

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I thank Kelly DeVries and Brill for allowing me to publish this book in the Wade-Giles romanisation I greatly prefer over the newer Pinyin system. I submit that Chang Hsüeh-ch'in in Wade-Giles is no less monstrous and obscure than Zhang Xueqin is in Pinyin, and I remain unconvinced that all China scholars should adopt Pinyin simply because it is now the preferred romanisation system of the ruling authorities on mainland China. Additionally, I note with interest

Christopher Beckwith's observation that Wade-Giles is "the only English-language transcription system that correctly represents the phonetic values of the initial stop consonants in modern Mandarin Chinese (which lacks voiced stops)."<sup>1</sup>

My academic debt of longest standing is to Sechin Jagchid, whose enduring and contagious interest in the history of Sino-nomadic relations and imperial Chinese foreign policy has been an inspiration since my undergraduate days in the 1980s. Paul V. Hyer, his son Eric, and David C. Montgomery have also exerted positive and encouraging influences on my academic career since the mid 1980s.

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For almost two decades now my longsuffering wife and our two sons have endured my historical obsessions with grace and good humour. Perhaps one day I can make it all up to them or at least find adequate words to express my gratitude and affection to them. But for now I must still admit that I am, like my father before me, "absolutely speechless."<sup>2</sup>

We were all very close to my mother, who died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack in February 1996. Since then we have

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<sup>1</sup> Beckwith 1987, xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Wright 1977, xxvi.

tried to “restrain our grief” and “conform to the changes” in our lives without her, but our sense of loss is at times still quite poignant. I dedicate this book to her memory.

I also note that this book will be published in 2005, the one thousandth anniversary of the conclusion of the Covenant of Shan-yüan. In my opinion, the Sung and Liao diplomats who decided that a peace agreement was preferable to continued bloodshed deserve to be remembered with respect and affirmation. Many of the positive developments in eleventh-century China might well have been impossible without them.

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

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Snow