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Research Article

Symbols and Images of Peace in the Meranaw Epic *Darangen*

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ABSTRACT

A profound relationship exists between literature and peace that transcends centuries and cultures. In the southern Philippines, the Meranaw people consider peace to be more than a mere notion; it is an intrinsic aspect of their cultural and traditional way of life. Furthermore, by applying critical discourse analysis to the symbols and images in the Volume 1 of the Meranaw epic *Darangen*, this literary research elucidates the significance of peace. This is further supported by Aristotle's Theory of Poetry, Stuart Hall's Cultural Studies, Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, and Karl Marx's Marxism. Moreover, it is found that *fear, marriage, dialogue, status, royalty, tolerance, power, nobility and proletariat, cleanliness, communication, discontinuity, death, politeness, sacrifice, pride, royalty, divinity, harmony, support, safety, divine protection, and courage* are the meanings of the symbols and images in relation to peace. Each symbol and image in the epic illustrate how the Meranaw people define peace. Peace is represented in marriage, gatherings in the *torogan*, the colors of the *malong*, flags, jewelry and gold, gifts, and divine like the spirits, magic chair, and shield in the epic. Further, the epic portrays that peace for the Meranaw people can only be achieved by valuing their honor, dignity, self-esteem, and reputation. Hence, this study revealed the symbols and images in the epic that reflect the concepts of peace in the Meranaw community.

Keywords: *Darangen, Epic, Imagery, Meranaw, Peace, Symbolism*

Introduction

The fundamental connection between peace and literature transcends both temporal and cultural boundaries, enduring over millennia and across diverse societies. The Meranaw people residing in the southern region of the Philippines exhibit a profound integration of peace within their cultural practices and traditions, perceiving it not merely as an abstract

notion but as an intrinsic aspect of everyday life. Throughout the course of several centuries, the Meranaw people have occupied a significant position at the intersection of various civilizations, serving as observers of the fluctuating empires and changing territorial demarcations. The area, which was previously a symbol of tranquility, has been damaged by the reverberations of conflict. Repeatedly, the

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Meranaw people have encountered themselves ensnared amid strife, resulting in the disruption of their life and the fragmentation of their aspirations. The Meranaw identity was deeply affected by the harsh nature of colonization, which posed a significant risk to their cultural heritage and language, perhaps leading to their assimilation. The fundamental nature of their being was being threatened, and the forces of transformation introduced a tumultuous period characterized by a lack of predictability. (Saber, 1960).

Moreover, with the onset of violence in Marawi City on May 23, 2017, also referred to as the Marawi siege, the Meranaw community emerged as advocates for peace, acknowledging that genuine peace is not derived from the use of arms, but rather from the embrace of compassion. The Meranaw people's emotions, previously weighed down by grief, discovered comfort in the ancestral knowledge that emphasized the significance of collective cooperation and the profound capacity for change through meaningful conversation (Douglas and De Lang, 2020).

Furthermore, the Meranaw people have effectively reclaimed their narrative by utilizing various artistic mediums such as art, music, and storytelling, enabling them to disseminate their stories of adversity and perseverance to a wider audience. The *Darangen*, an epic, has a central position within the cultural history of the Meranaw people. This creative masterpiece chronicles the enduring journey of the Meranaw community, encompassing their historical challenges, accomplishments, and pursuit of both governance and harmony across generations. The epic holds significance beyond its literary excellence, serving as a witness to the steadfast dedication of the Meranaw community towards the principles of peace, justice, and ethical governance (Milligan, 2000).

Throughout generations, the *Darangen* has consistently served as a poignant reminder to the Meranaw community of their enduring quest for peace. The Meranaw people have effectively communicated the significance of unity, understanding, and cooperation in the quest for peace through the utilization of powerful language and striking images within their

epic. Despite encountering challenges like the Marawi siege, the Meranaw community has demonstrated unwavering faith in their belief that peace is attainable. They firmly believe that engaging in discourse, demonstrating respect, and fostering mutual understanding are effective means to reach this objective (Saber, 1963).

