

Meranaw Traditional Weapons and Warfare and their Relevance

Noralia Usman Ibrahim^{*}

Ibrahim-Macaorao Compound, Brgy. Tolali, Lilod Marawi City 9700, LDS

Email: Ibrahimnoralia@yahoo.com

Abstract

Ibrahim, noralia u., “meranaw weapons and warfare: its relevance to the decades of conflict in mindanao.” A Masteral Thesis, Master of History, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mindanao State University, Marawi, 2018. The study was an attempt by the researcher to document the traditional weapons used by the Meranaws in their historic warfare with western invaders starting with the Spanish conquerors up to the Americans. The Meranaw weapons were the focus of the study as well as their warfare, and the researcher was thankful to the existing write-ups about this subject in both the Spanish and especially American periods. Though the information given was lacking and scant, it was enough to discern that western conquerors were impressed with the weaponry of the Moros of Mindanao and the Meranaws in particular. The greater portion then of this paper devotes itself to the detailed documentation of the various Meranaw weapons which were significantly useful in the battles of Marawi in 1895 and up to the early years of the Americans in the country. Also included in the study was the discovery and analysis of these traditional weapons’ origin, features and purposes or relevance. Most importantly, the researcher attempted to find out the utmost relevance of these various weapons in those decades of conflict in the history of Mindanao especially of Lanao. Some of the findings of this study showed that the Meranaw weapons were not so different from the weapons utilized by other Moro groups like the Tausug and Maguindanao. Moreover, these kinds of weapons possessed by the Meranaws significantly enabled the Moro resistance particularly the Meranaw resistance to Spanish conquest for centuries and which consequently gave the Americans the hardest times in colonizing them. Of all natives of the Philippines, the Moros like the Meranaws surprised the invaders, in those chaotic times of conquest, by being equipped with the necessary and basic items in fighting and for defence. Their most popular weapons were the swords like the *Sundang* and the *Kampilan*. They were also outfitted with the mighty *Lantakas* and firearms that met the Spaniards on equal grounds and challenged the Americans. It also found out that the weapons by the Meranaws were not only part of warfare but definitely a reflection of the people’s way of life centuries ago. The study intends to be useful and contribute in understanding a portion of Meranaw history and culture.

^{*} Corresponding author.

At the end of this paper, it appeared that the Meranaws were the most well-armed group among the Moros at the times of western conquest and the production of these mentioned types of weapons could just be one of the enduring contributions of the Meranaws in Moro history and culture. And as one recommendation, it was only right for the government to take actions in protection and retrieval of this kinds of artifacts which were not only important to the Meranaws but to the whole country itself.

Keywords: Meranaw Traditional Weapons; Warfare; Philippines.

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

Cultural heritage preservation and conservation is one of the concern of the Government, this is the reason why the Commission on Culture and Arts was created. It is imperative that for civilization to continue, government has role in preserving and conserving cultural heritage like artifacts. In fact part of the Comprehensive Development Plan and Executive Agenda (CDP-ELA) of every local government unit is cultural preservation under the environmental conservation.

It is posited that one of the greatest fields in which history and historians can join in is the concern on cultural preservation of a place or materials with historical value. In first world countries like the United States this was a major concern that is supported by the government itself. Unfortunately, in third world countries like the Philippines, this activity usually lacks funding or concern. This was particularly true in the province of Lanao del Sur, where this humble researcher was from. In fact, very little was done by the local government in the sense of cultural preservation especially with the place where the most historical events took place.

Fortunately, there was the Mindanao State University which served as the leading force in the recording of history and culture in the province. In this university stands a museum that preserves some of the remnants of Meranaw [1] past and culture and this was the Aga Khan Museum. The place had some of the artifacts important to Meranaw history that were preserved and most eye catching of all were the Meranaw implements of war. Inside this place, one may observe shields, local cannons called *Lantakas* and firearms. There was also the *Bangkaw* which was a native lance used for fishing and in war. However, the descriptions given about these remnants of the past were not enough, as well as in the books about their history. And this did not do justice to such treasures of an artifact.

It is in this endeavor that a research was conducted for the documentation or recording of these examples of Meranaw Weapons including warfare. The author once read from an online discussion on artifacts which hold that; they are essential to learning more about the culture and people who are now extinct; however in modern culture they are just as important in recording the lifestyles and practices of more recent time periods for the next generation [2]. In other words, they are important because they comprise as primary evidence for scholars to understand what happened in the past, and give valuable information about people and culture in the past.

By looking at these weapons, one can see how battles were once conducted; the variety of them and their

fearsome characteristic certainly represent the existence of a native form of warfare [3] dominated by bravery and honor. Weapons and Warfare were interesting subjects of history. After all, history books were more about conflict than any other issues. And it is a main argument in this study that weapons seemed to be a necessity in many aspects of life or human civilization.

It was believed that to be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace. So it seemed understandable why people, especially in the past, favored being armed.

In Philippine history, the natives of the south were believed to be the most powerful military group in Mindanao and the most advanced society in pre-Spanish Philippines. The Meranaws and other Moro groups had an interesting history as people. Ironically, in most books discussing them, it seemed that outsiders had sometimes negative views and had usually misunderstood their role in Philippine history. For instance, the Meranaws were perceived to be a people with an innate culture of conflict and thus the result could be a history of violence. Adding to these whole negative views was their obvious love for weapons and weaponry build up. This further validated their notorious reputation in history. Growing up in a Meranaw society, the researcher witnesses that they really like keeping weapons especially the rich and the leaders. Therefore, as an addition to further documentation, this paper wanted to give a different view about the Meranaws by focusing on a study of their traditional weapons and also their warfare. With these the researcher hopes to give valuable explanations regarding their native weapons and warfare and would hope to contribute in giving a logical reason behind the common opinion that Meranaws have an intimate love affair with weapons. Specifically, it would desire an attempt to trace the roots of this Meranaw interest to weapons. This is also to better understand their behavior and actions as people and in history.

2. Methodology

The study utilized historical type of unobtrusive research design. This is the most appropriate design to be used since it is done through archives and oral narration of events. Hence, qualitative research approach was the most fitting in the interpretation of data. Sources needed to come up with this paper were a combination of primary and secondary sources. Library research was the first action taken by the researcher. In these libraries, necessary books which were both primary and secondary sources were discovered, it was followed by Museum visit and Heirloom sighting. Furthermore, in the study of what Meranaw weapons were primary sources like the interview was very helpful. The research interviewed as many as 50 Meranaws, 10 of whom were Meranaw blacksmiths from Tugaya, Bayang, Ganassi and Marawi.

The descriptive content of the study can be found in the discussion of the Meranaw weapons, this appeared like a 'case study' but not entirely. Moreover, the historical and analytic approaches were paramount to this study because it involved an examination of the past events. It follows the steps in historical research and some of which were: gather data, analyze data, and analyze the source of data. Whereas, the anthropological concept stems from the fact that the current study was about a particular culture and their perspectives on weapons. The Sampling design that was helpful in this research was particularly the Snowball sampling procedure.

3. Main paper Discussion

The Meranaw Weapons and Warfare

Meranaw Weapons

Weapons can be defined in this study simply as anything used as a means of gaining an advantage or for defending oneself in a conflict or contest. The researcher thinks that weapons for many years shaped history all over the world and were used by men making possible the rise and fall of civilizations. An example was its influence in the age of explorations in the 15th century which led to discoveries and later conquests by the European powers. If the Europeans and the Japanese weapons were most popular, weapons from South East Asia like in Mindanao also had its unique characteristics and importance deserving of attention.

