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## MERANAW *BAYOK* CHANTS: ORAL TRADITIONS IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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### ABSTRACT

Music and oral traditions have long served as vital instruments in peacebuilding, providing communities with a shared language to negotiate conflict and foster unity (Howell, 2022). This study examines two selected *bayok* texts—*Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* (Reunion Chant) and *Bayok sa Kasimpala* (Poetic Debate Chant)—to explore their role in promoting peace within Meranaw society. Using linguistic analysis on existing texts, the study investigates how these traditional poetic chants contribute to themes of social harmony and conflict resolution. Findings show that *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* emphasizes peacebuilding through the promotion of unity and respectful reconciliation during clan reunions. The chant metaphorically links the gathering of families with collective strength and highlights personal demeanor as central to fostering meaningful agreements and lasting harmony. This form of *bayok* serves as a ceremonial invocation for restoring social bonds and reinforcing communal dignity. Conversely, *Bayok sa Kasimpala* addresses marriage issues by presenting positive impact of polygamy and emotional expectations (according to male *Onor*) and gendered peacebuilding (according to female *Onor*) perspectives. Moreover, the male chant supports polygamy from creating peace within the household through female solidarity, while the female chant often opposes polygamy. This performative debate promotes peace by enabling audiences to understand the complexities and varying viewpoints on polygamous marriage, encouraging empathy and dialogue within the community. Study suggests to integrate and utilize traditional narratives like *bayok* in youth and peace education to subjects like Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) or teaching music unique in Bangsamoro region to instill values of harmony, responsibility, and ethical behavior.

**Keywords:** *Bayok, Onor, Bayok sa Ka-Khapal, Bayok sa Kasimpala, Thematic Analysis*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Music has long been a medium of expression, capable of bridging divides and fostering unity (Howell, 2022). It transcends cultural boundaries, offering a shared space for peacebuilding and dialogue. While music is often celebrated for its role in preserving cultural heritage, although often overlooked (Klem, 2018), it also plays a crucial role in fostering peace.

The link between peace and music is profound, as songs and chants often carry messages that promote understanding, and build community cohesion (Arbie and Bandung, 2021).

One such example is the *bayok* of the Meranaw people. This poetic chant, which is integral to Meranaw tradition (Tahir, 2012), goes beyond merely representing cultural values; it also functions as a powerful tool for resolving conflicts and disputes (Benito, 2022). More than just an artistic expression, *bayok* serves as a platform for dialogue, reconciliation, and the restoration of harmony within the community. It is also a vital vehicle for conveying aspects of Meranaw society, such as family genealogy and customary law (Hadji Daud, 2014). The stylized form of *bayok*, marked by its dignified and formal language, varies depending on the occasion. Alonto (2005) identifies several forms of *bayok*, including those for thanksgiving (*kandori*), weddings (*kambitiyara*), enthronements (*kandatu*), stage plays (*kapagoragis*), and funerals (*kandiaga*). In this way, *bayok* is more than just a ceremonial performance—it encapsulates a peace narrative that reaffirms communal bonds and strengthens the social fabric of the Meranaw people (Sarangani, 2010).

For instance, from the context of the present study, *Bayok sa ka-khapal* (reunion chant) is often chanted during clan or community reunions, where it serves to reaffirm unity, resolve past misunderstandings, and celebrate collective identity. Meanwhile, *bayok sa kasimpala* (poetic debate chant) reflects the Meranaw tradition of respectful discourse and deliberation, offering a performative space for expressing differing views while maintaining communal respect and dignity.

Central to the performance of *bayok* is the presence of an *Onor*, a respected poet, chanter, or tribal leader. Inviting an *Onor* to perform is often seen as a privilege, typically reserved for those who are financially capable (Benito, 2014). The *Onor's* participation in weddings, enthronements, or community events is considered prestigious and usually entails significant costs for the host. However, the role of the *Onor* extends beyond mere performance; it involves upholding the values of modesty, sensitivity, and diplomacy (Curo, 2008). For instance, in occasions such as weddings, an *Onor* must carefully craft their delivery to avoid offending the *maratabat*, the deeply rooted sense of honor and pride among attendees. As noted by Cayongcat (1986) as cited by Hadji Daud (2014), a poorly chosen reference to a family's past could lead to social tensions, emphasizing the need for the *Onor* to consider their words with cultural awareness and tact.

Despite its cultural richness and peace-promoting potential, recent studies have shown a declining connection between the younger generation and *bayok*. Panggaga (2009) found that many Meranaw students, faculty, and staff had only encountered *bayok* during formal occasions such as enthronements or feasts, and most could not understand its content. Although 95% of respondents agreed on the importance of preserving *bayok*, their limited exposure and comprehension reduced their appreciation of it. Similarly, Tawano (2016) observed that Meranaw youth preferred mainstream music, citing the limited accessibility of *bayok* as a major reason for their lack of interest.

