

SACRED METAMORPHOSIS: THE WERETIGER AND THE SHAMAN

CHARLES E. HAMMOND (Southern Illinois University)

Introduction

Traditionally, the Chinese believed that people could change into tigers.¹ Since this role corresponds to the role the werewolf plays in European folklore, weretiger is the term that seems most suitable as a name for its tigrine counterpart.² Legends of weretigers show the Chinese see the metamorphosis sometimes as caused by the magical power of the tiger, and sometimes by heaven. Many sources attest to the sacred nature of tigrine manifestations in general, and of the appearance of the weretiger in particular. Accordingly, certain Chinese ritual exorcisms of fated death also required shamans to appear as tigers.³ Records of the time demonstrate that power and control were an essential aspect of both the weretiger and the shaman.

¹ Even the skeptic Wang Ch'ung 王充 (A.D. 27-ca. 100) accepts legends of weretigers as factual. He argues that people can change into tigers without dying; *Lun heng* 論衡 (Pai-pu ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng edn.); 20.12b, and maintains the legend of a person who changes to a tiger and eats his brother is factual; 21.10a. Though many call this famous weretiger Niu Ai, his name is actually Kung-niu Ai 公牛哀; cf. *Huai-nan tzu* 淮南子 (SPPY), 2.42, where the editor suggests the illness was the result of illness.

² Indeed, there is even a Chinese counterpart to the story of Little Red Riding Hood, with a tiger instead of the wolf; see Hsi Ti 西諦, "Lao-hu p'o-p'o" 老虎婆婆, *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* 20.5 (May 1929), p. 800.

³ For a general examination of tiger folklore, see J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, (Taipei: Literature House, 1964), 4, pp. 163-182; 5, pp. 544-63; Minakata Kumagusu 南方熊楠 (1867-1941), "Tora 虎 ni kansuru 史話 shiwa to densetsu 伝説, minzoku 民俗" in *Minakata Kumagusu zenshū* 南方熊楠全集 (Heibonsha, 1971), 1, pp. 5-64; and Ts'ao Chen-feng 曹振峯, *Chung-kuo min-i yü Chung-kuo hu wen-hua* 中國民藝與中國虎文化, in *Chung-kuo min-i hsieh - li-lun yen-t'ao-hui lun-wen-chi*, 中國社會文化編輯委員會, ed., *Chung-kuo she-hui wen-hua pien-i wei-yüan-hui*, 中國民藝學—理論研討會論文集 (Peking: Peking kung-i mei-shu ch'upan she, 1989, pp. 24-50).

There are several notable sources of Chinese tiger lore: *Hu yüan* 虎苑 (A Garden of Tigers),⁴ *Hu hui* 虎薈 (A Tiger Anthology),⁵ and *T'an hu* 談虎 (Discussions of Tigers)⁶ which unfortunately generally omit the sources for most of their quoted legends. Many other such legends date from the T'ang or earlier,⁷ but such beliefs were current at least until the late seventeenth century.⁸ However, since the recorders of these legends often omit the setting and time of the legends, and place contemporary accounts side by side with items from centuries earlier, it is often difficult to determine the origin and extent of many such beliefs.⁹

Tigrine Metamorphosis

The phenomenon of the werewolf, technically known as lycanthropy, has been rationalized in terms of sadism, hallucinations or delusions, or even porphyria.¹⁰ The belief that people change into beasts exists in many cultures; the creature a person becomes is usually the one that the locals most fear. Historically in China, it is the tiger that arouses more fear than any other animal,¹¹ and people believe that it is possible for humans to change into tigers.

⁴ Wang Chih-teng 王穉登 (1535–1612), comp., (Ts'ungshu chi-ch'eng hsü-pien); unlike the later works, this book classifies the legends by subject.

⁵ Ch'en Chi-ju 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), comp., (Ts'ungshu chi-ch'eng); he compiled many other anthologies of legends and anecdotes.

⁶ Chao Piao-chao 趙彪詔 (Ch'ing dynasty), comp., (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng hsü-pien).

⁷ Generally from Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al., comp., *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1963); hereafter TPKC.

⁸ For the non-fictive character of T'ang legends, see Charles E. Hammond, "T'ang Legends: History and Hearsay," *Tamkang Review* 20.4 (summer 1990), pp. 359–82. More specifically, for tiger legends, see Charles E. Hammond, "An Excursion in Tiger Lore," *AM* 4.1 (1991), 87–100, which also analyzes the tiger as heaven's envoy, often conveying a political message.

⁹ Indeed, the Chinese vision of the weretiger may well have been influenced by non-Han ideas, as similarities with Southeast Asian lore indicate; see Robert Wessing, *The Soul of Ambiguity: the Tiger in Southeast Asia*, (Northern Illinois University: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), who discusses the role of the weretiger and shamans at length.

¹⁰ W. M. S. Russell and Claire Russell, "The Social Biology of Werewolves," in *Animals in Folklore*, ed. J. R. Porter et al., (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), pp. 166–171. The assumption is that the symptoms of this disease, which include the skin's sensitivity to light, as well as being yellow and hairy, redness of the teeth, disturbed behavior, and deformations of the face and hands, may have helped give rise to the notion of the werewolf.

¹¹ The Chinese feared other animal gods as well as the tiger; cf. Lin Hui-hsiang 林惠祥, *Wen-hua jen-lei hsüeh* 文化人類學 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shang-wu yin-shu-

In contrast to Christians, who usually perceive the werewolf as evil, the Chinese are more ambivalent, often seeing the tiger as a magical or sacred beast.

According to a T'ang compiler of legends, the appearance of weretigers is simply one of a number of natural, if bewildering transformations. He sees the tigrine metamorphosis as echoing the cosmic rhythm:

The changes and transformations of the myriad creatures — the sparrow's becoming a mollusk, the pheasant's becoming a giant clam, peoples' becoming tigers, rotten grass' becoming fireflies,¹² dung beetles' becoming cicadas, the leviathan's becoming the roc¹³ — all of these are recorded in books and annals, but they cannot be logically understood.¹⁴

Though the author writes of these transformations (*hua* 化) as difficult to comprehend, the texts he cites speak of them as natural, or even seasonal.¹⁵ Taoists similarly understand the metamorphosis as a natural process.¹⁶ Though Buddhists recognize that changing into a tiger is not rebirth into an animal form, but rather a direct transformation, they nevertheless detect a similarity between the two.

However, few legends of the weretiger depict the transformation as such a natural or even intentional metamorphosis;¹⁷ the subject involved has usually

kuan [1934]), pp. 287–89. However, tigers appear in the legends far more often than other animals.

¹² These four transformations are respectively found in *Huai-nan-tzu*, 5.169, 5.172, 2.42, 5.162, as well as in the *Li chi* 禮記.

¹³ The source of the dung beetle transformation is unknown, but the leviathan's appears in *Chuang-tzu* (SPPY), 1.1a.

¹⁴ "P'ei Ch'en" 裴諶, in Niu Seng-ru 牛僧孺 (779–847), comp., *Hsüan-kuai lu* 玄怪錄, (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), p. 13. All translations are my own.