Considering the ongoing global challenges related to violence and conflict, the Meranaw people persistently strive for peace. In this regard, the epic *Darangen* and *taritib ago ijma* (Meranaw customary laws) have been instrumental in preserving a peaceful and equitable society for the Meranaw people (Saber, 1960). Thus, it is possible to deduce that literary works, including the *Darangen*, exert an impact on policymaking and discourse regarding peace across various societal sectors. By emphasizing the numerous images and symbols of peace in the epic *Darangen*, the Meranaw people must come to recognize the importance of fostering a culture of peace (Saber, 1963).

By incorporating key concepts from peace and conflict studies and a variety of resources from literary, psychological, sociological, and possibly spiritual standpoints, this study also establishes directions for conversations concerning literature and peace. Further elucidating the Meranaw epic *Darangen*, this research contributes to the enhancement of the culture and identity of the Meranaw people in the Philippines and beyond. The primary objective of this research is therefore to shed light on the fundamental notions of peace that are portrayed through the epic's symbols and images.

Theoretical Framework

Through the symbols and images in the *Darangen* epic of Meranaw, this study reveals the meaning of peace. This is supported by several theoretical frameworks, including Aristotle's Theory of Poetry, Stuart Hall's Cultural Studies, Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, and Karl Marx's Marxism.

Poetry is universal and imitative (mimesis), according to Aristotle's Theory of Poetry. Components of mimesis include the following: (a) the medium; (b) the object; and (c) the style. In contrast to alternative artistic modalities

like painting or music, poetry distinguishes itself through its utilization of language as its

medium, as opposed to relying on visual or auditory components.

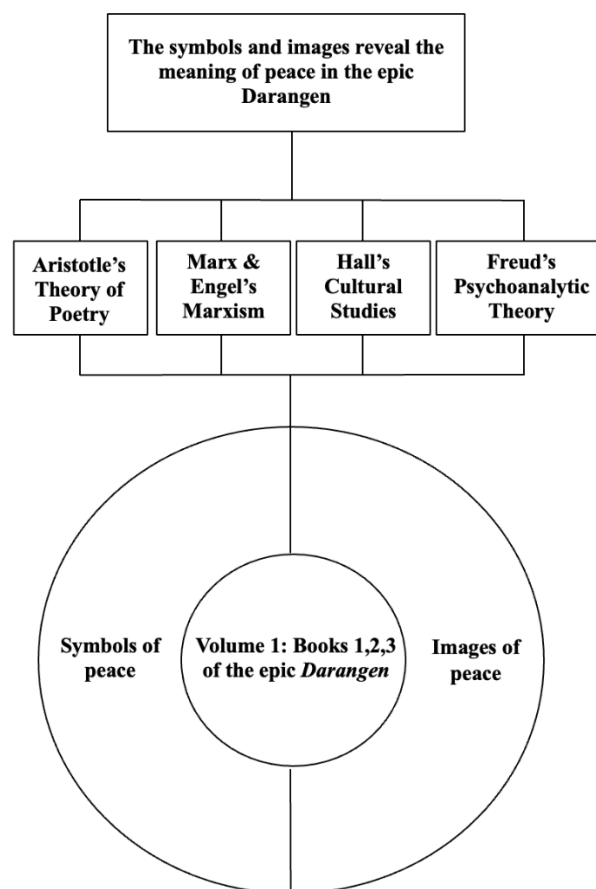


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical Framework

The likeness to the original may be greater, worse, or the same because the subjects of mimesis are living people. That is the main distinction between comedy and tragedy. Using the same tools and medium, one can achieve a different effect. One can either partially narrate the events or depict the characters as acting out the events, as in drama. Since mimesis is essentially a theory of technique, and because the distinctions between art forms and literary genres are made based on technique, mimesis provides an accurate framework for identifying and describing these distinctions (Simpson, 1988).

The subsequent principle elucidated in Aristotle's Theory of Poetry is universality. In contrast to historians, poets engage in speculation regarding forthcoming events rather than retelling past occurrences. The distinction between poets and historians does not

lie in the usage of prose or verse in their respective works. Poetry exhibits a higher intellectual and serious tone in comparison to history due to its emphasis on universal themes rather than occurrences. In contrast to the object itself, "the universal" is defined by Aristotle as the type of action or statement that kind of man is predisposed to perform or articulate. The pursuit of the universality of nature, according to Aristotle, is the aim of poets. Philosophy, according to Aristotle, investigates the universal, and his universal was the abstract universal (Heath, 1991).

