

# Transcreation of Select *Darangen* Texts to *Manga* to comprise a Collection of Children's Literature

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## ABSTRACT

This transcreation project was undertaken to address urgent felt needs: 1) to wrest from oblivion *Meranaw* cultural/literary gems, specifically the crown of Meranaw literary achievement, the *Darangen* epic, which is recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as part of the world cultural heritage; 2) to instill in the present and future generations of Meranaws pride in, and appreciation of, their rich and unique cultural heritage which forms a vital part in their identity, and stem their increasing alienation from their roots; 3) to respond to the problem of lack of instructional/reading materials in Meranaw for MTB-MLE or K to 12 pupils (particularly Grade 3 to 10 pupils); 4) to help in the popularization of Meranaw narratives and increasing readership by making them more accessible and more comprehensible through their transcreation to *manga*; 5) to cultivate in young students interest in reading and develop in them critical literacy through more engaging reading materials; and 5) to serve as a countervailing force against powerful forces, specifically modernization, Western influence, and globalization, that have the effect of killing off cultures of weaker minority groups.

The project involved the transcreation or adaptation to *manga* form of stories from the *Darangen* to comprise a collection or anthology of Children's Literature that is culture- or community- based. Firstly, these reading materials shall serve a more utilitarian purpose: as instructional/reading materials for K to 12, specifically Grade 3 (MTB-MLE), students. Although the texts are first rendered in the Meranaw language, their utility need not be restricted to Grade 3. Through translation to English, their use can be extended to higher grade levels, 4-10.

The *manga* form adds to the visual attractiveness or appeal and impact of the texts as instructional/reading materials. Transcreation, an interpretation in its own right, is hoped to contribute to the popularization of an art/literary form that is dangerously on the verge of extinction.

The ten (10) texts or episodes selected by a rigorous process from the voluminous epic make up the envisioned collection of *Darangen manga*: *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon sa Iliyan a Bembaran*; *Paramata Gandingan*; *Alongan Pisaeyanan*; *So Kiyaprawa'a ko Lawanen (Kapmabaning)*; *Kormatan Borodan*; *Sawolaya sa Lego*; *Sandalinayan Sirig*; *Kangginasaan a Oray*; *Taratakan a Oray*; and *So Kiyandatu i Sayana sa Komara*.

These texts are not only for reading pleasure and for use as instructional materials. More important, perhaps, they are a rich resource or trove of the belief system/worldview, values and ideals, traditions and practices of the ancestors of the Meranaws before the advent of Islam. In fact, *Darangen* scholars regard the epic as a kind of Charter (*anonen a rawaten*) by which latter-day Meranaws steer or are guided.

The higher goal of the project is to arrest the widening of the gap between the present generations of Meranaw and their native cultural heritage. Before young Meranaws' alienation from their cultural heritage becomes irreversible, intervention must be provided by institutions, specifically schools and mass media.

**Keywords:** transcreation, *manga*, MTB-MLE, *Darangen*, epic, instructional material, children's literature

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are pressures at work that forced recognition on the part of the author of the necessity and the desirability of the transcreation of the *Darangen* to *manga*. The initial inspiration and impetus came from the article on reading by columnist Conrado de Quiros. Like many inveterate readers who have been chanting dirges or intoning requiems for a once-favorite pastime, de Quiros takes up the issue but on a positive note. Yes, he said, reading does not anymore enjoy a vogue as it did half a century ago because people, young and old alike, are absorbed in some other activities like posting

their most prosaic routine on Facebook or playing some Computer game, or unabashedly glued to television shows like *Eat Bulaga!* because they have become instant avid fans of *ALDUB*.

There is indeed an epochal difference between the time of Generation X parents and grandparents and the present. Before the movie house and the television, especially, became ubiquitous, for many people, a day was not complete without reading a book, a novel, or a short story. Now with people, young and old alike, grown more visually fixated in a technology-driven world, interest in reading steadily decreases. Rising to the challenge, some reading programs have been launched by *PDI* a few years back, and by *Manila Bulletin* last year. But as de Quiros has argued, more modern technology like CDs, videotapes, films and the internet need not be treated as the culprit; in fact,

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modern technology can be tapped as allies in the advocacy of reviving reading interest. For example, interest in literary works can be stimulated by introducing these through videotapes, films, comics, or *manga*. He thinks of the revival of the *komiks* tradition in the Philippines as a good idea. The internet, videotapes, films, and comics are what appeal to young learners and even high school or even college students. What is needed, according to de Quiros, is changing the tack. To quote him: "Many kids today find reading books an alien experience but they do not find reading things in the PC that at all. Maybe it's just a question of bringing the books to the PC. Maybe it's just a question of getting the kids to read the books in their turf, or the medium they call home."

In addition to the need for designing engaging reading materials (Children's Literature) in the mother tongue for MTB-MLE use, there is the equally compelling need for raising awareness and cultivating and deepening appreciation of the rich native cultural heritage of the Meranaws. The steadily increasing alienation of the present generation from their rich native cultural heritage is alarming and lamentable. It is not at all an exaggeration to say that the epic Darangen is as unfamiliar to the present generations of Meranaw themselves as it is to outsiders. The artist/illustrator is a living example and her honest confession a living testimony. Before agreeing to the transcreation project proposed by then doctoral candidate Ms. Edenairah Ismael, the names Bantugen, Paramata Gandingan, Lawanen, Sayana and Lumena were as alien to her as Brunhilde, the Valkyries, and other characters in the *Gotterdamerung*. Meranaw students are as unfamiliar with the Darangen as they are with the *Nibelungenleid* and *Beowulf*. Pride in their rich and unique cultural heritage must be cultivated and instilled in them.

