

## Historical Development Of The Kirim Language: Its Benefits To 21st-Century Learners

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### Abstract

*This research analyzed the historical evolution of Kirim by examining surviving documents printed in the script through content analysis. The purpose of the activity was to safeguard the recorded Kirim manuscripts, which are integral to the cultural legacy of the Meranaw people. The study employed qualitative historical research to enhance and revise Meranaw history by exploring accounts from surviving manuscripts written in Kirim. This involved methods such as collecting archival data, locating surviving cultural artifacts, recording narratives, and analyzing content from primary and secondary sources. The informants were literate in kirim, Islamic scholars, and owners of surviving kirim manuscripts like Darangen, Salsilah, Bolong, Katao/Kakasi, and Adimat. Information was collected through face-to-face interviews utilizing an interview guide and then documented using a smartphone voice recorder app. The study demonstrated that Kirim played a crucial role in shaping the Meranaw identity by serving as a primary tool for recording their social, cultural, political, and religious activities. Kirim is a modified Arabic writing system that plays a crucial role in chronicling the oral traditions of the Mëranaw people. Kirim should be included in school curricula, especially in social studies classes, and in alignment with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education initiative of the Department of Education to enhance its preservation. Further research on Kirim is needed to analyze its influence on the Meranaw community and its relationships with the writing systems of adjacent Southeast Asian countries.*

**Keywords:** Kirim, Madrasah, Meranaw, Darangen, Bolong, Kakasi, Historical Linguistic.

### INTRODUCTION

The need to rewrite the history of Mëranaws has been a contentious issue among Mëranaw historians in the Philippine's today. Consequently, this has intensely urged them to develop a correct version supported by clearer, deeper discussions and explanations about the Mëranaw society from the pre-Islamic period to the present. In this regard, it is argued that documents and manuscripts written in Kirim should be included as sources of narratives about the Mëranaw people. is the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the Mëranaws, especially their traditional practices, beliefs, ideas, and values, as depicted in early writings that use the Kirim language.

Hopefully, these valuable artifacts will be further preserved through a digitalized system to keep up with the demands of technology. With these, there will be easy access to those documented written accounts for the millennial Mëranaws to recognize the undying legacies of their forefathers. Additionally, it is also aimed by this work to rectify the wrong notion about

the status of some Madaris as the training ground of the terrorists since the Kirim language has contributed significantly to the early tapping of the educational training of early Mëranaws in Lanao del Sur.

Moreover, the Moro people in Mindanao are still remembered as foes to the country's colonizers, specifically the Spaniards. This remembrance of the Moro, the Mëranaws in particular, seems to be slanted. While perceived negatively as foes, Mëranaws, as part of the Moro people, must be perceived as heroes for having successfully protected Mindanao from foreign invasions. This is a significant factor why, until today, essential cultural practices of the Moro people, like those of the Mëranaws, have been preserved. The researcher believes that this study is not the first to correct the misrepresentation of Mëranaws in Philippine history. Kirim, as a uniquely historical local writing system of the Mëranaws and the foci of this study, is one turning point that may reveal the suppressed pieces of Mëranaws' contributions to the intellectual history of Filipino people (Sila, 2018). This, in a way, will lead to changing the progressive outlook of historians, which will primarily affect how ordinary people think of history.

Whether or not the Philippines had a writing system before the colonization period has been the center of argument among historians and archaeologists (Camba, 2021); Thomas, 2012). For example, nationalists contend that there is by citing Baybayin's finding (Porter, 2017). Though only baybayin is now known, it is thought that at least sixteen (16) writing systems existed during the pre-colonial era. The printing of *Doctrina Cristiana*, written in baybayin, made way for the alphabet to be recognized as a writing system among the people of Luzon and Visayas (Vibar, 2021). According to Verzosa (2010), this alphabet is derived from the arrangement of the Arabic alphabet (alif, ba, ta). In addition, baybayin emerged around the 13th century, whose origin traces from the Indian-influenced cultures of Indonesia and Malaysia (Francia, 1997).

