

Maranao Women as Portrayed in Selected Maranao Folktales

**MARIA ELENA C. REYES
NORLAINIE MANGOTARA ABDULMALIC
INSIRAH ISLAO MATANOG**

Abstract - The study aimed to find out how Maranao women are portrayed in the selected Maranao folktales by using the cultural feminism approach. This literary study ascertained (1) the biological differences between Maranao men and Maranao women; (2) the struggles of the Maranao women; and (3) the roles Maranao women play in the formation of Maranao society. This study has shown that the biological differences between Maranao men and Maranao women are evidently shown through their gender differences as female and male. These differences were highlighted by the depiction of a Maranao woman's capacity to conceive, bear, and rear a child which a man is incapable of. In a Maranao society, a woman is expected to provide an heir to her husband. Moreover, through the analyzed short folktales, it was revealed that despite of the patriarchal society, Maranao women played important roles in the formation of Maranao society. They have a social leadership function inside the clan. And more so, if she is holding a female royal title. Lastly, this study showed the struggles of Maranao woman in twofold: they struggle against the discrimination foisted upon them within their own communities, and they struggle against the Muslim stereotype when they step out of the confines of their family and tribe. Nevertheless, there seems to be a change in this traditional picture of Maranao woman, going from

one extreme to the other, from a woman staying consciously at home to care for her children and wearing the “hijab” to a woman who is independent from her family.

Keywords - Maranao women, folktales, gender roles, cultural feminism, struggles

INTRODUCTION

In patriarchies like the Maranao society, the males hold the center stage in real life situations and understandably in literature. This male dominance is borne out by titles of signal literary landmarks like the epic *Radia Indarapatra and Pilandok*, the Maranao hero of numskull tales and drolls. Predominantly Muslim and unabashedly patriarchal societies give special emphasis to rising of sons to whom are bequeathed the responsibilities of fathers and in the case of *rido* (feud), on whom the sins of the latter are visited.

Thus in Maranao literature, men are the ones given higher valuation and exposure to prepare them for their societal roles. Obviously, machismo and wisdom make up the apotheosis of manhood in Maranao society and this ideal is celebrated in the Darangen.

“Behind every great man is a woman,” the popular saying goes. Women are said to be the Achilles’ heel of men. The great contribution of women to the society can be traced as far as the Greek mythologies. The goddesses Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera play vital roles in the deities. In the popular work of Homer’s *Iliad*, the main cause of the significant Trojan War is a woman. The goddess of Mischief throws an apple in the banquet table addressing it to the most beautiful goddess, the three goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena claimed to be the most beautiful goddess. To arrive at a decision, they have to go to Paris, the prince of Troy and let him decide. They bribe Paris with either power, wisdom or to have the most beautiful woman on earth to be his wife. Paris chooses to have most beautiful woman to be his wife and it is where the conflict starts because Helen was already married to Menelaus. Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world ignites the ten-year war between the Trojans and the Achaeans.

The culture of society leaves the impression of its characters on its literature. Literature is to a certain extent, a mirror or a reflection,

and a criticism of the life of a particular society. Thus, understanding a society's social organization without resorting to its reflective literature becomes merely superficial. Literature, as an integral factor of defining society's nature should be dealt with utmost care so as not to color it with partial point of view.. Otherwise, it becomes ground for a society's horrible misinterpretation. Ethnocentrism or the notion that one's culture is more sensible or superior to that of other societies is, in fact, claimed by prominent anthropologist as a malignant bias against other cultures.

One of the cultural minority groups in the Philippines that are able to maintain, uphold and take pride in their autochthonous culture in these times of discontinuities and prodigious change are the Meranaos in the province of Lanao del Sur and some parts of Lanao Del Norte in Mindanao. They are known for the richness and uniqueness of their culture. Despite modernization and Westernization, Maranao culture has remained one of the most vibrant and well-preserved of those found in Mindanao.

