

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a tiger's face, focusing on its eye, nose, and whiskers. The tiger's fur is a mix of brown, black, and white, with prominent stripes. The eye is a golden-yellow color, looking directly at the viewer. The nose is visible on the left side, and long, white whiskers extend from the right side of the face. The background is dark and out of focus.

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF **TIGERS**

Compiled by **Sun Zhanli**
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Hundreds of his works have been published in many Chinese and foreign newspapers, periodicals and magazines. They have also won many prizes at photography exhibitions and contests both at home and abroad.

He has held six photography exhibitions in Beijing, Hong Kong, Daqing, Guilin, Duyun and Pingyao, and has published twelve collections of his essays and photographs.

In 2002, he received the 1st Golden Path Award (for the Nature and Environment Category), the highest honor conferred by China Artistic Photography Society.

•Representative Works•

In May 1998, *The Charm of Tigers*, a collection of photographs, was published by Lijiang Publishing House.

In June 1999, *The Cry of Auspicious and Angelic Cranes – a Collection of Sun Zhanli's Photographs* was published by Great Wall Publishing House.

In July 2000, *The Grace of Tigers*, a large collection of essays and photographs, was published by Great Wall Publishing House.

In 2004, the "Wild Animals" book series was published by China Photographic Publishing House, including *Family Honor*, *Power of Privacy*, *The Time Passed*, *Flower of Life*, *Colorful Feathers*, *Fairy of the Earth*, *Demeanor of Kinghood* and *The Auspicious Crane's Dancing*.

In 2006, the Chinese version of his book *An Encyclopaedia of Tigers* was published by China Photographic Publishing House.

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藏书章



Preface: On Tigers

Tigers are a carnivorous mammalian species which belong to the cat family. The large and powerful carnivore is known as the King of the Beasts.

In ancient times, people were very humble, and discovered the strong power and violence of animals through a long period of practical experience. This made man timid, and inspired a feeling that both man and animals had souls. This was especially the case with those animals with special abilities. Man envied them, and wished that the worship of animals would imbue his own body with their spirit, wisdom, courage, strength, health, charm and other features, and that in this fashion he would be stronger and immortal. This point is extraordinarily clear, regardless of whether the animal worship is seen in China's Yinshan petroglyphs, fairy tales, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, or in European cave paintings or ancient Roman worship of tigers.

The Classic of Mountains and Seas: The Classic of the Western Mountain records "Luwu, the God of Mount Kunlun has the face of a man, the body of a tiger and nine tails. In ancient Roman times, important collected writings on tigers note their beauty and ferocity. In 11 B.C., the Romans saw their first tiger at a gift-giving ceremony in a Roman temple. The word "tiger" originates from the Tigris region. The Romans learned the word from the Tigris river region in Mesopotamia.

Our ancestors co-existed with tigers in the land. When the Chinese nation had culture, it also produced tiger-related culture. People believed that "tigers are creatures of the yang, and king of all animals. They are vicious fighters, and can eat ghosts". Whether their images were used to protect the home, safeguard graves or fend off evil, studies of folk customs show that up until the present the image of the tiger is deeply associated with both the driving away of evil spirits as well as the bringing of blessings.

The circle of life on earth is a long-term process involving a strict ecological system. In this system, countless lives are drawn together in complex circular exchanges of materials and energy. Its members are as close as lips and teeth, and a lack of equilibrium in any part of the cycle can lead to disastrous results for the cycle as a whole. It has many mysteries of which we humans are profoundly ignorant, for human beings are only a part of the system, even if the part with the greatest destructive and protective capacity.

In short, the significant of this book lies in the way it presents us with the world of the tiger in a groundbreaking and truly unique way, and does so in the expectation that those who know little of tigers as well as those interested in tiger cultures can gain a broader perspective, be inspired to knowledge, and come to respect and cherish all animals on our planet, consciously protecting both them and the ecological environment supporting them, and moving forward into the future in both thought and aspirations.

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An Encyclopaedia of Tigers **NO. 1**

The Origin and Evolution of the Tiger



The meaning of tiger in Chinese can be represented by *Panthera* and *Tigris*. These two words are what tiger means in the narrow and strict sense.

