

Hasmina Sarip - Prevailing Motifs

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Submission date: 20-Jul-2023 10:28AM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 2134042286

File name: Hasmina_Sarip_-_Prevailing_Motifs.docx (294.39K)

Word count: 7597

Character count: 39490

“Prevailing Motifs in the Meranaw *Rina-Rinaw*: A Thematic Study”

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover the prevailing motifs in the Meranaw *rina-rinaw* texts and. Through thematic analysis, this study determines how faithful the *rina-rinaw* has remained to the prototype, the traditional *bayok*, or how far it has drifted from the latter. Specifically, this study seeks to identify different motifs dominating the texts. The findings revealed that the *rina-rinaw* texts employ a rich variety of motifs or recurring themes which are the essential stuff of which songs are made to draw traction and engage the listeners. They enliven the experience or world portrayed in the songs. Most importantly, this study poses a challenge to future researchers to attempt forays into other aspects of the Meranaw culture. This study on the *rina-rinaw*, as one of the many “undocumented” Meranaw art forms, provides only a foretaste of much more that the unique and rich Meranaw cultural heritage has to offer.

Keywords: Culture, Meranaw, Motifs, *Rina-rinaw*, Traditional

Introduction

A special fascination, or a kind of enchantment, held by the literary form for the researcher and others of her generation. Related to this and recognizable as one factor speeding up decline and eventual extinction or the coming of the end is the present generations’ observed indifference to, or lack of interest in, local verbal art forms like *rina-rinaw*. This disinterest sharply contrasts with their avid appetite for such modern popular art forms as K-Pop and rock. The trend is deplorable. There are powerful forces at work that provide grist or fodder to the discourses of endangerment, for example, globalization and the unrelenting attempt of some cultures to gain and establish dominance or hegemony. The other source of impetus for the study is the appeal sounded by some works for scholars in the field to join in the effort to wrest native and traditional forms from oblivion. These considerations served as prods to Sarangani’s (2010) study on the Meranaw *bayok* and popular songs.

However, the context that provided the background for Sarangani’s study did not include a life-changing catastrophe of such magnitude as the recently concluded Marawi Siege and the vast devastation it wrought, reducing to rubble and ashes homes and cultural artefacts and heirlooms, and forcing recognition among Meranaws, this researcher included, of the fragility not only of human existence but also of the achievements which a people takes pride in. To use an analogy, the war has made the Meranaws aware of a crack on the dam similar to that tiny hole on a dam discovered by the Dutch boy in the story. Based on the story from which the analogy is borrowed, the boy heroically attempted to stop more water from seeping through

the hole and prevent the collapse of the dam by inserting his tiny hand into the hole to stem the flow of water. The spectre of endangerment hovering over Meranaw culture has sharpened awareness of the need for a discourse to counter the 'gloom and doom' discourse that seems in vogue now.

¹ Metamorphosis or evolution of art forms seems inevitable and may be the best defence against complete extinction. According to the popular hypothesis, it is from the *bayok* that the *rina-rinaw* and other innovations on Meranaw music like *banda* have originated. These new emerging forms are read as mirroring changes in the Meranaw culture and character. A conspicuous change is manifest in the difference between the refined and elegant language of the *bayok* and the plain, direct and even vulgar words or expressions noted in some Meranaw popular songs (Cayongcat, 1984).

In light of all this, the researcher finds this study timely and urgent. It is offered as a contribution to the preservation of an interesting contemporary popular Meranaw literary form – the *rina-rinaw*. The researcher believes that in this form endures, or can be discerned traces of the traditional *bayok*. She posits a continuity of the *bayok* tradition for in a sense, the Meranaw *bayok* lives in the *rina-rinaw*, hence, the compelling need to subject the latter to serious study. Through textual analysis, an in-depth analysis of *rina-rinaw* texts and other elements of the art form which make each *rina-rinaw* a complete performance package is done to bring to light its recurring motifs or themes in this verbal art that make it an interesting art form.

Methodology

¹ This study is a qualitative research which employed thematic analysis in the data collection. The corpus used in this study are the following: 1) audio and video recordings and 2) transcribed and translated *rina-rinaw* texts. Through thematic analysis, the prevailing motifs found in the texts were identified. Lastly, the researcher unravels new concepts and ideas about *rina-rinaw* and Meranaw culture, in general.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the data that answers the problems raised in this study. The presentation and analyses are split into three phases: 1) belief in the Almighty Allah, 2) kinship and, 3) reviving one's culture.

The Prevailing Motifs in the Rina-rinaw Texts

⁵ Abrams (1999) defines motif as a conspicuous element, such as a type of incident, device, reference, or formula, which occurs frequently in works of literature. Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with motif, but the term is more usefully applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.

² According to Velasco (2017), Meranaw folksongs cover a variety of subject matters and themes such as love, kinship, attitude towards difficulties and sufferings, good manners, social life, courtship and marriage and other values and attitudes towards life. They even vary in terms of kind and expressions, but they are all the outburst of their social and cultural environments, their life styles, beliefs, customs and traditions.

In the *rina-rinaw* texts, there are several motifs or themes that help the readers understand and reflect on the Meranaw culture. The discussion below is divided or organized into the different motifs or themes abstracted from the different texts of the onors.

A. Belief in the Almighty Allah

The significance of remembering the Almighty Creator and His Last Messenger and tracing one's ancestry are the primary foci of the onor's first texts. In the second phase of the structure, *panabiya ko Tuhan*, the singer speaks of God whom he describes as the Origin of all blessings and the Source of mercy.