The Maranao society is tradition- and culture-bound. The Maranaos are a product of their traditional culture. Their total personality is determined by their culture as shown in their language and literature. In fact, they still cleave to certain entrenched traditional practices or beliefs – e.g., rido and arranged marriages. Education and Islam, however, exert a regulating influence. The Maranao use of language reflects the soul of the people. It shows them to be a people that put much store on maratabat (honor and pride), politeness and courtesy, gentility, tact, and diplomacy, hence, the characteristic preference for indirection in their speech. The Maranaos' mental set, attitude, models they take as their own in life, their behavior, action and reaction, their decision-making process are largely influenced by culture which includes language and literature (Macaraya, 1993).

Folktales and the study of Maranao society are very contemporary. How Maranao women are portrayed in both traditional and contemporary societies is a relatively less explored subject. The portrayal of women in Maranao folktales is an untilled acreage in folklore scholarship. Furthermore, women as characters are seemingly neglected as subject of study. The characteristic anonymity of Maranao women before the eyes and minds of outsider's does mean they occupy a lowly position in comparison with or in contrast to those of

the menfolk or the women in other Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Observer can easily perceive the love, respect, and protection due to the womenfolk according to valued local customs and traditions.

The researchers, therefore, studied the portrayal of Maranao women in selected Maranao folktales to shed light to Maranao practices. The rediscovery of their portrayals in the past as reflected in selected folktales would enable the reader to arrive at a fairly good understanding of the culture of the Maranao as mirrored in folktales.

FRAMEWORK

Cultural feminism defines woman by focusing on the fundamental female difference- by celebrating connection. Intimacy is valued and gives rise to a feminine ethic of caring. Harm, for the cultural feminist woman, is expressed as separation or isolation from the community. Equality arises when society accepts and respects the feminine differences.

The cultural feminist understanding of women necessarily excludes the notion that pregnancy is harm. The core of this majority view of woman is the concept of connected. Consider the logical results of implementing the positive cultural view of feminine differences in our society. Women would be understood as different from men in essential ways that center both physiologically and psychologically on their capacity to conceive, bear, and rear children. Women, by virtue of their human dignity, would be entitled to the same freedom and respect that men have traditionally enjoyed. Meanwhile, their differences would amount neither to inferiority nor vulnerability that might separate them from their community. A positive cultural feminist view would influence all levels of society.

Dr. Nandihi Sahu (2008) in her study on feminism said that *cultural feminism* is an approach to feminism thinking and action which claims that either by nature and/or through nurture, women have developed what society refers to as 'feminine' or 'female' characteristics.. This set of characteristics, say cultural feminists, is to be compared and contrasted with the set of 'masculine' or 'male' characteristics which men have developed, also through nature and/or nurture. Cultural feminists fault western thought for its tendency to privilege 'male' ways of being, thinking, and doing over 'female' ones. Specifically, they

argue that the traits typically associated with men- 'independence', autonomy, intellect, will, wariness, hierarchy, domination, culture, transcendence, product, asceticism, war and death,- are not better, and perhaps worse, than the traits typically associated with 'women'- 'interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, immanence, process, joy, peace and life (Sahu, 2008).

This theory emphasizes the fundamental personalities differences between men and woman, and those women's differences are special and should be celebrated. This theory of feminism supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. For example, "women are kinder and gentler than men, "leading to the mentality that if women ruled the world there would be no wars. Cultural feminism is the theory that wants to overcome sexism by celebrating women's special qualities, women's ways, and women's experience, often believing that the 'woman's way' is the better way.