Furthermore, this research on Kirim is under Republic Act 9470 of the National Archives of the Philippines Act of 2007, which states that, it is the policy of the State to conserve, promote, and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage resources (Art. I, Sec. 2). By including Kirim to the list of recorded heritage in the Philippines, the Mëranaws will be acknowledged in equal footing with other citizens, which will eventually erase discrimination against the community (Ceniza et al., 2023; Barut & Cabonero, 2020; Buenrostro, 2010).

Historical records show the existence of baybayin as the Filipinos' pre-colonial writing system, but other systems are neglected. Baybayin, as explained above, had a semblance of the Arabic alphabet from which the writing system of the Moro, particularly the Mëranaws, originated (Jenks & Rose, 2011). This is called Kirim and proves the literacy of the Mëranaws in the ancient past, which some Filipino historians claimed to be characterized by oral tradition. While it is true that knowledge was transmitted orally from generation to generation, it could be claimed that this was also supported by written documents using Kirim. The Darangen that serves as a cultural heritage of the Mëranaws is a living testimony that Kirim was a widespread writing system among the pre-Islamic communities. Kirim is a form of writing system written in Arabic, but the language used is Mëranaw (Salau, 2018). Furthermore, this script is used by the early Mëranaws to quickly grasp the teachings of Islam taught in madaris (plural of madrasah or school). Because of the rich vocabulary of the Mëranaws, letters were added to the Arabic text to complement the Mëranaw language. Thus, Islam in Lanao was strongly reinforced, and Mëranaws became the primary supporter of the faith (Esposito, 2011).

The researcher, being a Mëranaw and a teacher of history, is inspired by the idea of enriching the history of the Mëranaws by making a space for them in the written sources of history.

Although there were materials available about the Mëranaws, most of them were supported by oral accounts regarded by some theorists as a weak source (Nakamura et al., 2023). Hence, this study on Kirim will make this literature more reliable and authentic in form.

### **Material and methods**

It utilized qualitative historical research, which essentially aimed to enrich and rewrite the Meranaw history by uncovering accounts of surviving manuscripts written using Kirim, including strategies of gathering archival data, searching for surviving cultural objects, documenting narratives, and content analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Two hundred fifty (250) participants were selected using purposive sampling, with five family respondents purposely chosen from each selected barangay of the thirty-nine (39) municipalities and Marawi City as the informants of the study who were kirim literate, Islamic scholars and owners of kirim surviving manuscripts such as Darangen, Salsilah, Bolong, Katao/Kakasi, and adimat. Data were gathered using an interview guide during the face-to-face interviews and recorded using a smartphone voice recorder application. The study showed that Kirim was integral to the Meranaw identity, mainly used to document their social, cultural, political, and religious events.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The study findings and their interpretation are presented below. The data gathered from the Meranaw family participants, whose households consist of a member or more who can write and understand Kirim, from resource persons who are experts in the historical developments of Kirim, from the archives of various libraries, and other sources such as local museums in Lanao del Sur. Analysis and interpretation revealed and organized in the following order: 1) The existing surviving Kirim in Lanao del Sur; 2) Evolution of Kirim as a language that was used by the early Meranaws; 3) The contribution of Kirim writing system to the Madrasah Schools in Lanao del Sur.

### **Surviving Meranaw Manuscripts Written in Kirim**

To survive the Meranaw manuscripts written in Kirim, the images below are samples of Kirim manuscripts of Meranaw people that survived from various municipalities of Lanao del Sur. These manuscripts exist in the households of some family participants and were freely shared with the researcher during his fieldwork. The Meranaw families, as direct possessors of these artifacts, considered them rare and precious. These Meranaw families wished for the restoration of the torn-out pages of surviving manuscripts, which existed as early as pre-Islamic times, with the Philippine government's help: local and national endeavors. For them, these documents are a source of their intellectual history left unwritten in the pages of history books and almost forgotten by today's breed of Meranaws. In Marawi City, only a few of Kirim's manuscripts have survived due to the 2017 Marawi Siege that occurred in the city. The Arabic alphabet has 28 characters, while Kirim has only 26 characters plus an additional letter ڠ (nga). Participant AC.3 from Piagapo, Lanao del Sur, observed similarities between Kirim and Arabic and slight differences. He said that, “Adën a plagidan o kirim ago so Arabic. Ati makasowa ka sa kirim odi ka matao sa Arabic ka aya kasorat sa Kirim na Arabic, datar o batang a nga. Da nga sa Arabic.” (There is a similarity between Kirim and Arabic. When you know how to read Arabic, you will also learn how to read Kirim. Like the letter “nga,” “nga” is not present in Arabic).

