li Xueqin 李學勤 comp., Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) anno., *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (The Book of Rites with Annotations) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), vol. 1, p. 81.

⁹⁷ Ching-lang Hou, "The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, Anna Seidel and Holmes Welch eds., (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 215-6.

Zhaoxiang of Qin 秦昭襄王 (r. 306-251 BC). After getting shot with three arrows in the head, the angry white tiger killed all the other tigers it led before it died. The white tiger appeared as the leader of all the other tigers and the chief culprit in the murder of a thousand and two hundred people in four prefectures.⁹⁸

In some cases of human-tiger interactions, the white tiger king changed into a symbol of the hero who defeated it and was enshrined as a humanoid god in traditional Chinese folklore. The *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記) included a story from the *Collection of Strange Stories* (*Jiyi ji* 集異記) by Xue Yongruo 薛用弱 (fl. 821-827) about Kuo 廓, the god of a nameless temple in Yongqing County 永清縣廟 (in modern Xiangyang 襄陽 City, Hubei Province) who killed a lot of vicious tigers including the white tiger king. Local people built a temple to commemorate Kuo. However, as time went by, people started to mistake Kuo for the white tiger god. Kuo showed up in the dream of the younger brother of the county magistrate and explained: “The leader of the tigers was in the Prefecture of the West Town 西城郡 (in modern Ankang 安康 city, Shaanxi province). It was huge and extremely swift. Its body looked like white embroidered silk. There was a halo in its forehead like a mirror. It harmed people the most, so I slew it.”⁹⁹ As the leader of common tigers, the white tiger had not only the

⁹⁸ Chang Qu 常璩, Ren Naiqiang 任乃強 anno., *Huayangguo zhi jiaobu tuzhu* 華陽國志校補圖注 (Chronicles of Huayang with Annotations and Pictures) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), p. 14. This story was also included in the *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*, see Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), et al., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (The Extensive Records of the Taiping Era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), vol. 9, p. 3465.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 2431-32.

overwhelming physical build of an apex predator but also the aberrant coloration and the numinous mark on its forehead to set it apart from common tigers. The plot where locals mistook Kuo for the white tiger to worship in the temple suggested a possible way of deifying trouble-making animals.

Similar deification happened to the black tiger in Zhao Gongming's origin story. The *Gazetteer of Zhouzhi* (*Zhouzhi xianzhi* 整屋縣志) recorded a relatively comprehensive introduction to Zhao Gongming:

Previous Gazetteer Recorded: There was a village called Zhaoda in the southeast part of Zhouzhi County (modern Zhouzhi 周至 County to the southwest of Xi'an 西安 City, Shaanxi 陝西 Province), and it was allegedly the birthplace of Marshal Zhao, the God of the Dark Altar. Gazetteers recorded that the god was a man from the Zhou dynasty (1046 BC-256 BC) whose name was Zhao Gongming. He lived in the Wazigang of that village. At that time, there was a black tiger causing harm to the people. The god went into the Black Water Valley to collect firewood and captured the tiger alive. Later, [Zhao] became a god. A temple for him still remains in the village even now.¹⁰⁰

舊志：邑東南鄉有趙大村，相傳為元壇神趙元帥故里。志載：神為周時人，姓趙名公明，居是村之瓦子崗，時有黑虎為民害，神入黑水谷採薪，遂生擒之，後為神。今村中有廟。

¹⁰⁰ Wang Kaiwo 王開沃, Yang Yi 楊儀, Deng Binglun 鄧秉綸, *Zhouzhi xianzhi* 整屋縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhouzhi), 1793, *juan* 14, p. 11a.

Although the black tiger was neither a god nor slain by Zhao Gongming, it was defeated and deified alongside Zhao Gongming. According to a study of Zhao Gongming and his stories circulating in his hometown Zhouzhi, locals still regard him as the Numinous Official of Black Tiger 黑虎靈官 and even call him “Zhao Black Tiger” 趙黑虎 in the modern era.¹⁰¹ Before the black tiger’s encounter with Zhao Gongming, it was evil, like the white tiger that was harmful to people. Becoming Zhao’s mount and symbol, the black tiger shed its baleful image, which alluded to the white tiger while maintaining its incredible power and inclination to violence that the white tiger also shared.

As the reoccurring features of the white tiger’s cultural narratives, the direction of West in the Four Symbols, the element of Metal in the Five Phases, and the involvement of violence/death were culturally built into the identity of tigers.¹⁰² While most of the white tiger images were conventionally deviant in religious literature and folklore,¹⁰³ the black

¹⁰¹ Research Association of Zhao Gongming at Zaolin in the Zhouzhi County 周至縣棗林趙公明研究會, “Zhao gong yuanshuai caishen xingxiang yu minjian chuanshuo de yuantou—yi Shanxi Zhouzhi Zaolin cun wei hexin de minsu kaocha” 趙公元帥財神形象與民間傳說的源頭——以陝西周至棗林村為核心的民俗考察 (Marshal Zhao’s Image as the God of Wealth and the Origin of the Folklore—A Folkloristic Investigation on the Zaolin Village in Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), *New West 新西部*, 9(2012): 94-96.

¹⁰² According to the *Huainanzi* composed by Liu An 劉安 (179 BC-122 BC) and his literati community: “The West is Metal. Its god is Shao Hao 少昊. His assistant is Ru Shou 蓐收. Shao Hao grasps the T-square 矩 and governs autumn. His spirit is Great White 太白 [Venus]. His animal is the White Tiger. His musical note is Shang 商; his Heavenly Stems are *geng* 庚 and *xin* 辛.” See John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, etc. ed. trans., *Huainanzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 118.

¹⁰³ Linjun 廩君, the mythical leader of the southern clans, alleged turned into a white tiger after his death. Linjun’s own clan of Ba 巴 thought that the white tiger should drink human blood, so they made human sacrifices for him. See Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), Li Xian 李賢 (655-684), et al., anno., *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han) (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 2012), vol. 10, p. 2840. In the Daoist canon, a blood-thirsty white tiger god was confronted and eventually banished by Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (34-156). See Zhang, *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 47, p. 337. A positive image of the white tiger is *zouyu* 騶虞, a kind of long-tailed white tiger, was considered righteous and benevolent. See Xu, , *Shuowen jiezi*, p. 155; Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641), *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 1716-17. In certain cases, *zouyu* was interchangeable with a

tiger was portrayed more positively as the guardian or companion of deities. The difference probably came from the dichotomy between black and white in traditional Chinese cosmology.

2) Spiritual Identities of the Black Tiger and Black Tiger Gods

The black tiger was mainly associated with two Daoist deities: Zhao Gongming and the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven. Daoist canonical literature was vague about Zhao Gongming's tiger. When Zhao Gongming, or Marshal Zhao 趙元帥, was one of the demon-kings according to the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* (*Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律) compiled between the 3rd century and the 6th century,¹⁰⁴ he had no direct connection to tigers. In Daoist literature compiled since the Song dynasty, Zhao's tiger mount was rationalized by the Five Phase theory and the Four Symbols. The “Esoteric Rite [to Summon] Marshal Zhao of the Mysterious Altar of Orthodox Unity” 正一玄壇趙元帥祕法 included in the *Corpus of Daoist Ritual* (*Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元) started with a biography of Zhao Gongming:

The Marshal's last name was Zhao, first name was Lang or Chang, and style name was Gongming. He was a native of Mt. Zhongnan (modern Mt. Zhongnan in the south of Xi'an City). He hid away in the mountains during the Qin dynasty. There he practiced the supreme Dao. When he achieved

white tiger. However, judging by the difference in naming, *zouyu* should not represent white tigers in general.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang, *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 8, p. 609. For more information about Zhao Gongming's relationship to the exorcistic deities, see Guo Qitao, *Exorcism and Money: The Symbolic World of the Five-Fury Spirits in Late Imperial China*, (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2003), pp. 37, 39, 128, 130-33.

his merits, he was appointed as the Deputy Marshal of the Superior God in the Nine Heavens by the Jade Emperor. Notes: The Marshal was formed by the *qi* of Brahma¹⁰⁵ from the Thearch Huijuehun of the Haoting xiaodu Heaven.¹⁰⁶ His position was in the direction of *qian* (Northwest), and it was the symbol that combined the *qi* of Metal and Water. As for the color of his outfit, the reason why [Zhao] had an iron hat upon his head and an iron whip in his hand was because the Metal encountered the *qi* of Water. The reason why his complexion was black with heavy beard was because of the *qi* from the North. The reason why he was mounting a tiger was because it was a symbol of the Metal. Therefore, it referred to the Metal in the Water.... When the ancestor Celestial Master (Zhang Daoling 張道陵) during the Han dynasty practiced alchemy, his spirit flew to the [Jade] Emperor and requested a mighty and fierce divine official to guard it for him. Therefore, the Marshal answered the Jade Emperor's edict to become the Marshal of the Mysterious Altar of Orthodox Unity.¹⁰⁷ 'Zheng' meant that ten thousand

¹⁰⁵ *Fan* 梵 or *dafan* 大梵 is cosmic, pre-creation material (*prima materia*). It is the *qi* of Before Heaven. See Bede Benjamin Bidlack, *In Good Company: The Body and Divinization in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ and Daoist Xiao Yingsou*, (Netherlands: Brill, 2015), p. 153; *Fanqi*, represents the primordial Dao in its creative aspect. See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), p. 386.

¹⁰⁶ According to *the Seven Bamboo Tablets of the Cloudy Satchel* (*Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤), the Haoting xiaodu Heaven was one of the Eight Heavens in the North. See *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 29, pp. 198-201. Haoting xiaodu Heaven was also mentioned in the *Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure of the Upper Clarity* (*Shangqing lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法). See *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 34, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ In the *Comprehensive Mirror of Perfected Immortals and Those Who Embodied the Dao through the Ages* (*Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑒), Zhang Daoling subdued Zhao Gongming, one of the eight demon marshals. See *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 47, pp. 338-40. For more information about the relationship between Zhang Daoling and Zhao Gongming, see Vincent Goossaert, *Heavenly Masters: Two Thousand Years of the Daoist State*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022), pp. 109-10.

of evils could not approach; ‘yi’ meant that the pure singularity could not be divided in two. For this reason, the responsibility of the Mysterious Altar was the most significant. After the Celestial Master achieved immortality, [Zhao] permanently protected the famous mountain Longhu (Dragon-tiger).¹⁰⁸

元帥姓趙名朗，一名昶，字公明，中南山人。秦時避世山中，精修至道，功行圓滿，被玉帝旨，召為神霄副帥。按：元帥乃皓庭霄度天慧覺昏梵炁化生，其位在乾，金合水炁之象也。其服色，頭戴鐵冠，手執鐵鞭者，金遘水炁也。面色黑二鬚鬚者，北炁也。騎虎者，金象也。故比水中金之義。……逮祖天師修煉大丹，飛神奏帝，請威猛神吏為之守護，由是元帥上奏玉旨，充正一玄壇元帥。正則萬邪不干，一則純一不二。所以玄壇之職至重。天師飛昇之後，永鎮龍虎名山。

Noticeably, Zhao Gongming’s tiger was not explicitly described as black in this account.¹⁰⁹

The tiger alluded to the white tiger, which represented the Metal, so it would be more logically sound to be a black tiger with all the given cosmological elements in this passage. There were two groups of symbols related to Zhao Gongming: one included the West, Metal, iron, tiger, etc., and the other one included the North, the Water, black, etc. The image of a black tiger combined both groups of symbols. In addition, the origin of Zhao Gongming’s tiger seemed mostly built upon the sacred position of the tiger in Daoism and these cosmological elements that Zhao represented.

¹⁰⁸ *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 38, pp. 312-13. Also see *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全 (The Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), pp. 141-43. Another version of this account was recorded in the *Gazetteer of Zhouzhi*. See Wang Kaiwo 王開沃, Yang Yi 楊儀, Deng Binglun 鄧秉綸, *Zhouzhi xianzhi* 整屋縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhouzhi), 1793, *juan* 14, pp. 11a-b.

¹⁰⁹ It was consistent with the description and illustration in the *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings*.

During the late-imperial time, Zhao Gongming's tiger was more recognized as a black one in popular literature. In the *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義) compiled in the 16th century, Zhao Gongming subdued a black tiger and rode it to support the King of Shang in the battle against Ji Fa 姬發 (1076 BC-1043 BC) and Jiang Shang 姜尚 (d. 1015 BC).¹¹⁰ Although Zhao was criticized for siding with the corrupted King of Shang, he was still promoted posthumously to godhood by the Celestial Venerable of the Primordial Beginning 元始天尊 to guard the Dark Altar of Mt. Longhu. Besides the conceptual construction of Zhao Gongming in earlier Daoist canonical literature, the black tiger can be regarded as the counterpart to the black *qilin* 麒麟 that Wen Zhong 聞仲, the grand tutor to the King of Shang 商, rode when he went to persuade Zhao Gongming to help; moreover, that linkage suggested a sinister sense of being an anti-hero. In contrast to the biography of Zhao Gongming recorded in the *Gazetteer of Zhouzhi*, the black tiger in the *Investiture of the Gods* voluntarily went to Zhao when he needed to climb over a tall mountain. After Zhao drew a spell on the black tiger's forehead, clouds and wind appeared around the black tiger's legs, which enabled Zhao and his mount to travel fast. It seemed that the black tiger was sentient and even numinous before its encounter with Zhao.

After his deification, Zhao Gongming's spiritual powers aimed to help people through natural disasters and bring prosperity or justice to the masses. His biography from

¹¹⁰ Xu Zhonglin 許仲琳 comp., *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Investiture of the Gods) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 438-39. For more information about ritual practice perspective of Zhao Gongming's story in the *Investiture of the Gods*, see Mark R. E. Meulenbeld, *Demonic warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), pp. 86, 88, 184-85. For more information about the shadow play adaptation of Zhao Gongming's story in the *Investiture of the Gods*, see Fan Pen Chen, *Chinese Shadow Theatre: History, Popular Religion, and Women Warriors*, (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), pp. 154-56.

the *Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* (*Sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 三教源流搜神大全), an encyclopedia of a hundred and eighty-one deities in Chinese Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian traditions composed in the late Ming period detailed:

Those who were inclined to goodness and wished to atone for their mistakes with achievements, as well as those who were stubborn and incorrigible, would be under Marshal Zhao's management. For this reason, the Dark Altar of Mt. Longhu was indeed an office that served to reward and punish... As for appealing against wrong convictions, Marshal Zhao had the ability to bring justice in wronged cases and help businesses to profit and thrive. If people had encountered injustice, they could pray to Marshal Zhao and he could fulfill everybody's wishes.¹¹¹

其趨善建功謝過之人及頑冥不化者皆元帥掌之，故有龍虎玄壇，實賞罰之一司。……至如訟冤伸抑，公能使之解釋；公平買賣求財，公能使之宜利和合。但有公平之事，可以對神禱，無不如意。

As Zhao Gongming's mount and companion, the black tiger would serve as his helper, which could be traced to the tiger role as the executor of a god's will. One of the accounts where Marshal Zhao and the black tiger brought justice to the innocent was in the *Tiger Compendium* (*Hu hui* 虎薈) compiled by Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639). A beautiful widow from Yixing 義興 (modern Yixing 宜興 City, Jiangsu 江蘇 Province) was framed by her ill-intentioned neighbor for theft. The widow always served the God of the Dark

¹¹¹ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, pp. 141-43.

Altar devotedly, and she told him about this. The god came in her dream and said, “I will dispatch my tiger to avenge you.” When the neighbor went into the mountains to hack some wood with his colleagues, a black tiger jumped out of the bamboo grove and ate him.¹¹² This story demonstrated how the God of the Dark Altar punished evil through his black tiger.

The characteristics of the black tiger were not well articulated in Daoist canonical literature, but such information could be found in late-imperial Chinese folklore. A story in the *Gazetteer of Qingyang* (*Qingyang fuzhi* 慶陽府志) compiled during the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1522-1566) shed some light upon the public perception of the black tiger. Wang Lun 王綸, son of the local worthy Wang Fu 王福, was allegedly the reincarnation of Marshal Zhao’s black tiger. When Fu’s wife was in labor, he had a dream that the God of the Dark Altar gave him a black tiger and said, “Let him be your son.” When he woke up, Fu was informed that his son was born. Lun was incredibly smart and could memorize any book that he read. He was also a good writer. He would never cross any lines and was benevolent by nature. However, Lun was hot-tempered like fire and always had regrets after he embarrassed others in conflicts. Even though he was loyal to the court and had achieved grand merits, Lun was framed as one of the traitors due to the fact that he had earlier offended the official in charge. Lun’s lack of restraint when it came to torture and punishment led him to wrongly executing the bad along with the good. Master Shao 邵子

¹¹² Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), *Hu hui* 虎薈 (Tiger Compendium), Baoyantang 寶顏堂 edition, *juan* 5, pp. 25b-26a.

(1011-1077) once said, “Those who like killing shall be killed.”¹¹³ The moral of the story was to tell all talented people that they should keep a low profile and restrain themselves in order to avoid the same fate as Lun.¹¹⁴ Because of the connection between Lun and Zhao’s black tiger, Lun’s personality and character could reflect that of the numinous animal. Based on the given information, the black tiger was fundamentally smart and benevolent. It was loyal to Zhao just like Lun was to the court. In addition to these humanoid qualities that probably came with its deification, the black tiger was bad-tempered and unrestrained in killing, which coincided with the stereotypical perception of the tiger as a violent, bloodthirsty, and deadly predator. This story revealed the weakness of the black tiger—the lack of moderation when it came to penalty. Even though the punishment of evil automatically justified the overwhelming violence during the process, there was potential for an abuse of power based on poor judgement. The *Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* pointed out that Zhao had the ability to tell right from wrong and carry out rewards or punishments fairly, Wang Lun’s story might imply that the black tiger needed Zhao’s guidance and supervision in order to overcome its shortcomings, i.e., bestial instincts, and bring justice.

One of the most popular efficacies of Marshal Zhao in the Ming-Qing era was to resolve human-animal conflicts, which might be referring to Zhao’s subjugation of the

¹¹³ This quote came from *Huangji jingshi shu* 皇極經世書 (Book of the August Ultimate Through the Ages), a Daoist treatise written by the early Northern Song mathematician and philosopher Shao Yong 邵雍. See *Shao Yong quanji* 邵雍全集 (The Complete Anthology of Shao Yong) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), p. 1162.

¹¹⁴ Fu Xueli 傅學禮, Liang Minghan 梁明翰, *Qingyang fuzhi* 慶陽縣志 (Gazetter of Qingyangfu), 1557, *juan* 14, pp. 20a-b.

black tiger described in the *Investiture of the Gods* and the *Gazetteer of Zhouzhi*. In the twenty-second year of the Kangxi reign (1683), local official Gong Yinglin 龔應霖 donated money to build the Dark Altar Temple 元壇廟¹¹⁵ in order to restrain tigers from harming people.¹¹⁶ In Shanxi, a stele inscription from the Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai 英寨 Village recorded that this temple was built in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743) to protect people from tigers and wolves.¹¹⁷

Tracing back, the black tiger was also associated with Mt. Wudang 武當山 and the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven (Xuantian Shangdi 玄天上帝), or the Dark Thearch, according to Daoist canons.¹¹⁸ Mt. Wudang is located in the south of Shiyan City, Hubei Province and was gradually identified as the Thearch's most holy site by the 14th century. The *Record of the Revealed Sacred of the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven (Xuantian shangdi qisheng lu 玄天上帝啟聖錄)* mentioned that during the Dark Thearch's practice in Taizi Cave 太子巖, there was a numinous crow that heralded the break of day and a black tiger who guarded the cave. Every time the Dark Thearch ate, he would feed the crow

¹¹⁵ In order to avoid the character *xuan* 玄 in Emperor Kangxi's name, people at that time replaced it with *yuan* 元.

¹¹⁶ Lü Lüheng 呂履恆, *Ningxiang xianzhi 寧鄉縣志* (Gazetteer of Ningxiang), 1702, *juan* 6, p. 4a.

¹¹⁷ Gao Jianfeng 高劍峰, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan) 三晉石刻大全 (臨汾市安澤縣卷)* (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Anze County, Linfen City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 50. There were many Black Tiger Temples in Anze, Shanxi that were originally built to address local human-animal conflicts. See Liu Xinyang, "Mingqing shiqi Anze beike zhong de heihushen xinyang yu shengtai huanjing." Chapter 2 and 3 will be focusing on these temples and stele inscriptions.

¹¹⁸ For more information about the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven or Zhenwu 真武, see Shin-yi Chao, *Daoist Ritual, State Religion, and Popular Practices: Zhenwu Worship from Song to Ming (960-1644)* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

and the black tiger as well. Since these two animals had interactions with the divine, they both rose to become grand gods that showed themselves from time to time. The black crow had a red beak, and whoever encountered it would flourish; the black tiger could banish evil, and whoever went against it would be doomed.¹¹⁹ Further on, the commentary quoted an introduction of the black tiger god from the *Comprehensive Collection of Facts Concerning the Blissful Land of Wudang* (*Wudang fudi zongzhen ji* 武當福地總真集) compiled by a Daoist priest named Liu Daoming 劉道明 in 1291, though it was not exactly the same as original entry. The original passage read:

The Marshal Black Tiger who patrolled Mt. Wudang was created by Heavenly One of the North. He was the god that protected the teachings and guarded the mountains. His spiritual power was so authoritative and numinous that it could not be described in detail. Those who did not have the proper physiognomy, yet wished to learn transcendent skills, would be chased away either by the revelation of [Marshal Black Tiger's] true face, or by his warning in their dreams. During the night, he would inspect rooms in the monastery and secure the blissful place. He had his own teachings transmitted in the world.¹²⁰

武當山巡山黑虎元帥，北方天一所化，護教鎮山之神。神通威靈，不可具述，凡骨相未應學仙之人，或現真相，或警夢寐，悉皆逐去。夜則巡行廊廡，衛護福庭，有法行之於世。

¹¹⁹ *Xuantian shangdi qisheng lu* 玄天上帝啟聖錄 (Record of the Revealed Sacred of the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven), in *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 30, p. 637.

¹²⁰ Liu Daoming 劉道明, *Wudang fudi zongzhen ji* 武當福地總真集 (Comprehensive Collection of Facts Concerning the Blissful Land of Wudang), in *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 48, p. 575.

The quotation in the *Record of the Revealed Sacred of the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven* seemed to add more information to the original, such as the black tiger god being able to transform itself into different things. Sometimes he would change into a human wearing golden armor and a general-like black gown; sometimes he would reveal his true self with dark mane and black body like a lion; sometimes he was as big as a yak or as small as a leopard; sometimes his tracks could be found in the snow or in the mud. It was inauspicious to physically meet him, but those who dreamed of him would be blessed.¹²¹

Although canonical Daoist resources did not directly explain the symbolic meaning of the black tiger god, it was reasonable that there was a good conceptual correlation between the black tiger and the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven. First of all, the Thearch was formed by the Taiyin 太陰 (Grand Yin) and Tianyi, which were both spirits of the North.¹²² As we previously discussed, tiger represented *yin* in both Daoist canonical literature and folklore, the black tiger could be regarded as the combination of the notion of North and Yin. Then the word *xuan* 玄 or “dark” in the Thearch’s name also indicated the color of North. Besides the black tiger, the Thearch had another companion—a crow, also bearing the black color of the North.

All the conceptual correlations between the black tiger and the North had developed into the black tiger tradition surrounding Mt. Wudang and the Dark Thearch. There were deities affiliated with the Thearch that were portrayed with a black tiger. For example, Liu Wenxian 劉文顯 or Marshal Liu 劉元帥, who was documented in the *Corpus of Daoist*

¹²¹ *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 30, p. 637.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 636.

*Ritual*¹²³ and the *Retrieved Pearls from the Sea of Rituals* (*Fahai yizhu* 法海遺珠)¹²⁴ as a man with date-colored face in a black gown wrapped in flames, was noted as being followed by a black tiger. A secret technique, as probably invented by the Dark Thearch, could summon Marshal Liu to capture demons and goblins or strike them with thunderbolts. Because of the cultural presence of the black tiger in Mt. Wudang, many geographical features were named after it, such as the “Black Tiger Rock/Cave” 黑虎巖 on top of the “Black Tiger Gorge” 黑虎澗 amid the big forest and the huge rocks where the black tiger dwelt.¹²⁵ In addition to these natural sites, there were literary creations related to the black tiger in Mt. Wudang. The *Collection of Marvelous Sceneries in Mt. Wudang* (*Wudang jishengji* 武當紀勝集) compiled by Luo Tingzhen 羅霆震 during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) included two poems titled “Black Tiger Temple” 黑虎祠¹²⁶ and “Black Tiger Elixir” 黑虎丹¹²⁷ that had employed a great amount of black tiger imageries. The first poem viewed the black tiger god as an underappreciated talent patrolling for the Thearch; the second poem introduced the efficacy of the Black Tiger Elixir while comparing it to a tiger’s attack.

¹²³ Ibid., vol. 38, pp. 200-1.

¹²⁴ Ibid., vol. 41, p. 575.

¹²⁵ Ibid., vol. 48, p. 564.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 580.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 589.

The black tiger culture in Daoism could have been constructed in contrast to the symbolism of the white tiger, and the black tiger image was employed to indicate the Daoist lineage. Since the white tiger was mostly a baleful creature, the black tiger should be on the opposite what the white tiger represented and became the symbol of auspiciousness and good—some things with which the Dao should be related. The *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Jiangxi* (*Jiangxi tongzhi* 江西通志) recorded a story of the Eighteenth Celestial Master Zhang Shiyuan 張士元 (late Tang dynasty) who rode a black tiger in Mt. Yingtian 應天山 (in the modern Guixi 貴溪 City, Jiangxi Province) in the windy and rainy weather.¹²⁸ An earlier version of this story could be found in the *Hereditary Household of the Han Celestial Master* (*Han Tianshi shijia* 漢天師世家) by Zhang Yuchu 張宇初 (1361-1410), the forty-third Celestial Master. This version specified that Zhang Shiyuan wore a dark cap 玄冠 while mounting a black tiger—with these features people knew he was a celestial master.¹²⁹ It seemed that the black cap and the black tiger were important indicators of the celestial master's identity. According to the *On Conducting the Pervasive Mystery Numinous Treasure Three Grotto Rituals and Commandments for Worshipping Dao* (*Dongxuan lingbao 68anding fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始), the black cap was a standard accessory to a master of Orthodox Unity or a celestial master.¹³⁰ In the “Introit to Biographies of the Celestial Master Lineage” 天師世傳引, Zhang Daoling,

¹²⁸ Tao Cheng 陶成, Yun Hesheng 惲鶴生, Xie Min 謝旻, *Jiangxi tongzhi* 江西通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Jiangxi), 1732, *juan* 104, p. 23b.

¹²⁹ Zhang, *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 46, p. 351.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 42, p. 22.

the first celestial master, was visited by a numinous person Zhao Gongming, followed by a black tiger. Zhao volunteered to protect the elixir chamber for Zhang in Mt. Longhu (about 5.6 miles northwest to Mt. Yingtian).¹³¹ In the same account, Zhang admonished the white tiger god in the west Town for accepting human sacrifices. The clear contrast between the guardian black tiger and the bloodthirsty white tiger not only reinforced the positive image of the black tiger in the Daoist context, but also tied the lineage of the Orthodox Unity sect closer to the black tiger. Therefore, the black tiger became the guardian and symbol of Daoist teachings.

The tradition of the black tiger possibly influenced local Buddhist community where the black tiger was also considered a guardian of the Buddhist teaching. In the *Gazetteer of Zhouzhi*, a numinous black tiger was making random appearances in Mt. Jiufeng 九峯山 (in the southeast of Zhouzhi County). The local people thought it was the Dharma-protector 法護 of this mountain and built a temple to serve it.¹³² Based on the information given in the entry to Mt. Jiufeng, there was a temple dedicated to the Bodhisattva in White 白衣菩薩 or Pāṇḍara-Vāsīnī in the mountain. Thus, the black tiger was probably regarded as the Buddhist *dharmapāla* or dharma-protector. As the birthplace of Zhao Gongming, the black tiger culture could have a significant impact on local spiritual life.

