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## Research Article

### Sweet Heritage: Preserving Meranaw Identity Through Mamis Delicacies

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to help the Meranaw people to verify the veracity that behind their colorful, rich and beautiful culture, there is Mamis which symbolizes the royalty and hospitality of every Meranaw. In which every Meranaw occasions, engagements, merry-making, and homecoming of people who had gone to Hajj, and during the two religious feasts, Eid'l Adha and Eid'l Fitr there should be a serving of sweet desserts together with the main course or dish. This study is anchored by various theories to strengthen the analysis. First is the Foodways Theory (Douglas, 1984) which analyzes food's role in shaping cultural identity and community, and the second one is the Culinary Cultural Heritage (Henderson, 2009) which highlights food's significance in preserving cultural traditions. In determining the nature and the purpose of the study, the researchers used two ways of gathering data, Random Sampling method and Purposive Sampling method through the medium of self - made validated survey questionnaire and in - depth interview with the self-made guide questions. The study came up to conclude that the level of awareness among the respondents were on positive side result since majority of the respondents have tasted or seen these identified delicacies of the Meranaw despite the influences of the multi diversified colonial cuisine which indicates the preservation still remains today to some extent. Moreover, this study concludes that Mamis delicacy makes it more unique from other culture especially the ceremonials and rituals that are associated with it. These delicacies are commonly served during Meranao festivities in authentic Pagana. The method of preparation involved in making mamis has been transmitted from generation to generation which shape the characters and identity of Meranaws.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Delicacy, Mamis, Meranaw, Heritage, Pagana, Preservation*

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## Introduction

Many researchers have spent so much research about Pagana Meranaw, a prestige feast of the Meranaw without giving much emphasis on one of its highlight and important dish the so called "Mamis" (sweet desserts) that is always serve together with the main course of a meal, that is why the researcher were prompted to focus on a topic about Mamis delicacies, its role and relevance in the preservation of Meranaw cultural heritage.

The Meranaw known as the people of the Lake are looked up in this contemporary society as one of the tribal group in Mindanao who are well numbered of educated and professionals. Sometimes the effect of these western education and professionalism is the unfamiliarization of one's identity, culture and heritage. Millennial youngsters engage much or patronize heavily to what was introduce to them by the social media, TV information and colonial environment, forgetting the colorful, rich and beautiful culture his Meranaw forefathers left for perusal and enrichments. To many Meranaw teenagers they do not know what Mamis is and even identified one. What is familiar to them is brought by the multi diversified colonial products for commercial value and popularization.

This study will help the Meranaw especially to verified the veracity that behind their colorful, rich and beautiful culture, there is Mamis which symbolizes the royalty and hospitability of every Meranaw in which every Meranaw occasions, engagements, merrymaking, and homecoming of people who had gone to Hajj, and during the two religious feasts, Eid'l Adha and Eid'l Fitr should be served as sweet desserts together with the main course or dish.

In a grand occasion traditional Mamis are usually hang in a colorful "Marigay" that is best decorated and some serve them on a "dulang" and used as sangkad (crown) that must be looked presentable and attractive. Therefore, this study badly needs attention for us to be able to understand and identify the role and relevance of Mamis in the preservation of Meranaw cultural Heritage.

## Literature Review

### *Mamis*

"Mamis" is a Meranaw term that refers to food items often served as sweets after meals or taken informally as snacks. These specialties are commonly served during Meranao festivities in authentic Pagana. The method of preparation involved in making mamis has been transmitted from generation to generation. Traditionally, no measuring cups, spoons or thermometers have been used. The success of cooking depended solely on the mastery of food combinations and flavoring to suit the taste and on the methods of cooking that the cooks have found practical through repeated application (Gania – Pangandaman, 1990).

