This broad-ranging examination of Chinese state and court ritual from 1000 BC to AD 1750 represents the first modern comprehensive account of the subject in any language. The essays demonstrate how and why ritual has played such a fundamental and often controversial role in the practice of Chinese politics. By tracing the political and social development of particular rituals, such as imperial funerals and popular religious practices or Buddhist ordination ceremonies and court audiences, the authors set out to convey their historical significance. Further discussion of the role of ritual in relation to language, and élite and popular concepts of emperordom, is included in the volume. The book will be of interest to students of Chinese history, anthropology, and religion, as well as those seeking to understand the legacy of that history in the context of modern China.
STATE AND COURT RITUAL IN CHINA

A series list is shown at the back of the book
State and court ritual in China

Edited by

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This volume is the outcome of a conference, ‘State and Court Ritual in China’, held at St John’s College, Cambridge, on 6–8 April 1993. For many years the topic of this conference had been considered important for an understanding of Chinese history. But it has long suffered serious neglect due to a reputation for being a highly esoteric backwater of sinology which most scholars had the wits to avoid. Cambridge being the sort of place it is, a surprising number of its teaching staff and graduate students had by the early 1990s come to share this erudite interest. And so, it was decided that a conference on this topic was not only desirable but also feasible. At the conference itself fourteen papers, ten of which are collected here, were presented on virtually every major Chinese dynasty. The authors benefited greatly from the participation of scholars not represented in this volume: Tim Barrett, Peter Burke, Patricia Ebrey, Stefan Feuchtwang, Jack Goody, Robert Hinde, Gilbert Lewis, Robert Neather, Edward Shaughnessy, Edward Shils, and Hans van de Ven. Much of the conference’s intellectual discussion, if not its humour, has found its way back into the papers, and I hope that these articles will serve as evidence of what was a highly instructive and pleasant occasion.

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J. P. McDermott

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSJC    Congshu jicheng
SBBY    Sibu beiyao
SBCK    Sibu congkan
SKQSZB  Siku quanshu zhenben