

**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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UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
2004**



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by

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

April 2004

## **Acknowledgements**

I am pleased to acknowledge my gratitude and appreciation to various institutions and persons without whose assistance, guidance and advice, the present study could not have been undertaken. I wish to thank the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, which offered me a four-year scholarship under the Young Lecturer's Scheme to pursue my studies at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Lim Chee Seng, whose constructive criticisms and numerous suggestions have helped me in developing and formulating the ideas throughout this study. I would always remember your invaluable help and meticulous commitment in looking through my work during many hours of our 'marathon' reading and discussion in your office.

Special mention must also be made of some individuals who have contributed in their own special ways in the course of my study. I am particularly indebted to my wife, Nazima Versay Kudus who has been ever willing to be there intellectually, emotionally and financially throughout my study. To my daughter, Fitria and my son, Daniel, who enlighten my life. To my best friend, Fred de la Rosa of Milwaukee Area Technical College, Wisconsin, USA for his willingness to read my first draft and offer some suggestions, and to Lisa Dusick, for reading Chapter 5. To my friend Dr. Reevany Bustami of School of Social Sciences, USM, thank you for helping me bring the socio-historical perspectives into the study of the colonial literature in my work. I must also mention Professor Mashudi Kader of the Centre for Languages and Translation, USM, and Professor Md Khalid Md Taib of the School of Distance Learning, USM for having confidence in me to undertake the doctoral programme.

Special thanks must go to Noordin Mohd Noor of the same centre who helped me with the Malay abstract. My previous supervisors for my Masters programme, Dr. Chris Carleton and Professor Nasir Kazmi have always encouraged me to pursue my studies to the doctoral level. I wish to thank also Associate Prof. Dr. Norizan Md. Noor, the Dean of the School of Humanities, USM, for making my extension possible.

I must extend my appreciation to Sasterawan Negara, Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh of USM (formerly with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) for a stimulating discussion on Hugh Clifford. Thank you to Mohd Noor Mokhtar of Universiti Teknologi MARA (Penang Branch) for numerous delightful discussions on matters pertaining to my work. Special thanks should go to the Dean, the Deputy Dean, and the staff of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya for their administrative cooperation. Thank you also to Datin Masrah Hj. Abidin and Mariah Yusof of the Universiti Sains Malaysia Library, Zailan Endin of the University of Malaya Library, Che Puteh Ismail of Perpustakaan Za'ba and the staff of Malaysian National Archives for helping me out with the library search of the colonial materials related to this study. To my friend, Shukri Zainuddin, thank you for providing a roof over my head whenever I came to the Klang Valley. I should also express my greatest appreciation to all my primary and secondary school teachers of Sekolah Rendah and Menengah Siong, Baling, Kedah for without them, this kampong boy would not be where he is now.

Last but not least, I would like to express my special thanks and affection to my parents and families for their love and continuous support throughout the long years of my graduate studies.

In loving memory of my two sons, Ariff and Assidiq,  
who passed away during the course of my doctoral programme.

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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.

Tesis ini mengesyorkan di dalam karya fiksyen kolonial tulisan Sir Frank Swettenham dan Sir Hugh Clifford terdapat kecenderungan kedua-dua penulis ini membantu mewujudkan kebangkitan modeniti dalam kalangan bangsa Melayu. Karya mereka memberi penekanan kepada kekuatan dan kelemahan bangsa Melayu dalam arus modeniti. Aspek sosio-budaya, ekonomi, politik dan perundangan, dan ciri-ciri individu orang Melayu telah dibincangkan berdasarkan teori modeniti Marx, Weber, Durkheim dan Simmel di dalam Bab 2, 3 dan 4. Bab 5 pula membincangkan karya Mahathir Mohamad bertajuk *The Malay Dilemma* berdasarkan penggunaan teori dialogik Bakhtin sebagai model analitikal. Hal ini bertujuan sebagai timbalbalas dan pengukuhan terhadap kebimbangan awal yang dibincangkan oleh pegawai-pegawai kolonial tersebut. Contohnya, sikap orang Melayu yang terus tidak menghargai masa seperti yang dibincangkan oleh pegawai-pegawai kolonial tersebut terus menjadi faktor yang menyumbang kemunduran orang Melayu terutama dalam bidang ekonomi. Perbincangan modeniti menjadi lebih mencabar lagi dalam situasi Malaysia yang berbilang bangsa yakni orang Melayu, yang memiliki kuasa politik ingin mencapai integrasi sosial melalui pemulihan ekonomi mengikut kaum, tidak meyedari kelemahan diri mereka sendiri. Saya membuat kesimpulan bahawa selagi bangsa Melayu tidak mampu melakukan perubahan, harapan mereka untuk mencapai integrasi sosial tidak akan tercapai.