According to the study of Macadaag (1990) as cited by Magomapra (2016) entitled "the M'ranaw Culinary Culture: Yesterday and Today" food is considered in Islam as the following: 1. Rahma (mercy) from Allah, 2. Riskih (gift), 3. One of the panabi – nabian (prophets), 4. As satisfying hunger, 5. As rasa (nutrients), 6. As bolong (medicine), 7. As having social value (keeps family and community united and cohesive), 8. As having niawa (spirit) as in the case of rice, 9. As an appetizer, 10. As having the capacity to beautify, 11. As a source of strength, and as a symbol of rank and social status.

Magompara (2016) further cited the study of Pangandaman (1990) entitled "The art of Meranaw Cookery" in which she mentioned the use of the word "art" on her study may invite a variety of meaning, two of which are relevant. At one level, "art" refers to Meranaw food's aesthetic aspect that is to the pleasing selection, preparation and serving of the food and in a way that appeals to the senses. On the another level, it implies the belief that "art" may be so much a part of our daily living that it helps us to do more beautifully the simple, homely things of life as well as the more unusual. She added that food has a fundamental role in one's struggle for existence and is an integral part of the person's life style. Its significance however is beyond that of simply providing nourishment for one's body. Food is not only necessary for the physical need of a man to survive. These basic needs are universal and their fulfillment is determined by the culture of the group to which the individual belongs.

In connection to that, the study of Omar (2016) entitled "Tasting History: The Mamis of the Meranaw" revealed that there are factors that encourage the continuity of making Mamis among the Meranaw in Lanao del Sur or anywhere else in the Philippines, to wit:

A. Agricultural Production.

The Province has a cool and pleasant climate which is distinguished by an even distribution of rainfall throughout the year. Because of this cool climate, agriculture is the basic means of their income. Rice and coconut are the main products and other crops grown in the province are harvested three times a year. The native sweets are made from the crops through processed products like glutinous rice and coconut milk. Traditional sweets like the Amik and Dodol are made from these crops.

B. Great festivities and welcoming

During the important occasions, there is bounty of food and entertainment for people. The Meranaw have unique celebrations which differ from other cultures. When someone arrives home from a long journey, like pilgrimage to Mecca or Hajj, everyone gets busy planning before guests the family member arrives. Islamic Events such as; Eid'l Fitr and Eid'l Adha, these days come only once a year and is joyously celebrated. During these occasions, they exchange foods which show signs of love and care to everyone. Furthermore, welcome greetings to kin even visitors, preparing of food is necessary especially the serving of Mamis which preserve tradition.

C. Market Availability

The market plays a big role with the existence of Mamis. Even with the labor hindrances in preparing and cooking procedure, the market fills the gap between the consumer and the supplier. Moreover, the marketing of Mamis serves as the source of income to some Meranaw and these business that help the busy people.

D. The cultural Aspect

There are some people located in the remote area of Lake Lanao eat Mamis even if there are no special occasions. According to these people, they want to preserve the Mamis because they do not want it to disappear and be changed by the western food. In connection to that, Solaiman (2016) revealed in her study entitled "The Meranaw Taste of cultural food and

its ontological implication to the Meranaw" that there are similar food to every culture, but what makes it more unique to other culture in Meranaw specifically are the ceremonials and rituals that are associated with it, the different chant and association of these foods to the spirits are what makes these food cultural one in Meranaw.

Moreover, her study mentioned four different kinds of Meranaw food that define who the Meranaw are, and she concluded that these foods shape the characters and identity of Meranaws are very loving, caring, hospitable, generous and brave in a right way.

Also, Magomapara (2016) argued in his study that the underlying belief and practices of the Meranaw in their cuisine in its preparation and preservation still remains today to some extent. In terms of technical process, most of the practices and beliefs are still in place. However, some of the beliefs and practices on the cultural aspect have already been disregarded to the growing consciousness on Islam. But regardless of religion Islam, the old folks especially on the rural areas, are still practicing what their beliefs and practices about their traditional cuisine.

## **Methods**

In determining the nature and the purpose of the study, the researchers used two ways of gathering data, Random Sampling method and Purposive Sampling method through the medium of self-made validated survey questionnaire and face to face Interview with the self-made guide questions. These are employed through distributing personally to the respondents and on the in-depth interview; the researchers had personally visit the key-informants at home and in their respective Office. Frequency, percentage distribution, and weighted mean are the statistical tools which were used to analyze and interpret the gathered data.

