

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Symposium

Citing a Southeast Asian Classic Citation Analysis of Vicente Rafael's: Contracting Colonialism

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Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 61 no. 4 (2013): 507–20

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Symposium

RAMON GUILLERMO

Citing a Southeast Asian Classic Citation Analysis of Vicente Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism*

On an international plane, *Contracting Colonialism* by Vicente Rafael is probably one of the most successful historical works written by a Filipino. Since its publication, it has been widely cited in various disciplines such as Philippine studies, Southeast Asian studies, translation studies, Latin American studies, and various other fields. This paper aims to gain some insight into the extent and nature of its extraordinary influence, both Philippine and international, through citation analysis. However, a critical perspective is also offered on the issue of scholarly valuation through such citation analysis in relation to the Malaysian scholar Syed Farid Alatas's proposal for an "autonomous social science."

KEYWORDS: VICENTE RAFAEL • CITATION ANALYSIS • THOMSON REUTERS • GOOGLE SCHOLAR • AUTONOMOUS SOCIAL SCIENCE

Citation analysis is a useful tool that is, however, prone to misuse. Neoliberal reforms currently being applied in the higher education sector are exerting powerful pressures on universities around the world to evaluate faculty tenure, promotion, and incentives with a strong emphasis on publication in “high impact” journals that are included in the lists of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), now known as Thomson Reuters (cf. Guillermo 2000, 2008, 2011b, 2011c; UNESCO 2010). Some of the problems with this dominant contemporary tendency in the academe, especially in its indiscriminate application in the social sciences and the humanities, are the following:

- a. It gives an incredibly disproportionate advantage to publications in English;
- b. It is overly dependent on journal publications whereas books are still regarded as the most accomplished form of intellectual production in the social sciences and humanities;
- c. It forces academics to fit into the idioms and adopt the concerns of the Anglo-American academic domain and disregards the sociocultural specificity of each domain of intellectual production;
- d. Parallel academic/intellectual spheres of production and alternative forms of dissemination are further marginalized, if not gradually eliminated; and
- e. Most national centers of intellectual and academic production risk becoming mere expanded markets for the latest exports of the massive and highly profitable Anglo-American academic publishing industry.

The uncritical use of citation analysis, which has privileged ISI-listed journals in the major universities in Southeast Asia, including the University of the Philippines, continues to undermine the painstaking efforts of scholars in the past decades to support independent journals, develop local publishing initiatives, and increase the production of knowledge based on national priorities and community concerns. The current palpable crisis in Southeast Asian studies itself in terms of resources and publication opportunities on a global scale is also partly a result of market forces impinging upon universities, which force them to adjust their curricular offerings toward greater marketability. More often than not, the field of Southeast Asian studies

is seen in the North American and in some European academic contexts as an expensive but not exactly financially rewarding academic area.

Taken from a broader perspective, however, citation analysis can also serve as a useful tool in tracing the life histories of particular texts and measuring the intellectual impact of these texts through time. Ironically, it can also serve as a critical tool to investigate the effects of neoliberal reforms in the production and dissemination of knowledge in institutions of higher education. The data used in this citation analysis were obtained from Google Scholar (GS) on 21 September 2013. According to some recent studies, data from GS are comparable to those from the ISI, which are accessible only through an expensive subscription. The use of GS, therefore, has been heralded as contributing to the “democratization of citation analysis” (Harzing and van der Wal 2008). Aside from being free, another advantage of GS is the fact that citation counts derived from it are not limited to ISI journals. It includes books, conference proceedings, and non-US journals. Works in the humanities and social sciences, which give greater emphasis on publications in book form or as book chapters, can be more adequately covered with GS than with ISI.

However, the current limitations of GS include the following: it includes some non-scholarly citations, not all scholarly journals are indexed, there are cases of double citation, coverage can be uneven across different fields of study, coverage of older publications is not yet comprehensive, automatic processing sometimes produces garbled results, and the database is less frequently updated than that of the ISI. In common with other well-known sources of citation data, GS also does not adequately cover non-English publications (*ibid.*). The expansion in coverage and other changes in how GS data are produced will result in variations in the data obtained from it through time.

