Preface

This book originates from a collaborative research project involving academics from the White Rose East Asia Centre (WREAC). Established in 2006, WREAC is an international centre of excellence on China and Japan funded by Britain's Higher Education Funding Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council following a successful £4 million bid under the 2006 Language Based Area Studies initiative. The White Rose East Asia Centre is a joint endeavour between the University of Leeds and the University of Sheffield. The National Institute of Chinese Studies and the National Institute of Japanese Studies together constitute the White Rose East Asia Centre.

A WREAC research workshop on the subject of 'China, Japan and Regional Leadership in East Asia' was held at University House, Leeds on 11-12 July 2007. Organized by the book's editor, Dr Christopher Dent, the event brought together a number of distinguished scholars to discuss current developments in Sino-Japanese relations, and the prospects of China and Japan assuming positions and roles of leadership in the East Asia region. Subsequently revised papers presented at the research workshop form the basis of the book.

East Asia is becoming an increasingly prominent and coherent region in the international system. Thus, understanding how the region is, or will most likely be 'led' by particular leader actors is of some critical importance. This is in some way connected to emerging new governance structures of the East Asia region, for example through the construction of regional-multilateral organizations and frameworks such as the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asia Summit. As the stand-out regional leader actors in the region, much attention has been focused on China or Japan in relation to the above. These themes and ideas lie at the core of the book's analysis.

I would like to express my special thanks to a number of people. Firstly, to my WREAC project team colleagues – Glenn Hook, Caroline Rose, Hugo Dobson, Joern Dosch, Shogo Suzuki – for their constructive help in the research project's overall development. Thanks also to Jenni Rauch who provided very efficient and cheerful assistance in organizing the WREAC research workshop in July 2007. A big thank you, too, to Alexandra

O'Connell at Edward Elgar for brilliant help and encouragement through the book's development. Finally, an extra special thanks as always to all my family for their love, patience and support. This book is dedicated to the memory of Derek, Stanley M., Stanley, William and Francis.

Christopher M. Dent
Leeds, November 2007