## **Result and Discussion**

This part of the study presents, among others, analyzes and interprets the quantitative data gathered from the field. The data obtained from the respondents were their socio-economic profiles, their awareness on Meranaw delicacies, their view on the relevance of the

Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage, and their view on the role of the Meranaw Community in the preservation of the Mamis delicacies. This will be presented in tables for analysis and interpretation to come up with the findings of this study.

**Part I. The socio-economic profile of the respondents**

The following tables below present the data gathered about the socio-economic profiles such as age, sex, civil status, and profession.

*Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Age*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>15-20</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>21-30</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>31-40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>41-50</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>51-60</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>61+</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 manifests the frequency and percentage distribution of the 100 respondents according to their age. Age is categorized into 15-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61 and above years old with its corresponding frequency and percentage.

As shown in Table 1 above, 55% of the respondents belong to the age bracket of 15-20, followed by the age bracket, 21-30 with 23%, followed by 31-40 with 10%, followed by 41-50 with 9%, followed by 61 and above with 3% and lastly, 51-60 with 0%. This implies that the majority of the respondents are those aged 15-20.

*Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Sex*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 manifests the frequency and percentage distribution of the 100 respondents according to their sex. Sex is categorized into Male and Female with its corresponding

frequency and percentage. As shown in Table 2 above, 60% of the respondents are female and 40% are male. This implies that the majority of the respondents are female

*Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Civil Status*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Single</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Married</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Divorcee</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Widow</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 manifests the frequency and percentage distribution of the 100 respondents

according to their civil status. Civil status is categorized into single, married, divorcee, and

widow(er) with its corresponding frequency and percentage.

As shown in Table 3 above, 75% of the respondents are single, 24% are married, 1% is a

divorcee, and there is no widow(er). This implies that the majority of the respondents single.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profession

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Student</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Government Employee</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 manifests the frequency and percentage distribution of the 100 respondents according to their profession. Profession is categorized into student, Government employee, and other professions with its corresponding frequency and percentage.

As shown in Table 4 above, 75% of the respondents are students, 15% are government employees, and 10% are in other field of works. This implies that the majority of the respondents are students.

## Part II. Identified Mamis Delicacies of the Meranaw in the Philippines

In general, the Meranao Mamis is classified into a 1. Mala a Mamis and the 2. Maroni a Mamis. Mala or Large Mamis is prepared in Bulk and usually a main principal feature of special occasions among the Meranaws while Maroni a Mamis refers to small mamis. Some Maroni a Mamis in their original Meranao names are listed below.

1. Apang
2. Aper
3. Awami
4. Balukodi
5. Barobud
6. Batugen
7. Browa
8. Buribid
9. Datumanong
10. Daug
11. Dilata
12. Dunggaw
13. Katumbar
14. Kinwit
15. Kosiri

16. Ladamis
17. Lukatis
18. Lupad
19. Nakas
20. Ongkalwag
21. Pabrot
22. Padada
23. Pakbol
24. Panagan Sulog
25. Panganan sina
26. Perkambing
27. Pinuted
28. Ribon
29. Saliyasulog
30. Sama a samar
31. Sarikaya
32. Sikarang
33. Sindul
34. Solabay
35. Taginupun
36. Tamokonsi
37. Tanda
38. Tapisa

## Part III. Level of awareness of the respondents on Meranaw delicacies

Table 5 below displays the mean rating on the level of awareness of the respondents on Meranaw delicacies. The table below presents the statements that evaluate the level of awareness of the respondents on Meranaw delicacies. It includes 5 columns. The first one enumerates the statement indicators; the second one are the sum; the third one are the means; the next ones are the qualitative descriptions; and the 5th one is the rank of the respondents' answers to each indicator.

