Most Muslim-majority countries have legal systems that enshrine both Islam and liberal rights. While not necessarily at odds, these dual commitments nonetheless provide legal and symbolic resources for activists to advance contending visions for their states and societies. Using the case study of Malaysia, Constituting Religion examines how these legal arrangements enable litigation and feed the construction of a “rights-versus-rites binary” in law, politics, and the popular imagination. By drawing on extensive primary source material and tracing controversial cases from the court of law to the court of public opinion, this study theorizes the “judicialization of religion” and examines the radiating effects of courts on popular legal and religious consciousness. The book documents how legal institutions catalyze ideological struggles that stand to redefine the nation and its politics. Probing the links between legal pluralism, social movements, secularism, and political Islamism, Constituting Religion sheds new light on the confluence of law, religion, politics, and society.

This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core at https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108539296.

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Constituting Religion

ISLAM, LIBERAL RIGHTS, AND THE MALAYSIAN STATE

TAMIR MOUSTAFA
Simon Fraser University
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This book has been a long time coming. *Constituting Religion* was initially conceived as a comparative study of Islamist litigation in Egypt, Malaysia, and Pakistan. However, I quickly realized that a significant treatment of the nexus of law, religion, politics, and society in any one of these three countries would require an enormous investment of time and energy. Having already been captivated by initial fieldwork in Malaysia, I chose to shift my full attention to understanding the Malaysian experience as best I could. It is a decision that I have not regretted for a minute.

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