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Language connects people to each other in social relationships and allows them to participate in a variety of activities in everyday life. This original study explores the role of language in various domains of our social life, including identity, gender, class, kinship, deference, status, hierarchy, and others. Drawing on materials from over thirty languages and societies, this book shows that language is not simply a tool of social conduct but the effective means by which human beings formulate models of conduct. Models of conduct serve as points of reference for social behavior, even when actual conduct departs from them. A principled understanding of the processes whereby such models are produced and transformed in large-scale social history, and also invoked, negotiated, and departed from in small-scale social interactions provides a foundation for the cross-cultural study of human conduct.

ASIF AGHA is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, and editor of *The Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*.

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TYPOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS

I use **boldface**

For technical terms when first introduced and occasionally thereafter to remind the reader of their technical senses

‘Single quotes’

1. For glosses of expressions and utterance-acts
2. For quotations from authors (except when numbered and set on a different line)
3. For everyday usages and terminologies on which I wish to comment

Italics

1. For forms of words and expressions in orthographic representation
2. For expository emphases

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To clarify levels of embedding in reported speech

As for the linguistic data cited in this book, I have used IPA conventions whenever possible, but have left intact the conventions used by the many authors I cite when these depart from them.