



THE IMPACT OF THREE RELIGIOUS GROUPS ON  
THE CHANGING ROLES OF *MERANAO* WOMEN:  
A STUDY OF *TABLĪGH JAMA'AH*, *MARKAZOSSHABAB*  
*FIL-FILIBBIN* AND  
*AHL AL-BAYT*

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Master of Arts in Islamic Philosophy, Ethics  
and Contemporary Issues

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## ABSTRACT

This research analyses the impact of three religious groups, *Tablīgh Jama'ah*, *Markazosshabab fil Filibbin* and *Ahl al-Bayt* in the city of Marawi, Lanao del Sur, Philippines, on the changing roles of *Meranao* women. Of necessity, this research examines the coming of Islamic resurgence in the Philippines and the traditional to contemporary roles played by *Meranao* women. This study is based upon primary and secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, newspapers, government reports, non-governmental organization's reports, policy statements, and press releases. The researcher also carried out interviews with key figures of the three religious groups and distributed questionnaires to four hundreds and fifty (450) individuals from different walks of life. The findings reveal that the three religious groups impacted *Meranao* women including the secular-oriented women. The interviews and the responses to the questionnaire items also show the impact of these religious groups in terms of donning hijab and participating in Islamic religious assembly or activities not just at the local but also at the national level. The study emphasises the necessity of cooperation and coordination among the religious groups and *Meranao* women's organizations in promoting comprehensive and equitable development of all segments of the Islamic *Ummah*.

## ملخص البحث

يحلل هذا البحث تأثير ثلاثة من الجماعات الدينية في الفلبين على الأدوار المتغيرة للمرأة في ميراناو Meranao وهي جماعة التبليغ، مركز الشباب في الفلبين، و أهل البيت في مدينة مراوي، محافظة لاناو ديل سور. وبحكم الضرورة فقد فحص هذا البحث الانبعاث الإسلامي القادم الى الفلبين وتأثيره على الأدوار التقليدية والمعاصرة التي تضطلع بها المرأة في ميراناو Meranao. واعتمدت هذه الدراسة على المصادر الأولية و الثانوية مثل الكتب والمقالات و المجلات والصحف والتقارير الحكومية و تقارير المنظمات غير الحكومية، و البيانات السياسية، والنشرات الصحفية. قام الباحث أيضا باجراء مقابلات مع شخصيات رئيسية من المجموعات الدينية الثلاث و وزعت استبيانات على اربعمائة وخمسون (450) فردا من مختلف مناحى الحياة. كشفت النتائج أن المجموعات الدينية الثلاث أثرت في ادوارالنساء في ميراناو Meranao بما في ذلك النساء ذوات التوجه العلماني. المقابلات و الردود على بنود الاستبيان إظهرت تأثير هذه المجموعات من حيث ارتداء الحجاب والمشاركة في التجمعات أو الأنشطة الدينية الإسلامية ليس فقط على المستوى المحلي بل أيضا على المستوى الوطني. وتؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة التعاون والتنسيق فيما بين الجماعات الدينية والمنظمات النسائية في ميراناو Meranao لتعزيز التنمية الشاملة و العادلة لجميع شرائح الأمة الإسلامية.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Philosophy, Ethics, and Contemporary Issues (MIPECI).

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Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Master of Islamic Philosophy, Ethics, and Contemporary Issues (MIPECI).

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Examiner

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Dean, International Institute of  
Islamic Thought and Civilization

## DECLARATION

I here declare that this dissertation is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for my other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Ni'mah Ummu Hani Didaagun Barra

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ROLES OF *MERANAO* WOMEN: A STUDY OF *TABLIGH JAMA'AH*,  
*MARKAZOSSHABAB FIL FILIBBIN* AND *AHL AL-BAYT***

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The role of Muslim women in the Islamic world provokes much discussion. The twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented Islamic resurgence that was felt in different parts of the world. It was a phenomenon that was expected to occur in response to the politico-economic and socio-cultural dominance, impositions, and influence of the West. Islamic resurgence took various forms such as: the extremist, the conservative, and the liberal or modernist.<sup>1</sup> This includes the changes in women's position in Muslim society.

The history of the Philippines is divided into four phases: the Pre-Spanish period, the Spanish period, the American period and the years since independence.<sup>2</sup> These periods also provide a convenient framework to consider for the changing roles and status of women in the archipelago.

The Muslims in the Philippines are often referred to as *Moros*.<sup>3</sup> They are divided into thirteen ethno-linguistic groups.<sup>4</sup> Among the major Muslim ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines are the *Meranaos*<sup>5</sup> of the *Lake Lanao* region. The *Meranao* have been historically isolated in their Lake environment.<sup>6</sup> And because of

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<sup>1</sup> Norma A. Maruhom and Fatima Pir T. Allian, "Religious Extremism and Its Impact: The Case of the Southern Philippines" in *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*, edited by Norani Othman (Malaysia: Sisters in Islam, 2005), 134.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Davis, *Revolutionary Struggles in the Philippines*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989), 119.

