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THE STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF TIGERS IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT: The tiger (*Panthera tigris* L.) is a large carnivore. According to the historical record, five of the eight tiger's subspecies were lived in China. At that time, She once had many tigers throughout the whole country. In past 50 years, because of the explosive growth of human population, they had led to a vast lose of forest habitats, killing and destruction of food fund. So its population number decreased sharply, distribution area shrinked and fragmented. Based on investigation in recent years, the results declare indicated between 100--120 tigers in China.

KEY WORDS: Tiger, status, conservation, China.

Tiger (*Panthera tigris* L.) is a large carnivore. In nature, it lives in mountain forest areas mainly. Its home range is very large and certain amount living animals are needed to meet feeding demand. In recent 50 years, its population numbers decreased sharply, distribution area shrinked and isolated. It was know as one of the 10 endangered animals in the world.

China was a country with abundant tiger. In history, there were large amount tigers distributed in all provinces except Taiwan. According to the recorded, the Chinese tigers can be divided into five geological subspecies. The status of each subspecies are with different natural geographical condition and society situation.

1. Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris* L.)

They distribute in southern, southeastern Tibet and western Yunnan. The estimate by recent investigation indicates that there are 10--15 tigers distributed in 100,000 km² (Yin, 1993). Tiger corpse was found during the summer in 1977 in Motuo; some were hunted in 1978, 1979, 1991 at Chayudu. There are about more than 10 tigers distributed in western Yunnan. So there are about 30--35 Bengal tiger in China.

2. Indochinese Tiger (*Panthera tigris corbetti* Mazak)

The subspecies distributed in the countries in indochina mainly.

It is the latest subspecies named (1963). At present in China there are only 30--40 indochinese tigers distribute at Xishuangbanna of southern Yunnan and southwestern border areas of Guangxi Province.

3. South China Tiger (*Panthera tigris amoyensis* Hilzheimer)

South China Tiger is endemic species in China. The original distribution area is from Fujian and Zhejiang Province (about 120° E) to western Sichuan (about 100° E), from Xijiang River Basin (about 23° N) to Shanxi, Gansu and Shaanxi Province (about 35° N). The length from east to west of the total was 2,000 km, width from south to north was 1,500 km. During 1950's, in Jiangxi, Hunan and Guizhou Province etc. the tiger's numbers was the most abundant. However many places no tigers were found according to recent investigation. Up to early 1990's, the tiger only distributed at north Guangdong, south Jiangxi, south Hunan and northeast Guangxi (Nanling Mountains) and northwestern Hunan, northeast Guizhou and southeastern Sichuan (Wuling Mountain areas). The total area is 200,000 km² (Liu, 1983; Yuan, 1994). The present number is about 20--30 tigers.

4. Caspian Tiger (*Panthera tigris vigata* Illiger)

The subspecies distributed in Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and Turkey along the bank of Caspian Sea mainly. In China, they distributed along the bank of Luobupo lake and Talimu River of Xinjiang. It disappeared at about 1920's (Gao, 1994) in China and no sign since the early 1970's in Iran and Russia (Jackson, 1993).

5. Amur Tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica* Temminck)

In the past time, the subspecies distributed widely in northeast China and Amur River side of Russia. At recent 30 years, its distribution area reduced very much because of over hunting and changing of habitats. According to the investigation, the tiger extincted at 1960's in Daxinganling Mountains; 1970's in Xiaoxinganling Mountains and in the end of 1980's in Changbaishan Mountains (Ma, 1979, 1983; Wang, 1994). There are about 12 tigers distributed at eastern mountains in Heilongjiang Province according to the survey in recent years. Comparing with the results in 1975, the reducing proportion is up to 86.2% and the annual reducing rate is 11.2% (Wu, 1994).

Nowaday, the tiger population numbers in nature is about 100--120 in China.

CONSERVATION MEASUREMENTS

Chinese Wildlife Protection Law listed all the subspecies of tiger

as the first category protected animals. Tiger is protected by the law at national scale, hunting is prohibited.

There are about 39 natural reserves were set up in the range of tigers existed. Among the reserves, the Bengal tiger was 4 sites, about 634,905 ha; Indo-chinese 5 site, 295,946 ha; South China tiger 28 sites, 853,766 ha; Amur tiger 2 sites, 223,781 ha. The total areas is about 2,007,398 ha. (Table 2).

