

Original Research Article

Images in the Meranaw *Rina-Rinaw*: An Intertextual Criticism

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: April 18, 2020

Accepted: May 13, 2020

Volume: 3

Issue: 5

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.5.5

KEYWORDS

Bayok, Imagery, Intertextuality, Meranaw, Rina-rinaw

ABSTRACT

This study aims to discover the images in the Meranaw rina-rinaw and the distinctive features that make it sui generis. Through intertextual criticism, 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 do the following: (1) to characterize the imagery of the rina-rinaw; and, (2) to analyze how these images in rina-rinaw text represent the modern Meranaw culture. The findings revealed that the rina-rinaw texts employ a rich variety of imagery which are the essential stuff of which songs are made to draw traction and engage the listeners. They vivify the experience or world portrayed in the songs. These images found in the rina-rinaw texts are representations that connect meaning and language to culture. 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.

Introduction

Some factors gave the researcher the motive force to pursue the present inquiry on the Meranaw verbal art form commonly known as *rina-rinaw*. The first of these is the special fascination, 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.

Endangerment and the threat of extinction stalking cultures of weaker minority groups, especially those of indigenous peoples like the Lumads in the Philippines, has become a global concern. There is a growing recognition of the fact that powerful forces, specifically globalization and modernization, are at work, swallowing up traditional knowledge and skills that lie in their path. A warning was sounded by UNESCO representative Dr. Malama Meleisea during an international conference held in Khon Kaen, Thailand, in August 1999, on "Collecting and Safeguarding Oral Traditions": "Globality has a positive potential, by creating a more closely integrated world, to break down barriers between nations and peoples. But it also has accelerating potential to erase the cultural heritage of countless minority groups and small societies, with the result that we will all be impoverished by the loss." The Meranaws may well count among those countless "minority groups" and their unique, rich cultural heritage confronted with possible eradication by the march towards a mono-civilization under the hegemony of a "bulldozer" superpower like the United States. This may seem far-fetched but not at all impossible.

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 intertextual criticism, 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 language use and interesting features and conventions in this verbal art that make it an interesting art form.

This study is undertaken to identify and analyze in depth the interesting linguistic features of *rina-rinaw* that make it distinctive or *sui generis* (a class in itself) as well as those features that connect it to the *bayok* from which it has diverged over time, but with which it still is unmistakably linked. Specifically, this study seeks to do the following:

- a. Characterize the images of the *rina-rinaw* texts; and,
- b. Analyze how these images and meanings represent the modern Meranaw culture.

The aim of this inquiry is to discover the images of the Meranaw *rina-rinaw* and its distinctive features that make it *sui generis*. Through Intertextual criticism, the researcher should be able to determine how faithful the *rina-rinaw* has remained to its prototype, the traditional *bayok*, or how far it has drifted from the latter. Most importantly, this study is an attempt to add spurs to interest in academic research on Meranaw folk songs, like the Meranaw lullaby, work-related songs (fishing songs), dirges and other occasional songs.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research which employs ethnography in the data collection. However, in the data analysis, intertextual criticism was used as a method. The corpus used in this study are the following: 1) audio and video recordings and 2) transcribed and translated *rina-rinaw* texts. Through intertextual criticism, the play of language and images found in the *rina-rinaw* texts were identified. The different texts were analyzed through Derrida's Intertextuality in order to find out how these meanings recontextualize the *rina-rinaw* as a representation of the modern Meranaw culture. Lastly, the researcher unravels new concepts and ideas about *rina-rinaw* and Meranaw culture, in general.

Results and Discussion

This section is concerned with the presentation of the *rina-rinaw* texts and their analyses and interpretations.

The Images in the Meranaw Rina-rinaw and its Presentations

According to Abrams (1999), imagery (that is, "images" taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other works of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or through similes and metaphors as vehicles (the secondary resources).