Proudly, the Meranaws were among the groups of people who used and possessed some of the well-known pieces of traditional weapons of the Malay world. They had firearms, cannons called *Lantakas*, spears like *Bangkaw*, shields called *Kelong*, war drums, and probably, the most popular of all were the bladed weapons that were categorized into swords, such as *Sundang*, *Pudang*, *Kampilan*, and *Barong*, and daggers like the *Kris* and *Gunong*. Among Meranaws, words like *Pana* and *P'utik* which were projectiles like arrows can also be found, however, these were not documented and interview showed that these were not actively used during the resistance to western powers but this was worth mentioning.

The Swords

Sundang



Figure 6: A centuries old Meranaw *Sundang*

(Source: Photo taken by the researcher in the house of Imam H. Usman Ibrahim Ali)

The researcher believed that the most popular of all Meranaw weapons was the *Sundang*. It was a weapon of war and peace. Neither too long, like the *Kampilan*, nor too short, like the *Kris*, the common length is between 22 to 30 inches.

Most Meranaw being asked would identify first the *Sundang* than any other weapons. In fact majority of the respondents, like the females or adult males were not aware of the *Kampilan* and the *kris*. It was as if, to them all other bladed weapons were called *Sundang*. But this weapon had its own peculiar qualities compared with the other celebrated Moro weapons. It combines the beauty and purpose of both the *Kampilan* and the *kris*. It has the wavy design mostly attributed to the *kris* and a deadly weapon like the *Kampilan* at the same time.

Its popularity among the Meranaws can be explained by looking at their history and tradition. Unlike their Tausug and Maguindanao counterparts, the Lake people were left for most of history minding their own affairs within the Lake. They seemed to be all on their own and their exposure was to their traditions with the Sultanate and the Datus in the *Pangampongs*. The *Sundang* was the favorite and had become the symbol of the Meranaw Sultans and Datus. This then made this type of weapons popularity. Unlike the other Moro groups who were known to be the most warlike, their most popular weapon was the *Kampilan*.

By nature, it can also be thought of as the *kris* sword. And to these days, it seemed that the term *Sundang* has been used to refer to all types of agricultural implements especially by the non-Muslim groups in Mindanao. In the past, the Meranaws gave names to their weapons like the *Sundang*. Giving names to weapons was a practice for some reasons. One explanation was, it was a sign of how much they value these kinds of items. Another was that, in many cases, a datu or sultan had numerous weapons. And so, for the sake of familiarity and to differentiate one from the rest the naming became common or a practice. Datu Kali,[4] in an interview gave this as an example:

Egira a pagosarun odi na egira a plompiyowan na egira a ana ngaran eyan na matutundo antay kuwan antay epliyo. Gyotoy kapkailaya on e kala e arga keran aya.

(Free Translation: When it was time to use it or clean the weapons, with their names they could distinguish what to get or bring out. This also showed how much it means to them.)

The *Sundang* and other weapons of war were precious to the Meranaws, and those which were very old were sacred because they were passed on them which, in turn, they also expected to pass to the coming generation. When things were very old, people would get a feeling or the idea of these weapons being enchanted. In truth, these kinds were not used in mundane tasks. Their weapons were said to possess a *niyawa* or soul that helped them against evil and enable them to fight. These were men's constant companion that there came to a point when these were treated like a person that should be taken care of, and there was no wrong in believing or respecting the traditions as old as time.

Kampilan



Figure 7: A Kampilan

(Source: Photo taken from Datu Kamid Anting of Ganassi Lanao Del Sur. He claimed to be its 9th generation keeper and from the Ampuan family of Pualas)

The most notorious of all southern Philippine weapons was the *Kampilan*, it is a cutlass which Combes described as a “weapon made for the cutting off heads, and for splitting the body from top to toe.”[5] Furthermore, it is a very bloody weapon, but being so heavy, it is a danger for him who handles it, if he is not adroit with it. Combes further remarked that it has only two forms of use, namely to wield it by one edge, and to raise it by the other, in order to deal another stroke, its weight allowing time for the spears of the opponents to enter [6]. It was a weapon that was said to be distinct with other neighboring Moro tribes of Mindanao and indigenous to Mindanao.

This weapon became so popular during the Spanish campaigns since the 16th century and called it a pointed cutlass. But most *Kampilan* were actually straight, while some are indeed cutlass meaning curved blade toward the tip for slashing blows.

This can be found in other parts of the Philippines like the Visayas but these originally came from Mindanao. This was considered as the next most popular weapon that was part of the Meranaw epic *Darangen* [7] because it was the weapon used by Prince *Bantugan* of the Kingdom of *Bumbaran*. It can be read from Scotts writings that one of the scenes in *Darangen* described the prince wielding the *kampilan* [8].

“He took his great *Kampilan*, wrapped the strap securely round his hand and held his shield before him. While he danced out the road and swung his bright *Kampilan* round his head in such a wise and could be heard within the palace tower.” Moving on, Scott described that fine ones are handed down from father to son, bore personal names known to the enemy and could be recognized by the sound of little bells which formed part of the tasseled decoration [9]. They also have a portion of horse hair as decoration, it was said that hairs are used to give temporary distraction when it was hit to the enemy in combat. Others stated that to the most warlike like the *Iranuns*, who were called the lords and Vikings of the eastern seas, the hairs were believed to be actual

human hairs collected from their fallen enemies [10].

The Meranaw and Maguindanao *kampilan* had so much similarity, in Cato's observation their blades are unique, the tip usually looks almost trapezoidal and spiked [11]. Although to other studies, a *kampilan* has many varieties or kinds, but to the Meranaws, there are two kinds of Meranaw *kampilan* blades, the *Sosondian*, with protruding part at the end, and the *da a sondi iyan*, without the protrusion. This weapon lacked the wavy design from the *kris* and is straight bladed which the Meranaw call as *barangkas*, and measures up to 1 meter long. The only difference with the blades or swords used by the Maguindanao can be found in the scabbards or their covering. In the book Moro swords, this distinction is emphasized "Maguindanao have scabbards with shoulders which are a bit curved in their execution and thicker and were often cut so that the blades straps are covered. Nearly, all Meranaw scabbards have crosspieces that are almost rectangular in appearance" [12].

Pudang/Keping



Figure 8: A *Pudang* (a type of *Pudang* with Deer horn *Danganan* from H. Kamid Anting in Ganassi, Lanao del Sur)

Theoretically, this is how the Meranaws identify any long bladed weapons or swords which were not a *kris*, *kampilan* or *sundang*. In other words, this seemed to be the literal Meranaw word for sword. Others believed that *keping* was the Meranaw word for *Kampilan*. And it seemed that this was also how they identify all foreign made swords. And it appeared that the two words were used interchangeably. Curved weapons were popular and common not only in Philippines but all over Asia for so many years. But straight bladed weapons were still seen by many as ideal in actual combat. This was probably why the Meranaws had the "Pudang" and the "Keping." And there were Meranaw *Pudang* or *Keping* that had very thin or narrow blades while others were of enough width.

