



# **Kings of the Forest: The Cultural Resilience of Himalayan Hunter-Gatherers**

*Jana Fortier*

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## **Kings of the Forest: The Cultural Resilience of Himalayan Hunter-Gatherers** Jana Fortier

In today's world hunter-gatherer societies struggle with seemingly insurmountable problems: deforestation and encroachment, language loss, political domination by surrounding communities. Will they manage to survive? This book is about one such society living in the monsoon rainforests of western Nepal: the Raute. "Kings of the Forest" explores how this elusive ethnic group, the last hunter-gatherers of the Himalayas, maintains its traditional way of life amidst increasing pressure to assimilate. Author Jana Fortier examines Raute social strategies of survival as they roam the lower Himalayas gathering wild yams and hunting monkeys. Hunting is part of a symbiotic relationship with local Hindu farmers, who find their livelihoods threatened by the monkeys' raids on their crops. Raute hunting helps the Hindus, who consider the monkeys sacred and are reluctant to kill the animals themselves. Fortier explores Raute beliefs about living in the forest and the central importance of foraging in their lives. She discusses Raute identity formation, nomadism, trade relations, and religious beliefs, all of which turn on the foragers' belief in the moral goodness of their unique way of life. The book concludes with a review of issues that have long been important to anthropologists - among them, biocultural diversity and the shift from an evolutionary focus on the ideal hunter-gatherer to an interest in hunter-gatherer diversity. "Kings of the Forest" will be welcomed by readers of anthropology, Asian studies, environmental studies, ecology, cultural geography, and ethnic studies.

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