Like all books, I imagine, this one has been shaped and sustained by many people, in ways small and large. My debts to friends and interlocutors in Delhi and Lucknow are deep, and I am especially grateful to the qazis, muftis, mahila panchayat leaders, and disputants who took the time to teach me some of what they know.

My interest in the ideas and problems I address here was sparked while I was at Berkeley. Lawrence Cohen has provided guidance, insight, and a model of capacious and creative intellectual life since I first met him. His support has been unwavering. Marianne Constable has been an unfailingly generous and careful reader since the beginning. Her vision for where this project could go exceeds what the book has accomplished; perhaps a work on the rhetoric of anthropology is yet to be written. Saba Mahmood’s fierce intellectual determination, commitment to the stakes of anthropological research, and uncompromising standards undergird the efforts of this book. All three have continued to support and nurture this project in the years since I left Berkeley, for which I am tremendously grateful. Barbara Metcalf
generously read and commented on parts of the manuscript, and her insights have been influential.

At Berkeley, friends propelled my intellectual life. To the rhetoricians—Diana Anders, Nima Bassiri, Michelle Dizon, Alice Kim, Yannick Thiem, Andrew Weiner, Yves Winter, and Ben Young—thanks for teaching me so much. To the anthropologists (and their allies)—Michael Allan, Dace Dzenovska, Angie Heo, Cindy Huang, Lucinda Ramberg, Tahir Naqvi, and Pete Skafish—thanks for welcoming me into the discipline and helping me learn my way about.

My research in Delhi was made possible and enjoyable by people beyond my immediate circle of interlocutors. I thank Nisha Kirpalani, Harpreet Anand, and Sajida Khan and her family for helping with and sharing housing. Chitra Padhmanabhan and M. K. Venu have made Delhi a home. In their apartment I have been questioned and encouraged by many, among them Hartosh Bal, Nonika Datta, Basharat Peer, Sarim Naved, and Ananya Vajpeyi. Among the academic friends in Delhi who have read and discussed parts of this book with me are Ulka Anjaria, Jon Anjaria, Leo Coleman, Shalini Grover, Deepak Mehta, and Rajni Palriwala each of whom has contributed to my thinking. At Jamia Millia Islamia, I was welcomed by Dr. Kahkashan Danyal, Dr. Akhtarul Wasey, and Qazi Obaid ur Rehman Hashmi. Dr. Hashmi’s family—Mehnaz Obaid, Sana, Saba, and Amaan—warmly welcomed me into their home.

A number of friends and colleagues have read chapters over the past few years, helping give shape to my ideas. They include Gretchen Bakke, Rachel Berger, Dace Dzenovska, Saida Hodzic, Sarah Pinto, Lucinda Ramberg, and Theresa Ventura. I have, furthermore, been lucky to have received robust and probing comments in a number of workshops. I thank the following groups and participants for their generous but rigorous engagement: Rupa Viswanath, Nathanial Roberts, and Srirupa Roy, as well as the other members of CeMIS in Göttingen, Germany; Mayanthi Fernando, Joan Scott, Michael Allan, Judith Surkis, and Saba Mahmood; Tamir Moustafa, Jeffrey Sachs, Michael Peletz, and the other participants at the workshop on Islamic Law at Simon Fraser University; Arzoo Osanloo, Nada Mouttaz, Aria Nakissa, and the other participants in the workshop on Islam and Forgiveness at the University of Washington; Leslie Orr and the working group on Religion and Women’s Studies at Concordia University; the members of the Montreal working group on religion and media—Hillary Kaell, Setrag
Manoukian, Kristin Norget, Armando Salvatore, and Jeremy Stolow; and those who asked astute questions at the Johns Hopkins University Department of Anthropology. For their interest in and ongoing discussions about this material I thank Srimati Basu, John Bowen, Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, Jeff Redding, Mengia Hong Tschalär, Gopika Solanki, and Sylvia Vatuk.

In Montreal, where I wrote most of this book, I am lucky to be surrounded by colleagues and friends who have offered critical guidance and feedback. My colleagues in the anthropology department at McGill University—Diana Allan, Nicole Couture, John Galaty, Sandra Hyde, Eduardo Kohn, Setrag Manoukian, Ron Niezen, Kristin Norget, Tobias Rees, Colin Scott, Lisa Stevenson, and Ismael Vaccaro—have been collegial and supportive, making this a hospitable environment in which to think, write, and collaborate. Beyond the anthropology department, Poulami Roychoudhury and Narendra Subramanian have both been astute interlocutors. I am grateful to the students in my 2017 seminar on secularism for their energetic engagement with much of the material that informs this book. Catherine Larouche has provided invaluable help with the detail work required for publication. My undergraduate research assistants Myra Sivaloganathan and Samar Nisar worked diligently with me on various court records.

I am humbled to have received five insightful anonymous reviews on the manuscript, and I thank these scholars for their seriousness and generosity. I hope the revisions reflect my appreciation for what they have done to make this a better book. I thank Jim Lance for his enthusiasm about the manuscript and his help with the publishing process. Thanks to Matthew Wyman-McCarthy for a careful final edit and to Zahra Sabri for expert transliteration. The research and writing of this book have been supported by the American Institute of Indian Studies, the Fonds de Recherche du Québec Société et Culture (FRQSC), and McGill’s internal Social Science and Humanities Research Council Award.

I owe Dace Dzenovska a special debt of gratitude. She has been discussing this project with me for over a decade; her incisive questions reflect her intellectual generosity and her abiding commitment to argument. She has, through it all, been an unwavering friend. Finally, I thank my kin. Yves Winter’s scholarly acumen has both inspired and challenged me; his endless energy for discussion and debate, his unflagging belief in the project, and his companionship have been both a source of energy and a ballast. I appreciate
the aplomb with which my children, Anouk and Nasim, have taken my absences for research and writing. The indomitable Anouk has brought me laughter and joy and new perspectives on our shared world; Nasim’s unfeigned love for all of us has made our lives richer. I thank my parents, Daniel and Mary Lemons, for support of every kind, from interest in my research to childcare. Their determination and energy inspire awe, and their unwavering love humility. I rely on my brother, Peter, for his insights and for his ability to make me laugh. My sister, Sarah, has taught me much about determination. My parents-in-law, André and Karin Winter, have always stood behind me; Ada Winter’s carefully-timed visits enabled me to do follow-up research in Delhi. Jaron Winter could not be a more dedicated brother-in-law. Without the professional and loving labors of my children’s daycare teachers, I would not have been able to complete this project.

Several sections are reproduced from past publications, with permission from the publisher. Parts of chapter 1 have appeared in “The Politics of Livability: Tutoring Kinship in a New Delhi Women’s Arbitration Center,” Political and Legal Anthropology Review 39(2): 244–260. Some of the research presented in chapter 4 has been published in September 2018 as “Sharia Courts and Muslim Personal Law in India: Intersecting Legal Regimes,” Law and Society Review 52(3). Finally, a different version of the second half of chapter 5 has been published as “Paying for Kinship: Muslim Divorce and the Privatization of Insecurity,” History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History 7(2): 197–218.
DIVORCING TRADITIONS