Chapter 6

Conclusion

> "We need to reconstruct those (institutions) we have, or create new ones. For globalisation is not incidental to our lives today. It is a shift in our life circumstances. It is the way we now live."
>
> - Anthony Giddens.

In the beginning of his book, *Runaway World* (2000), Anthony Giddens quotes a sermon delivered in the year 1014 by Archbishop Wulfstan in York, which says as follows: 'The world is *in a rush*, and it is getting to its end' (my emphasis). While one can easily establish the religious belief or sentiment in the second part of the statement, the fact is that the people of York, in the eleventh century, already felt 'a rush' suggesting the rapid changes that have affected them daily. As century progresses, the changes in the West continued. This 'rush' went on through the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, the Reformation in the sixteenth and the era of Cartesian philosophy in the seventeenth century. The philosophy of Enlightenment where 'reason' functions as the unifying force encompassing the realms of science, history, jurisprudence and politics took place in the eighteenth century and provides the basis for other modern philosophies of our time, including modernity. While those changes continue to take effect in the West, a quick glance at Clifford's perception of the Malays in the 1890's that "their [the Malays'] lives are entirely monotonous, dull, and uneventful, but the knowledge of other and better things is not for them" (1897a: 28) would definitely help us to appreciate and justify Malays' backwardness or the stagnancy of eastern civilization described by Marx.

The British colonial encounter in Malaya, exemplified in the writings of Frank Swettenham and Hugh Clifford, are not limited to the dissemination of the imperial agenda alone because what may seem to be "*something beyond control*", to borrow Homi Bhabha's words, is not necessarily "*beyond accommodation*" (1994: 12)(italics in original)—that the two colonial authors are able to accommodate the discourse of modernity in their works. While they realized that the 'Juggernaut of Progress' in Swettenham's words, and the 'wheel of progress' in Clifford's terms, would eventually change the course of Malay life, the two colonial authors also anticipated, to borrow Bhabha's words again, "the more complex cultural situation where 'previously unrecognized spiritual and intellectual needs' emerge from the imposition of 'foreign' ideas, cultural representations, and structures of power" (ibid., 12). This study has shown that in the two colonial officers' works of fiction, the discourse of modernity is certainly not 'beyond [their] accommodation' and that the Malay characters in their writings are capable of initiating change.

Of course, one should not wholly take Clifford's statement above as entirely true for the Malays in the Malay Archipelago have also gone through many changes in their civilization before the advent of the British. The Malacca Sultanate and the arrival of Islam in the Malay world are two examples. Clifford's statement above can only be used appropriately to view the British encounter during the author's era. However, when one argues the current Malay backwardness in Malaysia, for instance, the economy, some historical justifications such as the colonial government's encouragement of Chinese businesses and/or the colonial's divide-

and-rule policy, Clifford's statement then might hold some validity. The fact that the Malays are incapable of accepting that the world is in a rush and always changing has contributed to their dilemma. This, coupled with the Western industrial culture shaped by the philosophy of Enlightenment has drastically widen the cleavage between the East and West. The meeting of the two civilizations, one industrialized and always in a rush, the other underdeveloped and stagnant, will probably lead to the two colliding, with one crushing into the other mercilessly, recalling the earlier metaphor of "Juggernaut". The history of British colonization of Malaya, however, has witnessed the steady process of negotiations that has helped to bridge the gap between the coloniser and the colonised through the idea of 'regeneration,' to use Swettenham's word. The colonial administration helped to guide the path of the juggernaut.

The Enlightenment philosophy, which governs the thoughts of western intellectuals and policy-makers, has contributed greatly in the shaping of world history, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The process of British colonization in Malaya and other parts of Asia and Africa, which actively took place during this era, and the Enlightenment which co-existed alongside it, would definitely influence each other. As we have seen in this study, the philosophical approaches behind the writings of the two colonial officers discussed above manifested the Enlightenment influence in their thinking. It was this philosophy and the influence of the Enlightenment's thinkers that have helped to make the process of the regeneration of the Malays more steady.

As so, at any point when there is a mention of the metaphor of progress such as the "Juggernaut of Progress" by Swettenham, or "the wheel of progress" by Clifford, the two authors will surely establish the connection with the future generation of the Malays. For example, Swettenham writes "That time of regeneration will come rapidly" (1895: x) and Clifford "Let us hope that succeeding generations will become used to the new conditions..." (1897a: 246). Therefore, we could also associate the Enlightenment philosophy, which views the future (of the Malays) with the utmost concern, as the underlying perspective of the two colonial officers professing the discourse of modernity rather than solely concentrating on the discourse of colonialism in their works of fiction.

As modernity promotes change encompassed by the word progress itself, the history of British colonization in Malaya cannot be viewed solely by the economic or other forms of exploitation by the colonialists. The writings of the two colonial officers confirm that the risks they took, the joy they shared, the confidence they gained, and the friendship they earned by sharing their lives with the Malays had gone beyond the colonialist-subject relationship. It is through this understanding, sympathy and friendship with the Malays that the British officers were able to bring change to the socio-cultural and economic spheres of the Malays, especially in the light of what Marx describes as a stagnant traditional peasant economy.

The Enlightenment philosophers consider modern society as a promoter of change or progress. Change is a normal phenomenon; to a certain extent, it is anticipated and institutionalized by the norms in society, as opposed to the traditional society where change or progress is seen as abnormal or constituting a violation of the norms. This is exactly what we have seen in the beginning of the colonial era—that the two colonial officers, in order to bring progress to the Malays have to face—the resistance from the traditional Malay society towards the spirit of modernization of which the two colonial officers wish to impose on the Malays.

In the traditional Malay society, there exist many courageous and mild mannered Malays, the characteristics which the two colonial officers acknowledge in their works of fiction to be important to progress. Of course, the negative aspects of the Malays such as laziness, amok, *latah* and reluctance to change have also been highlighted. The understanding or sympathy derived from mixing with the Malays may determine a certain form of policy towards the Malays (such as the provision that they are the 'sons of the soil') has to have its limits, no matter how much it is welcomed by the Malays. Constructive criticisms or the discourse of modernity delivered by the two colonial authors still have to be taken seriously.

A few disturbing questions may have propped out in the course of this thesis. One would be the question concerning the writings of the two colonial officers that are suggestive of their hesitation to fully endorse colonial discourse in their works of fiction. The discourse of modernity, which was born in the cradle of the

Enlightenment philosophy, is capable of generating the intellectual self-examination and insight, of which the two colonial officers have taken liberty to do so. Swettenham's skepticism on the virtue of sending the young Malay ruler for overseas' education appears in his short story "At a Funeral" and the irreversible effect of Westernization is duly described in the short story "A Mezzotint." Clifford is even more skeptical of the overseas' education when he describes Saleh's as a misfit in his novel. These instances serve as proof that the discourse of modernity outweighs the post-colonial discourse in the works of fiction of the two colonial authors. It should become obvious that while the two colonial writers are encouraging the Malays to be critical of their traditional way of life, the former is becoming critical of their own colonial agenda. It involves the two colonial authors' 'ways of seeing' as Ania Loomba suggests in the following quote: "Colonialism thus refracted the production of knowledge and structured the conditions for its dissemination and reception, the processes by which it did so testify both to colonial power and to its complex interactions with 'other' epistemologies, ideologies and ways of seeing" (1998: 69). Swettenham and Clifford, however, chose to adhere to the discourse of modernity rather than to fully subscribe to the colonial discourse perspective.

Secondly, there is the question of the two colonial authors' narration of their own experiences facing the hostile native rulers such as in Clifford's "At the Court of Pelesu" which clearly fosters the colonial agenda on the issue of native's barbarity. Or, the projection of Swettenham's heroic attempt to escape the natives'

rage in a short story entitled "James Wheeler Woodford Birch." At first glance or as post-colonial critics would argue, those heroic projections and the preponderance of the native's lawlessness are part of the colonial agenda to justify the necessity of colonial intervention in the colonized nations. While this thesis does not wish to argue against those post-colonial critics on the matter for their stance which has their own theoretical backups, the only explanation to be offered is that even if the two colonial officers actually subscribed to the imperial agenda and their stance is actually apparent in their writing, then their stance has helped to make their works of fiction saleable. After all, as also argued earlier, the discourse of modernity still allows for the two colonial officers to rationalize their positions and decide their own autonomous decisions. I am sure that was exactly what Swettenham and Clifford have done. Other than that, most of the short stories that deal with amok, *latah* or forms of injustices and lawlessness have shown the successful implementation of the discourse of modernity, that the Malays are beginning to accept change. It is the nature of modernity that it continues to reflect upon itself as Giddens suggests in his 'reflexivity' of modern social life that "social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character" (1990: 38).

Thirdly, would be the question of whether colonization is contradictory or not to modernity. In the course of history, in Malaya and in any part of the world, civilizational change normally took place with outside influences, which eventually helped local inhabitants to change. To use the same example again, the Malacca

Sultanate which embraced Hinduism at the outset of the empire changed their faith to Islam after being influenced by the Islamic traders of India and Arabia. Intermarriages between these traders and the locals helped spread Islam at a greater speed.[1] Such religious influence, despite the change that it has affected, was not considered as colonization because the Indian and the Arab traders did not use the element of force in the process of Islamization of the Malays. During the British colonial era, we have the British, as imperialists, who actually imposed and controlled the political power on the Malays. In that sense, they are the colonizer. However, if it is seen from another angle, it was the same colonizer who acted as actors and initiators of change on the Malays. The British possessed the attributes of vigour and energy as we have seen in the works of Swettenham and Clifford. There is no doubt about the exercise of power but there is also an issue of moral responsibility as well—to help shape the course of modernizing the Malayan/Malaysian. Part of their task was to rebuild, revitalize or in Swettenham's term, regenerate the Malays. Modernity acts as an instrument of internal change and is part and parcel of British colonization.

Without a doubt, during the colonial era, the British occupied a special position in the strata of Malay society—they formed almost like a bridge or intermediary between the Malay Rulers and the ordinary Malays, yet their function mostly laid in the administrative machinery of the government. The ordinary people viewed them almost to the rank of their own Malay Rulers, while the Malay Rulers, even though ranked highest among the three strata, are obliged to listen to the advice

of their British Residents, which makes their position rather peculiarly lower than the Residents. But due to the efficiency of British administration, with the proper collection of taxes and other successful modernization programmes, the Malay Rulers began to trust and accept these complex arrays of power in the hands of the British government. Perhaps, for that reason the British were able to effect change in both directions, with less resistance. The peasants who feared their rajas would also fear the British for the British have put themselves in the proper constituted authority, which the Malays respected. The Malay Rulers whose position and monthly allowance have been guaranteed by the British government were mostly satisfied with such an arrangement.

Occupying this position, the British found themselves capable of affecting change on the habit of the Malays. During the tenure of the two colonial officers, as reflected in their works of fiction, the following forms of change have taken place in Malay society. In the socio-cultural and economic sphere, the Malays are encouraged to inculcate the spirit of inquisitiveness, the "dare to know" philosophy as discussed earlier, in order to overcome their superstitious beliefs and veneration of the old customs or *adat*, which proven to be harmful, to borrow Mahathir's words. The Malays also have learned the habit of order and regularity, which would help them to better organize their life. With both positive changes above, it is hoped that the Malays no longer lived their lives monotonously, dull, and uneventful as Clifford suggests earlier. They should be able to appreciate the fact that every thing around them is changing and they should learn to cope with those changes. Their courageous

character would help them get rid of the 'uncivilised' elements in their society such as amok and *latah*. Their conservatism would be overcome by their understanding of rational thought, which British education system would offer. Their economic well-being would also be improved when the demand for food production increased with the process of modernization introduced by the British. The British set the conditions for a capitalist agriculture to develop and encouraged farming for profit rather than subsistence. In other words, the trust the Malays had in the British administration brought progress to them.

In the political and judiciary sphere, the Malays no longer have to face the many civil wars which were inflicted by the Malay Rulers before the coming of the British. They could go on making progress in their life without having any worry that their rulers would seize the lands and the crops they cultivated. The Malay Ruler "found that he was no longer a law to himself; that he could not levy taxes as he pleases; could not kill without inquiry, ravish or rob without punishment, requisition the labour of the *raiyats* without payment" (Swettenham, 1899: 17). They also need not worry about the injustices caused by their native rulers since the latter has also come to admire "the gospel of freedom, justice, and British methods of administration" (ibid., 48).

In the course of more or less two decades, the two colonial authors have been able to instill and continue to encourage many personal and intra-personal values into the Malay society, as their writing would suggest. For example, the element of

trust has been successfully instilled in the Malay Rulers that they have learned to trust the British's administration. To the *ra'ayat*, the element of trust is manifested in their willingness to let go the habit of carrying a *kris* as protection as Swettenham writes, "In 1874, no Malay man was ever seen unarmed," but with the British gradually forbidding the carrying of arms, "A *kris*, which used to be a Malay's most prized possession, has now [1899] very little value" (1899: 24-25). This latter instance describes clearly how the British as an external power, to use Marx's words, is acting on the individual Malay to change his attitude towards the tradition of carrying *kris*; once accepted, it becomes the 'objective culture' in Simmel's term, that the Malay society is accepting the habit of not carrying a *kris* as a universally shared culture or value.

As the Enlightenment philosophers allow people to believe that they could comprehend and control the world around them by reason, the outcome would be the recognition of autonomous individual power and/or decision-making process. The rational choice of choosing one's own lover, such performed by Meriam in Swettenham's "A Malay Romance," or by Munah in Clifford's *Since the Beginning* is beginning to take place in Malay society. Of course, as we have witnessed in this study, the emergence of such individual rational actions in Malay society are still being limited by Malay society itself since it was newly introduced, as Durkheim would argue. The least we could say is that during the era when the two colonial authors' active participation in Malaya, the new generation of Malays have been able to absorb some level of moral and social improvement in their lives, as demonstrated

by a few characters in their works of fiction discussed earlier. As their numbers are growing, these individuals will engage in constant dialectic with social forms and, what Simmel calls, objective culture. At this point, although objective culture extends human freedom, for the sake of achieving social integration, the individual has to put up with the constriction of his/her integrity.

It is exactly this point that Mahathir wishes to take up in his *Malay Dilemma*—that to achieve social integration is not an easy task as we have seen in chapter five. It is as if the British who ruled Malaya through autocratic government and enjoyed the administrative convenience by the divide-and-rule policy knew right from the beginning that it was going to be hard to realize social integration in this country. The best that they could do, as inspired by the writings of Swettenham and Clifford, was to introduce the Malays on the path of modernity as this thesis argues. The process of change in attitudes and behaviour, or at psychosocial level in the words of Gino Germani continues to affect the process of change at the normative level—the institutions, values, statuses, roles and other norms (1968: 345) to the time when Mahathir published his *Malay Dilemma.*

Again and again, the same issue of Malay's backwardness or being too much behind is apparent. In the works of the two colonial officers discussed earlier, the issue has amounted to the difficulty of modernizing the Malays during British era. We have to be mindful, however, that the colonial government had no social agenda, which would eventually lead to the social integration among the people who lived in

Malaya at that time as evident in their divide-and-rule policy. During the pre-and post-Independence, with the establishment of democratic government, the actual issue of social integration is becoming more salient, if not more challenging. The approaches seem almost the same—both colonial authors and that of Mahathir—that is by seeking to understand the native people, the Malays. Then, comes understanding and sympathy, which is later used to rationalize the reasons for the 'son of the soil' treatment the Malays received during the colonial era or the preferential treatment for the definitive people in Mahathir's era.

While Mahathir is able to explain the causes of the May 1969 race riot from a Malay perspective and probably offer a few suggestions to overcome the Malay dilemma, the riot itself serves as proof that modern society possesses a fragile social structure, as Weber claims, since Malaysian society now saw the struggle for power between different groups, which, in the case of Malaya/Malaysia, is between the Malays and the Chinese. The power here would mean that the political power is in the hands of the Malays, and the economic power in the hands of the Chinese. Between those two, Marx argues that the economy serves as the centre of power. Mahathir seems to agree.

In order for any given multiracial society to achieve social integration, there is a need for social equality and to achieve that social equality, there is a need for economic equality. But as opposed to Marx, who supports the formation of classless society, Mahathir's approach (and that of the sympathetic Chinese as seen in Tan

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Cheng Lock discussed earlier) to achieve economic equality would mean that the less economically developed race such as the Malays should be helped in order to compete on an equal footing with the economically strong Chinese, a notion with which Marx would never agree. The complexities of Malaysian modern society, as opposed to the European societies, lies in the form of a country's policies to maintain its racial line in order to achieve its social integration and solidarity. In that sense, what I have said earlier that the Malays are lonely in their path of improving their economic backwardness should become clearer.