These findings reveal a concerning trend: the influence of modernity and the rarity of *bayok* performances, have contributed to a growing disconnect between the youth and this

traditional form of expression. Moreover, the current body of research has predominantly focused on *bayok's* linguistic, structural, or cultural dimensions (e.g., Pacasirang, 2025; Panggaga, 2009; Tawano, 2016; Sarip, 2018), while largely overlooking its role in peacebuilding.

Given these challenges, the present study aims to explore *bayok* through a peacebuilding lens, specifically focusing on its role in resolving conflicts and promoting social harmony in Lanao del Sur—a region where peace remains fragile. Using linguistic analysis as the research method, this qualitative study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how *bayok*, beyond its cultural significance, may serve as a vital tool for fostering peace and reconciliation in Meranaw society. Through this investigation, the study hopes to shed light on the untapped potential of *bayok* as a meaningful instrument for building peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In oral tradition, poems and songs were intertwined, often chanted to instruments like the lyre, with significant structure (Ingrid, 2021). In the context of Meranaw *bayok*, the chant is arranged from particular and regular words and syllables that produce a specific sound pattern. While the structure of the *bayok* may vary, it generally adheres to set patterns of intonation, rhythm, and sometimes instrumental accompaniment, which are crucial for its cultural and expressive purposes.

The verbal arts encompass narratives, dramas, poetry, incantations, proverbs, riddles, word games, and structured forms of naming, compliments, and insults. Narrative, in particular, is one of the easiest verbal arts to record or collect. Due to their reproducibility and widespread appeal, narratives have attracted significant attention from linguists and anthropologists.

Music and storytelling are essential to human experience, intertwined with language and communication. Documenting verbal art is important for cultural context and linguistic insight, revealing cultural practices and providing valuable information about a language's structure.

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According to Sarma (2015), when a language dies, its oral traditions are lost. However, it is the active use and public performance of these oral expressions that play a crucial role in preserving a language, rather than relying on dictionaries or databases. Moreover, while languages thrive in songs, stories, riddles, and rhymes, making the preservation of languages closely tied to the transmission of oral traditions and expressions (UNESCO, 2006), like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, oral traditions are endangered by rapid urbanization, mass migration, industrialization, and environmental changes. Media such as books, newspapers, radio, television, and the internet can significantly impact these traditions (Alchazidu, 2020). Hence, modern mass media may significantly alter or replace traditional forms of oral expression. Epic poems that once took several days to recite in full may be reduced to just a few hours and traditional courtship songs that were sung before marriage may be replaced by

CDs or digital music files (UNESCO, 2006). Therefore, safeguarding oral traditions involves preserving their societal role, promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer, and encouraging creativity through events like storytelling festivals.

A study of Pacio (2023) investigates the perspectives of the Yakan community on their oral tradition, exploring how it is valued, transmitted, and sustained in the face of changes in social and cultural practices. Through interviews with the selected Yakan oral performers and youth in Basilan, Philippines, the study found that traditional stories and songs are primarily shared through informal gatherings and special occasions and are highly valued as a means of preserving cultural heritage, expressing cultural identity and values, and fostering community cohesion. Overall, the study highlights the importance of oral tradition in maintaining cultural continuity and promoting community well-being among the Yakan people and underscores the need for continued efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the Philippines and beyond.

Moreover, a notable research gap in the study of Meranaw bayok is the lack of exploration into its potential role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. While most studies have primarily focused on analyzing the bayok and its translations, there has been little attention given to how this traditional verbal art form may contribute to promoting peace or resolving conflicts within the Meranaw community. Given the bayok's deep connection to Meranaw history, values, and social cohesion, investigating its use in fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and peace could provide valuable insights into how traditional cultural practices can be leveraged in contemporary peacebuilding efforts.

Additionally, the bayok has been less studied due to the challenges involved in transcribing it. The decline of this verbal art can also be further attributed to modernization, as younger generations gravitate towards K-pop and rock music, a trend highlighted in Sarangani's (2010) study of Meranaw bayok and popular songs.

Tahir's (2012) study on the morphological analysis of five Meranaw bayok—Kapranon, Kapagarimaonga, Kambongbong, Kataringtang, and Mamayog—utilized content analysis to present the morphemic lexical categories of these bayok. While Tahir's study significantly contributes to understanding the structure of the Meranaw language, it did not disclose the source of the data (Meranaw bayok).