In 1986, Felidae Breeding Center was set up at Hengdaohezi, Heilongjiang Province. 73 tigers were being raised up to the early 1995. At present, the wild experimental study about Amur tiger are being done.

In recent years, the checking up of enforcing law was strengthened in China. In May of 1993, Chinese State Council sent a notice that "For Prohibiting the Trade on Rhinosorous Horn and Tiger Bone". More than 40,000 persons checked up more than 3,000 Business markets and drugstores. 50 kg tiger born (trues and false) were burned in Harbin in January, 1994; 8 tiger skeletons for smuggling were confiscated, 11 persons were arrested according with the law. At present, the study of substitution for tiger bone were carried out by involved departments in China.

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Table 1. Average numbers of Chinese tiger pelts harvested in South China

Year	Guizhou	Guangxi	Jiangxi	Hunan	Hubei	Henan
1951-1960	85	-	86	85	13	23
1961-1965	45	25	21	16	5	22
1966-1970	14	-	-	14	5	6
1971-1975	2	2	1.5	5	1	7
1976	1	1	1	1	0	8
1977	0	1	0	1	0	7
1978	1	1	1	0	2	0
1979	0	0	1	-	0	7
1980	3	0	0	-	0	2
1981	0	0	1	0	-	8

Table 2. The Nature reserves for tigers protection in China

Map no.	Name (Nature Reserves)	Location	Areas (ha)	Subsp.	Date
1	Chayu	Chayu County, Xizang A.R.	101,412	<u>P.t.tigris</u>	1985
2	Nujiang	Nujiang, Yunnan Province	375,433	"	1986
3	Gaoligongshan	Baoshan, " P.	123,900	"	1986
4	Tongbiguan	Dehong, " P.	34,160	"	1986
5	Lincang-daxue shan	Yungde, " P.	17,887	<u>P.t.corbetti</u>	1980
6	Nanguenhe	Cangyuan, " P.	6,983	"	1980
7	Xishuanbanna	Jinhong, " P.	241,776	"	1986
8	Huanglianshan	Luchun, " P.	13,935	"	1983
9	Daweishan	Pengbian, " P.	15,365	"	1986
10	Tungluoba	Suifu, " P.	2,803	<u>P.t.amoyensis</u>	1990
11	Shennongjia	Badong, Hubei Province	70,467	"	1982
12	Houhe	Wufeng, " P.	2,067	"	1988
13	Mulinzi	Hefeng, " P.	2,133	"	1983
14	Fanjinshan	Jiangkou, Guizhou Province	41,900	"	1978
15	Hupengshan	Shimen, Hunan Province	40,847	"	1994
16	Tianzishan	Wulingyuan, " P.	5,470	"	1982
17	Badagungshan	Cili, " P.	20,000	"	1986
18	Daweishan	Liuyang, " P.	6,290	"	1982
19	Taoyuandong	Li, " P.	10,000	"	1982
20	Bamianshan	Guidong, " P.	4,333	"	1984
21	Mangshan	Yizhang, " P.	19,833	"	1994
22	Qianjiadong	Dao, " P.	5,400	"	1982
23	Dayuanyuankuo	Jiangyong, " P.	10,733	"	1982
24	Maoershan	Ziyuan, Guangxi A. R.	15,300	"	1976
25	Haiyangshan	Quanzhou, " "	106,700	"	1982
26	Xiling	Fuchuan, " "	19,327	"	1982
27	Huashuichong	Hexian, " "	10,500	"	1982
28	Babaoshan	Ruyuan, Guangdong Province	53,067	"	1994
29	Yuebei	Shaoguan, " P.	270,000	"	1990
30	Chebaling	Shixing, " P.	7,545	"	1988
31	Fengxi	Dapu, " P.	1,070	"	1984

Table 2. (continued)

32	Jinggangshan	Jinggangshan, Jiangxi Province	15,469	<u>P.t.amoyensis</u>	1981
33	Yihuang	Yihuang, " P.	23,936	"	1992
34	Wuyishan	Qianshan, " P.	5,300	"	1981
35	Wuyishan	Jianyang, Fujian Province	56,530	"	1979
36	Mangdangshan	Nanping, " P.	3,577	"	1988
37	Meihuashan	Longyan, " P.	22,169	"	1988
38	Changbaishan	Antu, Jilin Province	190,781	<u>P.t.altaica</u>	1986
39	Qixinglazi,	Huanan, Heilongjiang Province	33,000	"	1980
Total			2,007,398 ha.		