In a literary text, it is an author's use of vivid and descriptive language that adds depth, concreteness and life to his/her work. A work's imagery appeals to the human senses and draws the reader into the universe depicted in the work, engaging and involving him/her, thus deepening the reader's understanding of the work. In addition, it is a memory technique, a kind of mnemonics, that involves constructing mental images when learning new information in order to be able to better recall the information later. For example, with the passage of time the reader may forget all other details of Conrad's Lord Jim, but not the image of him as a solitary figure in white against the immense sky, or the mournful sound of the gongs and drums in Jose's Waywaya that sends off the protagonist to his end, combined with the image of the river that he knows in his heart, he will never cross.

Based on the texts, the first singer uses striking images as literary devices. These are shown in the following excerpts from the texts:

<p>"...lemba on a Ka'aba beken a Baitullah a kiyasaromagayan ko Hajjar Allah mombao, montiya a masindaw a dinidawan ko Nabi pyodian ko Rasul ka kagiya so Muhammad na inipag-adil iyan"</p>	<p>"...where Ka'aba is situated and at the center is the Baitullah, where the Hajjar Allah is found; a bright shining diamond where the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was lulled and the Messenger of Allah (SWT) was honored" (Text 1, Line 18)</p>
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<p>"...tlo a kokoman inipag-adil a myabaloy a sindaw sa pito aya a aklim a myaamas a aras ngkaya a nem a inged a Ranaw"</p>	<p>"Three judgments which served as the light of the seven continents and seen on the throne are the six places of Lanao" (Text 1, Line 19)</p>
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The images extracted from the first text of the first singer are the following: *lemba on a Ka'aba beken a Baitullah* (where the Ka'aba is situated, at the center is the Baitullah), *kiyasaromagayan ko Hajjar Allah* (the place of the Hajjar Allah), *montiya a masindaw* (a bright shining diamond), *myabaloy a sindaw* (served as light) and, *myaamas a aras* (seen on the throne). The *Ka'aba* which is situated in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, sometimes referred to as *Baitullah*, is considered by the Muslims as a *montiya a masindaw* or "a bright shining diamond". This image describes the *Baitullah*, the "abode of God" as a radiant beacon calling forth the faithful to face in the same direction (*qibla*) and to perform the *hajj* which is one of the Pillars of Islam. According to the excerpt, the Holy Mosque is very significant because it is where the Prophet was molded and loved. All Muslims aspire to undertake the *hajj*, or the annual pilgrimage, to the *Kaaba* once in their lives if they are able or financially capable. Indeed, the image of the *Ka'aba* or *Baitullah* represents the most fundamental of faith and reverence. The congregation in Makkah once a year completes or caps the training in unity and solidarity or brotherhood which is the most important social ideal of Islam. It transcends all other forms of unity based on geography or territory, race, linguistic and ethnic affinity. With the faithful gathered around the *Ka'aba*, all man-made bonds and barriers fall away, bringing them all into one universal family, created from the same common clay.

Moreover, the *Hajjar Allah* is another significant image to the Meranaws. The 'Black Stone,' as it is commonly named, is a rock set into the eastern corner of the *Ka'aba*. It is revered by Muslims as an Islamic relic which, according to Muslim tradition, dates back to the time of Adam and Eve. The "Black Stone" plays a central role in the ritual of *Istilam*, when pilgrims kiss the Black Stone, touch it with their hands or raise their hands towards it while repeating the *takbir*, "God is Greatest." They perform this in the course of walking seven times around the Ka'aba in a counterclockwise direction (*tawaf*), emulating the actions of Muhammad (SAW). At the end of each circuit, they perform *Istilam* and may approach the Black Stone to kiss it at the end of *tawaf*. However, in modern times, large crowds make it practically impossible for everyone to kiss the stone, so it is currently acceptable to point in the direction of the Stone on each of their seven circuits around the *Ka'aba*. Some even say that the Stone is best considered simply as a marker, useful in keeping count of the ritual circumambulations that one pilgrim has performed.