The Darangen has sadly become a leading symbol of the vanishing native cultural heritage of the Meranaw, as the phrase "*miyonot ko Darangen*" (gone with the Darangen) succinctly illustrates. Fresh information on this is derived from the dissertation of Rogong-Rasul (2015) on the status of traditional leadership in the context of the modern political system super-imposed on the traditional *pengampong*. It was found in this study that under the influence of keeping the faith, they shirk or repudiate fulfilling their traditional role of preserver and transmitter of their people's cultural heritage, and even lend a hand in hastening the eradication of traditional

practices which form part of the unique, rich cultural heritage of the Meranaw. In the focus group discussions (FGDs), some respondents nostalgically recalled the more robust and effervescent past with all those traditional games, music, and arts.

Except for folk literature students who study it as a specimen text and most likely treat it as antiquarian delight or a museum piece, generally they are hardly aware of its place in the national or world heritage. This neglect of indigenous or autochthonous culture and literature is a national crisis, as borne out by papers presented in national and international conferences held in the Philippines which denounce the fixation of literature education on Anglo-American classics or canons, or the privileging of texts of European and American origins. One such paper was read by no less than Isabel Martin, the president of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines at the 3rd International Conference on Language Education sponsored by the Philippines Association for Language Teaching, Inc. (PALT) in December 2007. Filipino students *do not* read because they read only works by Western writers. Indeed, the growing tendency to embrace mainstream Philippine culture which is mainly nourished by a Western-centered fare is proving to be a serious threat to the survival of the ancient epic Darangen and the rest of the gems in the hoard of native lore and literature. The Darangen is pre-eminently the quintessential Meranaw literary classic. It counts among the nineteen ethnoepics identified in *A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics* of anthropologist E.A. Manuel (1963). These include, among others, the Ilocano *Lam-Ang*; Bikol *Handiong*; Kalinga *Ullalum*; Ifugaw *Alim* and *Hudhud*; Sulod *Hinilawod I (Labaw Dunggen)* and *Hinilawod II (Humadapen)*; Bukidnon *Agyu* and *Baybayan*; Manuvu *Tuwaang*; Matigsalug *Ulod*; Sabanen *Guman*; and Magindanaw *Indarapatra* and *Sulayman*. Based on the criteria employed for the accreditation of the extant of ethnoepics, only six made it to the final list. The Darangen is one of the six.

There is now a growing international concern for the preservation of native or indigenous cultural heritage as affirmed in a series of articles published by the International Federation of Library Associations (2001). Obviously, the Philippines has much catching up to do in this area.

Moreover, under the favorable auspices

provided by the MTB-MLB, preservation of the Meranaw language stands a greater chance. Indisputably, the primary function of language is the communication of ideas. As important as this is the expression and elaboration of the complex, elaborate behavior that constitutes a people's culture. Bolinger (1995) is succinct: "Without language, the transmission of complex traditions would be virtually impossible, and each person would be trapped within his or her own world of private sensations." It is the major transmitter of culture, allowing a particular people like the Meranaw to share, preserve, and pass on their complex configuration of attitudes, beliefs, and patterns of behavior.

It is the conviction of the author that the preservation of the Meranaw language must be recognized and accepted by the present and subsequent generations as a common obligation. As Fishman (1996) puts it, language is the mind, spirit, and soul of the people. In their language is distilled the purest form their identity and the distinctiveness or uniqueness of the culture they represent. The extinction crisis that threatens many languages is growing into a global dilemma as revealed in studies such as that conducted by linguist K. David Harrison (2010) and his team. Many minority languages are faced with the threat of extinction; the rate is alarming. Based on the 2011 UNESCO report, at least forty three percent of the 6809 (*Ethnologue*) remaining languages throughout the world belong to the category of minority languages. The threat of extinction looming over many of these minority languages, according to Crystal (2002), "is a matter of widespread concern, not only among linguists and anthropologists but also among all interested in the issues of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized culture."

In his book *The Last Speakers*, Harrison gives an account of his team's expeditions to meet last speakers in remote language hotspots in Asia and South America. It humanizes the insidious global crisis by communicating the concerns, hopes and fears of the last speakers themselves, whose efforts at language revitalization to arrest extinction of their cherished words and meanings and the methods in the social sciences employed by the team were recorded and reported with respect and empathy. Their stories should help the rest of the world grasp the impact of language extinction or loss and come to the realization that when languages are threatened, so are diversity, culture, and heritage.

There is wealth of knowledge and wisdom tied to each language, enriching understanding of the speakers, hence, the need to wrest threatened or endangered languages from extinction. The language of a people is their fundamental tool for understanding the world. Javier Sanchez (2011), Director General of the National Institute for Indigenous Language of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, asserts: "Through language, they are able to interact with the world, and when their language dies, their culture and form of understanding of the world die with it."