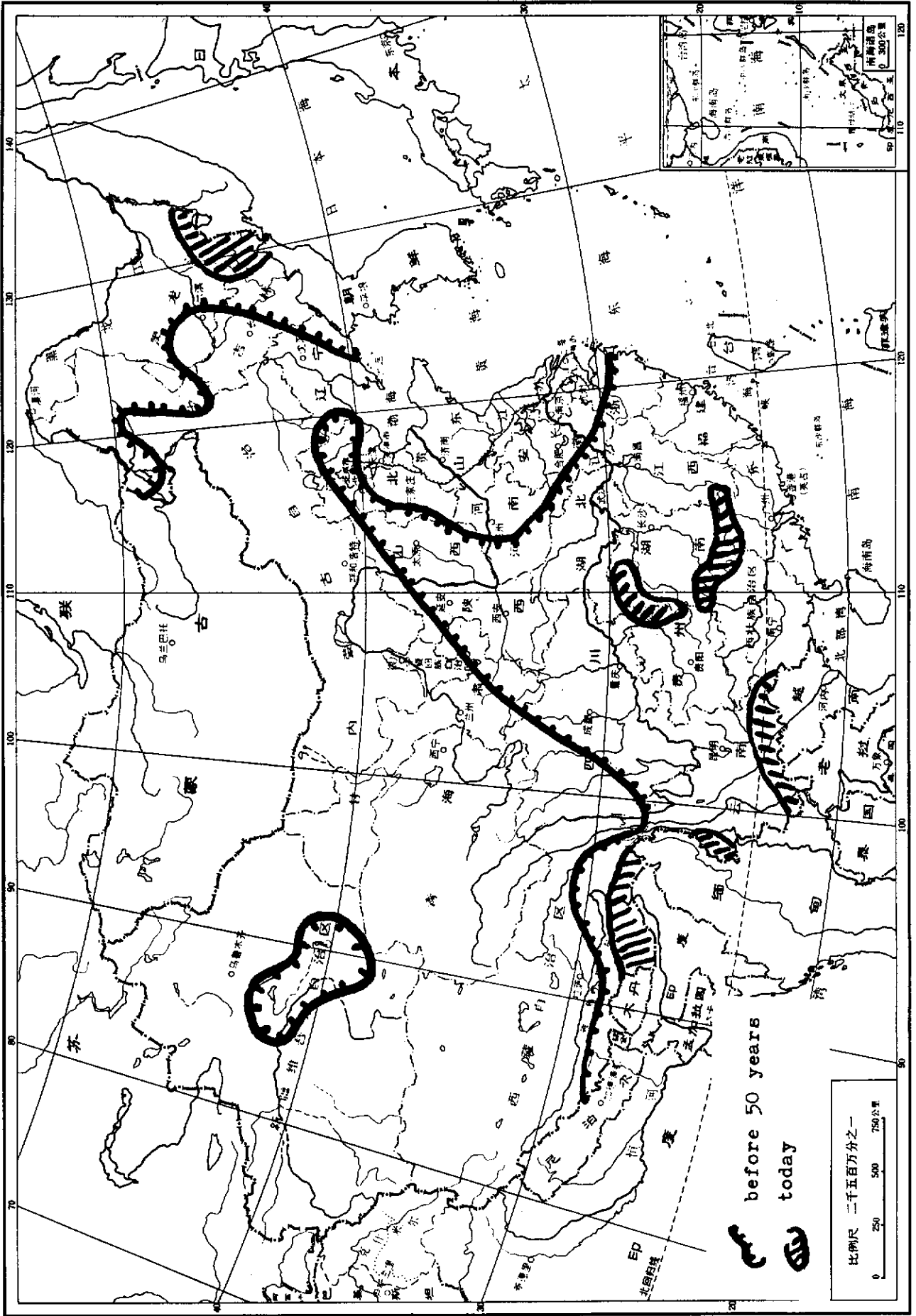
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地理底图

