This project first owes its conception and completion to the many friends and hosts I met in the field, in Wa Region, and in the neighboring Yunnan Province of China. I am deeply grateful for the hospitality and friendship shown by companions, officials, people in Pangkham, football teammates, and hosts in villages, who gave me a chance to understand a far-flung part of the world. They remain unnamed, but I recall their faces and demeanors fondly. I hope they see in this book a reflection of the world they showed me.

Colleagues at the World Food Programme gave me an opportunity to contribute, had patience with my mistakes, offered their friendship, and showed me an image of professionalism and commitment under many constraints. These include Domenico Scalpelli, Guillaume Foliot, Jean-Luc Kohler, Simon Hacker, Ayuka Ibe, Arsen Sahakyan, and Silja Lehtinen. In Pangkham, the WFP team treated me like family and provided warmth and companionship; much of the knowledge in this book I learned from their decades of living and operating in the region, in particular, SNM and AKL. My predecessor and mentor, SB, who looked out for me like a son—much gratitude for his vast experience and perseverance.

My professors and advisers at Harvard: the late Paul Farmer, who inspired the directions of the research and made it possible; the late Mary Steedly, for her encouragement and care; Ajantha Subramaniam, for her sharp wit and kindness; Arthur Kleinman, for his unwavering support and dedication to students; and Byron Good and Mary-Jo Delvecchio Good, whose care for my well-being extended far beyond academics. Also, Asad Ahmed, Steven Caton, and Nick Harkness for kindness in engaging with my work. Fellow students saw me through the research and writing periods: Marty Alexander, Vivien Chung, Margaret Czerwienski, Ofer Dynes, Shuang Frost, Sam Hawkins, Abbas Jaffer, Andrew Littlejohn, Jared McCormick, Benny Shaffer, and Dilan Yildirim. Naor Ben-Yehoyada, Namita Dharia, Veronika Kusumaryati, and Ramyar Rossoukh have all had significant input in shaping the ideas and writing of this book. I received funding from GSAS and the Asia Center at Harvard. I am deeply grateful for Tessa Montague, Annie Spokes, Will Frost, Marc Warner, Lauren Forbes, and Ilya Feige, who were indispensable parts of my time in Cambridge and supported me through difficult periods.

Colleagues at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) in Singapore were gracious and welcoming, giving me a space to begin rethinking my PhD dissertation. I thank
Acknowledgments

Maitrii Aung-Thwin, Michelle Miller, Shiori Shakuto, Sharlene Anthony, and Tim Bunnell in particular. ARI funded an invaluable book workshop where Maitrii, Louisa Lombard, Michael Gilsenan, John Buchanan, Courtney Wittekind, and Elliott Prasse-Freeman pored over an initial manuscript draft and made it much better. I also thank Michael Montesano, Moe Thuzar, and Terence Chong at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, who provided a place to continue my research and writing. This book was finally completed at Nanyang Technological University with the indispensable space and resources granted by Joseph Liow and Khong Yuen Foong. Much gratitude to two anonymous manuscript reviewers, and Jim Lance, Clare Jones, and Karen Laun of Cornell University Press, for their kind guidance in the editorial process. Also, Anne Jones and the copyediting team. I thank Steve Tickner for allowing me the use of his photograph of the UWSA’s Thirtieth Anniversary celebration.

Much gratitude also to friends in Yangon—Max Belleri, Narcisco Rosa-Berlanga, Julia Stricker, and Margherita Pedroni. I would like to thank seven other Burmese friends and interlocutors for the wonderful conversations and insights we exchanged when I arrived in Yangon. I wish them grace, strength, and justice in this dire time. And other friends in Myanmar studies—John Buchannan, Stephen Campbell, Charlie Carstens, Chang Wen-Chin, Amy Doffegnies, Enze Han, Masao Imamura, Bertil Lintner, David Mathieson, Kevin MacLeod, and Hans Steinmüller—for their generosity, insights, and camaraderie. Magnus Fiskesjö at Cornell for his kind input and support. Elliott Prasse-Freeman for being my cheerleader and close reader of my work.

Finally, this book owes much to my family—Rachel and Joel and their beautiful children for their unconditional love; my parents, who dealt with anxiety and uncertainty repeatedly, showing great grace and unwavering care. And to my partner, for keeping us together and me grounded, and making me a better person.