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Sommario/riassunto

Demystifying the Sacred: Blasphemy and Violence from the French Revolution to Today offers a much-needed analysis of a subject that historians have largely ignored, yet that has considerable relevance for today's world: the powerful connection that exists between offences against the sacred and different forms of violence. Drawing on cases from revolutionary France to the Russia of Vladimir Putin, the international authors probe the nature and agency of local blasphemy accusations, the historical and legal framework in which they were expressed and the violence, both physical and symbolic, accompanying them. In doing so, the volume reveals how cultures of blasphemy, and related acts of heresy, apostasy and sacrilege, were a companion to or acted as a trigger for physical action but also a form of how violence was experienced. More generally, it shows the importance of religious sensibilities in modern society and the violent potential contained in criticism or ridicule of the sacred and secular alike.