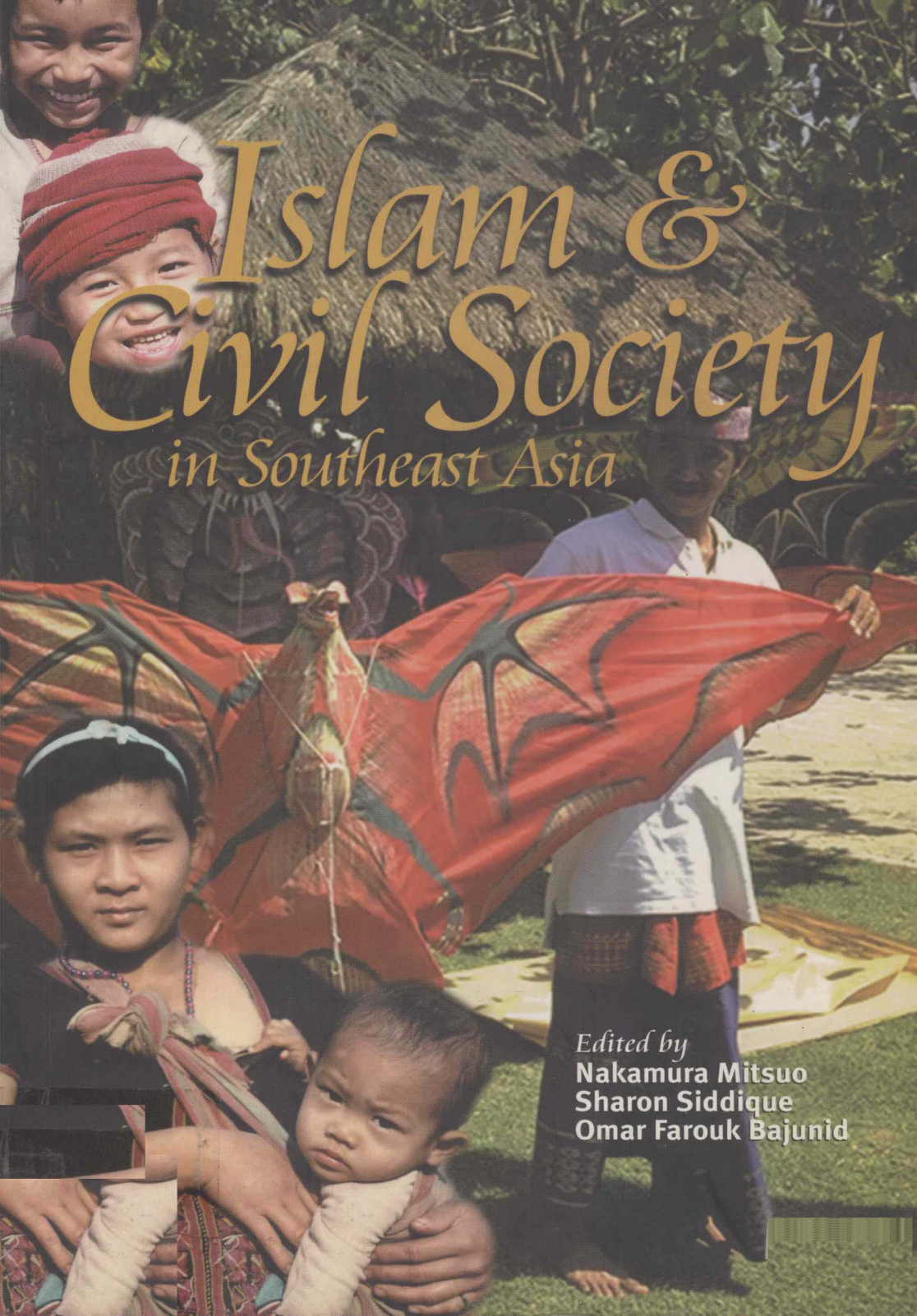
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Nakamura Mitsuo

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Preface

This volume is the result of a two-day closed intensive seminar and a half-day open symposium entitled "Islam and Civil Society: Messages from Southeast Asia", held on 5–7 November 1999 in Japan, sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Ten paper-presenters from five countries of Southeast Asia participated in the seminar, joined by ten commentators from Japan. In the open symposium, more than one hundred individuals — scholars, graduate students, activists from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and staff of non-political organizations (NPOs), business and media people, and government officials – were present.

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation planned the conference and commissioned the project to me as general co-ordinator. The Foundation also sought the co-operation of Professor Nurcholish Madjid, Rector of Paramadina Mulya University, Indonesia, as another general co-ordinator. In preparation for the conference, I visited all ten countries in Southeast Asia for a preliminary survey and consultation.

