

THE EMPIRE OF ONE MILLION TIGERS

CHINA SAVING TIGERS :

A KEY INITIATIVE TO RESTORE THE ORDER AND THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD)

1. Beyond oblivion : history of China/Tiger as a symbiotic association and its dynamics : a short summary
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In summer 2007, wild tigers are at immediate margin of extinction.

Probably less than 2000 of these animals are still living in the wild, under the heavy and permanent threat of poaching.

The first extinction of a big feline species since the end of the pleistocene period in the world is happening amongst a general indifference.

The animal concerned is considered by a large majority of human beings as the most beautiful animal on Earth.

He is also the biggest of the family, the only one striped (and in what a way !), and the eternal God and Protector of Chinese civilization.

Towards such a situation, it is necessary for China to take a strong initiative to restore the symbol of the heart of the country culture for the future, and to make humanity enter in a virtuous circle in its relationships with big wild animals all over the world.

Beyond oblivion : history of China/Tiger as a symbiotic association and its dynamics : a short summary

During the upper pleistocene (up to 15 000 years ago) China is covered by deep forests not only in the southern regions but also very far towards the North. This fact induces a strong presence of tropical

animals, which can develop particular races adapted to coldness, like siberian tiger or Amour leopard.

This fauna is extremely rich : besides great carnivores, there are tapirs, elephants, two species of rhinoceros...

At that time, when still small human communities live particularly in northern regions, China is clearly « the kingdom of one million tigers » while all other eurasian territories, as well as Africa and Northern America, are the gigantic Empire of Lions.

Important environmental modifications occur at the end of Pleistocene.

They are determinant for the rapid development of human communities in the Yellow River basin, with considerable consequences worldwide.

Northern China forest disappears very fast, and tiger migrations take place, firstly to occidental China and then to Eurasia, with a great implantation success.

They take 3 principal roads of migration.

1. Northern way (Siberia up to Liakhov Island in the North, oriental lakutia, Kamthchatka and Alaska in the North/East) . Moreover, dynamic siberian culture of the upper pleistocene had a very strong influence on North China. It would be an important way for Chinese tiger culture.

2. Southern way (indian sub – continent up to indonesian archipelagos)

3. Western way (occidental China, then central Asia up to oriental Europa).

In each case, tigers progression is in coincidence with lions withdrawal (important human development, progression of tropical forests in southern Asia).

A strong development of tiger populations occur in India and tropical Asia (several hundreds thousands individuals in the fifteenth century, after a substitution to the lion in reality and mythology).

The western branch is much more timid demographically speaking , but particularly impressive in its distribution, which expands from occidental China to oriental Europa, at least.

Inside China, tigers are in general regression after the Shang dynasty (who revered the animal as a god

and a protector of Monarchy). from North to South, then from East to West. But it's not a continuous process. Many events in Chinese history implicate important fluctuations in tiger populations and their distribution.

It's particularly true in southern regions where 3 subspecies are more or less present depending of sociopolitic context.

But it's also the case for northern regions : from the 18th century, Siberian tiger comes back in the Yellow River basin. Peasants build small temples for him, as it is considered as a good protector of recolts by hunting boars and deers. At the same epoch, a western expansion of Chinese civilization induces a new migration dynamic for Caspian tigers.

Furthermore, little communities (like Oroques in Chaylai amongst others, with in certain cases, a specific veneration, here for the White Tiger, there for the Black one...) continue to protect the feline for ancestors worship.

From almost exclusively Chinese in prehistoric times, tigers have so become demographically Indian in majority in historic times (tigers have taken home in India only from 15 000 years, even though they were present in China since two millions years).

But India counts 1 continental subspecies with certainty (*P. tigris tigris*) and perhaps marginally a second (*P. tigris corbetti*) on its territory.

The 5 continental subspecies have always been present in China up to 1930, true natural mirrors of the 5 symbolic tigers protectors and defenders of the Empire, guardians of the four cardinal points and the center.

There were still 40000 southern Chinese tigers in 1900 and 4000 in 1949.

