

UNVEILING THE MUSLIMAH: A FEMINIST STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE OF THE FEMALE FILIPINO MUSLIMS IN SHORT STORIES

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Abstract

In the Muslim discourse, there is a feminist sentiment growing among Muslimahs in the world. In the Philippines where Muslims are a minority, it is necessary to know their sentiments to contribute to the development of the gender discourse on Muslimahs. Hence, this paper endeavors to unveil the image of the female Filipino Muslims in short stories written in English by female Filipino Muslims namely Pearlsha Abubakar, Arifah Macacua Jamil, and Loren Halilah Lao. By using feminist stylistic analysis, this paper aims to answer the main problem: How do female Muslim writers construct the image of the Muslimahs in selected short stories? After examining the passages that contain the descriptions and actions of the female characters in Abubakar's *Magrib*, Jamil's *Mukna*, and Lao's *The Trip to a Forbidden Land*, findings revealed that the female Filipino Muslim writers construct the image of Muslimahs as individuals who are struggling with the teachings of Islam and the tradition of the tribe. The parents of the female characters, specifically the father, shape the image of the Muslimah, a manifestation that they are doing their responsibility as *khalifah* 'bearer of Allah's trust'. Thus, it is in consonance with the principle of *Musawah*, a global Muslim feminist group, that men are not superior over women in Islam.

Keywords: feminist stylistics, Filipino Muslimah, Filipino Muslim short stories

Introduction

Hijab, niqab, dupatta, turung. These are the different veils worn by the Muslim women around the globe. Wearing this veil signifies their image as Muslims who are practicing the teachings of Islam. Behind their veil, these Muslimahs (Muslim women) have their sentiments as to gender status in Islam.

In Muslim countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan, a feminist sentiment is growing among Muslimahs who are seeking to reclaim Islam and the Quran for themselves. In 2009, a global movement called Musawah – equality in Arabic- was formed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and began to make the case that Muslimahs can fight for justice and equality from within Islamic traditions. At its core, Musawah believes that Islam is not inherently biased toward men: patriarchy within Muslim Ummah ‘community’ is a result of the way male interpreters have read the Quran. Guided by this principle, Musawah empowers women to shape the interpretations, standards, and laws that affect their lives, then push for legal reform in their respective ummah (Segran, 2013).

In the Philippines, where Muslims are living as a minority, it is interesting to study than the sentiments of some Muslimahs from the Kagan of Davao, Maguindanao of Cotabato, Tausug of Sulu, Meranao of Lanao, Sama of Tawi-Tawi, and Yakan of Basilan. Certainly, we can see their sentiments and images by looking at their literature.

It is said that literature is one of the repositories of cultural identity. There are Filipino Muslims who have written literary pieces such as short stories in English. The English language was not just exclusive to the Christian Filipinos. This also became the lingua-franca of Muslims from the educated classes starting in the American colonial period, though English-fluent Muslim Filipinos comprised a small group at that time (Barry, 2008). Generational struggles, romantic love and coming of age crises were the themes of their short stories. After Ibrahim Jubaira, a prolific Muslim writer and had been granted a place in the canon of Filipino literature in 1960, female Filipino Muslim writers like Arifah Macacua Jamil, Pearlsha Abubakar, and Loren Halilah Lao emerged and they address the hierarchies of class, class, and gender within Muslim communities.

Thus, this paper endeavors to unveil the image of Muslimah ‘female Muslim’ as represented in selected short stories in English written by female Muslim Filipinos. It aims to answer the problem: How do female Muslim Filipino authors construct the image of the Muslimah in selected short stories?

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research using feminist stylistic analysis. It deals with the description, interpretation, and analysis of the image of Muslim Filipino women in short stories based on the linguistic features in the texts.

The short stories are from the anthology of fiction by Muslim Filipinos entitled *The Many Ways of Being Muslim: Fiction by Muslim Filipinos* edited by Coeli Barry published in 2008. The stories are chosen based on the following criteria: (1) They are written by female Muslim Filipino authors. (2) Each story must have at least one female main character.

