

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS PROJECT BEGAN BY SERENDIPITY. After class one day, Yoshiko picked up *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* by Holmes Welch in a pile of free books for students in Tozzer Library at Harvard University, not knowing the author. She was impressed by its excellent ethnographic details that evoked some parallels with modernization processes in Sri Lanka, where she had done her dissertation fieldwork. She showed it to David, who found it a fascinating perspective on the state and society in China, which he had experienced working in China several years earlier. This occurred in 1986 when we were both graduate students.

Three years later, we found ourselves conducting research in Nanputuo Temple in Xiamen City. Yoshiko was teaching at Xiamen University on a one-year contract while David was conducting fieldwork on the business community for his doctoral dissertation. The Tiananmen Square protest in spring 1989 temporarily halted our teaching and research. So, we started visiting Nanputuo Temple, next door to the university. The temple was alive with clerics, worshipers, and tourists. Soon, we met Miaozhan, the elderly abbot. In response to our questions about the temple, he encouraged us to talk to as many people in and out of the temple as possible. He was correct. Talking with people—shopkeepers, state officials, devotees, workers at the temple, and of course clerics, novices, lay nuns, and students—and listening to their stories drove us, for over thirty

years, to learn more and more about the temple, people's lives, and Buddhism. We also conducted research at temples and their communities in Southeast Asia and North America that had historical links with Nanputuo. As clerics flow like clouds and water, we did our best to follow them accordingly. To write what we learned became another life journey for us. All the while, China's state and society changed tremendously, and so did Nanputuo Temple and Buddhist practice.

This book would not have been possible without the kindness and generosity of many people in the Buddhist communities in Xiamen and various locations around the world who shared their knowledge and experiences with us. Many elderly clerics we met have since passed away, while some younger clerics and lay nuns are now leaders of temples in China and abroad. Their devotion to Buddhism taught us what Buddhism means to them and other people. This is also how we came to understand Buddhism in practice.

Our special thanks go to Pan Hongli, with whom we started our field research in 1989 full of excitement. We thank Deng Xiaohua, Zhang Xianqing, and their colleagues and students in the Anthropology Department of Xiamen University for supporting our fieldwork. We are especially grateful to Wu Shaoren and two lay nuns whose friendship over three decades always made us feel at home in Xiamen. Their devotion to promoting Buddhism in the city greatly encouraged us to continue our study. We learned a lot from those we met on our journey, not only about Buddhism but how people continue turning the wheel of life regardless of the ups and downs.

The book has been improved by discussions with other scholars following our presentations at public lectures, conferences, and workshops. Some of these took place at Aoyama Gakuin University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Columbia University, Free University of Berlin, Fudan University, Harvard University, Hitotsubashi University, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), National University of Singapore, Pompeu Fabra University, Sophia University, Stanford University, University of Auckland, and Xiamen University. Our special thanks go to Kenneth Dean, Huang Weishan, Ji Zhe, Mark Mullins, Yasemin Soysal, Ezra Vogel, Nur Yalman, and others who gave us these opportunities for fruitful discussions. We thank our enthusiastic research assistants Gao Yang, Jiang Chengli, Yang Wenhao, and others. At Columbia

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The works of Holmes Welch have inspired us to weave observations and narratives by people with broader frameworks of Buddhism and modernizing processes in China. And if this book successfully appeals beyond China specialists to general issues of state and Buddhism, we owe it to the works of Richard Gombrich, S. J. Tambiah, and Gananath Obeyesekere and our conversations with them.

Finally, we acknowledge our children, Alice Kiwako and Tobias Yujin, who played in the courtyards of many temples during our research. We hope they had a good time.