To reiterate, the proposed transcreation to manga of select stories/episodes from the Darangen is undertaken for the general purpose of keeping these the "living traditions" that they should be, instead of mere antiquarian delight or materials consigned to archives. Specifically, the following objectives shall be achieved through this project:

1. To contribute to the preservation of the texts under consideration and to ensure intergenerational transmission of these through their popularization as reading materials;
2. To deepen appreciation of the literary texts, particularly the Darangen, as repository of what is significant, vital, meaningful and timeless in Meranaw culture — belief system, values, ideals, traditions, and native lore or wisdom — which give the Meranaws their unique identity, and are highlighted in the select texts;
3. To instill in the present and future generations of Meranaw, pride in, and appreciation for, the accomplishments of their ancestors that constitute their cultural heritage, which are encoded or enshrined in such literary traditions as the epic and folk tales; the Darangen, in particular as a sublime work of art *par excellence* and a "Charter" that provides a guide or moral compass (*anonen a rawaten*), invites critical reading for the edification and inspiration of the younger generations.
4. To serve as instructional/reading materials for K to 12 (K-3 to K-10) and as a trove or resource of values, insights, and ideals handed down by the Meranaws' ancestors as a legacy to succeeding generations;
5. To stimulate and engage young learner's interest in reading, literature, and culture

- through the appealing form of the manga, which the present generations are known to be passionately interested in;
6. To stimulate interest in other means of keeping the Darangen and other Meranaw narratives the "living traditions" that they should be — e.g. use of intertextuality or other forms of adaptation like stage plays based on the original texts; and
  7. To provide materials for an animation project, a planned sequel to this project.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Ten (10) Texts or episodes form the epic *Darangen* make up the target collection of *manga*:

1. *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon sa Iliyan a Bembaran*;
2. *Paramata Gandingan*;
3. *Alongan Pisaeyanan*;
4. *So Kiyaprawa'a ko Lawanen (Kapmabaning)*;
5. *Kormatan Borodan*;
6. *Sawolaya sa Lego*;
7. *Sandalinayan Sirig*;
8. *Kangginasaan a Oray*;
9. *Taratakan a Oray*; and
10. *So Kiyandatu i Sayana sa Komara*.

The *Darangen* collection that the team headed by the URC-Folklore Division Director, Sr. Delia Coronel, was able to put together and translate consists of 8 volumes in all, and totaled from 17 to 26 books (Llorca 1994). Not all of these could be included in the transcreation project because some criteria, principles, and guidelines governing instructional making or design had to be taken into account in the rigorous selection. *Foremost, the texts must be age-appropriate and grade-appropriate; they must fit the category "Children's Literature."* Since the proposed instructional materials were primarily intended for Grade 3 pupils, they must make not only engaging or stimulating reading materials for 8-12 year-olds; they must also fulfill the objectives and requirements of the curriculum. In what subject areas may they be used as instructional materials? Obviously, the language arts, *Sibika*, and Values Education.

Critical analysis and interpretation based on close reading approach (*explication de texte*) as

befitting or appropriate to literary opuses was employed. A more rigorous application of the process is inevitable considering the fact that one of the aims of the production of manga forms of select stories/episodes form the epic is to start the development of Children's Literature in the Meranaw language for use as MTB-MLE instructional/reading materials, and later, translations of these to English for use in the higher grade levels. Utmost care and sensitivity to the needs and interests of the target readers or beneficiaries must be observed by a meticulous sifting of details; anything that can violate or offend the sensibilities of the young must be excluded. In this phase of the work, the Reader/Critic/Consultant is the principal figure. She/he provides input to the Artist/Illustrator.

For purposes of interpretation, translation from the high variety of Meranaw (classical/literary) used in the *Darangen* to the more comprehensible conversational Meranaw had to be done. Thus the service of a translator—a native speaker of Meranaw—was deemed essential. So was the constant consultation with a consultant well-versed about the texts and steeped in Meranaw culture.

Close reading for purposes of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, aided by translation, takes up the preliminary phase, an essential or indispensable step toward transcreation, the second phase. However, these processes (criticism grounded in analysis, interpretation and evaluation) continue throughout the more creative, imaginative, delicate, and detailed process known as transcreation. At this point, the artist/illustrator takes over but consultation with the critic must continue. Transcreation to manga is representational art or comics-making. Execution requires artistry, imagination, and laborious, meticulous attention to detail. The artist/illustrator's work is interpretive.

Finally, the artist/illustrator's manga drafts, after final scrutiny by the critic/consultant, are brought to the printing press. For purposes of this article, *Alongan Pisaeyanan* (Volume 3, Book 6B) is thought to suffice as a specimen text for transcreation.

The whole endeavor is a collaborative work of a team: reader/critic, translator, artist/illustrator, and consultant. Ostensibly, the greater burden or bulk of the work is the artist/illustrator's.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the course of selecting texts for transcreation, some problems were encountered

and worked as constraints or restrictions. First of these is the element of romance (amorous exploits) which the most celebrated hero in the epic, Bantugen, personifies or is immediately identified with. Then there is also the martial interest—the preponderance of fighting scenes—of the epic. There should be less amorous affairs of the hero Bantugen which abound in the entire Darangen and of the martial interest or fighting that characterizes an epic; wars are the stuff of which epics are made and are expected to be plentiful in the Meranaw epic. Regarding this, however, absolute exclusion was thought indefensible since using the epic Darangen must necessarily include some relevant basic information about the genre and it would be a grave omission to neglect touching on the martial interest as an established hallmark of the epic. Moreover, K to 12 subjects must prepare young learners (Grade 3) for dealing with real-life situations, and indisputably, conflict or fighting is unavoidable in life. There are even ideas and theories, such as those of the philosophers Nietzsche, Adler and Girard, that conflict is inherent in human nature, or at the very least, inevitable in the life of a society. “A conflict-free world just doesn’t exist.” (Adler et. al, 1986). It can be argued also that awareness of the possible causes of conflict and knowledge of the strategies for preventing escalation of conflict, or for arbitrating/mediating and finally resolving conflict should be part of the education or training of the young, especially in Meranaw society where *ridu* or feuds between clans are common. Moreover, something good can come out of wars, for example, lessons or realizations learned from them, feeling compassion for one’s enemy, and a sense of tragic waste from the spectacle of ruin and destruction of lives; in other words, conflict as a theme has its uses. It can be used as a prompt or stimulus for an inquiry-based approach or problem-solving activity. The critic and illustrator agreed that young learners should not be shielded from reality or life. How the teacher puts the material to creative pedagogical use is the challenge.