Benito (2014) also explored three types of bayok in his undergraduate thesis such as bayok sa *ka-khupal*, bayok sa *kasimpala* and bayok sa *kambitiyara*. He provided Filipino translations of these bayok and examine the idiomatic expressions embedded in it. Study suggests that other types of bayok should be explored providing as well the English translations.

According to Sarip (2018), the literary heritage of the Meranaw people, much of which is oral, is one of their most vulnerable traditional art forms. Modern changes in fashion, taste, and practices, described by Sarangani (2010) as an era of ruptures and discontinuities, have impacted this part of the Meranaw oral tradition. The evolution or transformation of these art forms may be the best way to prevent their extinction. It is believed that new Meranaw music forms, such as the rina-rinaw and banda, originated from the bayok, reflecting shifts in Meranaw culture. A noticeable change is the contrast between the refined language of the

bayok and the simpler, sometimes vulgar expressions in modern Meranaw songs (Cayongcat, 1984). This experimentation with new forms and trends suggests that the boundaries between traditional heritage and modern innovations may eventually blur, making it difficult to distinguish between the two (Sarangani, 2002).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on analyzing two types of *bayok*: (1) *Bayok sa Ka-khapal* (Reunion Chant), and (2) *Bayok sa Kasimpala* (Poetic Debate Chant) as a traditional verbal art form within the Meranaw culture. The data is taken from an existing undergraduate thesis that examined the idiomatic expressions of the above-mentioned Meranaw *bayok*.

The method involves a detailed examination of these two types of *bayok* to determine if it contains elements related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The analysis includes *Linguistic Analysis*, which is a close examination of the language used in the chant, focusing on the morphology and syntax identified within the *bayok*. The aim is to assess whether the linguistic structure conveys themes related to harmony, reconciliation, or social cohesion, which are central to peace and conflict resolution. This involves considering the similarities of the two types of *bayok* to draw themes specifically on cultural context of the chant, to understand how it might promote unity and resolve conflicts, either directly or indirectly.

#### 3.1 Participants

The primary participant of this study is the text or script which was taken from an undergraduate thesis authored by Benito (2014). These theses provide Filipino translations of these *bayok*. The text serves as the primary source for the analysis of the chant's structure, language, and potential connections to themes of peace and conflict resolution. Since the study is based on an existing written script, the participants are the words and linguistic elements embedded in the *Bayok* itself, as presented in Benito's work.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis for this study involved a multi-step approach to examine two types of *bayok*, namely, reunion chant and poetic debate chant-texts and its potential relationship with themes of peace and conflict resolution. The analysis was focused on both the linguistic structure and the symbolic meaning embedded within the chant. Further, using a thematic analysis, each line or statement in the *bayok* or chant was examined for cultural significance of the chant within the context of reunion and poetic debate chant of Meranaw social life.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Context of the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* (Reunion Chant)

*Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* is a traditional Meranaw chant recited during social gatherings, particularly family reunions or clan assemblies. It often recounts genealogies, and reminds the younger generations of their roots and responsibilities. Through poetic language, it fosters a collective sense of identity and belonging, reinforcing social harmony. By emphasizing shared ancestry and values, the *bayok sa ka-khapal* acts as a unifying force, bridging potential divisions and encouraging peaceful coexistence.

From the researcher's analysis of the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal*, it narrates the momentous gathering of two clans — one of which travels from a distant place to reunite with relatives. This chant unfolds as both a literal and symbolic voyage. The arriving family, traveling by boat, is received with watchful anticipation by those awaiting onshore. As the boat draws near, the *onor* (traditional chanter) begins to vividly describe the passengers such as individuals of honor and high regard, like *datu* (chieftains) and elders who embody dignity, lineage, and moral stature. Composed of 84 lines in total, the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* offers a structured and elaborate depiction of this reunion, underscoring the ritual and poetic depth of the event.

Central to this *bayok* is the concept of *salam* (peace), which the visiting clan brings with them. The chant transforms the act of arrival into a metaphor for reconciliation, unity, and the restoration of familial bonds. As the waves grow stronger, this imagery is linked not to conflict, but to the growing strength and solidarity of the families involved. The chant celebrates not just the physical meeting of people, but the spiritual and cultural convergence of shared values — respect, kinship, peace, and strength through unity.

In this context, the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* serves as more than a narrative. It becomes a ceremonial invocation of peacebuilding through respectful reunion. It reflects Meranaw ideals, manners, and the social fabric that sustains harmony within and among clans. Below are the two themes found in *bayok sa ka-khapal* (1) **Bayok Lines as Peacebuilding Tools** and the other theme is (2) **Bayok as a Carrier of Maratabat and the Potential for Conflict**.

