THE MALAY IN AN EMERGENT MODERNITY:
A READING OF THE FICTION OF FRANK SWETTENHAM
AND HUGH CLIFFORD AND MAHATHIR MOHAMAD’S
THE MALAY DILEMMA

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by

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Abstract

This thesis will argue that in the works of fiction of Sir Frank Swettenham and Sir Hugh Clifford, there is the tendency of the two colonial authors to support the emergence of modernity of the Malays rather than solely to engage in what we now term hegemony in the postcolonial discourse. By examining the strengths and weaknesses of the Malay, the two colonial officers made use of their encounters as an opportunity to initiate the discourse of modernity in their writing. Drawing on the early Marxist, Weberian, Durkheimian and Simmelian sociological theories of modernity, I examine the authors’ engagement in this discourse of modernity. I highlight the intersections between the theorists’ sense of modernity and that of the colonial authors’ in the construction of the socio-cultural, economic, political, judicial, and personal domains of the modern Malay. This will be discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Applying Bakhtin’s dialogic method as the analytical model, this thesis, in chapter 5, also makes use of Mahathir Mohamad’s concerns over his people in *The Malay Dilemma* as a counterpoint, as well as to reaffirm the overlapping concerns of the two colonial officers above. The fact that the Malays, for instance, in Mahathir’s analysis, do not value time, which the two colonial officers have pointed out earlier, remains among the factors contributing to their own backwardness especially in their economy. The discourse of modernity becomes even more challenging in multi-racial Malaysia where the Malays, given the dominant political power, wish to achieve social integration through racialised economic reforms, without first realizing their weaknesses. I conclude that in their unwillingness to accept change, this ideal of social integration will not be achieved.
Abstrak

Bangsa Melayu ke arah kebangkitan modeniti: Pembacaan Fiksyen Frank Swettenham, Hugh Clifford dan The Malay Dilemma karya Mahathir Mohamad.