Conflict, internal/psychological as well as external, is dominant in Darangen episodes like *Paramata Gandingan*, *Alongan Pisaeyanan*, *So Kiyaprawa’a ko Lawanen (Kapmabaning)*, *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon*, and *Kangginaasan a Oray*. In *Alongan Pisaeyanan* and *So Kiyaprawa’a ko Lawanen*, the conflict led to full-blown wars between kingdoms, with devastating consequences. Conflict in *Paramata*

*Gandingan* and *Kangginaasan a Oray* took different forms. In the first, it was the individual against society: Paramata Gandingan and her son Sayana versus the Bembaran aristocracy, the *Asalan I Gibonen*, with its customs and traditions, including prejudice or biases and fears—safeguarding the purity of the race/*bangsa* against possible contamination. Since she would not reveal anything about her origin, the former incurred the displeasure of the *Ayonan* and the antagonism of the members of the nobility led by Daranda. Her son suffers the same treatment. In the other text, the conflict came in the form of a marital conflict triggered by baseless suspicion and the green-eyed monster, jealousy. *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon* deserves to be treated as a class in itself. It depicts internal conflict; the heart of Aya Paganay Ba’I, the first wife of Gibon, becomes the battleground as she finds herself in a dilemma, torn between two painful choices: personal happiness and her role as the queen of the *Ayonan*.

To completely do away with conflict is to deny its reality of human existence or the life of society. Moreover, such a purge fails to do justice to the epic spirit with its distinctive martial interest and celebration of the heroic ideal. Conflict is, after all, the fertile soil on which heroism grows and thrives.

Another problem concerning the depiction of battles surfaced. There are scenes of carnage and mutilation galore in the epic—e.g. the victor beheading the vanquished or cutting the body *cap a pie* (head to feet) or into two halves, or mowing hundreds down with his sword, like fruits of the *Porogan* tree. The battlefield virtually becomes a pool of blood. There is such a scene in *Alongan Pisaeyanan* where the young hero decimates an entire community. How should such a gory scene be depicted or represented in *manga*? The artist/illustrator chose to make the portrayal as realistic as possible, but practiced some censorship by avoiding graphic representation of morbid or gory details like mutilation of the bodies of enemies in the battlefield, or by resorting to suggestion like the use of shadows or silhouettes, or by synecdochical representation (parts for wholes). As artist, she also took some liberties, for example, introducing touches of humor and comic relief such as giving the antipathetic Daranda his comeuppance in the combat with Sayana by depicting him as landing on his derriere against a coconut tree, with a coconut falling on his head.

During the proponent's (Dr. Edenairah P. Ismael) final oral defense, a new problem cropped up. A Panel member expressed serious reservations about the inclusion of *tonongs* or the supernatural in the manga for young learners. According to her, when conservative Muslim parents go over materials, they might react negatively on the ground that such elements have no place in Islam. The point was valid and had to be seriously deliberated on, with sensitivity. Fortunately, majority of the Panel were of the opinion that emphasis on the Darangen cosmos being part of the pre-Islamic cultural heritage of the Meranaw is all it takes, and it was thus decided that the *tonongs* stay. The *tonongs* play an important role in the epic as part of epic machinery and it would be too much of a truncation or mutilation to do away with them. *Tonongs* are not mere decorations or embellishments. They are important agents or causes of plot complications. For example, the mysterious disappearances of Gandingan was not a case of abduction perpetrated by Bantugen; it was the mischievous matchmaking design of a *tonong* who had her transported to, and delivered on, *lakongan mipantaw* in a desolate island.

These powerful spirits, also called *diwata*, pervade the Darangen world, and are as numerous as the human characters. In *Ambayan a Kilat* (*Paramata Selegan* episode), Bantugen and Madali met a huge army of *tonongs*. This great number of *tonongs* was actually sent by their queen, the Walain sa Apiran who was the twin-sister of Bantugen's mother, Lalawanen sa Solog, to test the bravery of the pair of heroes. The husband of the Queen was a member of the royal court of *tonongs*. The *tonongs* are as important agents as the heroes. Each powerful kingdom and clan (the Asalan i Gibonen of Bembaran, for example) has their patron *tonongs* that watch over not only the kingdom but also the individual heroes/heroines representing a particular kingdom/clan.