Vicente Rafael's Contracting Colonialism

Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule by Vicente Rafael is considered an important and innovative historical work in the Philippines (Nagano 2007). Since its local publication by the Ateneo de Manila University Press (Rafael 1988b), it has been routinely included among the essential readings in Philippine studies subjects in undergraduate and graduate courses at major universities in the Philippines. A related study has shown that Rafael is one

of the most cited references in Philippine studies dissertations and MA theses at the University of the Philippines Diliman (Guillermo 2011a).

Based on Rafael's (1984) outstanding dissertation in the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, *Contracting Colonialism* first saw print as a hardbound publication of Cornell University Press in 1988 (Rafael 1988a). The first paperback edition appeared in 1993 under the imprint of Duke University Press (Rafael 1993); its third printing as a paperback came in 2001. Rafael himself explains the longevity of *Contracting Colonialism* because of the fact that Duke University Press reissued it in paperback as part of a series on postcolonialism. This edition also had an introduction with an extended discussion of Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000), which attracted a readership among South Asian students working on postcolonialism who otherwise would not have been interested in anything about the Philippines (Rafael 2010).

Although its status in Philippine studies is secure, the impact of *Contracting Colonialism* as a work in Southeast Asian studies specifically is somewhat more difficult to assess. A list of the fourteen "most influential books" in Southeast Asian studies nominated by the International Advisory Members (IAM) of the journal *Sojourn* does not include *Contracting Colonialism* (Hui 2009). Keeping in mind all the abovementioned limitations of GS data and the approximate nature of the figures involved, it can be observed that the most heavily cited works in *Sojourn's* list are those of Benedict Anderson—*Imagined Communities* (1983) with an average of 534.6 citations per year since year of publication—and two books by James Scott—*Weapons of the Weak* (1985), with an average of 147 citations per year, and *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976), with an average citation of 77.8. Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java* (1960) had an average of 24.4 citations per year, while his *Agricultural Involution* (1963) had 12.4. Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979) had an average of 9.8 citations per year while the lowest, Willem Frederik Wertheim's *East–West Parallels* (1964), had 3.7.

As already mentioned, older publications are not yet adequately covered by GS so the data are undoubtedly skewed in favor of newer works. The criteria of *Sojourn* that the work should "transcend" the period when it was written implies, however, that these works should continue to be cited into the present. The great gap between Anderson's and Scott's work and that of Geertz and the rest of the works included in the list can be explained by the fact that the respective titles by the former two authors seem to have

found readerships well beyond the confines of any particular or narrow specialization. These outliers can be considered as atypical of the citation rates within the field.

For its part, *Contracting Colonialism* has had approximately 638 citations from 1989 to 2012, with a respectable 26.58 academic citations per year since its original year of publication. This figure is comparable with those for Geertz’s much older publications. Though extremely useful in determining general impact, these aggregate citation data can only tell us very little about the life histories of individual texts and the specific nature of their impact or influence. The citation data for *Contracting Colonialism*, therefore, has been broken down per year in this study in order to determine the number of citations per year. The resulting citation graph shows the years of relatively high and relatively low citation for *Contracting Colonialism* in comparison with *Pasyon and Revolution* (fig. 1).¹ The numerical values of the major peaks for *Contracting Colonialism* are shown in the graph.

The data can be disaggregated based on the use of keywords in order to demarcate imputed thematic subsets. By tracing the general outlines of the (continuing) life-history of *Contracting Colonialism* by means of citation

