

fourth of the “Xue” chapters on *dushufa* 讀書法 or “method of reading”, complemented by excerpts on the *Four Books* as core readings from the first of the “Daxue” 大學 chapters and elsewhere), and “Moral self-cultivation” (i.e. excerpts from the sixth and seventh of the “Xue” chapters). Gardner’s chapters come with a concise and highly informative introductory summary that facilitates the reader’s access to Zhu Xi’s remarks; source references at the end of each of the translated sequences enable us to locate the passage in the original text easily. Building on his previous work, namely his earlier translations in part two of his *Learning to Be A Sage* and elsewhere, Gardner brings into focus the paradigmatic views on learning and reading of Zhu Xi, who devoted much of his life to education. More importantly, one might argue that significant parts of these chapters on learning, which are crucial for a meaningful reconstruction of the history of reading (and learning) in traditional China, may still be considered relevant for the contemporary learner.

However, one minor caveat may be in order here: given that the punctuated edition published by Zhonghua Shuju (1986), on which this translation is based, consists of well over 3,000 pages in eight volumes and includes detailed notes, explorations and commentaries on the classics, it becomes apparent that Gardner’s selection represents but a tiny part of the original. Yet his highly accessible translations, supported by a general introduction, concise notes and a glossary of key terms, offer a good elementary overview on the basics of Zhu Xi’s system of thought. Nevertheless, the more advanced student of Zhu Xi will still want to consult the original version of the *Zhuzi yulei*, especially the rich records of his explorations on the classics, many of which complement and further elucidate his celebrated glosses and interlinear commentaries on canonical works.

In sum, Gardner’s translations from the *Zhuzi yulei* constitute a most welcome contribution on the study of so-called Neo-Confucianism and the man and his work that informed this philosophical system that still reverberates through contemporary Chinese discourses.

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Huaiyu Chen: *Animals and Plants in Chinese Religions and Science*

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In March 2023, Huaiyu Chen published two books on the subject of animals in China: *Animals and Plants in Chinese Religions and Science*, the focus of this review, and *In the Land of Tigers and Snakes: Living with Animals in Medieval Chinese Religions*. In the former, Chen extends his remit to cover plants as well as animals, and moves beyond the context of religion. What is perhaps not clarified in the title is that medieval sources are the primary focus of this book, though sources from preceding and subsequent dynasties are cited throughout.



The book is divided into three parts, each comprised of two chapters. The first part focuses on plants, in particular the classification and understanding of plants in technological, medical, and scientific terms. The second focuses on animal divination practices, i.e. how observed animal behaviour was connected with human consequences. The final section on animal transformations explores how Buddhism shaped narratives surrounding the twelve zodiac animals as well as the interconnectivity of weretiger stories across India, China, Korea, and Vietnam. While each chapter fits within the broad scope of this book, they can also be treated as distinct studies which could be appreciated in isolation.

The study of animals and plants in medieval China, as noted in the introduction, has yet to appreciate fully animals' spiritual, imaginative, and psychological impact on human societies. The chapters focus largely on case studies that allow for a broader exploration of the encounters between humans and animals/plants. The second chapter, for instance, revolves around Daoxuan's taxonomy of plants and how his classification sought to reconcile a Buddhist worldview with his local experience of botany. This chapter is laden with references to plants in other Buddhist texts and is rich in detail. The third chapter, on the cult of the pig, is a fascinating and novel way to approach animal cults in a Chinese context by seeking to explain why pigs were associated with water through discussions of temperature, rainfall, and animal behaviour. The fourth chapter, on zoomancy, or prognostication through observation of animals, likewise addresses a significant oversight in the study of Chinese divination practices. The chapters remain broad and tend to jump between topics and time periods, but provide striking examples of how animals and plants interceded on all levels of the human experience, as well as providing the foundations for future focused case studies.

Only the first chapter seems to lack this spiritual/psychological viewpoint, as it moves from plant to plant with occasional detail but mostly remains at a distance, observing only that certain plants were adopted for a particular purpose without engaging more directly with what this *meant* for cultivators and consumers. While this makes for an excellent springboard for scholars interested in plant technologies in the medieval period, particularly as it gathers such a significant corpus of scholarship, the chapter lacks the same focused intervention seen in the other studies of this book.

It must be noted that the phrasing throughout can at times appear ambiguous or difficult to parse fully, and there are repeated issues with formatting, consistency, and typos. Terms, text titles, and dynasties are introduced without always having their characters (e.g. on p. 6 Western Jin is given with characters but Tang and, on p. 7, Song are not), and dates for dynasties or events like the An Lushan Rebellion are not always given (dates for the Tang dynasty are, oddly, given suddenly on pages 17 and 29). As the concepts of Yin–Yang and the Five Phases are also raised in the introduction without any additional explanation, alongside a great deal of Buddhist terminology in chapter 2, it would seem that this book is intended solely for an academic audience with some knowledge of China. This clashes with the assertion in the introduction that scholars of science and technology, material culture, and animal studies would find this book of use. It is therefore not clear if the book is truly accessible for scholars outside of Sinology and, in particular, medieval China. The choice to include common and taxonomical names for plants but not the Chinese characters also hinders an academic reading of the first chapter. Finally, the conclusion promises to discuss the “animal turn” in Asian studies and the “Asian turn” in animal studies, but instead elects to review six recent books on Asian animal studies. While this may point interested readers to other publications of note, it reads as disjointed and fails to advance an overriding argument about the future of Asian animal studies.

In sum, Chen has gathered together a staggering corpus of animal- and plant-related literature from the disciplines of Sinology, science, environmental history, and beyond. The scope of the book, broad in timeframe, topics, and places, means that its findings

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.

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

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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