

Early Philippine Life and Hegemony in Bienvenido N. Santos's *The Volcano*: A Cultural Studies Reading

Rosemarie Cerbito-Abocot 

Eastern Visayas State University, Tacloban City, Philippines

rosemarie.abocot@evsu.edu.ph

Abstract

This article critically explores the lessons learned from the previous colonizers, the Spaniards, which were taken into account by the new colonizers, the Americans, as depicted in Bienvenido N. Santos's *The Volcano*. Reforms are not solely enforced by the Americans but also by the elite Filipinos, and these native elites were groomed to control the local populace while enjoying societal privileges.

Using the qualitative research and descriptive-analytical method, this article centers on hegemonic practices employed by the American colonizers during their occupation in the Philippines. The Americans institute reforms on institutional structures to prepare Filipinos on their journey to self-government. Hegemonic practices refer to the practices employed by the dominant group to build an alliance with the subordinate group through force and consent. In conclusion, most Filipinos see that subservience creates and perpetuates unequal power relations. Such effects do not pass unnoticed because of the powerless experience exploitation and marginalization.

Keywords: cultural studies reading, descriptive-analytical method, hegemonic practices, Philippines.

Introduction

Considering the dominant influence of American culture in the Philippines, the article interrogates how American occupation in the Philippine islands dramatically and drastically changed Philippine life and culture depicted in Bienvenido N. Santos's *The Volcano* (1986). The mechanism of colonization played a strong influence in shaping the country's social, economic, cultural, and political spheres, and Filipinos were forced to embrace an alien culture through hegemony. Hegemony allows easy penetration of power among the powerless through subtle negotiation in

which, without knowing it, they unwittingly participated as an accomplice in colonization. However, hegemony requires ceaseless transposition to withstand the constraint of circumstances in the institutional structures (Jones, 2006). Widening inequality is visible because economic policies, for instance, favor the privileged group while a pool of cheap labor provides services for the underprivileged group. This kind of social, political, and economic climate for the powerless who fear their survival has no choice but allowed to be induced to consent to this new development. Undoubtedly, hegemonic reforms require flexibility to respond and sustain its goals in all social, political, economic, and cultural processes (Jones, 2006).

The Filipino rule or policy of organizing local government under the hands of the Filipinos has an essential effect on the war between Americans and Filipinos. Americans let the Filipinos enjoy settling their own affairs if they are desirous of peace in the country. Undeniably, Filipinos were forced to adapt to the imperatives of an alien society because of their fear of crippling weapons of mass destruction like cannons and other high-powered weapons. This research article centers on the American employment of hegemonic practices to early Philippine life. It seeks to answer the following questions: a) What are the hegemonic practices employed on societal structures during American occupation portrayed in the novel?; and b) What are the effects of American hegemonic practices on Philippine life and culture?

Literature Review

The current analysis sketched out reading materials necessary to conduct the study accordingly and delineated a plethora of issues necessary to better understand the conflux of stance between the dominated group's marginal position and the dominant group's powerful posture. While bearing in mind Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony (Jones, 2006) and Raymond Williams's theory on culture (Williams, 1977): In *Multiple Resistance Strategies for Survival Under Israeli Occupation in the Novels of Sahar Khalifeh*, Koudur & Koudur (2018) stress that resistance calls for action to achieve its objectives and the result is not attained overnight. A series of overt or covert resistance operations against occupation preoccupied the people's minds as part of their nationalist engagement. The Israeli occupation had forced the people to stand against it. Khalifeh's novels unveil various strategies of defiance to show opposition against Israeli occupying forces. This article shares commonality with the current study because it accentuates the feeling of anxiety and despair of the people on political issues, such as political resistance resulting in revolution, as delineated in Khalifeh's novels. Meanwhile, the latter employed Raymond Williams's theory on culture and Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony using

cultural studies approach in the analysis of Santos's *The Volcano* (1986) set during the American occupation in the Philippines.