#### **Theme 1: Bayok Lines as Peacebuilding Tools**

From the analysis of the *bayok* texts, two major themes emerged: (1) expressions that reinforce peacebuilding, and (2) expressions that potentially challenge harmony, often tied to maratabat (honor) or social status.

Some lines of the *bayok* explicitly promote reconciliation, understanding, and peaceful coexistence.

#### **Sub-Theme 1: Peaceful co-existence**

##### **Line 10: “A ngeniran sa daradat a ipagampira gakit”**

**Translation:** Cultivating virtuous conduct (in individuals) fosters harmony and facilitates conflict resolution.

This line encapsulates one of the core values embedded in Meranaw social philosophy: that peace and harmony are sustained not merely by formal authority or tradition, but by personal conduct marked by *daradat* (i.e., courteousness, and emotional discipline). Individuals with highly regard “daradat” are agents of diplomacy. Their behavior carries weight in shaping the outcome of the reunion.

In the cultural framework of the *bayok*, manners are not superficial gestures; they are moral tools that facilitate reconciliation (*ipagampira gakit*). A reunion, especially one involving clan from different places, may carry historical tensions, unspoken grievances, or emotional distance (Dy, 2022). Yet, the presence of well-mannered individuals becomes the mechanism through which those potential conflicts are softened and resolved (Kechine, 2021). This line also subtly aligns personal virtue with communal peace — suggesting that the strength of a family or clan lies in the character of its members.

The poetic voice here does not just describe an event — it offers a reflection on how peace is actively constructed through behavior. In the context of the *Ka-Khapal*, where two groups come together after a distance and time, this line serves as a gentle reminder that the success of their reunion depends as much on attitude as on ancestry.

**Line 29: “a dimarondaw e saleg a kisasagansang yan ko sambakati o bagel”**

**Translation:** It may be characterized as the formidable influence exerted by vastly unified waves

This line draws on the powerful imagery of the sea — a recurring symbol in Meranaw oral tradition — to represent the collective strength and unity of the families being reunited. The *sambakati o bagel* (unified waves) are not chaotic or threatening, but rather a formidable force, steady and synchronized, symbolizing the harmony achieved through solidarity.

In the context of the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal*, the waves metaphorically reflect both the arrival of the visiting clan and the spiritual momentum they bring. As the boat approaches, the waves grow stronger — not to disrupt, but to announce the presence of something significant and powerful: the reunion of bloodlines, the restoration of kinship, and the reaffirmation of peace. These waves echo the emotional and social currents stirred by such a gathering.

The phrase *dimarondaw e saleg* suggests a “formidable influence” that adds a philosophical depth. It points to the idea that unity is not passive; it exerts influence. Just as the waves can shape the shoreline, a unified community can shape outcomes, resolve disputes, and fortify social bonds. It implies that peace, when grounded in unity, is not fragile — it is compelling and transformative.

The chant elevates the natural environment to reflect human virtues — in this case, suggesting that the natural strength of the sea is akin to the moral and emotional strength of a united family. Thus, Line 29 deepens the *bayok*’s message: peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of a powerful, unified will like waves moving in harmony toward a shared shore.

### Sub-Theme 2: Promote Reconciliation

**Line 40: “a paraatoran a taw ko miphasada marandang na onayan so igma a okit a kalilintad”**

**Translation:** “The demeanor of an individual is determined by their capacity to reach meaningful agreement of a peace process.”

This line captures a core philosophy within the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal*, where the *paraatoran* (demeanor or conduct) of an individual is central to their role in fostering peace. In Meranaw culture, an individual’s social standing or worth is not solely determined by status or wealth, but by their active participation in and commitment to the process of peace.

The word *miphasada* refers to the act of reaching a meaningful or significant agreement. It highlights the idea that an individual’s influence or reputation within the community is shaped by their ability to contribute to the resolution of conflicts, ensuring that agreements are not superficial but genuinely reflective of the community’s needs and aspirations (Disini et al., 2022). This is particularly important in the context of a reunion, where the process of reconciling past differences and fostering unity is as important as the event itself.

The term *marandang na onayan* underscores the importance of *meaningful agreement* — an agreement that is not just a formality but one that results in real understanding and cooperation. In this sense, the line emphasizes that the true measure of an individual’s *paraatoran* is their capacity to engage in the peace process in a way that brings about lasting reconciliation, rather than temporary resolution.

The latter phrase, *so igma a okit a kalilintad* (the peace process), reinforces the ongoing nature of peacebuilding. It suggests that peace is not a singular event or a one-time negotiation, but a continual, evolving process. To participate effectively in this process requires individuals to embody virtues such as patience, wisdom, and humility. These qualities are reflected in their *demeanor* or *conduct*, which, according to this line, is the true measure of their character and standing in the community.