¹⁵ Victor H. Mair, *Transformation Texts: a Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, 1989), pp. 44–46, distinguishes such change as evolutionary in the sense that one thing changes into another rather than constituting a spirit's miraculous manifestation. Manfred Porkert, *Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine: Systems of Correspondence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982), p. 15, explains that such change is of a fundamental, essential nature.

¹⁶ The universe and everything in it continually renews itself through transformation, and Taoists adapt themselves to these transformations. Isabelle Robinet, "Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism," *History of Religions* 19, 1 (1979), 38–42. Cf. T'an Ch'iao 譚峭 (fl. ca. 922), *T'an-tzu hua shu* 譚子化書, (Pai-pu ts'ung-shu), a Taoist text collated by Ch'en Chi-ju.

¹⁷ In describing Six Dynasties legends, Karl Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 11–12, claims the transformation into an animal is primarily caused by shamans exercising their powers on others, as well as a self-induced change engineered by Buddhists and Taoists, or a mysterious change without apparent cause. However, as far as weretigers are concerned, the transformation tends to be either accidental or imposed by heaven.

not tried to effect the change.¹⁸ So powerful is the tiger that those who think about it excessively can find themselves physically transformed. In the case of one old man, his transformation into a tiger occurs because of such an obsession.

Yang Chen's 楊真 life-long obsession with tiger paintings is the reason for his transformation. When he falls ill at the age of ninety, he reveals this obsession has led him to hallucinate tigers. As a result, he has destroyed his paintings, but it is too late. After taking to his sickbed, he has even begun to dream of being a tiger, and expects to become one. He accordingly asks his relatives to spare any tiger they may meet on the chance that it may be him.

After he dies, his corpse changes into a tiger that bounds away, eating one of his sons, who has followed him. When he later appears in a dream to announce his contentment at his metamorphosis, and the fact that he has already eaten a person, he reveals his failure to recognize his son.¹⁹ A neighbor excuses the tiger's behavior, since it is simply in accordance with its new nature. (Metamorphosis often leads to the victim's alienation from human society.) The point is not whether the transformation occurs, but once it has occurred, whether one remembers one's previous existence. Note that the neighbor discusses the transformation in terms that treat it as equivalent to reincarnation.²⁰ However, this does not directly address the problem of how to treat the transformed father — if he is for all intents and purposes now a tiger, and a menace to humans, he ought to be killed, but since the discussion treats the transformation as equivalent to reincarnation, he should presumably be left unharmed, particularly in light of filial sanctions (as he himself requested). To the extent that no one tries to kill the tiger, one could say that filial piety triumphs. Similarly, in an earlier legend where a man's weretiger mother dies of wounds incurred in her tiger state, he buries her with the rites due a mother.²¹

¹⁸ One of the exceptions is "Wang Chü-chen" 王居貞, in P'ei Hsing 裴鉞 (fl. ca. 860–878), comp., *Ch'uan-ch'i* 傳奇, Wang Meng-ou 王夢鷗, *T'ang-tai hsiao-shuo yen-chiu* 唐代小說研究 (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu kuan, 1974), vol. I, p. 197.

¹⁹ One man whose illness changes him into a tiger at one point drools hungrily at his son; *Hu yüan* B 8b.

²⁰ "Yang Chen," in Liu Hsiang 柳祥 (ninth century), comp., *Hsiao Hsiang lu* 蕭湘錄, TPKC 430.3494–95. The concern with inherent nature is typical of the legends in this anthology, but T'an Ch'iao, 2.4a, agrees the transformation is complete: "When the licentious change into women or the violent into fierce tigers, their minds must also change." Huang Hsiu-fu 黃休復 (fl. ca. 1001) comp., *Mao-t'ing k'o-hua* 茅亭客話, (Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan), 8.3a–b, records a similar story, which in addition links the transformation to a rebellion.

²¹ "Wu Tao-tsung" 吳道宗, in Tung-yang Wu-yi 東陽無疑 (fl. ca. 432), comp., *Ch'i Hsieh chi* 齊諧記, TPKC 426.3467–78.

Metamorphosis into animal form generally requires wearing the animal skin or the use of incantations.²² In China, however, simply wearing the skin is usually sufficient. According to an early dictionary, the two bottom strokes of *hu* 虎, the character for tiger, similar to representations of a person's feet, are the tiger's feet, while the balance of the character — the tiger radical in Chinese dictionaries — represents the tiger skin.²³ This suggests that the Chinese conceive of the skin as a separate entity, holding the essence of the beast.²⁴

A biography of a nameless monk tells of an unintentional metamorphosis that occurs because of an ill-considered impulse. The monk initially puts on a tiger skin as a practical joke, but finds that his victims are so convinced, they flee in terror, leaving their valuables for him to enjoy. Soon after he accepts his ill-gotten gains, he finds that he cannot regain his human form. Though the transformation is again unintentional, the victim is more at fault. The monk spends a year as a tiger, serving ghosts and gods by eating those they designate, yet his mind is still human, and he only kills a person out of dire need. It is only at this point, when he nearly consumes a fellow monk, that he fully understands the error of his ways, and before the echoes of his regretful cry die away, his skin sloughs off. As his teacher later tells him, this shows both the ease of slipping into evil ways and of turning over a new leaf: a single thought can cause either damnation or salvation. (However, even if one reads the legend as an allegory, the beast's service to ghosts and gods reveals the presumption that is the normal tiger's behavior.) The transformation into a tiger is not, strictly speaking, reincarnation, but the protagonist understands this instantaneous transformation of human to animal as similarly determined by *karma*, a punishment differing from reincarnation only in the speed with which it is imposed.²⁵

In another legend, the original cause of the unintentional metamorphosis is medical rather than jocular, but the weretiger's motivation for continuing his practice is similarly greed. The protagonist uses the tiger skin as a cover to

²² In the West, Christians often connect the incantation with the devil; ointment, special foods, or drinks may also be necessary; Frank Hamel, *Werewolves and Other Transformations*, (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1964), p. 5. Cf. how shamans in Sumatra, Java, or Malaysia wear a striped cloth to become transformed; Wessing, p. 80.

²³ Hsiü Shen 許慎 (30–124), *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu* 說文解字, s.v. *hu*.

²⁴ See "Cheng Hsi" 鄭襲, in Liu Ching-shu 劉敬叔 (fl. 411–ca. 470), comp., *I yuan* 異苑 TPKC 426.3469; when the protagonist tries to regain his human state, peeling off the skin leaves him covered in blood.

²⁵ "Seng hu" 僧虎; TPKC 433.3510–11 attributes the story to Tsan-ning 贊寧 (ca. 976–995), comp., *Kao-seng chuan san-chi* 高僧傳三集; however, the Tripitaka edition of the work does not include this story. Ssu Shan-t'ang 思善堂 (fl. ca. 1206–1227), comp., *I Chien hsü-chih* 夷堅續志 (Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan), p. 378 records an instantaneous transformation into tiger as punishment for eating a fish.

treat his malaria.²⁶ However, rather than cure his malady, it causes him to become a tiger. While his family is willing to accept the cattle he steals, human flesh is beyond the pale. When his wife interferes with his transformation, one of his hands fails to change, which serves to identify him, so that when the locals see a tiger with a human hand and call out the old man's name, it spares them. Finally, he is killed by a thunderbolt; significantly thunder, like the tiger, is a tool of fate.²⁷ The old man has become a tiger more or less by chance, through his contact with dangerous powers, but when he persists in behaving as a tiger rather than a human being, heaven strikes him dead.