In *Indigenous Ambivalent Figure in Jack Davis's Play, 'The Dreamers'*, Hadaegh & Heidari (2018) underscore the political ramifications of colonization in the lives of the colonized group, particularly on the racial imbalance of power relations depicted in Jack Davis's "The Dreamers" (1980). With the peoples' nationalist cry, Hadaegh and Heidari (2018) examine the rudimentary issues hounding the socio-political arena of Australian Aboriginal oppression caused by colonization. He explores the diversity and fluidity of gender relations, including the perpetration of crimes influenced by factors such as colonization and people's position in the periphery. Davis's play is pictured as a "work of literature" providing polysemic meanings, thus, requiring multiple interpretations of indigenous life vis-à-vis colonization (Hadaegh & Heidari, 2018: p.13). Meanwhile, the current study appropriated William's theory on culture and employed a cultural studies approach to analyze Santos's *The Volcano* (1986).

In a similar vein, Masoud & Household-Ilkhani, in *In Search of Englishness: A Study of the Historical Novel During the Victorian Era* (2017), delve into the role of the historical novel in the dimension of nationalist discourse cantered on fictional historiography necessary in unearthing history, nationhood, and identity. The article presents that historical novels serve as a nexus between the past and modern development. The historical novels' functions fortify nationalistic spirit and delineate the country's past. The nationalist narrative ushers the readers to the dark past and the modern era of the nation. This article examines the interplay between the ideologies and the country's struggle through an interrogation of the Victorian era depicted in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (2007). Meanwhile, the present study analyzed Santos' *The Volcano* (1986) and applied Gramsci's theory on ideology.

Campbell's *English Language and an Inclusive Malaysia* (2018) discusses the push and pull in language development caused by division in society, particularly on the demands of globalization. The language development pressure cannot be relegated to the background because it serves as the currency of man's expression of innermost thoughts. The derailment of language development is an issue that no one should take for granted because of its impact on people's lives looking for a fulfilling life. Expressing one's thoughts is necessary to have a successful communication repertoire. Campbell's article shares commonalities with the present study, particularly on its articulation of the inestimable worth of language in achieving a satisfying life in society. It argues the role of language in globalization as a global phenomenon affecting the economic life of the people. In Santos's *The Volcano* (1986), Filipinos were influenced subtly by the inclusion of the English

language as part of the school's curriculum. However, the commonality ends with the employment of the cultural studies approach in the present study.

Interestingly, Yuan's "*Translation, Modernity, Acceptability—From Language Reform to Cultural Resistance in Translation Practice in China*" (2018) calls to one's attention the inevitability of multiple meanings of words in a language. The article brings to mind the Filipino experience during colonization, particularly their linguistic experience, which make them grapple with language problem affecting their everyday communication. The operation of subjugation through language, making the English language the dominant language, has driven Filipinos to re-think their place amid colonization. Defiance of new power could not be taken for granted because of the ill effects of colonization.

In Asl's "*Practices of Counter-Conduct as Mode of Resistance in Middle East Woman's Life Writings*" (2018), the redefinition of women's place in society is highlighted to portray their marginalization as well as their protestation against a patriarchal society profoundly affecting their lives. In conclusion, the creative documentation of women's stories sheds light on how women critically interrogated the hierarchical, patriarchal structure, mainly how men are organized in a series of levels with different importance, ranks, or status. Meanwhile, the current study is centered on hegemonic practices introduced by the colonizers. Wright's *The Worldliness of Stuart Hall* (2013) highlights Stuart Hall's immense influence in cultural studies, especially his intellectual temperament, openness to new ideas and changing social conditions, and, more importantly, his reflections on cultural studies as a practice. Interestingly, this article shares the same exploration with the present study, particularly on people entangled in oppressing social conditions caused by the unfavorable political climate. In contrast, the present study employed cultural studies approach.

In *Postcolonial Disorders*, Good, et al. (2008) delineate political ramifications such as subjectivity and racial inequality reflected in political and economic spheres facilitated by globalization. The psycho-social dimension affecting everyday preoccupations had been deeply felt in each individual's sensitivity. In conclusion, the book's ethnographic exploration of postcolonial sensibility attempts to crystallize the results of colonial forces' manipulations. The assemblage of colonial ideas has found a place in creating the colonizers' order of things.

However, the book is different from the present study because the latter is centered on applying insights using Williams's concept of culture and Gramsci's hegemony to examine the hegemonic practices employed during American colonial rule in the country.