In Meranaw perspectives, an individual's role in the peace process goes beyond simply being present at a reunion; it involves active, meaningful participation in creating and sustaining harmony (Langco, 2014). Thus, Line 40 articulates that personal dignity and respect within the community are not given by birth or external titles but earned through one's actions — particularly in their ability to mediate, resolve disputes, and bring others together for the greater good.

This line encapsulates the essence of peace in the Meranaw worldview: peace is not passive or accidental, but actively constructed through dialogue, negotiation, and a shared commitment to mutual understanding (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012). An individual's *paraatoran* — their moral character and demeanor — reflects their involvement in this process and is a key factor in sustaining the community's unity and harmony.'

### **Theme 2: Bayok as a Carrier of *Maratabat* and the Potential for Conflict**

**Line 52:** “*na opama pyandian so daromimbang a kapal na pasandalan sa kadar a linog p'phananggila ka nanao ko bangsa na bandila so kaontol a madaita mlimbay ko Bandarany karga na dopo so maratabat a kilabo sa kaogon*”

**Translation:** If you have prepared a flag to *Daromimbang a Kapal*, who is a *Pasandalan* as destined, be mindful of its implications for the lineage, as this flag shall carry with it the weight of justice, which will be faithfully reflected in its constituents. The *maratabat* associated with it shall endure for eternity.

This line captures a deeply philosophical and political perspective within the *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal*, where leadership and justice are symbolically embedded in the act of raising a flag. It reflects the Meranaw worldview that the recognition of authority, especially within the sacred context of reunion which must be accompanied by a moral and spiritual consciousness (Papa, 2020) of what that recognition entails.

The phrase “*opama pyandian so Daromimbang a Kapal*” refers to the act of preparing a *pandi* (flag) in honor of *Daromimbang a Kapal*. Here, *pandi*, the root word of *pyandian* is a traditional Meranaw term for flag, carrying deep cultural and ceremonial significance. It is not just a symbol of leadership, but a living representation of ancestral pride and historical responsibility (Maseland, 2006). This is paired with the more modern term “*bandila*”, bridging cultural tradition and political formality. Their use together in this line is intentional, reminding the audience that both indigenous values and public responsibility are at play.

The term “*Pasandalan sa kadar*” describes as a “destined one”, someone who carries historical mandate to lead or represent the community. The act of raising a flag for the *datu* is not merely ceremonial; it has far-reaching implications for the lineage, both in terms of honor and accountability.

The line “*bandila so kaontol a madaita mlimbay ko Bandarany*” explains that the flag embodies *kaontol*, the weight of justice, which flows and reflects upon the people. It implies that if the flag stands for fairness and equity, the people will mirror this in unity.

The concluding phrase, “*so maratabat a kilabo sa kaogon*,” expresses the deep-rooted Meranaw belief in *maratabat* — a concept that extends beyond pride to include moral integrity, ancestral dignity, and social credibility. To carry the flag is to carry the *maratabat* of the entire *bangsa* (lineage), and once it is raised. Thus, public affirmation of a leader is a sacred act; it binds the family and community in a covenant that cannot be taken lightly.

**Table 4.1.2. Linguistic Analysis of *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal* (Reunion Chant)**

Line	Original Text (Meranaw)	Translation	Theme	Linguistic Features	Discourse Function	Cultural Meaning
Line 10	<i>A ngeniran sa daradat a ipagampira gakit</i>	Cultivating virtuous conduct fosters harmony and facilitates conflict resolution	Peaceful Co-existence	Use of gerundive phrase and metaphorical action verb	Promotes moral behavior as a precondition for reconciliation	Daradat (courteousness) as a moral compass; personal conduct shapes communal peace
Line 29	<i>a dimaronda we saleg a kisasagansa ng yan ko sambakati o bagel</i>	It may be characterized as the formidable influence exerted by unified waves	Peace through Unity	Symbolic imagery and alliteration	Evokes emotional and spiritual unity as peacebuilding tools	Unity metaphorically likened to synchronized natural force, reinforcing social cohesion
Line 40	<i>a paraatoran a taw ko miphasada marandang na onayan so igma a okit a kalilintad</i>	One's demeanor is measured by their ability to achieve meaningful peace agreements	Promoting Reconciliation	Complex nominal phrases and abstract nominalizations	Positions peace as an ongoing, negotiated process grounded in behavior	Emphasizes peace as earned through virtue, not birthright; moral stature through negotiation
Line 52	<i>na opama pyandian so daromimba ng a kapal... so maratabat a kilabo sa kaogon</i>	If you prepare a flag for the destined one, it carries the weight of justice and eternal maratabat	Maratabat and Conflict Potential	Symbolic language and deep metaphor	Warns of the heavy responsibility of leadership and public recognition	Flags as symbolic containers of ancestral pride and moral justice; maratabat as moral inheritance

