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The Lost Wolves of Japan

By Brett L. Walker

University of Washington Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 360 pages. Dimensions: 8.8in. x 6.0in. x 0.9in. Many Japanese once revered the wolf as Oguchi no Magami, or Large-Mouthed Pure God, but as Japan began its modern transformation wolves lost their otherworldly status and became noxious animals that needed to be killed. By 1905 they had disappeared from the country. In this spirited and absorbing narrative, Brett Walker takes a deep look at the scientific, cultural, and environmental dimensions of wolf extinction in Japan and tracks changing attitudes toward nature through Japan's long history. Grain farmers once worshiped wolves at shrines and left food offerings near their dens, beseeching the elusive canine to protect their crops from the sharp hooves and voracious appetites of wild boars and deer. Talismans and charms adorned with images of wolves protected against fire, disease, and other calamities and brought fertility to agrarian communities and to couples hoping to have children. The Ainu people believed that they were born from the union of a wolflike creature and a goddess. In the eighteenth century, wolves were seen as rabid man-killers in many parts of Japan. Highly ritualized wolf hunts were instigated to cleanse the landscape of what many considered...



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