In "The Ch'en-chou Assistant Clerk", attested to by the dynastic history because of its cosmological significance, the protagonist starts to become a tiger because of his illness itself, rather than because of any cure. The fact that this weretiger has only a tiger's tail is nonetheless emblematic of his tigrine nature.²⁸ Here women are the weretiger's chosen victims. He targets his sister-in-law because, as a novice tiger, he is expected to provide a meal, and she is an easy catch for him.²⁹ Though he gives a roar like a tiger's to help prove his story, there is further evidence of this incident. The manifestation of the weretiger prodigy was an indication of political upheaval. The Five Phases section in the dynastic history briefly mentions this incident, though the historical version contends that though his body remains human, it is covered with tiger hair.³⁰ Presumably because it is said to have occurred just before Wu Tse-t'ien 武則天 (r. 684-704) declared the Chou dynasty in an unsuccessful bid to found her own state, the reader is to understand that the significance of the partial change is symbolic of the T'ang state's regaining power. Just as her dynasty was only temporary, and hardly a true dynasty, so was the clerk's existence as a tiger brief and superficial.³¹

²⁶ The tiger skin is supposed to cure the disease because it functions as a talisman, frightening the spirits that cause the illness. In his preface to *Hu hui*, p. 1, Ch'en Chi-ju admits that he has read *Hu yüan* in order to expel the demons causing his malaria. His admission the treatment failed is ominous; he has instead developed a taste for such stories.

²⁷ *Hu hui* p. 70; Cf. *T'an hu* 23a-b.

²⁸ *Hu hui* p. 30 records the significance of the tail; "tail burning" is the expression used for the graduation banquet of officials; the meaning is that the true character of the scholars will stand revealed.

²⁹ J. Beatty, *Human Leopards*, (London, Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1915), pp. 6-9, 23, 86, discusses cannibal societies such as the Human Leopard Society, whose members dress up in leopard skins, alligator skins, or baboon skins, and are expected to provide a human victim as a condition of joining.

³⁰ Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 (1007-72) et al., *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975) 36.955.

³¹ Ch'en-chou tso-shih 林州佐史, Tou Wei-wu 竇維達 (T'ang dynasty), comp., in *Kuang ku-chin wu-hsing chi* 廣古今五行志, TPKC 426.3471-72.

Sometimes unintentional transformation is imposed by heaven for its own reasons. "The Nan-yang Scholar" tells of a scholar who has no choice but to function as heaven's agent.³²

The Nan-yang Scholar

Recently a man staying at the Nan-yang 南陽 mountains³³ suddenly fell ill of a fever. After ten days, he still had not recovered. It was summer, and the moon was bright. One night as he was reclining in the courtyard to get some fresh air, he heard an unexpected knocking at the door. He listened carefully: it was like a dream; no one else in the household seemed to hear it, so he dazedly arose, hardly conscious of it, to see who it was himself.

Outside the door, there was a person who said, "You must change into a tiger: here are your orders."

He was astonished, but without thinking, stretched out his hands to receive them. He noticed that the messenger's hands were tiger's paws. After the messenger had left the letter, he opened it and looked at it, but it was only a row of seals on blank paper, which he found very strange. Putting it under his mat, he fell asleep again. The next morning, he vaguely remembered a little of the incident, and spoke to his household about it. When he took out the paper, it was still there, which everyone thought was yet stranger.

His illness seemed to be cured, and he suddenly felt like going for a stroll, so he went walking with his cane. None of his children accompanied him. After walking over a *li*, he came to a brook at the foot of a mountain, where he walked slowly along the bank. All of a sudden, in the water he saw the reflection of his head, already changed into a tiger's, and looking at his hands and feet, he saw they were also a tiger's. It was all very clear. He realized that if he went back home, he would only frighten his wife and children. Feeling nothing but anger and shame, he followed a road into the mountains.

After a day had passed, his family did not know where he had gone, and looked for him everywhere. His neighbors all thought that he had been eaten by tigers or wolves, and his family could only weep and wail.

Having become a tiger, and having spent two days in the mountains, he felt hungry. Crouching by some water, he saw enough tadpoles to fill several *sheng* 升,³⁴ and remembering that he had once heard that tigers also ate mud, he scooped some up, and felt it was quite tasty. He went back to slowly prowling, and seeing a rabbit, pounced and caught it at just the right moment, then ate it. His body felt light but more powerful. In the mornings he would lie deep in the underbrush, and in the evenings he would go out to look for something to eat, catching several deer and rabbits. Thus he learned to harm other creatures.

When he happened to climb up a tree, he saw a woman picking mulberry leaves. He watched her from the grass, thinking, 'I have heard that tigers all eat people'. Trying to catch her, he got her, ate her, and found her delicious indeed.

³² This function of the weretiger as vehicle of fate is redolent of the onerous duty imposed on the *ch'ang*, the spirit of a person killed by a tiger, which then forces it to help catch other victims.

³³ Probably those near present Nan-yang in Honan.

³⁴ By current measure, one-fifth of a gallon.

Once he was near a small road, waiting for travelers. As the sun was setting, a man carrying firewood passed by. Just as the tiger was about to pounce, someone behind him suddenly said, "Don't take him! Don't take him!" He turned in surprise, seeing an old man whose whiskers and eyebrows were all white. He knew that it was a spirit. Although he had changed into a tiger, he still thought of home, and he told his sad story.

The old man said, "People like you are transformed at the behest of envoys of the spirits of heaven. For you it will end now, and you will return to your human form. However, if you kill the woodcutter, you will never change. Tomorrow you must eat a certain Case Reviewer Wang 王, and then you may change back to a person." When he finished speaking, he disappeared.

The tiger then prowled in the grass stealthily, and the next evening, he approached the official road, waiting for him. When he heard the sound of a bell, he hid in the grass.

All at once he heard the sound of a voice in the air, asking, "Whose retinue is this?"

Another voice answered, "Case Reviewer Wang's retinue."

The first again asked where Wang was, and the second answered, "In the suburbs. The district officials are seeing him off. His companions from the farewell banquet have left."

Hearing this, the tiger walked by the roadside, awaiting him. After the first watch, when there was a little moonlight, he heard the sound of men and horses, and the voice in the air said, "Case Reviewer Wang has come."

In a little while, the tiger saw a man of about forty, riding a horse and wearing red, and looking half drunk. His retinue was quite large, but still far from him, so the tiger snatched him up from his horse, and dragged him deep into the underbrush where he ate him. The man's followers scattered.

When he had finished eating, he felt his mind awaken, and remembered the way home. He was over a hundred *li* from home, but he started back through the mountains. Arriving back at the brook that reflected his image, he saw his body had changed back into a human's. When he returned home, his household was astonished, having not seen him for seven or eight months. His speech was muddled, like a very drunk person's, but gradually he was able to eat gruel, and in a little over a month was back to normal.