Although there were a few associations of black tigers with Chinese Buddhism, the majority of the black tiger images in Chinese religious literature were either related to the

¹³¹ Ibid., vol. 46, p. 346.

¹³² Wang, Yang and Deng, *Zhouzhi xianzhi, juan 1*, p. 15b.

black tiger god that worked for the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven in Mt. Wudang or associated with the God of the Dark Altar—Zhao Gongming, who was working for the founder of the Orthodox Unity—Celestial Master Zhang Daoling in Mt. Longhu. Due to their similar job to protect the mountains, the black tiger god in Mt. Wudang and Zhao Gongming with his black tiger mount were venerated as the Mountain God in many popular beliefs. In these cases, the black tiger's spiritual powers seemed to be heavily dependent on the human deities they were serving. Meanwhile, the black tiger brought its cultural images rooted in the perception of tigers and the white tiger to symbolize the human god it was accompanying.

In summary, in the case of the Black Tiger God in the Black Tiger Cult in Anze, it is necessary to differentiate the deification of the black tiger from that of tigers in general. The spiritual narratives of the black tiger, although they shared cultural common ground with tigers in general, had their own development in both Chinese folklore and canonical literatures. The goal of this chapter was to clarify the cultural identity of the black tiger and find its spiritual origins and cultural references.

As a rare kind of tiger that might have existed in China, black tigers were mysterious subjects in Chinese culture; their images appeared in historical anecdotes, anomalous tales, and Daoist canonical literatures from time to time. Black tigers inherited the roles tigers in general played as companions or opponents of humans and executors of god's will, and at the same time enhanced the particularity and extraordinariness with their unique coloration.

As a symbol in spiritual narratives, the black tiger was correlated with elements such as North, Northwest, Water, Metal, etc. and associated with human deities such as

Zhao Gongming and Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven. The conceptualization of the black tiger was particularly related to the image of the white tiger, which served as a contrasting image to the black tiger image. Daoist deities including the celestial masters could be represented by the black tiger—a figure claimed and reinvented not only in Daoist canons but also in popular literature. In the case of Zhao Gongming, it seemed that his tiger mount was specified as black in late-imperial narratives, which became a popular tradition. Therefore, local cults and mainstream religions were exchanging and embracing their spiritual property. The next chapter will focus on the Black Tiger Cult's relationships with local religious communities and government in late-imperial Shanxi.

CHAPTER TWO

**BLURRED BOUNDARIES: THE BLACK TIGER CULT'S RELATIONSHIP
WITH LOCAL RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN LATE-
IMPERIAL SHANXI**

Introduction

Images of the black tiger were developed on the foundation of traditional Chinese thought and canonical literature, especially with respect to the Daoist literature. Therefore, it is impossible to separate the Black Tiger Cult from local Buddhist and Daoist communities. Meanwhile, the establishment of Black Tiger Temples also required financial and governmental support. This chapter aims at retrieving the social fabric around the Black Tiger Cult in late-imperial Shanxi to shed some light upon local traditions of the Black Tiger God that reflected human-tiger relationships and its impact on social dynamics.

This chapter will explore the Black Tiger Cult's relations to local religious and governmental institutions between the 16th century and the early 20th century by analyzing locally produced historical sources, such as stele inscriptions and gazetteers. Based on these textual materials, I argue that the Black Tiger Cult conceptually and physically shared resources with Buddhist and Daoist communities and in some cases became a site of fusion of religious traditions and institutions. Although the Black Tiger Temple was not qualified to earn a place on the list of state supported temples, it was still recognized by the local government for its religious efficacies. This chapter consists of two parts: (1) the detailed establishment, renovation, and temple management of the Black Tiger Temples in Shanxi from Ming to the early era of Republic; and (2) local governments' and religious communities' attitudes toward the Black Tiger Cult in comparison to another cult also

involving a tiger god—the Bazha 八蠟 Cult. On the one hand, Black Tiger Temples in late-imperial Shanxi seemed to be related to Buddhist and Daoist communities as attached religious site and even occasionally occupied the central position in local monastery complexes. On the other hand, the local governmental authority recognized the efficacies of the Black Tiger Temple in resolving human-tiger conflicts and the ability of the Black Tiger God to bring justice. From both religious and governmental perspectives, the Black Tiger Cult offered space to express and negotiate their spiritual, political, agricultural, and cultural interests.

1. The Rise, Function, and Management of the Black Tiger Temples: Merging Religious Institutions

Sharing the numinous and protective role of black tiger in Chinese Buddhism and Daoism, some of the black tiger gods enshrined in Shanxi during the late-imperial era were, according to stele inscriptions, associated with Zhao Gongming, or the God of the Dark Altar. Besides being regarded as the guardian of the altar of the Celestial Master Zhang Daoling and the Daoist teaching, Zhao Gongming was also capable of dealing with wild animals and protecting people from any disasters or harm.¹³³ The local Black Tiger Temples were more or less established and maintained for this reason. While traditional Chinese ideas (i.e., the theory of Five Phases, *yin-yang*, the Four Symbols, etc.) and Daoist traditions acted as cultural and religious resources for the Black Tiger Cult, Chinese

¹³³ Before Zhao Gongming became a god, he resolved the local tiger calamity by slaying the black tiger. See Wang Kaiwo 王開沃, Yang Yi 楊儀, Deng Binglun 鄧秉綸, *Zhouzhi xianzhi* 盩厔縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhouzhi), 1793, *juan* 14, pp. 11a-b.

Buddhism had accepted and absorbed the black tiger tradition as a popular belief in the area of Shanxi. Sometimes a local Buddhist facility was attached to a Black Tiger Temple, and sometimes the other way around. This section will examine the Black Tiger Temple as the attachment to a monastery complex and as the center of the monastery complex by analyzing the origin, purpose, and management of these temples.

1) Black Tiger Temple as the Attachment to a Monastery Complex

The guardian role of the black tiger god was reflected on the Black Tiger Temple's position in some monastery complexes, which was well-received by different religions and became a symbol of merging traditions. Mt. Jue 珽山 (located in the southeast of modern Jincheng City) had a long history of being home to both Buddhist and Daoist communities. This blurred boundary was also demonstrated in the local Black Tiger Temples. As the oldest extant stele inscription in Mt. Jue, the "Record of the Stele for Renovating the West Summit of Mt. Jue along with the South Gate of Heaven and the Black Tiger God Temple" 重修珽山西頂並南天門與黑虎神祠碑記 carved in the eighth year of the Jiajing reign (1529) introduced the local religious landscape at that time.¹³⁴ The inscription could be divided into three parts. At first, it praised the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven 玄天上帝 (also known as the Dark Thearch 玄帝 or the North Thearch 北帝) for his Daoist achievements and compassion for the people. In order to honor him, people built a temple on top of the West Summit. In the second part, the inscription talked about the Qinglian (Green Lotus) Temple 青蓮寺, a renowned Buddhist monastery originally built in the mid-

¹³⁴ Wang Li 王麗 et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jincheng shi Zezhou xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全(晉城市澤州縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Zezhou County, Jincheng City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 148.

6th century. “The pale moon on top of the peak could compete with the Buddha for loftiness and brightness; the clear stream at the foot of the mountain traveled far with the meditative waves 禪波.” The description suggested blurred boundaries between Buddhist and Daoist terminology and traditions. The third part briefly mentioned some renovation projects including the main temple that was dedicated to the Thearch, the Black Tiger God Temple, and the first Gate of the South Heaven. The inscription indicated that the Black Tiger Temple was a part of the monastery complex in Mt. Jue. About three hundred years later, temples on the West Summit, such as the temple of the Thearch and the Black Tiger Temple, went through another massive renovation according to the “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Temples on the West Summit of Mt. Jue” 重修瑤山西峰頂殿宇碑記 carved in the seventeenth year of the Daoguang reign (1837). This 19th century inscription adopted the Daoist terminology “Grotto-Heaven” 洞天 and “Land of Bliss” 福地 to describe the mountain in the first sentence, and specifically pointed out that the abbot of the monastery complex was a Buddhist monk 僧 whose name was Changtai 常泰. The abbot and others brought in local donations to support the renovation project.¹³⁵ We do not know whether these temples that were dedicated to Daoist deities were originally managed by Buddhist monks. One speculation is that the local Buddhist community supported the renovation of temples of Daoist and popular gods in the mountain.

The blurred boundary among the Buddhist, Daoist, and popular beliefs’ sites was also evidenced by the “Record of the Stele for Building the Towers of Bell and Drum, Temples for the Numinous Officer and the Black Tiger, Memorial Arch, and the Temple

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 640.

of Five Sages on the East Summit of Mt. Jue” 珽山東頂造鐘會創建鐘鼓樓靈官黑虎二殿牌坊五聖祠碑記 carved in the seventh year of the Kangxi reign (1668). The inscription was composed by a local scholar Guo Zhenxiu 郭振修 and handwritten by the fifty-sixth generation of Śākya, Buddhist monk Xianxiu 顯弼 (lit. Prominent Progress).¹³⁶ The content described the building of temples, including a Black Tiger Temple, on the East Summit to mirror those ones on the West Summit. The inscription also read: “The numinousness of this mountain was attributed to the gods; the power of the gods was not necessarily attributed to the mountain.” The activity of building temples for these gods was to honor them and keep the mountain blessed. The local Buddhist community also shared this belief and participated in the event. As for the Black Tiger God Temple, it was the God of the Dark Altar that was enshrined there instead of the black tiger god who was the guardian of the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven according to the Daoist canon.¹³⁷ Of course, it is very likely that over time the image of the black tiger god and that of Marshal Zhao had merged into one due to their similar animal representation and responsibilities. With a much higher popularity, the God of the Dark Altar could indeed take over the position as a guardian to the Thearch and the mountain while being recognized by the local Buddhist community and the secular people.

Some Buddhist monasteries even encompassed the Black Tiger Cult into their complexes. For example, the “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Hongyuan Temple

¹³⁶ Wang, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jincheng shi Zezhou xian juan)*, p. 278.

¹³⁷ In the modern Black Tiger Temple on the West Summit of Mt. Jue, there was Zhao Gongming’s statue mounting the black tiger. This modern temple was renovated based on the 1529 site.

and the Guangsheng Temple Outside of the Monastery” 重修紅源寺及寺外廣生祠碑記, carved in the twenty-eighth year of the Daoguang reign (1848), documented that the enshrinement of the Black Tiger was within the Buddhist monastery.¹³⁸ Located in Yingzhai 英寨 Village, the Buddhist monastery consisted of four secondary temples in addition to the main temple. In the East Affiliated Temple 東夾殿, there were the Twelve Perfect Enlightenment Iron Buddhas 十二圓覺鐵佛; in the West Affiliated Temple 西夾殿, there were the Black Tiger, the Mountain God, and the Earth God;¹³⁹ in East Temple 東殿, there was the Thearch Guan Yu; and in the West Temple 西殿, there was the Earth God of the monastery. Regardless of the Black Tiger’s identity as either Zhao Gongming or the black tiger god associated with the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven, he was placed onto the altar with the other local gods, such as the Mountain God and the Earth God with an obvious purpose to protect and bless the monastery and the area.

In a Daoist monastery, the black tiger was usually regarded as the guardian of other gods. Take the Lingzhen (Numinous Perfection) Temple 靈真觀 in Yuyi 榆邑 (modern Jinzhong City, Shanxi) for instance. The “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Lingzhen Daoist Temple in the Shangying Village” 上營村重修靈真觀碑記, carved in the nineteenth year of the era of the Republic (1930), mentioned that during this renovation of the Daoist monastery, originally built during the Jiajing reign of the Ming dynasty, people

¹³⁸ Gao Jianfeng 高劍峰, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全(臨汾市安澤縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Anze County, Linfen City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 117.

¹³⁹ It could be the Black Tiger Mountain God 黑虎山神, which put the Black Tiger into the position of a Mountain God.

respectfully moved the Black Tiger and the Numinous Officer 靈官 to the side chambers at the entrance of the monastery since they were the *hufa* 護法 or the protector of the teaching.¹⁴⁰ The main god on the front terrace was the Primordial Sovereign of the Clouds of Dawn or Bixia Yuanjun 碧霞元君, who was honored with the title of the “Sage Mother” 聖母. The Jade Emperor was venerated as the main god on the middle terrace. On the back terrace were the Three Uppermost Clarities as the main gods. The inscription proclaimed the purpose for enshrining these deities was to receive their blessings. It specifically introduced the spiritual power of Bixia Yuanjun: “If people make offerings to her (Bixia Yuanjun), they would be blessed with abundant offspring and experience no suffering from disasters.” In Mt. Tai 泰山 (in the modern Taian 泰安 City, Shandong Province) where the Goddess originated and was worshiped, there was actually an Erhu (Two Tiger) Temple 二虎廟 near the Second Gate of Heaven. The Black Tiger was the main god to receive offerings in the Erhu Temple.¹⁴¹ In modern times, the God of the Dark Altar still receives offerings in the temple. In another case, the Black Tiger also guarded the gate of the Jade Emperor Temple in Anze. According to the “Stele for Renovating the Jade Emperor Temple” 重修玉皇廟碑 carved in the twenty-first year of the era of the Republic (1932),¹⁴² the location of the Mountain God Black Tiger Temple was also at the entrance of the

¹⁴⁰ Wang Linyu 王琳玉 and Yan Zhen 閆震, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jinzhong shi Yuci qu juan)* 三晉石刻大全(晉中市榆次區卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Yuci Region, Jinzhong City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 412.

¹⁴¹ Nie Qin 聶鈺, *Taishan daoli ji* 泰山道里記 (An Itinerary of Mt. Tai), Yushantan 兩山堂 edition, 1878, pp. 14a-b.

¹⁴² Gao etc., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)*, p. 194.

monastery. Although it was hard to tell if the Black Tiger was considered a Mountain God, the fact that they were listed together suggested the Black Tiger's responsibility could be very similar to that of a Mountain God, which was to protect the monastery premises.

2) Black Tiger Temple as the Center of a Monastery Complex

During the Qing dynasty, most of the Black Tiger Temples dedicated to the God of the Dark Altar, Zhao Gongming, were initially built to address local human-animal conflict in the southern region of Shanxi, such as, the Dark Altar Temple located in the southwest of Shuiquan 水泉 Village in Qinshui 沁水 County (in southern Shanxi). Due to its unique position on the border of Qin 沁 County and Yi 翼 County in the mountainous region between Mt. Taiyue 太岳山 and Mt. Zhongtiao 中條山, this Dark Altar Temple overlooked an area that was busy with inter-county travelers and wild animals. According to four remaining stele inscriptions on site, this temple had a history of nearly two hundred years.

These four steles not only marked major projects that the temple and its affiliated buildings went through, but also recorded the interactions among local people, wild animals, and spiritual activities between the mid Qing dynasty and the early era of Republic. The “Record of the Stele for Establishing and Renovating the Dark Altar Temple” 創修玄壇廟宇碑記, carved in the forty-seventh year of the Kangxi reign (1708), first introduced the natural environment in the area as mostly “deep gorges and steep cliffs.” As a result, “insects and snakes resided in the grass whereas the spotted-leopards dwelt in the mist.” Due to its geographical condition, people were constantly threatened by wild animals there. The Dark Altar Temple was first established in the forty-third year of the Kangxi reign

(1704). For three years, “although mountains and valleys still made noises and echoes, travelling merchants were not scared; although tigers and gibbons still roared and cried, fathers and sons would tell they were safe.” The local people believed that the Dark Altar Temple brought peace to the region, and so they decided to improve the exterior of the temple.¹⁴³ About half a century after the establishment, the roads there were safe, and the vicious beasts all migrated afar. However, the Dark Altar Temple was getting old and outdated. More importantly, it was running out of space to meet its increasing popularity. From 1748 to 1753, the temple underwent a massive expansion and renovation project. A poem attached to the “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Black Tiger Dark Altar Temple” 黑虎玄壇廟宇重修碑記 carved in the eighteenth year of the Qianlong reign (1753)¹⁴⁴ praised the God of the Dark Altar for expelling tigers and leopards and how responsive he was when it came to flood, drought, and plague relief. Moreover, the God of the Dark Altar brought people from two neighboring counties together to accomplish this renovation project, which created a sense of community. For the next sixty years, the temple received a lot of support from local residents, and the God of the Dark Altar served to keep the people safe. Around the sixteenth year of the Jiaqing reign (1811), there was another temple renovation according to the “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Dark Altar Temple” 玄壇廟宇重修碑記.¹⁴⁵ The reason to renovate the temple was to bring

¹⁴³ Che Guoliang 車國梁, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jincheng shi Qinshui xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全(晉城市沁水縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Qinshui County, Jincheng City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 164.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

peace to the god so that local people could also find peace of mind. It did not directly associate the renovation to any event of local human-animal conflict. However, in the winter of 1836 and the spring of 1837, wild animals and ferocious beasts, showing off their fangs and claws, continuously ate humans. The “Stele for Rebuilding the Earth God Temple Along with the Construction of the Carriage with A Canopy” 重修土地殿祠並創製傘轎碑 explained that people tried to find the reason to this abrupt outbreak of animal attacks. It turned out that while the main temple of the Xuantan was well-maintained, the Earth God Temple was collapsing. Although the rituals were conducted as planned, the carriage with a canopy as a part of the ritual display had not yet been built. Therefore, by the fall of the seventeenth year of the Daoguang reign (1837), people renovated the temple for the Earth God, and offered a carriage with a colorful canopy along with other ritual supplies and decorations.¹⁴⁶ The stele inscription started with a couplet: “When the golden scissors snip, its ethos of killing chopped the *sika* deer; when the golden whip swung, the wind of prestige came riding the black tiger.” This couplet alluded to the *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義). Zhao Gongming had a fight with the Burning Lamp Daoist Practitioner 燃燈道人 who was the top disciple of the Heavenly Honored of the Primordial Beginning 元始天尊 and a figure inspired by the Dīpaṃkara Buddha 燃燈佛. Zhao cut the Burning Lamp Daoist Practitioner’s mount, the sika deer, in half with a pair of golden dragon scissors.¹⁴⁷ The golden whip belonged to Wen Zhong 聞仲 who

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 413. The transcript mistook “丙申” for “丙辰”; the inscription was carved in “道光十七年” instead of “光緒十七年.”

¹⁴⁷ Xu Zhonglin 許仲琳, comp., *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Investiture of the Gods) (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1979), p. 451.

persuaded Marshal Zhao to help the King of Shang.¹⁴⁸ With no explicit introduction, Zhao Gongming was identified as the main god of the temple. The golden scissors scene demonstrated the destructive and violent power that Zhao possessed, and the golden whip scene emphasized the action of asking Zhao for help. Since the fall of the Qing dynasty, the Dark Altar Temple went through another grand renovation in the twelfth year of the era of Republic (1923). The “Record of the Stele for Renovating the East and West Observation Towers, Constructing the Kitchen, Theater, Incense Sheds outside of the Mountain Gate, and Repairing the South Wall and the Slop” 重修東西看樓及創建竈房戲樓山門外復棚香棚修理南牆廟坡碑記 suggested that the renovation was mainly because of the regime change. It explained, “Given that our nation has been reestablished as a Republic, the fortune of rural villages turned around. People are all embracing a progressive attitude, and their spirit has been lifted so much that it has far surpassed that of the Qing era.”¹⁴⁹ The inscription, although briefly introducing the history of the temple, minimized the spiritual capacity of the God of the Dark Altar as if he was a reminder of the pre-modern ideology. The renovation itself became a metaphor for the social revolution. Additionally, this downplay of the temple and God of Xuantan might imply that the threats from wild animals were no longer an issue to local people; decades of extended human activity eventually claimed victory over the wilderness.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 437-38.

¹⁴⁹ Che, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jincheng shi Qinshui xian juan)*, pp. 438-9.

In some cases, the Black Tiger Dark Altar Temple housed other popular gods like the Earth God in addition to Zhao Gongming and turned into a monastery complex managed by local Buddhist monks. While the Hongyuan Buddhist Monastery included the God of the Dark Altar and other popular gods for protection and blessings, the Dark Altar Temple in the same village of Yingzhai, located in the Sishui 泗水 river valley in the south of Mt. Taiyue, had Buddhist monks to manage ritual activities. The “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Temple, Constructing the Stone [Missing], Relocating the Dance Tower, and Building the Stone [Missing] Chambers” 重修廟宇創立石□移改舞樓並修石□廊房碑記 carved in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743) detailed the recent renovation project that not only moved the Dance Tower right in front of the god’s residence, but also built dorms for the Buddhist monks and temple-goers so that “the religious meetings and rituals would be conducted conveniently.”¹⁵⁰ The involvement of the Buddhist monks signified that the Dark Altar Temple had become a site of merging traditions. Different from the West Affiliated Temple dedicated to the Black Tiger and other gods in the Hongyuan Buddhist Monastery, this neighboring Dark Altar Temple that was built on top of the mountain enshrined the God of the Dark Altar so that he could pacify local wild animals and at one point was managed by Buddhist monks.

A century later, the Dark Altar Temple still seemed to be managed by Buddhist monks, yet its meaning had shifted. Between 1849 and 1853, according to the “Record of the Stele for Renovating the Temple and the Monks’ Dorms and Painting the God’s Altar”

¹⁵⁰ Gao et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)*, p. 50.

重修廟宇僧舍粧塑神臺碑誌,¹⁵¹ the temple and the monks' dorms were repainted and repaired in order to please the god and receive his blessings forever, while simultaneously demonstrating people's strong faith. This stele inscription, compared to the previous one, did not justify the renovation project or seek public recognition by tracing back to the original purpose to build the Dark Altar Temple. Instead, it lingered on a more generic note to honor the god and keep the monastery complex functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. This lack of touching on the fundamental motivation implied a shifted emphasis of the purpose of the Dark Altar Temple based on the locals' need.¹⁵²

In addition to Black Tiger Temples in southern Shanxi, there were other Black Tiger Temples in the north that were also built to address the threat from local wild animals, especially tigers. The Black Tiger God Temple along with several teahouses in Chunjingwa 春景窪 Village, located in the northern mountainous area of Mt. Lüliang 呂梁山 (in the west of modern Shanxi province), for instance, was first established in the fortieth year of the Qianlong reign (1775) due to local complains about tigers that disturbed traveling merchants on the mountain trails. The "Stone Stele for the Black Tiger God Temple" 黑虎神廟石碑 recorded that since the establishment of the temple, all the trails were safe, and people were happy. However, when the temple and the teahouses became weathered and collapsed, the tigers came back. In order to restore peace, people donated money to reconstruct the buildings and even wanted an abbot (probably a Buddhist monk) to stay in

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁵² A more detailed reading and analysis of the stele inscriptions found in the Yingzhai Black Tiger Temple will be in the next chapter.

the twentieth year of the Jiaqing reign (1815). By the time this stele was erected in the eleventh year of the Xianfeng reign (1861), the Black Tiger Temple and the teahouses went through a second renovation.¹⁵³ Although the initial purpose of the temple was similar to other Dark Altar Temples discussed above, the Black Tiger in this temple was not explicitly identified. It is possible that sometimes locals might address the God of the Dark Altar by his mount—the black tiger.

Ecologically, the establishment of Black Tiger Temples or Dark Altar Temples might indeed resolve the human-animal conflict in mountainous areas and thus boosted the popularity of the Black Tiger Cult. The efficacy of the God of the Dark Altar or the Black Tiger God could also earn him a spiritual position among the local religious communities. Hypothetically, the temple construction changed the local wildlife distribution. Before the temple was built, the area was usually remote, underdeveloped, and mostly covered with dense vegetation, which supported rich fauna, presumably including a good number of predators. As the construction of the temple consumed materials, such as wood, that were sourced locally, human activity invaded and caused damage to the natural environment where the wildlife dwelt. Once the temple was fully constructed, it became a site where people would go to pray and burn incense. More specifically, in the case of Chunjingwa Village, the teahouses next to the Black Tiger God Temple helped to draw more people to the area and stay longer. With increased human presence and activity in the vicinity, wild animals had no choice but to retreat. This result convinced the local residents that the god

¹⁵³ Ren Ninghu 任寧虎, Guo Baohou 郭寶厚, et. al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Xinzhou shi Ningwu xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全 (忻州市寧武縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Ningwu County, Xinzhou City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2010), p. 131.

was aiding in keeping the animals away. As it gained more popularity, more rituals were held in the temple that could attract many people from the nearby villages. Temples like the Dark Altar Temple in Yingzhai Village started to expand. More dorms were added to the complex for more resident monks and visitors. These renovation and expansion projects would lead to further consumption of natural resources and disturbance to local wild animals.

According to the stele inscriptions, most of these Black Tiger Temples were originally built during the Kangxi reign, and before the first half of the 19th century, the main function of the temples was to protect the local residents from animal attacks. However, after the 1850s, the temples were maintained and renovated mostly to show respect to the god in exchange for his blessings. This trend could support Cheng Sen's 程森 argument that the tiger calamity mainly happened during the Kangxi and Qianlong 乾隆 reigns in the Shanxi area, and after the Qianlong reign (1735-1796), the tiger population declined sharply.¹⁵⁴ Although the construction of the Black Tiger Temples was not the

¹⁵⁴ Cheng, "Lishi shiqi Shanxi diqu hu yu huhuan de fenbu bianqian", pp. 78-83; Another case was in the forty-third year of the Kangxi reign (1704), the Temple of the Dark Altar was built to pacify the local tigers since they were harming people in the Lingchuan 陵川 County (in the modern Jincheng 晉城 City, Shanxi Province). See Liang Yin 梁寅, Xu zhu 徐焮, *Lingchuan xianzhi* 陵川縣志 (Gazetteer of Lingchuan), 1882, *juan* 6, p. 3a.

main or only reason for the extinction of local tigers,¹⁵⁵ it definitely had a direct impact on the wildlife in the temple vicinity.¹⁵⁶

Although Black Tiger Temples were received well by other mainstream religious communities and seemingly efficacious in dealing with local tiger calamities, their spiritual position seemed to be dependent on the Daoist and/or Buddhist communities. The role of a guardian to protect other major deities in monastery complexes or the management affiliation to other mainstream religious communities implied a rather peripheral status of the Black Tiger Cult.

2. From the God of Cats and Tigers in *Bazha* to the Black Tiger God: Political Institutionalization of Popular Cults

Unlike the Black Tiger Cult, the Bazha Cult had a very long history and was very well documented in historical records. In fact, the *bazha* ritual can be traced back to the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) where it recorded that the eight gods, namely Xianse 先嗇 (Xiannong 先農, the first god that taught people how to farm), Sise 司嗇 or Houji 后稷 (the agriculture official), Nong 農 (the official that was in charge of tax, corvée and farming), Youbiaozhui 郵表畷 (the agriculture official that supervised the people at the

¹⁵⁵ In the “Record of the Stele for Constructing the Shijinggou Temple” 創建石井溝廟碑記 carved in 1743, people built the temple contributed to Taishang Laojun 太上老君, Guan Yu, God of Xuantan and other popular gods after the birds and beasts were gone due to the local industrial development. The purpose was to thank the gods for the previous blessings. See Che, etc., comps., *San Jin shike daquan* (*Jincheng shi Qinshui xian juan*), p. 589.

¹⁵⁶ The relationship between the Black Tiger Temples and the local human-tiger conflict in Yingzhai will be discussed in detail in the next chapter: Tiger, Man, and God—A Study of Black Tiger Temples in Anze 安澤 (18th-19th Centuries).

fields), Maohu 貓虎 (cats and tigers), Fang 坊 (dams), Shuiyong 水庸 (ditches) and Kunchong 昆蟲 (insects, i.e. locusts, waxworms, mole crickets, etc.), were worshiped by people in all four directions.¹⁵⁷ It is clear that among these eight gods, at least two were represented by animals. While insects could directly cause damage to crops, cats and tigers could prey on the animals that hurt the crops. The Republican gazetteer of Anze County further explained that since cats ate voles, and tigers ate wild boars, people would worship the god of cats and tigers to protect their crops in the field and thus secure the harvest.¹⁵⁸ Despite the threat that tigers posed to local residents, these apex predators were regarded as allies to farmers as well. It indicated that the pre-Qin (prior to 221 BCE) people were already aware of the tigers' ecological role to maintain nature's balance. In contrast to the Black Tiger Cult, the tiger image from the Bazha Cult seemed to be rooted in Chinese farming culture instead of Buddhist or Daoist traditions. In other words, the spiritual narrative of the Black Tiger God was constructed upon the interaction between the tiger and gods, such as Marshal Zhao, the Earth God, etc., whereas the tiger image in the Bazha Cult was built upon years of human observation of tiger activities/behaviors, and directly reflected the human-tiger interactions happened in the process of reforming the land.

