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HANDBOOK OF
CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN



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MARK R. MULLINS



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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This *Handbook* is the product of international scholarly collaboration. I was approached by Brill about the possibility of preparing a volume on Christianity in Japan for the *Handbuch der Orientalistik* Series in 1996, during a sabbatical at the University of Edinburgh. While I could see the value of the project, it was one I could not envision taking on by myself. I agreed to serve as general editor of such a volume if given time to recruit a team of specialists to contribute chapters on their own areas of expertise. The editors at Brill accepted this proposal and I began to seek the advice of colleagues on how best to organize such a reference work. The following year I returned to Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo and was delighted to find that members of the Research Institute for Christian Studies considered the proposed volume a project worthy of their support. The Institute not only enthusiastically endorsed the project but provided five years of financial support, which enabled me to draw together contributions by many fine scholars from around the world engaged in ongoing research related to Christianity in Japan.

As a world religion that travels the globe, Christianity has influenced and shaped various cultures and societies, while at the same time being reshaped and transformed by local cultures. Although a relative latecomer to Japan's religious scene and often regarded as an intrusive "foreign" influence or "outsider" from the West, Christianity is hardly the only foreign-born religion in Japan. Buddhism, Confucianism, and numerous New Religions have similarly been transplanted from abroad. Without disregarding the importance of various indigenous folk and Shinto traditions, the larger and fascinating story of religion in Japan is, in fact, one of the reception, impact, and adaptation of foreign-born religions in relation to native traditions and cultural concerns. The aim of this volume is to provide students and scholars of religion and Asian studies with a guide to research on Christianity within this larger context of Japanese religious history, culture, and society.

To the casual observer it may appear that Christianity has remained a marginal and largely insignificant religion in Japan. This impression is not without some foundation. Christianity has had more difficulty in shedding its "foreign" images and associations than has Buddhism and hence remained a minority religion throughout its history in Japan. Even today, less than 1 per-