In July 1999, I set out for the first half of my journey and made contact with the following people: Dato Michael Mastura in the Philippines; Dr Iik Arifin Mansurnoor of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and a number of his colleagues at UBD in Brunei; in Singapore, Mr Zainal Abidin Rasheed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MENDAKI), Dr Sharon Siddique, and Dr Syed Farid Alatas and his colleagues at the National University of Singapore; and in Malaysia, Prof. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia, Prof. Dato' Osman Bakar, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya, Dr Dato' Ismail bin Ibrahim, Director of the Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia (IKIM) and his colleagues, amongst others.

On my return, I stopped over in Jakarta and consulted with K. H. Abdurrahman Wahid (then General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama and now fourth President of the Republic of Indonesia), Prof. Syafi'i Ma'arif (then Acting General Chairman of the Muhammadiyah), Prof. Malik Fadjar (then Minister for Religious Affairs), and some others concerning Indonesian representation to the conference. I also had a discussion with Nurcholish Madjid to finalize the list of delegates from island Southeast Asia.

In August 1999, I left Japan again for five countries in mainland Southeast Asia. In Thailand, I talked to Dr Chaiwat Satha-Anand of

Thammasat University and some others, and then visited Myanmar. In Myanmar, I met, among other people, Mr U Thein, President of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council of Myanmar, with whom I was already acquainted, and obtained follow-up information on the position of Muslim communities in the country. I then proceeded to Vietnam, where I was assisted by Mr Phu Van Han, a researcher on the Champa-Melayu culture at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Institute of Social Sciences, Ho Chi Minh City. I travelled next to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where the Foreign Ministry welcomed me (the Ambassador of Cambodia in Tokyo, His Excellency Mr Ing Kieth, had kindly notified the Ministry of my visit). Accordingly, I was able to see a number of Muslim leaders including Mr Tol Lah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Youth and Culture, and several MPs including Mr Math Ly, President of the Cambodian Islamic Association. Through the Cambodian contact, I was able to meet Mr Keu Seu and Mr Yahya Ishak, President and Vice-President respectively, of the Lao Muslim Association in Vientiane, Laos, where I made the last stop of my journey.

On the basis of my report on the field trips, the Foundation decided to invite ten individuals from five countries as overseas participants for the conference in Japan. Although I was involved in the decision-making, I do not dare claim to be comprehensive or balanced in my choice of participants since there are many obvious gaps. It is regrettable indeed that delegations from Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam were left out this time primarily because of budgetary limitations. At the same time, I expect that readers who are familiar with Muslim Southeast Asia will agree with us that the line-up of the overseas participants for the purpose of listening to the representative voices of Muslim intellectuals from contemporary Southeast Asia was in itself no small achievement.

Ten Japanese participants were invited to respond as commentators. Some of them already had firsthand knowledge of Islam in Southeast Asia through their respective fieldwork, like Tokoro Ikuya (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) who had worked on the Philippines, Kaneko Yoshiki (Matsuzaka University) on Brunei, Singapore, and Malaysia, and Nakamura Hisako (Bunkyo University) as well as Miichi Ken (Kobe University) on Indonesia. Some were already familiar with Islam in other parts of the Islamic world, like Nakanishi Hisae (Nagoya University) on Iran and Nejima Susumu (National Museum of Ethnology) on Pakistan. The remaining two, Shuto Motoko (Komazawa University) and Takeda Isami (Dokkyo University), however, had no intimate knowledge of Islam but had a strong regional studies background and knowledge of Southeast

Asia. Among the participants from Japan's side, Omar Farouk Bajunid (Hiroshima City University) was in the unique position of representing both Southeast Asian Muslim intellectuals and Japanese academia.

I believe that the occasion was a significant one of fresh intellectual learning for most of the Japanese scholars and members of the audience. Many of them heard for the first time directly from responsible Islamic intellectuals that "Islam and democracy can be compatible and complementary, and Muslim civil society is enhancing the relationship". In addition, the occasion facilitated actual contact of civil society activists for future co-operation between Japan and Southeast Asia. It was also an opportunity for reciprocal learning among Muslim participants.