According to animal taxonomy, the tiger belongs to the family *Felidae* of the order *Carnivora* in the subclass *Placentalia* of the class *Mammalia*. In the light of body type and crying sound, the existing felines can be roughly classified into two categories: small-sized mewing cats and large-sized roaring tigers (including lion, tiger, leopard, etc.). All these felines, no matter how different they are in body size, fur and color, have the following two common features on their skulls and teeth: one is *loculose auditory vesicles*; the other is a set of teeth highly fit for cutting.

Fossil of *Machairodus*



Fossil of *Panthera Tigris Palaeosinensis*

What time did the tiger appear in history? To clarify the origin of the tiger, we have to rely on tiger fossils, which can be formed mainly by bones and teeth. Thanks to the pursuit and research by paleontologists for nearly two centuries, much has been known about the origin of the tiger and the path of the tiger's evolution and history.

As early as the middle of Oligocene (the name of a geological age 34 million to 24 million years ago), an animal species called *Proailurus* appeared in Europe (France) and Asia (Mongolia) where *Proailurus* fossils have been found. At the beginning of Miocene (24 million to five million years ago), a branch of *Proailurus* evolved into a species called *Pseudailurus*. After animals of this species crossed the Bering Land Bridge (present-day Bering Strait) and entered North America in the middle of Miocene, their bodies became much larger, coming close to the size of present-day lion and tiger. This species became extinct at the end of Miocene. It is possible that present-day felines emerged from among the *Proailuri* and the earliest *Pseudailuri*.

Machairodus is a branch of felines or super felines evolving independently. At first, only big saber-shaped separate canine teeth were discovered; therefore, it was thought to be a new species of bear. Only when whole skulls were found later did people realize that these fossils showed the upper canine teeth of a species of tiger. Like other felines, *Machairodus* has loculose auditory vesicles. Its dentition is basically identical with felines': the carnassial teeth are overdeveloped, the front molar teeth and molar teeth behind the carnassial teeth have degenerated, etc. But *Machairodus* is much more special in many aspects compared with present-day felines. We can say that there exists a certain genetic relationship between *Machairodus* and the present-day tiger, but *Machairodus* is not the real ancestor of present-day tiger.



The fossils of *Panthera tigris Palaeosinensis*, formed more than two million years ago, were discovered in 1920 at Location 38 of Lan'gou, Mianchi, Henan. They might be the earliest tiger fossils. The samples are a skull, a lower dental bed and an atlas (the first cervical vertebra of the neck), which belong to the same body and are relatively well-preserved. After having discussed the characteristics of each bone's shape in detail and made measurements and contrasts carefully, scientists concluded that the vast majority of its features are much closer to those of the tiger, but its body is smaller than the tiger and a little bigger than the leopard. Therefore, it should be a subspecies of tiger. Hence, it is quite possible that *Panthera tigris Palaeosinensis* is the ancestor of the tiger.

The real tiger fossils were first found at Gongwangling, Lantian, Shaanxi. A section of upper jaw and an incomplete lower jaw are all that were discovered. What's interesting is that the upper jaw and a skull of the famous Lantian Man were combined closely when discovered. Therefore, we can say that the tiger and Lantian Man – the ancestor of humans – lived together at least more than one million years ago.

There are more tiger fossils from the Medio Pleistocene about 600,000 years ago. In particular, the fossils of at least 46 tigers were discovered in Yanjinggou, Wan County, Sichuan. According to fossil records and results of bone analysis, they were active in central and southern Asia near present-day Hubei, Sichuan and Hunan in China at the very beginning. Later, their distribution area became larger gradually, expanding to the sea and Japanese Archipelago in the east, to the Malay Peninsula in the south and to Java and Bali through Sumatra; extending to the eastern region of Turkey along the coast of the Caspian Sea in the west through Indian subcontinent and to the north and the east along the Turan Lowland, reaching Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and Tarim River Basin; expanding to Outer Xing'an Mountains and Siberia in the north through North China Plain. This shows that the tiger originated in Asia and lives and evolves only in Asia. It is a typical Asian species.







