Acknowledgments

This book comes out of a collaborative research project titled *Frontlines: Class, Value, and Social Transformation in 21st Century Capitalism*, hosted by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Bergen, Norway. As a research fellow, I was engaged with the project full time from September 2018 to August 2020, after which I remained involved, but only intermittently and from a distance, as I had by then returned to Nanyang Technological University in Singapore to take up my previous faculty position in the School of Social Sciences.

As an investigative endeavor with a global focus, *Frontlines* has aimed to bring anthropological theory and ethnographic methods to bear on a critical rethinking of capitalism in the present—an analytical and political project of pressing relevance given worsening trends of gross inequality, irredeemable indebtedness, climate catastrophe, military interventions, domestic militarization, and emboldened fascist movements around the world, none of which can be adequately understood in isolation of the capitalist contexts in which they occur. In this way, *Frontlines* is situated in a long tradition of anthropological political economy, a tradition that has consistently refused economistic reductionism without shying away from broad political economic questions. Many of the ideas in this book were developed in conversation with fellow *Frontlines* participants, including Don Kalb (principal investigator), Katharina Bodirsky, Charlotte Bruckermann, Tom Cowan, Dan Hirslund, Sharryn Kasmir, Oana Mateescu, Marc Morell, Patrick Neveling, and Sarah Winkler-Reid.

For assistance in conducting field research, I am indebted to all the residents of the Yadana settlement who graciously shared their stories with me, welcomed me into their homes, and tolerated my presence at their places of work. In this respect, there are too many people to name, and in any case, I have anonymized all the settlement’s inhabitants who are discussed in the book. Nonetheless, I would like to especially thank for their friendship the individuals I am calling herein Aunty Cho, Uncle Hla Soe, Brother Myo, Mister Lin, and Mrs. Sandar Oo. For further support, critical insights, encouragement, solidarity, and enduring friendship, I owe an immense debt to all my comrades at the Yaung Chi Oo Workers’ Association, namely, Kyaw Zin, Naing Htay Lwin, Aye Sandar Win, Aung Thu, and Aye Myat Thazin.

During the process of writing (and rewriting) this book, I received helpful input and critical feedback on various draft chapters, and in some cases the entire
manuscript, from Geoff (Soe Lin) Aung, Don Kalb, Sharryn Kasmir, Bo Bo Lamsin, Gerard McCarthy, Tania Murray Li, Elliott Prasse-Freeman, Izzy Rhoads, Matt Schissler, Courtney Wittekind, and two anonymous reviewers for ILR/Cornell University Press. For parts of the book’s ethnographic narrative, I received helpful input from Alexandra Shimo and fellow participants in the University of Toronto’s winter 2020 creative nonfiction writing seminar. I am additionally indebted to Tania Murray Li for the mentorship she has provided over the years. And I would like to add an extra word of thanks to Geoff Aung, who, aside from commenting on an entire draft of the manuscript, has been an important interlocutor, as well as friend and comrade, for well over a decade. Many of the ideas presented in this book were developed and refined in conversation with Geoff, especially the conceptual relevance of passive revolution in understanding Myanmar’s shift to electoral politics in 2010. For proofreading, I owe thanks to Hadia Akhtar Khan. If you spot any errors, I alone am at fault.

Research and writing of this book would not have been possible without financial support from the Bergen Foundation (now the Trond Mohn Foundation), delivered through the Frontlines project. I am also grateful to the School of Social Sciences at Nanyang Technological University, and especially Professor Teo You Yenn, Head of Sociology, for allowing me extended leave to carry out research and writing for this book. I owe thanks, as well, to Fran Benson, Ellen Labbate, and everyone else at ILR/Cornell University Press who helped push this book through to publication. And I would like to thank the editor of Anthropology Today for permission to include herein (as a section of chapter 3) a version of my article, “Of Squatting amid Capitalism on Yangon’s Industrial Periphery,” and the editor of Social Anthropology for permission to include (as chapter 4) a version of my article, “Debt Collection as Labor Discipline: The Work of Finance in a Myanmar Squatter Settlement.” Lastly, some of the material about Myanmar’s passive revolution included in chapter 1 previously appeared in the article “The Lady and the Generals,” cowritten by Geoff Aung and me, which was published in Jacobin in January 2016.

To my parents, Anne and Bruce Campbell, I am indebted for the consistent care and support they have shown me, despite the fact that my research and travels have taken me farther afield and for far longer than they would have liked. And finally, none of this would have been possible without the support and patience of my wife and best friend, Ingyin Khaing, and our wonderful children, Oakar and Parami. To the three of them, with immeasurable love, I owe an unrepayable debt.
ALONG THE INTEGRAL MARGIN