Mao Ze Dong inhabited in his youth the paradisiac valley of Shaoshan (Hunan province), with neither road nor navigable river, where villagers lived in total biodiversity amongst a forest of three hundred species of trees, with tigers, leopards and boars.

It was necessary, to go to the neighbouring village, to take a way where tigers liked to come to sleep in the sun.

And nowadays, after extinction of Caspian tiger, a few individuals of 4 continental subspecies are still present in the wild in China (as observed in June 2007 by Chinese scientists).

Chinese civilization as Tiger culture, Chinese people as Tiger sons.

Tiger is the heart of Chinese culture.

He is the Soul and the Spirit of China.

As in the entire southern Asia, he is considered as the master of initiation . He is also strongly linked to wealth (the God of Wealth is riding a black tiger) and providency (in certain cases, he saves a man trapped in a ditch !). And perhaps most of all, he is the universal protector.

A political protector : he protects young princes in his mouth, and the 5 tigers defend the 4 cardinal points and the centre of the Empire. He is the symbol of Royalty. he embodies dignity and bravery.

The first Chinese dynasties considered the Tiger as their father and ancestor.

An economical protector : he protects cultures, crops, and medicinal plants like Gingsen.

A social protector : he protects life of human beings against evils, and brings them biologic fertility, prosperity and happiness.

An ecological protector : he protects forests and mountains.

A subterranean, cosmic and marine protector : after his death, he continues to protect the world from both the heart of Earth, with amber « the soul of tiger » and the Milky Way galaxy. Moreover, he may, in certain cases, even protect Chinese people against themselves and their excess : The hero Old Huang, owner of important magic powers, who neglects the right behaviour, is killed by a white marine tiger who appears in the Eastern Sea .

He has good and frequently intimate relations with wise men and monks : he protects them as they take care of him.

Wisdom offers tiger protection.

Moreover, there is no separation between men and tigers in the traditional culture of the entire southern Asia area. Tigers are considered as parents and ancestors in many Chinese, but also korean, thai, burmese, indochinese, malaysian and indonesian communities.

The legend of tigers, which can appear under one appearance or the other, is strongly present everywhere. For all these reasons, many communities revered tiger as god and sacred animal, and of course never kill him. They spontaneously take care of whom they considered both as their protector and ancestor.

Chinese civilization was firstly the Tiger culture, Chinese people were first of all tiger sons. It explains why the 5 continental tiger subspecies were present on Chinese territory up to the XXth century, and moreover they can be found in safety in all regions of China up to this recent epoch..

How Tiger people may realize one of their most patriotic actions.

CHANGING HABITS AND NEW FUNCTIONAL STATUS FOR BREEDING CENTERS.

Wild tigers have declined for various reasons all over Asia (human invasion of their life areas, destruction of their food, direct killing for commercial or hunting pleasure motivations, and, perhaps the most important, artificially induced degradation of relationships between great predators and village communities where they were good, it seems in the most part of tiger distribution space up to the XXth century).

Up to now, destiny of tigers seems to be also linked to aims and practices of tiger farms.

Tiger farms produce captive tigers corpses of those naturally died (according to Chinese version, Europeans and Americans fearing they are often killed) are dismembered for further selling parts obtained by this means, creating a going up demand on these products, and last wild tigers were poached in the same way.

Senior responsables of these farms said that with a legalization of the trade, they would produce 100 000 captive tigers in 2020. So, with an actual political determination, Chinese people can not only save tigers but also strengthen their populations.

China has often shown, in History, that spectacular results were obtained from political decisions. At the Tang dynasty epoch, horses numbers quickly rise from 5000 to 700 000 individuals. And efforts imposed to Chinese society by Ming emperor Yongle to build a great navy implicated the plantation of more than one billion trees...

ONU, by CITES intermediary, has rejected tiger trade parts, and tiger farming in this aim. The argument developed by responsables of tiger farming for trade of tiger products (legalization of trade would break down poaching) was far from convincing.

Indeed, nobody would be never able to stop the action of poor poachers if they know that they can easily

sell the products of their hunt on any local market... The key question is about alimentary customs and more generally using of tiger products customs. The legalization of trade would have amplified this behaviour which is already in expansion.