The short stories written in 1991-2002 are the following:

1. *Mukna* by Arifah Macacua Jamil
2. *Maghrib* by Pearlsha Abubakar
3. *The Trip to a Forbidden Land* by Loren Hallilah I. Lao

The passages taken from the short stories were limited to those that contain descriptions and actions of the female Muslim characters. These were subjected to an analysis limited only to the following: (1) At the word level, the researchers looked for the modifiers to describe the character of the Muslimah. (2) At the level of phrase/sentence, the researcher considered the verb phrases to reveal the actions and emotions of the female characters. (3) Then, the data were analysed at the discourse level. According to Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* deals with how language use is related to inequality of power among participants (Mills, 1995, p. 22). In this level, the short stories were analysed to reveal the power (or lack thereof) of the women characters through observing their discourse in relation to the other characters in the story. Finally, the images of the Muslimahs were drawn by taking into the social-cultural context. This means that the social traditions and treatment of the women in Islam were explored to account the image of the Muslimah in the short story.

Results and Discussion

The short stories in English written by female Filipino Muslims were taken from an anthology of fiction by Muslim Filipinos entitled *The Many Ways of Being Muslim: Fiction by Muslim Filipinos* edited by Coeli Barry published in 2008.

Each of the stories has its female main characters. These female characters were the focus of the study.

Mukna

The story is told from the third person of view and is centered on the lead female character, Aisha. It tells the story of a teenaged-Meranao girl who rebels against the forms of Muslim life she must master and abide by if she is to live within the family and the Muslim Ummah 'community.'

Only a few lexical items are used to describe the Muslim background of Aisha in the story as seen in the following passages:

She tells herself she should know her prayers having attended a nearby Arabic school, where teachers lectured them on people who could save their parents from going to hell. (p. 181)

She hurriedly puts on her malong and a long sleeve shirt. (p. 180)

The excerpts above reveal the descriptions of the character of the 16-year old Meranao girl. She attended an Arabic school and wears the malong and a long sleeve shirt. Muslim children go to Arabic school or madrasah, to gain knowledge not just on the Arabic language but also on Islamic values. Islam in the Philippines was first introduced in Mindanao at around 1460 with the arrival of missionary Shariff Awliya (Baddiri, 2000). Aside from the Meranao of Lanao, other ethnic groups in Mindanao such as Tausug of Sulu, Maguindanao of Cotabato, Yakan of Basilan, Kagan of Davao, and Sama of Tawi-Tawi are also followers of Islam.

The Muslim Meranao women usually wear malong, a multicolored cloth with geometric or flowery design, and a long sleeve shirt as these cover their body. In Islam, the aurat like arms, hair, and legs must be covered. Wearing malong is common to Filipino Muslim groups. The Tausugs and Samas also have their *tajung*. In Southeast Asia, malong is also similar to the Indonesian and Malaysian sarong, the Thai ponong, the Myanmar loungi and the Laotian *sinh*.

The wearing of malong of the female character identifies her as a Muslimah living in a Muslim society in Lanao. She is embracing the traditional

attire. In Lanao, this is the common attire of the women, a lifestyle not affected by the western trend (Bara, 2015).

In naming of the character, the girl in the story is named as Aisha, a Muslim name which means "alive", or "happily living." Aisha, derived from the ain-y-sh (livelihood) root which is used in many verses in the Quran, is a common Muslim name out of life for Aisha bint Abu Bakr, wife of Prophet Muhammad.

