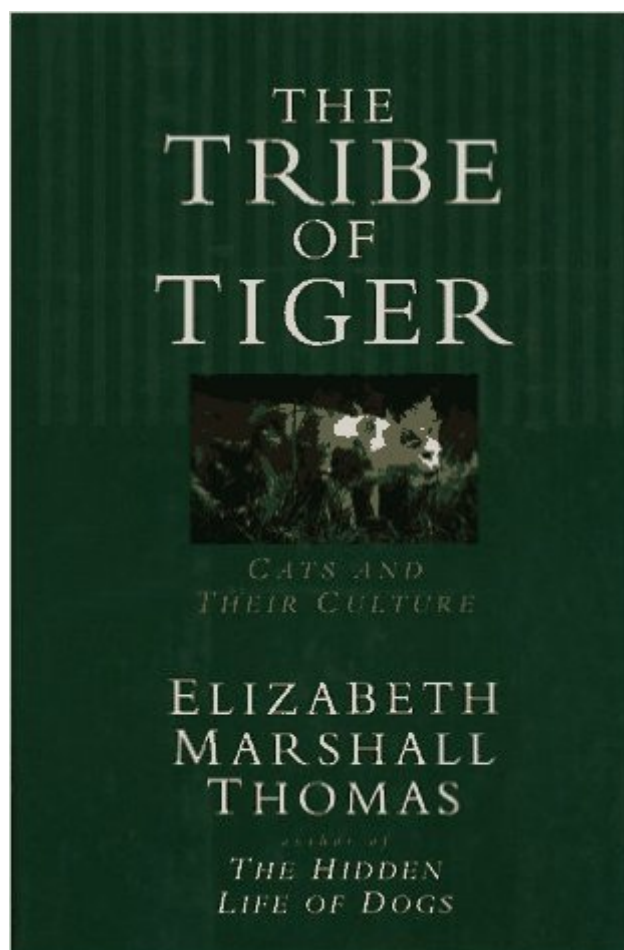


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The Tribe Of Tiger: Cats And Their Culture



Synopsis

The author of *The Hidden Life of Dogs* investigates the mysteries of the cat world and the history of cat culture, examining what cats are--and who they think they are--in relation to humans. 150,000 first printing. Tour.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is without doubt one of the best books on animal behavior I have ever read. What Thomas does that others do not (and often cannot) is three-fold: First, using her long experience with animals both domestic and wild, she INTERPRETS their behavior from her observations. Most of us do that, but scientists in general do not. They cannot because such interpretations, unless established scientifically, would be labeled "anthropomorphic," and prove dangerous to their careers. You and I interpret the behavior of our animals, but most of us have only a small fraction of the experience that Elizabeth Thomas has. She has spent decades in the wild, especially in Africa, studying animals and their interactions with humans. This interaction between humans and their way of seeing the world and that of cats and their way of seeing the world--our differing "cultures" as Thomas rightly uses the term--is the second thing she does so very well. Her stories about how the Ju/wasi people, for example, treat lions and how the lions treat them--with mutual respect--and how that differs from the way non-indigenous people treat lions is just fascinating to read. She describes the Ju/wasi talking to a couple of lions, telling them firmly and politely that a certain fallen wildebeest was theirs and that the lions should leave. After listening, the lions left. (p.118) And how the Ju/wasi behaved if

by chance they should come upon a lion in the wild: the person would take an oblique angle away from the lion and walk with purpose, keeping the lion in sight but not staring. Thomas discovered that a lion meeting people sometimes would do the same! The third thing that Thomas does extraordinary well is to use her novelist's sense of description and IMAGINE how the cat is feeling.

When I first caught sight of this book it looked very enthralling. I am a huge lover of cats and of animals in general. However, I left somewhat disappointed. It seemed to me that there was insufficient evidence to back up the numerous claims she makes, many of which seemed based on anecdotal evidence. I appreciate her not wanting to bog the book down, but I do think that more evidence was needed to back up many of her claims, particularly in the instances where she was more forceful about her claims. She could have done this by simply by providing more examples. I'm not saying most of them aren't valid claims, she just needed to provide more evidence. Half of the book relates her family's experiences among African bushman in the 1950s and 1980s. In the middle of the book I was uncertain whether I was reading a book on cats or on the culture of the African bushmen (much of which was very intriguing indeed, but it was just not what I wanted from this particular book.) I loved her notion that cats have their own culture. However her book tried to awkwardly force the cat culture into the human cultural mould, as though the cat culture in and of itself was not valid unless directly paralleled to that of humans. Also, as an animal lover, I did not like the episode in which she joined a researcher whose method it was to capture pumas for radio collaring by having his dogs tree them. In the episode she recounts one of his dogs killing one of a young puma mother's kittens--not exactly what I wanted to read. After the kitten was killed the author came back later the SAME day with the researcher, who used a gentler dog to tree the remaining kittens as the mother paced about from afar. They were then safely fitted with radio collars.

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