
Re-imagining Malaysia; nationalism, ethnocracy and the postliberal politics of halal

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Résumé

This paper examines the emergence of Malaysia as a leading player in the global halal industry. Drawing on documentary research undertaken to augment findings from the EU funded Dialrel project, it examines the ongoing attempt to position Malaysia as a leading player in the international halal market through new economic and social spatializations. Moving beyond a concern with nation building through halal consumption to a position targeting halal consumers in selected locations, we argue that the Malaysian state elite is pursuing a ‘postliberal’ halal strategy to maintain the legitimacy of its ethnocratic regime by inserting new hegemonic claims into transnational space. Going beyond the idea of horizontally aligned networks of transnational power as the dominant framework for understanding socioeconomic change, we examine the ways in which Malaysia targets diverse groups of halal consumers through new economic and social alliances that cut across transnational space on the vertical plane. In conclusion, we discuss the significance of these developments for understanding Malay nationalism and the continuing role of the state.

Mots-Clés: ethnocracy, halal, Malaysia, nationalism, postliberal.

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