<sup>3</sup> Referred as the Muslim-Filipinos.

<sup>4</sup> Norma Maruhom and Fatima Allian..., 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Meranao* also spelled as *Meranao* are one of the ethnic groups of Muslim-Filipino in the Philippines.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Gordon Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos and their Homeland: Heritage and Horizon*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), 3.

this isolation or geographical location, they were the last to be Islamized, one of those tribe to fight Spaniards for over 300 years, the last to surrender to the American authorities, and the least affected by modernization and western values or ideas.

Undeniably, the Spaniards and then the American invaders can trace the changing roles of women in the *Meranao* land through the colonization that was brought. For the Muslim-Filipinos, including the *Meranaos*, these two colonial powers had comparable missionary objectives. The Spaniards dreamed of making over the *Meranao* into little brown *Hispanised* Christians as they had the majority of lowland Filipinos.<sup>7</sup> While the Americans did not seek to teach the *Meranaos* with the teachings of Christian religion as such, but did wish to win them over to “civilized” ways—that is, civilized in terms of American values.<sup>8</sup> But prior to the coming of the Americans, the *Meranao* women’s roles were associated with the home-based workers and regarded as weak. *Meranao* women’s educational learning and economic activities were primarily confined at home. And because of its isolation, *Meranao* subculture area is rich in folklore and folk-life.<sup>9</sup> This stage, according to Dr. Frank Lauback, an American missionary who lived in Lanao, reported that the *Meranao* were in “Homeric Age” at 1930’s to 1970’s.<sup>10</sup> It was this stage where they were made to learn and recite lengthily and skillfully their epic song called the *darangen*,<sup>11</sup> learned how to read, write and memorize chapters from the *Qur’an* because by tradition, Islam entered the Philippines in 1380 A. D. with the arrival of the Arab missionary Sharif Makdon.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos...*, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Mamitua Saber and Abdullah Madale, *Magical and Curative Practice in The Meranao Society*, (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing house, 1975), 65.

<sup>10</sup> Mamitua Saber and Abdullah Madale..., 66.

<sup>11</sup> *Darangen* is the traditional poetry of *Meranao*.

<sup>12</sup> Nagasura T. Madale, *The Muslim Filipino*, (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House, Inc., 1981), 38.

The change resulting from the western contact came at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the first inception of the Americans occupation to the present.<sup>13</sup> Extensive public works and improvements in communications were undertaken.<sup>14</sup> The introduction of a system of formal education, the modification of socioeconomic and political *Meranao* institutions, and the improved communication facilities initiated by the Americans have apparently contributed to the changing roles of the *Meranao* women in their society.<sup>15</sup>

Though improvements and new ideas have been embraced by many, this 20<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed an unprecedented Islamic resurgence that was felt in different parts of the world. The Islamic resurgence in Southern Philippines, where Marawi City belongs, exists in the forms of movements and organizations.<sup>16</sup> This research therefore focuses on the movements of three religious groups—*Tabligh Jama'ah*, *Markazosshabab fil-Filibbin*, and the *Ahl al-Bayt*—and their impacts on the changing roles of *Meranao* women today. Though *Ahl al-Bayt* religious group came to Marawi in the 20th century, but rapidly increased the numbers of its *Meranao* members up to this time.

*Meranao* are born into a community that is emerging from social stratification with civil and religious functions,<sup>17</sup> still some promote and emphasize only the conservative Islamic views of women based on the interpretations of the Qur'an developed by the classical jurists.<sup>18</sup> Hence, lectures about Muslim women delivered by *da'wah* workers are often limited to their roles or identity as wives, social workers,

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<sup>13</sup> Mamitua Saber and Abdullah T. Madale..., 25.

<sup>14</sup> P. Gowing, 36.

<sup>15</sup> Amina Sumagayan, "The Changing Role of Maranao Women in a Maranao Rural Society", *Dansalan Quarterly*, Vol IX No 4, (Gowing Memorial Research Center: Marawi City, July 1987), 165.

<sup>16</sup> N. Maruhom and F. Allian...,134.

<sup>17</sup> M. Saber and A. Madale..., 28.

<sup>18</sup> N. Maruhom and F. Allian...,150.



community organizers, or income earners.<sup>19</sup> Yet, today, *Meranao* women have become more active in performing their civic duties in the society. Though some religious *Meranao* groups strongly criticized these duties for they oppose the idea of frequent meetings of men and women, they still continued undertaking community activities within Marawi City.