Barong



Figure 9: The *Barong*

(Source: [Http://www.googleimages.com](http://www.googleimages.com))

Is the most popular weapon of the Tausug but also found among the Meranaws. In his article, Dowd described this unique leaf shaped blade in detail [13]:

“The blades range from 12 to 18 inches in length and are single edged and guard less for easy, comfortable grip and maneuvering at the middle of a battle. It is a heavy blade and is an ideal tool for chopping, thrusting and slashing. It is commonly stylized with a cockatoo (or kakatua) handle. It is an amazingly effective slicer and despite its diminutive size it has been known to have the ability to cleave a man in two. The blade tends to be thick and heavy with the weight aiding in the slicing capability of this sword. Barong blade lengths tend to range from 8-22 inches, with the newer blades tending to be larger than the 8-22” range. Damascene patterns are also sometimes evident but again most often not as controlled as the more widely known Malay Kris. Some Barong blades were made by Chinese smiths because of its similarity with Chinese cleavers. For import into the Sulu sultanate”

The barong blades tended to be of excellent quality, it generally sported a flat grind to the spine with a slight convexity near the edge, and some commonly Chinese originated blades sport convex grinds. Some rare blades featured what appeared to be a swollen edge that extended into the blades for about half an inch from the edge. Dowd shared that, “the most rare barong blade style sports a spine with a false edge that tends to extend 1/3 of the length of the blade from the tip” [14].

Like in the *kampilan* and *kris*, common pommel motif was the *cockatoo* and *naga* serpent, with long metal ferrule that tend to be around 5 inches in length. Cockatoos were usually made of banati, barongs belonging to the upper classes used rare materials like ivory, Carabao horns, *kamagong* or Philippine ebony, and etc. While Barongs for the lower classes, and ones meant primarily for fighting have much less elaborated cockatoos of much smaller sizes. The barong became popular and gained attention for documentation because it was used by

the *Juramentados* [15] as a study mentions; “Of particular note are *barongs* used by Juramentados, often they would sport smaller blades with normal size hilts. These Barongs are often mistaken as children’s weapons, but are in fact meant for adults”[16]. It was good as it can be hidden or stuck at the back like what was observed sometimes among farmers who sport it like a backpack. It seemed to be a practical weapon for any ordinary men given the conditions of time and environment in the past. It can be used to cleave any attacking wild animals for instance. In addition, a study further observed that [17].

“The Barung was an in-efficient weapon for hand to hand fighting. An opponent can sometimes grab it by the heavy back edge, and as a slashing weapon it is difficult to direct to a vital spot. It was used today as an ornamental weapon and is seldom used for fighting unless another weapon is not available....although the blade is razor sharp, and there is no question that it can be a deadly weapon especially when the opponent is unarmed. It is sometimes used to slash men who have fallen from gunshots.”

Tabas/Panabas



Figure 10: The *Panabas*

(Source: Photo taken in the Aga Khan Museum by the researcher)

Panabas, or *Tabas* to the Meranaws, was a Philippine version of a western battle axe. Originally, it was used as an agricultural tool by Meranaws but this also gained a place as a weapon of war during their encounters with foreign colonizers as evidenced by pictures of Meranaw warriors dated around the American period. This was believed to be a useful chopping weapon and also favored by some natives of Mindanao. The *Panabas* ranged in sizes from 2 to 4 feet and single edged. It is often used as an execution weapon that can deliver a deep meat cleaver cut, and so commonly used in the ritual of butchering goats and other animals among the Meranaws. As Fred Miguell said in an interview;

So Tabas na gyanan e pagusarun egira a kapamata ko kapraon ago gyanan e pagusarun egira a panumbali sa kambing ago sapi sa Lanao.

(Free Translation: Tabas were used during harvesting seasons and to cut vines, and are the very implement used to butcher goats and cows in Lanao.)

Henceforth, it can become deadly in times of war, and in view of that Dowd commented that [18]:

“It was said that the warriors wielding it would follow the main groups of combatants up front and would go in behind mopping up any survivors of the first wave of attack. It can be used by holding it with one or two hands. Either way, in combat this particular weapon can cut anything it comes in contact with right in half. As a weapon of execution, like the *Kampilan*, the *tabas* also came to represent a Datu/Ruler’s power/prestige in relation to his ability to control violence.”

In the past, it was believed to be not a weapon of common carry, but a weapon devoted to court, ceremony, execution and campaigns. The researcher thinks that in many cases, the *Panabas* looked more fearsome than any Meranaw weapons. No wonder, it seemed to be the chosen weapon by the men surrounding the Datu or Sultan. It seemed to be a weapon fit for the fighting men of the datu. With these weapons in hand, they seemed to be capable bodyguards or protectors of the Datu or Sultan. The *Tabas* blade also often features damascene patterning. On the spines of the *Panabas*, one will see decorative file work. Its hilt was often wrapped in rattan bindings, though some featured no wrap, or had metal collars. The *Panabas* also may have different forms and sizes though they look just the same.

Daggers

Kris



Figure 11: *Kris* blade

(Source: <http://www.google.com.ph.q+search+Kris+blade.chrome> accessed on August 20, 2018)

Another weapon that some Meranaw also possessed was the *kris* or *keris*. This was the weapon that very much identifies them as one with the rest of the southern Muslim groups and undoubtedly the most famous among themselves. The term was probably an old Malay term of Javanese origin 'ngiris,' meaning to slice, wedge or sliver. It was a weapon in which this people took great pride; it is of various shapes and sizes, and "was invariably worn from infancy to old age specially among Maguindanao royalty; they were generally wavy in their blades, and are worn in wooden scabbards, also tucked in a long silken net sash for the datu, which are neatly made and highly polished" [19]. It was not only a weapon, but an emblem of a datu or sultans rank. In Blair and Robertson, "Their *krisses*, which are their most inseparable weapons, have gilded scabbards and hilts of massy gold. I have seen some of them which were valued at nine slaves each, all covered with precious stones and perhaps encrusted with pearls"[20]. The *kris* is so popular of all Moro weapons that some historians called the Moro Wars and offensives as "era of the Kris," however, despite of its dagger like form this definitely was a weapon of peace. Because the researcher thinks that this was mostly used as an accessory and identifies the carrier as deserving of respect since he might have come from noble backgrounds. And it might had become a favorite to the natives including Meranaws because it was usually the smallest therefore the lightest to carry of all Meranaw weapons.

Gardner clarified that, it is primarily a dagger with a handle set at an angle to the blade, a sort of pistol grip in fact, to enable the wielder to thrust [21]. But it was more of a cutting sword. Originally short, but as men fought, it became longer and heavier. Its prominent evolution is the *Sundang*, a malay broadsword. And, "as it got bigger, it was found out that it was deadly enough in itself "[22]. Furthermore Dowd sufficiently gave detail on the Kris;

"The kris also spelled as keris is a distinctive, asymmetrical sword or dagger which spread from the island of Java to the many parts of the archipelago of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Southern Thailand and the southern Philippines. Both a weapon and a spiritual object, it is often believed to have essence or presence. Kris's were worn everyday and at special ceremonies, with heirloom blades being handed down through successive generations. Yearly cleanings, required for as part of the spirituality and mythology around the weapon, often leaves ancient blades worn and thin. In everyday life and events, a man usually only wore one kris. Story says, women sometimes also wore krisses, though of smaller size than a man's. In battle, a warrior can carry three krisses: his own, one from the father in law, and one as family heirloom. The other krisses served as parrying daggers. If the warrior didn't have another Kris to parry with, he used his own sheath. The Kris blade is defined as one that is wide on the base and double edged. It is capable of delivering both chopping and slicing cuts. While many assume the traditional form of the kris is the fully wavy blade, the half waved half straight, as well as the fully straight blade, are equally if not more common, as straight blades were more practical in combat [23]. It was also a discovery to find out more about the *Kris* and its features, accordingly, "The waves in older kris were fewer in number and of deeper /wider distribution, however as time passed waves started to becoming tighter and more frequent in placement. Kris blades with many waves demanded excellent skill in use since if cuts were improperly made they would merely bounce off targets or worse become stuck in the bone of the enemy. However, it is said that the higher number of waves increased a Kris's potency as a talismanic object. Often one can find a testament to their usage as a talismanic objects, also a totemic like engravings(often filled with an in lay of brass, silver or nickel) on the blade, generally in okir (jungle motifs such as tree and leaf)

designs but occasionally, one will find Islamic script instead. Many Kris blades were also forged with meticulously crafted fullers, ranging from a complex webbing of multiple full-length fullers, to a single elegant fuller running down the latter third of the blade approaching the tip. Near the gangya(guard) on some Kris, are ceremonial spear/arrow head like incisions that have been carved into the blade. Unlike their Malay cousins, Moro Kris's are primarily cutting swords, and generally were not used as thrusting blades like the Malay dagger Keris. This is evidenced by the rounded state of the many Kris points. Moro Kris blades generally range in size from 18-26 inches, though as with all Moro weapons there are exceptions. Generally, however, the larger blades are found on later pieces, while the oldest Kris tends to be of smaller stature [24].