We know that the girl in the story is Aisha when her father shouts at her to get ready for the Eid'1 Fitr (Feast of Breaking of the Fast), a festival following the obligatory fasting of the blessed month of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate this feast which lasts for three days. They welcome this feast with a prayer, with private prayer, and by giving praise to Allah (Al-Sawwaff, 1977). The second time we hear the name, Aisha is when her father scolds her about making fun with her friends. It is noticed that only her father called the girl's name and she is called by her father to get her attention to practice their tradition. In Islam, the girl is not advised to mingle and make fun with boys. This may give an impression that her identity is controlled by her father. But her name Aisha does not reflect her life. The rules do not make her happy.

Several sentences in the story reveal the girl's emotions and actions toward the ritual done on Eid'1 Fitr. The passages below:

The girl forgets the invocation for the bath.
She forgets even its Meranao version.
The mere thought of the khutbah gives her goose bumps. (p. 180)

The girl is afraid to attend the prayer.
The girl trembles. (p. 181)

show that the girl has negative reactions towards performing the salah 'prayer' on Eid'1 Fitr. The use of the verb forgets highlights the reaction of the girl. This starts when she forgets the prayer for the bath. What is worse is she even forgets the prayer in her language, Meranao. It is a religious duty among Muslims to say a prayer for the bath on occasion like Eid'1 Fitr.

The girl's negative reaction toward the ritual did Eid'1 Fitr does not only stop in saying the invocation for the bath. She does not like to attend the salahtul Eid'1 Fitr (prayer for the Feast of Breaking of the Fast) as revealed in the use of adjective afraid.

But why does the girl feel this way?

Perhaps, the girl does not like the execution of salah for it involves physical movements of the body such as standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting. The Eid prayer consists of two rak'ahs 'units of prayer.' The first rak'ah begins with seven takbirs (saying Allahu Akbar 'God is great), aside from takbiratul ihram. The second rak'ah begins with five takbirs aside from takbir ul-qiyam, which is said after rising from a previous rak'ah (Al-Fawzan and Al-Shuddi, 2014). In addition, a Muslim recites Quranic verses and specific supplications that must be verbalised when the Muslim assumes certain positions (Doufesh, Faisal, Lim, & Ibrahim, 2012).

The mere thought of the khutba gives her goose bumps. The use of goose bumps connotes that she fears to listen to the khutba. But why does she fear listening to it? Is it because the way it is done?

Khutba is almost an hour-sermon given after the prayer in Eid'l Fitr. The imam 'priest' climbs up to the pulpit to deliver the khutba in Arabic and translated in a language understood by the ummah or the community. The khutba is a serious address concerning the meaning of the Feast and deals with how Muslims should be loyal and sincere towards each other. Its message encompasses all the sublime ideas expressed by Islam, the entrusting of the realisation of these ideals to Muslims, and their adherence to its values.

The girl trembles when performing the salah. The time for salahtul Eid'l Fitr is to be performed when the sun has risen for twenty minutes and is clearly visible. At the level of lexical choices, the adjective afraid describes the feeling of the girl, and the verb trembles tells that the girl is anxious. She is not at ease to attend the prayer, but she realises that her prayer could save her parents from going to hell.

During the Eid'l Fitr prayer, Muslim women wear their mukna, a veil. The sentences below describe the girl's mukna.

Her mukna is embroidered with tiny flowers.

The girl's grandmother bought the veil during a recent pilgrimage.

She hates to wear one. (p. 180)

The lexical items tiny flowers highlight the feminine characteristic of mukna. The girl's mukna is special as this was bought by her grandmother during a recent pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Muslims in the Philippines, especially those who can afford, yearly go to Mecca, Saudi Arabia

to perform hajj, the last pillar of Islam and the biggest of all ibadah 'worship' (Mawdudi, 1986). This means that the girl's grandmother, with the title hadji, one who has performed the haj, is religious.

But still, the girl hates to wear the veil. In Islam, Muslim women wear veil when praying to cover their body and be modest.

We can sense that the girl is really against the tradition during prayer as revealed in the following:

The girl stares at the women around them.

The girl is not impressed.

She thinks she is getting sick from the sparkle of the jewelry.

