

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE that anyone would set out to write a book with the foreknowledge of how long it might take and how many dead ends and U-turns would be met along the way. That is certainly true in my case. I began the project that has resulted in this book in 1990. The job back then was that I should take the post of director of the Commission on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (CSC) with the assignment to design and implement programs for the multinational, multi-disciplinary study of human impacts on the natural environment of China. During my tour of duty (1990–92), the commission launched two such projects, one dealing with global climate change and the other with the grassland ecosystem of the Mongolian Steppe. The latter project was the beginning of an adventure that has resulted in this book.

I first made my way onto the steppe in the company of Dr. James H. Ellis, an ecosystem scientist with the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory at Colorado State University, who had spent many years studying the grasslands of East Africa and was anxious to expand his work to Asia. Jim Ellis was one of the most engaging scholars and people I have known. He viewed his subject—plants, animals, people, the sky above and earth below—as parts of a greater whole and challenged others to hear his thoughts, while he listened generously to theirs. He was a great scientist, a great traveler, and a great friend. His tragic death

<sup>1</sup>National Research Council (1992A).

<sup>2</sup>National Research Council (1992B).

James Ebert, did much to defend and promote the conduct of our relationship in China in the years following the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. President of the American Council of Learned Societies, Katz, was especially helpful, both personally and professionally, of our work. Associate director of the CSC, Bob Geyer, whom China scholars know as the guiding light of the Committee during its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s, made my time with this enterprise a pleasure and has remained a friend ever since. Program officer Leach contributed greatly to all of the science projects undertaken by the Committee in the early 1990s. Support for the Grassland Ecology of the Mongolian Steppe (GEMS) project was provided by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Foundation, and the Johnson Foundation.

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join the faculty in 1985 and has protected me from lamure ever since. Robert L. Gallucci, dean of the School since 1996, following an illustrious career as one of our nation's finest diplomats, has proven an outstanding leader of the institution and generous partner on the course. Peter Dunkley, associate dean for faculty affairs, is my friend and co-conspirator in the follies of academic administration. I honor all three for the same qualities: their devotion to the vision of a university in which scholarship and education are equally prized, their integrity, and their friendship. No one can have better colleagues than these.

Finally, I take this moment to thank my wife of more than thirty years, Kathleen, and our three children, Jane, Peter, and William, who are the light of my life and my chief reason for being. We are having the greatest of rides together.

JAMES REARDON-ANDERSON

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