The other images such as *myabaloy a sindaw* (served as light) and *myaamas a aras* (seen on the throne) refer to the role portrayed by the seven continents of the Sulu Sultanate (Maloco, Maladao, Brunei, Sulu, Maguindanao, Tagoloan and Lanao). According to history, as cited by Cadar (1985), the Meranaws claim that they are connected to the first ruler of Maloko (Moluccas Islands) who accordingly came from Mindanao. Also, the relationship to the Maguindanaon nobility is evidenced by a maze of intermarriages as much as by proximity and historic experience. Thus, the image of 'light' symbolizes the

identity and noble or aristocratic origins of the Meranaws even from the beginning of their history. The image of a 'throne' in the texts symbolizes the noble ancestry of the Meranaws. The Meranaws take pride in their lineage or descent and show resolve in keeping the purity of their bloodline. They are relatively less open to exogamous marriages, even marriage with members of other Muslim groups in the Philippines. Among the Muslim groups in the Philippines, the Meranaws have remained faithful to their traditions, as observed by scholar Peter Gowling in the early part of the second half of the twentieth century. However, over time, attitudes can change. In fact, there are already cases of intermarriage with Maguindanaons and Tausugs. Muslim males enjoy greater latitude or freedom in this area. Meranaw parents are stricter with daughters.

Additionally, the image comes from the Latin word "imago," which literally means "copy." It refers to the mental pictures presented in a poem or a song. Any literary text is made more appealing through beautiful images.

The second singer utilizes other clusters of mental pictures in his texts such as: *kyalimodan sa tauw* (many people were gathered), *liyabi a bolawan*, (a golden key), *gonsi a datomanong* (a golden key), *kidarpa ko panggao* (to be placed in pedestal), and *kurtina kaolan na lalansay ako ngka pen* (you are the curtain while I am your tapestry).

The first four images, as used in the texts, basically refer to the aristocratic ancestry of the Meranaws. *Kyalimodan sa tauw* simply means that 'many people were gathered.' This suggests Meranaws' predilection for social gatherings and festivities. Such affairs entail exhaustive work and expense or expenditure of resources, but the more people are gathered in a certain occasion, the greater prominence the affair confers on the family. Numbers are important to the Meranaws: large family or clan, large number of supporters/following, large crowd of attendees gathered. This works like a status symbol, conferring prestige on a family. It is the same principle at work in the matter of demanding a large bride price (dowry) for a daughter of the family, or a fine (sala) for an offense/injury inflicted on the clan.

Liyabi a bolawan and *gonsi a datomanong* are images that mean the same thing: "a golden key." These are symbols for the four municipalities of Lanao which are called *kiatathamana-an* or "boundaries:" Dalama, located in the municipality of Molundo, the boundary between Bayabao and East Masiu; Sawir, Masiu Municipality, the boundary between East Masiu and East Unayan; Madamba Municipality, the boundary between West Unayan and West Masiu; and Bacayawan in Marantao Municipality, the boundary between West Masiu and Bayabao. Surprisingly, there is no identified boundary between Bayabao and Baloi but the reason is that both *pangampong* lineages or *bangsa* come from the same family tree. Under the *kanggiginawai* (friendship) their boundaries need not be established.

From Line 33 of Text 2, "*mala so inged ka a kidarpa ko panggao a isung ko maliwanag*," the images "*kidarpa ko panggao*" (to be placed on a pedestal) and "*isung ko maliwanag*" (pathway to light) were extracted.

According to Tawano (1979), the term *panggao* refers to the bed of the sultan which is always elevated. This elevation and the magnificence of the bed with its canopy and embellishments make it iconic. Like a throne, it speaks of the grandeur or majesty of power. It signifies recognition of his being the head of the royal clan. In the said text of Mangoda Pyagma, the image *panggao* describes the *Jannatul Firdaus* (heaven). If the people of the community strengthen their faith, they would be placed on the pedestal which is also what is meant by the other images, "the pathway to the light" or "*isung ko maliwanag*" as used in the text. The light imagery here means spiritual enlightenment which lights one's path to God's kingdom.

In the line "*kurtina ka olan na lalansay ako ngka pen*" (you are the curtain while I am your tapestry), the images of curtain and tapestry are used by Mangoda Pyagma to lure Princess Norlyn into accepting his proposal. Playing the part of the determined suitor, he flatters the lady by describing her beauty as ethereal, comparing her to the moon: "*ka olan*". To Princess Norlyn's moon and curtain that adds beauty to the certain home, he is the tapestry that makes the curtain more beautiful because of its beautiful embroideries and exquisite designs. The message these images convey is, they make a perfect combination.