Kirim language is a modified Arabic alphabet that later became a standard writing system of the Mëranaw people. Kirim script is related to another Southeast Asian writing system developed from South Indian Brahmi script Origin and Characteristics of Arabic letters (Zurbuchen et al., 20202). Yet regardless of its origin, the early Mëranaws used the

Kirim language as part of their literary expression. In omniglot.com, an online encyclopedia of writing systems and languages, the Meranaw language was written with a version of Arabic script called Batang Arabic (Arabic letters). At the same time, Meranaw literary texts are known as Kirim.

These are a few of the Kirim manuscripts that have survived and are only found among the Meranaw people of Lanao del Sur. The participants readily consented to the prospect of having their documents exposed for research reasons when asked; however, only those manuscripts that accurately described the nature, substance, and purpose of the documents were chosen from among those that were offered.

Moreover, the presentation only displays the information that are readable. The ones that are currently in existence, though they are not of very high quality, highlight some important political situations in which the Meranaw people find themselves in their bloodline, such as the "Taritib and Ijma," ancient literature that is portrayed in Meranaw literature, cultural heritage (the literary stories Darangen and others), and traditional healing methods represented in "potions and rituals."

All of these instances prove the existence of the Kirim writing system in Meranaw. In Kirim Meranaw, manuscripts collected during fieldwork are listed in the following order:

#### Short Stories of Folk and National Heroes



**Story of Jose Rizal in Kirim script**



**Story of Datu Sumakwel in Kirim**

Meranaw storytellers recorded both the exploits of well-known heroes like Datu Sumakwel, Lapu Lapu, the last Datu of Manila, Dr. Jose Rizal, Emilio Aguinaldo, and Antonio Luna in Kirim. Kirim made the heroic triumphs of these individuals against colonizers toward independence intelligible. Writing their stories through Kirim is a unique way to develop respect and appreciation for Filipino bravery in the Meranaw way (Kelly, 2016). Such stories share a common purpose: to gain moral lessons and build character to promote better life experiences (Milligan & Milligan, 2020). Someone who was unable to read English but could understand Arabic understood and celebrated these tales. In areas like Lanao del Sur, where madrasahs are very common, writing the stories of national heroes in Arabic script is truly a remarkable step to knowing their historical identity (Kelly, 2021).

In addition to explaining and exposing the truth and bravery of the Filipino people, Aguilar's (1994) study highlights the importance of elder respect and obedience—two of the most admirable Ifugao characteristics. It discusses the brave and other characters (Tampos-Cabazares & Cabazares, 2016).

### **Evolution of Kirim as a language that was used by the early Meranaws**

The impact of linguistics on the Meranaw people's cultural component supports linguistic anthropology, which holds that oral transmission is the primary means by which the Meranaw people's cultural practices, particularly those that predate Islamization, continue to permeate people's daily lives. It now serves as a tool for determining their cultural views and ideologies, social identity, and group membership. Kirim evolved from a language to a tool for creating positive social dialogue. For instance, in Salalah, anyone can designate the suitable Datu or Sultan in their community with ease using kirim. As far as is evident, Meranaw people have been assigned political titles like Datu, Sultan, Bae-a-Labi, Pore-Major, etc. up until this point. Salah has contributed to the maintenance and perpetuation of this antiquated political custom because Meranaws are recognized for being politically aware (Taslim, 2012).