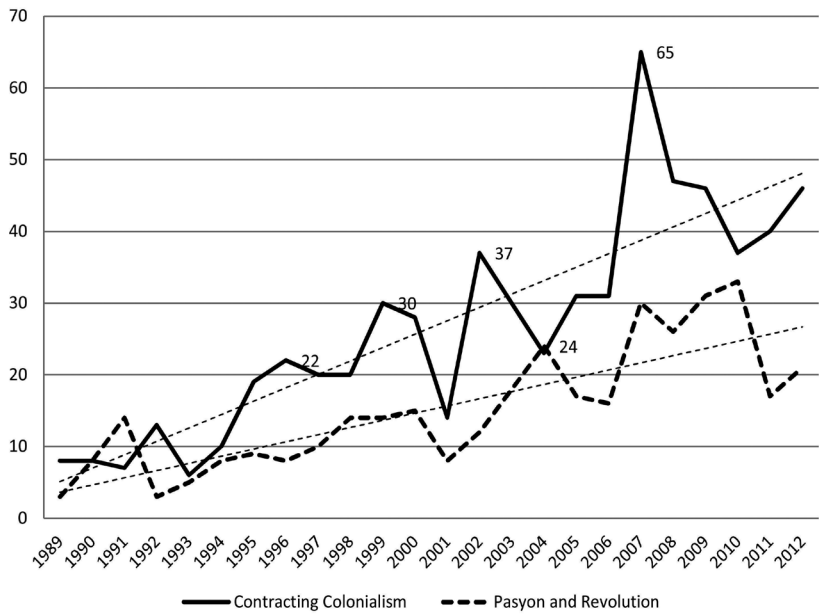


Fig. 1. Number of citations in Google Scholar for *Contracting Colonialism* and *Pasyon and Revolution*, 1989–2012

analysis, we may be able to make some general conjectures regarding the formative influences in the life-histories of this type of text.

Citation Analysis by Keywords

Some cautionary words must be emphasized at this point. The use of keywords in determining some overlaps or commonalities within the total corpus of texts citing a particular work can only lead to a very approximate and rough idea as to what these texts are about. However, a particular word-form that is found in a relatively large subset of texts within the total corpus is more significant than word-forms appearing in all of these works. Such word-forms can be used to make demarcations within the corpus of texts being analyzed. The co-occurrence of certain word-forms in coordination with particular keywords is also a fairly common occurrence so much so that their regularities of co-occurrence may serve to ground the probabilistic hypothesis that some works in which a particular word-form appears may exhibit certain degrees of thematic convergence.

Thus the whole corpus of texts citing *Contracting Colonialism* can be divided into subsets in which particular word-forms appear. These subsets can then serve as the basis upon which certain very rough hypotheses regarding

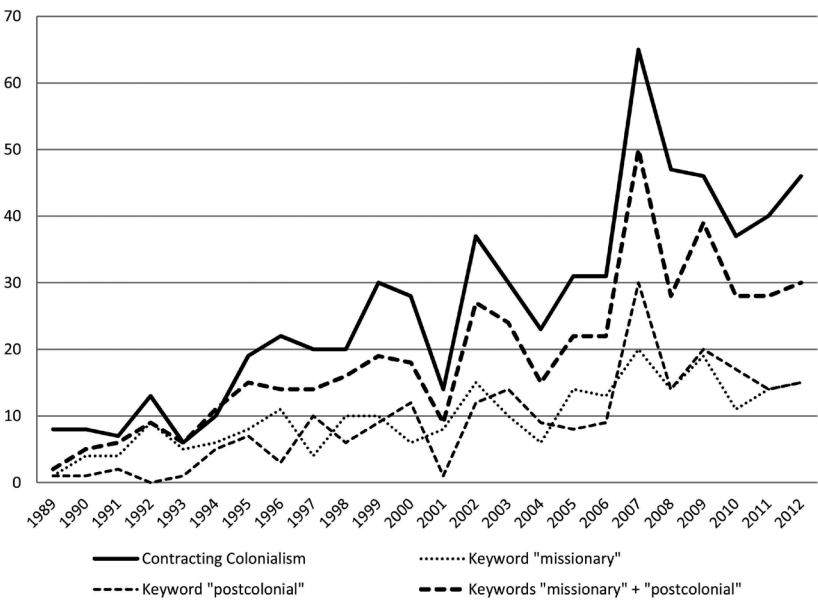


Fig. 2. Number of citations in Google Scholar for *Contracting Colonialism*, by keywords "postcolonial," "missionary," and "missionary" + "postcolonial"

thematic convergences can be drawn. Given these stringent limitations, this type of study covering a large number of texts too numerous to read in many cases has its value in giving an overview from which certain hypotheses may be extracted regarding the general characteristics of the total textual corpus. Traditional content analysis may arrive at more definite conclusions regarding the characteristics of the texts being studied but it is by definition constrained to a relatively limited number of texts.