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Professor Emeritus
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July 2000

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Introduction

Nakamura Mitsuo

BACKGROUND

It seems appropriate here to state what is meant by "civil society" in this volume. Although the various chapter writers have not jointly attempted to define the term explicitly, they seem to be more or less in agreement in using the term to refer to the public sphere between the state and the individual, which is really the widest common understanding of civil society in recent literature. Likewise, the writers are also concerned with either or both of the two aspects implied by the term, namely: (a) voluntary associational life on the one hand, and (b) civility, or civic virtues on the other. In the former usage, the term is used as a comprehensive category to refer to a wide range of voluntary organizations, including traditional volitional institutions as well as contemporary civic institutions and associations including NGOs (non-government organizations), POs (people's organizations), NPOs (non-profit organizations), and philanthropic organizations. In the latter case, values or normative principles constituting the foundation of society and regulating social relationships — most importantly state–society relationship — become the focus of concern.

The pairing of "Islam" and "civil society" in this book underlines an awareness that the relevance of Islam for civic values as well as the significance of associational life among Muslims for the civility of the entire society should become the subject of serious intellectual inquiry. More urgently, it is assumed that these two aspects of Islamic civil society should be approached from the viewpoint of exploring their roles in the dynamic processes of democratization and the empowerment of people in contemporary Southeast Asia. This volume presents the results of this exploration based upon recent Muslim experiences.

More broadly viewed, there was a convergence of several developments behind this project on Islam and civil society in Southeast Asia. Among these, the following seem to have been significant for the crystallization of the project:

- Rising concern for civil society in Europe and the United States since the late 1980s;
- Growing awareness in Japan of the importance of NGOs, NPOs, and philanthropy in public life;
- Rapid emergence of civil society in the Asia-Pacific region;
- "Discovery" of Islamic civil society in the Middle East and North Africa; and
- Increasing assertiveness of Islamic civil society as an important actor in the recent trends of democratization in Southeast Asia.

The relevance of these developments for the formulation of this particular project are discussed below.

Rising Concern for Civil Society in Europe and the United States

As is well recognized, the recent revival of the idea of "civil society" started in Europe and the United States in the late 1980s with the end of Cold War. The fall of socialist authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet bloc, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, and also the demise of developmental dictatorships in Latin America went hand in hand with the process of democratization and the empowerment of civil society. Practical as well as theoretical concerns relating to civil society were first directed to the transformation of those authoritarian regimes, but subsequently were re-directed towards the examination of organizational and philosophical foundations of Western democracies. Cohen and Arato comprehensively follow and discuss this process of intellectual development in their monumental works.[1] Yet, as Chaiwat Satha-Anand has observed in this volume (Chapter 6), they did not cover civil society in the Islamic world. Muslim civil society has remained as a lacuna.

Growing Awareness in Japan of the Significance of NGOs and NPOs in Public Life

The Japanese economy that had experienced unprecedented growth for three decades since the 1960s crashed in the early 1990s. Its aftermath was political uncertainty, social stagnation, and moral decay. In a reverse

relationship to this economic downturn, however, Japan witnessed a phenomenal growth of NGOs, NPOs and philanthropy during the same period. The emergence of voluntarism accelerated with the relief activities for the victims of the Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. Weakening influence of political parties gave impetus to non-ideological participatory politics nationally as well as locally. The enactment of the NPO law in 1998 placed a milestone in the development of philanthropy and voluntarism in Japan.

Internationally, in addition to its already huge amount of official development assistance (ODA) in the field of economic development, Japan's more positive contribution in such non-economic fields as security and peacekeeping activities, and social welfare and human resources development was called for. The Japanese Government responded to this call with much closer co-operation with NGOs, domestic as well as overseas, than before.[2]

The Japanese Government had hesitated, however, to approach Islamic civil society in its overseas aid activities for a long time. This was partly because of the fact that the Constitution of Japan required the strict separation of government from religion in order to prevent the revival of pre-war militarism inspired by the state religion, Shinto. Japan's ODA, therefore carefully avoided any involvement with things religious. A parallel situation existed with Japanese civil society. Until the late 1990s, Japanese NGOs and philanthropic organizations paid little attention to their counterparts in the Islamic world. Perhaps, this was partly because of the necessity to separate religion from public life in general as required by the Japanese Constitution and partly because of the fear of things Islamic in particular in view of the negative media coverage often given to it, or simply because of sheer unfamiliarity with the social significance of Islamic civil society on the Japanese side.

Emergence of Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific Region

Meanwhile, a series of drastic developments changed the public scene in the Asia-Pacific region. A remarkable political transformation occurred in the Philippines with the downfall of the Marcos regime as a consequence of "People Power" in 1986. Subsequent governments in the Philippines have been characterized by synergies of the state and NGOs and POs (people's organizations).[3] Significant progress towards democratization was also achieved in South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand accompanying the enhancement of the role of civil society. Meanwhile, the end of the