

# japanese biker gangs

Japanese biker gangs have long been a fascinating and often misunderstood aspect of Japan's subculture. Known as "bōsōzoku," these motorcycle gangs emerged in the post-war era and have evolved into a unique phenomenon characterized by their distinctive styles, rebellious attitudes, and complex social structures. This article explores the history, culture, and societal impact of Japanese biker gangs, delving into their origins, their role in Japanese society, and the challenges they face today.

## Historical Background

### Post-War Origins

The origins of Japanese biker gangs can be traced back to the post-World War II era, when the country was undergoing significant changes. As Japan rebuilt itself, a youth culture began to emerge, influenced by American styles and music.

- Influence of American Culture: American soldiers stationed in Japan brought with them a love for motorcycles, which quickly captivated the Japanese youth.
- Socioeconomic Factors: Economic hardships and a desire for freedom led many young people to form groups, often centered around shared interests, such as motorcycles.

By the 1950s, these groups coalesced into more organized gangs, with members adopting the name "bōsōzoku," which translates to "violent running" or "speeding."

## Evolution Through the Decades

As the years progressed, bōsōzoku evolved both in terms of structure and culture.

- 1960s-70s: The rise of bōsōzoku coincided with the counter-culture movements around the world, and these gangs began to adopt more flamboyant styles, including brightly colored uniforms and elaborate motorcycle modifications.
- 1980s: The bōsōzoku culture reached its zenith, with thousands of members participating in large gatherings and races. Their presence became a significant aspect of youth culture, often romanticized in media.
- 1990s-2000s: The influence of bōsōzoku began to decline as law enforcement cracked down on the gangs, leading to a decrease in their visibility and numbers.

## Cultural Characteristics

## Fashion and Identity

One of the most striking aspects of Japanese biker gangs is their distinctive fashion, which serves as a visual representation of their identity.

- Uniforms: Members often wear customized jackets adorned with patches, depicting their gang name, logos, and sometimes artwork that reflects their beliefs or interests.
- Motorcycles: Bōsōzoku bikes are typically heavily modified to reflect the gang's aesthetic. Common modifications include:
  - Excessively loud exhaust systems
  - Custom paint jobs featuring bold colors and designs
  - Extended frames and exaggerated handlebars

This attention to style not only serves as a method of self-expression but also fosters a sense of belonging among members.

## Music and Subculture

Music plays a vital role in the bōsōzoku culture, serving as both a rallying cry and a means of expression.

- Genres: Rockabilly, punk, and pop music are prevalent among bōsōzoku members, often reflecting themes of rebellion and freedom.
- Influence: The music scene surrounding bōsōzoku has influenced fashion trends and art, creating a vibrant subculture that resonates with youth across Japan.

## Social Dynamics and Organization

### Hierarchy and Structure

Japanese biker gangs often have a hierarchical structure that reinforces loyalty and camaraderie among members.

- Leadership: Each gang typically has a leader (known as "shacho") who makes decisions and represents the gang.
- Ranks: Members may hold specific ranks, which dictate their responsibilities and privileges within the gang.
- Initiation Rituals: New members often undergo initiation rituals, which can vary from gang to gang, but usually involve proving loyalty and commitment to the group.

This structured environment fosters a sense of brotherhood, with members often viewing each other as family.

## Activities and Community Impact

Bōsōzoku gangs engage in a variety of activities that can both positively and negatively impact their communities.

- Rallies and Gatherings: These events often draw large crowds, showcasing motorcycle culture and providing a sense of community among participants.
- Charity Events: Some gangs participate in charitable activities, collecting donations for causes such as disaster relief or local community support.
- Illegal Activities: On the flip side, bōsōzoku gangs have been associated with illegal activities, including street racing, public disturbances, and clashes with law enforcement.

The duality of their impact on society makes the presence of bōsōzoku both celebrated and condemned.

## Law Enforcement and Government Response

### Crackdowns and Legal Measures

As bōsōzoku gangs gained notoriety for their reckless behavior, law enforcement and government authorities began to take action.

- Increased Surveillance: Police departments across Japan increased surveillance of bōsōzoku members, particularly during large gatherings and events.
- Legislation: The government implemented laws aimed at suppressing gang activity, including stricter regulations on noise levels from modified motorcycles and penalties for illegal street racing.

These efforts have led to a significant decline in the visibility and activities of bōsōzoku gangs over the years.

### Changing Perceptions

Despite the challenges they face, perceptions of bōsōzoku have begun to shift in recent years.

