Acknowledgments

This book is the result of sixteen years of language studies in Arabic, Hindi-Urdu, Persian, and Sanskrit that began at the University of California, Santa Cruz and continued at the American Institute of Indian Studies, Delhi University, and the University of Texas at Austin. My first Hindi-Urdu teacher, John Mock, remains a major source of inspiration to me. I am likewise grateful to all the teachers at the American Institute of Urdu Studies’ program in Lucknow for their patience and for introducing me to the world of Urdu literature. I am especially grateful for the many hours that I spent discussing Urdu words with Fahmida Bano, Wafadar Husain, Ahtesham Khan, and Sheba Iftikhar. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, I was lucky to assist and observe the late Qamar Jalil, whose pedagogical insights are reflected throughout this text. At the University of Texas at Austin, I had the great fortune to study with some of the greatest teachers of language and literature in the world. Syed Akbar Hyder provided me with a broad and rigorous instruction in Urdu literature. Michael Hillmann spent years training me in the intricacies of Persian. Many of the ideas and insights in the Arabic and Persian units of this book are the direct result of his mentorship. I am also grateful to Rupert Snell, with whom I spent eight years studying Hindi, for exposing me to the many joys of Hindi-Urdu words and the intellectual rewards of applied philology.

This book is also the result of eleven years spent teaching Urdu at the Universities of California, Berkeley, Texas at Austin, and Wisconsin, Madison. I initially conceived of the project at the South Asia Summer Language Institute at UW Madison in 2008 and benefitted from conversations with students and colleagues, including Qamar Jalil and Faraz Sheikh. I developed the basic structures of the units and many early drafts of the lessons while teaching in the Hindi-Urdu Flagship at UT Austin. I taught many talented students there over the years, but am especially grateful for the feedback of Ayana D’Aguilar and Courtney Naquin, who worked through many early drafts of the exercises with me in my final year in graduate school. I have spent the past four years developing and teaching the materials to students at UC Berkeley. Their feedback has inspired what seem now like countless rounds of revision. Special thanks are due to the following students, who have worked through substantial portions of the book in its final stages of preparation for publication: Hammad Afzal, Khudeeja Ahmed, Hammad Ali, Aparajita Das, Elizabeth Gobbo, Salil Goyal, Shazreh Hassan, Caylee Hong, Zain Hussain, Talib Jabbar, Maryam Khan, Adeel Pervez, Omar Qashoa, Adnan Rawan, Ahmad Rashid Salim, Nawal Seedat, and Fatima Tariq. Special thanks are also due to Sally Goldman for her helpful feedback and suggestions on the Sanskrit unit and to my friend and colleague Walter Hakala for his learned comments on the units in a late stage of revision. Their feedback has considerably improved the quality of the book. All errors and oversights are, of course, mine alone.
It would not have been possible to carry this project to completion without the support and expertise of the editors and staff at Edinburgh University Press. Special thanks are due to Adela Rauchova for supporting the project from the outset. Thanks are also due to Eddie Clark, Bekah Dey, Zuzana Ihnatova, Emma Rees, Kirsty Woods, and the team of typesetters. I am also grateful to the anonymous peer reviewers whose comments have improved the utility of the book and to the many anonymous Urdu instructors from around the world who responded to Edinburgh’s preliminary survey with enthusiasm for the project. Finally, many thanks to my teacher and friend Hamidreza Ghelichkhani for the beautiful calligraphy on the cover.

The lessons in this book took around ten years to design, compile, and edit. I did most of the work between other academic writing projects, late at night, on weekends, over dinner, and while traveling for work and pleasure. I am deeply grateful to my family and friends for supporting and encouraging me as I excused myself from conversations to jot down notes about words.