According to Jane Adams, the feminist text is a radical statement on the role of women in the formation of culture and civilization. Mason attributed the development of many, if not all, the major innovations in art, language, religion, and industry to women. He documented that, in general, it was women who housed, fed, and clothed the species in early societies. Mason stressed the uniqueness of women's abilities and nature, even in the areas of public governance and speech: «Nothing is more natural than that the author of parental government, the founder of tribal kinship, the organizer of industrialism, should have much to say about that form of housekeeping called public economy.» Clearly, many of Addams's ideas are traceable to this influential book which not only stressed the significance of women, but even their superiority to men. Mason's concluding paragraph amply conveyed his view:

It is not here avowed that women may not pursue any path in life they choose, that they have no right to turn aside from old highways to wander in unbeaten tracks. But before it is decided to do that there is no harm in looking backward over the honorable achievements of the sex. All this is stored capital, accumulated experience and energy. If all mankind to come should be better born and nurtured, better instructed in morals and conduct at the start, better clothed and fed and housed all their lives, better married and encompassed and refined, the old ratios of progress would be doubled. All this beneficent labor is the birthright of women, and much of it of women alone. Past glory therein is

secure, and it only remains to be seen how far the future will add to its luster in the preservation of holy ideals.

On the other hand, according to Ezra Heywood, the legal subjection of women is thought to be justified by an assumed natural dependence on man. The old claim of tyranny, "The king can do no wrong, is reasserted by that many-headed monster, the majority, which widens the circle of despotism, but retains the fact. As people were to the king, so woman is now an appendage of man, who claims to be her "head," though nature seems not to have limited heads to the exclusive possession of either sex. That there is no natural feeling of dependence, on one hand, or of superiority on the other, is evident to the most casual observer of spontaneous dealings of the sexes. In practical sense and force a girl of fourteen is often ten years older than a boy of the same age; tells him how to act and protects him from the big boys at school.

Feminism as a theory has very recently given rise to a new area in criticism, known as *Feminist literary Criticism*. The motto of this literary criticism is a search for underlying, powerful female tradition in literature. The feminist literary critics attempt to uncover and interpret women's writing from a symbolic point view and to rediscover the lost works of women in the past. They aim at interpreting the works of the male writer's from a feminist standpoint and to distinguish between the politics, style and language of the male and female writers. Feminist theory is a locale of writing which represents a critical and original contribution to current thinking. With increasing acts of physical belligerence towards women, there is an even greater need for feminist psychoanalytic theory which investigates sexual distinctiveness. Unique to feminist hypothesis is its insistence on the inextricable link between theory and practice and between the communal and private. Theory and experience have a very singular relationship within feminism encapsulated in its slogan 'the personal in political'. Certain terms in contemporary theory are used to sum up what appear to be the key experiences of women. Among these is 'work', 'family', 'patriarchy', 'sexuality'.

These concepts reflect feminism's effort reveal nucleus social processes and to find what constantly reappears in various guises in the literary of women's account. An elementary goal of feminist theory is to comprehend women's oppression in terms of reveals the magnitude of women's individual and collective experiences and their

struggles. It analyses how sexual divergence is constructed within any intellectual and common word and builds accounts of experiences from these differences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study ascertained the portrayal of Maranao women in selected Maranao folktales. It aimed to determine (1) the biological differences between Maranao men and Maranao women as reflected in the selected Maranao folktales; (2) the struggles of the Maranao women; and (3) the roles Maranao women play in the formation of Maranao society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed the qualitative-descriptive content analysis, which is exploratory in intent. Specifically it employed the cultural feminist approach in the analysis of how women are portrayed in selected Maranao Folktales.

First, the researchers gathered literature concerning the Maranao folktales and culture. Most of the materials were from Mimitua Saber Research Center of The Mindanao State University, Marawi City. Since the study focused only on the portrayal of Maranao women in Maranao folktales, out of the folktales collected, only five folktales were selected, namely: *Tingting a Bolawan and Her Wicked Aunts*, *Potri Maalika*, *The Chaste Lady Who Outwitted Sinners*, *A Lesson for Sultan*, and *Tiny Birds*. These folktales were chosen since they best suit the purpose of the study.