Five or six years later, he was travelling in Ch'ang-ko 長葛 district³⁵ with Ch'en Hsü 陳許. At that time, the district magistrate held a banquet with about thirty guests. The host was talking about people who had changed into animals, and said, "There have been many absurd stories about people like Niu Ai 牛哀."³⁶ Then the man told his own story, to show that it was not preposterous to be changed. The astonished host was Case Reviewer Wang's son. Saying his father had been killed by a tiger, and having met his enemy, he killed him. Knowing the facts, the officials pardoned him.³⁷

While illness may be involved in his transformation, the scholar finally hears from a spirit that his metamorphosis into a tiger serves heaven's purpose:

³⁵ Corresponding to Ch'ang-ke in Honan.

³⁶ See n. 1.

³⁷ "Nan-yang shih-jen" 南陽士人, in Anon. (T'ang dynasty), comp., *Yüan-hua chi* 原化記, TPKC 432.3504-6.

devouring a certain official. Initially, when he sees the paper, he realizes his dreamlike meeting with the tigerpawed envoy actually happened. While the blankness of the paper the tiger-pawed envoy presents may be indicative of heaven's inscrutable nature, such papers commonly appear in the stories to prove that the weretiger's role is sanctioned by heaven. When fate comes knocking, only its victim hears, and is in fact forced to heed its call. Despite his homesickness and resentment at the ways of fate, the weretiger is too ashamed of his condition to return home. Later overcome by hunger, he soon accustoms himself to life in the wild, doing what he has heard tigers do, finally eating people. Significantly, he begins with a woman: the victims of weretigers are often defenseless women and children. However, he has been transformed solely to punish an official, a mission he accomplishes with the help of spirits who show him his victim. Since the change is not his fault, he feels free to disclose it when the topic arises. Unfortunately, when the dead official's son discovers what has happened, he kills him. The official recognition of the extenuating circumstances ignores the injustice done the anonymous scholar, a victim of fate.³⁸ The official reaction could be more sympathetic: in a similar legend, when the weretiger's deed is discovered, he is pardoned. Those who talk about it agree that though one's father's death should be avenged, this was not really murder, the weretiger having had no choice.³⁹ Though such legends recognize the absence of free will, they are of different minds as far as the punishment due those who serve as accessories to murder. One might fault the legends for failure to explore the psychological tensions that such a disagreement would entail, but perhaps they are simply recording the reactive nature of the local government.⁴⁰

Sacred Tigers

The legends often present tigers and weretigers as sacred, in the sense that they are associated with a divine power, performing heavenly missions. The belief that the gods send tigers is still the case in the early Ch'ing as a legend from that time demonstrates.

In the fifteenth year of K'ang-hsi (1676), in Yü-yao 餘姚⁴¹ there was a traveler in the hills, who spent the night at the shrine of a hill god. Halfway

³⁸ The same is true of "Shih Tao-hsüan" 師道宣, in *Ch'i Hsieh chi*, TPKC 426.3468, who is jailed and starves to death for what is perceived as a crime.

³⁹ "Chang Feng" 張逢, in Li Liang 李諒 (775-833), comp., *Hsü Hsüan-kuai lu* 續玄怪錄, (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), p. 193.

⁴⁰ Cf. "Li Cheng" 李徵, in Chang Tu 張讀, (833-888), comp., *Hsüan-shih chih* 宣室志, TPKC 427.3476-79; its far greater degree of fame is probably due to the titular character's description of his reactions to his life as a tiger. It was later incorrectly attributed to another author and titled "Jen hu chuan" 人虎傳.

⁴¹ In Chekiang.

through the night there was a tiger that knelt worshipping before the altar, and spoke in a human voice, begging to eat. The god permitted it to eat Woodcutter Teng 鄧. The next morning the traveler waited outside the temple where he saw a woodcutter pass by.

Approaching him, he said, "Is your name Teng?"

"Yes."

Then he told him what he had seen and heard in the night, warning him not to proceed.

Teng said, "I have a mother who lives off of my woodcutting. If I do not cut wood for just one day, my mother will go hungry. Dying and living are fate. Why should I fear it?"

Then he left without a glance backward. The traveler followed him to watch. Just as the woodcutter was collecting firewood, the tiger shot out of the underbrush. The woodcutter repeatedly struck at it barehanded. Grabbing the tiger's tail he twisted it for a long while. Unable to overcome its anger, the tiger gave a shattering roar and jumped, pulling away its tail, then fled, nursing its pain. Pursuing it, the woodcutter killed it. The traveler then approached him again, praising him.

The woodcutter said, "I am grateful for your eminent righteousness. Please lead me to the temple."

When he arrived, he loudly cursed, and showing the dead tiger to the god, said, "How about this, now!"

Then he smashed the earthen idol, and with a laugh mounted the god's pedestal, and closing his eyes, expired. The local people built another altar, naming it The Temple of Lord Teng.⁴²

The tiger's seeking guidance from a local god appears in other legends; this again suggests that such gods are playing the role of heaven's agents.⁴³ While its ambivalent victim here initially seems to acquiesce to his fate, confronted with the tiger, he kills it. By killing the tiger, he is exerting control over it, hence he is substituting himself for the god that sent it. His smashing of the idol is not out of anger at his fate, but out of contempt at the god's incompetence. As the expression *mingmu* 目瞑 ("closing his eyes") implies, he dies content, accepting his new role as a god.

The divine association between the tiger or the weretiger on the one hand and spirits or heaven on the other is paralleled by a similar tigrine association with monks or priests.⁴⁴ There are numerous anecdotes of Buddhist ascetics living peacefully together with wild beasts, typically tigers, demonstrating their spiritual power over the fierce beast (as paintings of Buddhists calmly

⁴² In Wang Yü-yang 王漁洋 (fl. ca. 1705), comp., *Hsiang-tsu pi-chi* 香祖筆記 5.5a-b; also quoted in *T'an hu*, 3a-b.

⁴³ See Hammond, "Tiger Lore." The wounded tiger often proves to be a god whose idol must be destroyed; see *Hu yüan* A 14a. Ssu Shan-t'ang, p. 371 records the anecdote of another idol destroyed; the discovery of human bones inside it proves that it, too appeared as a tiger.