The tiger in the Bazha Cult was neither attached to any remarkable god recorded in canonical literature nor acted as an animal deity by itself. As Zhou Hongmo's 周洪謨

¹⁵⁷ Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), Lu Deming 陸德明 (ca. 550-630), Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648), Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (The Book of Rites with Annotations) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), pp. 802-804.

¹⁵⁸ Wang Xizhen 王錫禎, Wang Zhizhe 王之哲, Yang Shiying 楊世瑛, Shi Biaoqing 史標青, *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi* 重修安澤縣志 (Revised Gazetteer of Anze), Republican edition (1932) (Taipei: Chengwenchubanshe, 1968), p. 378.

(1420-1492) *Record of Clarifying the Confusion* (*Yibian lu* 疑辨錄) argued, worshiping cats, tigers, and insects was not worshiping the animals per se but their gods. Of everything there had to be a god that took charge.¹⁵⁹ The god's control over the animal and people's worship of the god in charge revealed the common mentality that the animals were objects of human spiritual conquest. Although animal behavior could influence people, they were still just instruments to carry out god's will. By worshiping the god, people believed that they formed a kind of celestial communication and thus earned heavenly favor, which enabled them to exercise a degree of power over animal others. Simultaneously, these animals were also employed in political rhetoric based on the premise of human supremacy over other animals. The "Stele for Renovating the Bazha Temple" 重建八蜡廟碑 included in the *Puzhoufu zhi* 蒲州府志 (Gazetteer of Puzhoufu) stated: "Even though cats and tigers were vicious beasts with claws and fangs, they still strove to help people get rid of the evils by fighting rats and boars. How could there be officials who claimed to be parents of myriad people and yet were incomparable with cats and tigers?"¹⁶⁰ The *bazha* animals were employed to criticize incompetent local officials, and yet the tone was that the animals were inferior regardless of their dedication to humanity.

Bazha Temples could be found everywhere in China,¹⁶¹ and Anze County was no exception. According to local gazetteers, one temple site, originally built in the fiftieth year

¹⁵⁹ Zhou Hongmo 周洪謨, *Yibian lu* 疑辨錄 (Record of Clarifying the Confusion), 1480, *juan* III, pp. 32b-33a.

¹⁶⁰ Zhou Jingzhu 周景柱, *Puzhoufu zhi* 蒲州府志 (Gazetteer of Puzhoufu), 1903, *juan* 21, p. 47a.

¹⁶¹ Liu Yu 劉宇, Zheng Minde 鄭民德, "Nongshen chongbai yu shehui xinyang: Yi Ming Qing shiqi de Bazhamiao wei duixiang de lishi kaocha" 農神崇拜與社會信仰：以明清時期的八蠟廟為對象的歷史考察 (Agricultural Gods Worship and Social

of the Kangxi reign (1711) and rendered into a factory for the poor in the nineteenth year of the era of Republic (1930), was located in the Nanguan 南關 district of the county seat.¹⁶² While the information on the Black Tiger Temple was rather limited in the extant gazetteers of Anze, the Bazha Temple was introduced with ritual specifications. The Yongzheng gazetteer recorded that the offerings for these eight gods were: a goat, a pig, food offerings 獻食, starchy soup 粉飯, and paper money.¹⁶³ The Republican gazetteer eliminated the goat from the offering list. Additionally, this later version also included the prayer that people would chant during the ritual ceremony:

All of us made of dirt and wood are supported by gods; the farming and harvest also rely on the gods. They manage to dredge when it floods and irrigate when draught occurs. Insects and the beasts cannot cause any damage; barns and granaries will be filled; harvest years are peaceful and harmonious. Now it is the middle of the autumn/spring, and we are praying. Hope we can make offerings to the gods with sacrificial animals and wine as if the gods are present. Please enjoy the offerings!¹⁶⁴

維神土木是資，稼穡是賴，潦以司通，旱以司溉，蟲不為災，獸不為害，千倉萬箱，豐年交泰，茲值仲春秋祈報，惟賽祇薦牲醴，祭神如在。尚饗！

Faith: A Historical Case Study of the Bazha Temple During the Ming-Qing Period), in *Agricultural Archaeology* 農業考古, vol. 1, (2014), p. 316.

¹⁶² Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, Yang Shiyong, et. al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, p. 202.

¹⁶³ Chang Xun 常遜, Zhao Wen 趙溫, *Yueyang xianzhi* 岳陽縣志 (Gazetteer of Yueyang), Yongzheng edition (1735), *juan* 4, p. 33a.

¹⁶⁴ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, Yang Shiyong, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, pp. 379-80.

Almost every god in the temple was acknowledged for his specialty to benefit a certain aspect of the agricultural production. This saved people the trouble to visit each god in their separate temples and helped them avoid the potential problem of missing any god on their pilgrimage. However, there were some issues with the *bazha* rituals. In the tenth year of the Qianlong reign (1746), the emperor carried out an edict to address the controversial rituals of *bazha*.

According to the commentary to the *Liji*, the *bazha* rituals were performed by not only the commoners but also the emperor before Emperor Qianlong.¹⁶⁵ The *Canon of Rituals for Altars and Temples* (*Tanmiao sidian* 壇廟祀典) by Fang Guancheng 方觀承 in the twenty-third year of the Qianlong reign (1758) mentioned that the *zha* ritual started from Yiqi 伊耆 (or the God of Farming), and it was too old to trace. While some court officials suggested revising and restoring *zha* traditions in the tenth year of the Qianlong reign, the emperor issued a special edict to announce that the royal temple would discontinue the rituals, but district governments could carry on their sacrificial routine to comply with local customs.¹⁶⁶ Details of this event were recorded in Fang Junshi's 方濬師 (1830-1889) *Supplementary Jiaoxuan Miscellany* (*Jiaoxuan xulu* 蕉軒續錄). Emperor Qianlong acknowledged some problems with *bazha* rituals at that time. The recorded beliefs and ritual specifications were indefinite and contradicting. For instance, later Confucians believed that Kunchong was bad for the crops, and so the god should not be

¹⁶⁵ Zheng, et al., *Liji Zhengyi*, p. 802.

¹⁶⁶ Fang Guancheng 方觀承, *Tanmiao sidian* 壇廟祀典 (Canon of Rituals for Altars and Temples), 1758 edition, *juan* II, pp. 104b-105a.

worshiped. *Zha* 蜡 rituals were also controversial throughout history. In the Han dynasty, *zha* rituals were repressed due to the regulation of performing the *la* 臘 instead of *zha* rituals.¹⁶⁷ From the Wei 魏 and Jin 晉 dynasties (220-589) to the Tang 唐 (618-907) and Song dynasties, *zha* rituals were practiced intermittently. The popularity of the Five Phases theories was overwhelming, and the old rites were far behind. Fang Junshi quoted Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037-1101) article on *bazha* rituals that entertainers and actors would dress up as a cat and a tiger in the god's reception ceremony, which turned a solemn temple into a theater. Due to the unfitness for rites and lack of respect to the gods, *zha* rituals were eliminated since the Yuan and Ming dynasties. The gods worshiped in *bazha* rituals were also enshrined on other altars or in other temples; for example, Xianse was also worshiped on the Altar of Xiannong 先農壇 and the Altar of Changyu 常雩壇.¹⁶⁸ The court was tolerant with the lowbrow entertainment aspect of *zha* rituals in rural areas, but they had to be purified and regulated when used in court rituals.¹⁶⁹ In Qianlong's edict, the controversy concerning the Bazha Cult centered on the difficulty in unifying and officializing the ritual specifications across the country regardless of its contentious beliefs. People complied with

¹⁶⁷ According to the *Liji*, the *la* rituals were dedicated to the ancestors whereas the *zha* rituals were to the gods. See Zheng, et al., *Liji Zhengyi*, pp. 550-51.

¹⁶⁸ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, Yang Shiyong, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, pp. 373-74.

¹⁶⁹ Fang Junshi 方濬師 (1830-1889), *Jiaoxuan suilu xulu* 蕉軒隨錄續錄 (Jiaoxuan Miscellany and Supplementaries) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), pp. 536-38. However, in the article, Su Shi referred to the *Book of Rites* where Confucius had a conversation with Zigong 子貢 who was discontent with the *zha* performance. Confucius explained that the entertainment aspect of the ritual was needed to achieve a balance between relaxation 弛 and tension 張. See Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi quanji jiaozhu* 蘇軾全集校註 (Anthology of Su Shi) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2011), pp. 7162-64. For the conversation between Confucius and Zigong, see Zheng, et al., *Liji Zhengyi*, pp. 1222-24.

the emperor's attitude towards *bazha*,¹⁷⁰ and continuation of the Bazha Cult largely depended on local officials.

While Black Tiger Temples were mostly sponsored by local people (commoners and officials alike) according to stele inscriptions, the Bazha Temple seemed to be sponsored by the local government. Zhang Wenya 張文耀, a native of Yueyang 岳陽 (modern Anze and Guxian Counties) and Provincial Graduate 舉人, wrote the “Record on the County Magistrate Yao's Rectification of the Grain Regulations” 姚邑侯整頓糧規記 in the twenty-third year of the Guangxu reign (1897). Zhang pointed out that the natural environment in Yueyang County was already extreme and the severe drought made it even harder for people to survive. County Magistrate Yao decided to investigate the problem with grain and money and found that there were frequent new additions to the expense of grain and silver. For instance, the Bazha Temple only hosted one opera play per year, but the cost was more than two hundred thousand.¹⁷¹ This historical record revealed some very important aspects of the local Bazha Cult. On the one hand, the Bazha Cult in Yueyang County continued to flourish until the end of the 19th century, and the temple still hosted annual rituals. On the other hand, it appeared that the ceremonial cost of the Bazha Temple came from government revenue.

Although the Black Tiger Cult was not directly supported by central or local governments, the power of the Black Tiger God or the God of the Dark Altar was

¹⁷⁰ Liu, Zheng, “Nongshen chongbai yu shehui xinyang: Yi Ming Qing shiqi de Bazhamiao wei duixiang de lishi kaocha”, p. 318.

¹⁷¹ Wang Xizhen, Wang Zhizhe, Yang Shiyong, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi*, pp. 1103-04.

recognized and even utilized by local officials. For example, Zhao Fengzhao 趙鳳詔 (d. 1718), the magistrate of Qinshui 沁水 County (in southeastern Shanxi) that took office in 1696, composed a petition to the God of the Dark Altar and asked him to resolve the local tiger calamity. At the beginning of the petition, Magistrate Zhao explicitly expressed his wishes that the God of the Dark Altar could chase away vicious beasts and restore peace since people's lives were in his hands.¹⁷² In addition to resolving human-tiger conflicts, the Black Tiger God's ability to bring justice also made the god relevant to local authorities. A stele inscription written by Li Guanghui 李光輝, a censor during the Ming dynasty, discovered on the site of the Black Tiger God Temple 黑虎神廟 in Yangqu 陽曲 County (modern Yangqu County, Shanxi Province) recorded the history of this temple and its relation to the local government. The temple was originally the Three Sages Temple 三聖殿.¹⁷³ Since Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398) regulated sacrificial rites during the Hongwu 洪武 reign (1368-1395), the temple, specifically dedicated to Bodhisattvas, also housed the statue of the God of the Dark Altar. In the early years of the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1522-1566), a mob of the White Lotus Sect 白蓮教 instigated chaos, and they were arrested and jailed. One night, these prisoners escaped and were nowhere to be found. Provincial Administration Commissioner Qiao 喬 dreamed of a virile man in black, mounting a black tiger, who told him about the escapees' hiding spot. The next

¹⁷² Li Chou 李疇 and Qin Bingkui 秦丙燿, *Qinshui xianzhi* 沁水縣志 (Gazetteer of Qinshui), 1881, *juan* 10, p. 27b.

¹⁷³ The Three Sages had different definitions. In this case, it might refer to Confucius, Laozi and Sakyamuni.

morning, all the escaped prisoners were captured. When Qiao visited the temple, he saw the Marshal's valiant and heroic bearing with flowing hair and beard. After a close inspection, Qiao realized that the Marshal was the man he saw in his dream. Therefore, Qiao named the temple "Black Tiger." For hundreds of years, it became a place for local residents to burn incense and pray.¹⁷⁴ The emperor's order to regulate worship rites and temples had specified and hierarchized the enshrined figures so that the emperor, officials, and commoners had different sets of gods and worthies to make offerings to. The main purpose was to avoid excessive sacrifices and confusion about worship.¹⁷⁵ In this case, a possible split of the Three Sages resulted in the alternation of the gods in the temple. In the Jiaping reign, the White Lotus rebellions, though strongly suppressed by the court and local governments, were hard to pacify completely. The intervention of the Black Tiger God in the case of the White Lotus prisoners justified the government's actions against the rebels, and thus proved to the local government the Black Tiger God's spiritual superiority.

Compared to the Bazha Cult, we are able to see the Black Tiger Cult's relation with the government and possible reasons for their interactions. First of all, the Bazha Cult was documented in the *Book of Rites* and the *Canon of Rituals for Altars and Temples* and recognized by the central government and local authorities. The Black Tiger Cult embraced a much shorter history than the *bazha*, and its ritual specifications were not recorded in documents compiled by the court or local government. Moreover, the Bazha Cult was

¹⁷⁴ Li Fangzhen 李方蓁, Dao Mengxiong 戴夢熊, *Yangqu xianzhi* 陽曲縣志 (Gazetteer of Yangqu), 1682, *juan* 1, pp. 23b-24a.

¹⁷⁵ Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-1381), "Hongwu shengzheng ji" 洪武聖政記 (The Record of the Sage Policies during the Hongwu Reign), in *Jinhua congshu* 金華叢書 (the Collection of Jinhua), Tuibuzhai 退補齋 edition, *juan* 11, pp. 2a-3a.

primarily agricultural, and the eight gods were included in neither Buddhist nor Daoist pantheons, which utilized the terms in the *Book of Rites*. As for the Black Tiger Cult, the Black Tiger God was systematically deified in Daoist spiritual narratives, and he specialized in pacifying wild animals (tigers in particular). In addition, the establishment of Bazha Temples was sponsored by the local government and the rituals were regulated according to Confucian traditions and local customs. Black Tiger Temples were sponsored by local people including commoners and officials, and they were sometimes managed by Buddhist monks. It appeared that the Bazha Cult's institutional recognition was mainly based on its long-standing history in the Confucian tradition and its universal agricultural relevancy. The Black Tiger Cult's non-Confucian origin and niched spiritual power might be some of the reasons why it was not officially institutionalized,¹⁷⁶ yet it maintained a bond to the local officials and government for its particular efficacies dealing with the most urgent matters—tiger calamity and criminals at large.

In summary, this chapter discussed the Black Tiger Cult's relationship with Buddhist/Daoist communities and local government in late-imperial Shanxi. Based on stele inscriptions, local gazetteers, and other historical records, we could catch a glimpse of how the Black Tiger Cult and Black Tiger (Dark Altar) Temples fitted into local people's life.

¹⁷⁶ There are many studies on scholar-officials' interactions with gods and spirits in late-imperial China. While conventionally believed that Confucian officials rationally implemented the canonical ideal by either objecting excessive worship of non-institutionalized gods or turning local unorthodox rituals to meet Confucian customs, some of these officials arguably kept an open mind towards local religious practice. For example, Chen Xi and Hoyt C. Tillman's case study of Zhu Xi's 朱熹 relative tolerant view about local rituals in Nankang 南康. The efficacious Guangyou 廣佑 Temple that Zhu Xi mentioned in his personal account did not leave a record in gazetteers of the Song dynasty and Ming dynasty. Chen and Tillman pointed out that there might be two reasons: besides being omitted based on Confucian bias, the Guangyou God enshrined in the temple was associated with a different location instead of Nankang. See Chen Xi and Hoyt C. Tillman, "Ghosts, Gods, and the Ritual Practice of Local Officials during the Song: With a Focus on Zhu Xi in Nankang Prefecture," in *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, 2014, Vol. 44(2014): 287-323.

These temples reflected local human-animal conflicts, especially human-tiger conflicts, and for this localized situation, the Black Tiger God was accepted by the local religious communities in response to people's need. Being important to local spiritual landscape, the Black Tiger Cult was able to make an impact on local wildlife distribution, which made it valuable to local mainstream religious communities and government officials. Therefore, the Black Tiger Temple became a site of blurred boundaries between different religious institutions and between on-the-book and off-the-book governmental recognition. The utilitarian aspect of the Black Tiger God allowed it to maintain a remarkable place among other major religious institutions and state-run popular cults. As a deity, the Black Tiger God was a guardian of other major gods in Buddhist and Daoist monasteries. As the center of a monastery complex, the Black Tiger Temple could be managed by Buddhist monks. As a popular cult that served the local's spiritual need, the Black Tiger cult was sponsored by local individuals instead of the government compared to the Bazha Cult where the god of tigers was venerated, and yet efficacies of the Black Tiger God was promoted by local officials. In this way, the Black Tiger Cult became an indispensable part of the local spiritual life, which gradually developed into a local tradition that outlived the human-animal conflicts. In the next chapter, we will further investigate the relationship among humans, tigers, and gods in a case study of Black Tiger Temples in Anze between 18th and 19th century.

CHAPTER THREE

TIGERS, HUMANS, AND GODS: A STUDY OF BLACK TIGER TEMPLES IN ANZE (18TH-19TH CENTURIES)

Introduction

The Black Tiger Temple as a site of merging religious traditions and a reflection of local anxiety towards human-animal conflicts was neatly woven into its time and location, which made it an interesting approach to understanding the relationship among tigers, humans, and gods. One major challenge in this study is a lack of documentation regarding the temple in official histories, which means that the Black Tiger Cult and its rituals were not standardized or canonized. A close examination of the extant Black Tiger Temples in Anze, including their layout, murals, statues, stele inscriptions, and related narratives, is much needed to address the core questions: Who did people worship in the Black Tiger Temples and why? Was the Black Tiger God or Black Tiger Temple the go-to solution to tiger calamities? How did the local human-tiger relationships impact the cult *per se* and how did it evolve over time? The purpose of this chapter is to shed light upon the origin, spiritual narratives, and social relevance of the black tiger in the Black Tiger Temples dated back to the 18th and 19th centuries by analyzing the sources found in the temples.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ The murals and the stele inscriptions in the Black Tiger Temples did not get enough attention in previous studies. Although Liu Xinyang 劉鑫陽 and Mao Qiaohui 毛巧暉 surveyed limited stele inscriptions to their research, the temple murals were rarely touched upon regardless of the rich information they bear. See Mao Qiaohui, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong* 記憶、表演與傳統——當代文化語境下安澤文化尋蹤 (Memory, Performance and Tradition—Exploring the Culture of Anze in the Contemporary Discourse) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2016); Liu Xinyang, “Mingqing shiqi Anze beike zhong de heihushen xinyang yu shengtai huanjing” 明清時期安澤碑刻中的黑虎神信仰與生態環境 (Black Tiger God Worship in the Stele Inscriptions of Anze and Ecological Environment during the Ming-Qing Era), *Youth Literator* 青年文學家, (12) 2010: 43.

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part will examine the social and spiritual functions of the Black Tiger Temples by tracing the local political culture of tiger subjugation and analyzing petitions composed by Qing scholar-officials in Shanxi. Titled as “Petitions on Offering Sacrifices to Tigers” 祭虎文 or “Petitions to Chase Away Tigers” 驅虎文, these essays revealed the gods that local officials would turn to for tiger issues and the power dynamics among tigers, humans, and gods. The second part will focus on the initial purposes to build these temples, the representation of the black tiger or tiger in the temples, and the shifting spiritual power of the temples based on the stele inscriptions, murals, and wall writings found in the extant Black Tiger Temples in Bangou 半溝, Yingzhai 英寨, Zhangjiagou 張家溝, and Xinzhuang 辛莊—four villages hidden in the mountains of Anze County. This case study of Black Tiger Temples in Anze will provide a better understanding of the localization of the Black Tiger God and the history of human-animal relationships in this area during this time.

1. Political and Spiritual Functions of Black Tiger Temples in Shanxi

The tradition of the tiger as a metaphor for the unruly has been deeply rooted in the Confucian ideology, and the tiger’s reaction to the local governance became one of the most important criteria for the officials’ competency.¹⁷⁸ While a good ruler and his

¹⁷⁸ For the tiger rhetoric in medieval China and its historical root, see Huaiyu Chen, “Confucian Civilizing Unruly Beasts: Tigers and Pheasants,” in *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes: living with Animals in Medieval Chinese Religions*, (New York: Clumbia University Press, forthcoming); *Dongwu yu zhonggu zhengzhi zongjiao zhixu*, pp. 196-9. For the political implications of the tiger menace in Southeast China during the Ming-Qing time, see Luke Hambleton, “An Ambush of Tigers: A Socio-Ecological History of the Ming/Qing Fujian Tiger Menace,” in *Chinese History of Geographical Perspective*, eds., Jeff Kyong-McClain and Yongtao Du, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013). For tiger’s connections politics in late-imperial tigrine lore, see Charles Hammond, “An Excursion in Tiger Lore,” *Asia Major* 4, No. 1(1991): 87-100.

governance could protect people from wild animals, the tiger presence in a certain area might indicate impotent officials and political corruption. In Shanxi, the vast mountainous area had created a perfect natural habitat for wild tigers. As the human-tiger conflicts escalated during the late-imperial era, the tiger calamity continuously haunted people for centuries. Shanxi officials, most likely well-educated and well-versed, did not take the situation lightly.

1) Shooting the Tiger: The Competent Officials

While the tiger issue was fundamentally a political issue based on the traditional belief of “Heaven-Human Correspondence” 天人感應, well-educated politicians, from the emperor to the county magistrates, felt obliged to justify their governance by manipulating the Confucian rhetoric involving humans, tigers, and gods. Local gazetteers in Shanxi, written and compiled by literati-officials, demonstrated different political aspect of the human-tiger conflicts.

There are a number of records of how scholar-officials dealt with these unruly predators and how, in turn, these tigers helped to enrich the officials’ political portfolio in local gazetteers. Even the emperor took a part in this cultural narrative. In Wutai 五臺 County in the northeast of Shanxi where the famous Buddhist mountain Mt. Wutai located, there was a place called “Shehuchuan” 射虎川 (Valley of Shooting Tiger). According to the *Shanxi tongzhi*, it was named after a royal incident. In the 22nd year of the Kangxi reign (1683), the emperor went to inspect Mt. Qingliang 清涼山 (modern Mt. Wutai). Upon noticing a tiger crouching in the thick bushes, the emperor stretched his bow and shot the tiger dead with only one arrow. Local people hailed him and explained that the tiger had

been a problem for a long time, and now with the royal grace, the beast was executed. It was Heaven that sent the emperor to save the people from distress. Therefore, the locals named the area “Shehuchuan” and built a temple to commemorate this incident.¹⁷⁹ In the thirty-ninth year of the Kangxi reign (1700), a stele was erected in the temple with an inscription written by the emperor himself. The content of the inscription can be roughly divided into three parts. The first part briefly introduced the incident. The second part described the newly built Buddhist temples and the surroundings of the temple. In the third part, the emperor compared himself to the ancient sage kings and emphasized the beneficial impact of his heroic action. He wrote:

[I] have observed the rites of Zhou 周 where [it] specifically asked officials to hold and set up bows and arrows to attack vicious beasts. As for tigers, leopards, birds of prey, and anything that can kill people or harm others, [they] must be terminated because we want to be benevolent toward the people. The incident I experienced in my chariot happened to show up in front of [my] eyes. The matter of killing the beast with one arrow was accidental, yet all the people were pleased and spread the story as a wonderful deed. The story might comply with the righteousness of the previous [sage] kings who subdued the vicious.¹⁸⁰

嘗觀周禮特命官掌設弧矢以攻猛獸，蓋虎豹鷙戾，能戕人害物者必殄滅之，仁民故也。朕乘輿所歷，偶接於耳目之前。爰發一矢斃一獸事則適然，而羣心咸悅流傳，以為嘉美，其有合於先王服猛之義也。

¹⁷⁹ Chu Dawen 儲大文, and Jueluo Shilin 覺羅石麟, *Shanxi tongzhi* 山西通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi), 1734, *juan* 171, pp. 35a-b.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, *juan* 182, pp. 5a-b.

From the local people's point of view, the emperor was the Son of Heaven 天子, and he had the moral capacity and heavenly granted power to save his subjects from ferocious tigers. When it comes to the emperor himself, he rendered it into a political statement. He not only let the local people name the area after this incident and build the Buddhist temple in his honor, but also sketched this article in person. The tiger, therefore, became the ultimate symbol of evil, and the emperor, just like the righteous rulers before him, defeated it and restored the peace and harmony—this was a sign of good governance, and the emperor was legitimately the Son of Heaven after all. He assured that people would never forget that.

Resolving tiger calamity was not exclusively the emperor's privilege; local documents often depicted officials from Shanxi for their political achievements and attempted to build their connection with the gods for pacifying local tigers. Liu Zheng 劉徵, the magistrate of Pingshun 平順 County from the sixteenth year to the twenty-first year of the Kangxi reign (1677-1682), was said to be kind, benevolent and upright. When he was in the office, tigers did not cause any problems,¹⁸¹ which was considered the foremost achievement among his several other merits. More detailed strategies to handle the tiger issue were recorded in the stele inscription of the Mountain God Earth God Temple 山神土地廟. The content was written by Ge Qing 葛清, the magistrate of Xiangning 鄉寧 County in the southwest of Shanxi. When he first took office in the forty-fourth year of the Qianlong reign (1779), Ge became aware of the people's complaint about tigers that were

¹⁸¹ Lu Jiyuan 路躋垣 and Shen Changxian 申昌先, *Pingshun xianzhi* 平順縣志 (Gazetteer of Pingshun), 1682, *juan* 4, p. 4b.

harming the residents. Ge responded: “Why do not you capture tigers?” People were frightened by the idea since they believed that “Tigers were numinous things, and if people captured them, there would be more to come.” Ge thought it was ridiculous to treat tigers as gods or as something protected by gods, and so he argued: “The way of Heaven was to love life 天道好生.¹⁸² It was precious for Heaven and Earth to let humans live, and gods would definitely not lead the beasts to eat people.” He also alluded to the Confucian tradition that in order to guarantee a peaceful life for the people, ancient sage kings chased away wild animals. With the financial help and moral support from the local gentry families, Ge hired a group of hunters to hunt down tigers in that area. Eventually, the tiger calamity was resolved. The temple was built to show gratitude to the Mountain God and Earth God’s blessings.¹⁸³ Ge’s war on tigers gained local gentry’s support, and it was a very impressive achievement for someone who just took office. What’s more impressive was that he also won the commoners’ trust and love by swearing on his life that he would not embezzle even a penny from the local gentry’s donation for tiger control. Though the temple was built to thank the Mountain God’s protection and blessing, it was indeed a monument to showcase Ge’s own political endeavor and achievements.

If the official was incapable of taking the tiger calamity under control, he would defend his governance and question the connection between tiger calamity and government corruption. For example, Zhang Lianji 張聯箕, the magistrate of Xiangning County

¹⁸² This could be a reference to the “life-loving virtue” 好生之德 from the “Counsels of the Great Yü” 大禹謨 in the *Book of Historical Documents* 尚書. See James Legge, trans., *The Shu King*, in F. Max Müller, ed., *the Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. III, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 49.