Figure 2 demonstrates that almost all citations of *Contracting Colonialism* can be accounted for by two general areas identified by the keywords “postcolonial” and “missionary.” The generated citation rates for *Contracting Colonialism* combined with the keyword “missionary” (filtering out results with the keyword “postcolonial”) closely follow the peaks and valleys of the citation rates that were produced for *Contracting Colonialism* alone (encompassing 37 percent of the data points comprising the latter). The same observation applies to the citation rates for *Contracting Colonialism* combined with the keyword “postcolonial” (likewise filtering out results with the keyword “missionary”), although its peaks and valleys are a bit lower than the graph for “missionary.” Figure 2 also shows that, when the values for both the keywords “missionary” and “postcolonial” are combined, the resulting graph results in a close fit with the overall graph of *Contracting Colonialism*, accounting for 71 percent of all the data points. Most citations of *Contracting Colonialism* therefore include either the keyword “missionary” or “postcolonial.” Those that simultaneously include these two keywords or do not include either of them at all make up for the remainder not yet accounted for by the current citation analysis.

It ought to be repeated that a text citing *Contracting Colonialism* in which the word-form “postcolonial” appears does not necessarily mean that the text deals at length with “postcolonialism” itself. In the same way, the fact that the word-form “missionary” appears in a text citing *Contracting Colonialism* could be an isolated occurrence not related to the dominant themes of the text itself. However, it can be surmised, based on the preliminary results, that the great majority of works that have cited *Contracting Colonialism* are associated with studies relating to “missionary” activities (whether explicitly religious or not) most of which have been attracted by the “postcolonial” insights it provides. Aside from this observation, there is also a significant segment of works citing *Contracting Colonialism* that can be associated exclusively with the “postcolonial” theme and without any necessary connection with religious or missionary topics.

In addition to “missionary” and “postcolonial,” the citation entries were tested for the word-form “Southeast Asia” in order to determine the number of citations that could be associated, very roughly, with Southeast Asian area studies (fig. 3). Only 31 percent of the data points overlaps with the keyword “Southeast Asia.”

Peaks and Valleys in the Citation Graph

Some salient peaks and valleys in the *Contracting Colonialism* citation graph are of particular interest. Five of these can be explained as follows:

- 1996 (peak value 22): The first paperback edition of *Contracting Colonialism* was printed by Duke University Press in 1993. The work thus became accessible to a wider readership of scholars.
- 1999 (peak value 30): The Philippine Centennial celebrations of 1996 to 1998 produced a flurry of historical publications in its wake. Since local and international citations are not disaggregated in GS, a large enough increase in local citations can create substantial upturns in the graph regardless of the rate of international citations.
- 2002 (peak value 37): Rafael’s *White Love* (2000) was published by Duke University Press.
- 2004 (low value 23): This valley in the *Contracting Colonialism* graph interestingly coincides at the only point where Ileo’s *Pasyon and Revolution* exceeds *Contracting Colonialism* in the number of citations, with 24 citations of its own. In other words, the number of citations of Ileo’s work was peaking at the same time that citations of *Contracting Colonialism* were dipping. Nonetheless, the two phenomena may have occurred independently of each other. An alternative explanation is that, because both works seem to exhibit similar periods of rise and fall in citations, the increase in citations of *Pasyon and Revolution* in 2004 may be a delayed effect of the peak of 37 citations of *Contracting Colonialism* in 2002.
- 2007 (peak value 65): Rafael’s *Promise of the Foreign* (2005) was published by Duke University Press.