The folktales were then summarized and analyzed using the cultural feminism approach. The biological differences, struggles, and roles of the Maranao woman as depicted in the folktales were also presented in matrix forms at end of the discussion of every problem. These matrices also serve as guide for the researchers in the analyze of the folktales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summaries of the Folktales

The story "*Tingting a Bolawan and her Wicked Aunts*" is about

Tingting a Bolawan, the only daughter of Sultan and Bai sa Agamaniyog and how she and her three brother's *Radiya Bagaran*, *Radiya Mangandiri*, and *Radiya Mangawarna* survived and escape the wickedness of their mother's sister *Potri Bonso*, and *Matagbabay*. Immediately after birth they are thrown by their aunts to the river and told mother *Bai sa Agamaniyog* that her children died during her labor. However, the children survive and manage to live on their own in the shore. *Potri Bonso* and *Matagbabay* then realize that these children might be their niece and nephews, so they devise another plan to harm them. Every time the three brothers are out, they go to the house of *Tingting a Bolawan* and try to poison her mind by telling her if she couldn't have things like "*bentola a bolawan*" (miniature golden cannon) her beauty will be useless and that she should also have "*surod and salday a bolawan*". Unaware of it *Tingting a Bolawan* then desires to have all these things and endanger the lives of her brothers. They are magically imprisoned in the big tree. The last part of the story talks about how *Tingting a Bolawan* rescues and saves her brothers out of the big tree and how they are reconciled with their father and mother.

Potri Maalika on the other hand is about the only daughter of *Datu* and *Bae sa Agamaniyog*. After her birth, the datu gathers all his people to consult them as to the name of his daughter. And she is then named *Potri Maalika*. However, after giving birth, *Bae sa Agamaniyog* and the *Datu* decides to sail away to find gold to provide for her dear daughter, as promised. While he is away, her uncle try to destroy *Potri Maalika's* uncles try to destroy her by their indecent intentions on her, but she is able to escape from them. The brothers of *Datu sa Agamaniyog* send a letter to the *Datu* and accuse *Potri Maalika* of doing malicious act. When the *Datu* receives the letter, he hurriedly goes home and orders *Lomandagan*, *Potri Maalika's* first cousin, to kill her secretly. This is to punish her for destroying tradition by her indulgence in illicit love making. *Potri Maalika* is unaware of it, but since ALLAH knows that she is innocent, he helps her escape. She runs away until she has reached a house owned by a childless couple. They take good care of *Potri Maailka* and treat her like their own daughter. At last part of the story, *Datu sa Agamaniyog* brother tells him the true story. After hearing the truth the *Datu* is shocked and plunges in deep sorrow and kills himself.

The *Chaste Lady who Outwitted Sinners* on the other hand, is a story

about a beautiful woman who was also wise, faithful to ALLAH and true to her one and only love. Because of her beauty and bewitching charm, the leading *datu*s in their land are planning how they might win her favor. They even threaten her, while her husband is away on a journey, that they will destroy her life if she won't entertain them. But *Pito-a Manis* is a lady with a great mind and think of a good idea that can save her from these evil-minded men. At the end of the story, *Pito-a-Manis* is victorious in teaching those men a lesson. Moreover, upon the return of her husband, she gathers all the people in their land and surprises everyone by presenting strange creatures that she called "feathered ghosts." These are the men who try to destroy her purity and loyalty to her husband.

A Lesson of the Sultan mainly talks about how *Bae sa Agamaniyog* teaches her husband *Sultan sa Agamaniyog* a lesson. They have been quarrelling over *Lokes a mama* and *Lokes a babae's* misfortune. *Sultan sa Agamaniyog* blames *Lokes a Mama* but *Bae sa Agamaniyog* on the other hand blames *Lokes a Babae* for her laziness and incapability to support her husband. Because of their arguments, the *Bae* and *Sultan* decide to have arranged separate lives. The *Sultan* lives with *Lokes a Babae*, while *Bae* lives with *Lokes a Mama*. *Bae sa Agamaniyog* has proven to the *Sultan* that it is *Lokes a Babae's* fault why *Lokes a Mama* can't be a good provider. While *Bae* is with *Lokes a Mama*, step by step, she made him rich and become one of the renowned *Datu* in their land, while the *Sultan* losses everything he had because of *Lokes a Babae*.