Gunong



Figure 12: Meranaw *Gunong* made from Tugaya Lanao del Sur

[Source: pictures were taken from Waffah Zainal (above) and Johaira Goling (below).]

Some descriptions from Museums say that the *Gunong* belonged to the kinds of knives used specifically by the Meranaw. A small dagger used in ceremonies like enthronements. And it was a weapon of war for close combat and is used side by side with the *Sundang*. And due to its size and usefulness, it is not surprising that these would be commonly exchanged as souvenirs.

According to a Meranaw blacksmith like Abu Ali H. Acmad [25].

Ngaran eyan a andang, so kapkatanodi akun ko Ama akun, na gurok a pyor eyan a ngaran. Egira a pagosarun ka ep sugat ka na pung-gonongan a putaro-on non.

(Free Translation: Its oldest or real identity, as I remember from my father, was *Gurok*. It was in the actual use of stabbing or thrusting it that the word *gunong* comes out.)

It was believed to be the most popular dagger from the Meranaws. It can be mistaken as a knife like the *gulat*. However, it was not an ordinary knife, a dagger and a knife was differentiated in that a knife was for cutting while a dagger is surely made for thrusting or stabbing. And such is the nature of this type of Meranaw weapon. As a dagger, it often fulfills the role of the secondary defence weapon in close combat. And its difference with a *kris* probably lied in the fact that a *gunong* was either for the commoner or for the aristocrats and lacks the wavy shape. It was usually worn side by side with a *Kampilan* or *Sundang* and was prepared with an ornamented sheaths and hilts. From what we can deduce from images of a Mindanao fighter, this was the fashion of their time. It seems that there was the sense to be wary at all times. And a *gunong* was a handy weapon. However, with the use of firearms, this kind or almost all dagger weapons lost more and more of its usefulness in military combat.

Some *Gunongs* are found double edged either straight or wavy, but there also exist *Gunong* blade variants that are single edged often with more crescent like blade shapes, some believed that the crescent shape is just another variant or a different weapon but some interviewed Meranaw collectors of such weapon said that this was the original blade shape of a *Gunong* which are now rarely found or extinct. Aside from the blade, some of its features distinguish it from other Meranaw weapons like its hilt. As described,

“Many associate the bulbous pistol grip style pommel, which is often at extreme near right angles to the hilt proper, as being the traditional *Gonong* hilt. However, truly old *gonongs* feature a straighter hilt, as can be seen in the related pictures of old *gonongs*. At some point between the turn of the century and the 1930s, *gonong* hilts gradually changed into the more familiar pistol grip. In this time period as well, this weapon start to appear made with much more extravagant fittings and materials. These newer *Gonongs* often featuring beautifully chased bands on their scabbards, with conspicuous western style belts clip the top most band. Also, guards start to appear with more frequency, as well as hilts featuring socketed bulked ferrules that connect to the bulbous pommel [26].

The changes may have been due to growth of American influence. “This weapon was often worn in the back of the sash, or was hidden in various spots on a person, such as the Turban. They were daggers of last minute defense, as well as daggers for common utility. It has been reported in period documents that *gunongs* were often carried by both sexes, young and old ”[27].

Spears

Bangkaw



Figure 13: The Meranaw Bangkaw

(Source: Photo taken in the Aga Khan Museum by the researcher)

The Meranaws also made use of spears and lances in their battles against invaders. These spears and lances were called *Bangkaw* and an arm for war that appeared as long and slender and was thrown straight to the enemy. Due to its advantages especially in naval combat these was a favorite of the Moros in general, to a point that,

“They show the same care with Kris and are very much ornamented and engraved, and have their covers gilded. The shaft is of finest ebony or some other beautiful wood; and at intervals they put rings of silver or tin on. The head is of brass, which is used here, and so highly polished that it vies with gold. It is chased so elaborately that there are lances valued at one slave each. At the end they fastened a large hawk’s bell, which they fixed upon the shaft in such a manner that it surrounds it; and when they shake the lance it sounds in time with the fierce threats and bravados. The valiant use them and a man-slayers, give warning to those who do not know them and those of less-valor, so that they may avoid them as they would vipers [28].

According to Taha Taher [29] in an interview;

So Bangkaw na miyaka piya piya pun oto ko mga Meranaw a di pa-musaka, miyakapiya piya egira a gera, na gyoto na aya mapasang on pun musar ka see kiran pun makapopoon na so mga tao sa puro, seran a munaon musar.

(Free Translation: The *Bangkaw* was also seen by the Meranaws as a special item that can also become a nice *pusaka*, this was good during battle, and this was something we adopted from the Indigenous mountain groups who are the original users of this type of weapon.)

A person used this kind of weapon with a skill, the skill of precision and great instinct. This could be why the Meranaws in their memories had an admiration of this kind. Weapons like the *Bangkaw* were made of hard wood and its head was well patterned steel or iron. In connection, the Meranaws made sure that their weapons were of good quality and it would serve them a purpose if these were made with beauty. One can only imagine that in a group, if you have the same weapons what will make another stand out were the quality and the beauty of their weapons. He who had this as a weapon would be admired and respected. Something emerged from this, this probably evolved to the fact that weapons established identity for the bearer.

Bacayawan

Other kinds of spears were made out of bamboo trees and known as *Bagacayes* or *Bacayawan* to the Meranaws. These were believed to be less powerful than the *Bangkaw*. An example of how this particular weapon appeared and used was in a note in Blair and Robertson's;

"The *Bagacayes* are certain small bamboos which were as thick as fingers, hardened in the fire and with points sharpened. They throw these with such skill that they never miss when the object was within range; and some men throw them five at a time. Although it is so weak a weapon, it has such violence that it has gone through a boat and has pierced and killed the rower "[30].

In addition, these were the ones the Meranaws used in dig pits or in the traps they set for hunting wild animals. Stronger ones were also the very thing they used circling the outside perimeters of the *Kota*.

The *Lantakas* or Local canons



Figure 14: The *Lantaka* as *Pusaka* in Brgy. *Pagalongan*, *Ramain* Lanao Del Sur

(Source: Photo taken by the researcher)

Lantakas, also spelled as *Rantakas*, were local canons and were considered as the most fearsome weapon that were utilized and sometimes made by the Moros themselves. As a widespread term in Philippine islands it is traceable to the root word *Lantak* meaning an object that can damage or hurt or *Lantakan* meaning violent encounters where these ancient cannons were used [31] These were swivel guns. Unlike the Spanish guns, these

guns were placed on flexible swivels that allowed the gunner to quickly track a moving target.