- Cultural Appreciation: There is a growing interest in bōsōzoku culture, with some viewing it as a legitimate form of self-expression and an important part of Japan's social fabric.
- Media Representation: Films, documentaries, and music have begun to portray bōsōzoku in a more nuanced light, highlighting their struggles and the positive aspects of their culture.

## Modern-Day Bōsōzoku

## Challenges and Adaptations

In contemporary Japan, bōsōzoku gangs are facing numerous challenges that threaten their existence.

- Declining Membership: Many traditional gangs are struggling to attract new members as societal values shift and interest in motorcycle culture wanes.
- Changing Interests: Younger generations are more inclined towards digital entertainment and online communities, making the traditional biker lifestyle less appealing.

In response to these challenges, some gangs have adapted by embracing social media and modern marketing techniques to reach a broader audience.

## Legacy and Future

The future of Japanese biker gangs remains uncertain, but their legacy is undeniable.

- Cultural Influence: Bōsōzoku have left an indelible mark on Japanese pop culture, inspiring art, music, and fashion.
- Community Resilience: Many gangs continue to foster a sense of community and belonging, maintaining their relevance in an ever-evolving society.

As they navigate the complexities of modern life, Japanese biker gangs will continue to be a fascinating lens through which to examine youth culture, rebellion, and identity in Japan.

In conclusion, Japanese biker gangs represent a rich tapestry of history, culture, and social dynamics. From their post-war origins to their modern-day adaptations, the bōsōzoku phenomenon encapsulates the spirit of rebellion and individuality that resonates with many young people. While facing challenges from law enforcement and changing societal norms, these gangs continue to evolve, ensuring that their legacy endures in the vibrant landscape of Japanese culture.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the origins of Japanese biker gangs?

Japanese biker gangs, known as 'bōsōzoku', originated in the post-World War II era when young people formed groups to rebel against societal norms and express their individuality through customized motorcycles.

### What distinguishes bōsōzoku from other motorcycle clubs?

Bōsōzoku are characterized by their loud modified motorcycles, flamboyant clothing, and often aggressive behavior. They typically do not follow the traditional club structure seen in Western motorcycle gangs.

## How do Japanese biker gangs participate in street culture?

Bōsōzoku are deeply embedded in Japanese street culture, often seen participating in illegal street racing, performing stunts, and organizing large gatherings, which can attract law enforcement attention.

## What role do aesthetics play in bōsōzoku culture?

Aesthetics are crucial in bōsōzoku culture, with members often customizing their bikes with vibrant colors, elaborate decorations, and personalized designs, reflecting their identity and creativity.

## How has the perception of bōsōzoku changed over the years?

Initially seen as rebellious youth, bōsōzoku have increasingly been viewed as criminal organizations due to their involvement in illegal activities, leading to stricter laws and crackdowns on their gatherings.

## What impact has media had on the portrayal of Japanese biker gangs?

Media portrayals, including films and manga, have romanticized bōsōzoku, often depicting them as anti-heroes, which can glamorize their lifestyle while overshadowing the more troubling aspects of their activities.

## Are there any prominent bōsōzoku gangs in Japan?

Yes, some well-known bōsōzoku gangs include the 'Kanto Rengo' and 'Gokuraku Densetsu', each with their own unique identities and styles that contribute to the diversity within the bōsōzoku culture.

## What are some current trends in the bōsōzoku scene?

Recent trends include a revival of interest in vintage bikes, increased social media presence for showcasing custom builds, and a growing emphasis on community events that promote a positive image of biker culture.

## Japanese Biker Gangs

**japanese biker gangs:** *Bosozoku* Estevan Oriol, 2021 Estevan Oriol is a Mexican-American photographer made legendary by his work featuring brilliant black and white photos of Los Angeles urban, low-rider and gang culture. His new book, *Bosozoku*, collects both color and black and white photos featuring the Japanese youth motorcycle subculture known as 'Bosozoku'. Devotees ride insanely customized motorcycles, mainly Japanese road bikes, embellished with extravagant paint jobs and super-modified, often illegal mufflers. Bosozoku motorcycles offer an aesthetic nod to American chopper culture, but with a highly unique look found only in Japan. This collection is a culmination of Oriol's photographs captured during many trips to Japan over the past 20 years. This celebrated photographer's oeuvre also includes portraits of celebrities such as Eminem, Kim

Kardashian, Blink 182, Rancid, Cypress Hill and many others.