The Meranaw manuscripts represent the identity of the Meranaw people and include recipes for kakasi (potions), bolong (medicine), and darangen (genealogy). Reading these linguistically significant historical writings allows one to envision the social life of the early Meranaw people (Gallop, 2022). Particularly when the language is Kirim, a relic from their homeland, these manuscripts automatically provide the people reading them a sense of cohesion and belonging (Yahya & Jones, 2021). It is indisputable that Meranaw culture and language are inextricably linked, and that the latter has influenced the way that Meranaw people live. Without a doubt, Kirim has contributed to the development of the Meranaw language.

Here, written records like those found in Darangen and other collections of Meranaw literature have been preserved and reproduced thanks to the scribbled Kirim language. Darangen's values and ethos, which have been linked to Indraputra and Suleiman, Bantugun, and other early Meranaw heroes, are considered the true wellspring of what it is to be a Meranaw. Gaining a thorough understanding of the Meranaw people in their Darangen is the greatest approach to comprehend their way of life.

### **Kirim Writing System and its Evolution**

Dr. Ben Kadil, a famous historian and retired full professor of Mindanao State University, believes Kirim means to send or write in Malay. Arabic Malay script is named after it. Additionally, Kirim is a Jawi script that uses Arabic letters or alphabets for a local dialect, in this case Meranaw. According to Dr. Kadil, Kirim is used to maintain Meranaws' tarsila or genealogy and oral traditions like Darangen, kissa narrative, and Daman tarasul poetry. This section discusses Kirim, an ancient Meranaw writing system. Arab immigration to the Philippines will be explored first.

#### **a. The Coming of Arabs**

Islam arrived in Southeast Asia in the 14th century, introducing maritime trading and closer interaction between merchants and natives. In Malaysia, Muslim merchants introduced Islam to the natives through trade origins in Egypt, India, and China. In the Philippines, Islamization began on the southern islands due to extensive contact with other Malay islands and Borneo (Bara, 2017; Yunyasit & Baybado, 2022). The first Muslims to arrive were traders and missionaries who brought Islam as their religion. They also brought their political system, leading to the establishment of sultanates in the southern Philippines. Islamic provinces were founded, governed by a datu, rajah, and sultan, such as Rajah Baguinda (Umali, 2019).

Subsequent Islamic penetration continued with the arrival of Muslim missionaries from Malaysia and Indonesia, which strengthened the settlement of Islamic missionaries. The Portuguese conquered Malaysia and Indonesia, leading to the establishment of a massive sultanate that overlapping the existing indigenous Filipino barangay governing system. The sultanate system greatly enhanced their rule over territories, enabling them to forge alliances based on their religion, expanding their domain, strengthening commerce, and gaining enough power to reject Western influence (Majul, 2017).

The Philippines' first mosque, Sheik Karimal Makdum mosque, was built by natives who newly embraced Islam. Arab traders have been visiting the Philippines for nearly 2000 years for trade purposes, including textiles, wool, gold bullions, jewelry, and other precious gems. The people who converted to Islam became known as Moros. The contribution of datus in the spread of Islam in the Philippines is evident in the interview of Participant X from Tamparan, Lanao del Sur.

#### **b. Use of Arabic Language as a Mode of Communication**

The Arabic language has played a crucial role in the communication between natives and traders in the Philippines, leading to the continuous expansion of maritime trading and cultural exchange between natives and Arabs. This was not only brought by Arab traders but also by Malaysians and Indonesians who had general contact with Arab traders. The introduction of Islam into the Philippines was generally peaceful and not driven by conquest, with the penetration of Islam being done through dialogue and exchanging ideas between natives and Arabs (Baybado, 2017).

