

Decolonising Archaeology through Film: a Postcolonial Critique of *Indiana Jones in The Raiders of the Lost Ark and The Temple of Doom*

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Benjamin Disraeli famously stated 'The East is a career'; this holds true for Dr. Indiana Jones, the legendary fictional archaeologist of the titular film series. The *Indiana Jones* franchise played such a focal role in archaeology gaining much popularity as a discipline in the West that, for most people (in the West), the image of an archaeologist is the one depicted in *Indiana Jones*. Its actor Harrison Ford was even elected to the Board of Directors of the Archaeological Institute of America, pledging support for 'real' archaeology. This paper undertakes a postcolonial approach to critiquing the first two movies in the series – *The Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Temple of Doom*, and attempts to decolonize archaeology as an applied science. Using pivotal theories including those by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Hegel, the analysis questions the universalist and positivist perspectives of archaeology in practice by the Euro-American 'centre' wielding hegemonic imperial control over the 'Orient'. The two selected films are set in Egypt and India respectively, and bear sufficient testimony to the intellectual appropriation of indigenous knowledge, coupled with the callous treatment of indigenous material culture by colonial occupation. From the trivialisation of indigenous artefacts and their worth, to distortion of history and misrepresentation of native society, the archaeology practised and propounded in the films, proves itself to be very much a neo-imperial project - it is plunder that happens in the name of archaeology. The constant 'othering' of the native is fundamental in shaping the Euro-American identity and establishes it as superior, thus justifying the colonial project. The popularity and wild acclaim of the franchise of course, then, has sinister implications.. Academic imperialism in the field of archaeology is exerted by colonisation, leading to the infantilisation and paternalistic control of, indigenous cultures showing that applied sciences are never neutral – they are certainly a cultural product of the West. This is clearly demonstrated by the *Indiana Jones* franchise, and its steadfast popularity for more than half a century.

Key words : Applied Science, Decolonising, Imperialism, Indigenous Archaeology, Theoretical Archaeology

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