It can be observed immediately that there is a time-lag of one to two years before the “event” that probably gives rise to a peak takes effect. Moreover, quite interestingly, new works published by an (increasingly) well-known author seem to give new impetus to the citation of the author’s older (more

classic) works. The appearance of new works can give new citation impetus to older works and “kick them up the stairs,” so to speak. If the interpretations are correct, it is interesting to note that only the 1997–1998 peak received its main impetus from an event “relatively external” to the author’s individual publication history. However, the close similarity in upturns and downturns with Ileo’s *Pasyon and Revolution* through time may point to some “external” factors that may be more powerful than just the upward impetus explainable from Rafael’s subsequent publications.

Conclusion

Given the preliminary results of this citation analysis, what can we finally say about *Contracting Colonialism* and its status as an influential text in Philippines studies? It cannot be disputed that *Contracting Colonialism* has had extraordinary success in terms of citation rates in comparison with other related works.² It can also be said that it is an outstanding example of a text within the field of Southeast Asian studies, which has proven successful in attracting a broader academic readership base due to its topic (religious conversion/translation) and theoretical approach (postcolonialism).

Nevertheless, if *Sojourn*’s ranking of the most influential works in Southeast Asian studies is to be taken seriously as a measure of impact within the field, it can be surmised that, despite its relatively strong showing in terms of citation impact in the Philippines and internationally, *Contracting*

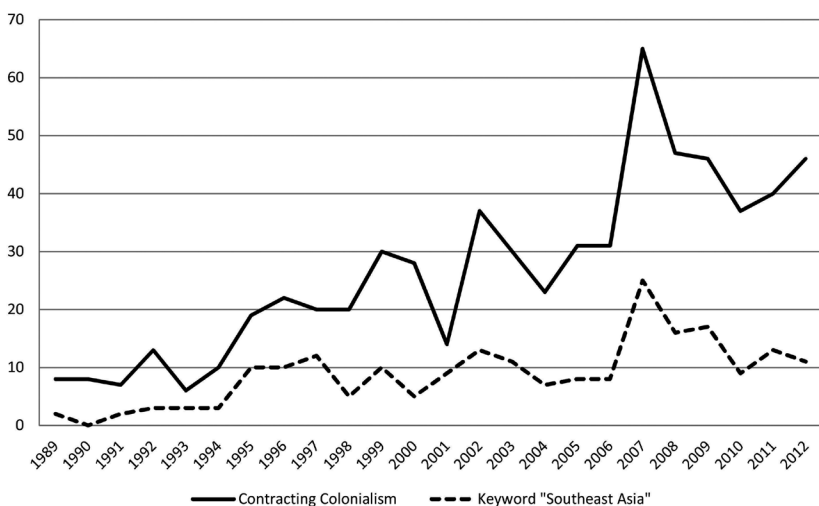


Fig. 3. Number of citations in Google Scholar for *Contracting Colonialism*, by keyword “Southeast Asia”

Colonialism may have exerted more influence outside the field of Southeast Asian studies than among scholars actually working within it. It should be kept in mind that the impact of important works within Southeast Asian studies is not necessarily reflected in extraordinarily high citation rates as we have seen in the works of Anderson and Scott. The relative “narrowness” and even “marginality” of the field naturally constrain the frequency of citation of the highly specialized works produced within it. Anthony Reid (Koizumi 2010) has observed how Southeast Asian studies constantly has to justify itself in the North American academe by attaching itself to the latest theoretical trends:

[Japan and Australia are] very different from North America or Europe, for which the Southeast Asian region is distant and exotic, and only a tiny minority have any knowledge of, or interest in it. There one must constantly struggle to show why one's data is relevant to the latest theoretical trend, because empirical research on such a marginal area is hard to justify in itself . . . [Japan] is a refreshing contrast with the trend in English-medium universities, where competitive pressures tend to push everybody towards the theoretical concerns considered “hot.”