Table 5. Level of Awareness of the Respondents on Meranaw Delicacies

Statement Indicators	Sum	Mean	Qualitative description	Rank
1. Are you aware that there are different identified delicacies of Meranao in the Philippines?	456	4.56	Always	1
5. Have you really gone into wide appreciation of these different Meranaw delicacies?	415	4.15	Often	2
2. Have you tasted or seen these identified delicacies of the Meranaw?	405	4.05	Often	3
4. Are these identified delicacies as luscious as with the rest of tidbits in the Philippines?	380	3.80	Often	4
3. Are these identified delicacies prepared or served in your dining as part of your meal?	307	3.07	Sometimes	5
<b>Over-all Mean</b>		<b>3.93</b>	<b>Often</b>	
<b>Scaling:</b> 1.00 - 1.79: Never    1.80 - 2.59: Seldom    2.60 - 3.39: Sometimes 3.40 - 4.19: Often    4.20 - 5.00: Always				

As shown on Table 5, the respondents on the over-all answered “often” on the five (5) indicators of the level of awareness of the respondents on Meranaw delicacies. Listed above based on their respective means : 1st indicator which ranked first, “Are you aware that there are different identified delicacies of Meranao in the Philippines?”, with a mean of 4.56, interpreted as always; 5th indicator ranked second, “Have you really gone into wide appreciation of these different Meranaw delicacies?”, with a mean of 4.15, interpreted as often; 2nd indicator ranked third, “Have you tasted or seen these identified delicacies of the Meranaw?”, with a mean of 4.05, interpreted as often; 4th indicator ranked fourth, “ Are these identified delicacies as luscious as with the rest of tidbits in the Philippines?”, with a mean of 3.80, interpreted as often; 3rd indicator ranked 5th, “Are these

identified delicacies prepared or served in your dining as part of your meal?”, with a mean of 3.07, interpreted as sometimes.

**Part IIV. Relevance of the Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage**

Table 6 below displays the mean rating on the relevance of the Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage. The table below presents the statements that evaluate the relevance of the Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage. It includes 5 columns. The first one enumerates the statement indicators; the second one are the sum; the third one are the means; the next one are the qualitative descriptions; and the 5th one is the rank of the respondents’ answers to each indicator.

Table 6. Relevance of the Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage

Statement Indicators	Sum	Mean	Qualitative description	Rank
3. Mamis delicacy shows the artistic creativity of Meranaws	447	4.47	Highly agree	1
4. Mamis delicacy is served in a different occasion as ways of welcoming special guests and visitors	438	4.38	Highly agree	2
1. Mamis delicacy symbolizes Meranaw royalty and hospitality	438	4.38	Highly agree	3
5. Mamis delicacy is what makes the Meranao different and unique from other ethnic groups in the Philippines	435	4.35	Highly agree	4

Statement Indicators	Sum	Mean	Qualitative description	Rank
2. Mamis delicacy is served in a different occasion that is usually hanged in a colorful Marigay to consider it as a grand occasion	432	4.32	Highly agree	5
<b>Over-all Mean</b>		<b>4.38</b>	<b>Highly agree</b>	
Scaling: 1.00 - 1.79: Never 3.40 - 4.19: Often	1.80 - 2.59: Seldom 4.20 - 5.00: Always	2.60 - 3.39: Sometimes		

As shown on Table 6, the respondents on the over-all answered “highly agree” on the five (5) indicators of the relevance of the Mamis delicacies in the preservation of the Meranaw cultural heritage. Listed above based on their respective means : 3rd indicator which ranked first, “A Mamis delicacy shows the artistic creativity of Meranaws”, with a mean of 4.47, interpreted as highly agree; 1st and 4th indicator tied on the second rank, “Mamis delicacy symbolizes Meranaw royalty and hospitability”, with a mean of 4.38, interpreted as highly agree and “Mamis delicacy is served in a different occasion as ways of welcoming special guests and visitors” with also a mean of 4.38, interpreted also as highly agree ; 5th indicator ranked fourth, “Mamis delicacy is what makes the Meranao different and unique from other ethnic groups in the Philippines”, with a mean of 4.35, interpreted as highly agree; 2nd indicator

ranked fifth, “Mamis delicacy is served in a different occasion that is usually hanged in a colorful Marigay to consider it as a grand occasion”, with a mean of 4.32, interpreted as highly agree.

