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My interest in the history of leprosy in China and its sufferers grew out of my earlier study on philanthropic institutions and a developing curiosity about the history of medicine. It is perhaps a strange topic for many historians, and had it not been for the encouragement of my friends and colleagues, I might not have carried the project through. I would like to express my special gratitude to Charlotte Furth, whose unflagging support over the years and critical comments on my work at its various stages have been indispensable for the completion of this book. I am also much indebted to Richard von Glahn for his astute suggestions on earlier versions of the manuscript, which helped me tremendously in my revisions.

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