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"'Tigers are Our Brothers': Understanding Human-Nature Relations in the Mishmi Hills, Northeast India"

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Human-nature relations are diverse, multifaceted and often contradictory, especially the relationships with animals. Mishmi people living on the Sino-India border claim tigers to be their brothers and take credit for tiger protection as they observe taboos against hunting tigers. Drawing on this notion of relatedness with tigers, local residents of the Dibang Valley question the governments' recent plans to declare the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary into Dibang Tiger Reserve and its scientific surveys of tigers and habitat mapping. This paper highlights how Mishmi people relate to tigers and how their understanding of tigers is in contest with versions of state and science, as national property or endangered species. Using in-depth interviews and participant observations in the Dibang Valley, I provide an ethnographic analysis of how different ideas of nature are played out by different actors in Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India. Tiger conservation projects bring these conflicting versions of nature together, creating unexpected encounters between Mishmi, state and scientists. This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of changing notions of nature in the age of globalisation and an increasingly interconnected world. (Text from author's abstract)

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