Despite this relative “narrowness” and “marginality,” several factors seem to aid in increasing the citation impact of some works in Southeast Asian studies. Some of these are the following:

1. Publication with a prestigious academic publisher in the US increases the possibility of high citation (this type of circularity has already been observed in ISI publications which tend to cite other ISI rather than non-ISI publications);
2. Works that are able to connect with current theoretical trends (e.g., postmodernism or postcolonialism) in the US academic industry can probably ride one or more citation waves within their textual lifespans;
3. Works that successfully attract other broad readership bases outside of their original specialist areas can generate higher or even atypical citation rates than what typical works coming from that field can;
4. Citation rates for an individual work can be boosted if its (increasingly well-known) author publishes a new work;

5. Finally, works with high citation rates in the international domain must be written in English.

Despite contributing to the undeniable success of works originating from the field of Southeast Asian studies such as *Contracting Colonialism*, all of these factors must be viewed critically if Syed Farid Alatas's (2006) ideal of an "autonomous social science" which "independently raises problems, creates concepts and creatively applies methodologies without being intellectually dominated by another tradition" is to be embraced by Southeast Asian practitioners of Southeast Asian studies. It is an undeniable fact that Southeast Asianists in Southeast Asia have so far been unable to construct more stable institutionalized spheres of discursive exchange among themselves from which autonomous and multidirectional theoretical dynamics could emerge. Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson (2010, 153) have proposed a novel operationalization of the notion of "autonomous" knowledge production through citation analysis:

We can distinguish European-dependent countries and North-American-dependent countries in terms of citations. Hence, Africa is largely a European-dependent region, with more than half of its references being to European journals in 2003–2005. By contrast, Latin America and Asia are North-American-dependent regions, with more than half of their references being to North American journals in the two periods. Oceania is an intermediary case while the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], having been comparatively autonomous in 1993–1995, became more dependent on North America ten years later. North America is largely autonomous in terms of citations (around 80 per cent are 'self-citations'; that is, citations of papers originating from the USA or Canada), while European citations are almost equally divided, with intra-European citations having a slight advantage above inter-citations.

Unlike Europeanists who sometimes display a vast and polyglot European-wide erudition, Southeast Asianists trained abroad tend to focus on their own countries of origin, and comparative studies on their neighbors are still relatively rare. There is also a scarcity of Southeast Asian Southeast Asianists with linguistic competencies outside of their own national

domains, a reality that probably hampers access to a not insubstantial part of each other's intellectual production that may be written in their national languages. Despite the dominance of English as the default working language of scholarship in Southeast Asian studies, it is plausible that a lot of valid and even indispensable works which have been written in Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, Filipino, and so on may be "invisible" due to language barriers (Narongrit et al. 2012, 31). The academic and publishing centers of the metropolises undoubtedly continue to mediate, facilitate, constrain, and regulate their institutional and intellectual interactions with one another.

Alatas's (ibid., 112) proposed ideal of an "autonomous social science" can be applied not only to national traditions but also to the development of regional spheres of social scientific intellectual exchange such as Southeast Asian studies (Guillermo 2010, 2013). Given the current difficult state of affairs, Alatas's ideal faces greater challenges than ever before in pursuit of its actualization. Nevertheless, the encouraging results of the Thai experiment with a Thai-Journal Citation Index (TCI), along with other similar initiatives in Malaysia, which are oriented toward the future establishment of an ASEAN Citation Index that may serve both as a complement to and a critique of the ISI system, seem to offer promising new directions (Narongrit et al. 2012). It is to be hoped, however, that with great challenges even greater opportunities will come in the future.

Notes

The contents of this study were discussed at the forum commemorating the 25th anniversary of the publication of Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule held at the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, 26 Sept. 2013. An earlier draft was presented at the Conference-Workshop on "Engaging the Classics in Malay and Southeast Asian Studies: Where to Go from Here?" (17–18 June 2010), organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and the Malay Studies Department, National University of Singapore, with support from Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) and Jamiyah. The author would like to thank Vicente Rafael, Rommel Curaming, Caroline Hau, Patricio Abinales, and Jun Aguilar for their comments on the data presented in this study.

- 1 The trend lines for both *Contracting Colonialism* and *Pasyon and Revolution* point to further increases in citations.
- 2 For a comparison with citation graphs produced using older GS data, not only for Ileo's *Pasyon and Revolution* but also for Renato Constantino's *A Past Revisited* (1975) and Teodoro Agoncillo's *Revolt of the Masses* (1956), see Guillermo 2010.

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