(p. 181)

During Eid'l Fitr, Meranao women are wearing velvet, satin malong, and jewelry. This practice is not appreciated by the girl as seen when she stares at the Meranao women around them. The girl also noticed the dangling earrings, huge pendants, and different rings of the women. She is not impressed with this practice. The girl is reflecting that the wearing of elegant clothes and expensive jewelry is not necessary though. She looks behind her, and she sees other women without the elaborate clothes and accessories. She asks her mother if this is inappropriate and her mother explained the one has to look her best for a special occasion. The statement of the mother is based on the sunnah 'tradition' of Prophet Muhammad that a Muslim on the first day of Shawwal, goes to the mosque, having carried out the total ablution, dressed in the best clothes, and perfumed herself (Al- Sawwaf, 1977).

But still, we can notice that the girl does not agree with this tradition as seen in the following sentences:

The girl pretends to agree.

She sighs and silently thanks the Mother for not mentioning the Arabs who dress their children in elaborate gowns then give the fancy clothes to people a day after Idl Fit'r. (p. 182)

The lexical items associated with the girl (pretends, and sighs) give the readers the impression that the girl is not convinced of the way the Meranao women dress up in Eid'l Fitr.

Not just with sophisticated gowns and accessories that the Meranaos are known for on occasion like this. They are popularly known for their

traditional foods as well. But the girl in the story has negative reactions on this as what we can discern from the passage:

She sees foods she does not think are delicious.
She is tired of eating the same food.
She wants to eat the fried chicken and not the native hot
chicken. (p. 182)

Normally in a Muslim house, the long table is filled with bowls and platters of delicious food. This is also a symbol of abundance at the end of fasting. But the girl feels the other way around as what can be noticed in the lexical items she does not think are delicious, tired of eating, and not the native chicken.

The story also tells of a father-daughter relationship. The father of the girl is authoritative. He is strict with following the traditions. We first notice this when he calls Asnia to get ready for the prayer. This act of the father mirrors the tradition in Islam that a father is the imam 'leader' in the family.' It is his responsibility to guide his family to the path of Islam. In terms of religious obligations, such as daily salah, the Muslimah is no different from man. In some cases, the Muslimah has certain advantages over a man; she is exempted from the daily salah and fasting during her menstrual periods and 40 days after her childbirth. Indeed, this proves that Islam is considerate with Muslimah.

The wearing of blouse also gets the attention of the father. He gets mad when her daughter wears a see-through blouse over a chemise during the burial of the family relative. But the girl still maintains that there is nothing wrong with what she wears as seen in the passage:

The girl thinks "indecent" is such an outrageous word.
She does not know what is wrong with Emy's blouse. (p. 183)

From the excerpt above, the girl reacted to her father's judgment. She still believes that there is nothing wrong with wearing the blouse. But the father of the girl explained that he is concerned with the reactions of the relatives. Their relatives might say that they raise an indecent daughter. The father of the girl wants to impose that the girl must wear the traditional attire, that is malong paired with long sleeve shirt. The attire covers the aurat 'important body parts.' In Islam, covering the aural is a way of showing care to

women. The body of a woman is so precious that it must be covered and reserved for her husband.

The girl wants to defend herself, but she controls her feelings as what we can discern from the passage:

The girl wants to cry, but she does not forget that she is sitting on the carpet in her father's room. If she cries, the father would think she is guilty. And she is not guilty. (p. 184)

From the passage above, the girl is firm that she is not guilty. She just thinks that she needs variety in clothes like the relatives she talked with in the city. In this scenario, the girl recognises the space of her father. This means that she knows her place in the family, and she is a daughter of a Muslim family.