The arrival of Spaniards in the Philippines, particularly during the Spanish-Moro wars, strengthened the influence of Arabic. Arabic played a crucial role in spreading culture and religion, possibly the reason for the progressive expansion of Islamic influence from the southern to the northern Philippines. The most important contributions of the Arabic language are the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, which were taught to children and adopted by the natives as their new religion (Donoso, 2015; Acac, 2020). The Arabic language became an instrument in teaching Islam among Muslim Filipinos, as it is guided by the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. It also became an instrument in inter-marriages between traders and natives, as seen with the Arab sheikh who married the daughter of the Sultan of Sulu (Hamid, 2002; Achi, 2021). Learning Arabic became obligatory for the early Meranaws, who needed to recite the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith (Radiamoda, 2019; Ingilan & Abdurajak, 2021). The easier way to teach Arabic was in informal madrasahs or private houses, where the ulamas or ustadths wrote instruction in vernacular using the Arabic language, which was later coined as the batang of the Kirim language (Gumanoy et al., 2022; Radiamoda, 2019; Al-Obinay & Verano, 2023).

#### **The Arabic Alphabet**

The Arabic language, which has been around for over 1000 years, is the native tongue of over 200 million people worldwide and ranks sixth among major languages. It is the official language of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, and other Middle Eastern countries (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Hammarström, 2018).

The Arabic alphabet, which is traced back to the writing of the semi-nomadic Nabataean tribes, is written from right to left in a cursive style and includes 28 letters with three short vowels (Holes, 2018; Stokes, 2017).

Each letter has a proper pronunciation, and each word has corresponding sounds. Proper pronunciation is crucial as it can change the meaning of a word. For example, a mispronunciation of a word can lead to an alteration of the word. Proper pronunciation of each Arabic character is essential, as a small mispronunciation can lead to a misinterpretation (Al-Jarf, 2022; Rehman et al., 2022). For example, ب (b) ت (t) ث (th) ن (n) have the same basic

shape but have one dot below, two dots above, three dots above, and one dot above, respectively. All of which have corresponding sounds.

Participants in this study stress accurate pronunciation because one error can entail a sin. Mispronunciation can change a word. Since they are Allah's words, every Arabic character must be interpreted correctly.

### **The Contribution of Kirim to Madrasah Education**

Kirim shared the moral values of the Mëranaw people, and Madrasah institutions taught these values to learners who strived to improve their Muslim beliefs. These Islamic educational institutions helped young Mëranaws correct their incorrect views. Meranaws could correct their past views, such as believing in invisible spirits and other activities against Islamic monotheism, through Madrasah. Thus, Islam in Madrasah has modified Meranaw morality.

The Meranaws, who once believed in the ability to transform into non-living objects, eventually rejected this belief upon accepting Islam. Since then, they have communicated through Kirim, which has strengthened the good commandments of Madrasah.

The emphasis on brotherhood and camaraderie is an Islamic value taught in madrasah. Saddam Solaiman's work, "Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) in Marawi City, Philippines," explains that Madrasah education in the Philippines began with the growth and coming of Islam, brought about by Arab and Malay missionaries (Sullivan, 1993). The main lesson was reading and writing in Arabic to understand the Qur'an. Madrasah was the single institution that ensured the survival of Islam in the country during Moro resistance against colonizers. The evolution of Madrasah included the education of local missionaries to Arab countries, who then imparted Islamic teachings using the acquired Arabic language (Burke, 2013; Salim & Salim, 2015). The infusion of Arabic letters with their own Meranaw language paved the way for the Kirim script.

Below are contributions of Kirim language to Madrasah education:

#### **1. Kirim as a medium for teaching Islamic**

Historian Dr. Kadil states that Kirim has an advantage in studying Islam in Arabic writing from a spiritual or theological perspective. Its primary impact on Madrasah education is enabling the reading of the holy Qur'an in Arabic. The phrase emphasizes that Kirim is inherently Arabic and serves as the language of instruction in Madrasah education.

Ustadhs and Aleems concurred that the Kirim script was indeed utilized as a tool for teaching Islam at Madrasah (Kushimoto, 2012). Madrasah education mostly focused on reciting Quranic passages and comprehending their meaning (Sabki & Hardaker, 2013). Arabic is the language of the Quran and is also used by Madrasah professors in class. They created a language of instruction that combines elements of Arabic and the Meranaw local dialect to facilitate communication between students and teachers.

