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HUMAN-MACAQUE INTERACTIONS: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN PERSPECTIVES ON COOPERATION AND CONFLICT

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Common, widespread and ubiquitous are adjectives that immediately spring to mind when describing macaque species. Most successful among the non-human primates in terms of geographical distribution and ecological adaptability, macaques have existed for thousands of years in close contact with modern humans, the only primate more successful than them. In many areas, macaques and humans interact almost daily, and the tone of these interactions ranges from acceptance and tolerance to rancour and hostility on the part of humans. Across Asia, macaques, perhaps more than any other animal species, exemplify the multiple facets of synurbization and the conservation problems of commensal species. The adaptation of wild macaques to urban environments, however, is not a twentieth-century phenomenon; centuries-old literary works attest to the fact that macaques have always been an intrinsic part of human lives and imaginations. They have been and are still used by people as tools of entertainment, as a labour force, as objects of devotion and affection, and, at the same time, as destructive intruders to be removed from the urban neighbourhood or pests that raid crops and damage property. This symposium will focus on studies that explore the various forms of interactions between macaques and humans across Asia, change in human attitudes vis-à-vis macaques over the ages, cultural views on macaques, and finally, human-macaque conflict and its conservation implications.

Keyword: macaques, humans, conflict, coexistence