The mother of Aisha supports the implementation of the teachings of Islam. The following sentences reveal her reactions towards her daughter: But the Mother acts as if she wants the girl to keep away from her. (p.183) After a brief silence, the Mother signals the girl to go back to her room. (p.184) The sentences above give us the impression that the mother knows that her daughter does something wrong. The verb phrases want the girl to keep away from her and signals the girl to go back to the room tell that the mother wants her daughter to know that wearing the blouse in the burial is indecent. The mother performs what has mentioned in the Shariah 'Islamic law' that the wife has the duty of bringing up children in the best possible way (Mawdudi, 1986, p. 186).

The father in the story is strict with traditions, and the girl must follow these rules, but the following passage shows her feelings towards this:

The girl decides to take the last trip of the town's public transport. She thinks she should leave the house. She thinks she has to go away from rules. She tells herself the conventions of the family are as tight as the mukna she wore on the Idl Fit'r. (p. 185)

The passage above tells that the girl finally reached the point that she is tired of the traditions. She wants to be free from the rules that her father strictly impose. The story ends with the girl looking at the bus with name farther away. This means that she wants to be away from the rules of her family.

Maghrib

The story is narrated from the perspective of Maryam, daughter of a second wife who converted Islam on marriage. The father abandoned this family and returned only when Maryam was nearly grown. The disappointment she feels towards her father finds expression in her attitude towards her obligations as the daughter of a Muslim.

Just like Aisha in Mukna, Maryam is not physically described in the story. Instead her family background is revealed in the following passages:

From inside the apartment, Maryam saw her father like some surreal painting framed by the wide-open windows. (p. 171)

Maryam merely offered a fleeting interest in her father. (p. 174)

Deserted by her father, Maryam lives in an apartment in Zamboanga with her mother. Though she was brought up in the Catholic tradition, this does not mean that she forgets to practice Islam. The following passages describe how she performs wudhu 'ablution':

First, she would smooth water on the right hand three times, then her left hand three times, so she could feel God, or so her father said; then, in her mouth, three times, so she could speak His name; then onto her ears so she could hear His instructions. (p. 172)

In the passages above, Maryam is preparing to perform wudhu. In Islam, wudhu is called purity from hadath (urination, elimination, and release of gas). Allahu taala 'God, the Exalted' said: "O ye who believe, when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hands to the elbows; rub your heads and your feet to the ankles (Quran 5:7).

Because of this verse, ablution became a religious duty, and without it, prayer is invalid. It consists of using clean water to purify and clean particular parts of the body. Maryam is preparing to perform wudhu for the maghrib 'the twilight prayer.' In Islam, a Muslim is required to perform the salah 'prayer' five times daily. The other prayer times are subuh 'morning prayer, duhur 'noon prayer,' asr 'afternoon prayer,' and isha 'evening prayer.'

In naming of the character, the name of Maryam's mother is mentioned only once. Grace was a Christian and becomes a Balik-Islam, one who is just returning to her nature. The term balik implies that those who embrace Islam are just returning to the faith given that historically the early settlers in the Philippines were generally or already Muslims before the period of colonialism (Wadi, 2014).

Despite the fact that her mother was a Christian, Maryam has still a Muslim name. Maryam is equivalent to Mary among Christians. Naming her Maryam manifests that Yusuf, the Muslim father, still has the authority. In Islam, choosing the name is the right of the father, but it is advisable for the father to involve the mother in the decision and to ask her opinion as to whether she thinks the name is good, so that she will be happy.

In terms of characterisation, Maryam seems to be a strong woman. She carries the responsibility of her father in taking care of her mother as revealed in the passage:

She had done everything by herself-called the ambulance; called her aunt Wilma who lived nearby; called relatives from Cagayan to break the news; got some ice from the ref to rub on her mother's body, hoping for the cold to save her from death. (p.172)

In this tragic event, she handles a difficult role. She does some first aid moves like rubbing ice on her mother's body in the hope that it can save her mother.

Maryam has no one to call but her relatives from her mother. Her Aunt Wilma is there in the difficult time, but it seems that Maryam is emotionally stronger than her aunt as what we can discern from the following sentences:

Wilma began to sob. (p. 172)

Maryam nodded absently while her aunt began to sob even louder. (p. 173)

Aunt Wilma shows the character of a woman as emotional. This is achieved through the use of the lexical items began to sob, and louder.