Most wars fought in the Darangen are as much contests between human armies as between forces of *tonongs*. In many instances, especially critical situations, *tonongs* had to be invoked to provide the assistance needed, thus their participation or involvement determined to a considerable extent the outcome of a crisis—a battle, for example. There are cases when one group of *tonongs* proves more powerful and overcomes another group. For example, Lawanen in captivity (*So Kiyaprawa'a ko Lawanen* or *Kapmabaning*) was compelled to concede the

dominance or superior power of the *tonongs* that executed the entreaty of her abductor Ayonan Dimasangkay to deliver the princess to him. The power of the *tonongs* is demonstrated in the abduction and rescue of Lawanen, the flight of Sirig and her daughter Payongan from Bembaran after Bantugen's cruel accusation and repudiation of her, the abduction of Gandingan and Sirig, and wars between Bembaran and hostile kingdoms, especially Kadaraan, its principal rival or antagonist. These amazing playful beings, like the Greek divinities, are amoral and are capable of noble and base acts, or plain mischief. They are 'meddlers' having no sense of right and wrong, and are often capricious. For example, in *Paramata Gandingan*, the mysterious disappearances of the princess on her wedding day is caused by the matchmaking attempt of a Bembaran *tonong* who believes that Gandingan's ineffable beauty deserves no less than the beauty of Bantugen. The Bantugen-Gandingan union bears a son, Alongan Pisaeyanan (Sayana). Unfortunately, the Asalan i Gibonen of Bumbaran does not recognize the mother and son because of Gandingan's unknown origin.

To the extent possible, the episodes chosen for transcreation have children or young individuals as major or minor characters—e.g. *Kangginaasan a Oray*, *Paramata Gandingan*, *Alongan Pisaeyanan*, *Kormatan Borodan*, *Tarataki a Oray*, *Minirigi a Rogong*, and *So Kiyandatu i Sayana sa Komara*. It was the artist's intent to come up with a collection of Children's Literature based on the Darangen. Such stories should gain greater traction for young learners/readers as they can easily relate to, and identify with those characters and their experiences. For example, the pain of rejection and sense of outrage and bitterness suffered by Sayana on hearing his mother denigrated and cruelly traduced in public arouse sympathy and empathy. Trust, justice, and responsibility which are explained to the young heirs of Gibon, Mineren and Boisan, in *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon*, and behavior becoming of a well-bred individual (*kambilang a taw*) as instilled in the young Lumena in *Kormatan Borodan* are also words and concepts that Grade 3 pupils should be introduced to. The same values and behavior, particularly prudence or self-restraint and avoiding trouble are impressed upon Sayana by his mother. She explains to the boy the grave consequence of his death: a full-blown war thus the need for him to observe utmost care. Undoubtedly, readers will applaud

the poise or equanimity and self-confidence of Sayana among foes led by Misoyaw as they cry for his blood.

Another point for consideration was the set of factors or principles identified by Tomlinson (1998; 2003). For purposes of this study, the following criteria are singled out: interest/motivation and impact, relevance and utility, ease of learning, confidence-building, preparedness or readiness to learn, facilitation of strategic self-investment, encouragement of aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual encouragement, and appreciation of the different learning styles of the learners.

In terms of impact and interest/motivation (novelty, appealing content and attractive presentation), the Darangen texts developed into instructional materials in *manga* form more than pass muster. Their content (subject matter and theme) and form (comics or manga) cannot fail to appeal to the imagination of 8-12 year old readers who, generally, are visually fixated, and irresistibly drawn to stories about adventures, magic, enchantment and fantasy. They will relish the excitement generated by epic machinery (the supernatural) employed in the texts—e.g. the air, tree, and water spirits or *tonongs* and the magical powers they wield. As regard superheroes (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman), it should come as a pleasant surprise to them that these are not after all modern inventions. Long before Superman, for example, *Darangen* heroes travelled on pathways through the clouds and in the Skyworld, as well as the great heavens, at lightning speed on their flying shields as Sayana does on his quest for his mother's homeland. With the help of the *tonongs*, they could also become invisible to their enemies, or magically transform themselves into other creatures to accomplish their mission. Paramata Bantugen, for example, assumed the form of a gray-haired old man and engaged his son Lumena in a fight to test the latter's mettle and readiness for his mission to Kormatan Borodan. To refresh themselves and heal their wounds after heavy fighting, they fly to the Skyworld to enjoy a dip in the Gambar river; water from this river has magical powers.

These selected texts are translated into prose and rendered in more comprehensible, conversational Meranaw. The code used is the mother tongue, that is, authentic and more familiar to the target users/audience (Grade 3 pupils). English translations are available for higher grades. More important, these are transcreated into manga form, thus their impact

and appeal do not only increase; they also facilitate learning by their building the learners' confidence and putting them at ease for more relaxed and efficient learning. As stressed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1981) through the socio-affective or simply, affective filter, optimal learning occurs in a relaxed state. The idea draws support from Lozanov of Suggestopedia (Suggestology) fame, and the research conducted by Russian scholars (in Brown, 1994, 2000), that hypermnesia or superlearning may be achieved in said state which produces more Alpha waves in the brain that aid learning and retention.

It is not only enchantment as described above that Darangen in manga form promises. There are, genre or intimate scenes from daily life, too, that are brought to life with greater clarity and sharpness than otherwise possible. *Paganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon*, *Alongan Pisaeyanan* and *Kangginasaan Oray* make fine examples of a delicate facet of life: husband-wife relationship, father-son ties and communication, mother-child bond, friendship, and affection and respect between mentor/teacher/caretaker and a child. Sayana's love and sympathy for his mother and the deference or respect he accords his nurse are such genre or intimate scenes. Such domestic drama or scenes, though lacking the architectonics of wars between kingdoms, and the excitement or wonder aroused by enchantment and magic, cannot fail to activate learners' schema; they are closer to hearth and heart. Such genre scenes are close to ordinary human experience and allow the young readers to experience their own humanness.

