Religious ideas and actors have shaped Asian cultural practices for millennia and have played a decisive role in charting the course of its history. In this engaging and informative book, Thomas David DuBois sets out to explain how religion has influenced the political, social, and economic transformation of Asia from the fourteenth century to the present. Crossing a broad terrain from Tokyo to Tibet, the book highlights long-term trends and key moments, such as the expulsion of Catholic missionaries from Japan, or the Taiping Rebellion in China, when religion dramatically transformed the political fate of a nation. Contemporary chapters reflect on the wartime deification of the Japanese emperor, Marxism as religion, the persecution of the Dalai Lama, and the fate of Asian religion in a globalized world.

THOMAS DAVID DUBOIS is Associate Professor of History at the National University of Singapore. He is the author of Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China (2005) and the editor of Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia (2009).
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Thomas David DuBois

National University of Singapore
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Preface

Looking back over the incredible transformation of Asia during the past few centuries, it is easy to see only the big themes of political, military, and technological change and assume that religion was either a historical footnote, or else a relic that the modern world left behind. This book will show the many ways that religious organizations and conflicts, not to mention individual beliefs and convictions, shaped many of the big and small transformations of history, and how they continue to influence policy and society today.

I first taught the content of this book as an undergraduate course at the National University of Singapore, and I should begin by thanking my students for helping me to make connections between places and events that I would not have seen on my own. More than that, they helped me always to keep sight of how interesting this history is, not to mention how relevant it is to problems and events that continue to surface in the news.

I have many people to thank for bringing this book into the world. Marigold Acland at Cambridge University Press read the first proposal (and many subsequent ones) and encouraged me to discover the potential in my as-yet half-cooked ideas. A number of libraries, museums, and temples provided me with the pictures used in this book, often for free. I am especially grateful to Mr. Nitta Ichirō, of the Hōzenji temple in Nara, for providing me with the image of the Kasuga mandala that appears on the book’s cover. Other friends came through with photos when I realized too late that most of my thousands of digital pictures of places mentioned in this book looked great on a computer screen but were not of sufficiently high resolution to use in print. A good many people have gone through the text, correcting mistakes, adding information, and making connections. I am very happy to acknowledge the kind assistance of Tim Amos, Ned Davis, David Ownby, and Judith Snodgrass, in addition to the anonymous readers arranged by Cambridge University Press. For a hundred other small kindnesses, I would like to thank Sheila Birch, Jack Meng-Tat Chia, Jack Fairey, Hu Wen, Ryoko...
Preface

Nakano, Normah Osman, and Wang Luman. My sister Jennifer, who is a scientist rather than a historian, made herself wonderfully helpful by reading chapters from an outside perspective and purging my writing of the horrible jargon that helps academics like me disguise the fact that they don’t always know what they are talking about. My other sister, Alicia, and my father, David, did absolutely nothing for this book but merit a mention for their residual awesomeness.

As always, Misako Suzuki is loveliest of all.

Note on names and transliterations

Most places and names are Romanized in standard form, with diacritics included. An exception is made for those that are known better in an older or dialect spelling, such as the city of Canton or the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek.