AL-SHAJARAH

ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization

Published by IIUM Press
2023 Volume 28 Number 1

AL-SHAJARAH

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
OSMAN BAKAR, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

EDITOR
AHMAD MURAD MERICAN, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
AHMAD EL-MUHAMMADY, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
WAN ALI WAN MAMAT, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

MEMBERS
SYED KHAIRUDIN ALJUNIED, NUS, Singapore
BADROL HISHAM @ FARISH AHMAD NOOR, NTU, Singapore
PETER CHANG, UM, Malaysia
MOHAMED ASLAM MOHAMED HANEEF, IIUM, Malaysia
ABDELAZIZ BERGHOUT, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia
WALEED FIKRI FARES, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia
TENGKU MOHD AZZMAN SHARIFFADEEN, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

AFIFI AL-AKITI (UK)
JOHN L. ESPOSITO (USA)
JOMO K. SUNDARAM (Malaysia)
YASUSHI KOSUGI (Japan)
AMIN SAIKAL (Australia)
TU WEIMING (China)
IMTIYAZ YUSUF (Vietnam)
MUHAMMED HARON (Botswana)
IBRAHIM KALIN (Turkey)
SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR (USA)
MUHAMMAD SUHEYL UMAR (Pakistan)
SALLEH YAAPAR (Malaysia)

Al-Shajarah is a refereed international journal that publishes original scholarly articles in the area of Islamic thought, Islamic civilization, Islamic science, and Malay world issues. The journal is especially interested in studies that elaborate scientific and epistemological problems encountered by Muslims in the present age, scholarly works that provide fresh and insightful Islamic responses to the intellectual and cultural challenges of the modern world. *Al-Shajarah* will also consider articles written on various religions, schools of thought, ideologies and subjects that can contribute towards the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of science. Critical studies of translation of major works of major writers of the past and present. Original works on the subjects of Islamic architecture and art are welcomed. Book reviews and notes are also accepted.

The journal is published twice a year, June-July and November-December. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, *Al-Shajarah*, F4 Building, Research and Publication Unit, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), No. 24, Persiaran Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Taman Duta, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All enquiries on publications may also be e-mailed to alshajarah@iium.edu.my. For subscriptions, please address all queries to the postal or email address above.

Contributions: Submissions must be at least 5,500 words long. All submissions must be in English or Malay and be original work which has not been published elsewhere in any form (abridged or otherwise). In matters of style, *Al-Shajarah* uses the *University of Chicago Manual of Style* and follows the transliteration system shown on the inside back cover of the journal. The Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to return accepted manuscripts to the author for stylistic changes. Manuscripts must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief in Microsoft Word. The font must be Times New Roman and its size 12. IIUM retains copyright to all published materials, but contributors may republish their articles elsewhere with due acknowledgement to *Al-Shajarah*.

©International Islamic University Malaysia
(IIUM)
ISSN 1394-6870

DENYING AND DEFLECTING THE RACISM OF EMPIRE: THE TROPE OF THE ‘MALEVOLENT NATIVE’ IN THE WRITINGS OF THE COLONIAL FUNCTIONARY AND AUTHOR HUGH CLIFFORD

Farish A Noor[1]

> Night is here but the barbarians have not come.
> And some people arrived from the borders,
> and said that there are no longer any barbarians.
> And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?
> Those people were some kind of solution.
>
> Constantine P. Cavafy
> *Waiting for the Barbarians* (*1904)*

Abstract

Hugh Charles Clifford (1866-1941) was a colonial functionary who served in various capacities in British Malaya, notably in the kingdom of Pahang (as colonial agent, 1887-1888; Superintendent (1889) and Resident (1896-1900, 1901-1903). Apart from his duties as a colonial administrator, Clifford was also the author of numerous works of fiction that were set in the kingdom and was thus an active contributor to the colonial imaginary. This paper looks at the fictional works of Hugh Clifford. It focuses on one specific theme that recurs repeatedly in several of his works, which is the notion that the aboriginal and other Asiatic communities of the Malay Peninsula were living under the overlordship of the Malays. That a British colonial functionary like Clifford could have foregrounded such a theme while seemingly unaware of his role and subject-position as a functionary of the British Empire is telling in many respects. In many

---

[1] Professor Farish A. Noor, SDAC Program, Friedrich-Alexander University, Erlangen, Germany. Email: badrol.hisham.ahmad@fau.de

ways, the fictional works of Clifford can be read as a systematic and sustained effort to deny and deflect the racism at the heart of racialized colonial capitalism then, which served as the basis of British imperial rule across Asia and Africa.

Keywords: colonialism, Hugh Clifford, Orientalist stereotypes, colonial fiction, colonial propaganda, British Malaya.

I. 'Protective Imperialism' and the Justifications for Empire

> All conquest literature seeks to explain to the conquerors 'why we are here'.
>
> Robert Bartlett,
> *The Making of Europe* (Bartlett, 1993: 96)

Throughout history, Empires all over the world have sought justifications for their actions and the expansion of their respective spheres of power and influence. Living as we do in a postcolonial, post-Cold War world, post-9/11 world, we have witnessed the myriad forms of superpower interventional all over the planet that has often been justified in the name of democracy, freedom, liberation, and anti-terrorism. And yet historians would note that none of this is radically new, and it could perhaps be argued that radical newness never makes an appearance in the first place. The discursive strategies that have been put to work in recent times to justify the interventions of the major powers in the world should remind us of similar strategies that were employed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the imperial powers of Western Europe were at the height of their power.

This paper looks at one particular discursive strategy that would undoubtedly be familiar to historians who have focused on Western imperialism in South and Southeast Asia: The claim that Western colonial expansion and imperial rule were necessary and justifiable on the grounds that Western intervention was a force that was capable of bringing about societal change, progress, and liberating Asians from the shackles of their own cultures and traditions. In this particular rendition of the theme, 'protective Imperialism' becomes a means through which Asian societies could be brought under the Western rule and, by extension, brought under Western guidance and mentorship as well. Instances of such discourses at work can be seen in the experience of British imperialism in India, where alongside the march of empire and incessant advance of Britain's colonial army, there came the attendant train of missionaries, reformers, and volunteers, who had set out to India to 'save the Indians from themselves'. Much of this missionary zeal was directed towards the traditions and cultural practices of the Indians themselves, and the targets included the caste system, India's feudal political culture, traditional forms of healthcare, as well as cultural norms and rituals such as marriage, inheritance, etc.

Here we would like to turn our attention to British Malaya, where similar discursive strategies were put to work as Britain embarked on its ‘forward movement’ strategy from the 1870s and began to intervene directly into the internal political and economic affairs of the Malay kingdoms one by one, beginning with British intervention in the kingdom of Perak, and the signing of the Pangkor Treaty in 1874.

In this paper, we will focus our attention on one British colonial functionary, Hugh Charles Clifford (1866-1941), who would play a pivotal role in the mapping and study of the Malay kingdoms of Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan on the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula. We intend to provide a detailed account of Clifford's career, before turning our attention from his colonial mapping and surveys to the popular fiction he would write in the later stages of his career. We will argue that in Clifford's writings – from geographical surveys to bureaucratic reports to popular fiction – we can see a set of constant themes and tropes being instrumentalized time and again. All of these relate to Orientalist stereotypes about Asians (Malays and Chinese in particular) that were already in circulation at the time among like-minded Empire builders and budding colonizers and which Clifford readily utilized to serve his own agenda. The net result of his literary output (which was considerable) was a body of fictional and non-fictional writing that, in so many ways, captured the colonial mood of the time and which foregrounded the ideologically laden belief that Empire was good and necessary because it was essentially benevolent. In writing in this manner, Clifford seemed oblivious to his own subject-position as a colonialist and imperialist and was, in fact directly involved in the denial of the racism that was at the heart of racialized colonial-capitalism.

II. Mapping, Writing and Distortion: The Arrival of Hugh Charles Clifford as Colonial Functionary-Propagandist

> Africa has been explored and re-explored during the last decade to such an extent that it no longer merits the name of the Dark Continent; Central Asia, too, has been forced of late years to yield up many of its secrets to energetic explorers; and all over the world the hidden things of darkness are daily being brought to light by adventurous spirits, not a few of whom, we may be proud to remember, are members of the great British race. (Clifford, 1897: 1)
>
> Hugh Clifford,
> *A Journey Through the Malay States*
> *of Trengganu and Kelantan*

To truly appreciate the extent to which his later fictional writings were shaped and influenced by his experience as a colonial surveyor-cartographer-administrator, we need to understand the circumstances that brought Hugh Clifford to British Malaya in the first place. Hugh Charles Clifford, who would serve as the British colonial Resident in the kingdom of Pahang (John Pickersgill Rodget was the first Resident appointed to Pahang in October 1888)[2] was one of the more prolific colonial functionaries in British Malaya. Coming from a military family that had served the British Empire, Clifford lived in the shadow of his father Major-General Sir Henry Hugh Clifford whose reputation was made during the Boer War in South Africa. Departing from his father's military path, Clifford opted for life in the colonial civil service instead and would be sent to British Malaya. Upon his arrival, he initially served under the tutelage of Sir Frederick Weld (to whom he was related), who was then the Governor of the Straits Settlements.

---

[2] See Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang 1880-1933: A Political History*. Monograph 18 Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Geographic Society, 1996.

Like many of his generation, Clifford wished to make his mark in the colonies, and in 1883 he was given his first posting in Perak as a cadet. In Perak, he began to learn the language, culture, history, and social norms of the Malays, whom he would later govern. Later in 1886, he was posted to Pahang to map the territory of the kingdom and find a means through which the British could gain a foothold. Clifford's mission was to enter Pahang on foot and to find the means to travel across the land with the support of his Malay guides and then to find a way into the inner court of Pahang. His goal was to find a way to persuade the ruler of Pahang to open up his land to foreign (i.e., British) capital and to accept the presence of a British colonial resident in the court. Clifford did indeed manage to map the territory of Pahang. He later undertook several expeditions to the north of the Malay Peninsula, eventually producing one of the first accurate maps of Pahang, Terengganu, and Lower Kelantan, which was submitted to the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1897.[3]

Clifford's arrival in Pahang came amid the Pahang Revolt of 1891-1895, which was the result of British intervention in the kingdom, occasioned by the signing of the Pahang Treaty of 1888 that led to the ruler Sultan Ahmad al-Mu'azzam losing much of his power and the kingdom being reduced to a protectorate where the British were, in fact, the *de facto* power.[4] Clifford's preoccupation with the mapping of Pahang (as well as Terengganu and Kelantan) was due to the desire on the part of the British to open up the East Coast states of the Malay Peninsula to British capital as soon as possible.[5] In his reports that were sent to his superiors, Clifford constantly reiterated the theme of native backwardness and political instability, which he found to be the primary reasons for the absence of foreign capital in the kingdoms concerned. That Clifford placed so much faith in the transformative power of Western capital was hardly surprising, for he also subscribed to notions of racial difference and believed that progress could only be delivered through the intervention of superior nations, including 'the great British race' to which he obviously belonged.

---

[3] Hugh Clifford, 'A Journey Through the Malay States of Trengganu and Kelantan'. In *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*. London: Savile Row. Vol. IX. No. 1. January 1897.

[4] The Pahang uprising of 1891 to 1895 was the result of the new laws and regulations that were introduced to Pahang under British colonial rule. British intervention in Pahang (as in Perak and Selangor earlier) meant that the Malay lords and nobles of Pahang were no longer able to collect tax revenues. This led to dissatisfaction among many of the Malay chiefs who resented foreign interference in their affairs and who blamed Sultan Ahmad al-Mu'azzam for allowing the British to enter Pahang in the first place. The primary instigator of the revolt was the nobleman Orang Kaya Setia Perkasa Pahlawan of Semantan, popularly known as Dato Bahaman. Dato Bahaman refused to comply with the orders of the newly appointed

Clifford did not simply map the geography of Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan, but he also produced a narrative account of the socio-political-economic landscape of the Malay kingdoms,

---

Resident at the court of Pahang, and between 1888 to 1891, continued to defy the orders of the British that was issued in the name of Sultan Ahmad. The Pahang Treaty had compromised Pahang's sovereignty in no uncertain terms, as Sultan Ahmad was no longer allowed to engage in diplomatic relations with any other state without the consent of the British. Article 6 of the Pahang Treaty of 1888 stated that 'The Raja of Pahang undertakes on his part that he will not, without the knowledge and consent of Her Majesty's government, negotiate any treaty or enter into any engagement with any foreign state', or 'interfere in the politics of administration of any native state'. See Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang 1880-1933*; Abdul Talib Haji Ahmad, *Sejarah Dato Bahaman, Orang Kaya Semantan*. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Bahagia Press, 1959; *Treaties and Other Papers connected with the Native states of the Malay Peninsula.* Singapore: Government Printing House. 1888: 42-55.

[5] As soon as the Treaty of Pahang was signed a British Magistrate and a contingent of colonial policemen were sent to the royal capital Pekan as well. British capital poured into Pahang immediately after the state came under indirect colonial rule. One of the first British companies that was set up was the Pahang Corporation which was founded by the tin prospector William Fraser; and not long after came other companies that included the Pahang-Kabang Limited company and the Pahang-Semiliang Limited company. See 'Mining Operations at Pahang, Malay Peninsula', in *The Illustrated London News*. London, 5 April 1890: 419. The Pahang Corporation was given the right to prospect for tin in an area of 2,000 square miles in Pahang, in and around the district of Sungai Lembing. The corporation recruited the help of Chinese tin miners to carry out mining work in areas under the company's control. See 'The Pahang Enterprise in the Malay Peninsula', in *The Illustrated London News*. London, 29 March 1890: 398.

thereby *combining geographical mapping with social mapping at the same time*. In his writings on Terengganu and Kelantan, Clifford was inclined to focus on what he regarded as the deficiencies of the people and their political systems and institutions. He regarded the political administration of Terengganu as weak[6], while the ruler of the kingdom he claimed to represent 'remains for the most part unaware of the things which are done in his name'.[7]

Kelantan was cast in the same light as that of Terengganu and Pahang, though for Clifford the main difference was that the ruler of Kelantan was very much in control of things.[8] The Kelantanese, Clifford claimed, were a 'miserable people' who had no rights of person or property, and so poor were they that they were selling their children 'for a few dollars a-piece'.[9] In the reports that he wrote, Clifford was often inclined to see and represent Malay political institutions, structures and titles in terms that were European for the sake of comparison. Clifford had thus brought with him the vocabulary of European politics, and it is interesting to note how he chose to see and represent Malay political institutions through lens that were distinctly Eurocentric. That he compared Malay politics to that of Medieval Europe and assigned to Malay leaders titles and roles – such as barons – reveals something about his own cultural perspectivism.

---

[6] Clifford noted that 'when the present Sultan (Sultan Zainal Abidin III) succeeded in 1881, being at the time a mere boy, his numerous relations had recognized that an opportunity, which they had long desired, had at length arrived. Under the iron will of his great-Uncle Baginda Omar, and while his father Ahmad was still alive, the revenue of the state went to fill the royal coffers only, and the rajas and chiefs of the country were mainly dependent on the Sultan's bounty for their supplies. In Zenal-a-Bidin III, however, they found a weak, studious boy, afflicted with a slight impediment to his speech, which made him shy and nervous in their presence, and whose devotion to his religious studies and practices caused him to be easily influenced by his pastors and governors'. See Clifford, 'A Journey Through the Malay States', 14-15.

[7] Clifford, 'A Journey Through the Malay States', 21.

[8] Clifford's low regard for the system of law in Kelantan matched that of his view of Terengganu. He noted that 'The law is administered on the same lines as those followed in Terengganu, but the barbarous punishment of mutilation of the hand for theft, and many of the other cruel enactments of *Hukum Shara* (sic) are still enforced in Kelantan. The gob, or cage cells, in which criminals are confined, are exactly as those I have described in writing of Terengganu, but the cages more numerous, and the number of inmates is greater.' See Clifford, 'A Journey Through the Malay States', 36.

[9] Clifford, 'A Journey Through the Malay States', 36.

Even before he turned his attention to fictional writing, we can see how Clifford's work was inclined towards the dramatic and exotic. In his 1897 report, he had already begun to utilize the common tropes of Asiatic despotism, native misrule, and anarchy in the Malay lands as when he wrote of the ruling classes in the Malay kingdoms:

> The relations of the Raja, to whom one or more districts in the state have been granted as a source of income, are for the most part absentees, the work of collecting the revenue from their people being entrusted to agents. These men, who are usually natives of Kuala Terengganu, being practically unchecked, tyrannize over the local headmen and the people of the out-districts, secure in the knowledge that none dare raise a voice in complaint and that no ill thing is likely to befall them provided that the district continues to be a steady source of income to the Raja to whom it has been granted.[10]

Clifford's attitude towards the Malay kingdoms and Malay society was complex: His criticisms were directed almost exclusively to the Malay ruling classes, who were sometimes compared to the tyrannical robber barons of Europe of the medieval era. He did, however, have a more positive view of Malay labor and industry and did note that in the two states that had yet to come under British influence (Terengganu and Kelantan) there existed a significant degree of Malay manufacturing. Terengganu, he noted, ‘may be aptly described as the Birmingham of the Malay Peninsula’, owing to the productive labor of the cloth weavers who were famous for their production of *sarongs, kain limar* (shot-silk cloth) and *kain songket* (gold-threaded brocade).[11] He also praised the metalwork that was being produced in Terengganu, notably the brass and silverware;[12] and had equally positive things to say about the quality of woodwork and boat building there.[13]

---

[10] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 17.
[11] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 26-27.
[12] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 28-29.

Yet notwithstanding his praise for Malay industry Clifford was disparaging when it came to the mental capabilities of the Malays in general, for ‘like all their race, their genius is imitative rather than creative’.[14] Thus Clifford had not only set out to map the Malay lands but also the Malay mind, and of the Malay mind he had almost nothing good to say: ‘A people so conservative as the Malays, who are so wedded to their ancient customs, whose chief standard of excellence is antiquity, who act by precedent, and who argue by quoting old laws and ancient sayings, are hardly to be expected now to produce anything’.[15] Among his peers and fellow colonial administrators Clifford would later come to be regarded as the foremost British expert on all matters related to Pahang and its people, culture, and history. He would later write of himself and his achievements in the following terms:

> At a preposterously early age I was the principal instrument in adding 15,000 square miles of territory to the British dependencies of the East.[16]

Clifford’s 1897 Royal Geographical Society report on the Malay kingdoms of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan holds the key to a better understanding of his fictional works that would come later, and they demonstrate the extent to which long before he dabbled in the world of colonial fiction, he had already internalised the common tropes and themes of Empire that were in circulation then. But it is in his fictional writings that Clifford foregrounded the theme of ‘protective imperialism’ and the trope of the malevolent, aggressive Malay, which were themselves ideas that were developed in the wider discourse and praxis of racialised colonial-capitalism. It is to these works of fiction that we shall turn to next.

---

[13] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 30.

[14] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 30.

[15] Clifford, ‘A Journey Through the Malay States’, 30.

[16] Hugh Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1916), x.

III. Framing the Other: The Trope of the 'Aggressive Malay' in the Fictional Stories of Hugh Clifford

> From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work. (Said 1985: 283)
>
> Edward Said, *Orientalism*

> The Orient becomes a pretext for self-dramatization… It affords endless material for the imagination, and endless potential for the Occidental self. (Kabbani, 1986: 26)
>
> Rana Kabbani,
> *Imperial Fictions*

When reading the fictional writings of Hugh Clifford today, it is imperative that we remind ourselves of the subject-position of the author as well as the historical-political circumstances of their writing. As we have noted above, Hugh Clifford was not merely an author but was in fact an important functionary within the bureaucratic-policing-administrative system of British Malaya. This places him and his work squarely at the center of the colonial enterprise, and his fictional writings need to be read and seen for what they were: Works of colonial fiction that were written under the auspices of Empire.

Kabbani has noted that the colonial author is a somewhat unique figure in the world of literature, for he/she writes/wrote during the heyday of Empire and with a specific imperial-colonial readership in mind. As she has pointed out:

> The (Western) traveler begins his journey with the strength of an empire sustaining him – albeit from a distance – militarily, economically, and intellectually; he feels compelled to note down his observations in the

> awareness of a particular audience: his fellow countrymen.[17]

That Clifford, along with scores of other colonial writers, was writing for his fellow countrymen is a point of some importance to our analysis here, for it must be stated yet again that his fictional works were written with a British/European readership in mind, and not for the entertainment or edification of the Asians he was writing about.

Hugh Clifford's fictional stories were compiled in two volumes: *In a Corner of Asia* (1899) and *The Further Side of Silence* (1916), and he also wrote a full-length novel entitled *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya* (1926). What we propose to do in this section of the paper is to look closely at some of the short stories that were penned by Clifford and offer a close textual analysis of the salient themes and tropes that were found in them, time and again.

At The Court of Pelesu[18] (1899)

The short story *At the Court of Pelesu* first appeared in the collection of short stories by Clifford in the volume entitled *In A Corner of Asia* (1899). Among the many short stories that he wrote, this was perhaps the most personal. Though the names of the characters and places are fictional, an avid reader of Clifford's work will undoubtedly realize that the character of Jack Norris is based on Hugh Clifford himself, and Pelesu refers to Pekan, the traditional center of political power in Pahang. The story centers around the killing of two Chinese merchants, both of whom were British subjects, and how the event led to Britain's intervention in the kingdom.[19]

Pelesu was described by Clifford as a 'squalid place', and those who have read his reports on the kingdoms of Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan would be familiar with the theme of Oriental squalor:

---

[17] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, 1986, xi.

[18] Hugh Clifford, 'At The Court of Pelesu' in: Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*, T. Fisher Unwin Press, London, 1899.

[19] Gopinath (1996) has given an account of the treatment of the two Chinese British colonial subjects that later served as a pretext for British intervention in the affairs of Pahang. In February 1888, a Chinese merchant by the name of Go Hui was murdered, and the British alleged that the Sultan of Pahang was indirectly implicated in the death of the colonial subject. Earlier in January 1888, another Chinese merchant by the name of Su Kim was poisoned, and once again, the British accused the Pahang elite of being responsible. See Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang 1880-1933*, 92-93.

> The capital city of the Sultan of Pelesu was a somewhat squalid place. It mainly consisted of one long irregular lane running parallel to the river-bank, the houses on one side having a double frontage, abutting respectively on the shore and on the water, while the occupants of those facing them could only gain access to the river by means of a few narrow landing-places; […] The street was unmetalled, but the red and dusty earth had been beaten smooth and hard by the passage of innumerable unshod feet; […] The mosque, the neglected European bungalow, and the big stone building were alike the property of the King, the two former serving to mark a period of his reign during which, after a short visit of ceremony to a neighboring British colony, he for a space had devoted to public works some portion of the funds which were more commonly employed in the ministering of his personal pleasures.[20]

The ruler of Pelesu, in turn was described by Clifford in disparaging terms, typical of the kind of critique that was found in the writings of other British colonial functionaries like Raffles and Crawfurd:

> For his part, the King resembled the gentlemen whose names sometimes appear in the police reports, inasmuch as, like them, he had no fixed place of abode. The standards of civilization, represented respectively by the White Man’s bungalow and the palace of Chinese design, did not appeal to him; instead, he led a peripatetic existence, dividing his time, as his passing fancy dictated, between the houses occupied by his various concubines.[21]

The primary character of the story, however, is the British colonial officer Jack Norris, who at the beginning enjoys his posting to the

---

[20] Clifford, ‘At The Court of Pelesu’, 14-15.

[21] Clifford, ‘At The Court of Pelesu’, 16.

‘one-horse kingdom’ where he was the sole Englishman assigned to lead the process of British intervention.[22] Clifford writes that the kingdom had long been ‘a thorn in the side’ of the British, and that some means had to be found to open the way for intervention into local affairs:

> The state of Pelesu had long been a thorn in the side of the government that presided over the neighboring crown colony and the adjoining British protectorate, and little by little, the evil deeds of the King gathered sufficient weight to turn the slow wheels upon which runs the administration of one of the most ponderous nations of the earth.[23]

The opportunity for intervention arises when a Chinese merchant named Che Ah Ku – who was also a British colonial subject from Hong Kong – approaches Norris for help on the grounds that his wife had become the object of attention of the kingdom’s ruler. It is interesting to note that the Chinese subject refers to Norris the Englishman as *‘Pen-awar Puteh’* (*The White Cure*), and here the theme of the White Man's Burden was being played out in earnest. Norris seized the chance to use this scandal as a means to extend British influence in Pelesu, and this is done in the name of ‘protecting’ the helpless colonial subject from Hong Kong from the intentions of the local Malay ruler.

As the narrative progresses, another opportunity for British intervention arises when another Chinese merchant (who was also a British colonial subject) is found murdered with poison. The tension mounts as Norris declares that he will personally escort the merchant Ah Ku to British Singapore and thereafter call for stern action against those who have threatened the lives of British subjects in Pelesu.[24] Norris’ plan, however, goes awry when Ah Ku dies on the night before their departure to Singapore. Notwithstanding the death of the two Chinese British colonial subjects, Norris now has what he needs to call for direct intervention in the Malay kingdom: The theme of native misrule and local anarchy provides him with the legal-moral justification for direct involvement in Malay politics.

---

[22] Clifford, ‘At The Court of Pelesu’, 19.
[23] Clifford, ‘At The Court of Pelesu’, 20.
[24] Clifford, ‘At The Court of Pelesu’, 70-74.

At the Court of Pelesu is perhaps the most crafted of all of Clifford's short stories. Apart from the autobiographical allusions that are evident throughout the narrative, the story also sets up a set of neat and exclusive racialized identities and categorizations of the native Other. At the heart of the story is Jack Norris, who is presented as the embodiment of law and righteousness and serves as the moral standard against which all other characters are measured.

The Malays in the story are divided into two categories: On the one hand, there are the 'loyal Malays' of the West Coast who have traveled to Pelesu as part of Jack Norris's armed retinue, led by the pro-British nobleman Raja Haji. Raja Haji and the 'loyal Malays' are referred to again and again in the story as part of Norris's band of steadfast warriors. Yet, they remain undifferentiated save for the fact that they have vowed an oath of loyalty to their British master. On the other hand, there are the Eastern Malays of Pelesu, who comes across as a malevolent and aggressive bunch, led by the Sultan (who is described in the most unflattering terms throughout the story and who later flees Pelesu before he could be implicated in any of the violence), and a band of Pelesu nobles who show blind deference to their ruler. The narrative juxtapositioning of the ‘Western Malays’ (who are loyal to Jack Norris) and the ‘Eastern Malays’ (who are loyal to their native ruler) underscores this binary division in the story as well.[25] The Chinese characters in the story are bereft of any personality, and their primary function in the tale – as British colonial subjects – is to provide Norris with the legal and moral justification for British intervention into Pelesu after their deaths. The kingdom of Pelesu, in turn, is repeatedly referred to as 'backward' and located in some far-flung 'corner of Asia', awaiting deliverance and intervention by the 'White cure/ *Pen-awar Puteh'* that is, of course embodied in none other than the form of Jack Norris (re. Clifford) himself.

---

[25] Despite the difference between the Malays of the West and the East of the Peninsula, Clifford’s own prognosis of the Malays as a nation remained a very negative one. This was further developed in his novel *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya,* where Clifford presented the predicament faced by colonial officials left with the task of ‘educating’ the Malays. Saleh, the main character, is a Malay prince whose English education in Britain leaves him uprooted and homeless. He becomes a social outcast amongst his own people and is regarded with contempt by the British colonial officials. Here Clifford expresses his objection to the attempt to ‘Westernise’ the Malays by educating them. [See: Hugh Clifford, *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya*, Harper, New York. 1926 (reprint of the original story which appeared in two parts, in 1904 and 1908).]

The recurrent themes in this short story should be familiar to those who have studied the discursive strategies of Western imperialism and colonial intervention from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries: The racial binary between the white savior and the dark, malevolent Asiatic rests upon a series of other binary distinctions as well: Between progress and regression, between law and lawlessness, between freedom and despotism, etc. As a work of colonial fiction, *At the Court of Pelesu* is a very good example of the kind of discursive strategy that was employed by the expanding Western colonial powers across Asia at the time, where intervention into local native politics was often done in the name of 'saving the Asiatic Other from himself/themselves'. This would be a theme reiterated by Clifford in many of his stories, as we shall see below.

The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing*[26] *(1899)

The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing is another one of the short stories by Clifford that appear in the collection *In A Corner of Asia*, and it tells the story of the roving marauder Kulop Sumbing, whose face was marred by a great scar that he received during a fight (hence his name *Sumbing*). The dichotomy of law versus lawlessness features prominently in the story as Kulop attempts to escape from Perak (which was, by then, a British protectorate under British colonial law) to Pahang.

The theme of evil – in both people and places – runs throughout the story, and the kingdom of Pahang is presented by Clifford as a still-lawless land that had yet to come under complete British control, and he describes it as 'a place which bore an evil reputation as a land where ill things were done with impunity, while the doer throve exceedingly'.[27] Clifford describes Kulop in the following terms:

---

[26] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', in Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*, T. Fisher Unwin Press, London, 1899. Edited and re-titled *The Lone-Hand Raid of Kulop Sumbing* in: Hugh Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1916).

> He knew that no woman would love him for the sake of his marred, unsightly face; but that many would bestow their favours upon him if his money bags were well-lined. Therefore, he determined to grow rich with as little delay as possible, and to this end he looked about for someone he might plunder.[28]

In Clifford's view, not only is Kulop seen and cast as degenerate, but so are Malay women in toto, 'who are among the most venal of their sex'.[29] As the story progresses, Kulop makes his journey to Pahang until he stumbles across an aboriginal settlement of Sakais in the jungle. Kulop is elated when he discovers that the Sakais had amassed a small fortune in a quantity of rubber they had tapped and which he could steal and sell later. After terrorizing the Sakais and bringing them under his subjugation, Kulop compels them to build for him several rafts for the purpose of transporting the rubber downriver with them so that he can sell it at the first opportunity. In this part of the story, we encounter another dichotomy that is introduced by Clifford between the unscrupulous and cruel Malay Kulop and the pathetic and weak Sakais.[30]

Upon reaching the first Malay settlement downriver, Kulop sells his ill-gotten rubber and earns himself a thousand silver dollars. Overjoyed by the sudden turn of fate, Kulop then considers returning to Perak to court a woman who had rejected his overtures earlier. Clifford adds that another reason for him to turn back to Perak was to escape the Malay chiefs of Pahang who may tax his earnings.[31] Kulop's decision proves to be the cause of his own undoing, however, for on his way back to Perak he is hounded by the Sakais, who later ambush him in the middle of the night, leaving him for dead in the middle of the forest. Unlike Kulop the Sakais have little regard for the silver coins in his purse, and he is instead left to suffer his fate alone in the middle of nowhere:

---

[27] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 80.

[28] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 80.

[29] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 80.

[30] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 86-91.

[31] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 98.

> They (the Sakais) carried off none of his gear, for they feared to be haunted by his ghost, and Kulop now had nothing edible about him, such as the jungle folk find it hard to leave untouched. Money had no meaning to the Sakai, so the silver dollars, which ran in a glittering stream from a rent made in the waist-pouch by chance spear-thrust, was left glinting in the moonlight by the side of that still, grey face with its ghastly, pallid lip split upward to the nostrils.[32]

The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing repeats some of the themes and tropes we have looked at earlier, with greater emphasis on the theme of the aggressive and cruel Malay. None of the Malay characters in the story is portrayed positively: Kulop Sumbing is presented as a ruthless thief and murderer, the Malay chiefs as greedy, and Malay women as venal. The Sakais, in turn, are presented as weak, backward, primitive, and in dire need of protection, and it is this theme of protection loomed large not only in the fictional works of Clifford but also in his reports to the colonial authorities. As in the case of the short story *At the Court of Pelesu* we have looked at above, *The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing* is another work of colonial fiction that extols the virtue of British intervention in the Malay lands, in this case for the sake of 'protecting' the aboriginal communities of the Malay Peninsula from the injustices meted out upon them by the Malays.

The Wages of Sin[33] *(1899)*

Though Clifford spent a considerable amount of time and energy in developing the trope of the malevolent, violent Malay, he also devoted some attention to the other ethnic communities that were also present in the Malay Peninsula, like the Chinese. Clifford's depiction of the Chinese in his stories is doubly interesting because they often fall into one of two categories: At times, they are portrayed as the victims of the Malays, while on other occasions, they are cast as a race of predators and opportunists. Both aspects are seen in the depiction of the Chinese merchant Lim Chong in Clifford's story *The Wages of Sin* (1899).

---

[32] Clifford, 'The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing', 104.

[33] Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', in: Sir Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*, T. Fisher Unwin Press, London, 1899.

At the heart of the story is the character of the Chinese merchant Lim Chong, who is accused of murder by the Malays of the village of Bukit Segumpal. Clifford's account of Malay-Chinese relations is couched in an oppositional dichotomy where the former is seen as a martial race while the latter is cast as venal, weak, and avaricious. In Clifford's words:

> It was natural enough for a (Malay) warrior to despise the yellow skin, for he prized others according to the amount of fight which they are capable of showing upon occasion, and judged from this standpoint, the Chinamen who, in those days, visited the Peninsula were poor creatures indeed […] The opinion as to its utter worthlessness prevailed equally with the Raja, the chief, and the peasant; it was as strong in the villages and the country places as in the town and the palace; and in the estimation of no class of Malays, I verily believe, did the Chinaman rank higher than any beasts that perish. He was an infidel, for one thing; he was a rich man, often enough, and as such a natural prey of prince and chief; he was a skillful and shifty trader, who cheated the peasants out of their halfpence, and he was detested accordingly.[34]

That such a neat binary opposition could be found in Clifford's story is hardly surprising when we consider how late nineteenth-century racialized colonial capitalism had been built upon the foundations of the numerous pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference that had been in circulation across Europe and North America by that time. Clifford returns to the theme of the greedy Chinese who are hated by the Malays later when he writes:

---

[34] Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', 183-184.

> He is despised by those around him, but he makes money; he is an outcast, and knows it.[35]

For Clifford, the Chinese merchants who were in the Malay Peninsula at the time were largely a class of parasites who were directly or indirectly responsible for the poverty of the Malays:

> In a little space, half of the village is in his debt, and as the folk who owe him money are bound to treat him with civility, he begins to taste the sweets of power. He uses it badly, of course, for he hates all the villages cordially. He has no scruples, no heart, no morality, commercial or private […] When the menfolk are in the fields, the women come to the shop and either contract debts which they and their husbands are powerless to meet or else beg for trifles which sooner or later, the shopkeeper makes them pay in very full measure. Thus, presently, half the womenfolk of the village will be in the power of the alien.[36]

Though by the end of the story, it is discovered and proven that Lim Chong is innocent of the charge of murder, Clifford's account of him leaves the reader with the impression that the Chinese merchant remains an intolerable figure: Lim Chong demands one thousand dollars in compensation from the government for having him arrested and complains of having his wife kidnapped (despite the fact that he was never married).[37]

This somewhat clichéd depiction of Lim Chong as the stereotypical Chinese merchant driven by greed and vainglory was in keeping with the wave of anti-Chinese hostility that had swept across Europe and North America at the time, echoing the rhetoric of the 'Yellow Peril' scare and mirroring the attitudes of other Western colonial powers in the region then. In the nineteenth century, similar anti-Chinese sentiments were present in the neighboring Dutch East Indies, where the Chinese were seen as 'industrious' and yet

---

[35] Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', 184.

[36] Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', 185.

[37] Clifford, 'The Wages of Sin', 192.

'non-native' and regarded as 'foreign Asiatics'. The Chinese of the Dutch East Indies had been co-opted by the Dutch to serve the ends of colonial-capitalism but were hardly ever made to feel part of their colonial society, despite the increasingly large number of Peranakan Chinese who were born and growing up there. Decades earlier, in December 1857, the Dutch Minister of the Colony of East Indies, P. Mijer (1856-1858), went as far as referring to the Chinese merchants in Java as the *'bloedzuigers der Javanen'*[38] ('Bloodsuckers of the Javanese') and called for limits to be imposed on their economic activities, ostensibly to protect the local Javanese merchant community – while also allowing Dutch entrepreneurs more room to manoeuvre in the colony. Thus, in British Malaya as well as the Dutch East Indies, the attitude of the colonial administrators was the same: Britain and the Netherlands had come to the region to 'protect' the natives from all manner of ills – from themselves, from their superstitions, from their tyrannical rulers, and from other parasitic Asians. 'Protective Imperialism' had become a reality in British Malaya as it had become a reality in British India, British Burma and the Dutch East Indies, and the idea of 'protection' had seeped into policy papers, administrative projects, and popular fiction in equal measure.

Recurrent themes: Oriental despotism, native anarchy, and local superstition.

A cursory reading of the short stories by Hugh Clifford will show that he employed several key themes and tropes that would recur again and again in the various works of fiction that he penned. Among the ideas that he chose to foreground is that of the Malays as a violent, warlike race prone to despotism and tyranny, and this was a major theme in his works like *At The Court of Pelesu* (1899), *The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing* (1899) discussed above, as well other works like *The Story of Ram Singh*[39] (1899), *A Malayan Prison*[40]

---

[38] Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains: The Chinese and the Dutch in Colonial Java, 1890-1942.* Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, Jakarta, 2002.

[39] The depiction of the Malays as a violent race led by warlike chieftains is evident in Clifford's short story *The Story of Ram Singh* (1899) which recounts the exploits of Ram Singh, a Sikh soldier garrisoned in an outpost located at Kuala Tembeling. At the

(1916) and *The Vigil of Pa' Tua, the Thief (1899)*[41]. Related to the

---

end of the story, Ram Singh manages to reach the village of the pro-British Malay leader Dato Imam Prang, who alerts the British and, by doing so, prevents a general revolt across the kingdom of Pahang. While Clifford's depiction of the fictional character Ram Singh is positive, his portrayal of the Malays in the story is consistently negative. In the narrative, the reader encounters historical figures such as Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau, Awang Nong, Orang Kaya Pahlawan Semantan, and Teh Ibrahim, who Clifford summarily described as 'typical young Malay roisterers, truculent, swaggering, boastful, noisy and gaily colored'. (pg. 166). Though inspired by real events (namely, the Pahang Uprising) Clifford's account of events is decidedly one-sided and naturally identifies the 'rebels' as criminal elements who are bent on bringing anarchy and destruction to Pahang. See 'The Story of Ram Singh', in: Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*.

[40] Clifford's short story *A Malayan Prison* (1916) recounts his visit to a Malay prison that was run by one of the chiefs of Terengganu, who is described as 'a Raja who, though he was not the ruler of the country, was a man of exalted position and stood possessed of considerable power'. (pg. 136) Unlike his other works of fiction, Clifford notes that *A Malayan Prison* 'is not a pretty tale, and I would counsel persons who prefer to ignore the existence of uncomfortable things to give it a wide berth'. (pg. 135) The main character is a Malay man named Talib, who was accused of stealing the *keris* of the Raja, and who was then incarcerated in the Raja's jail; a structure made of wood in the form of a wooden cage-raised above the ground. The emphasis of the story lies in the detailed accounts of the wretchedness of the prisoners and the absence of anything that resembles a legal system in the Malay kingdoms. Among the many stories that he wrote, Clifford's *A Malayan Prison* is one where he explicitly made a case for direct British intervention in Malay affairs, for 'readers of this true tale will perhaps realize how it comes to pass that some of us men in the outskirts – who have seen things, and not merely heard of them – are apt to become rather strong 'imperialists', and find it hard at times to endure with patience the ardent defenders of the Rights of Man, who bleat their comfortable aphorisms in the British House of Commons, and cry shame upon our 'hungry acquisitions'. See Clifford, 'A Malayan Prison', in: Hugh Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company,1916), 147.

[41] *The Vigil of Pa' Tua, the Thief* is a simple tale of Pa' Tua (Pak Tua), who scours the coastal fringes of Pahang, visiting one island after another in search of birds' nests which he sells to Chinese merchants. After a mishap Pa' Tua finds himself struck in a cave, his body squeezed and crushed between the rocks and unable to get himself out. In the end Pa' Tua dies and Clifford notes that he dies a wasted death, victim of fate that is wont to prey upon the Malays: 'So Fate, more vindictive that human justice, refused even the burial rites of the Muhammadans – without which, as it is well known, the salvation of the soul is by no means assured – to the tortured body of Pa' Tua, the thief'. See Clifford, 'The Vigil of Pa' Tua, the Thief', in: Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*, 251-252. Clifford's story reiterates the common colonial stereotype of the

trope of the violent Malay was the idea of the Malays as a superstitious and unscientific race, which he explored in stories like *In The Central Gaol* (1899)[42] and *A Daughter of the Muhammadans* (1899).[43]

Apart from the Malays who were the central characters in many of his stories, Clifford also focused his attention on two other Asiatic communities: The Chinese in Malaya as well as the aborigines of the Peninsula. Whenever Clifford touched upon these subjects, particularly on the relationship between the Malays, Chinese and aborigines of the land, his belief in racial distinctions as well as hierarchies between the races were visibly pronounced, as in

---

'lazy native', and the popular Western belief that native Southeast Asians were disinclined to work and lacked a sense of industry.

[42] The theme of Malay superstition and folk beliefs is touched briefly in the short story *In the Central Gaol* (1899) where the reader is introduced to the character of an old Malay prisoner who recounts how he ended up in jail. The old man explains that he had murdered his own daughter fifteen years ago, in a fit of rage when he claimed that he had been possessed. The character of the old prisoner reinforces Clifford's long-standing view that the Malays are a superstitious race who believe in ghosts and spirit possession. At the end of the story, the old man is finally set free when two visiting British justices review his case. As the two colonial officials conclude their review of the case, one of them says to the other: 'The murder was an accident, and the conviction a mistake, but native human nature – a thing that we shall never really get the hang of – and not White Man's folly was responsible for the latter as much as for the former'. See 'In The Central Gaol' in Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia,* 136.

[43] The bulk of Clifford's story *A Daughter of the Muhammadans* recounts the circumstances of the young woman Minah's life and marriage to her husband and repeats many of the Orientalist stereotypes about the ways of Asians: Minah is married off when she was a child. Later her husband falls ill with leprosy, and they are unable to have children, but she dutifully stays by his side as his illness destroys his body. In the story, Malay society is depicted as superstitious and ignorant of medical discoveries. The disease is described by the Malays as something 'evil', unspoken, and misunderstood. The tale ends after a short aside when Clifford refers to his posting as Governor of the Crown Colony of Labuan (1899) and his subsequent return to Pahang as a British Resident there. Clifford lauds the virtues of Minah and commends her for her devotion to her husband; he still admonishes her community for their traditional ways and ignorance of modern medicine and healthcare. See Clifford, 'A Daughter of the Muhammadans', in Hugh Clifford, *In a Corner of Asia*. The story also appears in the edited volume *The Further Side of Silence*, but with the omission of the last section where Clifford relates his last encounter with Minah, long after her husband has passed away.

his short story *The Further Side of Silence*.[44]

Read together against the historical backdrop of a British colony-in-the-making at the time, Clifford's short stories can be seen as fictional works that lent a gloss of purpose and meaning to Britain's effort to colonize the entire Malay Peninsula from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. But these stories went beyond conventional exhortations to the imperial ambition that was common and popular at the time: They also offered a discursive justification and rationale for Britain's arrival and presence in the Malay world, and they furnished the imperial enterprise with a sense of moral legitimacy upon which the empires of Europe were then built upon. It is to this topic that we shall now turn to, by way of a conclusion.

IV. Denying and Deflecting the Racism of Empire: Hugh Clifford's Colonial Fiction and the Whitewashing of British Imperialism

> The existence of the disabled native is required for the next lie and the next and the next. (Bhabha, 1994: 183)
>
> Homi K. Bhabha,
> *Articulating the Archaic:*
> *Cultural Difference and Colonial Nonsense* (1994)

---

[44] The theme of Malay-Sakai relations is the main theme in Clifford's story *The Further Side of Silence*. The story revolves around two primary characters: A Malay by the name of Kria, son of Mat; and a young Sakai girl by the name of Pi-Noi. Clifford portrays Kria as a Malay who had 'sneaked up on the Telom valley and established himself as a trader on its banks well within Sakai country' (p. 3), living close to the Sakais whom Clifford describes as 'feeble and timid jungle-folk, the aboriginal possessors of the Peninsula' (p. 3). At the outset of the tale Clifford presents the relationship between the Malays and the Sakais as being fundamentally an unequal one. Clifford maintains that Pi-Noi's Sakai intellect is 'child-like' and her adaptation to Malay social and sartorial norms only superficial (p. 13). An essentialist viewpoint can be seen in Clifford's depiction of the aborigines in Malaya, for Pi-Noi eventually reverts to her 'savage' nature. Clifford's understanding of the Malays and Sakais of the Peninsula was shaped by his own belief in racial hierarchies and biological differences between the races. See Clifford, 'The Further Side of Silence' in: Hugh Clifford, *The Further Side of Silence* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1916).

To state (bluntly) that Hugh Clifford was a proponent and defender of British imperialism in Asia would hardly be a case of hyperbole or overstatement. From the beginning to the end of his career Clifford never concealed the fact that he was a steadfast believer in the philosophy and praxis of Empire and was intensely proud of the fact that he belonged to 'the great British race' that had, by that time, created the largest Western empire the world had ever seen. Present-day scholars should remember that the quotidian realities of Empire from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries were founded by men like these, who were part of the vast army of bureaucrats, technocrats and administrators who built and held together the vast imperial domains they created by and for themselves.

What is interesting, however, is how Clifford's writings display an unease about the messiness of Empire and how the entire imperial enterprise was founded upon the divisive and antagonistic politics of divide-and-rule, guided by a host of pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference and racial hierarchies, and the popular belief in the superiority of some martial, industrious races over others. In this respect Clifford's portrayal of the Malays, Chinese and aborigines in his reports as well as his popular fiction display the same set of beliefs, grounded in the prejudices of the time which he himself clearly endorsed and internalized. In the course of his work and writings, Clifford had not only mapped, surveyed, and studied the societies of the Malay Peninsula, but also classified them and located them within a violent hierarchy that was grounded on general essentialist assumptions about the character and nature of the communities he wrote about.

This places Clifford squarely at the heart of the operational logic of racialized colonial-capitalism, as one of its most vocal and visible defenders and proponents, and who was himself part of the divisive political system that had been introduced to Malaya by the British.

The importance of reading Clifford's works today lies in the manner in which they show how empires were constantly in need of some form of moral legitimacy and justification all the time, and that in the case of the kind of 'protective imperialism' that Clifford defended and promoted there was a constant need for an ‘enemy Other’ that would play the discursive role of being the counterfoil to Britain’s imperial ambitions. Enemies are useful for empire building, and the British Empire was constantly on the lookout for adversarial Others that could be cast in a negative light, as enemies of progress, modernity, development, law, and order. As in the case of the negative portrayal of some of the communities in British India and British Burma, Britain’s colonial adventurism in Malaya also required the presence of an adversarial Other that would justify the use of means fair and foul – from outright military intervention and martial violence to bribery and co-optation – in order to gain a lasting presence in the land.

The sophistication of Clifford’s fictional work lay in how he carefully presented his (British/European) readers with scenarios and choices that were false from the outset: By presenting the Malays of Malaya in the most disparaging terms – as lazy, tyrannical, and superstitious – he invented the perfect enemy for Empire’s claims to progress and enlightenment. Added to this decidedly negative view of one community was the stereotype of the crafty and greedy Chinese, and the backward and feeble aborigines; and all these groups would be framed in his fictional stories in relationships that were antagonistic and oppressive. From the point of view of the British or European reader, there seemed no escape from the inevitable conclusion that this messy state of affairs could only be resolved and brought under some kind of order through the intervention of a benevolent external power, and that power was of course Britain.

Clifford was certainly not a writer of note, and his prose could hardly be compared to that of Joseph Conrad’s (1857-1924) or Somerset Maugham’s (1874-1965). But his popular fiction was meant to supplement his official work, as well as the reports and surveys that he did in the service of Empire; and in that sense, this wide range of writings complemented and informed one another. And in all his writings, Clifford strove to hammer home a simple point: That British intervention in Malaya was benevolent and necessary and that the arrival of British power to the Malay lands would ultimately 'protect' the natives from themselves.

In this respect, Clifford was no mere colonial functionary who busied himself only with the humdrum tasks of managing a colony: Unlike his peers and contemporaries, Clifford set out not only to understand and study the communities of British Malaya but also to categorize them and re-cast them in roles that were his own invention. His literary output came in the form of reports and surveys and also stories, but these stories were not merely stories that were told for the sake of entertainment or amusement. In his stories, we can see the workings of the discourse of racialized colonial capitalism at work, and though his role and works have been mainly forgotten today, he remains one of the British colonial functionaries most responsible for the dissemination of negative stereotypes of the Malays and other communities in the land. By doing Hugh Clifford was also one of the most active deniers of racism at work in the building of British Malaya.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ء	’	’	’	’
ب	b	b	b	b
پ	–	p	p	p
ت	t	t	t	t
ٹ	–	–	–	ṭ
ث	th	th	th	th
ج	j	j	c	j
چ	–	ch	çh	ch
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ
خ	kh	kh	kh	kh
د	d	d	d	d
ڈ	–	–	–	d
ذ	dh	dh	dh	dh
ر	r	r	r	r

	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ز	z	z	z	z
ڑ	–	–	–	ṛ
ژ	–	zh	j	zh
س	s	s	s	s
ش	sh	sh	ş	sh
ص	ṣ	ṣ	ṣ	ṣ
ض	ḍ	ẓ	ż	ż
ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ
ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ
ع	‘	‘	‘	‘
غ	gh	gh	ğ	gh
ف	f	f	f	f
ق	q	q	k	q
ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	k

	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
گ	–	g	g	g
ل	l	l	l	l
م	m	m	m	m
ن	n	n	n	n
ه	h	h	h[1]	h[1]
و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ى	y	y	y	y
ة	-ah			-a[2]
ال	al[3]			

[1] – when not final

[2] – at in construct state

[3] – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

		Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	Ā	–
	و	ū	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī	ī
Doubled	يّ	iyy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)	iyy (final form ī)
	وّ	uww (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	uv	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	au	ev
	ى	ai or ay	ay	ey
Short	ـَ	a	a	a or e
	ـُ	u	u	u or ü o or ö
	ـِ	i	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. جھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

AL-SHAJARAH

Vol. 28, No. 1, 2023

Contents

ARTICLES

DENYING AND DEFLECTING THE RACISM OF EMPIRE: THE TROPE OF THE ‘MALEVOLENT NATIVE’ IN THE WRITINGS OF THE COLONIAL FUNCTIONARY AND AUTHOR HUGH CLIFFORD 1
Farish A Noor

NORMS OF RISE AND FALL OF CIVILIZATIONS IN THE QUR’AN 27
BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE AND JUSTICE AS A MODEL
Arshad Islam and Ruqaia Taha Al-Alwani

NINETEENTH-CENTURY *KITĀB JAWI* SUFI WORKS IN PATTANI, THAILAND 51
MAINSTREAMING ETHICAL SUFISM OF AL-GHAZALI
Jajat Burhanudin

TRANS-NATIONALISM AND CIVILISATIONAL IDENTITY 73
RUMI ON LAND, LANGUAGE AND LOVE
Amir H. Zekrgoo

CENTRAL ASIAN WAQF STUDIES DURING COLONIAL, SOVIET, AND INDEPENDENCE PERIODS: A LITERATURE REVIEW 97
Osman Bakar, Sultonov Uktambek, and Ganiyev Avazbek

BRIDGING TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THAI ISLAM 119
THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ROLES OF SURIN PITSUWAN (ABDUL HALIM)
Imtiyaz Yusuf and Pham Thuy Quynh

MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

KITĀB AL-MAWĀHIB AL-ʿALIYYAH FĪ AL-JAMʿI BAYN AL-ḤIKAM AL-QUR’ĀNIYYAH WA AL-ḤADĪTHIYYAH (BOOK OF HIGH TALENTS IN THE INTEGRATION OF QUR’ANIC AND HADITH WISDOM): A MANUSCRIPT STUDY 143
Mohamed Aslam Akbar

REVIEW ESSAY

MEMENTO MORI: EXISTENTIAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH 163
Arief Subhan

THE GENESIS OF ISLAMIC SCIENCE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF CLASSICAL INDIAN SCIENCE REVISITED 175
Osman Bakar

BOOK REVIEWS 187

WoS-Indexed under *Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts and Humanities* and **Scopus**

ISSN 1394-6870

9 771394 687009