

Wrestling beetles and ecological wisdom: how insects contribute to the cosmopolitics of Northern Thailand

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Abstrak

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In Northern Thailand, a game that builds upon an uncanny cooperation between human beings and rhinoceros beetles *xylotrupes Gideon* has developed at a high level of refinement and institutionalization. Beetle fighting is even being widely presented as a marker of the local identity and a local ecological wisdom. In this paper, I will show how it is not so much the coleoptera that symbolize a harmonious connection built by human populations with their natural environment, but rather a question of what happens in the intimate relationship between human beings and insects. Following the way players build on the great alterity between them and the insects, this article will address how the technical and conceptual handling of the beetles shapes pragmatically an original cosmology. It will pay specific attention to the ways players try to connect with their coleopteran by projecting human traits on them and adopting their communication mode. Through these, we can examine how beetles force humans to reflect on their engagement in the world, up to the point where it brings this game onto the stage of political ecology.