⁴⁴ On the religious associations of tigers, see also Minakata, p. 17.

consorting with tigers also suggest).⁴⁵ If the biographies of Buddhist monks are to be believed, many monks raised tigers as a matter of course.⁴⁶

However, the association between temples and tigers is also due to the fact that religion, particularly Buddhism, may serve as a defense against tigers. One religious confronted by a tiger silently recites the "Diamond Sutra." When villagers arrive, they find a pool of saliva where the tiger had been crouching.⁴⁷ According to other legends, monks used the *dharma* to subdue tigers, or even convert them.⁴⁸ In fact, one monk's virtue is so great that a tiger in his charge becomes a human being, freed from its animal incarnation.⁴⁹

Similarly, another monk cures a man transformed into a tiger when a *ch'ang* 長 throws a tiger skin over him, and is forced to serve the creature until he escapes into a temple, where a monk raises him until he finally loses his fur and becomes a human. But as soon as he steps out of the temple, the *ch'ang* throws the skin back over him. Fearing another transformation, he spends the rest of his life in the temple.⁵⁰

Yet other anecdotes show how the weretiger was also associated with Taoists. One brief anecdote tells of an old Taoist found in a tiger trap; released, he changes back into a tiger.⁵¹ A legend of Hsieh Yün 謝允 (a nebulous Taoist figure of the Six Dynasties period)⁵² is more specific. Rather than saving a human being, he releases a tiger from a trap. When he confesses his action at the district office, the magistrate has him tortured. That night Hsieh Yün dreams of a young man dressed in yellow who later appears outside the bars, intimidating the magistrate, who frees him. He later travels to Wu-tang 武當 mountain,⁵³ where he meets the young man who appeared in order to save him, and is in fact a transcendent. His repayment for rescuing the tiger is initiation into

⁴⁵ The same is true of many Christians, Moslems, and Brahmans; see Robert Eisler, *Man Into Wolf: An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism, and Lycanthropy* (London: Spring Books, n. d.), p. 113.

⁴⁶ *Kao-seng chuan san-chi*, passim.

⁴⁷ In Tuan Ch'eng-shih 段成式 (803-863), comp., *Yuyang tsa-tsu* 酉陽雜俎, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), p. 223.

⁴⁸ *Hu yüan* B 6a-b, *T'an hu* 6b-7a.

⁴⁹ "T'ang Shou-chou Tz'u chin shan Hsüan-tsung chuan" 唐壽州紫金山玄宗傳, Taishō Tripitaka 50.838.

⁵⁰ "Ching-chou jen" 荊州人, in Tai Fu 戴孚 (fl. ca. 757-800), comp., *Kuang-i chi* 廣異記, TPKC 431.3499-500. Cf. "K'uai Wu-an" 翳武安, in Lu Ch'iu 盧求 (*chin-shih* ca. 825), comp., *Pao-ying chi* 報應記, TPKC 102.773-74.

⁵¹ "Hsiao T'ai" 蕭泰, in *Kuang ku-chin wu-hsing chi*, TPKC 426.3470; cf. Kan Pao 干寶 (fl. ca. 317), comp., *Soushen chi* 搜神記, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), p. 152, where it is a village elder who is trapped.

⁵² "Hsieh Yün," in Tai Tso 戴祚 (Chin dynasty) comp., *Chen-yi chuan* 甄異傳, TPKC 426.3468; for *Chen-yi chuan*, see Lu Chin-t'ang 盧錦堂, "T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi yin shu k'ao," (Cheng-chih University dissertation, 1980), pp. 173-74.

⁵³ A haunt of Taoists in northern Hupei that was in fact associated with Hsieh Yün.

the secrets of immortality. The implication is that Taoists are able to change into tigers.

However, in similar legend, it is a Buddhist monk who is found in a tiger trap; released, he changes into a tiger.⁵⁴ This suggests not only that the nature of the connection is not between any particular religion and the tiger, but between the tiger and spiritual forces in general.

Shamans

The ultimate source of religion is the sense of dependence, but the equivalent faith in magic encourages the belief that one can overcome both self-evident natural forces and occult powers. The belief in the efficacy of such rites derives from the conviction that natural effects are largely dependent on human deeds. Although people have recourse to them only in the face of pressing needs, the performance of such rites provides people with a sense of their own control over their destiny.⁵⁵

The shaman is a priest-doctor or healer who performs such rites, communicating with the spirits to discover how to cure the sick, or control events affecting peoples' welfare. The healing process, founded on shared beliefs, proceeds through suggestion, rather than analytic consciousness-raising. In spite of surrendering control to the therapist, rather than merely witnessing the ritual, the patient may often be expected to participate in the healing process. Finally, the treatment involves the redirection of violence, to enable the patient to regain power.⁵⁶

In fact, a medical system (a set of ideas and practices having to do with illness), when approached as an aspect of religion, is concerned with power as an attribute of people and objects in the patient's environment. The system seeks to answer questions of the locus and control of usually malevolent power: the illnesses are usually caused by an act of will on the part of such a power.⁵⁷

The shaman's communication with the spirit world, often in the form of a theatrical performance, may involve trances or hallucination. This shamanistic

⁵⁴ The author is impressed at his cleverness; see "Hu hua wei seng" 虎化為僧, in *Mao-t'ing k'o-hua* 8.4a-b.

⁵⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay On Man* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 91-93.

⁵⁶ Jeanne Favret-Saada, "Unbewitching as Therapy," *American Ethnologist* 16 (1) (February 1989), pp. 47-48.

⁵⁷ Leonard B. Glick, "Medicine as an Ethnographic Category: the Gimi of the New Guinea Highlands," *Ethnology* 6 (1) (January 1967), pp. 32-37. Rather unlike the Chinese problem treated by the weretiger shaman, his definition of an illness is one that, having a socially significant cause, requires a cooperative response from the patient's social group.

seance is formalistic, following a set pattern, and the dramatized aspect may include acts with a symbolic meaning.⁵⁸ The ceremony may require a sacrifice, though the sacrifice need not be alive, nor even be an actual animal. One may also substitute a scapegoat: an animal, object, or another person to which the shaman transfers the threat aimed at the patient.⁵⁹ Sometimes there is an offering of blood to appease the gods; blood from a wound is dribbled on rags, which then serve as a surrogate for human sacrifice.⁶⁰ Though the performance, like magic, involves simulation, the magician and the audience both believe in it.⁶¹

Several aspects of the shaman's behavior are similar to the werewolf's. Part of the symbolism of the shamanistic seance concerns his or her dress. Not only may the shaman wear an animal skin, in itself a powerful medicine by virtue of its rarity, but both the audience and the shaman may believe she or he has become the animal: a mythical being with special powers.⁶² Because the people believe the aspect of the fiercest beast frightens the spirits as much as it does human beings, the shaman's behavior may be little different from that of beasts. Such violent rites have an atavistic element, and in fact, like the werewolf, the shaman is sometimes characterized as psychotic.

In some Chinese legends, though the stories do not explicitly identify them as such, the religious appear to be shamans.⁶³ Like the solitary tiger with which he is associated, the weretiger shaman regularly appears deep in the lonely forest, outside the matrix of civilization. His solitary nature may be due to his association with the tiger, but is also characteristic of shamans generally.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Spencer L. Rogers, *The Shaman: His Symbols and His Healing Powers* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1982), pp. 123, 142–143.

⁵⁹ Rogers, pp. 95–97.

⁶⁰ John Lee Maddox, *The Medicine Man: a Sociological Study of the Character and Evolution of Shamanism* (New York: MacMillan, 1923), pp. 180–181.

⁶¹ Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), p. 54.

⁶² Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Willard C. Trask, tr. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), pp. 167–168, 460.

⁶³ Minakata, p. 52, suggests that the encounter in *Nihongi* 日本記 (Chronicles of Japan) with a tiger that gives a Korean a needle with curative powers illustrates that, with the tiger as totem, the shaman acts as an acupuncturist dressed as a tiger; cf. W. G. Aston, tr., *Nihongi* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956, 2, p. 190). The year in question — 632 — suggests at least the possibility of a connection with Chinese weretiger shamans.

