

can appeal to a range of scholars. While the content of the book as a whole may lend itself most easily to medieval China specialists, individual studies may be of use for the continued study of animals and plants in human history.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000629

## **Huaiyu Chen: *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes: Living with Animals in Medieval Chinese Religions***

**x, 271 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023. ISBN 978 0 231 20261 9.**

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Huaiyu Chen's *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes* is the result of a decades-long interest in the intersection between medieval Chinese religions and animal encounters. This includes the transformation of animals which inhabited Indian Buddhism into those familiar to Chinese Buddhists, the taming and killing of threatening animals, and the enlightenment of animals like the talkative parrot. By honing in on sixth- to twelfth-century sources and a specifically religious context, this book offers a contrast to the broader remit of Chen's other publication released in the same month, *Animals and Plants in Chinese Religions and Science*. The tight focus of this book in terms of time period, religious context, and the animal species studied (chiefly tigers, snakes, locusts, parrots, and pheasants) is its greatest strength. Each chapter contributes to this book's key message: that animals could broker power between religions, local communities, and the state, just as they could be transformed and weaponized in power conflicts between these different groups.

The six chapters of this book, while often paralleling and responding to each other, can also function as independent studies. The book opens with the classification of animals under Chinese Buddhism and the substitution of certain exotic animals with those known to monks of northern China. The second chapter moves to discuss the Confucian symbolism of key animals analysed throughout this book, with chapters 3 and 4 contrasting Buddhist and Daoist methods for taming tigers, an arena where religions, humans, and animals were pitted against one another. Chapter 5 centres on the symbolism of the snake in Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, while the final chapter explores the intelligence of animals – highlighting how the talkative parrot became an intriguing parallel to Confucian sages in Chinese Buddhism.

The first chapter, while providing a theoretical foundation for Buddhism's view of animals as inferior to humans, perhaps adds the least momentum to an otherwise incisive and insightful work. This is because much of the chapter is spent introducing concepts and prior secondary literature on Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Buddhism. As the book focuses on Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, sources related to other religions are perhaps less pertinent here. The analysis tends to deviate from the chapter's key case study, which does provide ample contextualization and source materials for further study, but at the expense of the chapter's momentum and argument.

One minor assumption, seen on page 31, is that the forbidden animals in Daoxuan's sixth-century interpretation of the Buddhist monastic code (i.e. cats, dogs, eagles, and mice) were



“pets” on the basis of medieval European examples. This can immediately be brought into question given that cats in no way functioned as pets in China until the tenth century, while dogs and eagles were largely kept for hunting. As Ann Heirman argues in the upcoming chapter “Buddhist monastics and (their) dogs”, prohibitions around cats, dogs, and eagles were more likely due to their use in hunting, rather than because they were emotionally significant pets.

The remaining chapters are engaging and rich in detail. The second chapter on Confucian administration and its encounters with locusts, pheasants, and tigers highlights the expansion of agricultural and habitation activities which brought humans and animals into shared territories. The increasing overlap between human and tiger territories underpins the tense negotiations between human and animal seen in the following chapters on tiger violence. These chapters provide intriguing evidence for the acceptance and proliferation of animal violence in Confucianism and, perhaps more surprisingly, Buddhism and Daoism, as well as the parallels created between animal behaviour and political order. The threat of tigers, in particular, brought religions, communities, humans, and animals into direct competition. Chen’s analysis of the methods each teaching developed to resolve tiger violence evidences how animals could be sites of religious competition. The chapter on snakes even highlights how Buddhist principles of non-violence could be re-worked in light of competition with Daoism. Far from centring solely on humans, Chen’s appreciation of the animal’s role in recognizing, even reaffirming, the interests of each group makes this a balanced study of human–animal encounters.

While occasional long passages of quoted secondary literature can detract from the pace of each chapter, the focus of this book remains unique in addressing this intriguing intersection between medieval Chinese environmental, animal, social, and religious histories. This book is of significant use for Chinese animal studies specialists and religious scholars interested in environmental–religious interfaces, alongside scholars of either field who do not specialize in China. Concepts novel to non-Sinologists are explained, and the level of detail provided throughout allows for future cross-cultural research. In all, this is a much-needed addition to the ever-growing field of Chinese animal studies, demonstrating the applicability and range of the “animal lens” in scholarship.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000617

## **Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan (eds): *Technical Arts in the Han Histories: Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu***

**(SUNY Series of Chinese Philosophy and Culture.) xi, 414 pp.  
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.  
ISBN 9781438485430.**

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This volume collects articles on Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) topics, paying particular attention to the two histories’ treatises and the realms of techniques (*shu* 術). Its contributions vary in content and research tactics. This review will discuss some of their findings and then get back to the editors’ project.