The lantakas, or *Rantakas* as the Meranaws said, of the Moros gave the Spanish so much trouble that they always included native ships, like the *karakoa* [32] to be equipped with *Lantakas* to counter Moro weapons as seen from the different stages of the Moro wars. These were eventually exported to South America, and may have become the precursor of the Gatling guns. In the Brunei-Mindanao tradition, Burgh and Mangahas shared that Sultans were ranked according to the numbers of wives and *Lantakas* they owned [33] According to many historians these were the mightiest symbol of wealth and power. In the past, aside from the warships and in *Kotas*, the *Lantakas* can also be seen at the house of some men of wealth and power. It was the largest of all the so called Moro weapons, thus the most expensive. If a Datu had it, it only meant that the Datu was both wealthy and powerful. It was mentioned in many books that Lantakas were usually given as part of the dowry among royal families so it also implies that the Datus or Sultan who had them probably were well connected to other sultanates. Though its origin was debatable and uncertain, what was for sure was that till these times the Meranaws knew the knowledge or the science of making this type of weapons. These had been utilized and part of their history. The Meranaw *lantaka* was a brass cannon called *Laila* used specifically by the Meranaws against foreign invaders. The Aga khan museum noted that; “Meranaw cannons are either of Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, Chinese, Malay and Bornean origin.” The Malaysian cannons were also called *Lela*, suggesting an evidence that the Meranaws may have learned this first through their Malay ancestors. Furthermore, the distinction of the *Laila* can be based on the design. Of all cannons from the Malay world, the Meranaw cannon looked to be huge but simple in its overall appearance.

The other word they used in reference to Meranaw local cannons was *Pula*. But the *Pula* was the ancient cannon made of bamboo that can be commonly used in merry making days.

Oral tradition says that these were probably one of the very weapons used by the *Saber sa Radapan* [34] in his pursuit against the Spanish encroachers. Furthermore, many remembered that his story was so fearsome and that his cannon balls returned to him to recharge. The *Pula* might be the very thing that inspired the making of Lantakas and this was due to the bamboo like shape found at the tip of most Lantakas and the ring like bumps in the cannon.

When Ustadh Tantawe Panumpang [35], who was a seasoned Lantaka maker, was interviewed, he was generous in enumerating the different parts found in this weapon. Accordingly,

So puliyowan a apoy na aya ngaran eyan na Simud, a egira dimbaalan na titiborunun a putagowan sa okir odi na alok-alok eyan. Esa pun a puka pansin a mala ko Rantaka na so Balimbing a esan o rings. A matatago pirmi kounaan ago orian o lawas o Rantaka. Para mas mataid na panaguwan sa mga okiran lagged o piako. Laged of sesa solud o mgatriangle ah. So pud na soKawar, aya kapta. Ago so para ko tokod odi na Tiyangak a pumbutadan on. So orian na Pitot a ana O-Pangga-Rakan on, a mayto a lubo a gyotoy pakapoon o kapagusara on.

(Free Translation: The tip where the fire comes out was called *Simud*, it was usually designed with an enhanced

cylindrical form, sometimes with okir designs. Another evident design was the rings found on the body of the cannon, these were usually found immediately after the bottom part and just below the *Simud*. And this was called *Balimbing*. To beautify the piece, markings like *okir* were added and the most popular was the *Piako*, which can be found in the triangular designs under the rings. The other parts were: the *Kawar* or holder, the Tokod or Tiyangak which was the flexible swivel where it stands, and the Pitot or end tip with the O-Pangga-Rakan, the small hole where the operation of this weapon begin.)

The researcher failed to witness an actual operation to a Lantaka and books were not specific about it. Probably, there was a similarity in how the *Pula* and the *Lantaka* was operated. Accordingly, older bamboos aged five to six years make the best kind of *Pula*. If it was dried of any moisture the bamboo then becomes ready for firing. The most recent and common knowledge on how it was used was by putting a carbon carbide leaf called “*Karbura*”[36] mixed with a small amount of water and when a smoke emerges from it, an amount of fire or heat was added and an intimidating or bazooka like sound was produced. The Lantakas probably made use of gun powder, or *ubat* to the Meranaws, to fire. In addition, Mahdi H. Noor [37] informed us that,

So mga tao guwani na puraksan eran sa mga baram barang a metal odi na potao, apya tuna metal lagged o totok odi na rantay para mas mabagur egira a minisogat.

(Free Translation: The older people would insert or add scrap metals in the opening, any kinds of metal like chains or nails to produce an even more powerful impact.)

The Shields



Figure 15: The wooden shield

(Source: Photo taken by the researcher at the Agakhan Museum, MSU)

These are an arm for war and in fighting on land. The Moros have shields that are round especially among the coast dwellers of the south, and in the islands of Basilan and Jolo. While the rest of the island seemed to have a general custom of preferring the long and narrow shield and so with these, they shield and protect all the body. The Meranaws were among those who seemed to favor and produce the long and narrow shield. And it was obvious that from this weapon the bladed weapons of war were inseparable. Moreover, the Malays were not known to use much body armors as it was in Europe, but the Moros in general have some along with shields. To enumerate, one was the *Kelong*, it was the Meranaw shield used in combination with a native bladed weapon. Today it is used only in stage performances such as the war dance. But the Meranaws are also warlike in that they were equipped with the most basic and important weapons such as shield in times of battles. Spanish invaders in the 1639 Lanao conquest were themselves taken off guard by the thousand numbers and fighting ability the Meranaws had, “they have tactical moves, and as mentioned, they have an army as many as three thousand with many shields”[38]. Their shields were of three kinds; the chain armors, the rounded shield definitely of Chinese origin and the wooden type in parallel or standing position which can be made by the Meranaws themselves. Most millennial Meranaws were shocked by the knowledge that Meranaws long ago have body armors protecting themselves called *Kelong sa rarubor Rareb a Potao*. Another was called *Raben a Potao*. The *Raben a Potao* is similar to the *Baju Rantai* or *Baju Besi* of the Malays. It is “an iron coat of chain mail probably obtained from the Portuguese, as they are too large for most Malays”[39]. This chain mail type of shield was common in Europe, and so there could be a shade of light in this observation. Either directly or indirectly, it could be an influence learned from them. Nevertheless, the Meranaws especially in Tugaya make these types of weapons even in the 21st century. They made good use of their skills and of what they had available to them.

The War Drum



Figure 16: The Gandangan in the Aga Khan Museum (left) and Xavier Museo de Oro (right), it was usually 22-25 inches long

(Source: Photo taken by the researcher)

Gandangan was the ancient Meranaw war drum played in pairs by two persons to send messages of warning or in preparation for battle. It was also used in merry making celebrations. There was also an *Agong*, which was an instrument of many values and of different sizes. The smaller ones were called “pong” specifically used by the Meranaws in calling their slaves and in spirit worship while the larger ones are used to send messages in neighboring communities around Lanao. The *Gandangan* was cylindrical in form and was usually made from hollow tree trunks or from a shell of wood or tree with two open nodes in both sides hence the description “double headed barrel drum.” And these open nodes were covered by leather as trappings and the most popular to use among Meranaws was goat skin. It was probably a masculine instrument and used with a forceful striking.

