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This book is a study of the economic history of southern Fujian Province, located on China's southeast coast, from the third to the thirteenth century. It looks at the relationship between changes in the agrarian and urban economies of the area and their connections to the expanding role of domestic and foreign trade. It provides a new perspective on the role of commercialized production and trade in a regional economy in the premodern era and demonstrates that trade effected change in a premodern economy in a way that has not generally been recognized.

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Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions
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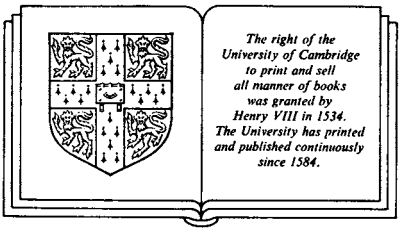

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To the memory of my mother,
Anna Fisher Clark,
and the endless support of
my wife, Barbara

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Acknowledgments

Why southern Fujian? Why Quanzhou? For that matter, why China? These are valid questions all, and difficult to answer. The answers inevitably lead to those who guided me in this direction, who helped shape me intellectually, who introduced me to the study of China and the study of History. In these opening thoughts I want to address the questions I have raised and give tribute as it is due.

Why China? Allyn and Adele Rickett were among the first to introduce me to China, to show me the glory of its civilization and the complexity of its history. They encouraged me and conveyed to me the love and fascination they felt for its remarkable culture. But the initial attraction that I experienced under their tutelage was like the euphoria of first love, which either matures into something stronger and more stable or dies. My transition from the naïve to the more mature lover was aided by the wisdom and insight of Robert Hartwell. It was he who led me to appreciate China's history as a wellspring of human experience, as something in which we can find insights relevant to all of us, and so as something to study not simply for its own sake but also for what it tells us about the human condition.

But if that answers the broader question "Why China?" it hardly addresses the others: Why southern Fujian? Why Quanzhou? I was initially interested in a process that I called "sinification": the transition of a frontier zone into a part of the Chinese cultural ecumene. Fujian, because of its relatively late inclusion in that ecumene, offered an array of sources that more central areas lacked. As my early efforts unfolded, however, I turned away from the question of sinification toward the related and more revealing question of consolidation: How did the Chinese state and culture consolidate themselves in a new area? That is a very broad subject, but it is the question that ultimately led to my doctoral dissertation. It also set me on the path that has culminated in the current study. As I unraveled the question of consolidation, I became increasingly

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fascinated with a specific feature of the process. As the Chinese state and culture consolidated their hold on the southern reaches of the province, these areas experienced an economic transformation that was defined by the role the port of Quanzhou assumed in the long-distance trade patterns of the Indian Ocean and the archipelagoes of Southeast Asia. I was intrigued to find, upon rereading my dissertation, that in a clumsy way I was already raising these issues. But this study pursues the economic transformation in a systematic way, which my dissertation did not do. It does not specifically address the question of consolidation, although that issue is inevitably present in much of the discussion. This work, then, represents the culmination of a long process of evolution and maturation.

Many persons have aided and encouraged me along that long road. My greatest debt is to Denis Twitchett, who may be as surprised as I at the final version but who was ceaselessly encouraging and optimistic along the way. Robert Hymes, Paul Smith, and the others with whom I shared the pains and rewards of graduate school played important roles as well. Aoyama Sadao, Furugaki Kōichi, and the many others I have come to know in Japan, as well as Fu Zongwen, Wang Lianmao, and other colleagues in China, have given me support and encouragement. I also owe thanks to William Akin, academic dean at Ursinus College, where I labored to complete this work, as well as to my many friends on the Ursinus faculty, especially to the Faculty Development Committee, and to Amy Wayes for her willingness to try to turn my incomprehensible maps into something worthwhile.

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