¹⁸³ Ge Qing 葛清, *Xiangning xianzhi* 鄉寧縣志 (Gazetteer of Xiangning), 1881, *juan* 15, pp. 29a-31a.

appointed in the third year of the Kangxi reign (1664), though in agreement with hunting down tigers, stressed his helplessness in the face of challenge. Whether or not he succeeded like his successor Ge Qing in tiger control, Zhang's main political achievement recorded in his biography was revising and completing the gazetteers. The poem Zhang composed under the title "Lament about Vicious Tigers" 猛虎歎 seemed to serve two purposes, i.e., condemning the beast and excusing himself from the blame of incompetency. The *yuefu*-styled 樂府 poem roughly goes:

The area is remote, and the crops are scarce; the mountains are secluded with many tigers and leopards. I have been here for three months; you [tigers] pass by frequently. Last winter [you] attacked pedestrians; people were mad, but nobody dared to scold [you]. [Before you] ate the donkey in Qian; [you] teased and studied it.¹⁸⁴ [You] hunt for food several times a day; [your prey ends up with] broken necks and collapsed limbs on the ground. Residents and neighbors worried about their work; business travelers were all obstructed. Officials have been managing this land; their governance is not repressive. You have already escalated the situation to this level; there is no use to talk about benevolence or tyranny. Considering [you] go to our town so often; why not cross the river instead? Recently [we] are collecting

¹⁸⁴ It is an allusion to the story of the donkey in the Qian area (modern Pengshui County 彭水縣, Sichuan province). There was no donkey in that area originally, and when someone brought one there, the local tiger dared not to attack this alien animal. Then the tiger gradually got used to its loud bray and figured out that the most it could do was kicks. That was it. So eventually the tiger killed it and ate it. If the donkey did not expose the only two tricks it had, the tiger would not attack it out of cautiousness. See Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), "Qian zhi lü" 黔之驢 (Donkey of Qian), in the *Liu Hedong ji* 柳河東集 (Anthology of Liu Hedong), *Qinding siku quanshu* edition, *juan* 19, pp. 15a-b.

taxes owed; and people were leaving like rushing water. It took effort to summon [the people]; [we hoped they would] come back and comply with the tax regulations. Once [you] satisfy your way of damaging others; would not it be against the harmony of the Heaven? Even a trapped beast would consider fighting back; why would people be scared of taking up weapons? My fellow people have long been holding the grudge; their eyes are open wide with anger. Wave our sleeves as well as hoes; [we] will kill you at the foot of the mountain. I lament about this: those whom with craving and wrath¹⁸⁵ should be captured.¹⁸⁶

地僻桑麻少，山深虎豹多。我來三月耳，爾跡屢經過。去冬搏行客，眾怒誰敢訶。不則噉黔驢，冒衝習盪摩。日或三攫食，頸斷枝靡他。鄉鄰嗟負戴，商旅共蹉跎。長吏守茲土，為政無乃苛。汝寔逼處此，仁暴各云何。竟疑常入市，奚但不渡河。日者追逋賦，民去如流波。招徠費辛勤，歸籍事催科。一朝飽毒手，得無干天和。困獸猶思鬪，人豈憚操戈。父老積怨久，睚眦起麼麼。奮袂呼耰鋤，殲爾山之阿。對此三歎息，貪嗔罹網羅。

This poem addressed local tigers directly. While Zhang emphasized the troubles that tigers caused and even employed the allusion of the donkey from Qian to show the resourcefulness of the cunning beast, he also spent a lot of effort to explain that the tiger calamity had nothing to do with the administration. Trying to deny the connection between local tiger issues and his governance, Zhang argued that the large tiger presence was due to local geographical conditions. Instead of poor governance, the tiger calamity was the main reason that people left the area, which led to issues of local taxation. Despite Magistrate Zhang's helplessness in the situation, he firmly believed that tigers were

¹⁸⁵ *Tan* 貪 and *chen* 嗔 are Buddhist terms. Together with *yi* 癡 or ignorance form the Three Poisons 三毒.

¹⁸⁶ Ge, *Xiangning xianzhi*, *juan* 15, pp. 45b-46a.

destined to be annihilated since they represented two out of three afflictions in the Buddhist tradition. The message here was that the tiger calamity was no longer the indicator of political failure but the cause.

The examples mentioned above suggested that the tiger image was not only recognized by its political rhetoric, but also manipulated by traditional Chinese politicians to create or maintain their public image. Thus, the local tiger situation offered a unique perspective to observe and evaluate the socio-political dynamics. As much as the local officials wanted to keep all the tigers out of their territories, the limitation in human power and complexity of local human-nature relationships made it a difficult task to accomplish, and this was where the spiritual support came in to help.

2) Petitions to Gods: “Petition on Offering Sacrifices to Tigers” and “Petition to Chase Away Tigers”

Scholar-officials’ communication with tigers and local gods was a long-standing tradition in China due to the officials’ spiritual legitimacy that came with the title appointed by the Son of Heaven and the political implication of tiger calamities.¹⁸⁷ In late-imperial Shanxi, an area that was not so far from the central government and yet home to the predators, local officials took the matter seriously and publicly through composing petitions to the gods.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Huaiyu Chen suggested that people viewed local officials as spirit-mediums that could communicate with gods based on the Confucian tradition. See Huaiyu Chen, *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes: Living with Animals in Medieval Chinese Religions*, Chapter Two: “Confucian Civilizing Unruly Beasts: Tigers and Pheasants,” (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁸⁸ For example, Cui Jue 崔珽 (585-648) was the magistrate of Zhangzi County during the Tang dynasty and deified by the local people posthumously. Worshiped in many regions in Shanxi, Magistrate Cui or Cui Fujun 崔府君 was allegedly able to summon a man-killing tiger and let it confess to its crimes in front of the general public. For this reason, people were convinced that Magistrate Cui’s authority was numinous.

Some officials in Shanxi were known for their spiritual power in managing tiger problems. During the Yongle reign, Zhou Yu 周郁 was the magistrate of Hunyuan 渾源 County in the north of Shanxi. When locusts swarmed the area, Zhou fasted and bathed, and then piously prayed. As a result, the flying locusts left the area. When there was a tiger harming the people, he wrote down all the accusations to show them to gods. That night, the tiger went to the cage and turned itself in.¹⁸⁹ The story indicated that Zhou was clearly engaged in some religious practices, which successfully resolved the issues. Li Neng 李能, an officer of Zhaocheng 趙城 County (in the modern Hongtong 洪洞 County) in the south of Shanxi during the Zhengde 正德 reign (1506-1521), was upright and brave. There was a vicious tiger in the area, and Li was sent to capture it. In the end, the tiger followed Li in submission to the county seat. After Li died, local people built a temple outside of the east city gate and named it “Temple of General Li” 李將軍廟. Later in the 10th month of the 45th year of the Kangxi reign (1706) there were, again, several tigers causing chaos in the Qiuchili 仇池里 area (in the modern Hongtong County). People went to the Temple of General Li to make offerings, and the tigers were all captured, which instantly put an end to the calamity.¹⁹⁰ Although details of how General Li convinced the tiger to submit to human laws were not included in his biographical account, it was easy to see the connection

See Fan Dui 樊兌, Liu Yue 劉樾, *Zhangzi xianzhi* 長子縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhangzi), 1816, *juan* 21, p. 5a; Liang Yin 梁寅, Xu Zhu 徐焮, *Lingchuan xianzhi* 陵川縣志 (Gazetteer of Lingchuan), 1882, *juan* 26, p. 27a; Tian Jiagu 田嘉穀, Zhu Zhang 朱樟, *Zezhou fuzhi* 澤州府志 (Gazetteer of Zezhou), 1735, *juan* 6, p. 38b.

¹⁸⁹ Gui Jingshun 桂敬順, *Hunyuan zhouzhi* 渾源州志 (Gazetteer of Hunyuan), 1763, *juan* 5, pp. 1b-2a.

¹⁹⁰ Fan Anzhi 范安治 and Zhang Tinggui 章廷珪, *Pingyang fuzhi* 平陽府志 (Gazetteer of Pingyang), 1735, *juan* 35, p. 28b.

between him and the numinous power that again confirmed by his posthumous impact on local tiger control.

Besides praying to gods and deified people who succeeded in subduing tigers, local officials could also write petitions to gods and urge them to control local tigers. An official named Xue Jingzhi 薛敬之 from Yingzhou 應州 County (modern Yingxian County 應縣, Shanxi) in northern Shanxi during the Chenghua 成化 reign (1465-1487) was a learned man who liked to help and assist the commoners. Consequently, the region had no lazy resident or barren field. The south mountain had an outbreak of tiger calamity, and he composed a petition to address the matter. Within a few days, the tigers died in the ditch.¹⁹¹ According to this account, Xue wrote a petition on behalf of the residents and expressed wishes for the tigers to be gone. The recipient of this petition was a Higher Power that could exercise power over the tigers. Xue's words worked their magic and the tigers died without any actual physical conflicts. In contrast to Magistrate Ge Qing's argument that tigers were neither numinous nor supported by gods, Xue's experience implied that gods could help humans in the battle against tigers if the local official knew the proper way to communicate with the Higher Power. Although the content of the petition was not included in this biography of Xue, there were several other "Petition Offered to Tigers" and "Petition to Chase Away Tigers" in Shanxi during the Qing dynasty that could provide some information about the relation among tigers, humans, and gods.

¹⁹¹ Liu Mei 劉梅, Mu Ersai 穆尔賽, *Shanxi tongzhi* 山西通志 (Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shanxi), 1681, *juan* 18, pp. 33b-34a.

The petition could be written to address all the gods in a specific area. For example, Lu Jiang 廬絳, the magistrate of Jiangxian County in the south of Shanxi, wrote the “Declaration to the Gods of the Hengling Pass to Chase Away Tigers” 橫嶺關告神驅虎文 two years after he took office in 1698.¹⁹² In this petition, Lu blamed the geographical particularities of the Hengling (Horizontal Mountain) Pass for providing refuge to all sorts of deviant creatures in the area. Lu’s original strategy was to cut down trees to stop tigers from migrating to his county through the Hengling Pass, but as the result failed his expectation, he started to refer to the Confucian tradition where tiger calamity was associated with local officials’ corruption and immorality. In his defense, Lu argued that tigers were ignorant and senseless creatures, and their presence had nothing to do with the local governance. Even if it was indeed the official’s fault in the first place, gods should take the blame for allowing the beasts to devour the people. Thereupon, Lu requested the gods to get rid of local tigers within five days. However, if the gods could not comply, which meant they were just as ignorant as tigers, Lu would send soldiers to destroy all the tiger dens and temples in his county. Lu did not identify the god or gods he was writing to, and it might indicate that tigers were all the local gods’ responsibility to handle.

Similarly, “Petition to Chase Away Tigers” 驅虎文¹⁹³ by Wang Jinyuan 王今遠, the magistrate of Yuanqu 垣曲 County in the south of Shanxi between the eighth year and the eleventh year of the Qianlong reign (1743-1746), did not specify the god it was addressing. Interestingly at the beginning of the petition, Wang brought up the God of Cats

¹⁹² Fan and Zhang, *Pingyang fuzhi*, *juan* 36, pp. 86a-87a.

¹⁹³ Tang Dengtian 湯登泐, *Yuanqu xianzhi* 垣曲縣志 (Gazetteer of Yuanqu), 1766, *juan* 12, pp. 14b-15b.

and Tigers in the *bazha* tradition as the norms for human-tiger relationships. He pointed out that tigers could benefit the local agriculture by preying on boars, and it would be understandable if they snatched unguarded people in remote mountains and deep gorges occasionally. However, it would contradict the Heaven and Earth's principle of nurturing lives if tigers were allowed to kill at will without any restrictions. Therefore, Wang asked the god to eliminate local tigers for the people's sake or be easy on the people if it was a punishment. As much as the god could be the God of Cats and Tigers in the *bazha* tradition, he could also be any other god with the numinous power to rectify the situation.

As one of the petitions that actually named the gods, the “Petition to Chase Away the Vicious Tigers” 驅猛虎文¹⁹⁴ composed by Wu Zuochang's 吳祚昌, the magistrate of Shouyang 壽陽 County, in the tenth year of the Kangxi reign (1671) blamed the Earth God and the Mountain God for the tiger problem. Wu emphasized that humans were superior, and animals indeed committed a great transgression by harming humans. Knowing the Confucian metaphor of bad governance, Wu challenged the notion that gods could supervise or criticize officials. Since both gods oversaw the mountain, they were obliged to protect the people instead of letting tigers eat them. At the end of the petition, Wu addressed the gods and tigers: If the beasts did not leave the area within three days, he swore to lead the people and kill the tigers with poisoned arrows. Moreover, this petition offered more information about the ritual setting in the article. First, there was the specific date of the event and the person in charge of the ceremony who, in this case, was Wu with

¹⁹⁴ Gong Daojiang 龔導江, *Shouyang xianzhi* 壽陽縣志 (Gazetteer of Shouyang), 1771, *juan* 4, pp. 29b-30a.

his full official title. He offered a pig and a goat to the Earth God and Mountain God. After urging these gods to end the local tiger calamity and expressing his own determination to take over the matter if the gods should fail, Wu hoped they enjoyed the sacrificial offerings and eventually complied with his request. Judging by the textual format, there might be a corresponding ritual at the local Earth God and Mountain God Temple, and the petition was a part of the spiritual procedure either being presented to the public or to the god privately.

In addition to the Earth God and Mountain God, the City God and the Black Tiger God Zhao Gongming were also the recipients of officials' petitions. Zhao Fengzhao 趙鳳詔 (d. 1718), the magistrate of Qinshui 沁水 County in the southeast of Shanxi, composed the "Declaration to the City God to Chase Away" 告城隍驅虎文 in the thirty-fifth year of the Kangxi reign (1696)¹⁹⁵ and "Petition on Offering Sacrifices to the Black Tiger" 祭黑虎文 to the God of the Dark Altar—the Black Tiger God.¹⁹⁶ In the petition to the City God, Zhao stressed that people of Qinshui were very respectful to gods and frequently made sacrificial offerings in temples. However, due to its mountainous landscape, Qinshui was home to a large number of tigers. Local people believed that tigers were gods and dared not to capture or take any actions against them. As a result, these untouchable tigers killed countless people. Zhao then explained the reason why he wrote this petition to the City God: Gu Shaolian 顧少連 (742-803), a Tang official, once wrote to the Mountain God and

¹⁹⁵ Li Chou 李疇 and Qin Bingkui 秦丙燿, *Qinshui xianzhi* 沁水縣志 (Gazetteer of Qinshui), 1881, *juan* 10, pp. 26a-17a.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27b.

successfully resolved the local tiger calamity.¹⁹⁷ Thereupon, Zhao asked the City God to command the Mountain God and Earth God to banish the tigers within seven days; he also addressed the tigers directly: if they were sentient beings, they should lead their kind to hide. Otherwise, their behaviors would be regarded as a violation of the official appointed by the Son of Heaven and disrespect to the numinous authority of gods. Zhao would organize hunters and warriors to kill all the tigers since they were ignorant and non-numinous. The undated “Petition on Offering Sacrifices to the Black Tiger” specifically identified the Black Tiger as the God of the Dark Altar Zhao Gongming.¹⁹⁸ Magistrate Zhao mentioned that the god was specialized in “banishing beasts and bringing peace to people.” There was a local Black Tiger Temple that people would maintain and make offerings to.

In my opinion, these five petitions composed by Qing literati-officials in Shanxi illustrate two major points. First, while some officials believed that gods in general could control tigers, some specifically turned to the City God, Mountain God, Earth God and Black Tiger God for help. There was also a sense of spiritual hierarchy structured within the Confucian ideology. Heaven and Earth were benevolent and compassionate, and laid out the basic principle that life should be cherished, especially human life. Gods should join hands with officials appointed by the Son of Heaven and follow this principle to

¹⁹⁷ Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, et al., comps., *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New Records of Tang) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), pp. 4994-95.

¹⁹⁸ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全 (The Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), pp. 141-43. Wang Kaiwo 王開沃, Yang Yi 楊儀, Deng Binglun 鄧秉綸, *Zhouzhi xianzhi* 盩厔縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhouzhi District), 1793, *juan* 14, pp. 11a-b.

actively protect people from any harm. However, if people committed any transgressions, gods would warn them by releasing tigers. Since tigers usually dwelt in remote mountainous areas, Mountain Gods and Earth Gods should naturally be responsible for tiger activity. In Magistrate Zhao's petition, he regarded the Mountain God and the Earth God as the City God's subordinates and requested the City God to supervise both gods on the matter. As for tigers, their conflict with the local people had transformed into that between humans and gods, and in this way, tigers were no longer hungry beasts seeking food in the wrong place, but representatives and executioners to carry out heavenly mandates. It is also noteworthy that most of these local scholar-officials expressed their determination to hunt down tigers if gods should fail, which implied that the underlining reason for tiger calamities was people's reluctance to violate gods by killing their subordinates, which showed human superiority over tigers.

Second, the Black Tiger God and its tradition was area-based. In Yuanqu County where Magistrate Wang governed, there was no extant record on the Black Tiger Temple or the Black Tiger God. In Shouyang County and Jiangxian County, the Black Tiger God started to show up in historical records after 1700. The Numinous Official Black Tiger was enshrined as a guardian to Daoist deities, such as the Three Clarities and the Jade Emperor in Shouyang County based on stele inscriptions carved in the forty-seventh year of the Kangxi reign (1708)¹⁹⁹ and the sixteenth year of the Guangxu reign (1890).²⁰⁰ The Black

¹⁹⁹ Liu Zemin 劉澤民, Shi Jingyi 史景怡, eds., *San Jin shike daquan (Jinzhong shi Shouyang xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全 (晉中市壽陽縣卷) (Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shouyang County, Jinzhong City) (Taiyuan: Sanjin chubanshe, 2010), p. 235.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 718.

Tiger God added to the Temple of the Three Sages 三聖廟 in Jiangxian County in the sixth year of the Yongzheng reign (1728)²⁰¹ was regarded as the fourth sage, but there was no information about the spiritual position or purpose of the Black Tiger God. The lack of the black tiger culture in these counties that were prone to human-tiger conflicts implied that the Black Tiger God's ability to pacify tigers was only introduced to or developed in specific areas, such as Qinshui. Stele inscriptions found in the Dark Altar Temple in Shuiquan 水泉 Village recorded that the temple was initially established to protect residents from wild animals in the forty-seventh year of the Kangxi reign, and the temple went through at least four renovations until the twelfth year of the era of Republic (1923).²⁰²

Due to the limited pool of extant historical records, I did not find any extant petitions written by officials in Anze despite the intense human-tiger conflicts in this area during the late-imperial era. However, we will scrutinize the four remaining Black Tiger Temples in Anze built or renovated during the Qing dynasty to shed some light upon the local people's perception of relationships among humans, tigers, and gods.

2. Black Tiger Temples in Anze County (18th-19th Centuries)

The Black Tiger Temples in Bangou, Yingzhai, Zhangjiagou, and Xinzhuang are of special interest to this research for two reasons: (1) These four temples have harbored a

²⁰¹ Chai Guangsheng 柴廣勝, ed., *San Jin shike daquan (Yuncheng shi Jiang xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全 (運城市絳縣卷) (Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Jiangxian County, Yuncheng City) (Taiyuan: Sanjin chubanshe, 2014), pp. 222-23.

²⁰² Che Guoliang 車國良, ed., *San Jin shike daquan (Jincheng shi Qinshui xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全 (晉城市沁水縣卷) (Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Qinshui County, Jincheng City) (Taiyuan: Sanjin chubanshe, 2012), pp. 164, 209-20, 287, 413, 438-39.

number of fairly informative paintings and texts mostly dated between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. During this century, people of Anze experienced intense human-tiger conflicts and the decline of the tiger population. These Black Tiger Temples therefore became evidence of the changing relationships between local people and wild animals, demonstrated by the visual presentation of the gods (including the tiger image) and the purpose of rebuilding/renovating the temple. (2) These four temples have been established for hundreds of years now. While many of them are not well-maintained, some temples are fully or partially collapsed. In order to preserve the history of the Black Tiger Cult in Anze, I would like to conduct this study.

By studying the construction/renovation and spiritual narratives displayed in the four temples in Anze, I will try to answer some key questions to the local black tiger culture, such as “Who did people worship in these temples?” “What kind of roles did the black tiger or tiger in general play in the worship?” “What was the relationship among humans, tigers, and gods?” Mao Qiaohui already did some preliminary research and collected information about the temples, including the location, estimated time of establishment/renovation, building dimensions and scale, architectural structure and style, and the remaining artifacts on site. My research will be specifically focusing on the remaining artifacts, especially the textual and visual information. My approach is to trace the cultural references of these local spiritual narratives and find out the black tiger tradition in relation to other traditions and the local history.

- 1) The Black Tiger Temple in Bangou

Although the Black Tiger Temple in Bangou does not have any remaining stela inscriptions, the colorful murals on the wall implied a possible duo of a black tiger and a red dragon, which might reflect the local perception of the Black Tiger God.

The Black Tiger Temple is located in the north of Bangou Village in Liangma Town 良馬鄉. Surrounded by exuberant trees and bushes, the *yaodong* 窯洞 or “cave house” style temple, built with stone bricks, has three cave chambers facing the south (Fig. 1). The cave chamber in the middle has some murals on the arching walls stretching from both east and west sides of the wall all the way to the ceiling. The painting shows several colored human figures emerging from the twirling clouds (Fig. 2 and 3). Mao Qiaohui suspected they were the Eight Immortals 八仙 from the Chinese folklore.²⁰³ Judging by their peripheral position, these figures are probably supporting or accompanying the main god that is missing in this temple. The east side cave chamber is no longer accessible since it has been half buried by dirt and fallen leaves, and the walls are bare. The cave chamber on the west side is the better preserved than the other two. There is an elevated platform in the back where the statue of the main god might have been placed originally.

Although the back wall is completely bare, the arching walls on both sides, nonetheless, are illustrated with colorful paintings. While the east side is occupied by a red dragon dwelling in the clouds with its head turning towards the platform in the back (Fig. 4), the west side shows a black tiger in the mountains also turning its face to the back (Fig. 5). Based on traditional Chinese symbolism, the two imageries “red dragon” and “black tiger” have encompassed all four directions— tiger and dragon represent west and east

²⁰³ Mao, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong*, p. 125.

whereas red and black represent south and north.²⁰⁴ Moreover, a poem contributed to Lü Yan 呂岩 (also known as Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓) includes a couplet that described the black tiger and red dragon duo: “When the black tiger walks, the rain and dew will drop; where the red dragon plows, jade and pearls will reveal.”²⁰⁵ In Daoist alchemy, lead is tiger whereas mercury is dragon. The black (lead) was the foundation of water, and white (mercury) was the essence of metal.²⁰⁶ Though this poem is explaining the making and/or efficacy of the Daoist elixir, the literal meaning, which might be more intelligible for lay people, suggests that these two marvelous beasts can bring rains/harvest and riches to the land. So far, the remaining black tiger image in this temple lingers on a metaphysical level, and there is no specific reference to its affiliation to the missing and unidentified main god enshrined here.

The identity and spiritual power of the animal figures are made more ambiguous by the accompanied text. Regardless of the lack of dates or texts left in the chamber, there is an incomplete quotation of the famous Song poem “Sending Lin Zifang off outside of the Jingci Temple at Dawn” 曉出淨慈寺送林子方 by Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) written vertically next to the spine of the tiger, reading “Indeed the West Lake during the sixth month has extraordinary sceneries [apart from the rest of the seasons].” As a poem

²⁰⁴ “Zhang Sanfeng zhenren quanji” 張三豐真人全集 (Complete Collection of the Perfected Zhang Sanfeng) vol. 2, in the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Essentials of the Daoist Canon), 1906 edition, p. 39b.

²⁰⁵ Peng Dingqiu 彭定求, *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Complete Tang Poems) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), vol. 13, p. 9745.

²⁰⁶ Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹 ed., *Zhonghua Daozang* 中華道藏 (The Chinese Daoist Canon) (Beijing: Huaxiachubanshe, 2004), vol. 18, p. 595.

depicting the renowned summer lotus of the West Lake in Hangzhou 杭州, it does not mention anything remotely related to the black tiger in Shanxi. Moreover, on the mountain painting right above the tiger's head, there is another written text that attempted to copy Li Bai's 李白 (701-762) poem "Night Thoughts" 靜夜思, yet many characters are misused just to catch the sound of the words. It is very likely that these lines were written on the wall after the establishment of the Black Tiger Temple or even after it was no longer hosting any ritual events. The wall turned into a community board for anybody to write on. The detachment between the text itself and the tiger painting on the wall otherwise indicates the discontinuity of the communication and interaction between the temple and its audience. The mysteries and sacredness of the temple was simply disregarded, and the boundary between the secular world and the spiritual world was blurred. The action of adding irrelevant content next to the tiger image in the temple reflected the contempt for the spiritual power of the numinous animals and any gods enshrined here.

The visual depiction of the Eight Immortals, the black tiger and the red dragon, and the seemingly irrelevant text imply a collage of various traditions and shifting spiritual status of the temple. If the main god of the temple was the Black Tiger God, his spiritual power was evidenced by his connection to all the other numinous figures in the temple, and his spiritual role was diminished at one point or even from the beginning by the mismatched poems. Based on these speculations, the local perception of the numinous black tiger image might be ambiguous in later days if not initially.

2) The Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai

Compared to the Black Tiger Temple in Bangou, the history of the Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai has been well documented in stele inscriptions found on the site. The

text not only introduced the purpose of the temple and the renovations, but also explained the management of the temple, which offered an insight into the local Black Tiger God tradition.

As one of the oldest known Black Tiger Temples in Anze County, the temple's earliest renovation can be dated back to the forty-eighth year of the Kangxi reign (1709). The temple is located in Yingzhai Village of Liangma Town. The temple itself has already collapsed but three steles with inscriptions from the site have been preserved. The "Record of the Stele [for the Temple] in *Xishe*" 西社碑記 was made in the first year of the Qianlong reign (1736). According to the discussion in the *Comprehensive [Discussion] in the White Tiger Hall* (*Baihu tong* 白虎通) compiled by Ban Gu's 班固 (32-92), in order to make the Earth God's ritual sites more recognizable and commemorative, five different kinds of trees were planted in five sites, including *xishe* 西社 or the west ritual site.²⁰⁷ Then again in Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 (1613-1682) *Record of Daily Knowledge* (*Rizhi lu* 日知錄), the word *she* 社 was defined as a magistrate unite: "Ancient people regarded a town 鄉 as a *she*." In *Guanzi* 管子, "an area of six *li* was called a *she*." In the *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳), "twenty-five households were considered as a *she*."²⁰⁸ David Johnson pointed out in his study of rituals in north China that "a *she* could be identical to a natural village, or

²⁰⁷ Ban Gu 班固, Chen Li 陳立 (1809-1869), Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (1913-1977), *Baihu tong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證 (Annotations to the *Baihu tong*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), p. 90. This statement was quoted from the *Classic of Book* 尚書 according to the *Baihu tong*, but it was not included in the current circulating edition of the *Classic of Book*.

²⁰⁸ Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Rizhi lu* 日知錄 (Record of Daily Knowledge) (Shanghai: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1929), vol. 7, pp. 106-107.

several small villages could combine to form a *she*, or a single large village could be divided into several *she*. Each *she* focused on a particular temple, or perhaps a lineage segment.” He concluded that *she* was a basic component of the social and political organization of rural north China.²⁰⁹ Though the discernable content on this stele gave no information of the exact god or temple this stele was dedicated to,²¹⁰ it mentioned that this temple went through some kind of reconstruction 修理 to make sure that the god could continue blessing the local people with good fortune 隆福. Interestingly enough, in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743) after another grand renovation to the temple and additional construction in the temple complex, a stele with its head stone reading “Record of the Stele for Renovating [the Temple] in *Dongshe*” 東社重修碑記 was erected to record this event. It seems that *xishe* in the west and *dongshe* in the east were sharing the Black Tiger Temple and they sponsored the temple’s construction projects separately.

This *dongshe*’s stele inscription not only introduced the history of the temple, but also explained its cultural ties to the Dark Altar Temple. The inscription first talked about the intention of recording the event for later generations, and then provided a general introduction to the local surroundings: “The green peaks were crowded like barricades, yet there were paths on the slope of the mountains...they were indeed ineluctable for local farmers and traveling merchants. Besides, this place was covered in dense forests, and

²⁰⁹ David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice: Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), pp. 184-86.