The Firearms



Figure 17: *The Paliontod*

(Source: Taken by the researcher from the Aga Khan Museum, MSU Marawi)

It was difficult to place the exact date of the introduction of handheld firearms. But Kiefer estimated that medium sized muzzle-loading types had been in use by 1450.2 *Paliontod* was the name used by the *Meranaws* in identifying the guns they used in their struggles against the Spanish and Americans. They also use the word *Pukol* in identifying their firearms. There were little studies about these types of Moro firearms so a failure was met in the study of its etymology. However, in *Meranaw* dialect “*Pali*” is translated as wound whereas “*untod*” is sit. So this probably originated from the fact that these types of firearms were better fired while sitting down and could deliver a wound. The physical features of the *Paliontod* specifically showed that it was a kind of a Remington if not a Mouser rifle. This was the kinds of modern firearms that became popular in the early 1900’s.

According to H.Daud Sarip;

There was also the Totod, a sidearm weapon which is like a local piston-rifle. In fact, during the coming of the

Americans, the Meranaws in Bayang specifically were well equipped with several kinds of firearms like 47 mortal guns, 12 mouser Japanese guns, 33 revolver and 35 caliber pistol. These they got as captured materials from enemy Spaniards in the Past [40].

Aside from this, firearms were sold to them by other natives of the island. "It was also reported that because of their wealth, the Iranuns and the Maranaos were able to obtain more and better firearms than the Maguindanaos"[41]. It can be bought in black markets; accordingly *Malabang* was the place where general exchanges took place in the past. They also trade with those from Sulu. Also, Tawagon analyzed that "From Jolo, Mindanao received arms and ammunitions and other necessary items for the Iranun and other Moro Pirates to carry their own resistance against Spain and raids in the Philippine waters. Jolo was the great commercial part of all surrounding parts of Mindanao and the Celebes." When the Moros in general were disarmed in 1911, the documents showed that the greatest number of combined firearms and bladed weapons were collected from the Meranaws.

The Kotas

The *kota* can be considered in this research as a Moro weapon on land given the definition that a weapon was used for defense. Moros fortify themselves on land with the resolve to defend themselves. All Meranaw weapons were utilized and prepared within the Kota [42] and their warfare was mostly so dependent on the Kota. And this was not a surprise since it was common in recorded history. As stated, "Malay wars seem to have been mostly an affair of the outposts"[43].

Meranaw Warfare

The only positive appreciation of the conquerors toward the Moro groups and the Meranaws of the Lake were on the aspects of their bravery, courage and fierceness. This was constantly mentioned and repeated in numerous letters written by Spanish officials and missionaries like Father Chirino and Francisco Combes.

If we used the *Darangen* as bases, the epic expressed much idea on the state of warfare the Meranaws had. In summary, the Meranaw warfare may have consisted of the following: horsemanship, initiation of war, practice of chivalry, and military instruction and many more. In addition, the weapons covered in this study can be used as evidence to the existence of such Meranaw warfare in remote past. However, as fighters, the Meranaws unlike the Tausugs and Maguindanao, had no actual record of a kind of military training in preparation for battles. Whether there were sessions and possible postures when holding a *kampilan* or *kris* were not certain. But in all their encounters with the conquerors, they were highly praised for their courage, they fell but in no shame. And despite their weakened military strength in the face of newly developed fire powers of the Americans, they fought so that the conquest of Lanao was truly over their dead bodies.

From what we can deduce from history books, it seemed that there were two warfare dominant in their history of conflicts, and these were the *Kota* warfare and the guerrilla warfare.

Kota Warfare

The *kota* of the Meranaws was so vital that a discussion on the Meranaw *Kota* would even sum up the tales on Meranaw warfare. Kotas, or fortress in English, were integral part of warfare among Meranaws and to military groups. This had been a practice since early history to modern times. Walls were necessities to people or cities in general in a challenging world of invasion and conquest. Accordingly, in Europe the Greeks built the first of these buildings as watch towers, etc. However, it was the Roman legion that started the art of establishing a military camp. A castle can be called a type of fortress. And this engineering was also developed by the early people of the Philippines particularly in Mindanao. Though different from those in Europe in form or structure the idea for defense was the same. In Mindanao, these were popularly called kotas, and a line of kotas were stretched across Mindanao. Their *Kotas* were very important to the Moros in general. Some of the popular characters or interests of these people were their love for territory, loyalty to their faith and freedom. Thus kotas were built for this purpose, for protection of the above mentioned interests. Another specific reason behind the construction was the resolute resolved of the Moros to defend themselves against other Moros, probably when *Rido* takes place, and especially against invaders. This was a necessity to the island in which disorder, according to historians, had been the normal order of affairs for centuries. The history of *Kotas* can be read in many books. It helped the Moros in their centuries old wars with the Spaniards and gave difficulty to the Americans.

Unlike the Spaniards with their stonewalled forts Hurley noted that;

The Moro kotas in general were forts of Bamboo and Nipa, with stout double walls of tree trunks packed with earth or broken coral. They were defended by *Lantakas*, which are ornately carved, swivel cannon of the Moros, and older than the written history of the archipelago. Some authorities have stated that these cannon of the Malay pirates were among the earliest form of portable ordinance [44].

In the March 1895 battle of Marawi, the Meranaw fort was accordingly defended by five *Lantakas* named *Diatris*, *Marawi*, *Balo*, *Madnon*, and *Balai*. But the sternest line of defense of the kotas was the line of individual combatants who waved the great fluted and wavy edged blades that are a marvel of steel craftsmanship "[45]. They also used spears thrown from a close distance. Stones as well as boiling water were also used to delay the advancing enemy troops if there were moves to take down the forts.

In Lanao, fortifications were made of layers of stones and wood many writers noted that these were very old and Tawagon clearly identified the distinction of the kotas of Lanao:

1. There were relatively more *Kotas* in Lanao than in other Moro communities; 2. As such, there are more *kota* fights in Lanao than in other places; 3. The number of kotas corresponds more or less to the number of sultans and datus; and 4. the number of kotas were indicative also of the number of *rido* or (conflict and feuds)[46].

Catubig said, "These were usually located on the shores at the entrance to the town and were manned by guards." While some were found in remote areas but this research noticed that some were indeed near, but not so close, the shore. Prominent Kotas during the pacification years of the Americans can be found at Binidayan, Pandapatan in Bayang, Bacolod and Marantao, though not really on the shores but the locations gives a perfect

view of their side of the lake and meadows and the largest at the time was found in Bacolod. Similar description about these Kotas in 1902 stated that,

While the Kota's walls were only 10-12 feet high (3-4 meters), it was surrounded by an equally deep moat filled with sharpened bamboo stakes. The walls were of banked earth, nearly 10 feet thick. Impervious to either rifle or cannon fire, and covered by closely planted bamboo trees that had interwoven as they grown, forming an almost impenetrable barrier to an assaulting party [47].

To the lake people, their kotas play an integral role in warfare. One American officer further noted that "Moros in considerable numbers only fight from and in defense of their cotas"[48]. Their kotas were their strength as well as their weakness; "The Moros seem to depend entirely on their cotas"[49]. They fight like tigers around the Kotas and when it was conquered, it marks their downfall.

The *Kotas* were a legacy of the wars fought centuries ago and the fighting spirit of a people who were always ready to defend.

Guerrilla Warfare

The *kota* warfare of the Meranaws was supplanted by the guerrilla warfare. In fact, this warfare would characterized the kind of warfare taken by almost all native groups in Mindanao in the later years to come after the Spanish and American periods. This was obviously the warfare used by the Meranaws particularly during the American times in Lanao when *Kotas* proved to be powerless to the American bombardments and artilleries. This was so called guerrilla from Spanish meaning "small" and such this referred to the small units of fighters who resisted colonization and resorted to ambush and disturbances like hostage taking of American soldiers, stealing enemy weapons and then utilizing the hit and run tactics. Definitely, this kinds of action falls under the so-called guerilla warfare.