**japanese biker gangs:** *Bosozoku* Masayuki Yoshinaga, 2002 In *Bosozoku*, Japan's leading maverick photographer reveals a unique vision of the notorious Japanese bike gangs, linked to the underground activities of the Yazuka. They are the reality of Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*. A former member of the Bosozoku himself, Masayuki Yoshinaga has revealed hidden secrets of Japan's biker gangs.

**japanese biker gangs: Kamikaze Biker** Ikuya Sato, 1998-06-20 In this firsthand account of high-risk car and motorcycle racing in Japan, Ikuya Sato shows how affluence and consumerism have spawned various experimental and deviant life-styles among youth. *Kamikaze Biker* offers an intriguing look at a form of delinquency in a country traditionally thought to be devoid of social problems. Ikuya Sato's *Kamikaze Biker* is an exceptionally fine ethnographic analysis of a recurrent form of Japanese collective youth deviance. . . . Sato has contributed a work of value to a wide range of scholarly audiences.—Jack Katz, *Contemporary Sociology* A must for anyone interested in Japan, juvenile delinquency and/or youth behavior in general, or the impact of affluence on society.—Choice The volume provides a sophisticated . . . discussion of changes happening in Japanese society in the early 1980s. As such, it serves as a window on the 1990s and beyond.—Ross Mouer, *Asian Studies Review* *Kamikaze Biker* is a superlative study, one that might help liberate American social science from the simplistic notion that behavior not directly contributing to economic productivity should be summarily dismissed as 'dangerous' and 'deviant.' —Los Angeles Times Book Review

**japanese biker gangs:** *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno* Izumi Evers, Patrick Macias, 2010-07-01 Japanese schoolgirl fashions and subcultures have sprung up, burned out, mutated, and evolved into a pop culture phenomenon gone global—from Gwen Stefani's Harajuku Girls to Gothic Lolita-fueled manga and the deadly schoolgirl in *Kill Bill*, it's no wonder that international fashion designers look to the streets of Tokyo for fresh inspiration. This playful and thoroughly researched handbook examines the key styles and subcultures past and present: sailor-suited gangsters, Pippi Longstockings risen from the dead, girls in blackface, teens sporting giant hamster costumes, and more. Each fashion profile is packed with photos and illustrations, history, ideal boyfriends, and must-have items. Also included are a gatefold evolutionary fashion chart, resources, and makeup tips. At last, an in-depth guide to what the girls are wearing—and why on earth they're wearing it.

**japanese biker gangs:** *Yakuza* David E. Kaplan, Alec Dubro, 2012-10-22 *Yakuza* tells the story of Japan's remarkable crime syndicates, from their feudal start as bands of medieval outlaws to their emergence as billion-dollar investors in real estate, big business, art, and more. This 25th Anniversary edition has an updated preface from the authors and remains the definitive study of Japan's crime syndicates.

**japanese biker gangs:** *The Gendered Motorcycle* Esperanza Miyake, 2018-06-14 What happens to gender at 120mph? Are Harley-Davidsons more masculine than Yamahas? *The Gendered Motorcycle* answers such questions through a critical examination of motorcycles in film, advertising and television. Whilst bikers and biker cultures have been explored previously, the motorcycle itself has remained largely under-theorised, especially in relation to gender. Esperanza Miyake reveals how representations of motorcycles can produce different gendered bodies, identities, spaces and practices. This interdisciplinary book offers new and critical ways to think about gender and motorcycles, and will interest scholars and students of gender, technology and visual cultures, as well as motorcycle industry practitioners and motorcycle enthusiasts.

**japanese biker gangs: Film Out of Bounds** Matthew Edwards, 2018-07-24 Operating outside the commercial boundaries of Hollywood cinema, alternative and independent filmmakers have much to offer the discriminating viewer. Yet they struggle for a place in the popular culture, and even more for recognition by the scholarly community. The specific aim of this book is to provide much-needed critical examination of titles, particularly those by British filmmakers. In-depth commentary from such acclaimed writers as Maitland McDonagh, Jasper Sharp, Johannes Schonherr and Marcus Stiglegger considers filmmakers who work at the very heart of the independent medium, giving the reader specific insight into alternate cinema and the struggles its filmmakers

endure. Featured are interviews with both rising and established filmmakers, including the infamous Guy Maddin and Herschell Gordon Lewis. Finally, this collection of interviews and essays boasts a 20th anniversary retrospective on the British cult classic *The Company of the Wolves*, complete with an exclusive interview with director Neil Jordan.