In the following line from Text 5:

"*Aya pandapat ka o sa imanto aya na dumudungko so kapal i mangoda piyagma na maampir so galida i kanakan sa Unayan*" What could be your decision, if the moment, the ship of Mangoda Pyagma is docked and on the shore is the carriage of a gentleman from Unayan.

The dominant images are *kapal* (ship) and *galida* (carriage) which are visual images and *maampir* (docked) which is a kinaesthetic image. These images represent the proposal of Mangoda Pyagma, or rather what he perceives to be the status of his proposal. With his ship already docked and his carriage parked where it should be and ready to run, he conveys his message imagistically: he could not be more serious and resolute about his suit. He is telling Princess Norlyn that whether she likes it or not, she has to decide because the ship and carriage of Mangoda Pyagma are docked on the shore of Marantao (where Princess Norlyn originally comes from). The picture formed suggests determination to win the hand of the lady. He will not be easily dispensed with.

Further, the following excerpts provide examples for analysis and interpretation.

“...aya matero aken aden a taw a mapanton makambama sa mono, pakageget sa rareb” “...what I could say is, a person who is choosy may be able to chew a betel nut that causes heartache’

“...numamat sa rawingan, pakasakit sa ulo” “...and use with it a low class betel leaf that causes headache”
(Text 5, Lines 48-49)

The striking images in the quoted texts are *mono* (betel nut) and *rawingan* (betel leaf). These images give concrete forms of the traditional art of *kambama* or betel nut chewing. In the past, according to Tawano (1979), a part of a *torogan* called *paga* is where the ladies prepare the *pembamaan* (chewing ingredients) for the guests or visitors. This shows how essential and significant *kambama* (betel nut chewing) was to the Meranaws in the past. It is a symbol of a treasured cultural value: hospitality expressive of respect and courtesy. In the *Kapmabaning* book of the Darangen which centers on the abduction of Lawanen and the war it caused, Mabaning infiltrated the enemy territory disguised as a *madem* to find his way to the chamber where the princess was confined. On recognizing Mabaning, Lawanen offered him a betel chew prepared by her and which she handed to him with her own hand. By this gesture, a lady reveals her affection or love for a suitor. Preparing the betel chew and serving it is a ritual like the *cha no yu* or tea ceremony in Japanese culture. However, in Lines 48-49 of Text 5, these images are used by the male singer for another purpose – i.e. to answer the lady singer for being choosy. When he speaks the relevant line, Mangoda Pyagma uses an admonitory tone. Through the *mama* or betel chew image, he subtly warns the addressee, Potre Monaoray, of the possible price she might have to pay for being demanding and selective. Such folly could cause her heartache and headache, as when she mistakenly chooses somebody not worthy of her: “*aden a taw a mapanton makambama sa mono, pakageget sa rareb - numamat sa rawingan, pakasakit sa ulo.*” She might one day fall into the snare of a scheming or wily man.

Another image that demonstrates the potential fatality of selectiveness is shown in Line 47 of Text 5. Mangoda Pyagma pursues the same argument by saying that the lady singer, Potre Monaoray, might settle for ‘a jewel from a crow’ that is certainly worthless.

“...ino amay ka ndurat o aya ngka miyagaken so montiya a kakowak poporoten sa ragat daa kipantag iyan” “...ino amay ka ndurat o aya ngka miyagaken so montiya a kakowak poporoten sa ragat daa kipantag iyan”

(Text 5, Line 47)

Montiya is a Meranaw term for “jewel” or “gemstone.” While, *kakowak* refers to a black bird. Black birds fly in groups and according to Sultan Darimbang of Tubaran, these birds can cause great damage to crops; however, their impact may be less than previously thought. The image of a *kakuwak* bearing or delivering a jewel fished out of the sea obviously refers to another suitor who is unfortunately worthless – a cad out to deceive the lady with his fake offer of love. The choosy Potre Monaoray would then realize how she threw away a ruby or pearl for a counterfeit.