Furthermore, cultural factors contribute to the comprehension of human phenomena and behavior. Cultural Studies, as defined by Stuart Hall, is the scholarly examination of the various influences that shape the daily lives of all people. This discipline examines numerous cultural manifestations, including literature, art,

and upstream media, among others. This theory is unquestionably thought-provoking, and its stimulating nature is further enhanced by the societal perspectives it highlights. Culture redefines existence by portraying that it is not solely determined by conventional metrics like politics or economics, but rather by a combination of factors. This theory illustrates a number of guiding principles for the field of study: identity and reality are both social constructions; beliefs are contingent on perceptions of reality; society is characterized by a struggle for power; and cultural codes generate identities as a result of this struggle (Phillips & Hall, 1997).

Marxism, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is an ongoing and evolving literary theory that asserts the necessity of considering the cultural context in which a particular text originated to formulate an appropriate critique (which is precisely defined as one that aligns with socialist or Marxist ideologies). Marxists contend that theoretical examinations of society and literature are inextricably linked (Belkhir, 2001).

This relationship necessitates that a Marxist approach to literary analysis considers elements beyond the traditional concerns of literary analysis, including figures of speech, literary themes, narrative, and character development. Marxism transcends these literary components in order to reveal the author's domain and perspective. Marxist critics identify ideology as one of their primary concerns through an examination of the author's worldview and the historical context of the text. What intrigues these critics is the author's manifested ideology within the literary space, as well as the manner in which this ideology intersects with the reader's individual ideology (Gimenez, 2001).

In addition to the ideologies of the author and the readers, an analysis of the literary or creative features of a text must consider its dynamic relationship to history, the economic means of production and consumption that contributed to its creation, and the economic conditions of that time.

The proletariat is either consciously or unconsciously subjected to the ideology and rule of the dominant class, which is exposed

through this type of political and ideological investigation regarding class conflict. It further exposes what Marxists call fragmentation, a fractured and fragmented society, by disclosing the workers' detachment not only from the goods they manufacture but also from society and from one another, a phenomenon known as alienation. It is the critic's responsibility to expose and condemn this anti-proletarian ideology, while also demonstrating how it ensnares and subjugates the working classes in all facets of life. Above all else, Marxist critics hope that by means of this analysis they can illuminate to the proletariat how a socialist commitment can liberate them from bourgeois oppression (Belkhir, 2001).

Furthermore, psychoanalysis provides a deeper understanding of one's challenges. Sigmund Freud's psychological theory involves the analysis of the author or a character in their work. It facilitates the comprehension of the writer's goals and the characters' intentions for the audience. This criticism provides insight into the writer's stylistic choices, the impact of their personal circumstances on their work, and the underlying motivations behind the characters' behavior. It emphasizes that the intended audience for the story is the reader, rather than the creator, as previously suggested (Hoffman, 1950).

The psychological method, which encompasses the impact of psychology on both literature and literary criticism, was primarily shaped by the contributions of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Sigmund Freud proposed the hypothesis that literary pieces serve as a manifestation of the covert unconscious desires and fears harbored by the author. Therefore, analyzing the conduct of a character enables the reader to uncover details about their upbringing, family dynamics, obsessions, psychological wounds, and internal struggles. Nevertheless, the work does not explicitly state these facts; instead, they are frequently conveyed indirectly using dreams, symbols, and imagery. Thus, this critique can occasionally offer readers insights into comprehending the symbols, acts, and surroundings that would otherwise be challenging to grasp. Psychological critique disregards the author's objectives. On the con-

trary, it focuses mostly on the unintended aspects of the writer's work, specifically the unconscious elements that are there (Bressler, 2011).

