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Sommario/riassunto

This volume seeks to chart and elucidate the diverse relationships between the religious and secular spheres in regions of Asia that were significantly influenced – sometimes even dominated – by Buddhist discourses, ideas, and institutions. These regions include South Asia (India, Sri Lanka), East and Southeast Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam), Inner Asia (Buryatia, Mongolia, Tibet), and the Himalayan region (Bhutan). These regions were connected by communicative networks long before the global modern age. They constituted an intricately entangled discursive sphere, shaped by the cross-regional spread of concepts and ideas from Buddhism and, in East Asia, Confucianism. The volume sheds light on the prehistory and development of culturally specific forms of secularity, and related concepts, in Asia. It comprises a wide range of texts spanning approximately 2000 years; in many cases this is the first time that they have been presented in English. The texts here are not merely reproduced, but are also introduced and contextualized. Through these materials, the volume highlights the fact that distinctions akin to those between the 'religious' and the 'secular' were already prevalent in premodern Asia, laying the groundwork for the various forms of secularity which took shape in the modern period.