Table 4.1.2 shows the linguistic analysis of *Bayok sa Ka-Khapal*. As displayed in the table, its language is ceremonial and metaphorically rich. It weaves together moral conduct and unity as prerequisites for peace. Linguistically, it uses nominalized abstractions, metaphor, and culturally charged symbols to elevate the process of reconciliation. For instance, in Line 10: “A ngeniran sa daradat a ipagampira gakit”. the focus on *ngeniran sa daradat* (cultivating courtesy) highlights how peace begins at the level of personal morality. The phrase *ipagampira gakit* metaphorically likens conflict resolution to ferrying a raft across stormy waters (i.e., a common maritime metaphor in Meranaw poetics). Further, the term *daradat* is not just as

etiquette but as the cornerstone of diplomacy and leadership. It underscores the belief that peace is not merely a political process but a moral obligation (Arenas-Rivera, et al., 2024).

Moreover, Line 29: "*A dimarondaw e saleg a kisasagansang yan ko sambakati o bagel*" uses nature (waves) as metaphor for unity. The alliteration and rhythm evoke the chant's musicality while reinforcing its message: unity is powerful and organic. *Bagel* (energy, power) emphasize that collective moral strength (such as synchronized waves) can overcome conflict. Nature here serves as a mirror of social harmony.

Meanwhile, Line 40: "*A paraatoran a taw ko miphasada marandang...*" expresses the idea that one's worth is measured by their ability to *miphasada* (negotiate or facilitate reconciliation). The complex structure and abstract terms like *igma* (agreement) and *kalilintad* (peace) signal the chant's elevated moral tone. According to Campbell (2018), reconciliation is a prestigious act. Leaders are judged not by status alone but by their contributions to peace. This promotes a cultural ethic of active peacemaking

Lastly, Line 52: "*Na opama pyandian so daromimbang a kapal...*" warns of the responsibilities attached to *daromimbang a kapal* (a flag for the destined one). The metaphor of the flag stands for honor, responsibility, and possibly inheritance. The chant cautions against prideful displays of *maratabat* (ancestral honor) without awareness of their implications. It critiques the potential for these symbols to escalate conflict if misused.

#### 4.2 Context of the *Bayok sa Kasimpala* (poetic debate chant)

*Bayok sa Kasimpala* (Poetic debate Chant) is a traditional Meranaw poetic performance comparable to the Filipino *Balagtasan*, where a male and a female onor (chanter) engage in a stylized, often humorous lyrical debate. Performed during special occasions or public gatherings, this form of entertainment showcases the Meranaw community's love for rhetoric and oral artistry. It is characterized by its lengthy, metaphor-rich verses and is tailored to the theme of the event—be it cultural, social, or religious.

Based on the data analyzed in this research, the particular *Bayok sa Kasimpala* is focused on the theme of marriage, specifically within the context of Islamic polygamy. In the chant, the female onor chant strong opposition to polygamous marriage, challenging the male onor's claim that he desires to take multiple wives. Through witty and sharp poetic exchanges, she warns the audience, especially the women, not to be deceived by men's sweet words or justifications. In turn, the male onor defends his stance by asserting that polygamy is permissible in Islam, and it is a step toward peacebuilding at homes and among wives.

Though rooted in traditional poetic form, this *Bayok sa Kasimpala* serves as a mirror to ongoing cultural conversations around gender roles, marriage norms, and religious interpretation in Meranaw society. While performed for entertainment, it also subtly conveys social commentary, offering insight into the lived experiences and perspectives within the community.

In this bayok, the researcher has analyzed 105 lines from *Bayok sa Kasimpala* and only included selected lines which may tackle or relates to peacebuilding. Hence, two themes were emerged, one from the male onor's perspectives and the other one was from female onor's perspectives.

##### a. Male Onor Chant in *Bayok sa Kasimpala*

**Theme: Bayok as a Cultural Medium for Constructing Harmony and Justifying Polygamous Intentions through Gendered Peacebuilding**

**Line 41:** “*na tordo ako niyo ko maidan pinagadilan ka toyoden ko sukano ko kapeng'giginawai o basi Inambayan a Oray na so kinidansal iyan na Potre Matarintis*”

**Translation:** “and care for me in my home, so I may support you in forming harmony with others, like with Inambayan a Oray, who is recognized as Potre Matarintis.”