In *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Chen (1998) traces selective episodes of responses to colonialism in the era immediately following the end of World War I. The current investigation finds common ground in one of its articles, particularly its Part I Chapter 2, which presents Renato Constantino's *Globalization and the South*. His essay takes us back to the Spanish occupation and later US moment in Filipino history. From the cultural studies perspective, Chapter 2 offers great help in understanding the impact of globalization in the everyday lives of the Filipinos. The commonality, however, ends there because the present study is centered on race relations and the hegemonic practices employed by the early American colonizers.

Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays On Filipino Culture (1995), edited by Vicente L. Rafael, presents three essays joined by their historical focus, the period of US rule in the Philippines, and their analytical concerns explication of technologies of colonial rule. The three essays discuss the extreme measure introduced by the colonizers to maintain health and sanitation in the country. In so far as "these mechanisms of colonial rule impinged directly on the individual bodies of both the colonizers and colonized, they, in fact, drew their authority from their capacity to mystify such processes of individuation as 'natural' and self-evident" (Rafael, 1995: p.xviii).

In *Cholera and the Origins of the American Sanitary Order in the Philippines*, Reynaldo Ileto argues that the Filipino-American war of 1899-1902 and the war against the cholera epidemic of 1902-1904 were fought and commanded by the same American military personnel who were ordered: "to establish colonial authority in terms of disciplined and hygienic subjects receptive to tutelary intervention." For instance, the imposition of sanitary order, forcible isolation of infected people met many kinds of opposition, such as resorting to traditional curing rites (Rafael 1995: p.xix). Meanwhile, *Where Every Prospect Pleases Only Man Is Vile: Laboratory Medicine as Colonial Discourse* by Warwick Anderson stresses that the colonial laboratory medicine contributed "to biologizing the social and historical contexts of domination." This colonial laboratory medicine offered the "prospect of turning all the colonial society into one huge laboratory where the bodies of both ruler and ruled would be reduced into the categories of science" (Anderson in Rafael, 1995: p.xx). Furthermore, *Nothing Without Labor: Penology, Discipline, and Independence in the Philippines Under United States Rule* by Michael Salman argues that both American and Filipino colonial officials deployed colonial penology as an "interpretive metaphor" in the structuring of colonial society. Prisons produce an "ordered and disciplined subjectivity" (Rafael, 1995: p.xx-xxi). The three essays share common ground with the present study regarding its exposition on the role of technologies of colonial rule and the cultural processes.

However, the commonality ends there because the main argument of the latter is centered on power relations as seen through race relations and their reaction to American colonial rule.

Lyster T. Ramos' *Post-colonialist Views in Linda Ty-Casper's Historical Novels* (1998) demonstrates how the novels were analyzed and evaluated using the postcolonial approach. A postcolonial approach is a literary approach that critically evaluates colonialism and its effects on the colonized. Due to 400 years of colonization, the study found out that Filipinos developed subservience, indolence, lavish display, and expenditure at feasts and other negative values. This thesis differs from the main principle that the current investigation wants to pursue because the former employed a cultural studies approach while the latter applied a postcolonial approach. In addition, the current study is more focused on power relations as seen through race relations.

Gabriel Jose Gonzales, S. J.'s study, *Fictioning National Identity: Decolonizing the Filipino Self-Image in Nick Joaquin* (1996), used ideology to read and analyze texts, unmasked the ideology interpellating the characters in the story. As exemplified by the characters in the story, Filipinos have imbibed a belief that they must behave or act like their colonizers to be equal with them. Gonzales found out also that Filipinos (characters in the story) who behave like their masters become agents in perpetuating the dominant ideology. This article finds commonality with Gonzales's thesis, especially in its demonstration of how ideology interpellates the characters of Nick Joaquin's fiction. The article explores the dynamics of race relations, specifically the employment of hegemonic practices to legitimize American stay in the Philippines.

Methodology

Employing the qualitative type of research and the descriptive-analytical research method centered on analyzing Bienvenido N. Santos's *The Volcano* (1986), this research article focuses on American hegemonic practices employed on early Philippine institutional structures. The cultural studies approach was used to understand better power relations (Barker, 2004; Barker and Galasinski, 2001). Through close reading, the formal elements and recognition of tensions, silences, denials, and contradictions were done. Unmasking the deep structure, such as the tensions and contradictions "are inherent in the ideological position," provides an enriching literary exploration of race relations (Johnson et al., 2004: p.195). With this, American dominance through its employment of hegemonic practices on the vulnerable group represented by the Filipinos portrayed in the novel was closely analyzed.