**Part V. The Role of the Meranaw Community in the Preservation of the Mamis Delicacies**

Table 7 below displays the mean rating on the role of the Meranaw community in the preservation of the Mamis delicacies. The table below presents the statements that evaluate tthe role of the Meranaw community in the preservation of the Mamis delicacies. It includes 5 columns. The first one enumerates the statement indicators; the second one are the sum; the third one are the means; the next one are the qualitative descriptions; and the 5th one is the rank of the respondents’ answers to each indicator.

Table 7. The Role of the Meranaw Community in the Preservation of the Mamis Delicacies

Statement Indicators	Sum	Mean	Qualitative description	Rank
1. The Meranaw community should introduce Mamis delicacy to festivity for wide appreciation	440	4.40	Highly agree	1
2. The meranaw community should introduce Mamis delicacy to the market because it is not readily available outside Meranaw community	435	4.35	Highly agree	2
3. The Meranaw community should manufacture Mamis delicacy for import purposes	432	4.32	Highly agree	3
5. Mamis delicacy is what makes the Meranao different and unique from other ethnic groups in the Philippines	430	4.30	Highly agree	4
4. Meranaw eateries should also offer and serve Mamis delicacy on their menu	427	4.27	Highly agree	5
<b>Over-all Mean</b>		<b>4.33</b>	<b>Highly agree</b>	
Scaling: 1.00 - 1.79: Never 3.40 - 4.19: Often	1.80 - 2.59: Seldom 4.20 - 5.00: Always	2.60 - 3.39: Sometimes		

As shown on Table 7, the respondents on the over-all answered “highly agree” on the five (5) indicators of the role of the Meranaw community in the preservation of the Mamis delicacies. Listed above based on their respective means : 1<sup>st</sup> indicator which ranked first, “The Meranaw community should introduce Mamis delicacy to festivity for wide appreciation”, with a mean of 4.40, interpreted as *highly agree*; 2<sup>nd</sup> indicator ranked second, “The meranaw community should introduce Mamis delicacy to the market because it is not readily available outside Meranaw community”, with a mean of 4.35, interpreted as *highly agree*; 3<sup>rd</sup> indicator ranked third, “ The Meranaw community should manufacture Mamis delicacy for import purposes”, with a mean of 4.32, interpreted as *highly agree*; 5<sup>th</sup> indicator ranked fourth, “ Mamis delicacy is what makes the Meranao different and unique from other ethnic groups in the Philippines”, with a mean of 4.30, interpreted as *highly agree*; 4<sup>th</sup> indicator ranked fifth, “Meranaw eateries should also offer and serve Mamis delicacy on their menu”, with a mean of 4.27, interpreted as *highly agree*.

### Conclusion

The study came up to conclude that the level of awareness among the respondents were on positive side result since majority of the respondents have tasted or seen these identified delicacies of the Meranaw despite the influences of the multi diversified colonial cuisine which indicates the preservation still remains today to some extent

Moreover, this study concludes that Mamis delicacy makes it more unique from other culture especially the ceremonials and rituals that are associated with it. These delicacies are commonly served during Meranao festivities in authentic Pagana. The method of preparation involved in making mamis has been transmitted from generation to generation which shape the characters and identity of Meranaws.

### Recommendations

Based on the significant finding of the study, the following recommendations were arrived at:

- The researchers recommends that the LGUs of Lanao del Sur especially in Marawi City should conduct a short term courses and seminars in preparing and preserving our traditional food especially Mamis to preserve the Meranaw culture in terms of traditional food;
- The researchers suggests that more Meranaw eateries should serve and cater Mamis;
- Also, the researchers highly recommends that more studies concerning Meranaw traditional food be conducted to further preserve and promote our Cultural Heritage;

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And above all the almighty ALLAH, the lord of Universe, the Supreme Creator and the Source of all Knowledge

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