Not to be outdone or overpowered by the witty Mangoda Pyagma who is proving to be a wordsmith, Potre Monaoray, the third singer, utilizes the images *plimbo a ig* (drifting water) and *dalendeg* (thunder clap) in her first text. Her daring riposte is shown in the following line:

“ngkuto a di bnar di ngka nan sa psaratan aydadaw panaman ko Mangoda Pyagma panaman ko sa ranaw karam i ranon aken ko matag plimbo a ig da bo a dansal iyan ka so” “ngkuto a di bnar di ngka nan sa psaratan aydadaw panaman ko Mangoda Pyagma panaman ko sa ranaw karam i ranon aken ko matag plimbo a ig da bo a dansal iyan ka so dalendeg

dalendeg plimbo araparap di katanto na liliwatn ko sa dar a gyanan i lalag ko *plimbo araparap di katanto na liliwatn ko sa dar a gyanan i lalag ko*

“*Plimbo a ig*” which means “drifting water” stands for Mangoda Pyagma, who, according to Potre Monaoray, has no clear destination. The image of a *dalendeg* which means “thunder clap” is also used to refer to the male singer who, as far she is concerned, is a fake --- all sound or noise, signifying nothing -- and deceitful based on her perception. The lady will have nothing to do with him.

Another image is captured in Text 6, Line 8, which says: “...*manayo a torog ta ka mamot so kapaginged*” (we sleep soundly because life in the city is good/fragrant). The sense of smell is used in this image. Life in the past is described by the first *onor* as ‘a place where you get some good sleep and can say “This is life!” The olfactory image suggests the good life – pleasant, idyllic, and free of anything vexatious to the spirit. The term ‘*manayo*’ means ‘sound, healthy, normal and intact.’ It is used to describe the word ‘sleep’ but it generally evokes the peaceful and stable life of the Meranaws as depicted in the phrase ‘fragrant city life.’ This image hints at nostalgia, a comparison of the present and the past. People in the past were free from hardships and tribulations.

To sum up, as the sample illustrations show, the *rina-rinaw* texts are highly imagistic. Images are, after all, the essential stuff of which songs are made to draw traction and engage the listeners. They vivify the experience or world portrayed in the song. Representation connects meaning and language to culture. As seen by Hall, it is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for, or represent, things. Images are vehicles of the process of representation.

In Hall’s System of Representation, meaning is always produced within language; it is the practice of representation, constructed through signifying. As described in the previous section, the “real world” itself does not convey meaning. Instead, meaning-making relies on two different but related systems of representation: concepts and language. There can be no representation without images. Through images, meaning-making is possible. Meanings are conveyed whether the images are used as plain images appealing to the senses and creating mental pictures or used as symbols. Symbols, after all, are loaded or concentrated images that stand for something else or communicate something deeper. The passages excerpted from the various specimen texts employed different types of striking images: visual, auditory, olfactory, and kinesthetic. These are used for purposes of comparison, argument, persuasion, clarity or vividness, and in some cases, to tease or taunt.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found out that *rina-rinaw* texts are rich in images which are basically representations of the Meranaw culture. The identified images vivify the experience or world portrayed in the song. Representation connects meaning and language to culture. As seen by Hall, it is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, of images which stand for, or represent, things. Images are vehicles of the process of representation. Through images, meaning-making is possible. Meanings are conveyed whether the images are used as plain images appealing to the senses and creating mental pictures or used as symbols. Symbols, after all, are loaded or concentrated images that stand for something else or communicate something deeper. The passages excerpted from the various specimen texts employed different types of striking images: visual, auditory, olfactory, and kinesthetic. These are used for purposes of comparison, argument, persuasion, clarity or vividness, and in some cases, to tease or taunt.

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Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge the Editorial Board of the International Journal for Language, Literature and Translation (IJLLT) for the opportunity given to researchers like her. Also, she would like to acknowledge the *Meranaw Rina-rinaw onors* (singers) who sang the texts during the data gathering.

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