**japanese biker gangs: Biker Gangs and Organized Crime** Thomas Barker, 2010-04-06 This book examines the reported criminal behavior of the entire spectrum of 1% biker clubs and members. It identifies the clubs whose members have been involved in criminal behavior and classifies their behaviors as individual, group, or club- sponsored/condoned behavior. While other books examine the criminal exploits of one or more of what are called the Big Five biker clubs because of their size and sophistication, or the sensational crimes of lesser known 1% biker clubs or club members, this book pays attention to the criminal activities of individuals, groups and chapters of other clubs as well. The book is based on journalistic accounts and autobiographies of former and present members of biker clubs, academic/scholarly works, law enforcement/government reports, articles from newspapers and biker web sites, and a content analysis of federal and state court cases regarding bikers and motorcycle clubs. Text enhanced with numerous photos and figures.

**japanese biker gangs: Ninja Vs. Gokudo 3** Shinsuke Kondo, 2024-09-24 The yakuza declare their next battle against the ninja on Tokyo's Teito Highway, the stomping grounds of Japan's legendary biker gangs. With home field advantage, along with a fleet of 30,000 custom made cars, the yakuza seem invincible. In comparison, the five-member ninja team have a herculean challenge, but they've got overwhelming powers of their own. Can they avoid being roadkill and eradicate the evil causing the deadly pileup? Massacre up ahead on the expressway of hell!

**japanese biker gangs: Japanese Cinema and Punk** Mark Player, 2025-05-15 In *Japanese Cinema and Punk*, Mark Player examines how the do-it-yourself ethos of punk empowered a new generation of Japanese filmmakers during a period of crisis and change in Japan's film industry. Drawing on rare materials and first-hand interviews with key figures from the *jishu eiga* (self-made film) tradition, including Ishii Gakuryu (formerly Ishii Sogo), Yamamoto Masashi, Tsukamoto Shin'ya, and Fukui Shozin, Player explores how punk's bricolage style was leveraged to create exciting intermedial film aesthetics. These aesthetics were influenced by rock music, graffiti art, street performance, handmade animation, television, and other mass media. By considering the practical, phenomenological, and political ramifications of combining diverse media elements, Player offers in-depth analyses of films such as *Burst City* (1982), *Robinson's Garden* (1987), *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989), and more. He further traces the changing sociocultural position of Japan's punk generation throughout the 1980s—from its euphoric early-80s peak to the growing disillusionment caused by its mainstream co-optation and convergence.

**japanese biker gangs: Japanese New York** Olga Kanzaki Sooudi, 2014-10-31 Spend time in New York City and, soon enough, you will encounter some of the Japanese nationals who live and work there—young English students, office workers, painters, and hairstylists. New York City, one of the world's most vibrant and creative cities, is also home to one of the largest overseas Japanese populations in the world. Among them are artists and designers who produce cutting-edge work in fields such as design, fashion, music, and art. Part of the so-called “creative class” and a growing segment of the neoliberal economy, they are usually middle-class and college-educated. They move to New York for anywhere from a few years to several decades in the hope of realizing dreams and aspirations unavailable to them in Japan. Yet the creative careers they desire are competitive, and many end up working illegally in precarious, low paying jobs. Though they often migrate without fixed plans for return, nearly all eventually do, and their migrant trajectories are punctuated by visits home. *Japanese New York* offers an intimate, ethnographic portrait of these Japanese creative migrants living and working in NYC. At its heart is a universal question—how do adults reinvent their lives? In the absence of any material or social need, what makes it worthwhile for people to abandon middle-class comfort and home for an unfamiliar and insecure life? Author Olga Sooudi explores these questions in four different venues patronized by New York's Japanese: a grocery store and restaurant, where hopeful migrants work part-time as they pursue their ambitions; a fashion

designer's atelier and an art gallery, both sites of migrant aspirations. As Sooudi's migrant artists toil and network, biding time until they "make it" in their chosen industries, their optimism is complicated by the material and social limitations of their lives. The story of Japanese migrants in NYC is both a story about Japan and a way of examining Japan from beyond its borders. The Japanese presence abroad, a dynamic process involving the moving, settling, and return to Japan of people and their cultural products, is still underexplored. Sooudi's work will help fill this lacuna and will contribute to international migration studies, to the study of contemporary Japanese culture and society, and to the study of Japanese youth, while shedding light on what it means to be a creative migrant worker in the global city today.

