



# The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology

*John B. Henderson*

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Cosmological ideas influenced every aspect of traditional Chinese culture, from science and medicine to art, philosophy, and religion. Although other premodern societies developed similar conceptions, in no other major civilization were such ideas so pervasive or powerful. In *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, John Henderson traces the evolution of Chinese thought on cosmic order from the classical era to the nineteenth century. Unlike many standard studies of premodern cosmologies, this book analyzes the origins, development, and rejection of these models, not just their structure. Moreover, while historians often limit their studies of cosmic order to specialized fields like the history of science, Henderson examines how the cosmological ideas formulated in late classical times permeated various facets of Chinese life, from high philosophy to popular culture. In discussing these ideas, the author draws surprising parallels between the history of Chinese and classical Western cosmologies, identifying general patterns in the development of cosmological conceptions in several premodern civilizations. This volume thus appeals not only to students of Chinese intellectual history, but anyone interested in cultural anthropology, ancient and medieval philosophy, and the history of science and medicine as well. An understanding of the development and decline of Chinese cosmology illuminates broad areas of traditional Chinese culture and it provides a new perspective for viewing the history of Chinese thought in a larger comparative context. John B. Henderson earned his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. He is Professor in the Department of History at Louisiana State University. Professor Henderson's previously published works include *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* and *Notions of Time in Chinese Historical Thinking*.

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