The story reveals a father-daughter relationship. Maryam does not have a good relationship with her father. The following passages express the actions and emotions of Maryam to her father:

Maryam heaved a sigh. (p. 171)

But Maryam never really liked her father, because she never really knew him. (p. 172)

Maryam looked at him. For the first time in hours, the wall of her face crumpled with emotion. (p. 174)

It is worthy to note that the lexical choices associated with Maryam (heaved a sigh, never really liked, looked at him) tell her relationship with her father. The transitive verbs heaved and looked are non-verbal cues that tell Maryam does not like her father. When Maryam heaved a sigh the moment her father asked her about the condition of her mother, this expresses her disappointment. She hated how her father did not even help her hold her mother after she vomited her bile out and collapsed. She hated her father also when he deserted them and put them in an apartment in Zamboanga.

On the day of the death of Maryam's mother, the authority of the father is seen. Her father declared that her mother would be buried traditionally. In Islam, Muslims strive to bury the deceased as soon as possible after death, avoiding the need for embalming or otherwise disturbing the body of the deceased. The body should be ritually washed and draped with a clean cloth.

But Maryam insists not to bury her mother yet because they did not know yet what she died of. She wants that the body of her mother will undergo an autopsy. Maryam screams when father insists that her mother will be buried traditionally. Her scream means she wants to be heard, but she fails to pursue what her heart desires. At the end of the story, Yusuf continues to perform the ritual, a manifestation that he is in command of the family affair. In Islam, the father is considered to be the imam 'leader' in the family, the Khalifah 'bearer of Allah's trust.' Thus, Yusuf is doing his responsibility to observe the teachings of Islam.

The Trip to a Forbidden Land

In this story, a mother is enraged that her daughter went to her husband's hometown without having waited for the formal rituals of introduction and welcoming.

Only a few lexical items are used in the story to describe the women in the story. The mother of Asnia is described in terms of facts about her physical appearance and educational background, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Omar's mother-in-law was a plump middle-aged woman who was quite fastidious with children's affairs. She had a college education and was considered educated, but she was rather strict with traditions. (p. 152)

Asnia, who was tickling her brother's sides in her attempt to avoid both her mother's derisive queries and dagger looks let go of the boy. (p. 154)

The mother of Asnia is described as a plump or slightly fat woman. She is an educated Meranao who preserves the culture of the tribe. This is the problem that Asnia is facing because her mother is strict with traditions. She is a mother who is sensitive to the affairs of her children. At the level of lexical choices, such highlighting is achieved through the use of adjectives fastidious, strict, and dagger.

Asnia, a Meranao girl, went to her husband's hometown without having waited for the formal rituals of introduction and welcoming. Amidst her condition, she still joins her husband to Unayan, a place in Ranao. The following passages describe her condition:

She was seven months pregnant and was having a difficult pregnancy. (p. 151)

Her eyes were puffy for want of more sleep. (p. 153)

She leaned back on the sink as her bulging belly wearied her when standing. (p. 158)

From the excerpts, we can gather a few glimpses that Asnia is seven-month pregnant with the help of the lexical items bulging belly. With her condition, we see in the opening of the story that Asnia is tired with yesterday's trip to Unayan where Omar's, her husband, hometown was, and lexical choices her eyes were puffy speak that she wants more sleep. In the Meranao culture, there are many things to be done about the gawi-i 'the wake' such as the food to be served, the streamer announcing the death of the person, the

announcements on the radio to inform relatives from other places and other things. The aunt of Omar left no children to take care of these things and being the closest kin, Omar and Asnia were obliged to take charge of these things. This situation tells why Asnia is exhausted.