#### **2. Building of Good Character**

The purpose of every Meranaw, as portrayed in Darangen and documented in Kirim, was to achieve goodness, righteousness, bravery, and respect. Although early Meranaws were involved in superstitious ideas on the metaphysical origin of their tribe, the importance of good manners and social etiquette as taught in Darangen cannot be overlooked.

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Islamic discourse emphasizes morality as the highest level of human traits, defining a Muslim as one who loves God and God's creatures. This includes righteousness, good character, and virtues prescribed in religious texts like the Quran and Hadith. Good character is a commandment of Rasulullah, and going against it can lead to great sin. The concept of Maratabat, embraced by most Meranaws, should be preserved but used in accordance with Islamic teachings. Rigo, a moral principle in Islam, is forbidden unless the family is under attack. Prince Bantugan's moral qualities in the story of Darangen should inspire Meranaw people to follow Islamic ways. Meranaw laws, particularly in conflict resolution, are passed down through generations using the Kirim writing system, particularly in Madrasahs where Islamic knowledge, practices, and laws are taught using the Arabic language (Cayamodin & Durakoglu, 2021).

This is in order to behave morally and treat each other in the best possible manner to please God. As Respondent AH.4 from Sultan Dumalongdon Lanao del Sur said, "Aya maana na so kambilangataw na inisugo anan o Rasulullah. Na di nga oto gulawlaan na kadusa k aka sabap na so kambilangataw nap d ko paratiyaya."

### **3. Feminism and Gender Sensitivity**

The concept of feminism was present in the Meranaw worldview before it gained broad appeal in current society. The common belief that women in Islam lack freedom and equality is a mistake. Islam really regards women as having a high status. Women's role in Meranaw culture is consistently portrayed in the narratives of Darangen. The story of Tingting Bolawan and her wicked aunts narrates the survival and escape of Tingting Bolawan and her three brothers, Radiya Bagaya, Radiya Mangandiri, and Radiya Mangawarna, from the malevolence of their maternal aunt, Potri Bonso, and Matagbabay. Another tale is "Tiny Bird," which narrates the story of a couple named Lokes, a Mama, and Lokes, a Babay, who regularly set bird traps in the late afternoon and check them early the following morning. In the story, Lokes a Babay demonstrates her life without Lokes a Mama, who consistently deceives her. She will be able to construct her own Torogan through her perseverance in the future.

The most common misconception among people is that the early Meranaw women were not educated. This is wrong, given the fact that the Liyamen were given all opportunities to be educated. Though they only stayed in their torogan (royal houses), they still managed to get educated since their mother taught all things that women should be knowledgeable of, which include kakulintang and kapag onor. Thus, a Liyamen is a learned and articulate woman who speaks her mind and expresses a range of emotions. She is consulted by men on certain matters and can even assume the role of king (Collins, 2015; Nussbaum, 2013). She can call on supernatural helpers to do battle and has magical possessions. She can call on spirits that are so powerful that they can order the sun not to shine. These are just some of the things that an educated early Meranaw woman can do.

Additionally, Kirim has espoused considerable strictness on the separation of men and women. According to Aleem Hassanodin Bandara, men are not allowed to enter a house without the



presence of other men in the house (Freud, 2012). This is to protect women from any physical aggravation that might possibly occur. Such a statement is supported by Bae a Labi of the Royal House of Bayang, Bae Normina Paudac, who says that a Mëranaw woman is not allowed to entertain men visitors because her beauty must only be shown solely to her future husband. In Madrasah, the Islamic concept of protecting one's chastity and honor is where the policy of separation of male and female inside a class originated. Aside from this, both genders are also prohibited from hearing each other, during Q'ran recitation, for instance. It is believed that the voice is also among the attributes of women that can attract one's attention or is considered in Islam as a form of 'awrah' (Adamu, 2013).

