Acknowledgments

The work on this book began 40 years ago, before I planned to write such a book at all. I had not even finished my doctorate when I was invited by the late Prof. Nehemia Levtzion to give a conference paper at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, where I was then teaching) on the history of Islamisation in Java. ¹ This paper became, in effect, an early blueprint for what has now become this rather large book and its two predecessors. My interest and competence in this history was further stimulated by a request from BBC Radio in 1977 to prepare and present an hour-long radio documentary on Islam in Indonesia. I travelled to Indonesia with the producer John Thomas and recorded a range of valuable interviews. This required us to overcome Soeharto-era governmental resistance to the idea, which we did by saying that if we couldn’t interview people within the country we would do the documentary on the basis of interviews with exiles overseas. We decided whom to interview largely on advice from my then-colleague at SOAS, the late Dr Khaidir Anwar. In subsequent years, I kept returning to those interview materials as the society that they described was changing before my eyes.

In the end I decided that the history of the Islamisation of the Javanese required analysis on a three-book scale. Hence my Mystic synthesis in Java: A history of Islamisation from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries (2006), Polarising Javanese society: Islamic and other visions c. 1830–1930 (2007) and finally this book.

Part I of this book was done mainly in the common historical style of the lone scholar (that is to say, I) slogging through immense amounts

¹ Published some years later as ‘Six centuries of Islamization in Java’, pp. 100–128 in N. Levtzion (ed.), Conversion to Islam (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1979); and partially reprinted, pp. 36–43, in Ahmad Ibrahim et al. (eds), Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985).
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of primary and secondary sources. Part II, on the period since 1998, was
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provided so much of the information in this book was obviously crucial. They
ranged from prominent figures to students to ordinary rural villagers; those
actually cited in the book are listed in the bibliography.

Part II of this book represents part of a broader research project on
‘Islam and Social Dynamics in Indonesia: comparative analysis of law, culture,
politics and religion since c. 1998’, in which I studied Javanese-speaking
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MCR