Lastly the *Tiny Birds* is a story about the couple *Lokes a Mama* and *Lokes a Babae*. It is their habit to set their traps late in the afternoon and visit them early the next morning. *Lokes a mama* thought of cheating his wife; the first time *Lokes a mama* cheats on her, she prefers to be silent until the time she can no longer stand the situation. She decides to divorce her husband and builds her own *torogan* (royal house) in a nearby settlement. When *Lokes a mama* hears of her good fortune, he wants to reconcile with her but *Lokes a babae* refuses.

The biological differences between Maranao men and Maranao women as reflected in the selected Maranao folktales

The biological differences between a woman and a man are evidently shown through their gender as female and male. The capability of a

woman to conceive, bear, and rear a child of whom a man is incapable of is also the major stepping stone of a woman to prove that she is important in the society. Women would be understood as different from men in essential ways that center both physiologically and psychologically on their capacity to conceive children according to cultural feminism.

This fact is highlighted in the story *Potri Maalika*, how *Bae sa Agamaniyog* tries very hard to get pregnant to please her husband and provide an heir, since her husband is determined to have a child. As quoted in the first part of the story, *Datu sa Agamaniyog* said, “I vow this if I can have even one child: if the child is a boy, I will treat him like a girl by erecting him a lamin and if the child is girl, I will not walk following her nor her following me on a path until I have dressed it with gold.”

It is also shown in the story of *Tingting a Bolawan and her Wicked Aunts* since the first part of the story talks about how hard it is for *Bai sa Agamaniyog* to conceive a child, the *Datu* makes a promise that if they would have a child, he would not let that child step on the ground unless he is clothed in gold. The hardships of conceiving and rearing a child – a challenging role for woman is also shown in this story, as *Bai sa Agamaniyog* gives birth, she feels pain. It has shown the critical situation of a mother in giving birth to four children at the same time. A mother is responsible for the life of her child to the point of risking her own life. This is shown in this part of the story: “it so happened that after a time the *Bai sa Agamaniyog* became pregnant. The Sultan and some of his followers boarded to a boat to go on the journey to look for gold. Before he left, however, he told his wife not to stay with her evil sisters. The day came when she felt labor pains and she asked *raga* to get *panday* (midwife).”

When interacting with people and dealing with society as a whole, women are more gentle and kind than men who tend to be harsh. Women are seen to be more peaceful in dealing with other people while men tend to be individualistic. This statement is also supported by the cultural feminist in their theory of feminism that states “women, for example are kinder and more gentle than men”, leading to the mentality that if women ruled the world there would be no wars. Their influence by even word of mouth can bring calm in conflict because they are women (Sahu, 2008). They are born to be loved and taken be cared of.

As portrayed in the folktales: *Potri Maalika*, *Tingting a Bolawan*,

Pito-i-manis, *Lokes a Bababe*, and *Bai sa Agamaniyog* proved this fact by differentiating them from their male-counterparts in the story.

In the story of *Potri Maalika*, she found out that her father and cousin attempted to kill her, as quoted in the story, “after she woke up, she was horrified. She figured out to herself ‘my father must have sent Lomandagan home to have me killed.’” She doesn’t even bother to take revenge or ask them what she has done for them to accuse and execute her. Instead, she hides herself by running away even though her destination is unknown.

As depicted in the story of *The Chaste Lady Who Outwitted Sinners*, *Pito-i-manis* has demonstrated calmness even if she knows that she is in danger. It is said in the story that when the evil-minded Sultan is trying to win her favor, he threatens her life, but *Pito-i-manis* calmly said to him “Oh, my dear Datu! You must not threaten me. I know now how dearly you love me.”

Bai sa Agamaniyog, in the folktale *A Lesson for Sultan* demonstrates how a Maranao woman handles worst situation like separation between husband and wife wisely and calmly. She doesn’t bother take revenge instead teaches the Sultan a lesson for him to realize his faults. This attitude of *Bai sa Agamaniyog* proves that Maranao women are more calm and gentle than Maranao men. Lastly, in *Tiny Birds*, *Lokes a babae* has an idea how *Lokes a mama* cheats on her but then she decides not to talk about it. When she can no longer stand the situation, she talks to her husband and decides to divorce him.