From the beginning of Mangoda Pyagma's first text, this excerpt is taken:

*"A maporo a aya rakn miyaden
A tuhan a rumiyangkom a dikakanduri ko
miyaangaden
A rukiyan ko kapaar ago kambaya-baya*

The exalted and the One created me
Lord is eternally Besought of all that
controls all the creatures
In Him, belongs the control and discretion

*Ko pageletan o langit ago so antar a lupa
rakes o dalem iyan
A kaadel a da taman, a kadnan a psimbaan
o mbawataan o Adam
So man so tuhan tano na tunganay a
malimo ago masalinggaw
Ka inaden niyan so Nur, a Maulana
Muhammad*

Those in skies and between them and those
in the earth and beneath it
The Just that beyond limit, the Lord that
worshipped by the descendants of Adam
Look, Our Lord is so Merciful and
beneficent
He, who created the Light, the Prophet
Muhammad"
(Text 1, Lines 10-16)

It is stated in the excerpt above that God is The Great, The Exalted, The Controller of Everything between the Sky and the Earth, The Merciful and The Most Beneficent. He is also The One Who Created the Prophet Mohammad. The discussion went on by mentioning how importance it is for the Muslims of Lanao to strive harder on one's prayers and good deeds while the body and soul are still capable.

The Mangoda Pyagma's text also describes the "other place" where believers wish to stay in the Hereafter. Heaven, the goal of every Muslim, is described in the text as "*randarangan iyan so kapiiya a ginawa, sa mbekenan a kargan pkatarosan o mga taw a miyanaguntaman mag amal*" (he will truly enjoy the goodness of life, it is the destination of those who strive hard through prayers and good deeds." This statement affirms Meranaws' striving or struggle as believers of Allah (SWT) to become true servants of Allah (Abd Allah). The phrase "*miyanaguntaman mag amal*" refers to this relentless struggle. Jihad al-Akhbar is the greater struggle that every true believer engages in every day or every waking moment of his life against his base instincts or urges, against temptations or sinning. Sin drives a wedge into man's relationship with his Maker or Creator.

Further, Princess Norlyn's "*panabiya ko Tuhan*" mentioned the following lines:

minirampi ko pasik, miyaped ko dalimin

was classified with the worthless, the
sacrilegious; he went with those who lost
their ways and who were disgraced;

*aya man tiyabiya o Rasul a ba niyan
mapag-ummat sa pangadapan ko simban
so kinilemba iyan ko Makkah ago Madina a
kyatimba-timbangan o pat a palaw a mala
sa Makkah ago Madina a kiyasoldaan o
pat a imam sa Makkah*

he was refused by the Messenger as one of his followers when the Prophet faced Allah (SWT) in Makkah and Madinah, surrounded by the four big mountains and were the four Imams (religious leaders) lived.

(Text 2, Lines 16-17)

According to her, those who do not acknowledge the oneness of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger is considered worthless, lost, and disgraced. The Almighty Allah (SWT) was named *Rahman* and *Rahim* because He is the Most Merciful and Most Gracious. Also, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) refuses those who do not acknowledge the Almighty Allah (SWT).

This excerpt elucidates the significance of the Meranaw's belief in their Creator. The emphasis put in this sanctity and blessedness of the Almighty Allah (SWT) forwards a strong belief system among the Meranaws.

According to Assistant Superintendent Dr. Nordina Sarip, one of the guests during the *rina-rinaw* event, one of the functions of these events is "to go back to the forgotten teachings of the old folks." The old generation acknowledges the role of religion during their time. Through analysis, this reminiscence and remembering of the Islamic history which commenced in Makkah and Madina, is done for a purpose. It is to remind and instill the concept of God to the present generation (who are considered the primary beneficiaries of the *rina-rinaw*'s message).

B. Kinship

Another recurrent theme in the *rina-rinaw* texts, as seen in the first text of Potre Monaaray, is kinship or tracing one's ancestry. The singer gives an account of the contributions of the Four (4) *Imams* of Makkah in Saudi Arabia and the seven (7) continents, namely the Maloco, Malado, Brunei, Sulu, Maguindanao, Tagoloan, and Lanao. Then, the discussion turns on the Four Sovereign States of Lanao such as the Marogong (now Unayan), Maganding (now Masiu), Dagodob (now Bayabao) and Mimbisa (now Baloi). The singer shows vast knowledge of the genealogy or history of Lanao for he was able to connect the important points in the first text. He ends the first text by stating the purpose of the event, the importance of Thanksgiving and reviving traditions and customs. His presence and performance at the event is his way of contributing to the revivalism movement. "The medium is the message," to borrow the words of McLuhan.

The *rina-rinaw*, through the traditional *bayok* which may be considered as its prototype, is a link with the past. This, despite some undeniable differences between the traditional art form and the more recent form known as *rina-rinaw*, in terms of style (diction), tone, and thematic interests on which Sarangani (2010) trained the critical lens in his study on the Meranaw *bayok* and popular songs (*rina-rinaw* and *banda*).

Below is an excerpt from Potre Monaaray's first text:

*tanan ko nem (6) a ingud ikapito (7) so
ranao aya usolan iyan na so maloco,
maladao, boronayan, go sulog,*

*maguindanao rawatun, tagoloan,
minombao, samporna sa ranao*

And the six places of which Ranao is the seventh enumerated as Maloco, Maladao,

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