Probably, when Meranaw forces saw themselves with limited and inferior resources, but had strong fighting spirits and deep traditions, they may have found themselves with this another method of warfare which was different from direct and total war.

This kind of warfare, however, did not just develop during the American times in the country, but it can be traced back to the pre-conquered times when barangays fought against barangays. When raid after raid took place and revenge were the ways of life. It so happened that this tribalistic ways which were brutal was repeated against the Americans.

With this kind of warfare, the Meranaws who were still against the Americans and the new government that they established were able to convey their dissatisfaction and continued resistance. Even if they cannot defeat the enemy, they aimed to sting the enemy. It seemed to be the only popular option when fighting a strong colonial power.

On Jihad and War

Many Meranaws when interviewed had no recollection of any native or primitive military training, if there was they do not know, this could be a gap in their history that maybe, as they say, lost in the sands of time. But what was for sure was that they were ready to fight always because it was an age of heroism, honor and valor. Where what was important then at that time was that by what they believed in, what they saw as correct and what they felt was to surrender to foreign encroacher was against their nature. Protecting themselves; the religion and people was a necessity. Probably, that was part of their survival and “by peculiarities of temperament and a terrific fortitude of the soul, the Malays are eminently adapted to survival, even when badly pressed by outside influences”[50]. As fighters, it was obvious that they had a jihadist ideology and had a different perspective on war and winning the battle. As mentioned by Robert Fulton about the Meranaws during the early years of the Americans in Lanao,

The Americans, like all western armies, defined “winning” as killing the enemy and securing control over the battlefield. Their opponents in previous conflicts had generally accepted the same definition. Not so the Moros. What was important to them was the struggle and how one conducted oneself, personally and as a people, not necessarily a measurable outcome. They knew from the beginning that they were no match for American firepower. It was a one-sided contest, what was today is termed as “asymmetric warfare,” but so what? Their final measure was how well one did against the odds, the more overwhelmingly they were against one, the greater the glory. And being that life is transitory anyway, what mattered most was how much courage was shown and how well did one die [51].

Hence, some historians recognized that the Meranaws had a warrior culture.

Elmer Palahang [52] said that;

Filipino tribes like the Meranaws were warrior like in general especially during the pre-Spanish and Spanish times. They are tribalistic that's why tribes all over the Philippines have war dances. Being a warrior is general in Philippines.

As already mentioned, the Meranaw warfare might also be influenced by the Islamic teaching about the need for Jihad when the situation calls for it. Jihad is simply understood by many as the holy war in protection of the people's religion. But a clearer understanding from ulamas [53] say that it is fighting by the path of Allah and to quote;

In a religious sense, as described by the Quran and teachings of the prophet Mohammad (SAW), Jihad has many meanings. It can refer to internal as well as external efforts to be a good Muslims or believer, as well as working to inform people about the faith of Islam. If military Jihad is required to protect the faith against others, it can be performed using anything from legal, diplomatic and economic to political means. If there is no peaceful alternative, Islam allows the use of force, but there are strict rules of engagement. Innocents- such as women, children, or invalids- must not be harmed, and any peaceful overtures from the enemy must be accepted [54].

A similar understanding is shown by Norodin Mangondaya [55] in an interview who said that:

Sabap ko pangongonot eran ko rasul na apya tunay suguwan o Allah na die ran di gulalan sabap ko gyotoy kababaloy eran a oripun o Allah. See ko kapagingud, kapagintaw sangkaya a dunya na so mga Muslim na egira a seran e pag attackun, conquerun so darpa eran. Paminasaan so walay eran, so mga wata eran na pundadakpun ago so mga babae eran na gyotoy kapkawma o kan Jihad, kapka wajib o kan jihad. Kaprumasay seeko lalan ko Allah. Fighting in the path of Allah. Seympre o kuwan keran so darpa eran, so walay eran, na datar bo o ba seran piyamuno. So Agama na di niyan oto katigur oba so Muslim na ba conquera o kunaba muslim. Pero kunaba oras oras na di maka Jihad. Egira a myawma so oras eyan na di maka Jihadul Akbar so mga Muslim. Laged egira a myawma so wakto a kasambayang na pusambayang so tao.

(Free Translation: Because they had faith in the prophet and in the teachings of the religion, they would follow what was ordained as a true servant of Allah. When it comes to nation and living in this world, when a Muslim's land was being attacked or conquered, their house to be burned and their children and women captured. Then, the time for Jihad has come. It would be fighting by the path of Allah. If you take away their lands and properties, it only meant like you would kill them because it was valuable to them. And the religion does not permit conquest of Muslims by non-Muslims. But not all the time there would be a call for Jihad, it would come when reasons for it were valid. Just like when we pray, when the time comes, we must really pray.)

With regards to Meranaw bravery and weaponry, majority of the people interviewed agreed to the idea that the Meranaws in those times were indeed valorous. Amal Mangoranda [56] in particular explained that;

Basta puka touch a gyoto a pride, religion and territory na mawaraw talaga so Meranaw. Labaw egira a myawma so kiyapatotan sa kan Jihad. Na ana weapon, sa daa weapon, mabagur so weapon anta ka kunaba mabagur so weapon na pagato dun so Meranao antaka Muslim sa masa oto. Kanya defend eran so mga importante keran so land, family, children, women, wealth and religion. Para di seran kabinasaan. Eno tito dun a importante so weapon ka mapakay a ron misabap so kappaka defense ka.

(Free Translation: When the concept of pride, religion and territory was touched, The Meranaw becomes fierce. Especially when the reasons were valid and rightful to call for a Jihad, with or without a weapon, armed with superior or inferior weapons, a Meranaw and Muslim would fight in those times. Because they wanted to protect what was important to them and these were their land, family, children, women, wealth and religion. So these would not be destroyed. That was why weapons became so important at that time because these were the means to defend themselves and all that they saw important to them.)

He further told us that;

It was already in Muslim history, especially ever since the rise of Islam. Mga wawaraw seran dun, so mga Meranaw na mapakay a mapapadalum keran pun so paratiyaya. Ayabo a pagelayn eran na antonaa e suguwan o Allah mepantag saya. Apya miyamatay seran. Apya keya awaan so pamilya eran sabap ko ana suguwan ko kan jihad. It was also seen as a sign para ko tito a Muslim.

(Free Translation: It was already in Muslim history, especially ever since the rise of Islam that Muslims were brave. The Meranaws as Muslims may also had the faith in those times. They would rely to the teachings of the religion about it (conquest). Even if it meant they would die, and leave behind their families at least it merited Jihad. It was also seen as a sign for a true believer or Muslim.)

On whether a Meranaw man is brave with or without a weapon, Amal Mangoranda revealed that;

Esa pun a mala eno seran mawaraw ago tigas sa kapaki tidawa na kagya a sesa pamikiran eran a mababagur seran ka mipapaygo eran so ku'bul eran. Adun dun a psych eran a ana anting anting eran ko mga gumaan eran. Gyoto pun e mga suwa suwa e esako guwani komga miyangawna a Meranaw.

(Free Translation: One of the biggest reasons why they were brave and strong in fighting in those times was because they have that thinking that they are invincible because they were protected. They had that psych that they have their weapons as amulets. This was one of the old practices of the Meranaws.)

