



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

By David G. Goodman, Masanori Miyazawa

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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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### Editorial Review

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Why are the Japanese so obsessed with Jews when there is no visible Jewish presence in Japan? How did anti-Semitism become so prominent a part of Japanese thought and anti-Semitic rhetoric so pervasive in the media? Goodman, a professor of Japanese literature, and Miyazawa, a history professor, have written an often surprising and consistently dismaying history of Japan's negative attitude toward Jews. Japanese anti-Semitism is based on the "persistent, chimerical belief in a global Jewish conspiracy bent on destroying Japan." Curiously, this paranoia is wedded to an odd fascination with the idea of common ancestry between Jews and the Japanese and an identification with the Jews of the Holocaust. Goodman and Miyazawa attempt to explain these seemingly opposite points of view by examining various influential and wildly popular Japanese anti-Semitic books and other texts. They begin with discussions of Japan's deeply entrenched xenophobia, periods of spiritual crisis, and carefully orchestrated nationalism, and then consider the aftermath of World War II and the economic surge that has left many middle-class Japanese overworked, angry, and eager for a scapegoat. Goodman and Miyazawa rate high praise for explicating this sickeningly familiar tale and defining its implications. *Donna Seaman*

### Review

An enlightening and thorough examination of Japanese notions of the Jews. . . . *Jews in the Japanese Mind* is not a book about Jews. It is a book about being different, about not being Japanese, about the vast array of people with whom Japan still struggles to come to terms. (*The New York Times*)

This is a riveting study of one of the most surprising phenomena in the history of the Jews. Based on extensive and scrupulous scholarship, Goodman and Miyazawa have revealed how the mythological Jew can play a central role in a culture that has no Jews. This strange obsession reveals fascinating and often frightening dimensions of modern Japan. (David Biale, Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union)

By studying antisemitism and its reverse, philosemitism, Goodman and Miyazawa show that Japanese ideas about Jews stem directly from Japan's modern cultural experience. This unique study is an absorbing essay on relativism and universalism in the contemporary life of the mind in Japan. (Tom Havens, University of California, Berkeley)

A serious, thoroughly researched scholarly work that not just explains the superficial side of Japan's bizarre fascination with "Jewish" themes, but presents a balanced historical survey of Japan's encounter with Judaism from the end of the Tokugawa period to the establishment of a Jewish Cultural Center in Tokyo [in 1994]. (*The Instrumentalist*)

### About the Author

**David G. Goodman** is Professor of Japanese Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **Masanori Miyazawa** is Professor of History at Doshisha Women's College in Kyoto.

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