

**COEXISTENCE WITH “PEST MONKEYS”: CONFLICT-COPING IN JAPAN**

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Human-macaque relations in Japan have always defied simple definition or categorisation. As part of traditional culture, macaques have been revered by the people as divine messengers, while those practising agriculture have always considered them to be harmful pests. A further level of complexity is added by the practice of using macaques as sources of raw materials for traditional medicine, for in a sense of animism, it is believed that to eat living things is to acquire spiritual power from the component ingredients. Through this talk, I propose to examine the dynamic nature of interactions between man and monkey in Japanese culture. An examination of the historical literature and interview surveys of residents who coexist with macaques clearly demonstrate that there have been contradictory valuations of these animals. People who are adversely affected by the activities of macaques not only complain about the risk or harm from monkeys, but also about the lack of understanding of citizens who do not share their negative experience and of nature conservation institutions that fail to realise the ambivalent status of these wild animals. For people in Japan today, macaques are, by turn, harmful, hateful, frightening, mischievous, and adorable. These divergent perceptions make the presence of the monkeys vivid and real in the country. I argue that, although there has never been a “peaceful” history of coexistence in Japan, it is this kind of cultural diversity that has enabled residents to coexist with a “pest animal”.

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