## IV. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

In regard the objectives or ends mentioned, the *Darangen* texts in *manga* form, particularly *Alongan Pisaeyanan*, exceed expectations. They have proved to lend themselves well to transcreation to *manga* for the reading delectation of the target young readers. When the artist/illustrator presented the Sayana *manga* at the "Literatour in Mindanao and Forum" held at the Institute Mini-Theater of MSU-IIT, Iligan City, on January 29, 2016, the audience, mostly college students, roared their recognition, appreciation and delight: "Naruto!"

The impact on younger readers should be greater.

Moreover, the higher purpose—i.e. the pedagogical use to which the Darangen manga may be put— should also be evident. The Darangen in manga form is designed to engage the target readers intellectually, emotionally, morally and aesthetically. Strategic and critical reading of these should involve serious examination or study of characters, their choices, and their motives, and the analytical musings or reflection that precede interpretation and evaluation. The hero Sayana's bafflement and perturbation as he sought answers to questions that his young mind could not immediately grasp, is a case in point. He grapples with heart-rending questions: Why is he confined in the *lamin* instead of freely exploring the world outside and playing with other boys in the *lama* of the *torogan*? Why is his brother Boroboro treated by their common kin with affection and respect, while he and his mother are snubbed and treated as outcasts? What kind of a leader would Boroboro make someday, given his kind of upbringing which is molding him into a ruthless bully and aggressor? In his tender age, he already can distinguish between right and wrong, and shows his leadership potential. He promises the ladies attending them in the *lamin*—part of the “spoils of war” brought home by his father Bantugen — that he will come back to set them free so they can return to their places of origin. How this sensitive and discerning boy struggles and triumphs over his anger or resentment or desire for revenge —the wrenching conflict between opposed values within himself—draws the reader deeper into the action of the story and encourages lively interaction. Readers could form varying opinions and arrive at different conclusions. His journey and search for his mother's place of origin — Komara — and clan become the reader's. There is pathos in his separation from his mother when he resolutely sallies forth from the *lamin* to start his quest. Readers empathize with him, as outrage took possession of him over his Uncle Daranda's contemptuous and offensive attitude towards his mother Gandingan at the Council meeting called by the Ayonan to plan the initiation of Boroboro, and the sense of waste and inexpressible sorrow that filled his heart on viewing the scene of devastation wreaked by war. On the other hand, his childish taunts and challenge hurled at his Uncle Daranda call for understanding. The *Alongan Pisaeyanan* story

takes the reader through a gamut of emotions and a variety of experiences promised by the journey-quest motif or archetype.

As the language used in the text is not just words, but constitutes a cultural paradigm, the young readers should find beauty in how the characters use language, for example, politeness formula or forms of address and terms of endearment, such as those used by Sayana for his mother, his nurse (Walain sa Rogongan), and doting uncles (Princes Lomaban and Rangaig), and the highly figurative or metaphorical names given to characters and places. How the ancestors of the Meranaw maintained order and harmony in their society by adherence to an accepted code of conduct and respect for the Other's rank, age position, or station in life, in other words, *kambilang a taw* (fine breeding, refinement or gentility), and *maratabat* — all these are given prominence in the epic. This is demonstrated in public discourse — e.g. councils or assemblies held to deliberate on matters of consequence to the community/ kingdom — and even in dealing with identified enemies whom one accepts as his peers. There is much in this values-rich text for the education and emulation of the young generations of Meranaws. As Madale and Francisco sum up the socio-cultural and aesthetic worth of the Darangen, it is a Charter — *anonon a rawaten* — by which the ancient Meranaws lived.

The Darangen-based materials should also be found inclusive in terms of catering for all the learning styles, for example, the visual, the auditory, the kinesthetic, the experiential, the analytic, etc. the vivid representation of scenes in manga, through colors, sounds, scents and other kinds of images, sense of movement or action, symbolism, and other means, fulfills this condition. The full range of the reader's senses — his whole being — is involved.

To conclude, the enchantment promised by stories from the Darangen offers much more than amusement or entertainment. Enchantment is too blithe a word just as pointed didacticism sounds too stolid, dry, or dull for the intended intellectual, emotional, experiential, and aesthetic engagement. Stories generate evocative powers beyond any discursive language to explain them. To quote Bruno Bettelheim's (1977) succinct elucidation of the meaningful experience gained from reading literature in the “The Uses of Enchantment”:

Listening to a fairy tale and taking in the images it presents may be likened to the scattering of seeds; only some of which will be implanted in the mind of the child. Some of those will be working in his conscious minds right away; others will stimulate processes in his unconscious. Still others will need to rest for a long time until the child's mind has reached a state suitable for their germination, and many will not take root at all. But those seeds that have fallen on the right soil will grow into beautiful flowers and sturdy trees — that is, give validity to impart feelings, promote insights, nourish hopes, reduce anxieties — and in doing so, enrich the child's life at the moment and forever after.

### Recommendations

Preservation of the oral traditions (folk literature) of the Meranaws through transcreation to other forms or mediums like manga definitely should not end with the transcreation to manga of the Darangen texts. The Meranaws have much more to take pride in, hence, these recommendations:

1. The transcreation to manga form of Darangen texts other than those listed in this project which aimed at producing a collection of Children's Literature, should be pursued. Now recognized as part of the world heritage, the Meranaw epic deserves no less. The present generation of Meranaws must themselves fully realize the worth of this rare and precious literary gem, and surviving record of the remarkable culture developed by their ancestors in pre-Islamic and pre-colonial times. The view of National Artist Nick Joaquin — "culture as history" — bears repeating.

