In his attempt to cross Xinjiang’s Taklamakan Desert in 1895, Sven Hedin found his men to be more of a liability than an asset. When sandstorms threatened and water grew low, he forged ahead while they lost hope, drank camel urine, and died in the sand.

My experience in writing this book could not have been more different—all the way, I have been borne along by the help and encouragement of others. This was especially the case in China, where I conducted the bulk of the research for this book in 1990 while affiliated with the Institute for Qing History Studies at People’s University in Beijing. I was extremely fortunate in having as my advisors Cheng Chongde and Hua Li, who on that and subsequent occasions have shared with me their deep knowledge of the Qing frontiers, steered me to the important literature, and introduced me to other scholars in the field of Xinjiang history. The sheaves of letters they wrote gained me a warm welcome among their colleagues in Mongolia, Ningxia, Gansu, and Xinjiang as well as around Beijing, and thus made this book possible. I am thankful as well to Dai Yi and Ma Ruheng at Renda and to Ma Dazheng and the staff of the Zhongguo Bianjiang Shidi Yanjiu Zhongxin for similar help.

During my research year in China, the following scholars gave generously of their time and expertise: in Beijing, Chen Yongling, Lin Yongkuang, Wang Xi, Zhang Yuxin, and especially Wu Fengpei, who is truly a national treasure; Hao Weimin and Jin Feng (Altan Orghil) in Hohhot; Chen Yuning, Lai Cunli, Ma Ping, and Yang Huaizhong in Ningxia; Wang Xilong in Lanzhou; Ji Dachun, Feng Xisi, Li Sheng, Miao Pusheng, Pan Zhiping, Qi Qingshun, Xu Bofu, and Zhou Xuan in Urumchi. Qin Weixing spent the days of Qorb of Urumchi, for which I am eternally in his debt. It is a pleasure also to thank Abdulgeni, Chao-ge-tu, Kämäl, Li Shoujun, Mollaniaz, Xie Zhining, and Zhang Shiming for smoothing the way at various points. My friends Sun Hong, Wan Jun, Wang Hengjie, Wang Tong, Wang Yi, and Zhang Xuehui made Beijing seem like home; other friends and colleagues, Sabine Dabringhaus, Mark Elliott, Blaine Gaustad, John Herman,
Melissa Macauley, Nancy Park, Steven Shutt, and Paola Zamperini made even the Renda dorm feel homey—a considerably more difficult task—and taught me a great deal of history in the process.

While I made my first written reconnaissances of the material I brought back from China in a dissertation for Stanford University, the guidance of Albert Dien, Harold Kahn, and Lyman Van Slyke kept me on track. Hal Kahn’s thoughts have been particularly helpful in explaining to me what I was writing about; passages in his letters often described my work better than I could myself, and not a few terms first employed by him have found their way into my vocabulary. Pamela Crossley, Mark Elliott, James Hevia, Jonathan Lipman, Toby Meyer, Celia Millward, Sue Naquin, Peter Perdue, Evelyn Rawski, and Morris Rossabi have carefully read, corrected, and commented on all or portions of this book in various drafts. Their comments have been of great help, though I have probably implemented too few of their suggestions. I have also profited from discussions with Dorothy Borei, Alison Futrell and the Rome/Qing comparative imperialism seminar at Arizona, Kato Naoshi, Laura Newby, Shinmen Yasushi, Sugiwara Jun, and Nakami Tatsuo. My editors at Stanford University Press, Pamela MacFarland Holway and Stacey Lynn, and my copy editor, Erin Milnes, have been both sharp-eyed and pleasant to work with. Muriel Bell offered support and encouragement for this project from its inception, for which I extend my gratitude. Others, too, have made important contributions to this project, whether they know it or not: Kahar Barat, Carol Benedict, Philippe Forêt, Giu Renquan, Jake Haselkorn, John Olsen, Caroline Reeves, Joan and Daniel Sax, Jan Stuart, Kaneko Tamio, Hoyt Cleaveland Tillman, Mike Winter-Rousset, and Dick Wang. Meera and Sushma Sikka have kept me sustained at key stages with (aptly named) gobi paratha.

I am grateful for research access and assistance provided by the Number One Historical Archives in Beijing; Yin Shumei’s graceful approach to problems was always appreciated, and her good humor brightened many grim days otherwise illuminated only by the pallid glow of a microfilm reader. In Japan, Hamashita Takeshi welcomed me into his seminar and facilitated access to the collections of the Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo. I also consulted the collections of the Tōyō Bunko and Keio University, as well as the British Library, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Stanford University Green Library and the Hoover Institution, Widener and Harvard-Yenching Libraries, the University of Arizona Oriental Library, Georgetown University Lauringer Library, and the Library of Congress, Asian Division. My thanks to the staffs of all these institutions for their patient help and, in a few cases, flexibility about overdue fees.

Two extended seminars have added vastly to my understanding of Xinjiang
Acknowledgments

and the Qing dynasty. The first, a conference and field expedition in Xinjiang organized in 1992 by the Center for Research on Chinese Frontier History and Geography (Beijing) and the Sven Hedin Foundation (Sweden), gave me the chance to travel some of Altishahr's desert roads myself. The second, a month-long summer institute on the Qing palace at Chengde, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and held on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1994, first brought many of the issues discussed in this book into focus for me. I hope the organizers of both events will find in this book some sign that their efforts have paid off.

The financial support that I have received for this project includes tuition remission from the Inter-University Program in Yokohama for language study and research in Japan; a National Program Fellowship of the Committee for Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China and a Fulbright-Hays Grant for Doctoral Dissertation Research for my year in China; and a China Times Young Scholar's Fellowship, a Josephine de Kar-mine Fellowship, and a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship for completion of the dissertation. A grant from the Pacific Cultural Foundation provided partial support during a year spent finishing the manuscript. The University of Arizona provided me with a summer stipend for Lü Hui-tz'u, my highly efficient research assistant, and the Department of History there further facilitated work on this project by graciously granting me leaves during my first years of teaching.

My warmest thanks go to my wife, Madhulika Sikka, who has supported me patiently in all possible ways over these years, despite separation by oceans, continents, and the chasm that sometimes divides the historian from the journalist. I complete this book on the eve of our anniversary, and though I am tempted simply to offer the manuscript to her in lieu of a present, I will not. She deserves much better.

J. M.