

## Preface

**I** SUPPOSE THIS PROJECT really began during a brief visit to the One Sky Pavilion (Tianyige), a private library established in 1561 and preserved today as a key part of the cultural and material history of the city of Ningbo, Zhejiang. I recall the moment, while wandering through the corridors, that I realized I was not concerned with the books so much as absorbed in the buildings that contained them and curious about the artfully crafted shelves, the filigree decorations, and the courtyards that tied them all together. Like Phineas J. Nanson, a fictional doctoral student who I would later discover in the pages of A. S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale*, it occurred to me that "I must have things."

This is, essentially, a book about a complex thing—Kong Temple, also known as the Temple of Confucius, in the small city of Qufu, Shandong. I would prefer not to follow a statement on what the book is with a statement of what it is not, but having invoked the name of China's greatest sage, I think it only fair to state that this is not a book about Confucius. Readers might also want to know in advance that this is neither a social history of the people who used or sponsored the sage's temple nor a genealogy of his descendants. It does not concern the many other Confucius temples once found throughout East Asia or the international Confucius Institutes designed to extend China's "soft power" to the world. And it studies neither Confucian intellectual history nor the Confucian state nor whether Confucianism should be regarded as a religion or a philosophy.

I do not consider these people, places, and problems as unimportant to the history and development of one of China's proudest heritage sites. I just concluded early on that the only way to write about Kong Temple without digressing into an incomplete history of everything was to treat the temple as a microcosm and to concentrate as much as possible on the material and

documentary texts that emerged from or center on its specific locality. Even as a microcosm, Kong Temple presents a formidable challenge to the historian simply because the place is so old and venerable. Following my earlier studies of heritage formation and creation in Shandong's museum culture and at historical sites, including Lugou Bridge near Beijing and the Opium War relics at Humen, I initially intended to focus on a much less ambitious exploration of late-imperial and twentieth-century cultural memory and heritage values. That work now appears in the latter chapters of this book, although in addressing the modern history of the temple it occurred to me that we have much to learn from the premodern *longue dureé*. Having opened that door, I could find no justification for closing it again, and so began the work of unravelling some 2,500 years of Kong Temple history.

I also did not begin this study intending to emphasize building and construction. I initially assumed that Kong Temple would be articulated in more conventional terms as the site of multiple and overlapping communities, negotiated identity, cultural memory, and the social construction of place, much as Brian Dott explores Mt. Tai, as Susan Naquin studies the temples of Beijing, or as Tobie Meyer-Fong writes of the city of Yangzhou.<sup>1</sup> In considering dynastic histories, local annals, and stele inscriptions, however, I was impressed by how many of these documents were concerned with the material conditions of the temple, the negotiation of supporting properties and endowments, and the contingencies of management. I knew, of course, that Kong Temple stood for a good deal more than what could be seen, touched, and managed but could not dismiss the fact that the temple has been under construction, with the occasional pre-Tang intermission, since the Han dynasty. It is somewhat of a tourist cliché that when workers employed at the Forbidden City in Beijing, for example, complete one renovation of the complex they must immediately start over again just to keep decay in check. Cliché or not, that work is essential to the ongoing production of any large-scale architectural group, and it is a phenomenon that has not received the attention that it deserves. And so, while this book remains open to the many abstractions of Confucian material culture and the social construction of place, it is substantially concerned with actual construction and structure and the ways in which societies manage space and material. It is unfortunate that available historical records provide few details on who

actually shaped the timbers and fired the tiles for Kong Temple. In looking at the temple's history, however, one cannot escape the conclusion that behind the intellectual and state discourse over Confucianism a great deal of shaping and firing was going on and that beyond giving form to place, material culture has had a formative influence on perceptions and uses of time, space, and history.

Although I take responsibility for the translations not otherwise credited, most were collaborative productions, and I especially wish to acknowledge the linguistic talents of Grace Wei Xu. Selina Gao, Meili Ma, and Hua Huang were each invaluable as research assistants during the gestation of the manuscript. Frank Schumacher reviewed and translated a number of German-language resources. Andy Patton, Alan MacEachern, Sam Clark, and Dave Stasiuk offered their insights regarding the theoretical considerations presented in the introduction. Randy Fox and Jun Fang generously read the entire manuscript at various stages of development. As editors of the *Spatial Habitus* series on Chinese architecture, Ron Knapp and Xing Ruan encouraged me to pursue the topic, waited patiently for it to materialize, and offered unfailing advice and moral support as the manuscript matured. In Qufu, Luo Chenglie and Lu Houxuan of Qufu Normal University offered their contacts and resources, as did Gao Jianjun in Jining. A grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada supported most of the research. Much of the writing was done during a sabbatical year at the University of Queensland, where Chi-Kong Lai provided constant support. When the manuscript reached the University of Hawai'i Press, it was Pat Crosby who steered the work through the review process before handing it over to Stephanie Chun. A generous grant from the J. B. Smallman Publication Fund at the University of Western Ontario made the inclusion of illustrations possible.

