Reclaiming Old Moro Practices: Women in Peace Building

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Outline

- Origin and representation of Moros
- Darangen: Dispelling Stereotypes,
- Self-representation and Lessons
- Reclaiming Old Practices
I. Who are the Moros?

- 13 ethno-linguistic Muslim communities in the Philippines

Major tribes:

1) Meranao/Maranao (People of the Lake) (Marawi City and Lanao Area)
2) Maguidanaon (People of the Flooded Plains) (Cotabato City and Maguindanao)
3) Tausug (People of the Current) (Jolo, Sulu and Basilan)
Moro as a colonial term

- Miguel Lopes de Legaspi in 1565 named the Muslim natives as “Los Moros”
- Used by the Spaniards in a pejorative sense because of their refusal to be converted to the Catholic faith
- The Spaniards carried with them a fanatical hatred of Moros, born of hundreds of years of struggling for independence from Moorish rule (Gowing, 1979)
Representation of Moro

- Savages, pirates, evil
- Juramentado
- Need to be Christianised (Spanish time)
- Indians
- Immoral polygamists
- Ignorant
- Need to be educated (American period)
- Traitors
- Corrupt, cheaters
- Abu Sayyaf
- Kidnappers
- Terrorists
- Not Filipinos (Contemporary)
Reversing the narrative

- Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) first used the word Moro as a collective term in a positive sense.

- But unlike Filipino which signifies allegiance, nay subservience, to Spain, his name was the result of animosity and warfare - and resistance to foreign pressure. If Filipino was the child of colonialism, Moro was the offspring of anti-colonialism. (Salah Jubair 1997)
Meranao Society

- Matriarchal (Sr. Delia Coronel)

- Family arrangements are bilateral “gender-blind, pre-Islamic and pre-Western.” The Sultan has a female counterpart, the Bai a Labi and has her own social functions. (Brecht-Drouart 2011)

- The Darangen epic is two kinds: male Darangen and female darangen

- Visual art is also distinguished as okir a dato and okir a bai (Sakili 2003)
II. Darangen: A Moro Epic

- A masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity UNESCO Declaration in 2005

- Source of wisdom, inspiration for the value systems and practices of the Meranaos,

- Evidence of the ideals and ideology that guide their behavior (Dr. Mamitua Saber 1991)

- A window into the early cultural values of the Meranaos (Jeffrey Milligan 2011)
III. Dispelling Stereotypes

- Women as Equal partner in the governing of State:
  “But above all, set off, unique
  With unmatched furnishing, the best
  Was of course, the first lady’s own,
  For there the royal lord himself
  Set with her on their ornate bed
  The finest, widest of them all,
  There orders emanated, where
  Contention and appeals are heard...
  So too was this beautiful queen
  Who also acted as he did.

- (Book 1- “Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon sa Iliyan a Bembaran)
Women as the final arbiters

- The women had the power to convene an assembly to discuss important matters:
  “She too, is a wise counsellor
  Who helps our great Ayonan”
  (Book 5-A “Kapagondoga)

- The women had the final say, the final arbiters

If a decision is taken but disapproved by the assembly of datus, it is thrown to the women to finally settle (Book 7-8 Minirig a Rogong)
Listen to me, all men-servants,
I have made my decision which
Is that since the final judgment
On this issue has been resolved
To our royal ladies, go now...
Everyone to come and share
The pleasure to listen to the wise
Decision of the ladies”
(lines 715-733)

Sr Delia Coronel 1989
Women as judges: All winners

- Prince Bantogen and his men were fighting their equally strong enemies and it seemed like nobody was winning and both camps are losing their men.

On this scene a boat arrived with some princesses on board, the sweethearts of Bantogen and they disembarked at once and made their way into the middle of the battlefield between two armies. Princess Minoyod decided that the battle be fought between two representatives of each armies.

Book 10
Self-representation: The Ideal Me

- 1) Knowledge of Genealogy and tradition
- 2) Controls temper and displays qualities of honestly, reason, prudence, intellect, wisdom and honor

- 3) Verbal eloquence, a graceful walk, refined manners, a strong sense of tradition, and unparalleled talent in playing the kolintang

- 4) Concern for people and the quality of interpersonal relationships
   (Even conversations between enemies are strictly couched in the conventions of polite discourse).
Contemporary Meranao Women

• Princess Tarhata Alonto Lucman

First female Muslim Governor in Lanao del Sur

Known for her conflict negotiation skills

• (Rappler 2016)
Contemporary Meranao Women

- Babai Daluma

Mayor of Pantar, Lanao del Norte 1998-2004

Ran for mayor to avert possible rivalry of her sons-in-law
Ordinary Meranao women

- Meranao women are active in peace-making but this remains unacknowledged in both Muslim and Christian communities today (Hilsdon, Anne-Marie 2009)
IV. Why reclaim?

- Ideal
- Indigenous knowledge (Old practices are not in conflict with present-day realities)
- Allows for an inclusive and possible re-imagination of a community that includes Filipino
Why reclaim?

Thus a reconception of what it means to be an educated person might reduce the real and potential violence of education across borders of gender, race, ethnicity, culture and faith.

Jeffrey Ayala Milligan 2011
Why reclaim?
Sanggibo salamat!

- Mamola tano tanan sa oray a linggaonan a da klasanian ka apiya di maimpit sa alongan tanan oto na aden masoba okir o khisalimbago a tao.

- Let us plant the seeds of tomorrow, though we may not taste their fruits, but the new generation will.