2. Other genres like folk-tales, fables or legends lend themselves as well to transcreation to manga — e.g. tales in the collection *Agama a Niyog*.

3. Spadework — i.e. collection and recording of different varieties of folk songs, such as lullabies, work-related ditties, and ritual-related songs — should persist while the elderly members of society are still around to share their knowledge. As stated by a Mali researcher, and quoted by Manning, IFLA Professional Board (2000), "every elderly person who dies, represents a library going up in flames."

4. Other mediums should be tried, specifically animation and stage productions, to help in the popularization of Meranaw oral/literary traditions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Transcreation to manga of select texts of the epic *Darangen* to comprise an anthology or collection of Children's Literature, and for use as MTB-MLE reading/instructional materials for Grade 3 pupils, and by K-12 students in the higher grade levels (the English translation) started as a project for the dissertation of doctoral candidate **Edenairah P. Ismael**. The latter needed an artist/illustrator. Although still a novice in the art, the author who, at the time, was thinking of undertaking the same project for her own research/thesis proposal, took on the challenge. She is thus indebted to Dr. Ismael for the opportunity to try her hand at the transcreation of *Darangen* text to *manga*. She also owes much her mother **Dr. Rebekah Marohombsar Alawi** not only for her inspiration and encouragement, but for her patient guidance and invaluable assistance as critic/consultant and editor.

Finally, the artist/illustrator must acknowledge the influence of her grandfather, the late **Col. Louis R. Marohombsar**, governor of then undivided Lanao (1946-1949) who, despite his Western education as first Meranaw PMA graduate, never forgot his roots. As his youngest daughter, Dr. R. Alawi, fondly remembers, it was from his repeated soulful singing of *Paramata Gandingan* that she first heard about the *Darangen*.

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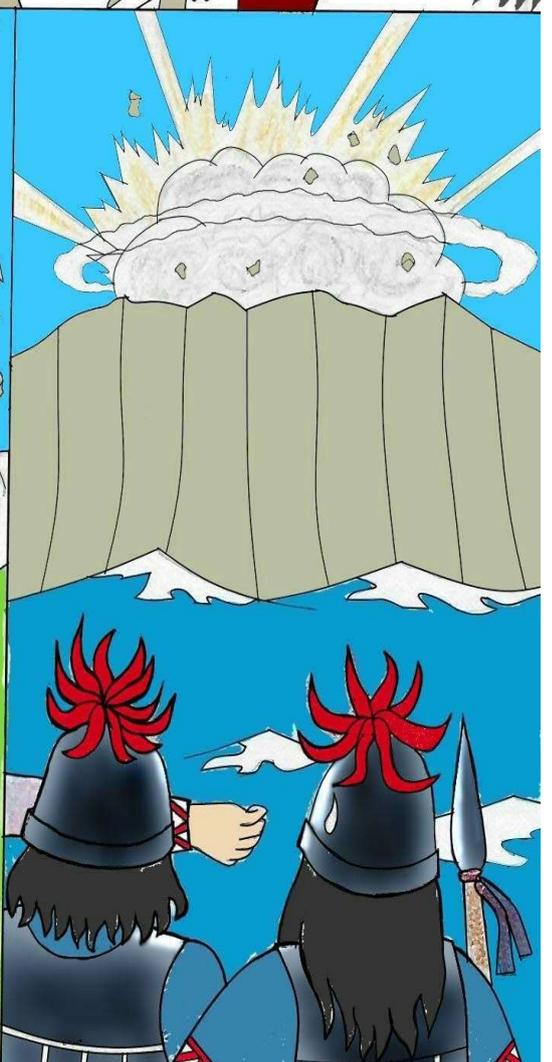
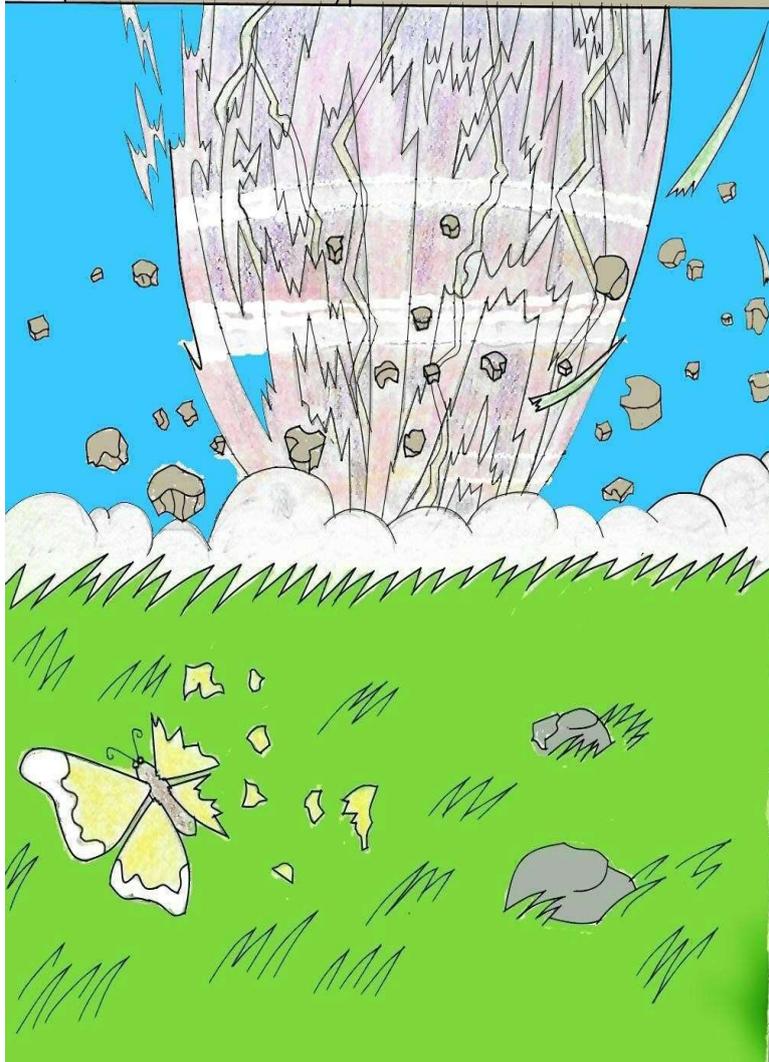
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Excerpts from the transcreation to *Manga ALONGAN PISAEYANAN* showing the battle between Gandingan & Bantogen