Theoretical Framework

Subsequent developments in literary and non-literary concerns have forced the mapping of the cultural studies' terrain for the rethinking of expanding intellectual inquiry. Considering the complexity of cultural studies' paradigm, this article's principal theories are those of Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony (Jones, 2006) and Raymond Williams's theory on culture (Williams, 1977). Adapting Gramsci's crucial notion of hegemony, this research article emphasizes how the power of the ruling race is formed and established within a complex cultural arena that requires the imposition of a different mode of life to people who accept unquestioningly and receptively to its dominant impressions and influences (Hall in Leitch, 2001). For Williams, culture defines everyday power relations, such as social relationships, affecting the multi-layered social structure (Williams in Frow, 1995; also, in Hornedo, 2002).

Results and Discussion

Summary

The Volcano (1986) is a riveting tale of an American couple, Dr. Paul Hunter and Sarah Hunter, with their two children, Junior and Florence. They lived in Legazpi City, Philippines, to do ministry work to spiritually uplift the people's lives during American colonization in the country. The family purportedly believed that their stint and religious mission in the Philippines was a thralling call from God. However, the Filipinos ardent desire to achieve independence resulted in hostility against the Hunters forcing them to leave the country.

American Hegemonic Practices

The Volcano (1986) depicts the hegemonic practices employed on different institutional structures to realize the American desire to pacify the entire archipelago and forge a national will with the emphasis on the dynamics of force and consent. Americans institute social, political, economic, and cultural reforms on different institutional structures to prepare and guide Filipinos on their journey to self-government. *Hegemonic practices* are reforms showing the intertwining of the dominant group's authority and the subordinate group's consent to achieve a better alliance.

Family

The Volcano (1986) delineates how it is noticeable that every fourth of July, speeches call for an end of American sovereignty in all the principal cities in the entire archipelago. Filipinos believe that independence is “only in name but not in substance” (p.210). However, the Americans exemplified by the characters like Dr. Hunter and his family continue to extend services to improve health and sanitation in Bikol, sing the Lord’s songs, and refuse to be affected by incidents happening in some parts of the country. The Barrios family knows that keeping economic security and social acceptance with the Hunter family is inappropriate. However, they know so well that these are powerful incentives, especially for their two sons, Tito and Badong, to uplift their lives against extreme hardship and deprivation that mark the experience of their neighborhood.

Government

As colonizing power, Americans secure social and political change through collective action by inviting Filipinos to participate in political dialogue like when Theodore McIntosh offered a political position to Capitan Lucas Alcantara. American decision to give minimal power to the Filipinos is a political affirmation that changing the political landscape in the Philippines is a gargantuan task that needs the cooperation of the Filipinos. Suspicion and hostility cannot be avoided. Americans see that Filipinos will never trust the conquering forces, but with the political participation of the Filipinos, then, doors will be opened for a good relationship. In the truest sense of the word, Americans would only like to strengthen political security for their own political survival both in the local and global arena. To establish a strong mandate, Americans should gain the goodwill of the Filipinos. As pointed out earlier, some Filipino responses to US rule are often shaped by many reasons, such as demands of plain survival or easy accessibility to power. Collaboration is one of the problems of the Philippine-American war ranging from passive acceptance of the new power to active support like giving information regarding the whereabouts of insurgents or political figures opposing the new political order. Some Filipinos responded to the new sovereignty by being collaborators and taking an oath of allegiance to American sovereignty, while others remained loyal to the young Republic that the colonizers did not recognize. However, the emergence of the elite political competition takes place. This local-level political structure created tension between the social aspiration and the political aspirations of the elite group and the dispossessed group.

