

Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype (Studies of Modern Japan)

David G. Goodman, Masanori Miyazawa

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Shortly before releasing deadly sarin gas on the Tokyo subway in March 1995, the Aum Shinrikyo religious cult published a vicious 95-page antisemitic tract that declared war on its Jewish archenemy.

The gassing of the Tokyo subway was the culmination of a century of Japanese theorizing about Jews, an important part of which has been antisemitic. In recent years, books blaming Jews for everything from the designs on Japanese currency to the 1995 Kobe earthquake have appeared, and some have sold millions of copies. What explains this virtual obsession with Jews in Japan?a country that has no Jews?

In this highly original cultural and intellectual history, David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa show that present-day Japanese attitudes toward Jews are the result of a process of accretion that began nearly 200 years ago. Skillfully tracing the historical development of Japanese images of Jews against the background of the development of modern Japanese culture, they describe how these images reflect the great themes of modern Japanese intellectual life. Spanning fields ranging from politics to poetry, the authors demonstrate how Japanese attitudes toward Jews have had real political and cultural consequences, culminating in the 1995 subway gassing and resonating into the twenty-first century.



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