

Healing Performances: Ethnographic Concepts and Emic Perspectives

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Abstract : This paper looks at healing performances as ethnographic expressions of local knowledge and culture embedded within the Malay psyche and gemeinschaft. As society develops and progresses, these healing performances are caught within conflicting trajectories which become compounded by the contestations of tradition, religious concerns, locality and modernity. As exemplifications of the Malay ethos, these performances practice common rituals, cater to the innate needs of the practitioners and serve the targeted, closed, local community. This paper traces the ethnographic methods in documenting these practices as rituals of healing in a post-modern world. It delineates the ethnographic concepts used to analyze these rituals, and to semiotically read the varied binarial oppositions and juxtapositions. The paper concludes by highlighting the reconciliatory processes involved in maintaining these ritual performances as exemplifications of the Malay ethos playing an important role in the re-aligning, re-balancing and healing of the Malay community's psyche.

Keywords : angina, winds, semangat, spirits, traditional theatres, trance

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