He added that:

So manusiya lagged o Meranaw na pukawma omaan sa kawaraw, so kapasang eyan sa kapaki tidawa kagya ana weapon. Pero bapiya ana weapon sa daa na magatoo dun. Sesa Muslim history na apya dagaid a weapon na miyato seran. They could be inspired by these also. Laged esako time o Rasul a miyangato so mga Muslim against 1000 fighters, a complete sa koda. Na so mga Muslim na badun labi sapolo a koda eran, so mga pudang na kukurang. They were unprepared pero sabap ko kawnot ko rasul ago kala e paratiyaya na miyato seran. So manusiya na egira a mya Zulum (myalalim), na may weapon o wala. Prepared or not na egira mawma so rarangit eyan na nago so kipangatoon eyan ko right eyan, pamilya niyan na mawaraw dun. Pakatigas dun. Pangato seran ka aya mala a ka padung na so agama eran esapun na so paninindag eran ko inged.

(Free Translation: A people, like the Meranaws, have bravery in their bloods, and their fighting spirit and skills are enhanced when they have weapons. But even without weapons they still would fight. It is within Muslim history that despite the lack of weapons they still fought. They (Meranaws) could be inspired by these also. Like the times of the prophet when the Muslims fought against 1,000 fighters equipped with horses while the Muslims only had a dozen horses, and limited swords. They were unprepared but because of their belief in the prophet and their strong faith they fought. A person who feels oppressed would fight with or without weapon. Prepared or not, when a person's anger is challenged, and the time has come for him to fight for his rights, and family he becomes a fighter. He becomes strong. They (Meranaws) will fight also in protection of religion, pride and people. They would really fight because they thought that the one that will be affected or eliminated would be religion and this was also for the sake of their pride for their land.)

The historic battle mentioned above in this interview was the battle of *Badr* which took place near Medina in March 624. Accordingly, "In Islamic history, it is the first military victory of the prophet Muhammad. It seriously damaged Meccan prestige while strengthening the political position of Muslims in Medina and establishing Islam as a viable force in the Arabian Peninsula. The rise of Islam against the Pagan tribes of Mecca was a vital development in Military history, as well as in the history of religion and society."⁴ This

served as an inspiration to Muslim fighters because this battle was so legendary and as what was constantly mentioned in many tales and congregations, “the armies involved were not large: fewer than 400 Muslims and around 1,000 Meccan fighters. Despite the superior numbers of the Meccan forces (about 1,000 men), the Muslims scored a complete victory”[57]. And so, with belief and trust to the almighty, there is nothing impossible. This notion was clearly strong among Meranaw leaders a century ago.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the analysis and interpretation of data gathered and discussed in this research paper, the following major findings are obtained:

The Meranaws were never left behind in the historical developments in Mindanao and the rest of the Moros because they have these weapons and warfare as early as the early years of the 17th century. Though they were left undisturbed for hundreds of years after the failure of the Spaniards to conquer them in the early parts of the 17th century, the Meranaws seemed to be active participants in the affairs of the Moros in later times. Because of the similarities found in their weapons, it served as a historical link that a relationship did really exist, supporting historical documents, between the Meranaws and Maguindanao and other Moro groups either by political alliances, trading or kinship ties. They may have an innate culture of conflict and a history of it. But this may have been the result of the historical experience of the natives of this province in general. Although, widely misunderstood as violent people the Muslims of southern Philippines like the Meranaws were really not. They are just the same with other natives of the Island who are a strong follower of tradition and religion. In the olden times, to these people leadership was recognized and respected. It was only in matters of fighting for their rights that they become defiant and acts on violence. Resistance was patriotic, so it was unfair for the Meranaws to be labeled as violent people and their contribution to Mindanao history should be recognized.

The issue on violence stemmed out of their hundred years of resistance to a colonizing power. In all probability, they do not really like or love weapons and weaponry build up but they saw the need for it. And this need was traceable to the ages long forgotten.

They saw its importance for several reasons. It had internal and external factors. When *Rido* takes place and when their greatest *Rido* against foreign colonizers took place, it made the Meranaws realize the importance of their implements of War. The external factor that made them realize the importance of weapons was the invasion and conquest of the west. Weapons were valuable to them because it will enable them to fight and defend what were important to them. Weapons served them well and became their greatest ally in the midst of their battles especially against western domination.

The internal factor to this Meranaw interest to weapons lies in the fact that even before the encroachment of foreign powers in Lanao, the traditional weapons of the Meranaws were a part of everyday life; In fishing, household chores, trade and governance, etc. They were precious items for a number of reasons and not specifically to commit atrocities. It was a necessity for them to have weapons. And they saw nothing wrong in carrying those weapons for this was the custom of those times. It offered personal security, and in many cases

like in *Rido* it can act as a component of peace when it becomes a remedy for conflicts to not escalate into war. It emphasizes respect and recognition of one's right and established that somebody was not anybody to easily oppress.

Moreover, to the Meranaws who developed to be skilled artisans and craftsmen, it maybe is part of their love for tradition and arts. Their weapons where an important item for personal security that were usually passed down to them. It had sentimental values. It is also a reflection of the social and cultural conditions of the time. It seemed that the initial contribution of this research lies in understanding the Meranaw society. It is revealed that the possession of these traditional weapons, of any kind specially the *Sundang* and *Kampilan*, signifies a person's identity. These become the beginning of its social significance. Without saying any words, with the kind of weapons he brings a Meranaw has established his identity clearly. Hence, on lookers or outsiders encountered will think twice before harming the individual. The Meranaw weapons give the idea that the bearer is from an important family, and he could be from the nobility. So harming him could entail danger since he must have come from a strong, huge and influential family. As such, weapons can give him not only personal security but also an identity.

The other meaningful result of this study reflects the Meranaw people's cultural beliefs. Aside from identity, it is revealed that the cultural beliefs on spirits were still very strong. Another reason why an intruder encountering a Meranaw with weapons is forewarned because of the weapons itself. This is because it was common at the time that weapons possess powers that can give good luck, bad lucks and diseases. And fear of attracting such an omen the bearer of the weapons will be recognized. This summarily explains the significance of weapons to the Meranaws in those times. One who has weapons would be recognized, feared, and given adoration and with that their concept of self-respect is boosted. Without the weaponry, a Meranaw is like nobody. In addition, without it, there would be no power, no self-value and identity. That was why during the time of the Americans when it was banned and people were discouraged to carry those weapons, it seemed that, to a Sultan, yes he is a sultan, but without it he is just like a commoner. Meaning, there was nothing to differentiate people, the nobility from the commoners. Henceforth, it can be concluded that weaponry has had a role on the status of a person among the Meranaw. Unlike today that when a man wears something costly then there is status established.

5. Recommendation

It should be important information that the people should know, realize and support the actions of the Republic of the Philippines when it attempted to retrieve examples of Philippine artifacts that were taken by colonizers and this study applauds the preliminary actions taken by the government with regards to our native heritage spearheaded by Pres. Rodrigo Duterte. Therefore, it was a definite recommendation that the government should continuously stand for the rights of the country and that the Philippine Registry of Cultural Property (PRECUP) continues in its identification, protection, preservation and conservation of cultural properties.

Another recommendation would be the continuous support that should be given by the government and the community to the preservation of cultural artifacts. These are reminders of the past, these kinds of remnants usually seen in Museums should inspire people to be thankful of the present, of the peace we have. Men armed

themselves for several reasons in the past. Definitely, men could live without weapons and so this paper discourages carrying weapons and weapons build-up.

Dedication

This Paper is Dedicated to my Children Harith and Hasan, May You be blessed with good health, wealth and wisdom Ameen.

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