²¹⁰ Gao Jianfeng 高劍峰, comp., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全（臨汾市安澤縣卷）(Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in the Anze County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2011), p. 48.

many tigers, wolves and other unusual beasts were crouching in there, which caused panic and horror to the passengers.” It echoes our previous discussion on the geographical condition of the Anze area and foreshadows the construction of the temple in this location. Then it talked about the history of the temple: “Previously a Dark Altar Temple was built on the summit of the mountain to guard with its powerful authority and shield the peaceful place... [however, the temple was] narrow and small, and it was definitely not a place for the god to reside. Not until the forty-eighth year of the Kangxi reign (1709) did Houqu 後曲 Village finally sponsor the expansion of this temple, which turned out to be grand and splendid.” Built to protect people in the mountains, especially from wild predators including the tigers, the Black Tiger Temple was originally the Dark Altar Temple. The god enshrined in the temple was very likely to be Zhao Gongming, and people of Yingzhai wished that Marshal Zhao could pacify the tigers in the mountains just as he did for his own village.

The 1709 and the 1743 renovation projects essentially expended the temple scale, relocated some structures such as the Dance Tower, and even established new buildings such as the monks’ living quarters. All these changes indicated that the temple was popular at that time. In other words, the need for protection from the wild predators was high, especially considering the two documented tiger calamities that happened during this time period. As human-animal conflicts were intense in the mountains, the ritual gatherings in the temple were also very lively, which attracted a considerable crowd each time. Take the construction of the monks’ living quarters for instance. The purpose was to “make the

sacred gatherings and ritual offerings more convenient.”²¹¹ The dorms were not only prepared for the resident monks but also visitors and ritual attenders. This project implied that the celebrations and offering ceremonies were held frequently and lasted for days. Since many people from the nearby villages came to the Black Tiger Temple on top of the mountain, the busy traffic and human activity consequently led to the retreat of wild animals. For local people, the god in the temple was indeed responsive to people’s requests and in turn gained more popularity.

While the previous two renovations seemed to be conducted by *xishe* and *dongshe* separately, the next major construction completed in the third year of the Xianfeng 咸豐 reign (1853) was initiated by a merchant named Jia Shanhua 賈善化, who brought *xishe* and *dongshe* together to work on the project. The “Record of the Stele for Rebuilding the Temple and Monks’ Living Quarters and Painting the Altar” 重修廟宇僧舍粧塑神臺碑誌 explained that in the northwest of Sangqu 桑曲 Village and the southeast of Yingzhai was an area that was divided into two *she*. The old Dark Altar Temple along with the monks’ living quarters was collapsing, and the paint was fading due to its old age. For this reason, spirits could not attach themselves to the temple, and the living could not come to make offerings. It had been more than a century since the last recorded renovation, and despite any undocumented repairs of any scale in between, the Dark Altar Temple or later the Black Tiger Temple was in very bad shape by 1849. Broken beams and dull colors suggested that the temple was out of service and neglected for a long time. Compared to

²¹¹ Gao, comp., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)*, p. 50.

the projects in 1709 and 1743, no building was added to the complex this time, and the construction was more focused on repair and restoration. It seemed that the popularity of this temple could not top the first half of the 18th century, yet its function and efficacy was still recognized and in demand somehow. Once the temple was renewed, it would continue to serve as a site for people to honor the god and receive heavenly blessings. In the end, the purpose of this project was analogized to the virtuous King Wen of Zhou 周文王 (1112-1056 BCE) who made sure that “the spirits of his ancestors had no discontent or sorrow.”²¹² At this point, spirits of the ancestors and the god in the temple were merged into a generalized concept as they both received offerings and bestowed good fortune on the local people.

These three stele inscriptions found in the Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai suggested that the worship of the Black Tiger God, Zhao Gongming, was gradually decentralized and turned into a less specified worship of ancestors and gods in general. Meanwhile, the purpose of the worship also switched from protecting people from predators in the wild into honoring gods and ancestors in exchange for their blessings. One explanation to this transformation is that the large predators such as tigers and leopards were very rare, if not gone completely at that time, and there was no need to ask Zhao Gongming for his protection in this regard.

3) The Black Tiger Temple in Zhangzhaigou

The Black Tiger Temple in Zhangzhaigou stands out for its massive colorful mural, illustrating a tiger rider alongside with other spiritual figures. According to their

²¹² Ibid., p. 124.

appearances, outfits, and mounts, we are able to relate these riders to popular gods, including the Black Tiger God. Additionally, the mural also consists of two steles, illustrated with inscriptions, which as both visual and textual sources provide some information about the local perception of the spiritual narrative involving the Black Tiger God.

The temple is located in the north of Yangling 楊嶺 Village and west of Zhangzhaigou in Mabi 馬壁 Town. The building is facing south and consists of three rooms—a main room and two smaller rooms on its east and west side (fig. 6). Mao Qiaohui mentioned in her book that there were two steles erected in the eleventh year of the Qianlong reign (1746) and the eleventh year of the Daoguang reign (1831) in the temple.²¹³ However, the stele inscriptions were not included in the *San Jin shike daquan* or the *Selected Stele Inscription Materials from Shanxi During the Ming-Qing Era (Ming Qing Shanxi beike ziliao xuan 明清山西碑刻資料選)*.²¹⁴ Unfortunately, the roof of the main room had already collapsed on our recent visit, and the steles might have been buried underneath the debris (fig. 7). On the east sidewall of the main room remains a piece of huge mural with two painted steles on the right corner (fig. 8). The stele on the left was dated on the fifth day of the ninth month in the first year of the Xianfeng reign (October

²¹³ Mao, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong*, p. 125.

²¹⁴ Zhang Zhengming 張正明, David Faure 科大衛, comps., *Ming Qing Shanxi beike ziliao xuan* 明清山西碑刻資料選 (Selected Stele Inscription Materials from Shanxi During the Ming-Qing Era) (Taiyuan: Shanxirenminchubanshe, 2005); Zhang Zhengming, David Faure, Wang Yonghong 王勇紅, comps., *Ming Qing Shanxi beike ziliao xuan (xuyi)* 明清山西碑刻資料選 (續一) (Selected Stele Inscription Materials from Shanxi During the Ming-Qing Era: Additional Compilation 1) (Taiyuan: Shanxirenminchubanshe, 2007); Zhang Zhengming, David Faure, Wang Yonghong, comps., *Ming Qing Shanxi beike ziliao xuan (xuer)* 明清山西碑刻資料選 (續二) (Selected Stele Inscription Materials from Shanxi During the Ming-Qing Era: Additional Compilation 2) (Taiyuan: Shanxirenminchubanshe, 2009).

28, 1851), whereas the one on the right was on the sixth day of the eleventh month in the twelfth year of the Guangxu reign (December 1, 1886). The Xianfeng stele (fig. 9), better preserved than the Guangxu stele, was simply titled as “Renovation” 重修. It detailed the layout of the Black Tiger Temple in Zhangzhaigou at that time. The main temple was accompanied by two adjacent rooms on the left and right, east and west wings, and a theater stage. Since the building structures were weathered, the current project was to restore them. In addition, a backstage dressing room would be built for actors to get ready for performance. It was quite common in Shanxi to build a theater or dance tower in front of a temple. As a part of the ritual to please gods, the opera performance could also entertain the secular audience, which made the spiritual event more anticipated and festive. The Guangxu stele (fig. 10) also introduced the gods enshrined here: “X Goddess was on the left while the Horse King and the Ox King were on the right.” Although the main god’s identity was unknown because of the missing content, it is clear that he or she was not alone on the altar. If the main god, as we presume, was the Black Tiger God, then it would be remarkable to see that he was presented with other animal related gods.

In traditional thoughts and popular beliefs, the Ox King and the Horse King were both venerated for their ability to protect livestock. The Ox King was often regarded as the guardian of the cattle. Since ox was commonly used to plow and pull heavy loads, the Ox King was a popular god worshiped in the agricultural society.²¹⁵ As for the Horse King, his identity was not clear. He could be the famous three-eyed god whose last name was Ma 馬

²¹⁵ Po Sung-nien and David Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village China*, (Berkeley, Calif.: Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1992), p. 80.

(Horse). Being reincarnated three times, his righteousness, loyalty and filial piety got him in trouble each time and consequently qualified his deification—the Jade Emperor appointed him a marshal serving under the Upper Thearch of the Dark Heaven (also known as the North Thearch).²¹⁶ Zhao Gongming happened to be one of the major marshals that worked for the North Thearch. The Horse King was enshrined near the traffic crossings or inns, for his third eye in his forehead could see the evil and therefore protect the travelers and passengers. According to Meir Shahar, the worship of Horse King flourished during the late imperial time, which “mirrored the ubiquity of his beneficiaries in agriculture, commerce, and quotidian lives” since he was the protector of horses, donkeys and mules. He was also venerated by government agencies.²¹⁷ For example, the Horse King Temple in Jinzhong 晉中 City (in the center of Shanxi Province) was also the office for traffic management bureau during the Ming-Qing era to manage the “horse licenses” 馬證.²¹⁸ In the temple, the Horse King’s statue has three eyes and four arms, and on his left side stands the statue of the Ox King. This duo of ox and horse could also be seen in the Ox King Temple in Weicun 魏村 Village (in Linfen City in the southwest of Shanxi) along with the Medicine King. The local legend indicated that in order to control a wild spread plague among the livestock in Pingyang and secure the harvest, the Emperor Zhenzong of Song

²¹⁶ Gan Bao 干寶 (286-336), *Xiuxiang daquan sanjiao yuanliu shengdifoshuai soushen ji* 繡像大全三教源流聖帝佛帥搜神記 (Illustrated Complete Compilation of the Record of Searching Gods among the Saints Thearchs Buddhists and Marshals in Three Traditions), Tongantang 同安堂 edition (1819), II *juan*, pp. 17a-18a.

²¹⁷ Meir Shahar, “The Chinese Cult of the Horse King, Divine Protector of Equines,” in Rotem Kowner, Guy Bar-Oz, Michal Biran, Meir Shahar, Gideon Shelach-Lavi, eds., *Animals and Human Society in Asia: Historical, Cultural and Ethical Perspectives*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 358, 374.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

宋真宗 (r. 997-1022) sent Minister Cai 蔡, Minister Zhang 張 and an eminent doctor here. They decided to pour the herbal potion in the upstream of the Fen River 汾河 and led all the animals to drink from the river. After the speedy recovery from the plague, the trio was venerated and enshrined as the Ox King, the Horse King, and the Medicine King.²¹⁹ In general, the Ox King and the Horse King oversaw cattle, horses, and other livestock that were indispensable to agricultural production and transportation. By positioning the Black Tiger God in the company of the other two animal gods in the Black Tiger Temple of Zhangzhaigou, it seemed that people at that time already had thought the Black Tiger God and maybe the animal tiger as a non-negligible factor to impact the local agriculture and people's livelihood.

Right above the Xianfeng stele is a sign written vertically “Returning to the Palace with the Mighty Power that Pacifies the Eight Directions” 回宮崇威鎮八方 enclosed within a rectangular box, and it looks like the title or motif of the mural on the east sidewall. There are three main characters and two attendants visible in the painting, and all of their bodies are facing left as if they are moving towards the north wall of the room. On the left is a man in long dark robe riding a white horse (fig. 11). His luscious white beard pours down onto his chest, and in his left arm holds a staff with a green ornament on top. On the right is another man in a dark shirt and red lower garments also riding a white horse (fig. 12). This man does not have any facial hair. His right hand is holding a white ribbon-like

²¹⁹ Song Nini 宋妮妮, “Shanxi Weicun niuwang xinyang diaocha yanjiu” 山西魏村牛王信仰調查研究 (Study on the Belief of Cattle King in Wei Village of Shanxi Province), MA Thesis, Yunan University, 2018; for more information about the Ox King Temple in the Weicun Village, see Shahar, “The Chinese Cult of the Horse King, Divine Protector of Equines,” pp. 383-84.

item (possibly a snake) to his chest, and his left hand is held in a “sword gesture” 劍指, which requires the thumb to hold back the ring finger and little finger while the index finger and middle finger are stretched. Judging by his outfit and his hand gesture, the horse rider on the right can be either a military official or warrior. The third man in a blue shirt and black lower garments is between the two horse riders and positioned right in the middle of the painting (fig. 13). His right hand is up in the air while his left hand is reaching straight out, seemingly holding the same sword gesture as the right horse rider. Most remarkably, his mount is a tiger that is turning back its head and staring at its rider. We can almost immediately tell that this tiger rider is the protagonist of the painting. Each character has a flame-shaped halo in different colors—the left horse rider’s halo is yellow, the right one is red, and the tiger rider in the middle is black. The identity of these three characters is not explicitly indicated in the painting (i.e., name tags next to the portraits), and moreover, their faces are all worn out or damaged.

The white bearded old man with a staff might be the Earth God, and the color yellow in the background matches the Earth element in the Five Phases. The right horse rider can be Marshal Ma 馬元帥²²⁰ since he was usually portrayed as a man in red robe with a white snake around his waist.²²¹ As the Fire Thearch of the South 南方火帝, he could not only breathe fire, but also lead a myriad of fire crows.²²² In addition, Meir

²²⁰ Marshal Ma and the Horse King both have three eyes and surnamed Ma, and so they are conventionally perceived as one person, even though their names and origins are slightly different.

²²¹ Zhang ed., *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 38, p. 269.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 260.

Shahar's study indicated that the Horse King was originally the Tantric manifestation of the Buddhist deity Avalokitesvara or Guanyin 觀音, and his mouth could emit blazing flames to burn the enemies of the faith.²²³ The color of the fire matches the color of his halo. The tiger rider in the middle is probably Zhao Gongming, which might also be indicated by the name of the temple—"Black Tiger." The signature iron whip cannot be found in this mural but the tiger mount, the dark lower garments as well as the black halo imply the rider's connection to the North, West and the Water element in the Five Phases.²²⁴ If the presumptions above were correct, the Earth God, Marshal Ma, and Marshal Zhao were pictured as a team, and their abilities, mostly rooted in the well-being of the residents, could support and complement each other.

4) Black Tiger Temple in Xinzhuang

Similar to the Yingzhai temple, the Black Tiger Temple in Xinzhuang is also signified by its interesting visual and textual remains on the wall. The positioning and postures of the characters on the mural demonstrate their hierarchy and interactions. Remarkably, two images of the tiger are playing key roles to understanding the spiritual narrative of the tiger in the temple. The illustrated stele inscriptions reveal various purpose of the Black Tiger Temple.

²²³ Meir Shahar, "The Tantric Origins of the Horse King: Hayagriva and the Chinese Horse Cult," in Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar, eds., *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 147-89.

²²⁴ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, pp. 141-43.; Zhang, ed., *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 38, pp. 312-13.

This south-facing temple, located in the north of Geta 圪塔 Group in Xinzhuang Village of Mabi 馬壁 Town, only has one room, and the roof is partially collapsed along with some portion of the south wall (fig. 14). Despite its lack of door and window, murals and texts on the north and the west walls have been preserved relatively well. There are two illustrated steles in the temple—the one on the south wall was dated on the eighth day of the tenth month in the sixtieth year of the Qianlong reign (November 18, 1795) and the one on the west wall was dated on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign (November 8, 1803). Evidenced by the phrase “newly built temple” 新修神廟 written on the stele, the Qianlong stele (fig. 15) was painted when the temple was first built. The god’s name was not mentioned. While the lower section of the content is fading out, a word “plague” 瘟 stands out at the end of the first line. It seems plausible that the establishment of the temple was motivated by or linked to a plague, which was probably a minor regional case that did not make it to the county gazetteer. Zhao Gongming, the Black Tiger God, was one of the five Plague Demons. In the Daoist tradition, Zhao, the White Plague Demon of the West and the Spirit of Metal, led a myriad of demons to spread the disease of *qi* infusion 注炁.²²⁵ The *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* depicted Zhao as the Autumn Plague among the Five Plague Envoys 五瘟使者 that were originally heroes from the five directions. In Heaven, they were the Five Demons, and on Earth, they were the Five Plagues.²²⁶ Therefore, Zhao Gongming also had the ability to expel plagues and mitigate

²²⁵ Zhang, ed., *Zhonghua Daozang*, vol. 30, p. 426.

²²⁶ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, pp. 412-13.

disasters.²²⁷ It is still unclear why people chose to worship Marshal Zhao instead of the other Plague Gods—it might be a result of the black tiger culture in this area.

The Jiaqing stele (fig. 16) on the west wall, similar to the style of the Qianlong stele, has been incorporated into the painting stretching out to its right. The title of this stele record is “Renovation and Repaint with Gold” 重修金粧. The stele content starts with the temple’s address, including information of the state, county, town, *li* 里,²²⁸ etc. Then it recorded the name of the temple: The “Guanyin Black Tiger God Temple” 觀音黑虎神廟. Guanyin, or Avalokitêsvara, came from the Buddhist Mahayana tradition, with the title referring to a compassionate buddha or bodhisattva who was sensitive to, and responded to the suffering of sentient beings. In this case, “Guanyin” probably was a title bestowed on the Black Tiger God to acknowledge his compassion towards the general population and his responsiveness to their requests. The purpose of this renovation was to pray for “peace and happiness to the country and its people.” The worship of the Black Tiger God was not as particular as to expel plagues but had been generalized to bless the whole country.

Although the stele record seemed to have already wandered off the original spiritual narrative related to Zhao Gongming or actual local human-tiger conflicts, the painting, on the other hand, brings the attention back to the gods and the tiger. On the right side of the

²²⁷ Ibid., *juan* 3, p. 20a.

²²⁸ “A *li* contains a hundred and ten households.” See Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844-1927), comp., “*Shi huo zhi*” 食貨志 (Treatise on Food and Commodities), in the *Qing shi gao* 清史稿 (Draft History of Qing) (Shanghai: Lianheshudian, 1942), p. 476.

Jiaqing stele, a demon licitor peeks out its head and raises its right hand with a cudgel in it, pointing above at three main characters sitting on a floating land (fig. 17). The man right above the demon licitor's cudgel is dressed in a long yellow/beige (Earth in the Five Phases) robe and wearing a black minister hat. His body is slightly turning towards the right. Although he does not have a white beard or a staff in his hand, his figure resembles the left horse rider, presumably the Earth God, in the Zhangzhaigou temple. Moreover, the cudgel looks exactly like the one held by a demon licitor in the Qing dynasty woodblock print of the Earth God and his attendants found in the Fengxiang 鳳翔 County of the Shaanxi 陝西 Province. In traditional beliefs, the Earth God would lead the newly dead to see the City God for further disposal,²²⁹ and that explains why he has demon attendants from the Netherlands. The character sitting next to him is dressed in a colorful suit of armor. His left hand is holding a black pointy stick (or an iron whip) with white rings or nodes dividing the body into several segments like the nodes in a bamboo culm. Meanwhile, his right hand is reaching out and pointing in the direction of the Earth God and the stele. Despite his damaged face, the black beard and long mustache are still visible. The character's physical features such as the beard and his accessories are very similar to that in the portrait of Zhao Gongming from the *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings*²³⁰ and the Qing dynasty woodblock print found in the Wei 濰 County in the Shandong 山東 Province²³¹. On the right side sits another general in

²²⁹ Po and Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems*, pp. 70-71.

²³⁰ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, p. 141.

²³¹ Po and Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems*, p. 179.

armor with only left arm through the sleeve of a red robe draping across his body. His face is also severely damaged, and there is no personal object in his hands that can help identify him. Right underneath him and on the same level as the demon lictor is a man dressed in a white robe. It looks like he is conjuring up something through the fingertip of his right hand, and he is aiming at a tiger below. The whole painting can be divided into three realms: The upper realm is the floating land where the three main characters are; the middle realm is below the floating land where the demon lictor and the conjuror stand; and the lower realm is where the tiger is. These six figures form an upside-down triangle (3-2-1), and everybody is facing the invisible centerline that can be drawn vertically between the Earth God and Zhao Gongming all the way down through the tiger's head. This particular composition is exerting a sense of hierarchy and manipulation from above. Clearly Marshal Zhao in the middle is taking the authority to pass down an order that requires help from the Earth God and the other unidentified general sitting next to him. Then the lower clerks or demons took the order and dispatch or address the tiger below them. If the tiger is the instrument to carry out the marshal's will, it may come from the correlation between Zhao and the black tiger. If, however, the tiger is the problem that needs to be dealt with, it may tap into the history of local tiger calamity. The gaze of the tiger (and the demon lictor) extends and guides the viewers' attention to the stele on the left, which grants the renovation project the approval and even appreciation from gods.

Due to the collapsed roof and the south wall, the right portion of the mural is no longer visible on the east wall. However, the remaining painting is very similar to that on the west wall (fig. 18). The Earth God is sitting on the left side of the floating land while the demon lictor with the cudgel is standing right underneath him. What is different here

is that the demon licitor's left hand is holding several reins that are attached to three or so animals or monsters. The similarity and the difference indicate a sense of continuity and parallel between the murals on the east and west walls. Spatially, the narrative mural usually followed the sequence of right-to-left in the traditional writing sequence. If this was the case, then from the mural on the east wall to that on the west wall the storyline might be that under the instruction of the gods above, the demon licitor on the left brought in the evil and then the clerk on the right released the tiger to devour them or he managed to take the evil including the tiger under his control. The narrative depicted in these paintings is open for discussion.

On the north wall is a painting of a tiger sitting under a pine tree and two magpies are looking at the tiger from a flower branch above (fig. 19). The tiger-magpie duo was a very popular painting motif. For example, a Yuan tiger painting in the Taipei National Palace Museum incorporates the very same elements (fig. 20). The English description provided by the museum explained that “the two long-tailed magpies [are] sounding an alarm against the intruder. Their chattering only heightens the level of anxiety brought on by this tiger coming down from the hills.”²³² During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), there were also similar paintings depicting a tigress, tiger cubs and magpies in the same space.²³³ The tiger-magpie motif can be a reference to Mt. Jinli 堇理, introduced in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, where “there were a lot of pines, cypresses, and beautiful catalpas.

²³² See https://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=758 Accessed on November 11th, 2022.

²³³ Sung Hou-mei, “Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting,” in the *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 64, no. 2(2004), p. 285.

There were a great amount of cinnabar dye and gold on the northern slope. In terms of beasts, there were many leopards and tigers. There was a kind of bird that looked like a magpie with dark body and white beaks, eyes, and tail. Its name was *qinggeng* 青耕. It could be used to prevent plagues. Its chirp sounded like its name.”²³⁴ *Qinggeng*’s ability to prevent plagues seems to be echoing the plague situation mentioned on the Qianlong stele in the temple. However, as the center of the painting, the sitting tiger should be the main figure instead of the birds. As the Taipei National Palace Museum implied the magpies’ presence here is to visualize the threat and tension brought by the tiger. Based on this tension between the tiger and the magpies, an allegory in the *Yulizi* 郁離子 further explained that the wind generated from the tiger’s roar could overthrow the magpie’s nest in the tree, and so the magpies had to scare off the tiger by making noises.²³⁵ While the tiger and the magpie are perceived as a fixed pair in a cultural narrative, there is also the possibility where the imageries are added with individual meanings. In Chinese folk culture, tigers have the ability to dispel demons and its image can be often seen on gates as a household guardian; magpie or *xique* 喜鵲 (lit. Happy magpie) usually represents happiness and auspiciousness;²³⁶ and the pine tree is the symbol of longevity and immortality since it is evergreen. These three imageries together convey a message of good wishes and heavenly blessings. Besides, the black tiger was the mount and companion of

²³⁴ Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324), *Hao Yixing* 郝懿行 anno., *Shanhai jing jianshu* 山海經箋疏 (Annotations to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*) (Shanghai: Zhonghuashuju, 1936), vol. 2, *juan* 5, p. 35b.

²³⁵ Liu Ji 劉基 (1311-1375), *Yulizi* 郁離子, *Shouyuepian* 守約篇 edition, *juan* I, pp. 10a-b.

²³⁶ Po and Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems*, pp. 108-09.

Zhao Gongming, and we can imagine that in front of the north wall there was a statue or name plaque of Marshal Zhao.

To sum up, the Black Tiger Cult was aligned with the belief that gods could control tigers, suggested by the Qing literati-officials' petitions against tiger calamities. As a localized tradition, the Black Tiger Cult was embraced by certain areas, such as Anze. The Black Tiger Temples here were mostly associated with Zhao Gongming, the Black Tiger God, who responded to a variety of challenges, including human-tiger/animal conflicts.

The change of local ecological environment and human-tiger/animal relationships was reflected on the Black Tiger Temples' purposes in Anze from the 18th century to the 19th century. Specifically, temples built before the mid-18th century might originally be established to protect the local people from tigers or other wild animals and secure the rural transportation. The Black Tiger Temple in Xinzhuang, however, might be established for the plague, another worldly matter that was overseen by Zhao Gongming. Since the late 18th century, these temples' renovation projects were mostly initiated by the obligation to pay respect to gods (not necessarily the Black Tiger God) and the hope that the renewed temples and adjacent buildings could bring good fortune to the people. It seemed that the original spiritual role of the Black Tiger God gradually transformed from addressing one or more practical issues, namely human-animal conflicts or plagues, to achieving a bigger and vaguer ideal, such as blessings of the land and people. This shift in roles could be a result of the residents' "success" in reducing the population of local predatorial animals as well as expanding human territories.

Tiger images in these Black Tiger Temples added more details to the hierarchy among animals, humans, and gods. While some tiger images were adopted to embody the

human perception of cosmology and self-cultivation, others demonstrated the identity or numinous power of the gods they were depicted with. In some cases, the Black Tiger God was partnered up with the Earth God and animal gods, such as the Horse King and the Ox King on the altar, which simultaneously implies the innate connection between animal gods and agricultural production. In comparison to horses and cattle, the tigers' significance for farmers seemed disputable and indefinite due to its mixed role as the predator and protector.



