

THE WORSHIP OF CONFUCIUS IN JAPAN

James McMullen

How has Confucius, quintessentially and symbolically Chinese, been received throughout Japanese history? *The Worship of Confucius in Japan* provides the first overview of the richly documented and colorful Japanese versions of the East Asian rite known as the *sckiten* or *sckisai*, in which Confucius and his followers were venerated. The original Chinese ceremony embodied assumptions about sociopolitical order different from those of Japan. Over more than thirteen centuries, Japanese in power expressed a persistently ambivalent response to the ritual's challenges and often tended to interpret the ceremony in cultural rather than political terms.

Like many rituals, the *sckiten* self-referentially reinterpreted earlier versions of itself. James McMullen adopts a diachronic and comparative perspective: by focusing on the relationship of the ritual to political authority in the premodern period, he sheds fresh light on Sino-Japanese cultural relations and on the distinctive political, cultural, and social history of Confucianism in Japan. Successive sections of *The Worship of Confucius in Japan* trace the vicissitudes of the ceremony through two major cycles of adoption, modification, and decline, first in ancient and medieval Japan, then in the late feudal period, culminating in its rejection at the Meiji Restoration. An epilogue sketches the history of the ceremony in the altered conditions of post-Restoration Japan and up to the present.

James McMullen is University Lecturer in Japanese (Retired), Fellow Emeritus of Pembroke and St Antony's Colleges, University of Oxford; and Fellow of the British Academy.

Harvard East Asian Monographs 421

**Published by the
Harvard University Asia Center
1730 Cambridge Street, CGIS S118
Cambridge, MA 02138
asiacenter.harvard.edu/publications**

**Distributed by
Harvard University Press
79 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138**