### **3. Worldview on Good Governance**

Islamic government is also written in Kırım script, according to the text study. It originated as a political theory that prioritizes love above law and is based on Ihsan. Islamic concepts like "kaiisa-isa o Bangsa" (nation), "kaseselai" (patronage), and "kaphapagaria" (fraternity) are also reflected in the "pat a pangamong sa Ranao," the original traditional political structure of the Meranaw people. The existence of a government is essential for social order in any civilized country. The importance placed on brotherhood in the Meranaw worldview enabled them to successfully repel Spanish invasion attempts on their sultanate.

It was evident that the governing clans of "pat a pengamong sa Ranao," which are often from powerful families, had become stronger. Despite that, the people continue to support this system, which suggests such a responsibility has been performed satisfactorily. How they defended their territory from all Spanish attacks for 333 years is evidence of their good governance. This led the Spanish to never again venture into the southern Philippine archipelago in the succeeding years (Von Kotzebue, 2013; Flynn & Giráldez, 2017).

On the other hand, the forces behind the strengthening and tightening of Mëranaw relational structures are its customary law called Adat and the Quranic law of Islam.

The government system of pat a pangamong sa Ranao, the kinship authority system from pre-Islamic influences, and the Islamic authority system from Islamic influences have been combined to comprise the Shariah Law. Adat is the foundation of authority for the Mëranaw Sultanate and serves several purposes. As a customary law, it defines courtship and betrothal, marriage and divorce, settlement of disputes, and religious and customary observance related to childbirth, marriage, illness, and death (Lon, 2019; Bustan et al., 2020).

According to the respondent in this study, the importance of Ijma and tartib is that they unify the cultural identity of Meranaw. especially in the reconciliation of Rido between parties, the genealogy helps the Meranaw settle issues. Ijma and tartib are also significant during the coronation of traditional political leaders. Adat contains tartib, which serves as Mëranaw protocol for special occasions and the basis for relationships between communities, especially with regards to their rank, position, rights, and responsibilities. It also contains Ijma, or the legislated ordinances. Adat is regarded as a material source of Islamic jurisprudence under the guidance of Ijma.

More so, another respondent to this study reiterates that the word "tartib" comes from the Arabic word "tartib," which means arrangement, while Ijma is a plural term of "jamaa," which means consensus. The combination of customary laws and Islamic law holds great significance in governing the Meranaw society and has become the basis for the social life of the Mëranaws. Tartib and Ijma constitute the distinct identity of a Mëranaw that is distinguishable from other

ethnic groups. Discarding or neglecting it would mean losing their own identity. Perhaps this could be the reason they have preserved it up to the present (Connerton, 2017).

Henceforth, both Kirim and Shariah emphasize love over law. While some of the Mëranaw thought Kirim should not be taught to young generations, these are some aspects of Meranaw identity one cannot dismiss. When it comes to manners and good character, Mëranaws claim that their tribe has a unique tradition and that Islam, as their religion, has the best social etiquette. According to Respondent AO, 3 from Wao, Lanao del Sur: “O ba tan obo pagilaya sa Darangen na so mga loks guwani na tanto dn ko mangalay adat. Igira bo man oto di siran kapakay suldan o mama a mimisita o da makatatalinguma a mama sa gyoto a walay. Igira pn oto a babo siran suminga na di kailay a ngipn iran.” Our elders before had the best characters. It is not allowed for a man to visit a house without the presence of another man in that house. [You cannot even see their teeth when they laugh].

### **Limitations**

The study was part of a dissertation extracted for publication and was limited within the studied areas; it does not represent the whole study of the Philippines as it was limited to only the province where the researcher found the respondents who shed more light on the study.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrated that Kirim played a crucial role in shaping the Meranaw identity by serving as a primary tool for recording their social, cultural, political, and religious activities. Kirim is a modified Arabic writing system that plays a crucial role in chronicling the oral traditions of the Mëranaw people. Kirim should be included into school curricula, especially in social studies classes and in alignment with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education initiative of the Department of Education to enhance its preservation. Further research on Kirim is needed to analyze its influence on the Meranaw community and its relationships with the writing systems of adjacent Southeast Asian countries.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Researcher declare no conflict of interest

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