⁶⁴ According to Rogers, p. 21, the shaman spends long periods alone, and is in fact a man apart socially. This distinguishes him from *fang-shih* 方士, the state functionaries who perform exorcisms as well as other tasks ranging from medical cures to divination. The shamans in these legends appear as concerned solely with the exorcism of fated death as embodied in the tiger, and are never associated with the state, unlike shamans from the state of Ch'u or the Han Dynasty. Cf. Van Xuyet Ngo, *Divination, magie, et politique dans la Chine ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976).

Chinese weretiger legends nearly always present this type of shaman as male. If he does not appear as a Buddhist monk or a Taoist priest, then it may be as a god with ambiguous affiliations. While occasionally he may cure a disease,⁶⁵ more commonly he works to exorcise the even more fearsome threat of fated (though not inevitable) death with which heaven has charged him.⁶⁶

Two aspects of the Chinese shaman as weretiger distinguish him from most other shamans. First of all, the meeting with the shaman who exorcises decreed death is a meeting between the endangered individual and the therapist who helps save him, without an audience. Secondly, the weretiger shaman simultaneously plays a pair of ambivalent roles: while he functions as an exorcist, usually he is also the vehicle of heaven's will (like the weretiger itself), the very will that he is trying to thwart.

Several legends depict exorcisms conducted by shamans who dress as tigers or even become tigers. While these explicitly state the connection between tigers and fate, the stark vision of this confrontation leaves such a deep impression in the minds of the witnesses that they tend to present the religious as an actual weretiger rather than a human wearing a tiger skin.

Liu Ping 柳井

Liu Ping⁶⁷ of Ho-tung 河東⁶⁸ was an Investigating Censor who went into the mountains on an investigation, taking with him a clerk who was frequently appointed to work for him. At the foot of the mountains, they stayed at an isolated inn, where the clerks all slept on the mat floor of the hall.

When it was the middle of the night, and the moon had just come out, everyone was asleep, except for Ping. All at once, he saw a small ghost, about a foot tall, that looked like a macaque. Holding a paper pennant in its hand, it climbed the steps. Planting the pennant by the clerk's head, it left. Ping stealthily rose and plucked it out, then lay down to wait. In a little while, a tiger entered, and sniffed all around the people, then left. In a little while, the little ghost came again, planting another pennant. He again plucked it out. In a little while, the tiger returned, sniffed all around, then left again. This happened a third time, then the sky brightened, as dawn arrived.

⁶⁵ After man afflicted with leprosy recites from the "Diamond Sutra" at a monk's suggestion, a tiger comes to lick his sores, and the monk then gives him herbs to wash the sores. He is cured, without any scars; "Ch'iang Po-ta" 强伯達, in *Pao-ying chi*, TPKC 107.819; cf. the explanation by Wessing p. 63, of how the Southeast Asian shaman behaves like a tiger, licking the patient; his saliva has magical power just as the Chinese tiger's does.

⁶⁶ According to Cassirer, pp. 82-83, the belief in the indestructible unity of life means that rather than a necessary, natural phenomenon, death is an accident, or the result of inimical influences.

⁶⁷ Fl. ca. 766-769. According to his biography in *Hsin T'ang shu* 202.5771, he was a scholar fond of Taoism.

⁶⁸ In modern Shansi.

He summoned the clerk and told him about it. "In the daytime, it will be hard to avoid. You need to make your own plan. You can't follow me, but I have a sword." He took it out and giving it to him, ordered him to flee the difficulty.

This clerk was strong and brave, and took the sword into the mountains, seeking the tiger's lair. Walking twenty *li*, he arrived at a thatched hut. Entering it, he didn't see anyone. There was only a table on the mat with an ink stone and a red writing brush, and a small scroll consisting of a list of people's names, some with a check next to them. Among those not yet checked was his own. On the ceiling, he saw a tiger skin. Taking the document and the skin, the clerk left, leaning on the sword.

Before he had gone a few *li*, he saw a foreign monk, who came up from behind him, calling out to him, "Stop! You'd better tell me your plan; then you'll be able to escape." As he spoke, the clerk saw that he had an unusual appearance, and did not dare kill him.

The monk said, "I'm not harming you out of mere brute force. It is heaven that has apportioned you to feed me. Didn't you see that document? Yesterday you transgressed several times. Even if you escape now, I'm afraid it won't end well. It would be better to get over it with a little trick."

The clerk asked about the trick. The monk ordered him to climb a tree and secure himself with a belt, using the sword to prick himself, then smear the blood on an unlined garment, and throw it to him. "I'll take the garment and make a sacrifice with that."

Climbing the tree as he was told, the clerk threw the skin to the monk, who put it on, then took on the aspect of a roaring tiger, his eyes flashing like lightning. The frightened clerk nearly fell several times. Taking the unlined garment, he smeared blood on it that he got by pricking himself. When he threw it on the ground, the tiger pounced on the garment, and clawing and ripping it, swallowed it.

After a long time, the tiger changed back into a person, and said, "You've escaped," sending him away. In the end, he was unharmed.⁶⁹

The little ghost who comes to identify the victim is actually a *ch'ang*.⁷⁰ Here the list of victims the clerk finds clearly shows that death is fated, a fact that the monk reiterates. The secret language the shaman uses to communicate with the spirit world⁷¹ has simply become the written language, mysterious to the illiterate. The fact that the clerk must stay out of harm's way when the monk wears the skin suggests that the latter is not just acting like a tiger, but is transformed into one that eats the scapegoat. The list of names of those who are fated to be or have already been killed by tigers, while proving that this is at heavens' direction, could also have been used by the shamans as a means to prove the necessity of an exorcism.

⁶⁹ "Liu Ping," in *Yüan-hua chi*, TPKC 433.3511-12.

⁷⁰ Were it not for the fact that the moon appears but rarely in the legends, the *ch'ang*'s arrival on a moonlit night might suggest that there may be some connection between the moon and the weretiger's transformation, as there is with the werewolf's.

⁷¹ Eliade, p. 96; there may also be a connection with the talismans used in Chinese popular religion.

Kuang-i chi 廣異記 includes a number of legends of these shamans exorcising fated death. When a tiger confronts Wang T'ai 王太, who is walking with a group of friends, they decide they cannot all be slated to die, and remove their clothes to see whose excite the tiger. When he sees that his clothes attract the tiger, Wang T'ai realizes that he has been selected, and fights it. (Though his friends, like him, are each armed with sticks, they do not assist him.) Knocking it unconscious, he retreats into the grass, where he finds a temple, upon whose crossbeam he hides. That night in the moonlight, when the tiger returns, he sees it change into a human form, though it is actually a god. The god enters a wooden statue, then sees T'ai. He explains to T'ai he initially escaped his fate because he met the weretiger too early. In the subsequent exorcism, the scapegoat is a pig smeared with Wang's blood.⁷²

In another legend from the same anthology, the exorcist is apparently a Taoist. When Chi Hu 稽胡, a hunter, pursues a deer to a Taoist's retreat, the latter identifies himself as the Tiger King 虎王, in charge of tigers, and he shows Hu a list with his name on it. Yet he offers to help Hu escape: the Tiger King admits that not eating him would only mean missing a meal. Here the surrogate is a straw man and a bowl of pig's blood. After the Tiger King has eaten the scapegoat, he checks Hu's name off his list.⁷³

Another destined victim is able to spy on his intended executor. Fei Chung 費忠, hiding in a tree, spies a tiger that removes its skin, becoming an old man. Taking advantage of the old man's falling asleep, Chung ties him up and interrogates him. His prisoner explains that heaven has transformed him into a tiger, and given him a calendar telling him when to eat his victims. Chung releases him and when he returns the skin to him (from a safe distance), the old man becomes a tiger. Here the substitute is someone else with the same name.⁷⁴

"The Hsia-k'ou Taoist Master" suggests a local tradition of human sacrifice.