The expansion of the capitalist economy in Malaya which took place during British colonial rule seemed to benefit the Malays the least, as opposed to the Chinese who were ever ready to reap its full potential. The spirit of hard work and industry, which Weber talks about in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* is there already in the "hardest-working" Chinese as Swettenham described them in his introduction to *The Real Malay*. The Malays who subscribe to the egalitarian way of life and do not feel the need to 'rush' are left behind. Fortunately, underneath colonialism lies the discourse of modernity of which the two colonial authors seem to prescribe in their writing and their view of the Malays. The two help to initiate progress and change in the Malay society, even though at times, their positions are against that of their own colonial government.

As we have also seen in the course of this study, both colonial authors and Mahathir see urbanisation as a possible solution for the establishment of social and economic equality, which in turns helps to ensure the social integration because it

provides the environment needed for society to progress. Clifford, for example, sees the advantages of bringing the Malay Rulers to the city of London as a preparation for organizing urban life based on universal symbols and beliefs, which form the basis for the city dwellers as Simmel would suggest. The perplexities over the logic behind the use of traffic lights as observed in the short story "Piloting Princes" is among the initial forms of collective conscience that each and every city dweller has to abide to.

Having such faith that the urban environment is capable of changing the attitudes and behaviour of its dwellers would certainly suggest that both the colonial officers and Mahathir agree with Marx's very important argument that humans change themselves by changing their environment discussed earlier, a stance of which is also echoed in Durkheim's argument that change depends not on the will of individuals but on the type of society in which individuals live. As modern Malaysian society is caught in the process of increasing rationalization of the individual and is also at the same time driven forward by the capitalist economic development as Mahathir wishes of his Malay people to engage in, since the Chinese is already way ahead of them, would Malaysia achieve its social cohesion and integration? No definite answer is offered but Mahathir is hopeful that "only understanding, goodwill and time" as stated earlier can help Malaysians adjust to each other. Most importantly, the Malays' economic dilemma in the free capitalist enterprise has to be tackled first. In this manner, Mahathir shares the same views of Durkheim and Weber that even though all of them recognized the problems of

capitalist society, they sought to reform social inequalities within capitalism than to opt for social revolution as argued by Marx.

The process of change in the life of the Malays has been since the colonial era, admittedly, too slow to evolve. So slow that at times they need the outsider's help. Even then, they are sometimes reluctant to change. The following adapted excerpt from The Hikayat Abdullah[2] should help capture the severe gravity of the situation with the Malays and all my earlier arguments.

One day in 1823, Thomas Stamford Raffles, the so-called founder of Singapore invited the ruling Sultan of Singapore and his Minister to his residence. During the meeting, Raffles conveyed a strong message that there was the need for his visitors' children to receive an education in the English language and basic arithmetic, the costs of which would be borne by Raffles himself. Raffles says,

> Look at Singapore, so many different nationalities living from trade: but do you see any Malay traders? The Malays are not capable of taking part in more serious enterprise, primarily because they have no knowledge of how to keep accounts or how to write. If your Highness's children study arithmetic and other subjects, then the benefit of education quickly will become evident to other Malays.

While Raffles' invitation here could be associated with the supremacy of the white man calling the native rulers to his residence instead of the white man going to the native rulers' residence (recalling the same incident in Swettenham's "A Silhouette" earlier), the concerns over the Malays' lack of education and economic enterprise by Raffles is more important here. It should become obvious that Raffles (Swettenham and Clifford could also be included in the category) wishes for progress of the

Malays for the betterment of their own race. Their hope was to modernize the Malays.

The fate of the Malays, however, was sealed when the Sultan refused the offer. What makes it hard for the Malays to succeed is not their racial, physical or psychological weaknesses, but their mere unwillingness to accept change. The Malays today need to realize that they have a lot of catching up to do. The best way is not simply to go forward[3] but also to be proactive. It is the way of present and the future.