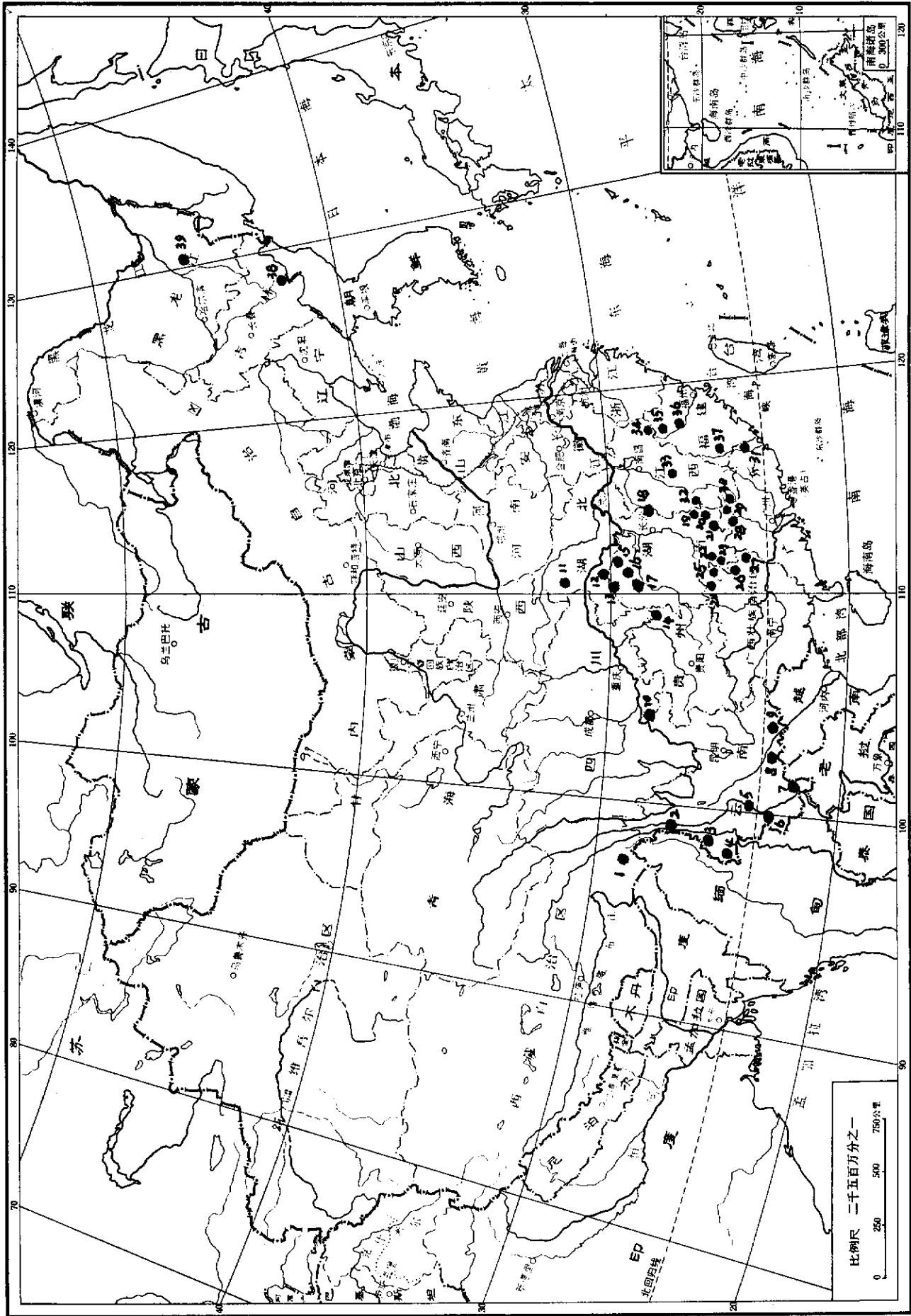


Map of tiger area in China.

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地理底图



Map of Nature Reserves for Tiger's Conservation in China (Up to 1995)

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