This book would not exist were it not for the support of numerous people and institutions who have accompanied me between Poland, China, and Switzerland for over ten years. First and foremost, I would like to thank my dear Polish and Swiss families for their love and support and for always standing beside me. It is indeed the greatest luxury to feel this support in everything one does in life. Particularly, I would like to thank Peter, with whom I conducted my fieldwork in China in 1999, who was my research assistant during my field study from 2002 to 2003, and who in the meantime became my husband. As the person most directly affected by my complaints, energy breakdowns, working crises, and all the bad moods and doubts one experiences during writing, he earns a very special thank you. I also would like to thank my friends: I am grateful that we can go through life together, sharing joys and sorrows and never forgetting to have a good laugh.

I have also experienced the warm help of tutors, colleagues, and friends at the graduate and postdoctoral level. First of all, I would like to thank Professor Alfred F. Majewicz from the Institute of Oriental Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań for his supervision and for being fun, open, and motivating. I would additionally like to thank my former colleagues at the Institute of Oriental Studies for the fantastic working atmosphere and time spent together, during and beyond research and
teaching matters. I still miss it! Next I would like to thank Professor Liang Deman from Sichuan University, my supervisor during my stay in Chengdu in 2002–3. Professor Liang welcomed me to her home every week with liters of green tea, and during hours of tutoring she introduced me to the complexity of post-1950s linguistic research in China. During my research in Beijing and Shanghai, I was helped enormously by Leszek Sobkowiak, who invited me to stay in his Shanghai apartment and provided me with everything I could possibly need. I also would like to thank Mieke Matthyssen; I was able to fine-tune my research design in her warm, snug flat in the middle of a Manchurian winter when she hosted me over the 2003 Spring Festival in Shenyang.

My research was enriched by the useful ideas of a large number of Chinese and foreign colleagues; I express my infinite gratitude to all of these individuals. I also send a big thank you to all of the informants in Beijing and Shanghai who shared their time and energy with me; and to my collaborators and informants in Zuosuo, where I conducted fieldwork in 1999, and in Xinjiang, where I conducted fieldwork from 2011 to 2012. This research greatly informed the ways I analyzed the data in this book.

The analysis and write-up of the fieldwork data took place at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Bern, Switzerland. There, I was greatly assisted by the helpful comments, motivating ideas, and literature suggestions shared with me by Hans-Rudolf Wicker, Ellen Hertz, Martin Sökefeld, Judith Hangartner, Sue Thüler, and other colleagues. Attending the institute’s weekly colloquium together—and the exchange at a beer afterward—inspired me and gave me new energy to keep working. I am grateful to the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Polish and Chinese Ministries of Education, and the Swiss Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students for financial support of my postgraduate studies and research.

While at work on this book manuscript in Seattle and Bern, I profited immensely from the knowledge, feedback, and comments of Pamela Kyle Crossley, Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Jonathan Lipman, Tom Mullaney, Mark Elliott, Dru Gladney, Cheng Yinhong, Nicolas Tapp, Madlen Kobi, Peter Lüthi, and Eric Schluessel. I am most grateful for the comments provided by the two reviewers of the manuscript, Stevan Harrell and James Leibold. The book was greatly improved by their suggestions and friendly critiques. Steve Harrell was a particularly attentive, helpful, and good-humored edi-
tor all along; thank you for that. Thanks also to Lorri Hagman of the University of Washington Press for her editorial assistance and most especially for so patiently explaining the nuances of writing styles to a nonnative English speaker. I am grateful to Jacqueline Volin, Tim Zimmermann, and Beth Fuget from the University of Washington Press and copy editor Julie Van Pelt for seeing the manuscript through the final stages of editing. Swiss National Science Foundation funded my stays at the University of Washington (UW). Stephanie Maher provided me with a great temporary home in Seattle, and Mike Caputi helped arrange my stays at the UW; my heartfelt thanks to both. I also would like to express my gratitude to Tomasz Ostwald and other Polish friends in Seattle who took care of me during my stays as a visiting researcher at the UW. Tomasz, your mojitos are unbeatable!

Further, I would like to thank the Adam Mickiewicz University Press and Cambridge University Press for granting permission to reprint parts of my articles published previously in *Linguistic and Oriental Studies from Poznań* and the *Journal of Asian Studies*. The Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bern provided financial support for the language proofs of the manuscript and assisted me in so many other ways all along. I would particularly like to thank Heinzpeter Znoj, Sabine Strasser, and Christiane Girardin for being uncomplicated, supportive, and encouraging. Michele Statz did the language proofs and greatly improved the style of the manuscript; thank you for that, Michele.

I am most grateful to all of these people and institutions and am well aware that without their assistance, this book would never have come into being.