Carl Jung explores the relationship between literature and a concept known as the '*collective unconscious of the human race*.' This idea posits that all narratives and symbols are derived from archetypes rooted in humanity's historical background. Jung was the pioneer in establishing a connection between the concept of archetype and literature (Hoffman, pp. 1950).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to exercise great responsibility when employing this criticism as a means of analyzing a piece of work, as it has the potential to exaggerate and undermine its value. The individual tasked with analyzing this material must use precaution to eliminate projecting any personal psychological biases onto the analysis. When investigating the biographical history of the writer, the critic must be careful to avoid false attributions.

Methods

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), a subset of the qualitative research method, is utilized in this literary research. Every aspect of a particular activity or circumstance is meticulously described by a qualitative research method. Qualitative research methods are intrinsically linked to the researcher as the primary instrument and the direct source of data. Additionally, the quantitative data utilized for inductive analysis is not present in this qualitative study; rather, it consists of interview transcripts and textual data (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Due to the researcher's presumption that power relations are discursive, CDA was also deliberately

selected for this reason. Thus, discourse serves as a medium for the exchange and expression of peace in the symbols and images of the literary text.

Texts that are subject to CDA often reveal strategies that seem ordinary or impartial at first glance but may in fact be ideological in nature and aim to influence the portrayal of events and individuals for their own benefit. By denaturalizing the language, this approach unveils the symbolic and visual representations of peace that comprise the Darangen epic of the Meranaw people.

Sources of Data

The primary source for this data comes from the English translation of the Meranaw epic Darangen, Volume 1. There are 645 verses in the Meranaw language and English translations in Volume 1 (Books 1, 2, and 3), which spans 233 pages. Based in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Philippines, the Folklore Division of Mindanao State University Research Center (now the Mamitua Saber Research and Technology Center) translated, collated, and published the Darangen in 1986 with eight (8) volumes with the support of the Toyota Foundation. Rather than being written by a single live person, the Darangen is an anthology of stories that have been handed down through generations.

Published papers, including published and unpublished research, internet sources, and literature books make up the secondary data.

Results and Discussion

Symbols and images from the Meranaw epic Darangen that are analyzed in relation to peace are detailed in the table below:

Table 1. Symbols and Images of Peace

Symbols and Images	Meanings in relation to Peace
...dark...confused times...	fear
...kingdom...space...no wife	marriage
...royal torogan...	dialogue
... flags...	status
...neutral pink...pleasing violet...	royalty
...green malong...	tolerance
...jewels...properties	power
...gold...soil...	nobility & proletariat

Symbols and Images	Meanings in relation to Peace
...tower...clean...beauty	cleanliness
...agong...	communication
fallen crown...chief died...	discontinuity
white flag	death
turning to the left	politeness
...offerings..	sacrifice
...stain...honor and fight	pride
...stone...amulet...tonong	divinity
nori bird	harmony
spirit	support
...magic chair...	safety
..shield...star...	divine protection
sword...Dagenday o Matangkal...	courage

Fear, marriage, dialogue, status, royalty, tolerance, power, nobility and proletariat, cleanliness, communication, discontinuity, death, politeness, sacrifice, pride, royalty, divinity, harmony, support, safety, divine protection, and courage are the meanings of the symbols and images in relation to peace.

The following verses 1-5 of Chapter 1 (*The First Ruler: Diwata Ndaw Gibon*) of the epic Darangen (Volume 1) reveal that a community or a group of people without someone to lead them may result to fear, confusion, and uncertainty among its people:

*In these our dark and confused times
Well-informed men are hard to find,
For very few would know all things,
Good and bad or just anything.
Now let us change this condition:*

This also implies that having an ethical, well-informed leader who can better the situation of his people and community is crucial for maintaining a peaceful community. But the verses above also stressed that leaders with these qualities are hard to come by, especially in times of uncertainty and distress. Hence, a Meranaw community may be in disarray with the absence of those attributes in a leader.