There are many instances where Asnia appears to act in a manner that reveals her thoughts and actions toward her mother as seen in the following sentences:

She yawned and stretched her arms. (p. 153)

Asnia complained trying to sound irritated. (p. 154)

She yawned again and rested her head on the back of the sofa apparently still drowsy. (p. 154)

Asnia burst into tears. She reached for a towel which her husband left on the back of the side chair and wiped her eyes. (p. 154)

Asnia only sniffled on the towel in reply. She no longer wanted to reply. (p. 156)

Asnia evaded the woman's stares. (p. 153)

These passages from the story speak how Asnia feels towards her mother. The lexical choices yawned, complained, burst, sniffled and evaded show that Asnia is in silent protest of the tradition that her mother wants to impose. In Meranao culture, a bride is not supposed to go to the groom's hometown, especially when he comes from a different place, not until his relatives have gathered to look for the girl and take her to their place for the kalawi. There, a kalilang 'feast' would be held in honor of the bride to welcome her to the place of her groom. Speeches extolling the visiting relatives-in-law would be delivered. For really grand kalawi, gifts such as parcels of land would be given to the bride and money would be distributed to her relatives. And to top it all, a tankong 'palanquin' awaits the bride while her new relatives wash her feet, the pamorawas, after which she is finally carried by her relatives-in-law to the house where the feat is to be held.

In the conversation with her mother, Asnia listens to the litany of her mother and just cries. Such highlighting is achieved through the use of the

verb phrases headed by transitive verbs (burst into tears and wiped her tears). Asnia just cries because it is difficult for her part to explain her side. Her cry symbolises that she lacks the courage to defend herself. She goes to the burial of Umar's aunt primarily because the aunt is so dear to her. She recalls that the aunt used to give her fresh fruits and vegetables. But her mother does not care and maintains that the tradition must be taken into consideration first.

In terms of characterization, Asnia's mother represents the typical conservative Muslim mother. She wants to impose on her daughter the Meranao Muslim culture, especially that she comes from the Basak area in Lanao. She is a picture of a Muslimah mother who practices the tradition of the Meranao Muslim culture. Her education adds to the fact that she is in authority, that she must be obeyed. At the end of the story, the mother tells her daughter to understand her. We can sense that the mother cares for the welfare of her daughter.

On the other hand, Asnia is a woman who is forced to accept things that her mother wants to implement. But it is difficult for her to decide since the relatives of her husband no longer observed such things. Her husband explains that the practice was possible before when very few married outside their place. Now that more and more men in their family marry the girls they meet in school, or somewhere else, girls who came from places all over the Lanao but not from their hometown, the tradition could no longer be kept. Asnia does not argue with her husband on this matter. She is a submissive wife.

Asnia characterises also a typical wife. The other female characters in the story namely Sairah and Noraisah could attest that Asnia is a good housewife. When Sairah and Noraisah go to Asnia's house, the mother lies that Asnia goes out. Sairah and Noraisah do not believe on this because Asnia always stays at home.

Indeed, Asnia is an example of a Muslimah housewife. She stays at home and cares her husband. The act of Asnia is in accordance with the teaching of Islam that a Muslimah is assigned to managing the household and providing her husband and children with the greatest possible comfort and contentment. But this does not mean that the woman is not allowed to leave the house. She is, when necessary. The Shariah 'Islamic law' has specified the home as her field of work and has stressed that she should attend to the improvement of home life (Mawdudi, 1986, pp. 164-166).

Conclusion

The selected short stories show that female Filipino Muslim writers like Pearlsha Abubakar (Maghrib), Arifah Macacua Jamil (Mukna), and Loren Hallilah I. Lao (The Trip to a Forbidden Land) construct the image of Muslimah as individuals who are struggling with the teachings of Islam and the tradition of the tribe.

Maryam, the female character in Maghrib, expresses her disagreement on the burial of her mother. She wants that her mother is subjected to autopsy first, but her father insists that her mother is buried immediately following the tradition of Islam. This manifests that Maryam attempts to grab power from her father, but she fails. Her father's decision prevails.