There is no doubt that many people in Europe, America, Australia... would have considered as "very style" to eat tiger.

And past and present history of Europe and America unhappily but clearly shows that there has always been a category of people that were ready to destroy animal species for such frivolous attitudes. In this situation, wild tigers would have no chance to survive, as it would be quite impossible to obtain an exact and permanent correspondance between Chinese tiger farms production and international demand.

CHINESE DELEGATES AND TIGER TRADE SUPPORTERS WERE PROBABLY IN THE EXCESS OF OLD HUANG.

The world – wide association of traditional chinese medicine has clearly sustained the tiger coalition of protection at CITES conference. Lixin Huang, President of the American college, told the forum before the decision was made : « TCM does not wish to be responsible for the extinction of wild tigers ».

FIRST BRANCH OF CHINESE INITIATIVE.

Infact, Chinese people might change relatively easily in the social look about tiger (as it has been the case in USA for cigarettes for instance) stimulated at the political level. The experiment of whale meat in Japan and southern Korea shows that alimentary customs that are considered as deeply integrated in people culture can disappear in less than a generation as it has been established in the very interesting report of James Franckam on this subject. Of course, difficulty level on that point is probably much heavier in China, as Japan is a urban civilization where habits may change much faster than in China, where 70% of the population are peasants. But when Chinese authorities have clearly decided to impose radical change, they have always obtained spectacular results. And in any way, consumption of tiger parts can't be better for wild tigers than consumption of fin for wild sharks.

SECOND BRANCH.

A global reorientation of breeding centers, strongly initiated at political level and financially sustained by authorities, would refresh tiger culture in China and bring a solution for 5000 captive tigers in tiger farms. As far as possible, some of them could be reintroduced (after a phase of preparation) in the wild in different Chinese regions, the others could live in the best conditions, in regular contact with Chinese public to promote the species popularity and the reintroduction plan.

From this point of view, an original initiative like a reintroduction plan of the two extinct large Bengal tigers of Tibet would be a very strong signal, at national and international levels, of a comeback of China to the fundamental biopolitical culture of the Country :

a large northern form of Bengal tiger which was also in Ladakh and who is still present in Nepal and Bhutan, was present in Tibet where he was revered as god and not killed. He has fallen down to extinction since Chinese occupation...

THIRD BRANCH.

Chinese breeding centers, if reoriented towards safety, could be a real chance for the future of tigers. In fact, China could have the biggest interests to take the initiative of a worldwide tiger preservation plan, which would implicate the crucial responsibility of India, Europe and America in the success or failing of it.

Status of breeding centers might be changed by the political authorities, with clear orders of mission.

Priority must be put on:

-constitution of a significant demographic stock (several hundreds of thousands individuals)

-constitution (with specific and oriented works if necessary) of a diversified genetic stock (much more realizable when individuals are numerous)

-Supplying a worldwide tiger project of adaptation to wild zones in China, but also in many other Asian countries as well as other areas on several continents.

In fact, Chinese breeding centers would continue to produce tigers (on a basis of genetic diversification) for reintroduction in wild prepared areas on Chinese territory. But they could also sell them, in a second time, to India, Europe, America or Africa, in consultation with the concerned countries or states, which might take their own responsibilities in the real protection of tigers, by assuming their presence in

compatible wild zones.

Tiger people must take care of their parents, protectors, spirits and souls. They are responsible of welfare of tigers everywhere in the world, since the first tiger diaspora.

In the same time, Tiger culture must be refreshed and developed inside China. But tiger protection is also the concrete responsibility of every country in the world.

From this point of view, America has strong historic roots to receive graciously, welcome and entertain populations of wild tigers, as it had been the case for human pionners, carriers of a siberian culture in strong similarity with that of North China several millenars ago .

In any way, original proposal from China could make the world enter in a virtuous circle, charging particularly Europa and America to at last protect the wild fauna on their own soil instead of giving incredible lessons to the entire world.

It's also a clear and urgent necessity, as the climatic change in Himalaya will have tremendous consequences on the last asian areas of symbiotic associations between the last wild tigers and men populations, Ganga, Mekong and Yang - Tse deltas.

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