Our society is in transition and this is evident in our daily lives. Nevertheless, levels of awareness are rising. The changing roles of women are still issues that need to be answered especially to society that changes at its pace.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It is obvious that most parts of the world today have seen revolutionary changes especially with regards to the role and rise of women within their respective societies. This subject matter has eventually aroused widespread interest among scholars and students of history, sociology, philosophy, and other related disciplines who have been studying the pace of social changes in the newly developing areas. The present researcher deals with the changing roles of women due to the impact of the three religious groups that exist in *Meranao* society.

In this regard, this paper hopes to provide insights and present a thorough study, on how the existence of the three religious groups in Marawi City impact the changing roles of *Meranao* women.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To know how the religious groups have emerged in Marawi City;
2. To identify and gain insights on the religious groups' impacts that contribute to the changing roles of *Meranao* women;
3. Finally, to understand how *Meranao* women involved in socio-political affairs and business deal with the religious groups' view.

The researcher attempts to study further how the changing roles of *Meranao* women, in some ways, influence the society and especially the existing religious groups at present.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Since these groups have different perspectives in some ways, especially of the *Meranao* women today, the following questions need to be answered:

1. How did the three religious groups emerge in Marawi City?
2. What are the impacts of the three religious groups on the changing roles of *Meranao* women?
3. What are the roles that are generally played by *Meranao* women traditionally and presently?
4. How do *Meranao* women, especially those who work in the public domain outside (socio-political sphere or in business for example) deal with the opposing religious groups' views and impacts on them?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

There is no doubt that the Islamic resurgence emerged as different movements, whether through liberation or conservative. This research provides evidence to indicate that, in some ways, there is an impact of the different religious groups on the changing roles of women in *Meranao* society. It was observed that *Meranao* women, were not just wives and mothers who only assumed household duties, but were also actual and potential leaders in the community, who engaged in socio-economic activities within the community. The findings of this study also give insights to the readers about the emergence of the three religious groups in Marawi City, specifically their principles, membership, and their similarities and differences in pertaining to politics, practices, *madhab*, and of course, their views about women.

Although the study is limited to the urban area of Lanao del Sur, its findings can provide a foundation for comparison with other societies, especially in terms of changes affecting woman's role throughout the world today.

Furthermore, this study serves as a reference material for researchers undertaking similar study in the future.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This research is a case study, thus, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach is considered as the most appropriate method to be used. The research design has employed qualitative approach to give the researcher room to explore the total reality and changing roles of women in Marawi City based upon the impact of the three religious groups. Structured questionnaires were used about this issue. This structured question is explained below.

### 1.6.1 Setting of the Study

This research was conducted in Marawi City, Philippines. Historically, Marawi City was a municipality called Dansalan, capital of the defunct undivided Lanao Province from 1907 to 1940. First under the Government of the Moro Province, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, the Commonwealth, and finally the Republic.<sup>20</sup> Marawi City got its new charter of autonomy as a city in 1940. It was jointly conceived by the Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon, and later by Senator Tomas L. Cabili, the granting of charter to the old Dansalan Municipality.<sup>21</sup> The changing of the official name from Marawi was through congressional amendment of the Charter in 1956 sponsored by Senator Domocao Alonto.<sup>22</sup>

Marawi City is the capital city of the province of Lanao del Sur, located at the central of Mindanao, Philippines. It is bound on the north by the Municipality of Kapakay; on the south by the scenic Lake Lanao; on the east by the Municipality of Bubong; and on the west by the Municipality of Marantao.<sup>23</sup> It is some 36 kilometres away from Iligan, the capital of Lanao del Norte, and is accessible through the Iligan and Malabang-Marawi Highway.<sup>24</sup> The people of Marawi are called *Meranao*. The name *Meranao* means ‘lake dwellers’ which refer to the native people living around the Lake Lanao.<sup>25</sup> Marawi City is predominantly a Sunni-Muslim city that comprised of 96.6% of the population.<sup>26</sup> Marawi City has an estimated land area of 5,838

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<sup>20</sup> Ali B. Panda, Marawi City and Its Environment. *Mindanao Journal: Towards Islamization of Knowledge*, (MSU: University Research Center), 155.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Mamitua Saber, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,156.

<sup>25</sup> Salipada Tamano, *Historical Background of Madaris in the Philippines*, (Philippines: Mindanao State University Press, 1974), 1.

<sup>26</sup> National Statistical Coordination Board, through records of Local Governance Performance Management System, City Hall, Marawi City, December, 9, 2012.

hectares, which is being used for various economic purposes to sustain the economic survival of the City. A major portion of the land is devoted substantially to the production of rice, corn, cassava, peanuts and other root crops. Other areas are used for building schools, residential and business establishments.<sup>27</sup>

Sources from the National Statistics of the Philippines said that the total population of *Meranao* living in Marawi City is around 123,295 people in 20,375 households in 2010 census.<sup>28</sup> The city has 22.6 square kilometer of land that occupies 0.01% of the Philippines.<sup>29</sup>

The setting is specifically chosen because out of the total population, 60% of the total *Meranao* women from Marawi City are of workingwomen, who were influenced by some of these religious groups. In doing so, the researcher took a month in collecting data, consulting, discussing, and interviewing because the setting is not that huge enough to go back and forth for the interviewees. Additionally, the researcher is also from this place.