The struggles of the Maranao women

As portrayed in the selected folktales, a Maranao woman has many struggles within the confines of her own culture and society. Those folktales had shown that those struggles of Maranao woman of the past time still exist until now. According to tradition, the lovely, lively and respectable place of woman in Maranao society is the home where she plays the ethical role of daughter, a mother, an aunt, or kindly grandmother. A Maranao girl is brought up in the strictest tradition. She has a whole set of grandmothers, aunt, and elderly ladies, who teach her what to do and how to do it, aside from her mother, whose sole responsibility is to transmit to her the unique customs and traditions that help make the Maranao girl what she ought to be:

graceful, modest, polite, obedient, always well-groomed, elegant, gifted with the social graces, and generally charming. In present time this is been the struggles that Maranao woman are experiencing. In Marawi City, images of woman dressed in figures hugging outfits are spray-painted and teenage girls are forced into early marriage. This is the rampant injustice against woman in this city. Maranao women not only face prejudice on account of their gender, but their culture and religion as well. And this cycle of discriminations begins early life as portrayed by the woman characters in the selected Maranao folktales.

The main characters, *Potri Maalika*, *Tingting a Bolawan*, *Pito-i-manis*, *Bae sa Agamaniyog*, *Lokes a Babay* have these qualities of a Maranao women, they are well- groomed and graceful even in worst situation, like *Pito-i-manis* during the time that the Sultan is trying to win her favor. Even if she intents to punish the Sultan she still manages to talk gracefully. *"Immediately after sunset, the sultan knocked at the door. He was well-dressed, and as he entered, he gave her hearty smile. Pito-i-manis smiled back which made him happier. 'Oh, dear Datu! Said Pito-i-manis as if she really cared for him, 'I am glad you came for I feel lonely. Please take your seat."*

Tingting a Bolawan wants the *salday* and *surod a bolawan*, because those things can make her more beautiful. A Maranao woman grows up in a tradition where modesty and proper grooming are given importance and somehow become their weakness. Like in the situation of Tingting a Bolawan, after hearing that without those magical things, her beauty is useless, her mind eventually focuses on getting the *salday* and the *surod* without listening to her brothers' warning.

As quoted in *Potri Maalika's* story, her father, *Datu sa Agamaniyog*, said, *"I vow this if I can have even one child: if the child is a boy and if the child is a girl, I will not walk following her nor she following me on a path until I have dressed hid/her with gold."* Thus, this shows how Maranao Women are being treated by their male-counterparts. *Lamin* is a place where no one can see the girl except her slaves and her parents. *Potri Maalika* is also ordered by her father to stay away from anyone even from her uncles and not to let anyone enter her room while her father is away from her. Her wicked uncles then accuse her of indulging in an illicit love making when they cannot have their way with her. They send a letter to her father and immediately her father orders that she will be punished with death without even hearing her side.

On the other hand, in the story of *Tingting a Bolawan*, she is confined inside the house by her three brothers, she is not aloud to go outside, and to discover the outside world. Because of this, her aunts *Potri Bonso* and *Matagbabay* easily poison her mind by telling her to have her brothers get the *salday* and *surod* without knowing that it would her brothers' lives in danger.

In the story of *a Lesson for Sultan*, *Sultan sa Agamaniyog* and *Bai sa Agamaniyog* argue after hearing *Lokes a Mama* and *Lokes a Babay* quarreling for blaming each other for their misfortunes in life. *Sultan sa Agamaniyog*, fights for what he knows is right by blaming *Lokes a Mama*, he insists and could not keep from arguing. Their arguments resulted in a serious quarrel that make them both decide to go on arrange marriage with the couple *Lokes a Mama* and *Lokes a Babay*, The situation shows that a man cannot allow a woman to step on his ego.