The Hsia-k'ou Taoist Master

In the K'ai-yüan period,⁷⁵ there were tigers in the Yangtze gorges. All the boats that travelled there suffered harm. Thereafter, whenever a boat was about to descend through the gorges, those aboard would choose someone to serve as food for the tigers; only then would the whole boat escape unharmed. If they did otherwise, many of the people on the boat would be harmed. Consequently, it became the standard practice for each boat to abandon a traveler⁷⁶ on the bank to feed the tigers.

⁷² "Wang T'ai," in *Kuang-i chi*, TPKC 431.3499.

⁷³ "Chi Hu," *ibid.*, TPKC 427.3475-76.

⁷⁴ "Fei Chung," *ibid.*, TPKC 427.3474-75.

⁷⁵ 713-42.

⁷⁶ Reading one for two here and below.

Several months later, among a group of rich and powerful people aboard a boat sailing there was a poor, solitary person whom they pushed out, ordering him to climb up the bank to feed the tigers.

Feeling he lacked the power to resist, he left the boat, but said to the others, "I'm poor, and so it's suitable for me to die in your place. But everyone has his individual destiny. If I am not harmed by them, I have an earnest wish: will you promise to fulfill it?"

Hearing his earnest words, the others were deeply moved, feeling sorry for him, and asked, "What is it?"

He said, "I'll go up the bank to look for tiger tracks, but I also have another plan: I wish that you would just stop the boat for me below the rapids. If I'm not there by noon, then let the boat sail on without me."

The others said, "All right; today we will stop the boat for you below the rapids. We'll not only stay until noon today, but we'll stay for you overnight, waiting until tomorrow. If you don't come by then, we'll leave."

When they had finished talking, the boat sailed towards the rapids, and carrying a long axe, the person went up the bank, going into the mountains to seek the tiger. He saw no evidence of any people, but did see tiger tracks. Deep in the woods, seeing a road thick with tiger tracks, he followed it, arriving at a mountain pass deep in mud. There the tiger tracks were even more numerous.

Half a *li* on, he saw a big stone room, with a stone bed. Fast asleep on the stone bed was a Taoist priest. A tiger skin hung on a rack. Thinking it was a place of tiger shapeshifting, he walked in on tiptoe, took the skin off the rack, and stood holding the skin and the axe.

Suddenly awakening, the Taoist noticed the skin was missing from the rack, and said, "It is quite proper for me to eat you. Why did you steal my skin?"

The person countered, "It is quite proper for me to eat *you*. How can you say such a thing?"

After a short struggle, the Taoist yielded, saying, "Having committed a crime against the Lord on high, I was exiled here as a tiger. I was to eat one thousand people. Up to now, I have eaten nine hundred ninety-nine. I lack only one: you, and then the number will be complete. Unfortunately for me, you've stolen my skin. If you don't return it, I'll be made into a tiger again, and must eat another one thousand people. I have a plan, now, that will help us both. May I?"

The person said, "If you please."

The Taoist said, "Take the skin back on the boat; cut a little hair and beard, some nails, and from your face, feet, hands, and body, collect two or three *sheng*⁷⁷ of blood, and wrap it all in a bundle of old clothes weighing three *liang* 兩.⁷⁸ Wait until I reach the river bank, and then you can throw the skin to me. When I've put on the skin and changed into a tiger, then you can throw the other things to me. I'll take them and eat them; it'll be no different than eating you."

The person then took the skin and his axe and returned. He explained what had happened to the amazed people on board the boat. Then he waited on the boat as instructed by the tiger. When it got light, the Taoist was already on the river bank. When he threw the skin to him, the Taoist put it on, and in a flash, changed into a tiger, roaring and prancing. Then he threw the clothes to it, and it ate them and left. From then on, no one heard of a tiger harming people there.

⁷⁷ From three and a half to five pints by modern measure.

⁷⁸ One third of a pound by modern measure.

People said since the number of people he had to eat was complete, he probably had returned to heaven.⁷⁹

The legend insists that this kind of human sacrifice was necessary; even the poor victim is more sorrowful than angry, agreeing that it is suitable for him to serve as a scapegoat because of his poverty. Rather than doubt that the rich and powerful have a right to life that the less fortunate lack, he wonders if his fate is to survive. In fact, he is slated to die, escaping only through a clever stratagem. He tells his fellow passengers that the weretiger is a Taoist whom he has surprised without his skin, and who has explained that for an offense against the Lord on high (Shang-ti 上帝), the latter had sentenced him to be a tiger and eat a thousand victims. One short of his quota, he has asked his final intended victim to make a scapegoat. When the victim throws the bundle ashore from the boat, the Taoist puts on the skin, changing to a tiger and eating the bundle. After that, there are no more problems with tigers; the author assumes that the quota was filled, but the fact that the passengers hear about it from an intended sacrifice suggests the possibility that this was a ruse to avoid sacrifice.

Some of the legends compiled after the T'ang are more critical of conniving with heaven's victims at their escape. A Sung legend records how people move to the city to escape the depredations of a tiger. One man who stays hides from a tiger on the crossbeam of a house. When the tiger removes its skin, changing into a human being, he steals it. Since he was the tiger's last meal, the weretiger offers to let him go free. After the tiger leaves, it is struck by a thunderbolt.⁸⁰ Heaven has expressed its displeasure at the weretiger's resistance to its dictates. Presumably, a scapegoat would have fooled it.

Yet at the end of a still later story, two authors both express their disapproval even of the scapegoat tactic. The legend of fated death begins by comparing the argument that the Lord (T'i 帝) sends tigers with an alternative argument that states that tigers have been changed by fierce spirits.

A Record of Changing to Tigers

Recently, my hometown has had many tigers. They frequently bite people. When I traveled around, visiting Min 閩, Ch'u 楚, Chin 晉, and Yü 豫⁸¹ I discovered the same problem. Some say they're sent by the Lord, and that taking up weapons against them will fail. Others say that existing fierce ghosts and cruel spirits are transformed into them through the arousal of their own emotions.

⁷⁹ "Hsia-k'ou Tao-shih" 峽口道士, in Anon., (T'ang Dynasty), comp., *Hui-ch'ang chieh-i lu* 會昌解頤錄, TPKC 426.3472-73.

