Acknowledgements

The idea for this volume originated in the work of the Cosmology Group (later renamed, somewhat more diffusely, the Cosmology, Religion, Ontology, and Culture Research Group – or CROC for short), which we have run with graduate students in the Department of Anthropology at University College London (UCL) since 2004. Initially we saw the notion of cosmology mainly as a banner that could cover an array of topics in which we had an interest – myth, ritual, witchcraft and sorcery, indigenous ideas of life and death, conceptions of the landscape, of time, and so on. Inevitably, however, the idea of cosmology itself became a running theme of our conversations from year to year. What might it mean, and why, notwithstanding its slightly crusty connotations in anthropology, were we all so interested in it at the dawn of the twenty-first century? These were the questions that led us, in May 2011, to hold a two-day symposium at UCL, inviting senior scholars who had worked on matters cosmological for decades, alongside younger ones seeking to recast these anthropological concerns in different ways, to speak on the theme ‘Contemporary cosmologies and the cultural imagination’. The present volume is based on the papers that were presented there.

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