Preface

This book is the outcome of collaboration among scholars working on innovation systems and related themes of competence-building systems in Asia. This collaboration was developed in connection with the worldwide network GLOBELICS and the region-wide network ASIALICS. The book is the second in a series of regional studies of innovation systems and a follow-up of the book *Africa First* (2004) edited by Mammo Muchie, Peter Gammeltoft and Bengt-Åke Lundvall.

Most of the papers included in the book were presented at the First ASIALICS Conference on Asian Innovation Systems and Clusters held in Bangkok in Spring 2004. The conference was organized by the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) and King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). At this conference it became clear – not surprisingly – that there are important differences among the Asian countries in terms of institutional set-ups supporting innovation, government policies and industrial structures. But what was exciting was that almost all of the national innovation systems were introduced as being in a process of ‘transition’. They were all trying to get on to a new trajectory more intensive in learning and use of knowledge, including scientific knowledge.

This commonality, which has inspired the title, organization and structure of this book, reflected, among other factors, the aftermath of the financial crisis in the middle of the 1990s which hit most of the Asian economies as a shock. Even if the core of this crisis was financial speculation and the bubble economy – together with the later global crisis of the ‘new economy’ – it also raised critical questions about the sustainability of the trajectories followed in the most successful of the Asian economies.