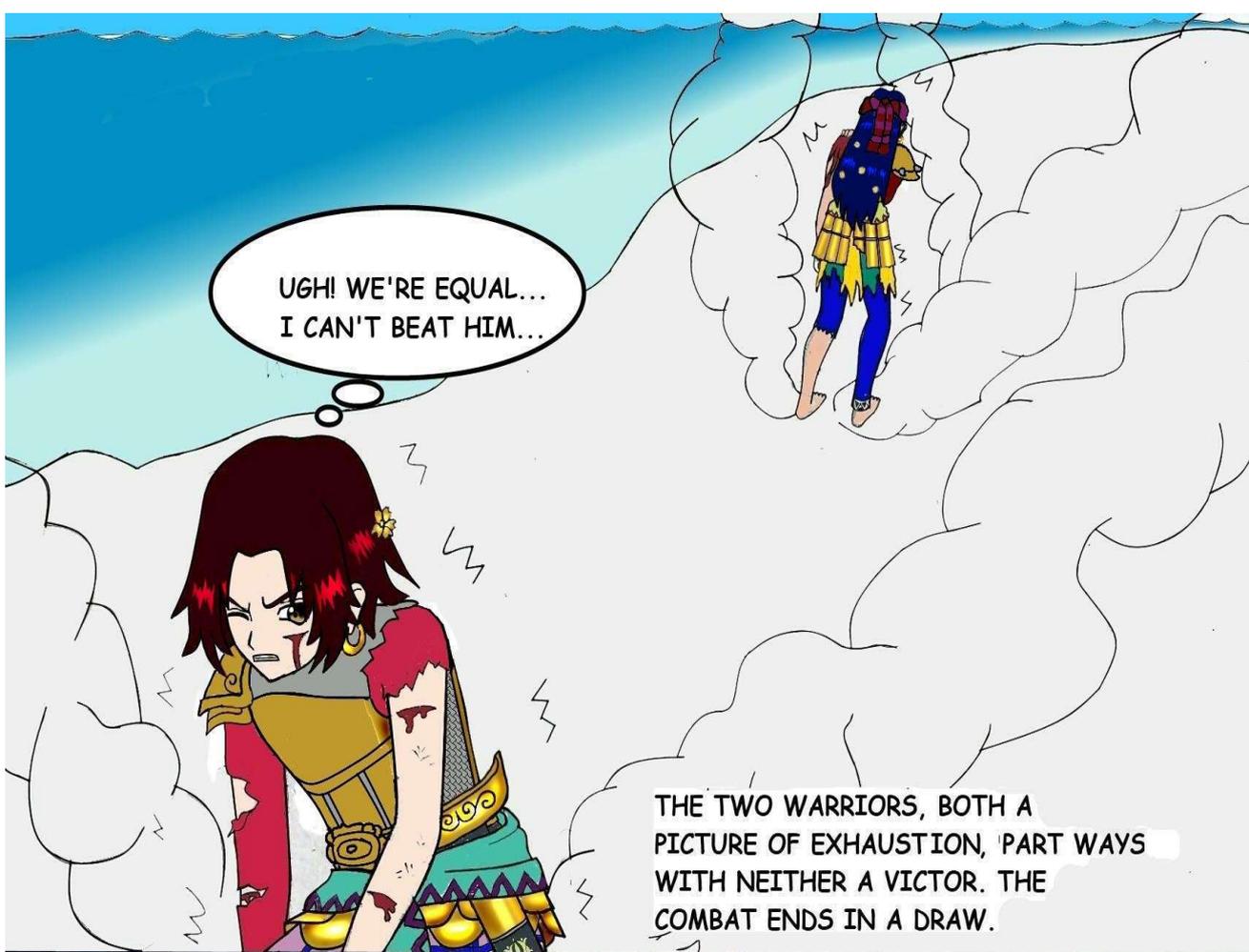




EVEN THE TONONGS ARE SHOCKED.

WHAT?!!!!!





BACK IN THE RINAYONG,  
BANTOGAN TELLS THE  
BEMBARAN WARRIORS OF THE  
AMAZING PROWESS OF THE  
YOUNG WARRIOR.



BANTOGAN SUGGESTS THAT IT  
IS RANGAIG'S TURN TO FIGHT  
THE MYSTERIOUS BOY WARRIOR.