The situation of male characters in the story just shows that Maranao women are tied with their male-counterparts. They are somehow in many ways are submissive to their male-counterparts. It is also drilled into them that a woman's primary responsibilities are to look after the family and manage the home. Once married, they have to follow the wishes of their husbands. But perhaps, the worst discrimination that a woman faces is the practice of early arranged marriage that is negotiated by the family.

Traditionally, Maranao women are discouraged from traveling alone. This is the reason why most of the Maranao woman are not exposed in all kinds of society. They are trapped in their homeland without any opportunity to go outside the world that was built for them. They live in accordance with what their family wants concerning traditional ways.

In the story of *Potri Maalika*, she is forced to run away from their home without knowing where she going and that again puts her life in danger. "After a long time of walking, they saw from the distance a large tree. They hurriedly walked toward this tree. When they reached it, because they were tired, they drooped under it and not long afterward they fell asleep there. This large tree was the house of the *kokok* (an elf-like creature described as having a pointed head mouth and prone to laugh)." The reason why Maranao women are discouraged to go on a journey alone is that they grow up sheltered not knowing what lies outside the confines of their community. The outside world is unknown to them, and they can

easily get lost.

In Maranao tradition, the parents do the search for prospective spouses for their children and arrange the unions among themselves, often without asking the one who are to be married. Oftentimes, the couples are not prepared emotionally and intellectually for the kind of responsibility marriage entail, but that does not seem to matter to the elders. And once married, there are either discouraged from completing their education or they get so caught up in household duties and with children that they no longer have time to pursue their studies. No matter how Maranao women fight for their rights still they are tied up in the traditional Maranao society. And there is still that pressure from the elders for youths to pursue non-arts courses. For Maranao women, as Muslims, they are responsible to wear veils. Their struggle is twofold: they struggle against the discrimination foisted upon them within their own communities, and they struggle against the Muslim stereotype when they step out of the confines of their family and tribe.

Maranao women are actually born achiever, they are capable of aiming high, be known in the country but because of their being tied-up in their culture, they lose opportunities in going higher in social status. However, in this present time, there are those Maranao women who made it, who had escaped the traditions by being renowned in the field they have chosen. But still most of the Maranao women are still imprisoned in their culture. As shown in the folktales, the main characters, as young girls or even single adults are under the strict control of their fathers or brothers.

The roles Maranao women play in the formation of Maranao society

Eventually, Maranao women have positions/roles in the formation of Maranao society in spite the inequality between them and their male-counterparts. They are not purely pacifier, household wife; they are also having an authority/power in their society. When a Maranao woman is an adult, the menfolk consult her on important matters of the family and community affairs, more so if she holds a female title (GRAR) and is known for her wisdom. When getting married as a bachelor lady, she is entitled to costly bridal gifts and

nuptial ceremonies commensurate with her family social status. *Pito-i-Manis*, *Lokes a Bababe*, *Bae sa Agamaniyog*, *Tingting a Bolawan* are highly respected, protected by their men folk. Aside from being the mistresses of home, Maranao woman assume varied titles and statuses in the traditional sultanate. Woman always occupy separate dignified or privilege position at all social functions.

In the story of *Potri Maalika*, she portrays the role of a good daughter who could not dare to put dirt on their family, though her uncles try to destroy her reputation she still manages to keep her promise to her father. A role of a single woman is highlighted in the conversation between *Datu sa Agamaniyog* and *Potri Maalika*, before he leaves, *Datu sa Agamaniyog* said to her, “*be careful that our social worth is not dirtied.*”

Similarly, in the story *The Chaste Lady Who Outwitted Sinners*, *Pito-i-Manis* has shown us how she respects her husband even if he is not around and this respect of being faithful and a loving wife of *Pito-i-Manis* makes her husband one of the most respected *Datu* in their land. It is said in the story that “*Pito-i-Manis* is a faithful and loving woman who could not deceive her husband”. Thus, this quality of being a wife has shown the important role of a woman in the society, specially her role as a wife of one of the sultans.