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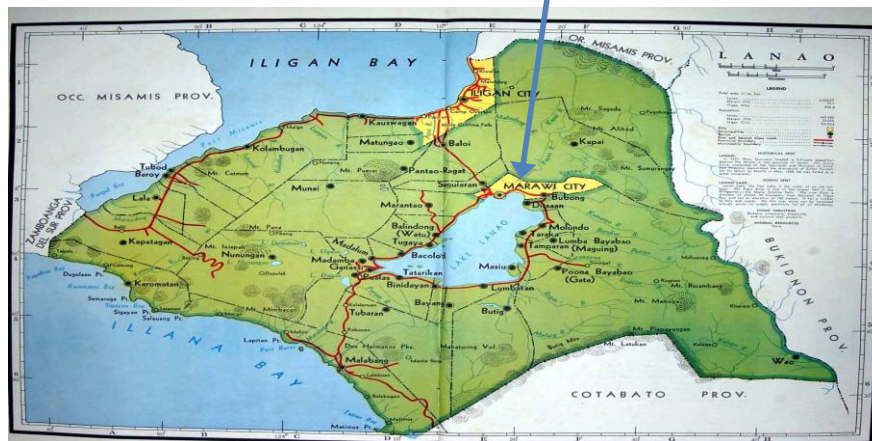
<sup>27</sup> Ali Panda, 157.

<sup>28</sup> 2010 Census of Population and Housing, National Statistics Office of the Philippines, Accessed on December 9, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



MAP OF THE PHILIPPINES<sup>30</sup>



Marawi City Map, Lanao del Sur<sup>31</sup>

FIGURE 1.1: Map of the Philippines showing Marawi City, Lanao del Sur land

<sup>30</sup> Philippines Map, 2009, <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/asia/philippines-road-maps.html>, accessed March 30, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Vintage Color Map, 1959 Philippines Lanao Marawi City, <http://www.old-print.com/cgi-bin/category.cgi?item=D4171959105>, 2007, accessed March 30, 2014.

### **1.6.2 Methods of Data Collection**

The first data-gathering for this study was from primary sources or known as first hand evidence. It was done mainly through participant-observation and personal interviews especially of key figures or leaders from those religious groups, and of course the interviews and questionnaires that were given to *Meranao* men and women were essential for the analysis and outcome of this study. The interviews involved those who were well-versed in the development and the changing roles of women within the scope such as Women Centre Organization and some workingwomen in different sectors (leaders, students, business women, etc.). The researcher employed historical-analytic method because of the fact that the *Meranao* women's roles and the emergence of the three religious groups are very much anchored to its history few centuries back. This is very significant for without this, readers will never understand the development or influential factors of the religious groups on *Meranao* women, and the historical development of the newly created society.

Hence the following are needed in doing this:

1. *Questionnaire.* 450 questionnaires were distributed to the different areas of Marawi City. The respondents were from the three religious groups and from individuals that were not members of the said groups. The questionnaire was a multiple-choice kind of questions.
2. *Interviews.* Key Informants Interview (KII) of the three religious groups in Marawi City was conducted. Also, interviews with the women who were members of the said religious groups and the women in different sectors—such as students, youth, politicians, business women, community leaders, etc. were also interviewed.

3. *Focus group discussions.* Where issues were raised and participants debated those issues.
4. *Participants Observations.* The researcher joined, listened, participate and observed some of the events of the three religious groups (*halaqah, multaqah,* and local tv and radio programs).

The secondary sources were the written books on the three religious groups, about the coming of Islam in the Philippines, and the *Meranao* women. Library research was done to accumulate baseline data on the study, and to enrich the materials that were used. A few available secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, newspapers, etc., were also collected and examined.

Since this is a case study, the research data was collected in three stages: The field research was embarked on the given time for the data collection that involved *Meranao* men, women, workers, and students. The participants were interviewed to gather oral data from a section of the three religious group's community in the areas of study. Another data were focused on unstructured and in-depth interviewing of religious groups and others from the women sector, personal involvement and contact with the respondents about the area of the study.

### **1.6.3 Time Framework**

For the time framework, the researcher took almost three months (June, July, and August of 2013) to work on the fieldwork for interviewing, observing, and collecting data. The interview period varied from 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the willingness of the participants and key informants. Thus, it involved on-the-spot investigations using unstructured and in-depth interviewing.