Figure 1. Black Tiger Temple in Bangou



Figure 2. Colored human figures on the west side of the arching wall in the middle cave chamber, Bangou



Figure 3. Colored human figures on the east side of the arching wall in the middle cave chamber, Bangou



Figure 4. Red dragon figure on the east side of the arching wall in the west cave chamber, Bangou



Figure 5. Black tiger figure on the west side of the arching wall in the west cave chamber, Bangou



Figure 6. The Black Tiger Temple in Zhangzhaigou



Figure 7. The roof collapsed in the main room, Zhangzhaigou

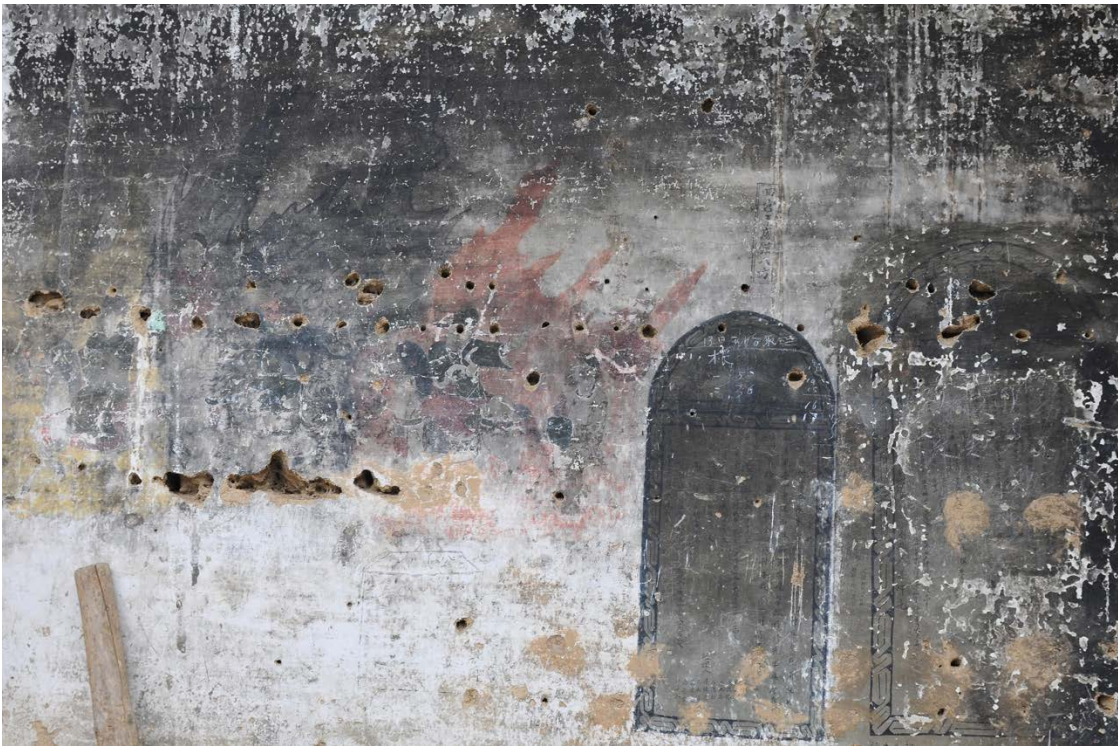


Figure 8. The mural and steles on the east sidewall of the main room, Zhangzhaigou

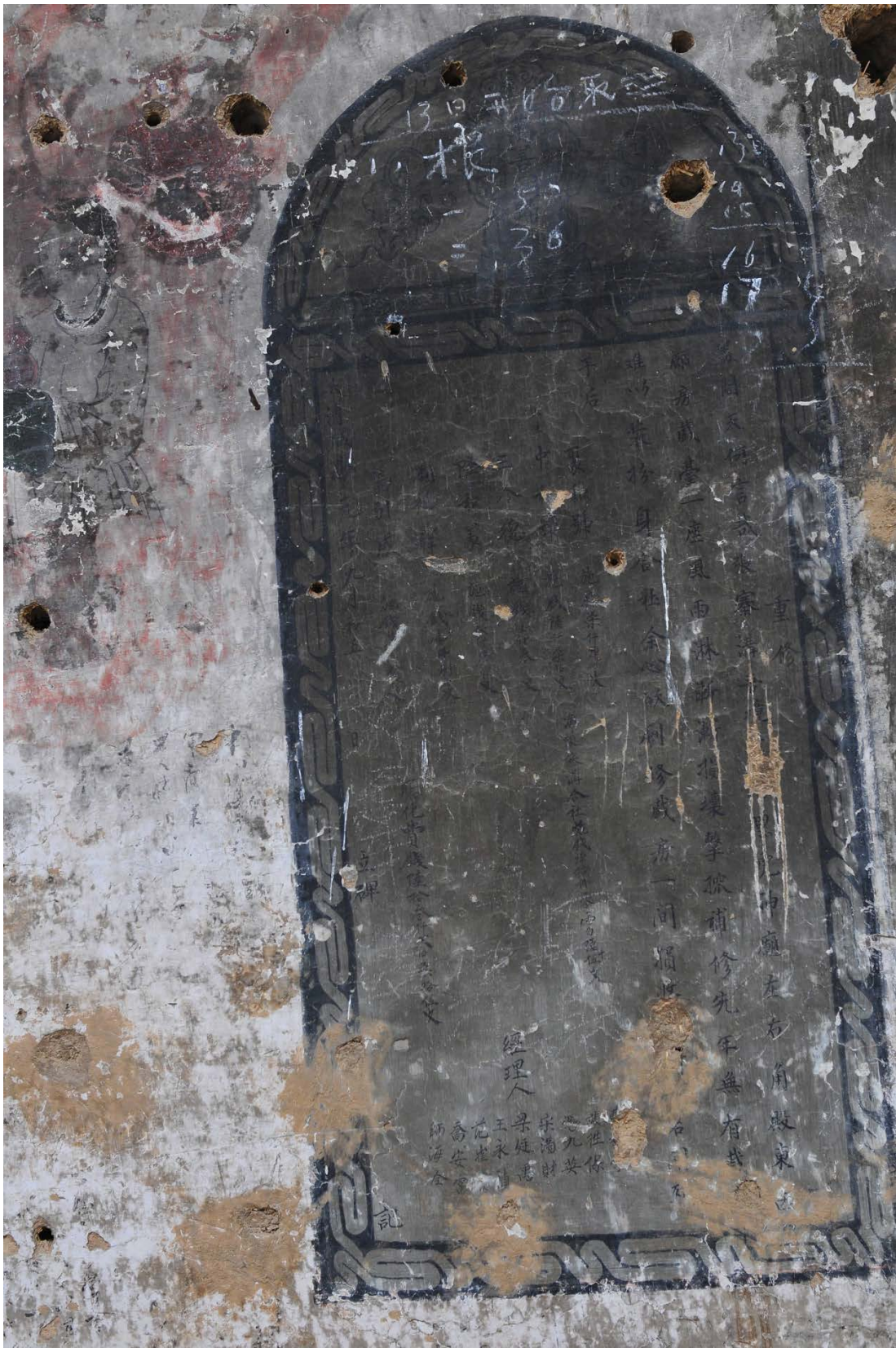


Figure 9. The Xianfeng stele, Zhangzhaigou



Figure 10. The Guangxu stele, Zhangzhaigou



Figure 11. The left horse rider, Zhangzhaigou



Figure 12. The right horse rider, Zhangzhaigou



Figure 13. The tiger rider in the middle, Zhangzhaigou



Figure 14. The Black Tiger Temple in Xin Zhuang



Figure 15. The Qianlong stele on the south sidewall, Xinzhuang



Figure 16. The Jiaqing stele on the west sidewall, Xinzhuang



Figure 17. The characters on the west sidewall, Xin Zhuang



Figure 18. The characters on the east sidewall, Xinzhuang



Figure 19. The tiger and magpies on the north sidewall, Xinzhuang



Figure 20. The tiger and magpies in a Yuan painting. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHERE IS THE TIGER NOW? A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON MODERN TIGER GODS IN MAINLAND CHINA AND TAIWAN

Introduction

The Black Tiger Cult has been a diachronic spiritual tradition since the late-imperial period in Anze 安澤, Shanxi. During the Ming-Qing era, people dealt with local human-tiger/animal conflicts, plagues, and all sorts of harm by worshipping the Black Tiger God or Marshal Zhao Gongming in Black Tiger Temples. As wild tigers withdrew from the wilderness, they eventually became a historical memory in local areas, distanced from the past tension between human and nature. In modern times, the worship of the Black Tiger God can also be found in north and northwest China, such as, Zhouzhi 周至 County in Shaanxi, Haidong 海東 City in Qinghai, and Mt. Jue 珺山 in Shanxi where the tradition of the Black Tiger God has been preserved for various reasons with particular emphasis.

While the Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China is peripheral and even on the verge of diminishing, the Tiger Lord (*huye* 虎爺) Cult in Taiwan, which also shares references to the spiritual narrative of Zhao Gongming in many cases, is flourishing despite the absence of tigers on the island. By comparing the Black Tiger Cult in Beisanjiao Village in Shanxi and the Tiger God Cult in Taiwan, this chapter intends to explore the impact of locality and modern imaginations of the human-tiger relationship. How does the local human-tiger relationship impact the spiritual image of the tiger in temples? In turn, how does the modernized tiger image in spiritual sites create new memories of the tiger?

I will explore the cultural network of tiger god traditions in this chapter. I will first investigate the modern Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village by examining stele inscriptions, temple statues, and spiritual traditions. Then I attempt to build connections among Black Tiger Cults across Mainland China to shed some light upon the status quo and relevancy of the black tiger traditions in the modern context. Finally, I will offer a comparative perspective on the Black Tiger Cult in Beisanjiao Village and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan in terms of the tiger presentation in the temples, the origin, efficacy and taboo of the tiger god, and the modern ritual and reception of the tiger god. Based on extended research on the Tiger Lord traditions in Taiwan²³⁷ and other places in Mainland China, I will try to find similarities of Black Tiger traditions in different locations while exploring their unique developments under different local impact.

1. The Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village: The Past and the Present

The Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village is one of the currently active Black Tiger Temples in Anze County with a relatively complete documented history. From

²³⁷ See Shu-Ju Lee 李淑如, “‘Caishenye de shizhe: Heihu, Jinkongque’ de dongwu shenzhi chuanshuo yanjiu—jianlun Dongxing miao Tuyegong chuanshuo” 財神爺的使者：黑虎、金孔雀的動物神祇傳說研究—兼論東興廟兔爺公傳說 (A Study on the Tales of the Animal Gods: the Envoys of the God of Wealth: the Black Tiger and the Golden Peacock—with a Discussion of the Tale of the Rabbit God), in Yi-yuan Chen 陳益源, ed., *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita* 台灣虎爺信仰研究及其他 (Studies on Tiger Lord Worship and More in Taiwan) (Taipei: Lirensheju, 2017), pp. 311-39; Welin-Lin Chen 陳惠齡, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guanacha” 台灣虎爺信仰的“崇高美學”及其作為“地方精靈”義涵—兼及新竹市區虎爺崇祀觀察 (The “Sublimity” of the Tiger Lord Worship in Taiwan and Its Meaning of Being the “Genius Loci”—Including the Observation of the Tiger Lord Worship in the Hsinchu City), in *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita*, pp. 159-83; Kuei-Wen Hsieh 謝貴文, “Shen, gui yu biao zhunhua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guanacha” 神、鬼與標準化：台灣虎爺信仰的一種觀察 (God, Ghost and Standardization: An Observation of the Tiger Lord Worship in Taiwan), in *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita*, pp. 1-26.

pacifying local wild tigers in the 18th century to fulfilling any requests imaginable in modern times, the Black Tiger God's spirituality has gone beyond the affiliation to Buddhism or Daoism and canonical literature of Zhao Gongming.

The Black Tiger Temple is located in Mt. Heihuling 黑虎嶺 (Black Tiger Hill) in the north of Beisanjiao Village in Anze County and in the east of Anji 安吉 Village in Guxian 古縣 County. The current temple was restored in 2012 by Li Aiyuan 李愛元, a native of Anze and the founder of the local coal mining company, and his wife. The main temple was built on an elevated foundation facing the theater stage in the south. With two side temples on the east and the west respectively, these four buildings have formed an enclosed courtyard.

Despite the modern restoration of the temple, the history of this temple is recorded by four surviving historical steles found on the site. The earliest extant stele was carved on the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month in the twenty-eighth year of the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (October 3, 1763), not for the inception of the temple but for one of the renovations. Although the stele was damaged and some characters of its inscription went missing, the remaining text suggested that during that time, tigers and leopards were indeed very active in this area, and they often disturbed the local traffic. In order to seek the Black Tiger God's protection, local people rebuilt and expended the temple.²³⁸

²³⁸ Cao Tingyuan 曹廷元, et al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Gu xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全 (臨汾市古縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Gu District, Linfen City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 49.

The second stele was erected on the same day by the abbot to specify territories of the temple land or *xianghuodi* 香火地 (Land of Incense and Candle Fire). Traditionally, the temple land is a crucial part of the monastic economy where the profit from the field would be used for the temple's expenses. However, the stele inscription did not mention how these sections of land were acquired or how they contributed to the temple's operation. Remarkably, the inscription reveals that the Black Tiger Temple was managed by a *bhikṣu* 比丘, a transcription of the Sanskrit term for an ordained Buddhist monk. Although he "erected the stone" 立石 as the abbot 主持, the monk's name was not mentioned in the inscription. In Shanxi, Buddhist monks sometimes resided in or even ran local Black Tiger Temples, and the Black Tiger God seemed to be well received by the local Buddhist community.²³⁹ For example, the Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai had dorms for monks added to the monastery complex in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743), which lasted beyond the third year of the Xianfeng reign (1853). Moreover, Buddhist monks also participated in the management of temples of other popular religions, such as the Cult of Guan Yu 關羽. For example, Monk Xinmao 心懋 was the abbot of the Thearch Guan Temple 關帝廟 in Nanliu 南流 Village in Jinzhong 晉中 City. In fact, Xinmao had three disciples according to the stele inscription erected in the seventh year of the Daoguang reign (1827).²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Liu Zemin 劉澤民, Li Yuming 李玉明, Gao Jianfeng 高劍峰, comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全（臨汾市安澤縣卷）(Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Anze County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2011), p. 50, p. 124.

²⁴⁰ Wang Linyu 王琳玉, et al. comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Jinzhong shi Yuci qu)* 三晉石刻大全（晉中市榆次區）(Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Yuci District, Jinzhong City, Shanxi Province) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 275.

The third stele was carved in the second month in the fifth year of the Guangxu 光緒 reign (February 21 – March 22, 1879) to document another temple renovation. Much better preserved than the previous steles, it explained the primary purpose of the temple and why the latest renovation was due. The inscription recorded:

I have heard it had been a long time since the tigers and leopards fled afar, and the jackals and wolves were gone and hidden. When the beasts were threatening people, everybody would rely on the gods and spirits for protection. In the past, there was a lofty mountain in the northeast of [...]. Grass and trees were flourishing there. Wild beasts were dwelling and breeding there. Mountain paths and roads were rough and uneven. Passengers were constantly frightened when they heard the sound of tigers and leopards. People from the past in our community (*she* 社)²⁴¹ were all [...]. They asked kind gentlemen to offer their good land and persuaded wealthy households to donate their money. Right here, they established the Black Tiger Temple. Without their achievements, how could it be like this? [...] for many years, it has gone through wind and rain. The painted walls

²⁴¹ Although *she* could refer to certain rituals or ritual sites based on the *Baihu tong*, it was probably considered as a magistrate unit here according to the *Guanzi* and *Zuozhuan*. See Chapter Three. Kenneth Dean introduced the term *she* as “either a village community, or an altar to the God of soil (Earth God), or more generally a temple dedicated to a local god. See Dean, “Transformations of the She 社 (Altars of Soil) in Fujian,” in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, Vol. 10, Culte des sites et culte des saints en Chine (1998), pp. 21-22. In his study of the rituals in north China, David Johnson explained that “a *she* could be identical to a natural village, or several small villages could combine to form a *she*, or a single large village could be divided into several *she*. Each *she* focused on a particular temple, or perhaps a lineage segment.” A *she* was considered as “the basic component of the social and political organization of rural north China.” See David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice: Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), pp. 184-86.

were gone. Moreover, a fire burned its floor, and it could not bear the structure. Upon witnessing the temple, all passers-by were saddened. Besides, people from the community [...], and they intended to rebuild the temple. People were worried that their effort was not enough. Therefore, the whole community had a public discussion and selected a manager. [We] sincerely pray for benevolent gentlemen who have some extra money should donate it as promised; those with not much extra money should try their best and donate accordingly. Is not this a marvelous age to offer our help together? This is the preface.²⁴²

聞之虎豹遠竄，豺狼遁藏，蓋久矣。會獸逼人，人之身莫不賴神靈以守護□。昔者□上良宮有崇山一座，草木以此而暢茂，會獸於此而繁殖。山徑小路崎嶇不平，往來行人每聞虎豹之聲，恆擔驚於心中。余社前人俱□求善士以舍吉地，勸富家以捐資財，於此創修黑虎廟宇壹所，非前人之功烈，何能如此。□□□□遠年湮，受風雨之飄零，失竣宇之雕牆。更兼逢火焦地而難堪，往來行人莫不目睹心傷，而況社人□□□意雖欲重修，憂覺獨力難撐。因此合社公議，必舉經理，懇祈仁人君子有餘者，固捐資以承諾；餘不足者，宜竭力以相施，量力而行。豈非共勸盛世哉？是為序。

The text echoed and confirmed the connection between the establishment of the temple and the threat posed by local wild animals mentioned by the Qianlong stele inscription. Differing from the original purpose, the temple was renovated to fix and restore the structure damaged by weathering and fire. However, it could not rule out the possible concern of human-nature conflicts. According to the local gazetteer, from the second year to the third year of the Guangxu reign (1876-1877), the whole Yueyang 岳陽 County

²⁴² Cao Tingyuan, et al., comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Gu xian juan)*, p. 140.

(modern Anze County and Guxian County) had experienced a terrible drought that historically known as the Ding-wu Disaster 丁戌奇荒.²⁴³ The shortage of food not only left more than 40,000 people hungry, but also led to more conflicts between human and animals within the borders of Yueyang County. The fifth and sixth year of the Guangxu reign (1879 and 1880) had witnessed series of outbreaks of wolf and rat infestations.²⁴⁴ It seemed reasonable to presume that the temple renovation was to cope with the traumatic experience and seek for spiritual comfort. Interestingly, the inscription did not mention anything about the famine or the animal disturbance despite the fact that the renovation project took place right after the Ding-wu Disaster. Moreover, the text even started with a statement indicating the long absence of former predators such as tigers and wolves. The implication was that the Black Tiger God was efficient in pacifying wild animals and resolving human-animal conflicts. The renovation of the temple was intended to carry on the tradition and legacy of the ancestors and predecessors—without their efforts later people could not enjoy peace and prosperity. Whether the Ding-wu Disaster directly motivated the temple renovation or not, the efficacy of the temple had been somewhat consistent—protecting local people from wild animals. The only difference in this case is that the original temple was built to ask gods for help whereas this later renovation of the temple was to pay homage to gods and founders of the temple.

²⁴³ Wang Xizhen 王錫禎, et al., *Chongxiu Anzexian xianzhi* 重修安澤縣縣志 (Revised Gazetteer of Anze), Republican edition (1932) (Taipei: Chengwenchubanshe, 1968), p. 916.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 917.

The fourth, and most recent stele (fig. 21), erected on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in 2012 (September 30, 2012), provided a modern perception of the Black Tiger Temple. The stele inscription recorded:

The Anji village has embraced a long history and civilization. It is surrounded by blue mountains and green waters. Since it is the essence and treasure of the Heaven, the talent and heroes have been coming forward in multitudes. As all the businesses here are blooming, this place is renowned. The Black Tiger Temple is sitting on the summit of the Guandaoliang at the border of the Anze County. Although the year of its initial establishment is unknown, stele records indicated that it was renovated in the twenty-eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1763). The layout was in a courtyard style. The buildings were made of bricks and wood. The main temple was in the north while the theater stage was in the south. There were side chambers on the east and west. The Black Tiger God was enshrined in the main temple. There was one door and two windows in the front wall. On the outside of the temple, there was a pathway of five *chi*. The ceiling was held up by wood beams and the roof was covered with azure tiles. Without the colorful gleam of the glazed tiles, the temple was still spacious and imposing. Unfortunately, it was razed to the ground during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Now in the time of prosperity while the traditional culture is reviving, the current village leadership team has carried on the ambition of the predecessors and heeded the wish of all the villagers to rebuild the main temple, side chambers, theater stage and the gatehouse. The leadership

team has consulted with the authority and done plenty of research to design and build the temple to the highest standard. The architecture has not only restored the historical look, but also had a touch of the modern art. The walls are made of azure bricks and concrete while the pillars and roofs are made of pine from the Northeast, which unifies the building structures as one. With exquisite colorful paintings, the grand numinous Black Tiger Temple is standing in front of people's eyes. On the one hand, it has granted the villagers' wish, and on the other, it has turned into a local attraction. The whole project was sponsored by kind-hearted Mr. Li Aiyuan. His kind action will bless the god and the land of ten thousand *li*. Therefore, this stele is erected to record this event so that it will be reputable for hundreds of generations and be remembered for thousands of years.

安吉村歷史悠久，文明古老，青山綠水，環繞遍地，物華天寶，歷代人才輩出，英雄湧現，百業興旺，遠近聞名，黑虎廟雄踞管道梁頂與安澤縣交界處，雖始建年限不詳，但有碑記載，清乾隆二十八年重修一次，四合佈局，磚木結構，大殿居北，南築戲台，合東西有廂房，大殿內供黑虎之神位，前牆一門兩窗，外有五尺過廳，頂部搭木起梁，青瓦蓋頂，雖無琉璃炫彩，但殿堂寬闊，建築高大，氣勢雄偉，只惜抗日戰爭時期被夷為平地，適逢盛世年華，文化復興，本屆村領導班子承歷屆領導之志，應全體村民之願，經權威諮詢，多方考證，精心設計，高標準修築，復修大殿廂房舞台和門樓，建築風格既尊重歷史，又以現代藝術加工，青磚水泥砌牆，梁柱棟榑，斗拱飛簷，全部為優質東北松木質結構，使整個建築凝為一體，又以藝術彩繪精雕細刻，一座雄偉壯觀，神靈大顯的黑虎廟聳立在世人面前，了卻了村民的心願，也是安吉一大景觀，整個建築由愛心人士李愛元先生出資修建，此善此舉恩施神靈，惠澤萬里，故樹碑銘記，流芳百世，永載千秋。

The natural environment, once described as the dangerous wilderness in the Guangxu stele, now has been cherished in modern times as a heavenly treasure. This contrast comes from two factors. First, the Chinese government has made the protection of natural environment

one of the Fundamental National Policies since the 1990s, and in the 2000s, Anze became a national ecological demonstration region and a renowned green county.²⁴⁵ The modern ecological awareness recognized the importance of maintaining a sustainable relationship between nature and humans. Secondly, wild animals and the rugged landscape here can no longer trigger the trauma of past human-animal/nature conflicts or pose any serious threat to the local population or transportation. Therefore, the cultural tie between the temple and the local environment has been transformed while the Black Tiger Cult's ability to reflect people's anxiety towards wild animal attacks is outdated. Although this lengthy inscription described the temple layout and architecture in great detail, it left out any information about the tradition of the Black Tiger God and the temple's spiritual position. Instead, this modern restoration was necessary in order to comply with the social trend of reviving local traditions, since the temple was destroyed during the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). The restoration also fulfills the request from both local officials and residents. Moreover, this Black Tiger Temple will become a new local attraction. When it comes to the sole sponsor of this project, the wording of the inscription is very interesting. It is Mr. Li that has bestowed (*shi* 施) his blessings (*en* 恩) on the god through the renovation project not the other way around. It would be common for monks and priests to thank donors or patrons in such a humble voice, but it would seem inappropriate when the god is placed in this inferior position. If it was not an accidental mistake by the author, the sponsor has claimed the authority over the god. In this way, the efficacy and the spirituality of the temple seemed

²⁴⁵ Mao Qiaohui 毛巧暉, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong* 記憶、表演與傳統——當代文化語境下安澤文化尋蹤 (Memory, Performance and Tradition—Exploring the Culture of Anze in the Contemporary Discourse) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2016), p. 30.

to be downplayed by human agency.²⁴⁶ Unlike renovation projects in pre-modern times that usually had more than one non-state sponsors or donors, this modern Black Tiger Temple had a closer affiliation to this one particular, private patron. In one of the side temples, many plastic flower baskets that were gifted to congratulate the consecration of the Black Tiger Temple were locked away from the public. One of them was a gift from the Beisanjiao Village Committee, and on the basket a note says: “[Wishing you] a thriving business” 生意興隆 (fig. 22). The indication is that the Black Tiger Temple is a part of Mr. Li’s enterprise at least in the eyes of the local leadership. This acknowledgement of the connection between the private business and the temple is further evidenced by the name of the mining company that Mr. Li founded carved right below the title of the modern stele.

These four stele inscriptions described a brief history of the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village, which demonstrated the transformation of the purpose to establish and renovate the temple and the shifting perception of the temple’s functionality associated with the social context. While the Qing residents maintained the Black Tiger Temple for the grace of the god in protecting people against wild predators, modern restorers of the temple, at least on the record, focused on preserving its historical and cultural values; the spiritual identity and the efficacy of the Black Tiger God were barely mentioned.

The modern Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village completely dropped the tiger image in its visual presentation. The main temple has three statues on the altar. The Black Tiger God sits in the middle of the altar, accompanied by statues of two young attendants

²⁴⁶ This might be a result of the anti-superstition ideology that has been advocated since the Era of Republic. For more information about the Communist perception of superstition, please see John Williams, “Supersition,” in Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere, eds., *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concept from Mao to Xi*, (Canberra, Australia: ANU Press, 2019), pp. 269-274.

on each side (fig. 23). A golden curtain with embroidered dragon patterns is draping over the altar and hides the two attendants behind (fig. 24). Furthermore, a red ribbon loosely ties these three figures together. The Black Tiger God's statue is also wearing a golden cape with a similar patterns and material as the curtain. The figure is dark-skinned with a luscious beard. He wears a suit of armor underneath a black robe which lays draped over his left shoulder. His right hand holds a golden stick that looks like the iron whip illustrated in the *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* (*Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全) (fig. 25).²⁴⁷ Judging by the dominant black color of the statue and the iconic weapon he is holding, the Black Tiger God enshrined here is very likely to be Zhao Gongming 趙公明 or the God of the Dark Altar 玄壇. The only item of inconsistency is the absence of the black tiger mount. The black tiger image is underlining the whole spiritual narrative of Zhao Gongming.²⁴⁸ In most of the cases, the black tiger has become the synonym for Zhao Gongming. Without the animal, the statue could be the Door God, Yuchi Gong 尉遲恭, another black-tiger-related god who originated from Shuozhou 朔州 City in northern Shanxi, who is also commonly portrayed as a dark skinned general, wielding an iron whip or two in traditional operas and folk art.²⁴⁹ In local folklore in northern Shanxi, Yuchi Gong

²⁴⁷ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全 (The Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings), p. 141.

²⁴⁸ Wang Kaiwo 王開沃, et al., *Zhouzhi xianzhi* 盩厔縣志 (Gazetteer of Zhouzhi District), 1793, *juan* 14, pp. 11a-b. *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, p. 142.

²⁴⁹ Po Sung-nien and David Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village China*, (Berkeley, Calif.: Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1992), pp. 112-13, 114-15, 118-19.

was the reincarnation of a black tiger god.²⁵⁰ The missing tiger image in this temple not only could cause some confusion about the identity of the god, but also could potentially isolate the god from his spiritual narrative that has been circulating for centuries.

Although the visual presentation of the tiger is absent in the temple, the word “*hu*” 虎 is displayed at the entrance of the temple. Outside of the main palace, above the two windows and the door are three wood plaques with golden text written on them (fig. 26). The middle plaque right above the door read “Tiger God” 虎神 while the two characters on the left plaque and the right plaque can be combined into a phrase, “Power that Shakes Mountains and Rivers” 威震山河. A painted wood board titled “Cranes Dancing in the Transcendent Mountain” 鶴舞仙山 right under the “Tiger God” plaque and above the doorframe depicts the unearthly scenery of lofty mountains surrounded by clouds, flying cranes, and pine trees. This board can be considered as a way to supplement the numinous image of the god through the visualization of the transcendent world. Meanwhile, the motif is rather generic with no particular relation to the traditional narrative of the Black Tiger God. On the pillars and top of the doorframe are couplets written on the red paper. The paper is already torn but the black-inked phrase “All Requests Will Be Responded” 有求必應 is still discernable, which seems to be a marketing strategy to attract a bigger audience and donors just like any other modern temple for universal needs.

²⁵⁰ Li Kui 李奎, “Shanxi sheng hushen xinyang diaocha yu yanjiu” 山西省虎神信仰調查與研究 (Survey of Tiger God Worship in Shanxi Province), in *Taiwan huye xinyang yanjiu ji qita*, pp. 558-60. Based on Li’s study, Yuchi Gong might not be directly referred to as “Black Tiger God.”

The caretakers of the temple provided more information regarding the modern management of the temple, demographics of temple-goers, and ritual practices. The caretakers, an old couple in their sixties, resided in the east side-temple. Without any religious background, they were hired by Mr. Li two and half years ago to look after the temple. According to an interview with the old couple, the temple-goers are mostly employees of Mr. Li's mining company nearby. Since there are no other major temples in this area, the Black Tiger Temple has become a popular and convenient spiritual site. When my informants asked about the history of this temple, the old couple were not strangers to this topic. They could briefly introduce the tiger calamities happened in the past and the Black Tiger God's ability to pacify wild beasts. The old couple explained that due to limited access to major temples in the area, modern residents would come to the Black Tiger God for a variety of reasons, including good fortune, wealth, safety, children, health, etc. The old couple specifically emphasized that people would come to the temple and pray to the Black Tiger God for male offspring. However, this is not amongst the efficacies that Zhao Gongming was known for according to the *Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings*, but a specialty that is usually attributed to female deities, such as the Child-giving Guanyin Bodhisattva 送子觀音. People would visit and make offerings to the Black Tiger God on the first and fifteenth day of each month (in agreement with the Lunar calendar). The meat offerings are usually chicken, fish, and sometimes pork, which must be cooked without salt. Vegetable offerings are required to be chopped into pieces as long as one *cun* 吋. Offerings such as *mantou* 饅頭 and plain flavored crackers are also acceptable. After the ceremony, the old couple or anyone in need may consume these food

offerings. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth day of the eighth month every year, Mr. Li would hire local or Henan 河南 traditional opera troupes to perform in the temple.