Additionally, the epic reveals that “marriage” is a highly regarded tradition in the Meranaw community which serves as the foundation of peace, tranquillity, and cooperation. A

Meranaw woman when asked as a wife becomes an equal partner in building a peaceful home. Marriage is also recognized as the most peaceful force in the Meranaw community that unites not only two individuals but also their families. Also, marriage in the epic is considered as an act that fosters linkages, cooperation, and respect among people. This is evident in the following verses in Volume 1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen epic:

verses 23-26:
*His kingdom was one vacant space
Because he had as yet no wife
No fair partner to grace his throne
And help him organize the place*

verses 562-567:
*If you give your consent, dear wife,
I shall marry all of them, thus
Linking us to these great domains.
If this plan of mine succeeds then
It shall bring much glory and fame
To Iliyan a Bembaran!”*

Furthermore, the Meranaw royal *torogan* serves not only as a seat of authority but also as a prominent emblem of peacebuilding throughout the Meranaw community. It symbolizes dialogue. This is because the *torogan* serves as an inclusive space where individuals may freely share ideas, address various concerns, and reach consensus on nonviolent measures. This is primarily exemplified in lines 107-115 of Chapter 1 of the Darangen (Volume 1):

*It was thus proper at that time
To assemble in one small group
All of the prominent datu
And all the people of the place
At the royal torogan there
And bring them into discussion
About the present situation
And the problem that now confronts
Their king, Diwata Ndaw Gibon*

Moreover, the epic paints the Meranaw *torogan* as a magnificent palace that is hailed by the *tonong* (spirits) as a revered residence where individuals, even foreign princesses, are welcome to reside. Accepting visitors is understood by the Meranaw people as an expression of peace.

On the other hand, displaying flags at major events in a Meranaw community is a long-standing tradition. The flags should be flown at appropriate times with appropriate colors. For instance, in Chapter 1, Verses 245-249 of Volume 1 of the Darangen, there is an image of flags streaming:

*All things on this boat were changed
All the buntings and the bright flags,
Not the red flags that announced war
But the gay flags for festivals
Especially those for courting.*

This further implies that flags represent social status. It further demonstrates that the Meranaw people raise flags to display their intentions, celebrate feats, or draw attention to special occasions. The Meranaw people also employ various colors in their flags to inform the community if they are rejoicing, grieving, or doing other related familial functions.

It is remarkable that the Meranaw people exhibit a strong inclination towards specific hues, including neutral pink, yellow, and violet, which are exclusively recognized and worn by the nobility, including princes and princesses. With due consideration given to the occasion, the colors of the garments donned by the Meranaw nobility are meticulously decided. Like the green *malong*, which represents tranquility or tolerance, illustrated in verses 863-

881 of the Volume 1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen:

*She controlled her sorrow and laid
Aside her feelings, felt better
As she remembered the advice
Of her brother who had told her
That she should never go against
Her husband, forget her sorrows,
Do whatever he wants and try
Her best always to look for ways
To bring progress and improvement,
To give more fame to Bembaran.
Spurred by these encouraging thoughts
Which brought a change of mind and heart,
She suddenly stood up and fixed
Her dress, shaking it up and down
So that her finr green *malong* moved
Like ripples that made her forget
All the sad things that had happened,
So she could accept quite well
His marriage to all these ladies.*

Additionally, the Meranaw people have their own unique style of expressing themselves creatively and peacefully without getting physically aggressive towards themselves or others, which is further strengthened by their meticulous practice of assigning colors to every emotion or celebration.

The Meranaw nobility, like other nobles, often flaunt their wealth and authority through the possession of fine jewelry and other items. As dowries and other valuable possessions play an important role in maintaining peace within the Meranaw community. This is clearly portrayed in verses 713-721 of Volume 1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen:

*And if the dowry asked cannot
Be covered by Bembaran's wealth,
I will at once send messengers
To Minango'aw a Rogong
To get jewels and properties
Of all kinds, to be ready for
The dowries that will be required
By all those places, near and far,
Where live those ladies you will court*

Furthermore, gold has long been closely associated with royalty and nobility. Gold serves as a symbol of social hierarchy among the Meranaw people. Those who possess gold are considered royalty, while those who do not are classified as proletariat. Peace can be achieved by embracing one's position within the socio-political and economic structure of the Meranaw community. This is regarded as a voluntary and favorable acceptance of one's social role in Meranaw peacebuilding. This is evident in verses 1077-1088 of Volume 1: Chapter 1 of the epic Darangen:

*Let me then remind you also
Of one thing: you, yourselves, should not
Mix with common folks, even when
You are poor, for gold does not mix
With soil, so don't go marry
Their daughters for you will be blamed.
But remain pure even when poor,
For as clouds cannot hide the sun
For long, so, too, will you soon
Find the proper consort, for people
Will despise you if you did not
Do you best to marry high.*

In addition, the cleanliness of a Meranaw family is indicative of good character as it promotes tranquility in the mind, body, and psyche. Verses 1223-1231 of the Vol. 1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen portrays cleanliness as a representation of beauty, grandeur, and a harmonious community.

*I must also ask you, my sons,
That you both take care of
The tower of our princesses.
Be sure to keep it always clean
Because it is quite widely known
And recognized for the beauty
Of your royal sisters whose fames
Have reached all the lands about us—
Yes, all the surrounding regions.*

The *agong* was also a means of communication for the Meranaw people. Whenever there is a major community ceremony, like a funeral, peace talks, or defense, the *agong* is struck. Therefore, the Meranaw people interpret the *agong's* beating as a symbolic and transactional

means of peace communication which also reflects their beliefs and practices. This can be read in verses 1256-1262 of Vol. 1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen:

*I also recommend to you,
Remember it, you both, my sons,
The Magandiya" a Oray
And the other agong, Rogongen,
Which may not be beaten except
When one dies in our family,
Or to call the people for war.*

Additionally, the chief or leader of the community holds great prominence in the Meranaw community. He actively pursues measures to establish peace. So the demise of a leader or chief within the Meranaw community will inevitably lead to conflicts among its people, thereby exacerbating their living conditions. Hence, leadership plays an essential role in achieving and establishing a harmonious community. These concealed fears and irregularity are apparent in verses 1275-1277 in Vol.1: Chapter 1 of the Darangen;

*As the chief ruler breathed his last
And there, like a broken flagpole,
A fallen crown, the great chief died.*

Additionally, a white flag signifies the be-reavement of an honored member of the Meranaw community. The deliberate positioning of white flags further indicates that the community or family is psychologically unstable as an outcome of the demise of a prominent figure or a family member. This is apparent in verses 1391-1401 of Volume 1: Chapter of the epic Darangen:

*Let us have, too, two small white flags
That we post on the river banks;
Every tree shall bear a white flag
In our every territory
On this land we call Bembaran,
To inform every one and all
In the neighboring settlements,
Especially the royal folk,
That someone so noted has died,
Of the highest rank, with power
Over this land and half the sea*

As an additional act of courtesy and reverence, the epic describes how the Meranaw people turn to the left prior to engaging in conversation. The Meranaw people employ this particular feature as a prerequisite for engaging in peaceful discourse with others. Verses 32-33 of Volume 1: Chapter 2 (*Kambembaran: The Story of Bembaran*) of the Meranaw epic Darangen illustrated this:

*After he had heard the statement
Of Dadiwanga Diliyon,
Turning slowly towards his left...*

Certainly, the Meranaw are a peaceful people, because bringing an offering is an inseparable part of their culture. An offering is a gesture executed by a Meranaw in order to alleviate the distress of another individual, thereby ensuring that the one who receives it may live a life of tranquility and improved health. This is also evident in verses 175-182 of Volume 1: Chapter 2 of the epic Darangen;

*All the datus, prominent peers,
Of Malinday a Bembaran.
Then they began to give away
To all these prominent datus
Rich clothes of different colors,
Yes, to each of the datus there,
And to the respected teachers—
Offerings for sick Mineren.*

Also, the Meranaw people possess a profound cultural reverence for *maratabat*. This refers to their deep sense of honor, self-worth, reputation, and dignity. The Meranaw people understand that peace can always be achieved when others recognize and respect their *maratabat*. This is clearly illustrated in verses 309-314 of Volume 1: Chapter 2 of the Darangen:

*Anywhere, for I shall leave this
Place, Iliyan a Bembaran,
For I have to remove the stain
On our people's honor and fight
For Iliyan a Bembaran*

and in verses 380-391 of Vol. 1: Chapter 2:

*Our Iliyan a Bembaran,
Because there would be no one left,
Not one of the reigning datus
Could come to defend our country.
Nor could one stop the abduction
Of all the women in the place
And all the children, because they
Would be captured by enemies:
Besides they would get our wealth,
Our treasures, our precious heirlooms
Which should only be handed down
To the descendants of Gibonen.*

In addition to upholding one's honor, the Meranaw people have a disciplined manner of living that enhances both personal and interpersonal harmony. This implies that individuals inside the community should adopt a systems thinking approach rather than an archipelagic thinking approach. All processes operate in excellent coordination, akin to the coordinated movements of a nori bird. This is evident in the beautiful verses 610-19 of the Volume 1: Chapter 2 of the Darangen below:

*He donned it properly, placing
The magnificent helmet just
Atop the kerchief he had tied
So snugly around his forehead.
And now the picture was complete,
In his colorful clothing he looked
Like a beautiful nori bird:
Who would not admire him moving,
His every step did shake the plumes
As though the breeze had blown across...*

In addition, the Meranaws actively pursue divine protection in order to attain their aspirations of establishing a tranquil and cohesive society. The symbols and images depicted in the Darangen, such as the spirit representing assistance, the magic chair symbolizing safety, and the shield with a star representing divine guidance and protection, clearly demonstrate these concepts. The symbols and images in the epic are regarded to be divine sources of motivation, safeguarding, and inner tranquility for the characters. These are creatively portrayed

in verses 790-797 of Volume: Chapter 3 (*Kap-madali: Story of Madali*) of the Darangen:

*Behind a mountain that would hide
Its brightness out of human sight.
And now I also call on you,
O Spirits there in the tower,
With power over half the sea,
For you are the Spirits assigned
To serve as the guards of all these
Regions found around the whole sea.*

and the *magic chair* in verses 800-811, Vol.1: Chapter 3:

*Please come down and be at my call.
And out of your kindness, serve me.
Bring down to me from the skyworld
The decorated flying chair
Use for travelling in the sky,
But when folded can be a boat.
Please place on this magic chair,
Our two beautiful princesses
Who live in the high tower here
And take them up there in the sky,
Hide them in the thick clouds and keep
Them there until I have returned...*

also the *shield...star* in verses 2405-2409, Vol.1: Chapter 3:

*Its end pointed up to the skies.
Removing it from the its scabbard,
He turned around three times and moved
How his shield had a star in front...*

Moreover, the Meranaws are renowned for their prowess in forging exquisite swords, which they employ as weapons to protect themselves from violent entities. Contrary to the commonly held assumption that swords are solely instruments of destruction, the Meranaw people perceive the sword as more than just a weapon. The heirloom is only given to a Meranaw chief or leader who bears the responsibility for ensuring peace and harmony within the community. The sword grants its bearer with strength, power, and courage, maintaining harmony among the Meranaw community. This is effectively portrayed in verses 2687-2694 of Volume 1: Chapter 3 of the Darangen:

*This was the time for Madali'
To go forward, reaching later
The clean wide playground where he took
A stand, thrust his sword on the ground,
The Dagenda o Matangkal,
The wrapped heirloom used to be kept
Near the window of the princess
In Magoyoda Selegen.*

Conclusion

The Meranaws have a distinct way of understanding and interpreting the concept of peace, and all the symbols and images that are portrayed in Volume 1 of the epic *Darangen* illustrate that. Marriage, the way congregations are led in the *torogan*, the colors of the *malong*, the flags, the jewelry and gold, the offering of presents, and the numerous images of divinity, such as spirits, magic chairs, and shields, all contribute to the presence of peace in the epic. In addition, the concept of peace in the Meranaw community is exceptional in that to have peace, one must acknowledge and value the honor, dignity, self-esteem, and reputation of others. This, based on the epic, is the only way that peace can be maintained. This study provides further evidence that the values held by the present-day Meranaw people are profoundly resembled through the various symbols and images revealed in the Meranaw epic *Darangen*.

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