This line reflects the male onor’s intended vision of polygamy as a structure of shared support and peace, where emotional and physical care is provided by his wives, and in return, he acts as a unifying figure who fosters harmony among them. By asking to be cared for “*in my home*” (*maidan* which actually referred to as “community”), the speaker emphasizes the domestic role he expects his wives to fulfill. However, his request goes beyond simple caregiving, it is tied to his goal of creating peace within the household through female solidarity.

The phrase “*so I may support you in forming harmony with others*” reveals a strategic vision: the male onor sees himself as a mediator or facilitator of peace between co-wives. He envisions a household where wives not only accept polygamy but also actively build friendships with one another, modeled after respected women like Inambayan a Oray, also known as Potre Matarintis (most beautiful).

From this perspective, polygamy is framed as a tool for peacebuilding, but one that depends on emotional labor from women and the husband’s role in managing harmony (Rasool, et al., 2024). The speaker’s idealized version of co-wife relationships reflects an aspiration for order and unity, yet it also raises important questions about agency, consent, and emotional expectations placed on women. Harmony is portrayed as a goal, but it is conditioned on women accepting caregiving roles (Copenhaver, 2022) and maintaining peaceful relations among themselves—an arrangement that may not account for the complexities of rivalry, jealousy, or unequal affection in real-life polygamous households.

Delivered through *bayok*, this vision is expressed with subtlety and cultural sensitivity. The poetic language masks the power dynamics embedded in the request, allowing the speaker to present his intentions in a socially acceptable and persuasive form. This highlights the function of *bayok* as a peaceful negotiation tool, where delicate topics such as multiple marriages and emotional expectations are framed in ways that invite reflection rather than confrontation.

In this context, *bayok* becomes a medium through which men can justify and romanticize polygamy as a system of peace and cooperation, while also subtly shaping women’s roles within that system. It reflects both the ideals and tensions within Meranaw cultural expectations around marriage, gender roles, and communal harmony.

### ***b. Female Onor Chant in Bayok sa Kasimpala***

#### **Theme: Bayok as a Platform for Ethical Discourse and Peaceful Social Negotiation**

This theme encapsulates the two sub-themes of the female Onor’s voice during the poetic debate chant. Here, the *bayok* frames personal virtue as foundational to social harmony and addresses how the *bayok* serves as a space to critique and negotiate sensitive issues, such as polygamy, without direct confrontation. By questioning the motivations behind marrying multiple women, the *bayok* encourages ethical reflection and dialogue, promoting respect and fairness in relationships.

**Sub-Theme 1: Bayok as a Medium for Feminist Resistance and Social Critique**

**Line 30:** “*sa mawatan a kanogon ka masalakaw dun a korop sa aya oto a tanda na propaganda niyan sa maidan pinagadilan na marugen puman anan a mga onor sa ranao ka bad'n kiyatokawan*”

**Translation:** “It is not unfounded for others to claim that his (referring to male onor) display of propaganda within the community is evidenced by his act of seeking Onor (referring to women onor) through marriage proposals, a motive we are well aware of.”

The female onor’s line emphasizes a performative debate which reflects how bayok becomes a space for voicing dissent, particularly from women’s perspectives. It shows that Bayok functions as a nonviolent platform for addressing social and gender injustices. The female speaker uses poetic form to question social norms without inciting direct conflict.

However, her tone shifts from reverent to cautionary as she warns against the intentions of men, particularly those who seek multiple marriages. This suggests a critical stance on how polygamy may be misused or misrepresented by men for personal desire rather than its intended religious purpose (Ebrahim et al., 2017).

The female onor's message functions as both a moral reminder and a form of resistance. By reminding the audience of the possible misuse of religious doctrine to justify male desire, thus serving as social critique within the bounds of cultural and religious expression. Her performance illustrates a female voice asserting agency within a traditionally male-dominated discourse (Meyers, 2022).

**Sub-theme 2: Negotiating Responsibility and Consent in Polygamous Intentions as a Path to Peace**

**Line 45:** “*na ino kakai mangoda? na ba'a ko suka sangka'a sa kaphakitordong ka ki Inambayan a Oray manganganon ta bad'n i pikitordo ka dow a katao a onor ka da a petordor*”

**Translation:** “Why is it, Kakai Mangoda? I must express my opposition to your intention of marrying Inambayan a Oray. I pity your reason as you only wanted to be taken care of by two other onor as he doesn’t have someone to take care of him.”

Line 45 shows a meaningful moment of questioning and concern expressed through *Bayok sa Kasimpala*. The female onor questions Kakai Mangoda’s (name of the male onor) plan to take another wife, suggesting that his reason was he wants someone to care for him which imply a selfish and not based on respect or fairness. Further, the female onor says, “*manganganon ta badn*” pointing out that Mangoda’s intention lacks deeper values like genuine affection and emotional sincerity.