Combining both the inscriptions of the historical monuments during the Qing dynasty and the notes from recent fieldwork, I suggest three trends in the development of the local Black Tiger Cult. Firstly, as the human-tiger/nature conflict subsided, the Black Tiger Temple started to serve more universal spiritual needs. In addition to legitimizing the establishment and maintenance of the temple,²⁵¹ the broader efficacy might be a result of geographical isolation, which pushes the Black Tiger God to take up roles of other popular deities. Secondly, the modern temple management has gained its independence from previous affiliation to local Buddhist community. The separation was not recorded in local history however, it is possible to be one of the repercussions of the anti-superstition or anti-religion movement in the era of Republic.²⁵² The modern Gazetteer of Anze also mentioned that a Buddhist committee was established during the Ming-Qing period to oversee the local Buddhist affairs until its decline in the era of Republic. Only 17 Anze residents were ordained Buddhist monks in 1934.²⁵³ The materialistic ideology and the commercial background of the sponsorship may have undermined the spiritual core of the Black Tiger

²⁵¹ Adam Chau's study of the Black Dragon King Cult in Shaanbei briefly discussed the more comprehensive benefits of worshipping the god in the stele inscription. Chau took it as a "text act," which was intended for literate people (mostly government officials) to gain their support during the Qing dynasty. See Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 96-98.

²⁵² Ji Huachuan 紀華傳, "Minguo chuqi de fojiao zhengce ji siyuan caichan guanli" 民國初期的佛教政策及財產管理 (Policies and Property Management Regarding Buddhism in the Early Era of Republic), in *Studies in World Religions* 世界宗教研究, 6(2018): 59-65.

²⁵³ Lu Dingyi 逯丁藝, *Anze xianzhi* 安澤縣志 (Gazetteer of Anze) (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1997), p. 419.

God. Thirdly, the tiger image has gradually transformed from the dangerous local predator depicted in the Qing stele inscriptions to a more culturally molded symbol that vaguely serves as a reminder of the past and local tradition. Without tiger representation in the temple, the identity of the Black Tiger God and the spiritual stand of the temple seem rather indefinite.

2. Other Black Tiger Temples in Mainland China Beyond Anze

The case of Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village demonstrated a form of modern development where the need to resolve human-animal conflicts has been replaced by the need to address various worldly issues due to the geographical isolation. Meanwhile, there are other modern Black Tiger Temples in Mainland China that demonstrate how the tradition of the Black Tiger God, with or without a history of local human-animal conflicts, has been carried on.

In Zaolin Village in Zhouzhi County, Shaanxi, the modern restoration of the Numinous Official Black Tiger Temple 黑虎靈官廟 was built upon Zhao Gongming's alleged old residence. This temple witnesses the local perception of Zhao's image from a hero-deity that tamed the vicious black tiger to the Martial God of Wealth. Zhao was originally known as the Numinous Official of Black Tiger or Zhao the Black Tiger 趙黑虎. The deification of Zhao Gongming and his black tiger in Zhouzhi County might be a result of local human-tiger conflicts. For example, local gazetteer recorded that the Xianyou (Transcendent Visit) Temple 仙遊寺 and the Louguantai (Platform to View the

Tower) Temple 樓觀台 usually stored weapons in case of tiger calamities.²⁵⁴ These two temples are both in close proximity to the village. Only recently did local people start to recognize Zhao Gongming's identity as the God of Wealth, which was proverbially promoted by Xu Zhonglin's 許仲琳 (ca. 1560- ca. 1630) *Investiture of the Gods* (*Feng shen yanyi* 封神演義) in the Ming dynasty.²⁵⁵ Apart from traces of Zhao's life in the village, the black tiger has become a local icon with its own origin story parallel to Zhao's. Both Zhao and the black tiger had a hard life: Zhao had to make a living by collecting firewood in the mountains, while the black tiger was abandoned by its father due to unusual coloration. Both Zhao and the black tiger were living with their mother and other siblings. Thus, the images of Zhao Gongming and the black tiger have been mirroring each other. In modern times, local people continued to commemorate this local deity as a representative of local identity and God of Wealth. On the fifth day of the first month, villagers send off the God of Wealth by having a kind of corn meal called "dajiaotuan" 打攪團. On the fifteenth of third month, Zhao Gongming's birthday, people from neighboring villages will come to attend the temple affair. The modern worship of Zhao Gongming in Zaolin Village reflected the local effort to secure its position as the birthplace of the Zhao Gongming and the origin of this popular culture. In accordance, the memory of tiger

²⁵⁴ Wang, et al., *Zhouzhi xianzhi*, juan 10, p. 11a.

²⁵⁵ Research Association of Zhao Gongming at Zaolin in the Zhouzhi County 周至縣棗林趙公明研究會, "Zhao gong yuanshuai caishen xingxiang yu minjian chuanshuo de yuantou—yi Shanxi Zhouzhi Zaolin cun wei hexin de minsu kaocha" 趙公元帥財神形象與民間傳說的源頭——以陝西周至棗林村為核心的民俗考察 (Marshal Zhao's Image as the God of Wealth and the Origin of the Folklore—A Folkloristic Investigation on the Zaolin Village in Zhouzhi, Shaanxi), in *New West* 新西部, 9(2012): 94-96.

calamities and the black tiger's origin has become a footnote to strengthen the cultural bond between the god and the place.

Sharing a similar history of animal attacks in the area,²⁵⁶ Mt. Jue 珥山 in Jincheng City 晉城 (in the south of Shanxi) is home to a Black Tiger Temple. Three extant steles erected in Mt. Jue between the 1500s and 1800s were about the Black Tiger Temple, but none of them related the temple with local animal attacks—instead, it was always brought up as a part of the Daoist monastery complex dedicated to the Upper Thearch of the Mysterious/Dark Heaven 玄天上帝 or the Northern Thearch. According to the *Daoist Canon*, when the Northern Thearch was practicing self-cultivation in the Mt. Wudang 武當山, a numinous black tiger was on his side to protect the mountain and the teaching.²⁵⁷ The Zhenwu (True Military) Temple 真武殿 for the Northern Thearch sits on the West Summit, and as a guardian to the Thearch, the Black Tiger Temple is located on the route leading up to the Zhenwu Temple. Besides his association to the prominent Daoist deity, the Black Tiger God could also serve as a spiritual response to local tiger/animal problems. According to the earliest recorded, the renovation of the temple happened in the eighth year of the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1529).²⁵⁸ Then two major renovations of the temple took place

²⁵⁶ According to the *Gazetteer of Zezhou* compiled in 1735, there were two recorded incidents of animal attacks in Zezhou (modern Jincheng City): One was in the third year of the Chenghua 成化 reign (1467) where tigers devoured people in daylight, and one was in the twelfth year of the Chongzhen 崇禎 reign (1639) where leopards entered the city. See Tian Jiagu 田嘉穀, Zhu Zhang 朱樟, *Zezhou fuzhi* 澤州府志 (Gazetteer of Zezhou), 1735, *juan* 50, pp. 5a, 8a.

²⁵⁷ Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹 ed., *Zhonghua Daozang* 中華道藏 (The Chinese Daoist Canon) (Beijing: Huaxiachubanshe, 2004), vol. 30, p. 637.

²⁵⁸ Wang Li 王麗 etc. comps., *San Jin shike daquan* (Jincheng shi Zezhou xian juan) 三晉石刻大全(晉城市澤州縣卷) (The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Shanxi—Zezhou District, Jincheng City) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2012), p. 148.

in the seventeenth year of the Daoguang 道光 reign (1837)²⁵⁹ and the ninth year of the era of Republic (1920).²⁶⁰ The modern Black Tiger Temple is dedicated to Zhao Gongming, one of the four marshals of the Northern Thearch. In the temple, Zhao is portrayed as a general with thick dark eyebrows and beard. He is holding an iron whip while mounting a black tiger. Zhao Gongming here is mostly recognized as the Martial God of Wealth whose spiritual power is consistent with the description in the *Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* and the *Investiture of the Gods*. The direct association with the Northern Thearch, the Daoist culture here in the mountain, and a considerable number of visitors from other places contribute to and maintain the Black Tiger God's identity here as a "standardized" deity that mostly aligns with the canonical literature and popular belief.

Different from Zhouzhi County and Jincheng City, Lijia Village 李家村 located in Ledu 樂都 District of Haidong 海東 City, Qinghai has no historical record of human-animal conflicts. The area has been nourished by the Huangshui 湟水 River and has become a breadbasket since the West Han dynasty. The local Black Tiger Temple was first established in the Ming dynasty and then destroyed. It was recently rebuilt with the money raised by villagers. Although the initial purpose of the temple was unknown, now it serves as a site for various spiritual and social activities. Local people believe that Zhao Gongming is an omnipotent god, and they would pray for favorable weather to secure and increase

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 640.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 742.

agricultural production.²⁶¹ The mural behind the altar depicted three deities—the Celestial Official of Fortune 天官福星 in the middle, Marshal Zhao Goingming on the left, and his three sisters who are in charge of fertility on the right. Traditionally, on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month when the summer harvest wrapped up, villagers and people from the neighboring towns would visit the Black Tiger Temple with *mantou* freshly made of the new wheat flour as offerings. Now the area has been urbanized, but the tradition continues. The temple affair starts on the twenty-second day when the old ladies make paper money to prepare for the ritual. During the nighttime, there are shadow plays to demonstrate people's gratitude to the gods for an abundant year and at the same time to entertain the audience. When it comes to the official ritual ceremony on the twenty-fifth day, people would welcome Marshal Zhao and various deities and then offer them buns, vegetable oil, dry cypress branches, incense, candles, and paper money. The temple staff will treat and bless people with stew along with the buns that were brought for the temple fair.²⁶² Although Zhao is recognized as the Black Tiger God and the God of Wealth here as well, the emphasis is actually on his power to help with farming based on the date of the temple fair, which is closely related to the local agricultural calendar instead of Marshal Zhao's birthday.

Surveying the history and modern tradition of Black Tiger Temples in Beisanjiao Village, Mt. Jue in Shanxi, Zaolin Village in Shaanxi, and Lijia Village in Qinghai, we can

²⁶¹ These abilities of Zhao Gongming can be found in the *Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* 三教源流搜神大全 published during the Yuan-Ming era.

²⁶² Ding Kexi 丁克西, "Heihumiao zhong de minjian jisi" 黑虎廟中的民間祭祀 (The Popular Sacrifices of the Black Tiger Temple), in *Cultural Monthly* 文化月刊, Z1(2014): 68-71.

see that these Black Tiger God traditions can be traced back to two spiritual identities of Zhao Gongming: before his deification as a tiger subjugator, and after his deification as a marshal guardian. The former identity focuses on Zhao Gongming's relation to tigers and wild animals in general, whereas the latter combines his connection to nature with other abilities that are associated with the Daoist cosmology and other gods, upon which most of these modern Black Tiger Temples are based. Judging by a few published studies in Mainland China, the tiger figure is either a part of Zhao Gongming's presentation or absent in these modern temples.

3. The Black Tiger God and the Tiger Lord: A Comparison of Modern Cults in Shanxi and Taiwan

In Mainland China, the Black Tiger Cult seems to be an obscure academic subject in contemporary scholarship; however, in Taiwan, the study of the Tiger Lord Cult has been thriving since the late 1980s. In order to keep the specificity and accuracy of this study, the Black Tiger Cult here refers to that in Anze County, especially Beisanjiao Village, whereas the Tiger Lord Cult mainly refers to that in Taipei, Tainan, Hsinchu, and Beigang. This section will compare these two cults by focusing on three issues, namely, tiger gods in temples, efficacies and taboos of tiger gods, and modern rituals.

1) The Presentation and Position of Tiger Gods in Temples

The statue enshrined in this Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village is a humanoid deity who is dressed up as a general. Based on his appearance and the history of the temple, the Black Tiger God could be Zhao Gongming, or Yuchi Gong. Rather than a black tiger mount or companion as described in Daoist canonical literature, there are two

teenager-like attendants on his sides. Due to his position in the middle of the main temple, the Black Tiger God is the main god to be worshiped.

In Taiwan, the tiger god is presented both as humanoid and tiger-like. According to Shu-Ju Lee's study of the Wude (Martial Virtue) Temple 武德宮 in Beigang, the main god enshrined there is also Zhao Gongming as the Center Martial God of Wealth 中路武財神 accompanied by the other four Martial Gods of Wealth from the four directions. Built in 1980, the statue is wearing a big golden hat and a colorful embroidered cape. All the five Martial Gods of Wealth are holding *yuanbao* 元寶, a traditional symbol of wealth, in their hands. Zhao Gongming's mount—the Black Tiger General 黑虎大將軍—is positioned under his altar. The tiger is in a crouching posture with its face looking up. The statue is black and covered with a piece of black embroidered fabric garment. This tiger figure is rather cartoonish and thus very popular with the temple-goers. Additionally, Welin-Lin Chen's research surveyed six temples that enshrined the Tiger Lord in Hsinchu. The Tiger Lord, positioned underneath the altar of the Earth God in the main palace of the City God Temple 都城隍廟 (first built in 1735), is portrayed as a sitting tiger. The wood statue has been painted in gold and placed in a glass box. The tradition and worship related to it is unclear.²⁶³ In the Siangshan Mazu Temple 香山天后宮 originally established in 1661 and recently rebuilt in 1922, the Tiger Lord is placed underneath the offering table of the main god Mazu (or the Sage Mother 聖母) and hidden behind the donation box. The tiger is in

²⁶³ Welin-Lin Chen, "Taiwan huye xinyang de 'chonggao meixue' jiqi zuowei 'difang jingling' yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guan cha," pp. 173-74.

a crouching posture, and the statue is also painted in gold.²⁶⁴ The Dongmen Bao Fude Temple 東門保福德祠 was first built in 1682 and one of the oldest Earth God temples in Hsinchu. The Tiger Lord is placed under the offering table to the main gods—the Earth God Fude (Fortune-Virtue) and his wife. The colorful tiger figure is in a sitting posture, and the statue is made of wood.²⁶⁵ Similarly, in the Inner Mazu Temple 內天后宮, the Tiger Lord is also located under the Earth God’s offering table that is on the right side of the main god Mazu. The crouching tiger statue was originally made with clay when the temple was established in 1748, and in 2004 it was repainted in light yellow.²⁶⁶ Besides the Earth God and Mazu, the Tiger Lord also accompanies other gods such as Master Guan 關公, the famous general Guan Yu 關羽 (?-220), in the Putian (Universal Heaven) Temple 普天宮 and Yu of Xia 夏禹 in the Water God Temple 水仙宮. Notably, there are two Tiger Lord statues in the Putian Temple built in 1975—one is crouching under Master Guan’s offering table with its face up, and the other one, the Great Tiger Lord 大虎爺公, is slinking outside of the palace.²⁶⁷

The idea that the Tiger Lord in Beigang and Hsinchu maintaining its individual status as a tiger while being attached to the main gods is particularly interesting. The Black Tiger God in Beisanjiao Village, however, is completely human with no sign of the tiger

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 176.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 176-77.

image. Besides the statue placed outside of the Putian Temple, all the other Tiger Lord statues are located under the altar of the main god. Welin-Lin Chen noted that this positioning was due to three reasons: (1) the Tiger Lord is the mount or associate of the main gods, (2) while the temple is a place for the gods of the *yang* realm 陽界, the Tiger Lord can pacify the demons from the *yin* realm 陰界 underneath, and (3) the main gods would tie the Tiger Lord underneath the offering table just in case it ran off or scared the children.²⁶⁸ This positioning, on the one hand, shows the definite partition between the main god and the Tiger Lord—the undeniable hierarchy leaves the Tiger Lord in an inferior position. On the other hand, the partition grants the Tiger Lord a certain amount of flexibility to be associated with multiple popular gods such as the Earth God, Mazu, Guan Yu, and Yu of Xia. In other words, although its basic characteristics are consistent in general, the Tiger Lord could be woven into other gods' spiritual narratives.

With respect to the presentation of the tiger statues in Taiwan, most of them are modeled after the actual animal, while some of them depart from the image of a vicious predator—instead, they portray a big round head and a small plump body. Welin-Lin Chen's study described the Tiger Lord statue in the Inner Mazu Temple as “adorable” 可愛. On the official website of the Wude Temple, the same wording was also applied to the Black Tiger General's statue.²⁶⁹ This adaptation and reinvention of the tiger figure makes it more appealing and acceptable by the general public, and most importantly, the statue

²⁶⁸ Welin-Lin Chen, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guancha,” pp. 168-69.

²⁶⁹ See https://www.wude.org.tw/?act=menuinfo&ml_id=20200818001# Accessed on November 9th, 2022.

establishes a new cultural image for tigers: small, cute, and auspicious. The Black Tiger General can be acquired as a souvenir or a talisman at the temple's gift store. In this sense, the tiger figure has been not only deified but also accessible. The relationship between humans and tigers is reimagined where the tiger is a lovable and tangible companion to ordinary people.

2) Local Tales, Efficacies, and Taboos of Tiger Gods

Contemporary scholarship has proposed several hypotheses about origins and efficacies of the Black Tiger Cult in Shanxi. Li Kui suggested that people of Anze established the Black Tiger Temple for protection instead of wealth. To support this hypothesis, Li introduced a story circulating in Beisanjiao Village: "A Buddhist monk had a dream where a leopard requested him to build a Black Tiger Temple; if not built, the leopard would harm the local people. After the temple was built, the leopard again forced the monk to do other things." Li noted that some people here believed that the black tiger was a leopard as in the story.²⁷⁰ This local tale portrayed the Black Tiger God in a negative light and switched the tiger's role from the subjugated to the manipulator. Although the god's identity was not affiliated with any specific gods, it otherwise confirmed the initial purpose of the temple—to protect people from tigers and leopards alike. In addition, the Black Tiger God in Beisanjiao Village is believed to have the ability to bless people with sons/children—a tradition that can allude to Zhao Gongming's three sisters and to Yuchi Gong, who was blessed by the Black Tiger God at birth and protected by a numinous black

²⁷⁰ See Li Kui, "Shanxi sheng hushen xinyang diaocha yu yanjiu," p. 564. Li argued that the black tiger here should be a tiger.

tiger when he was in danger. Li suggested that the tale bridged the Black Tiger Cult and reproduction worship in Northern Shanxi.²⁷¹

In both Shanxi and Taiwan, the tiger god sometimes is regarded as the guardian of children. The old couple living in the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village briefly mentioned that the Black Tiger God once saved two young children, which can be related to a tradition of Licheng 黎城 County in Changzhi 長治 City (in southern Shanxi): a stuffed tiger-shaped toy would be given to infants on their one-month birthday, for the tiger could protect the infants from all evil and harm. Li Kui argued that the tiger symbol could be traced back to the totem worship of the ancient state of Li 黎 during the Shang 商 (ca. 1600-1046 BCE) and Zhou 周 (1046-256 BCE) dynasties.²⁷² Coincidentally, the Tiger Lord in the Putian Temple in Hsinchu is believed to be the guardian of children and has the ability to make them smarter and healthier.²⁷³ Kuei-Wen Hsieh added that parents would make the Tiger Lord the “foster father” 契父 to children susceptible to illness. Since the Tiger Lord has the power to eat pigs 虎咬豬, it can cure mumps or “pig scalp” 豬頭皮 in children. Hsieh explained that this connection between the Tiger Lord and children in the Taiwan popular belief might be a result of the positioning of the statue which sits closer to the height of children while placed underneath the offering table,²⁷⁴ which contradicts Welin-Lin Chen’s perception that its placing is to avoid contact with children.

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 558-60.

²⁷² Ibid., pp. 568-69.

²⁷³ Welin-Lin Chen, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guanacha,” p. 177.

²⁷⁴ Kuei-Wen Hsieh, “Shen, gui yu biao zhunhua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guanacha,” p. 11.

Local folklore and traditions may also seem contradicting when it comes to the relationship between tigers and children. Mao Qiaohui pointed out that the Black Tiger God would be mentioned to scare or warn children in Anze County, and in some villages, young children and women are banned from visiting the Black Tiger Temple.²⁷⁵ In Taiwan, the story of the Grand aunt Tiger, based on Huang Zhijuan's 黃之雋 (1668-1748) "Hu ao zhuan" 虎媪傳 (Tale of Madame Tiger), has been wildly circulated. The story talks about the "tiger spirit" 老虎精 disguised as an old lady that would trick and prey on children at night. In Welin-Lin Chen's opinion, people's fear of tigers made them a sublime subject and simultaneously a focus of worship.²⁷⁶

Scholars have suggested that the tiger god in Mainland China and Taiwan share the common ability to grant people wealth. Although the *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings* did not directly refer to the Black Tiger God, Zhao Gongming as the God of Wealth, it implied this identity by stating "[As for] doing trades to obtain wealth, the Master (Zhao Gongming) could [help people make] profits and be successful."²⁷⁷ Moreover, from the prospective of the Five Phases 五行, the tiger is the symbol of the West that corresponds with the element of Gold/Metal, while the color black correlates to the element of Water that can generate wealth. Therefore,

²⁷⁵ Mao Qiaohui, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong*, p. 136.

²⁷⁶ Welin-Lin Chen, "Taiwan huye xinyang de 'chonggao meixue' jiqi zuowei 'difang jingling' yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guancha," p. 166.

²⁷⁷ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan*, p. 143.

the black tiger is believed to be capable of “biting money” 咬錢 and collecting riches.²⁷⁸ Regarding the Black Tiger God as the God of Wealth, a story has been circulating in Liangma 良馬 Town in Anze County: three brothers fled to Liangma Town from their hometown in Henan to avoid the terrible drought and famine. Once settled, they asked the god to make them rich, and in return, they would build a Black Tiger Temple for the god. After several years of hard work, the brothers finally achieved their goal. They kept their promise and built the temple. They believed that it was Zhao Gongming that blessed them with all the fortune. Since Zhao’s mount was a black tiger, they worshiped the animal in the temple in Bangou 半溝. Mao Qiaohui argued that this story might describe the origin of the temple. Judging by the style of the architecture, the brothers probably just rebuilt or renovated it.²⁷⁹ This story represents a much later and perhaps better-received perception of the temple’s origin. Similar tales of Zhao Gongming helping people with their business can also be found in Taiwan. Chen Mao-Lin 陳茂霖, a traditional therapist and herbalist, moved to Beigang to establish his herbal medicine business in 1955. The previous owners of the property were constantly disturbed on the property, and one of them even witnessed a tall and dark-skinned general pacing in the hallway. Chen’s business continued to thrive despite the haunting rumors. However, around 1961, Chen’s wife started to suffer from some unknown illness. Two years later, the family found out via planchette writing that there was an “inner or domestic god” 內神 in their household. Chen followed instructions

²⁷⁸ Welin-Lin Chen, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guancha,” p. 170.

²⁷⁹ Mao Qiaohui, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong*, pp. 133-34.

to make offerings to the god, and his wife miraculously recovered. In 1970, after learning that the domestic god was actually Zhao Gongming, Chen built the Wude Temple to worship him.²⁸⁰ According to the information on the official website of the Wude Temple, the Black Tiger General was Zhao Gongming's mount that he subjugated on his way to help the King Zhou 紂 against the Zhou 周 forces at the end of the Shang dynasty. Due to its affiliation to the God of Wealth and its adorable figure, people would often request wealth from the Black Tiger General.²⁸¹ As Kuei-Wen Hsieh summarized, the Tiger Lord, not necessarily the Black Tiger God, has been conventionally regarded as the mount of both the Martial God of Wealth, Zhao Gongming, and the Civil God of Wealth, Fude, who is also known as the Earth God. The Tiger Lord has been bestowed with the same characteristic as the God of Wealth. Many worshipers believe that the Tiger Lord could carry money in its mouth and would often lay paper money or sacrificial money around or on the tiger statue, wishing for more riches.²⁸²

In addition to the Military and Civil God of Wealth, Master Guan is also conventionally believed to help people obtain money. Master Guan enshrined in the Putian Temple is rather omnipotent—he can bless people with almost anything except fertility. Businessmen view him as their guardian.²⁸³ According to the stele at the entrance of the Putian Temple, the Great Tiger Lord outside of the main temple was set up on the twenty-

²⁸⁰ Shu-Ju Lee, “‘Caishenye de shizhe: Heihu, Jinkongque’ de dongwu shenzhi chuanshuo yanjiu—jianlun Dongxing miao Tuyegong chuanshuo,” p. 315.

²⁸¹ See https://www.wude.org.tw/?act=menuinfo&ml_id=20200818001 Accessed on November 9th, 2022.

²⁸² Kuei-Wen Hsieh, “Shen, gui yu biao zhunhua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guan cha,” p. 12.

²⁸³ See <http://www.guchi.org.tw/god1.php> Accessed on November 9th, 2022.

ninth day of the tenth month in the year of *gengyin* 庚寅 (the Year of Tiger, December 4, 2010) to comply with Master Guan's edict. With Master Guan's grace, the Great Tiger Lord will help worshipers to receive fortune, improve their business, accumulate wealth, keep their households safe, etc. The Tiger Lord in the Putian Temple is popular among temple-goers not only because it could bite demons and pacify the evil, but also because it could bite money and bring in riches.²⁸⁴

In terms of its spiritual power, the Tiger Lord in the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple of Hsinchu is known for its power to help people with promotion and examinations. The Tiger Lord's power seemed to be separated from that of the Earth God, and its independence is also manifested by the way of offering incense in the temple. The temple has specific instructions on the procedure for offering incense: the first incense stick is for the incense burner of the Master Heaven 天公, the second one is for the incense burner of the Earth God Fude, and the third one is for the incense burner of the Tiger Lord. Despite its lower standing compared to the Master Heaven and the Earth God, the Tiger Lord receives individual acknowledgement and offerings in the temple.

In summary, tiger gods' characteristics and efficacies are similar in both Shanxi and Taiwan due to their shared cultural references such as the story of Zhao Gongming and the theory of Five Phases that can be found in various canonical literature. Meanwhile, there are also some differences. Firstly, the origin story of the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan has nothing to do with human-tiger conflicts in the wild, whereas in Shanxi the history of

²⁸⁴ Welin-Lin Chen, "Taiwan huye xinyang de 'chonggao meixue' jiqi zuowei 'difang jingling' yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guan cha," p. 177.

the local tiger calamity still played an important role. Secondly, the Tiger Lord in Taiwan shares and supplements the spiritual power of the main gods in the temple.²⁸⁵ In Shanxi, the tiger god is mostly, if not always, the Black Tiger God that has been the title or symbol for a human god like Zhao Gongming. In other words, the Tiger Lord as a deified tiger in Taiwan can be worshipped separately from the main humanoid god in the temple, but the Black Tiger God in Shanxi will always carry the identity of Zhao Gongming or Yuchi Gong.

3) Modern Rituals

There are four aspects to be taken into consideration regarding modern rituals in the temples where the tiger gods are enshrined: dates of temple activities, demographics of temple-goers, offerings to the tiger gods, and ritual activities and/or traditions.