**japanese biker gangs: Japanese Motorcycle Gangs "Bosozoku" Logos** Charles Deroyan, 2019  
Japanese Bikers Logos compiled by Charles Deroyan.

**japanese biker gangs: Mobilizing Japanese Youth** Christopher Gerteis, 2021-07-15  
In *Mobilizing Japanese Youth*, Christopher Gerteis examines how non-state institutions in Japan—left-wing radicals and right-wing activists—attempted to mold the political consciousness of the nation's first postwar generation, which by the late 1960s were the demographic majority of voting-age adults. Gerteis argues that socially constructed aspects of class and gender preconfigured the forms of political rhetoric and social organization that both the far-right and far-left deployed to mobilize postwar, further exacerbating the levels of social and political alienation expressed by young blue- and pink-collar working men and women well into the 1970s, illustrated by high-profile acts of political violence committed by young Japanese in this era. As Gerteis shows, Japanese youth were profoundly influenced by a transnational flow of ideas and people that constituted a unique historical convergence of pan-Asianism, Mao-ism, black nationalism, anti-imperialism, anticommunism, neo-fascism, and ultra-nationalism. *Mobilizing Japanese Youth* carefully unpacks their formative experiences and the social, cultural, and political challenges to both the hegemonic culture and the authority of the Japanese state that engulfed them. The 1950s-style mass-mobilization efforts orchestrated by organized labor could not capture their political imagination in the way that more extreme ideologies could. By focusing on how far-right and far-left organizations attempted to reach-out to young radicals, especially those of working-class origins, this book offers a new understanding of successive waves of youth radicalism since 1960.

**japanese biker gangs: Historical Dictionary of Japanese Cinema** Jasper Sharp, 2011-10-13  
The cinema of Japan predates that of Russia, China, and India, and it has been able to sustain itself without outside assistance for over a century. Japanese cinema's long history of production and considerable output has seen films made in a variety of genres, including melodramas, romances, gangster movies, samurai movies, musicals, horror films, and monster films. It has also produced some of the most famous names in the history of cinema: Akira Kurosawa, Hayao Miyazaki, Beat Takeshi, Toshiro Mifune, Godzilla, The Ring, Akira, Rashomon, and Seven Samurai. The *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Cinema* is an introduction to and overview of the long history of Japanese cinema. It aims to provide an entry point for those with little or no familiarity with the subject, while it is organized so that scholars in the field will also be able to use it to find specific information. This is done through a detailed chronology, an introductory essay, and appendixes of films, film studios, directors, and performers. The cross-referenced dictionary entries cover key films, genres, studios, directors, performers, and other individuals. This book is an excellent access point for students, researchers, and anyone wanting to know more about Japanese cinema.

**japanese biker gangs: Greatest One-Percenter Myths, Mysteries, and Rumors Revealed** Bill Hayes, 2016-05-09  
Get the straight facts on the legends and events that surround outlaw motorcycle clubs. Not everything is as it seems when the media is involved. Pretty much everything the world has ever heard about one-percenter motorcycle clubs has been pure, unadulterated lies. Take the so-called Hollister riot of 1947 that started it all. LIFE magazine convinced America that what Hunter Thompson called The Menace was about to ride into town spewing rage and 30-weight motor oil, and America believed it. So what really happened in Hollister? *Greatest One-Percenter Myths, Mysteries, and Rumors Revealed* divulges the truth about that incident and many more

legendary events, including Charles Manson's desire for a biker army, what really happened to the Easy Rider bikes, and an examination of the mystery of the Waco shootings. The truth will be revealed, but only if you crack the spine on this book and read the real story. Topics covered in this book include the following: Lost Lore of the Laughlin River Run The Straight Satans and Charles Manson Inside the Heads of the Infiltrators The Growth of the Three-Piece Patch in Red China The Mystery of the Easy Rider Bikes Blunders Down Under Women in the Wild: Mamas, Sheep, Ol' Ladies, and Lies Purple Wings: Codes, Secrets, and Anti-Everything Acronyms The Holiness of Hollister, the Sins of the Scribes The Strange Rise and Fall of Japan's Bōsōzoku Putin's Angels: Throwing the Separation of MC and State to the Wolves Who Really Hatched Easy Rider? Confessions of Murder on National Television "Can You Guys Ride?": Giving the Cast of Sons of Anarchy Their Keys Waco: The Biggest Mystery of All Don't believe everything the media has been telling you about 1%-er motorcycle clubs. Greatest One-Percenter Myths, Mysteries, and Rumors has the straight facts.