Lastly, the story ‘*A Lesson for a Sultan*’, compares and contrasts the situation of *Sultan sa Agamaniyog* when his wife *Bae sa Agamaniyog* is staying with him and to the time they go on separate lives and the *Sultan* is lives with *Lokes a Babae*. *Bae sa Agamaniyog* know how to live life wisely and she knew how to manage and support *Lokes a Mama*, and soon she makes him the richest among the *Datus*.

Since most of the world’s conflict today involves Muslims, it is imperative that Maranao women become promoters of peace even at the village level. They should direct their energies to peace building, which includes conflicts resolution, advocacy and governance. Making for peace can also include teaching the values of peace, promoting interfaith dialogue, and faces journalisms and research. While existing customs and practices within our communities recognize the role of Maranao as peace negotiators and mediators. The role in the community as a peace mediators seem to be but an extension of our role in the kitchen that is, to keep the peace intact. But focusing in the Maranao women’s roles are should also consider their roles as a

mother, their role in economy and political issues.

The women's role concerning *maratabat* is two-fold: on the one hand she is to be one keeping up the family's *maratabat* though her behavior which includes having an eye on her family members doing the same. Like in the story of Pito-i-manis, while her husband is on a journey she is assigned to entertain their visitors that it gives the evil-minded suitors of her an opportunity to talk to her and threaten her life if she won't love them back. The role of Pito-i-manis is also two-fold: to substitute for her husband while he was away and to keep family name pure and un-dirtied. Moreover, as a wife, a Maranao woman is responsible to give birth to the family's heir.

CONCLUSION

As the researchers delved into the portrayal of Maranao women in selected Maranao folktales, they gained a lot of insight about the biological differences between Maranao women and Maranao men, the struggles of Maranao women, and the roles played by Maranao women in the formation of Maranao society.

It can be said that Maranao women are still under the supervision of their male-counterparts. They have to follow orders from their male-counterparts or from their family. Maranao woman are not exposed in all kinds of society, they are being trapped in their homeland without even given a chance to go outside the world, boundaries that was built for them in accordance with what their family wants. However, from the findings of this study, it is interesting to note that despite of the predominantly patriarchal set-up of the Maranao Society, women are given due importance in the society. She can command the respect of the community if she would follow the prescribed norms of their society. She can also be involved in important decision-making in the clan.

Considering the tight cultural boundaries set by the Maranao society among their women, some Maranao women are trying to go beyond these boundaries. But, unconsciously they are still being tied up in traditional way. The biological differences, struggles, and roles of Maranao women as portrayed by the main women characters in the selected folktales are somehow similar with the biological differences, struggles, and roles that the modern Maranao women face today.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a change in this traditional picture of Maranao woman, going from one extreme to the other, from a woman staying consciously at home to care for her children and wearing the “*hijab*” to a woman who is independent from her family. Nowadays, a lot of educated Maranao women opted to marry the man of their choice despite of the oppositions of their family and the community. At present, a number of Maranao women are occupying key positions in the academe and in business. Some have run for a political office and elected as either a mayor, governor, or assemblywoman.

One can clearly say that there is indeed an evolution going on among the lives of Maranao women despite of the many struggles they have to face.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The literature teachers should make their students aware of every single literary works of their country especially those literary works that are not usually found in published literary pieces. It is more effective to teach if teachers would let their students learn something unique, like letting them discover people that they rarely meet in the road, like a Maranao women.
2. Future researchers are encouraged to go beyond what their eyes can see by delving into literary works of other culture to foster better understanding among different cultural backgrounds.
3. For the Maranao women whom this study is all about, being tied up with the traditions is not prohibited, but it is better to try something beyond their boundaries to know what they are capable of, and discover themselves in a new world.
4. The Maranao men should know the rights of Maranao women in the society. They have to treat the Maranao women equally so that they won't be discriminated in the society.
5. The Maranao society must be aware and appreciate the roles of Maranao women in the formation of the society. If not because of the Maranao women, there will be unstoppable conflicts between families, and there will be no procreation without

them. So, they should at least be given freedom to do what they are capable of, and be freed from following the traditional ways, especially, arranged marriages.

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