Dates of temple activities can reveal the identity of the god and relevance of the temple to the local society. As previously mentioned, local people usually make offerings to the Black Tiger God in Beisanjiao Village on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar

²⁸⁵ Weilin-Lin Chen has made a form of the Tiger Lord's characteristics and traditions in accordance with various gods that it accompanies and explained that the nature of the Tiger Lord was transformed and deified through the subjugation by other gods. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Tiger Lord's Relation to the Main God	Tiger Lord's Efficacies and Characteristics	Local Tiger Lord Traditions
Servant of the Earth God	God that Guards the Temple	To Protect the Main God and Receives Worship and Offerings
Tiger Mount of the Medicine God 保生大帝	God that Cures Disease	To Request the Tiger-shaped Talisman to Cure Mumps
White Tiger Mount of the King Mother of the West 西王母	God that Acts as the Herald	To Act as the Vanguard General of the Temple Fairs
Tiger Mount of the Celestial Master Zhang 張天師	God that Expels the Evil	To Become the Foster Father to Protect Children
Tiger Mount of Zhao Gongming	God that Accumulates Wealth and Bites Money	To Request Wealth in Business
Tiger Mount of Li Tieguai 李鐵拐	God that Blesses with the Peace and Fortune	To Bless Worshipers
Subjugated Tiger by the Arhat	God that Preaches the Teachings	To Lead the Sentient Beings to the Righteous Path

month, which are the established dates to pay respect to gods in Chinese tradition. The three-day celebration from the thirteenth to the fifteenth day of the eighth month likely honors the consecration of the temple on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, which is the Mid-Autumn Festival, a national holiday. People often celebrate the holiday by getting together with their family members. Visiting the Black Tiger Temple and watching traditional operas there can serve as a good family activity for local people. Compared to the Black Tiger Temple in Zaolin Village where dates of temple activities have been set to Zhao Gongming's birthday, dates of the temple activities in Beisanjiao Village have little to do with the Black Tiger God specifically. Additionally, Mao Qiaohui's study suggested that herdsmen and other worshipers from Anze County traditionally would burn incense for the Black Tiger God on the sixth day of the sixth month, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the first day of the tenth month, and the first day of the first month. She further explained that on the sixth day of the sixth month, livestock owners would let the hired herdsmen take a break from work to sacrifice goats to the God of Stove.²⁸⁶ During this time-off, the herdsmen would take the chance to visit the nearby Black Tiger Temple since they regarded the Black Tiger God as the Mountain God who was in charge of all animals.²⁸⁷ However, this tradition is no longer popular in modern times. The fifteenth day of the seventh month is celebrated both in the Daoist and Buddhist traditions as the Ghost Festival where people would make offerings to their ancestors. People of Anze would offer

²⁸⁶ Mao Qiaohui, *Jiyi biaoyan yu chuantong—Dangdai wenhua yujing xia Anze wenhua xunzong*, p. 53.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

food and wine at the tombs of their deceased loved ones on this day.²⁸⁸ The first day of the tenth month is known as the Festival of Sending Winter Clothes 送寒衣節, which is also dedicated to the ancestor worship. People of Anze would burn paper clothes and paper money for their deceased family members at intersections or crossroads.²⁸⁹ The first day of the first month marks the beginning of a new year and is vastly celebrated as the Spring Festival. People conventionally hold ritual ceremonies to honor ancestors and gods.²⁹⁰ On these three occasions, the Black Tiger Temple would provide a site for various local rituals and demonstrate the merging practices of the Black Tiger Cult and the ancestor worship. In Anze, dates of temple activities in modern times and the past are mostly not exclusive with the Black Tiger God—even his birthday has rarely, if not never, been touched upon in any field research in Anze County. It seemed that the Black Tiger God has not been directly identified; he might not be comprehensively recognized as an established spiritual figure but a subject of the local and ancestral spirituality.

In Taiwan, there are several dates to be considered as the Tiger Lord's birthday, and some of them overlap with other gods' birthdays and festivals. The way that the Tiger Lord's birthday is celebrated makes it the center of temple rituals. Kuei-Wen Hsieh claimed that the second day of the second month, the sixteenth day of the fourth month, and the sixth day of the sixth month are the most common birthdays for the Tiger Lord. The second day of the second month is the Earth God's birthday, and since the Tiger Lord is his mount

²⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

or subordinate, it shares the same birthday. The sixteenth day of the fourth month is the Black Tiger God's birthday, and he was originally the black tiger that served the Medicine God. The sixth day of the sixth month is the Tiankuang Festival 天貺節 (Gift from Heaven Festival) where people would lay out their clothes in the sunlight to avoid damages from mildew or worms. People would also bathe their dogs and cats on this day, which is believed to free the animals from diseases and lice.²⁹¹ The birthday of the Black Tiger General in the Wude Temple is on the sixth day of the sixth month, while Zhao Gongming's birthday is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the third month. With separate birthday celebrations, the Black Tiger General has maintained a rather independent spiritual position. Meanwhile, the Order of the Black Tiger 黑虎會 of the temple has its own Black Tiger General whose birthday was on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, a date appointed by the Martial God of Wealth. On the same day, the Order will also host the "Grand Ceremony of Passing the Incense Burner" 過爐大典 and three days after the ceremony, the new "Incense Burner Owner" 爐主 will welcome the Black Tiger General to his household from the previous Owner.²⁹²

In regard to the worshipers or temple goers, the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village has mostly received the employees of the nearby coalmining company "Yuhetai" 玉和泰 founded by Mr. Li Aiyuan—the sole sponsor of the temple. The location of the temple is relatively convenient for the employees to visit, and the Black Tiger God could

²⁹¹ Kuei-Wen Hsieh, "Shen, gui yu biao zhunhua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guan cha," p. 8.

²⁹² Shu-Ju Lee, "'Caishenye de shizhe: Heihu, Jinkongque' de dongwu shenzhi chuanshuo yanjiu—jianlun Dongxing miao Tuyegong chuanshuo," pp. 319-22.

meet most of people's needs, i.e., wealth and health. In addition, the coal mining business relies heavily on natural resources and geographical conditions, which can be very dangerous for miners underneath the ground. Shanxi Province is known for its rich coal deposits and numerous coalmines; moreover, according to the Shanxi Administration of Coal Mine Safety 山西煤礦安全監察網, there were 48 cases of mining accidents between 2017 and 2020.²⁹³ On January 5, 2019, the tunnel roof fell between hydraulic pressure supports #82 and #83 in the Yuhetai coalmine and caused one miner's death.²⁹⁴ Due to the complicated and unpredictable mining situation underground, miners likely turn to the Black Tiger God for protection. In the past (probably during the Ming-Qing period) before modern coalmining businesses started to grow, worshipers of the Black Tiger God in Anze were not only herdsmen as mentioned previously but also traveling businessmen evidenced by the Henan and Shandong immigrants and historical inter-provincial business routes.²⁹⁵ Moreover, the involvement of the businessmen was recorded by the stele inscriptions carved in 1743 and 1853 in the Black Tiger Temple in Yingzhai 英寨 Village that implied these businessmen were seeking protection on the perilous mountain paths haunted by wild predators such as tigers and leopards in Anze.²⁹⁶

²⁹³ <http://www.sxsafety.gov.cn/channels/ch00073/> Accessed on March 21st, 2021.

²⁹⁴ <http://www.sxsafety.gov.cn/resource/sxsafety/att/201903/669c678d-c2b8-4ce8-9625-9d2656383913.pdf> Accessed on March 21st, 2021.

²⁹⁵ Li Kui, "Shanxi sheng hushen xinyang diaocha yu yanjiu," p. 565.

²⁹⁶ Liu Zemin 劉澤民, Li Yuming 李玉明, Gao Jianfeng 高劍峰, comps., *San Jin shike daquan (Linfen shi Anze xian juan)* 三晉石刻大全（臨汾市安澤縣卷）(Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions in Anze County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province) (Taiyuan: Sanjinchubanshe, 2011), pp. 50, 124.

As for the worshipers of the Tiger Lord in Taiwan, Kuei-Wen Hsieh suggested that the Tiger Lord is more appealing to gamblers, businessmen, and entertainers because of its conspicuous characteristics similar to those of the God of Wealth. Hsieh adopted the concept of “unruly gods” who were hard to regulate and did not fit in the bureaucratic system.²⁹⁷ He also argued that the Tiger Lord was an unruly god since it was self-serving and morally questionable, particularly for sex workers and gang members who believe that their business space was foul and sinister; in this regard, the Tiger Lord was believed to be able to dispel evil.²⁹⁸

Regarding the marginalized status of the Tiger Lord, Hsieh explored its spiritual position by looking at its offerings. He found that normally the food offering would be raw pork, egg, and dry tofu to mimic the tiger diet, while the paper money would be white and yellow, a standard that was more similar to that of ghosts than gods.²⁹⁹ Traditionally, sacrificial meats including pork, chicken, and fish, are referred to as the “Three Sacrifices” 三牲, which are usually offered to gods and ancestors. The combination of pork, egg, and tofu offered to the Tiger Lord in Taiwan is the minimal version of the Three Sacrifices where the egg represents the chicken and the tofu is interchangeable with the fish.³⁰⁰ However, in the case of the Wude Temple, the Black Tiger General does not receive raw food offerings since the Martial God of Wealth issued an edict: “The heavenly tiger should

²⁹⁷ Kuei-Wen Hsieh, “Shen, gui yu biao zhunhua: Taiwan huye xinyang de yizhong guan cha,” pp. 10-11.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³⁰⁰ See “The Rites of Sacrifice” 牲醴(牲禮) on the National Religion Information Network, <https://religion.moi.gov.tw/Knowledge/Content?ci=2&cid=355> Accessed on March 30th, 2021.

not consume food from the human realm.” Instead, it only receives Tiger Lord Gold 虎爺金, fresh flowers, fruits, vegetarian gifts and pious intentions from the worshippers. If offering the Black Tiger General raw food relates to tigers’ carnivorous nature, the action to replace the raw food with vegetarian offerings is not just to distinguish the Black Tiger General from other tigers, but to deny its bestial instincts in order to portray an unearthly and benign image. This exception does not change its peripheral status under the authority of the Martial God of Wealth.

In Shanxi, the food offering for the Black Tiger God in Beisanjiao Village is mainly unsalted cooked meat, vegetables, and wheat-based food. Although the lack of salt can set the food offerings apart from human food, it is not intentionally simulating the tiger diet like the raw meat in Taiwan. The reason is likely because the Black Tiger God in Beisanjiao Village is a humanoid god, or simply because of the caretakers’ personal preference.

While there are not many contemporary ritual activities in the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village except incense burning, food offering, and the annual traditional opera performance, the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan has developed a variety of rituals and traditions. For example, in the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple, there is the tradition of “touching the Tiger Lord” 摸虎爺 where touching the tiger teeth means to get the bite mark of the *zhuangyuan*’s seal 狀元印 (the seal of the top graduate on the imperial examination); touching the tiger’s head means to get promotion and become the head of the team; touching the tiger’s eyebrows means to catch a good match in marriage; and touching the tiger’s ears means to receive good luck.³⁰¹ In contrast to the Tiger Lord’s statue enclosed

³⁰¹ Welin-Lin Chen, “Taiwan huye xinyang de ‘chonggao meixue’ jiqi zuowei ‘difang jingling’ yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guancha,” pp. 175-76.

in a glass box in the Hsinchu City God Temple or the one hidden away in the Hsinchu Changhe Temple 長和宮 and the Water God Temple,³⁰² this Tiger Lord statue in the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple is accessible to visitors, which not only overcomes the boundary between gods and humans, but also reinvents the tiger image as an auspicious talisman.

Another interesting tradition is a national organization, “The Order of the Tiger Lord” 虎爺會. Members of the Order participate in rituals related to the Tiger Lord including carrying its litter and parading with it. It also hosts the “Ceremony of Passing the Incense Burner” mentioned above. As a branch of the Order of the Tiger Lord and one of the four orders of the Wude Temple, the Order of the Black Tiger has its members carry the Black Tiger General’s litter as the vanguard during the ceremony welcoming the main god. The temple promotes a new culture of litter carrying to demonstrate the “non-self-serving commitment” in response to the social problem of “all talk and no action”.³⁰³ Since a large number of firecrackers are lit on the Tiger Lord’s route to represent its habit of eating firecrackers 虎爺喫炮, the vice president of the Order preferred to have brave and experienced males carry the litter. The Order of the Black Tiger’s food offerings for the Black Tiger General mainly consist of meat, which is different from the vegetarian food requested by the Wude Temple.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Ibid., p. 180.

³⁰³ https://www.wude.org.tw/?act=menuinfo&ml_id=20200807019&mm_id=20200811019 Accessed on November 9th, 2022.

³⁰⁴ Shu-Ju Lee, “‘Caishenye de shizhe: Heihu, Jinkongque’ de dongwu shenzhi chuanshuo yanjiu—jianlun Dongxing miao Tuyegong chuanshuo,” pp. 322-23.

To sum up, the tiger image in the Black Tiger Cult in Anze County during the Ming-Qing period bridged the past trauma and anxiety of human-animal conflicts and nostalgic attachment to local spiritual figures. As the conflict subsided along with the decreased tiger population in the area since the late Qing, the worship of the Black Tiger God has continued with less reference to actual tigers. Therefore, the memory of dangerous tigers is fading. In the latest reconstructed Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village, the visual presentation of the tiger is nowhere to be found in the temple except for its textual existence in the title for the human-formed god that also lacks identification. Dates of temple activities, efficacies, offerings, and ritual practices have little to do with a tiger's nature. The Black Tiger Cult in modern times here cannot be regarded as the worship of, or even be related to, the animal. The tiger image has diminished into a mere modifier of a humanoid god—a super-human. In Taiwan, an island where tigers never roamed, the worship of the tiger was imported with immigrants from other places. As the Tiger Lord Cult has been gradually localized and people have formed various Tiger Lord traditions in different regions of Taiwan, it has become a distinct spiritual practice from the tiger worship in Mainland China.³⁰⁵ Despite the association to other humanoid gods, the Tiger Lord maintained its presentation as a tiger that is physically separated from the main gods it accompanies. To support its individuality, the Tiger Lord in many temples has its own date of birth, specialized offerings, efficacies, and ritual practices. Most of these traditions are based on the tiger's physical form, animal nature, and cultural perception. Without the history of the local people's struggle to survive the vicious beasts, these tiger features in

³⁰⁵ Welin-Lin Chen, "Taiwan huye xinyang de 'chonggao meixue' jiqi zuowei 'difang jingling' yihan—jianji Hsinchu shiqu Huye chongsi guancha," p. 168.

the temples are more or less romanticized to match the god's numinous image. For example, tiger bites in reality are painful and even fatal to human, but in the local spiritual narrative, the Tiger Lord can bite coins and bring riches. In the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple, the worshipers would touch the tiger's teeth, received a metaphorical bite mark and thus be blessed to pass school examinations. Moreover, instead of killing and devouring its prey violently, the Tiger Lord preferred to eat firecrackers—the celebratory object that is intended to lift the audience's spirits. This reinvention of the tiger image gives the Tiger Lord the flexibility to be molded in multiple spiritual narratives. Meanwhile, as Welin-Lin Chen argued, the Tiger Lord has become the *genius loci* that the residents would commemorate like the Earth God. For some, it represents the human triumph of overthrowing the king of the forest, and for others, it demonstrates the remembrance of the animal that never dwelt here. Eventually, this reinvention of the tiger image consciously or unconsciously draws attention to the animal itself and imagined human-tiger relationships.

In summary, the different status quo of the Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan might be result from many factors. Instead of looking at the differences from a socio-political and anthropological point of view as Adam Chau did when he compared the popular religions in rural areas in north China and southeast coastal areas in China,³⁰⁶ my approach is to zoom into changes in presentation of a spiritual animal figure, which has been intertwined with local history of human-animal relationships.

The survey of Black Tiger Temples in Mainland China indicates that the modern Black Tiger Cult continues to preserve the identity of local community by reminding

³⁰⁶ See Adam Yeut Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

people of human-tiger conflicts and marvelous deeds of a local hero in the past, such as the case in Zaolin Village, and to provide a site for local spiritual needs and tourist attraction, such as Beisanjiao Village. The spiritual narrative of the modern Black Tiger God tends to shift from the hero who subjugated the vicious tiger to the Marshal God of Wealth who responds to a variety of human needs. In these temples, a tiger's image mostly serves as an accessory to a humanoid god, and sometimes the tiger image can be too trivial to display despite its significant contribution to spiritual narratives rooted in local history of tiger calamities and humanoid gods.

In comparison, the Tiger Lord in Taiwan has evolved into a relatively independent god with a certain level of connection to humanoid gods. Less affected by the history of human-tiger conflicts and local traumatic memory, the reinvented tiger figure, though still inferior and marginal compared to other main gods, has been more accepted as an individual god with its own traditions and efficacies that appeals to the general public. In some cases, the deified tiger is approachable and even tangible like the Tiger Lord in the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple in Hsinchu City, which reimagines the physical and spiritual relationship between humans and tigers. The favored tiger representation in the temple also paves the way to the commodification of the Tiger Lord Cult. For example, in order to enhance the efficacy of the Tiger Lord to help with school examination, the Dongmen Bao Fude Temple promoted the "Tiger Teeth Drink" 虎牙子飲料; the Wude Temple in Beigang also has the Black Tiger General souvenirs as dolls, key chains, umbrellas, incense bags, clothes, etc., and the Martial God of Wealth's image is only featured on incense bags and key chains. The nonhuman identity allows the Tiger Lord to be more secular than regular gods and thus more popular with the general public.



Figure 21. The 2012 Renovation Stele in the Black Tiger Temple of the Beisanjiao Village.



Figure 22. The plastic flower basket in the west side chamber, Beisanjiao



Figure 23. The Black Tiger God statue accompanied by two attendants, Beisanjiao



Figure 24. The Black Tiger God and the golden curtain is draping above the altar, Beisanjiao



Figure 25. Marshal Zhao's portrait in the *Illustrated Complete Collection of the Investigation of Spirits Originating in the Three Teachings*,

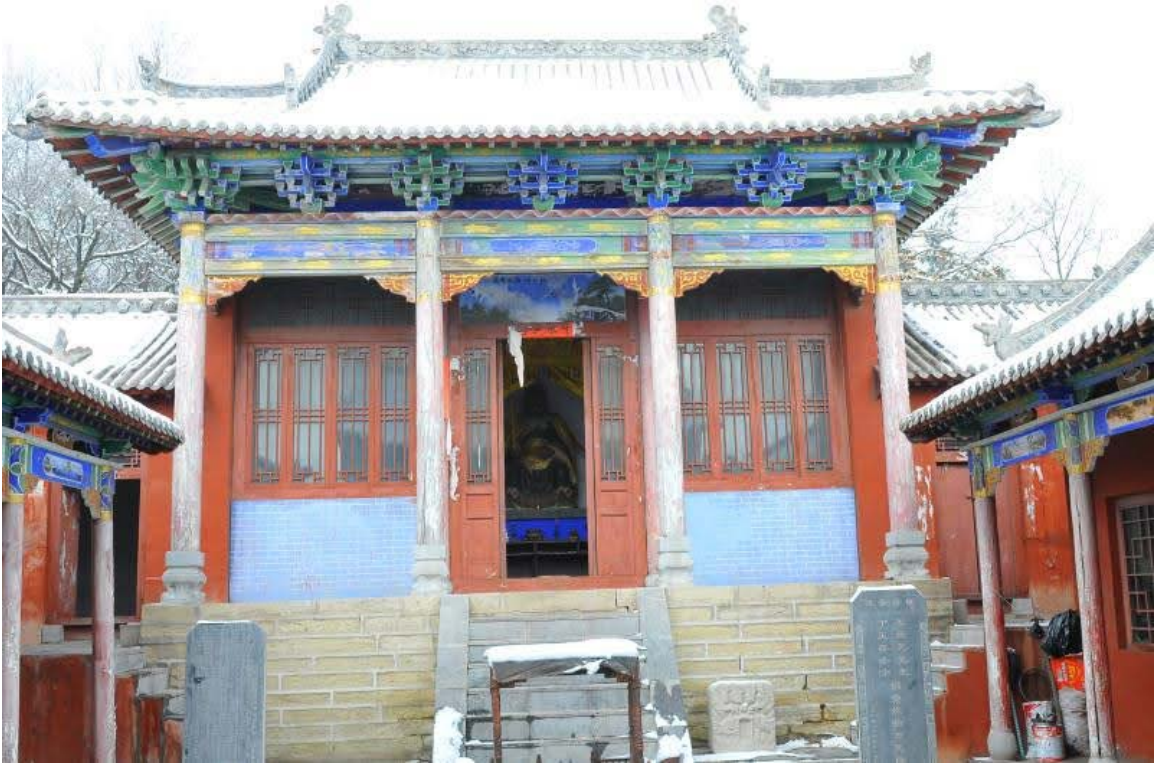


Figure 26. The front of the main temple, Beisanjiao

CONCLUSION

While this dissertation takes the approach of human-animal relationships in discussing the Black Tiger Cult, it not only uncovers the local ecological history and its interactions with people's spiritual life, but also explores the potential ways that the cult has tapped and become woven into Daoist canonical literature, folklore, and contemporary life.

As local cults and beliefs in rural areas of North China have become a topic of interest since the 1980s, scholars have dedicated their research to identifying and exploring the history, organization, rituals and scriptures, religious spaces and representations, and modern developments and relevance of cults.³⁰⁷ The Black Tiger Cult in Shanxi is a particularly interesting case because of its initial connection to local human-animal conflicts, long tradition since the late-imperial period, abundant textual and visual sources, and modern adaptations. I offer a point of view that is supplementary to the anthropological approaches that David Johnson and Adam Chau took in their research of local popular religions—a view where spiritual and community structures of the cult has also been influenced by local human-animal/nature relationships.

There are a few studies of Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China by folklorists in which their focus was on the historical origin of the temples, local beliefs, and rituals. The regional cult was regarded as a rather individualized tradition with little reference to

³⁰⁷ David Johnson, "The City-God Cults of T'ang and Sung China," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 45, No. 2(Dec. 1985): 363-457; *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*, (Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1995); *Spectacle and Sacrifice: Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009). Yuet Adam, Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Daniel L. Overmyer, *Local Religion in North China in the Twentieth Century: The Structure and Organization of Community Rituals and Beliefs*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

canonical literature and other similar traditions outside of the area. My study of the Black Tiger Cult in Anze, Shanxi builds a case where we can look in depth at the locality of the tradition, while recognizing its part in a cultural network among other tiger god traditions. Although the modern Black Tiger Cult and Tiger Lord Cult have different purposes and rituals as well as various tiger symbolism, they share similar spiritual narratives from canonical literature and popular folklore, which suggests that they tap into the same cultural origin.

In addition to supplementing the anthropological approach to popular religions and creating cultural connections among different tiger god traditions, the purpose of this case study is to document the Black Tiger Temples in Anze as much as possible. Due to negligence, most of the remaining Black Tiger Temples built during the Qing dynasty in Shanxi are falling apart, just like the local extinction of the tiger species in the wild. The history of local tigers, as a part of the local human history, fades away. By studying this local cult, I aim to preserve the memory of how people interacted with nature and its living things.

There are three points to which I would like to draw attention. First, the deification of the tiger did not elevate the position of the animal higher than human beings. In fact, the spiritual narratives about the tiger gods always put them under the authority of a humanoid god. This was the case for Zhao Gongming, the North Thearch, City God, etc. Even the tiger god in the Bazha Cult where its animal nature was venerated for preying on boars was referring to the god that was in charge of tigers. By building connections between tigers and gods, people imagined their control over these apex predators through communications with gods. Furthermore, as evident in local folklore and petitions composed by local

literati-officials to address tiger calamities, tigers were sometimes regarded as ignorant and insentient, which made them inferior to human beings. Based on this case study, I argue that although the traditional relationships between tigers, humans and gods did not support the general impression of an ecocentric ideology in China, the modern development of Black Tiger traditions has the potential of making a positive impact on cultivating sustainable human-animal/nature relationships.

Second, the establishment of Black Tiger Temples in Anze likely changed local distribution of tigers. In the case of the Dark Altar Temple in Yingzhai Village (in southeastern Shanxi), dorms were added to the original the monastery for more monks and visitors around 1853. Another example is the Black Tiger God Temple in Chunjingwa Village (in northern Shanxi) where a teahouse was built next to the Black Tiger Temple around 1861, which might help draw more people to the area and stay longer. The renovation of temples also required a lot of timber, which accelerated deforestation in the area. After the 1850s, according to stele inscriptions in Shanxi, most of the Black Tiger Temples were maintained and renovated to show respect to gods—a sign that human-tiger conflicts were no longer an issue.

Third, the modern Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China shared cultural elements with the modern Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan while maintaining local particularities. For instance, both the Black Tiger God and the Tiger Lord are identified as either the Martial God of Wealth Zhao Gongming or the tiger related him, and they both protect people, particularly children, from harms. In modern times, when wild tigers disappeared in the area, the spiritual power of the Black Tiger God tends to be universal and closely related to local industries and culture. This is evidenced in the employees of the local coal mining

company that would visit the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village and pray for safety and wealth. Meanwhile, the Black Tiger General in Wude Temple in Beigang, Taiwan was portrayed as a cartoonish vegetarian tiger that could bless people with wealth, which reimagined the physical and spiritual relationship between humans and tigers.

My study of the Black Tiger Cult started with the specification of the subject and the spiritual origin of the black tiger. Chapter One demonstrated how the black tiger, as a rare animal and apex predator, became a sign of numinousness and unworldliness and was attached to established gods in religious and popular narratives. Most of the black tiger gods were based on Zhao Gongming, a hero that subdued a local black tiger and claimed it as his mount. With this premise, Chapter Two explored the Black Tiger Cult's relationship with local religious communities and the government from the 16th century to the early 20th century. The Black Tiger God was embraced by Buddhist and Daoist communities as a guardian to their gods and as a popular local deity due to his (historical) achievements in pacifying wild tigers. Compared to the state-sponsored Bazha Cult where a god of cats and tigers was enshrined, the Black Tiger Cult, though not registered as a Confucian tradition, earned local officials' trust in repelling wild tigers and even supporting the government's action against rebellion. The main body of this study focused on a case study of Black Tiger Temples in Anze in Chapter Three. This chapter analyzed the relationships between tigers, humans, and gods in the 18th and 19th centuries. Local people at that time regarded tigers as executors of god's will that punished people for their transgressions. Therefore, in their petitions to local gods, scholar-officials showed repentance to gods in a hope to avoid further lose. It is noteworthy that most of these local scholar-officials expressed their determination to hunt down tigers if gods should fail,

which implied that the underlining reason for tiger calamities was people's reluctance to violate gods by killing their subordinates. This showed human superiority over tigers, and this kind of relationship was also depicted in murals. For example, figures on the western wall of the Black Tiger Temple in Xinzhuang showed that Zhao Gongming in the middle was taking the authority to pass down an order that required help from the Earth God and the other unidentified general sitting next to him. Then the lower clerk or possibly human addressed the tiger below them with magic. This chapter also showed that the Black Tiger Cult was a regional tradition that did not spread to all areas with human-tiger conflicts, and as the tiger population decreased, spiritual functions of Black Tiger Temples became more universal, which raised another question: What was the new development of the modern Black Tiger Cult in different locations? The last chapter compared the modern Black Tiger Cult in Mainland China and the Tiger Lord Cult in Taiwan for shared cultural elements and the reinvention of tiger images. The disappearance of the tiger image in the Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village served as a metaphor of the current human-nature relationships in which human mostly prevailed. In Taiwan, the Tiger Lord was commercialized and turned into popular merchandise. This local development created new meanings of human-tiger/nature relationships. My study explored three layers of tiger representations, namely, the animal tiger, the deified tiger, and tiger as a metaphor for nature. Starting from local human-animal conflicts that conditioned the enshrinement of the Black Tiger God to the diminishing tiger image in the modern Black Tiger Temple in Beisanjiao Village, the story of the deified black tiger became a local ecological history.

My study only covers the Black Tiger Cult and Temples during a short period of time in a small region, and there are a few areas for improvement. I surveyed historical

documents in local gazetteers, which mainly reflected scholar-officials' perspective on human-tiger relationships. Future studies may explore textual accounts written by people from other social classes (i.e., merchants) and shed light on their perception of tigers. It would also be beneficial to collect, document, and analyze textual, material, and liturgical information from extant Black Tiger Temple sites in other regions. Besides tiger gods, future scholarship may further explore other reimagined human-animal relationships in contemporary popular cults and their impact on modern human-animal relationships.

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