**japanese biker gangs: Japanese Culture Through Videogames** Rachael Hutchinson, 2019-05-28 Examining a wide range of Japanese videogames, including arcade fighting games, PC-based strategy games and console JRPGs, this book assesses their cultural significance and shows how gameplay and context can be analyzed together to understand videogames as a dynamic mode of artistic expression. Well-known titles such as Final Fantasy, Metal Gear Solid, Street Fighter and Katamari Damacy are evaluated in detail, showing how ideology and critique are conveyed through game narrative and character design as well as user interface, cabinet art, and peripherals. This book also considers how 'Japan' has been packaged for domestic and overseas consumers, and how Japanese designers have used the medium to express ideas about home and nation, nuclear energy, war and historical memory, social breakdown and bioethics. Placing each title in its historical context, Hutchinson ultimately shows that videogames are a relatively recent but significant site where cultural identity is played out in modern Japan. Comparing Japanese videogames with their American counterparts, as well as other media forms, such as film, manga and anime, Japanese Culture Through Videogames will be useful to students and scholars of Japanese culture and society, as well as Game Studies, Media Studies and Japanese Studies more generally.

**japanese biker gangs: The Rough Guide to Japan** Rough Guides, 2017-09-19 This in-depth coverage of Japan's attractions, sights, and restaurants takes you to the most rewarding spots-from the cutting-edge modernism of Tokyo, the history and culture of Kyoto, to the heights of Mt. Fuji-and stunning color photography brings the nation to life. The locally based Rough Guides author team introduces the best places to stop and explore, and provides reliable insider tips on topics such as driving the roads, taking walking tours, or visiting local landmarks. You'll find special coverage of history, art, architecture, and literature, and detailed information on the best markets and shopping for each area in this fascinating country. The Rough Guide to Japan also unearths the best restaurants, nightlife, and places to stay, from backpacker hostels to beachfront villas and boutique hotels, and color-coded maps feature every sight and listing. Make the most of your time with The Rough Guide to Japan.

**japanese biker gangs: "I'm Just a Comic Book Boy"** Christopher B. Field, Keegan Lannon, Michael David MacBride, 2019-03-06 Comics and the punk movement are inextricably linked--each has a foundational do-it-yourself ethos and a nonconformist spirit defiant of authority. This collection of new essays provides for the first time a thorough analysis of the intersections between comics and punk. The contributors expand the discussion beyond the familiar U.S. and UK scenes to include the influence punk has had on comics produced in other countries, such as Spain and Turkey.

**japanese biker gangs: Foreign Workers and Law Enforcement in Japan** Wolfgang Herbert, 2010-11-01 This is a detailed study of the extent to which an increased influx of foreign workers is a threat to law and order in the context of the data-generating process of police statistics and the media coverage of crimes committed by foreigners. It shows that a general mood in which foreign workers are viewed as potential danger to Japanese society protects the criminalization of foreign

illegal migrant workers. The work begins by tracing the upsurge of illegal foreign workers in Japan. It builds a social profile of these illegals showing that because of fear of expulsion, lack of knowledge of the law and over-dependence on employer and workplace, their ability to avail themselves off the protection of the law is negligible, and they are always at risk of becoming victims to multiple exploitation.

**japanese biker gangs: Dangerous Games** Joseph Laycock, 2015-02-12 The 1980s saw the peak of a moral panic over fantasy role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. A coalition of moral entrepreneurs that included representatives from the Christian Right, the field of psychology, and law enforcement claimed that these games were not only psychologically dangerous but an occult religion masquerading as a game. *Dangerous Games* explores both the history and the sociological significance of this panic. Fantasy role-playing games do share several functions in common with religion. However, religion is a socially constructed world of shared meaning can also be compared to a fantasy role-playing game. In fact, the claims of the moral entrepreneurs, in which they presented themselves as heroes battling a dark conspiracy, often resembled the very games of imagination they condemned as evil. By attacking the imagination, they preserved the taken-for-granted status of their own socially constructed reality. Interpreted in this way, the panic over fantasy-role playing games yields new insights about how humans play and together construct and maintain meaningful worlds. Laycock's clear and accessible writing ensures that *Dangerous Games* will be required reading for those with an interest in religion, popular culture, and social behavior, both in the classroom and beyond.

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