⁸⁰ "Ching-nan Hu" 荆南虎, in Hung Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202), comp., *I Chien chih* 夷堅志, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1982), p. 1586.

⁸¹ Respectively Fukien, Hunan and Hupeh, Shansi, and Honan.

Perhaps there is truth in both theories. Nothing is quite as strange as the strange story of old man Huang 黃 told by Wei-tzu Yün-tsang 危子允臧.

Old Huang was from Mi-hsi 密溪, and lived several dozen *li* from Ch'iao-ch'eng 樵城.⁸² He had three sons who were very strong. In the spring of the year *i-wei*,⁸³ he sent them into the mountains to plow the fields. They went out every morning and returned at the period of the cock.⁸⁴

After several days, one evening a neighbor told him, "Your fields lie fallow and unplowed. Is that on purpose?"

The old man said, "My sons use their plows every day. How could my fields lie fallow?"

The neighbor said, "They have not plowed them."

The old man wondered about it, and at dawn, when his three sons went out, he secretly followed them to see where they went. He saw them go into the forest and remove their clothing, which they hung in the trees. They changed into tigers, roaring and jumping in all directions.

Terrified, the old man fled home, where he whispered to his neighbor what had happened. He then locked his door and hid. At nightfall, his three sons returned, and called outside the gate a long time, but he would not reply.

The neighbor explained it to them, saying, "The old man does not consider you to be his sons."

When they asked why, he told them what the old man had seen.

The sons said, "It did occur, but we were forced to by the Lord's decree.

It was not of our own free will."

They cried, and one called to the old man, "How could we even think of not repaying your infinite favor? But there's no way out. Your name was there all along, Father. For several days we went far away to seek a substitute for you, but if you won't come out, we may no longer stop your destiny. In the collar of your clothing, there is a small booklet. Fortunately we saw it. If we hadn't, you would certainly have suffered, and the three of us would have been forced to commit the deadly offense of killing you."

So he took a candle and looked into his collar, where he found the booklet, which had the names of all the people in the Ch'iao commandery who were to be hurt by tigers. The old man's name was second.

He said, "What's to be done?"

They said, "Open the gate. We have a plan."

Their father did just as he was told, and when his three sons received the booklet, they bowed, weeping, "This is all the Lord's decree."

"We have a way to save you. You should wear three layers of thick clothing, without cinching the belt, and put yellow paper on the outside. Then prostrate yourself and pray respectfully."

He did as he was told, and one by one, each of the three jumped at him from behind, grabbing a layer of clothing in its mouth. Roaring like tigers, they left, never to return. The old man is still alive.

From ancient times, there have been many cases of people changing into tigers, including Feng Shao 封邵⁸⁵ and Li Cheng 李徵, but they simply changed

⁸² Neither place is identifiable.

⁸³ Possibly 1655.

⁸⁴ 7-9 p.m.

⁸⁵ In the original, Shao is misprinted Tai 台. See "Feng Shao," in Tsu Ch'ung-ch'ih 祖冲之 (427-498), comp., *Shu-i chi* 述異記, TPKC 426.3466.

their appearance and left. No one ever made a disturbance among people like these three. But the fact that they were sent by the Lord to hurt people, and that their father's name was in the booklet, put them in a very difficult position. However, one may say that the fact that after they had unsuccessfully sought a substitute, they finally found a solution, shows that though their form had changed, their minds had not. There are others in the world who have the appearance of a human being, but do not recognize their sovereign or their father when he is in front of them. How then could the three be tigers if they still did not forget their obligation? Yet they were. Nor is there anything to be done about the old man's being listed in the booklet. How could those in charge of it happen to forget it? His luck might change in future years, and they might go so far as to kill their father even though it would demonstrate the greatest ingratitude. Would the Lord let them do as they pleased and not ask about it? This is something I cannot tell.

Chang Shan-lai 張山來 says, "The three sons' plan to seek a substitute for their father was stupid. If the substitute had been killed by a tiger, that would only have served to conceal the father's guilt rather than substitute for his crime. If the three sons had subverted the law, arranging for someone who was not to be killed by a tiger to die, the father's crime would have gone unpunished. They themselves would have violated the law. But what else could they have done?"⁸⁶

When their father discovers that his three sons change to tigers, they maintain that this is at the Lords' direction, showing him a list of names of people hurt by tigers to prove it. His name is next. They say if he had not seen them, they could have found a substitute. Still, he can escape. They have him offer up prayers to the tiger as he wears several layers of clothing; each of the tigers pounces on him, taking off one layer.

Hsü Fang 徐芳 begins by presenting the man-eating tiger as either sent by the Lord — a personification of heaven, or by ghosts. Though he refers to other such legends, he is far from an expert on weretigers. On the basis of the two examples he cites, he contends that they typically do not harm people, even though we have seen weretigers are actually more likely to be man-eaters than actual tigers. However, he believes that while transformations into tigers may occur more or less spontaneously, heaven's decree is also involved in the behavior of tigers: the trio in his story are obviously tools of heaven, as the booklet demonstrates. (It also shows that administrative divisions in the supernatural world correspond with those in the human bureaucracy.) More than most earlier writers, both the author and his editor are concerned with the conflict implicit in the (still human) mind of someone who must serve as heaven's tool. Hsü Fang is convinced that their minds did not change with their bodies. Unlike T'ang writers, whom the scapegoat ceremony satisfies,

⁸⁶ "Hua hu chi" 化虎記, Hsü Fang 徐芳 (*chin-shih* in 1640), in Chang Ch'ao 張潮 (fl. ca. 1676), comp., *Yü Ch'u hsün-chih* 虞初新志, (Shanghai: Wen-ming shu-chü, n.d.), 7.6a.

the injustice inherent in the use of substitutes disturbs him. Hsü Fang wonders if their father will be safe in the future, since he has escaped his fate. His editor Chang Ch'ao 張潮 agrees, criticizing their idea of substituting someone else since it would only have meant concealing his crime at the cost of an innocent person's death. While these two Ming authors were better at analyzing the consequences of such avoidance, they do not discuss this as symbolic of a child's duty towards a guilty parent.

Conclusion

Chinese legends of weretigers show the metamorphosis into an animal is sometimes caused by human action, but sometimes imposed by heaven. Indeed, the interaction between humans, tigers, and weretigers is often suffused with a sacred aura. Despite the notion that being killed by a tiger is a fated death (even if the question of guilt is rarely explored), not everyone acquiesces; some weretigers work as shamans, exorcising such death. Together with suggestions that Chinese shamans dressed as tigers (like their Southeast Asian brethren),⁸⁷ this suggests that the Confucian recorders of the legends are blind to the religious aspect of the scapegoat ceremony. They fail to grasp that the weretigers are humans transformed by a religious experience, and that the weretigers are simply shamans.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ts'ao, p. 45. Cf. Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China* (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press: 1975), p. 129 notes that the tiger was an expeller of demons.

⁸⁸ Eliade, pp. 33, 324, 467, notes that the shaman's initiation may involve a pathological illness, but even though he concedes there are similarities, to him it is the shamans' ecstatic powers that fundamentally distinguish them from werewolves and cannibal societies.