Hence, this show that bayok is more than an entertainment, it is a way to guide behavior and remind people of their duties in a respectful and creative way. This makes bayok a useful tool for keeping peace and solving problems in the community.

The line also highlights how decisions like polygamy affect not only the man, but also the women involved. The mention of “two other onor” to take care of Kakai Mangoda suggests that marrying again for convenience can create unfair situations. In this way, the bayok helps to calmly bring up issues, allowing people to reflect on their actions. The female onor is not just pointing out a problem but is also giving the male onor a chance to think again and make a better choice.

In sum, this line shows how bayok is used not only to express feelings but also to help maintain peace, especially when difficult topics like polygamy are discussed. It turns a

personal disagreement into a chance for learning and reflection, making it an important part of Meranaw efforts to build a peaceful and respectful society.

*Table 4.2.1 Linguistic Analysis of Bayok sa Kasimpala*

Line	Original Text (Meranaw)	Translation	Theme	Linguistic Features	Discourse Function	Cultural Meaning
<b>Line 41 (Male)</b>	<i>“na tordo ako niyo ko maidan... kapeng'gigina wai o basi Inambayan a Oray...”</i>	“Care for me in my home, so I may support harmony, like Inambayan a Oray...”	Gendered Peacebuilding	Declarative modality	Frames polygamy as harmony-building; justifies male leadership	Home as a metaphor for the community; romanticized vision of polygamy rooted in historical precedent
<b>Line 30 (Female)</b>	<i>“sa mawatan a kanogon ka masalakaw dun a korop... propaganda niyan...”</i>	“It is not unfounded for others to claim that his (referring to male honor) display of propaganda within the community ...”	Feminist Critique	Irony and sarcasm	Challenges male authority through poetic resistance	Public courtship as political performance; resistance voiced through acceptable poetic discourse
<b>Line 45 (Female)</b>	<i>“na ino kakai mangoda? na ba'a ko suka sangka'a sa kaphakitordon g ka ki Inambayan a Oray...”</i>	“Why is it, Kakai Mangoda? I must express my opposition to your intention of marrying Inambayan a Oray...”	Negotiating Consent	Conditional structure and metaphorical idiom	Highlights emotional instability as a threat to peace	Emotional restraint as a moral expectation; polygamy criticized through emotional logic

Table 4.2.1 shows the linguistic analysis of *Bayok sa Kasimpala* is often performed in dramatic form and has wide scope and themes depending on the event or requested upon them by the audience. However, in this analyzed bayok, it functions as a commentary on gender

roles, courtship, polygamy, and emotional integrity. It takes a dialogic structure, with male and female voices negotiating through poetic lines. It employs sarcasm, conditional constructions, and emotional metaphor to frame peace not only as a communal affair but also as a deeply personal, emotional matter. For instance, Line 41 (Male): "*Na tordo ako niyo ko maidan...*", the speaker invokes the legendary figure *Inambayan a Oray* to justify his proposal. The appeal to tradition here is a rhetorical strategy to legitimize polygamy. It reflects how male suitors use historical references to present polygamy as a means to promote peace. It reveals how peace, in this context, is gendered and often controlled by men.

Further, Line 30 (Female): "*sa mawatan a kanogon ka masalakaw dun a korop... propaganda niyan...*" and Line 40 (Female) "*na ino kakai mangoda? na ba'a ko suka sangka'a sa kaphakitordong ka ki Inambayan a Oray...*", the female voice emphasized an opposition of the male perspectives such as polygamy in Islam and used

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of *Bayok sa Ka-Khupal* and *Bayok sa Kasimpala* reveals the profound role of Meranaw oral traditions in articulating indigenous frameworks for peacebuilding, social order, and cultural continuity. Through metaphor, symbolism, and narrative, these chants communicate core values such as justice, communal responsibility, and respect for gender roles and leadership. *Bayok sa Ka-Khupal* underscores the significance of ethical governance and the pursuit of harmony amid social conflict, while *Bayok sa Kasimpala* emphasizes the nurturing of interpersonal relationships and moral conduct, especially among youth and women. Together, these bayok not only reflect Meranaw worldviews but also offer culturally rooted strategies for addressing contemporary challenges. By examining these traditional forms, this study affirms the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in fostering peace, preserving identity, and reimagining gender dynamics within the broader discourse on decolonial and community-centered approaches to social transformation.

This study suggests to integrate and utilize traditional narratives like bayok in youth and peace education to subjects like GMRC or teaching music in BARMM to instill values of harmony, responsibility, and ethical behavior.

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