As depicted in the novel, to strengthen political structures, the Americans built structures like the Regan Barracks, named Cerro Gordo, after the liberation, where the governor's house was also found there. Like Commonwealth President Quezon, some Filipinos openly acknowledged the essence of the American coming to the Philippines as "one of the greatest blessings..." (p.49). Interestingly, a summary of the hegemonic practices introduced by the Americans is summarized by an American writer of a certain newspaper in a journal article:

‘On this fortieth anniversary of the most important event in Philippine history, we, the American pioneers, salute our country and our flag; we, the pioneers, who have brought Occidental civilization to the Orient, who have brought American comforts and luxuries to a million Oriental homes; we who have brought to the Philippines the greatest era of progress in its history, we who have built mines, bridges, piers, industrial plants, hospitals, roads; we who have been dubbed imperialists.....It has not been ‘easy living’ for all of us here. For one thing we must thank our government. We have been encouraged to develop two of man’s useful and commendable traits of character: self-reliance and self-confidence...’ (The Volcano, p. 50).

Education

Indubitably, schools were constructed because they had the mighty transmission power of the American lifestyle and provided a definite curriculum of subjects. Schools were consciously designed to function as a chief instrument for assimilating Filipino children and producing a common culture. They were established in order to speed up the assimilation of Filipino children. The teaching and learning process was patterned from US schools to achieve the desired effect. The influx of American books and other reading materials into Philippine soil dramatically changed their lifestyle. As expected, Filipino children simply took over unquestioningly the ideas learned from their lessons. They were required to accept and respond to the authority of the teaching staff. Americans introduced education where the source of knowledge was about American life – language, culture, and politics. On language, everything was possible because the Filipinos were considered educated if they could speak fluently and write effectively in English. Failure to accept American education would mean one would not be able to work in government offices as long as the Philippines were under the American grip of power. On culture, they were expected to imbibe the American way of life to be acceptable in society.

However, even with this much-vaunted education machinery by Americans, most Filipinos showed their resistance to it because of the ideological formation that it offered. Education could have a significant effect on how Filipinos viewed themselves. Simply put, to try to control how Filipinos accomplished something was a form of devaluing their choices and actions. It was done in a subliminal way in which Filipinos did not even realize it. Colonization pictured education as the embodiment of American political posture, which penetrated deeply and thoroughly into people's consciousness. Thus, education took an active part in changing the consciousness of the oppressed. Filipinos who belonged to the marginalized group became easy prey to adopt the new situation, making them easily dominated. They were taken as "outsiders" or passive players due to the mechanism of control. However, the truth was they were not living "outside," they were always inside and active in any challenges that they could be of society's inner structure, which was rightfully theirs. Even the introduction of educational institutions and Protestantism had drastically changed the lives of the Filipinos. Americans invoked the devices of education and religion to cloak their conquests. Education and religion significantly changed the lives of Filipinos because they were part of the mechanism of conquest. Americans believed that their religion was far superior to Catholicism and the local religion.

Economy

In *The Volcano* (1986), the Americans make it a point to infuse funds, for instance, to sustain the salaries of employed Filipino doctors and other medical workers in the Mission House and other needs of the armed forces. With the infusion of financial support, the health services are strengthened. It affects Philippine culture and society because the Filipinos are encouraged to accept Western medical treatment headed by Dr. Hunter instead of undergoing traditional healing practices using herbal plants like banaba leaves and guava leaves. However, the favorably positioned group would usually seek better medical services from Manila instead of securing medical aid in the province.

Conclusion

Race relations are complex, especially when marginalization and inequality exist. Cultural studies approach unmasking power struggle as seen through hegemonic practices. The exercise of authority and leadership becomes easy through hegemony because of the interplay, as well as interlocking of coercion, and more importantly,

consent, necessary in allying with the powerless group. With the forge of relationship through the mechanisms of hegemony, the smooth power play becomes an advantage to the dominant group bent on territorial conquest. Thus, most Filipinos see that the creation and perpetuation of unequal racial power relations result in subservience. The invisibility of such effects on Philippine life and culture does not pass unnoticed because the powerless experience hostilities and betrayal, not to mention exploitation and marginalization.

Nevertheless, this definitely creates cracks, gaps, or fault lines in the new relationship. In its entirety, the article presents the iniquity of colonialism and the immutable effects of stigma caused by war. It unveils a social, cultural, economic, and political field that affected the powerless' life. More importantly, it gives a fresh perspective on the conjuncture showing contradicting postures that affected Philippine culture.

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