Aisha, the teenage Muslim Meranao girl in Mukna, has had a similar experience with Maryam. She rebels against the Muslim life she must abide with. She forgets the invocation she should say before taking a bath for the Eidl Fitr, and she is restless at the salahtul jamaa 'community prayer session.' Her father's strictures on dress and conduct at a party force her to escape.

Asnia, the Meranao woman in The Trip to Forbidden Land, is a good housewife of Omar of Ranao. But for her mother, she is not a good daughter because she does not follow the Meranao tradition that causes the anger of her mother. She went to the hometown of her husband though, by tradition, she is not allowed to go there unless the relatives of her husband take her to their place for the kalawi.

But, do these imposed rules harm the Muslimah in the story? From the Islamic perspective, it is not. These rules are within the teachings of Islam and tradition of the tribe. The father of Maryam in the Maghrib is just following the Islamic way of burial that a dead person must be buried in the ground within 24 hours. The father of Aisha in Mukna wants his daughter to practice the deeds of the ideal Muslimah like wearing descent attire, performing the salah 'prayer', and observing the good conduct in dealing with people. These men in the lives of the young Muslimahs perform their duty as a leader in the family. Islam gives this position to the father to maintain peace and order (Mawdudi, 1986).

The educated and conservative mother of Asnia in The Trip to the Forbidden Land forces her daughter to follow the 'kalawi' tradition. For the Meranao culture, the relatives of the groom must bring the bride to their place for the kalawi, a formal introduction and welcome where the bride receives gifts such as money, parcels of land, and jewelry from the relatives of the groom. This tradition is to honor the woman in recognition of taking care of

herself as a Muslimah, but this is no longer observed by the relatives of Asnia's husband.

The female Muslim writers are showing to the readers that the parents of these Muslimah care for their children. They are performing their role as khalifah 'bearer of Allah's trust'. As khalifah, it is their primary duty to observe the teachings of Islam. In the hereafter, the Muslims believe that the parents will be held liable for the wrongdoings of their children.

Though the selected short stories are from the perspective of the female characters, the writers depict that the Muslimah get nothing to do still with the tradition but to submit themselves to it. Maryam and Asnia still show respect to their parents, a duty that is expected from a Muslimah. But Aisha can no longer bear the tradition. Thus she leaves home. This act of Aisha, a clear violation of the Sharia'h 'Islamic law', is a turn off to the male Muslim readers. The children must obey their parents. Aisha does not understand that the father is just protecting her from the vicissitudes of life.

In this generation, a significant thing that these selected short stories want to convey to the female Muslim readers is that they must be educated about the teachings of Islam so that they will know their status and will realise that they are honored in Islam.

The selected short stories may turn off also the non-Muslim readers who might think that Islam is strict with women. Thus, the Muslim educators have a big responsibility to educate the non-Muslims the "friendly" Islam and reiterate that Islam is a way of life. More importantly, Muslims in the Philippines must live the real teachings of Islam so that the non-Muslims will see the beauty of Islam. In short, they must be the ambassadors of Islam.

It can be noticed that the female Muslim writers still bring their identity as Muslimahs in unveiling the image of the female Muslim Filipinos as seen by the way they used the modifiers to describe the female characters in the story. Pearlsha Abubakar describes Maryam in Magrib in terms of her family background, Arifah Macacua Jamil portrays Aisha in Mukna as a Muslimah wearing malong and mukna, and Loren Halilah Lao uses adjectives to describe Asnia in *The Trip to a Forbidden Land* as a pregnant woman. In short, the modifiers were carefully thought of by the female Muslim Filipino authors.

The selected short stories tell us that the Muslimahs, who are bearing Muslim names, are still struggling with the teachings of Islam. Also, it is clear that men are not superior to women in Islam as revealed the discourses in the short stories. Men are always there not to harm the women but to guide them on how to live the image of a Muslimah. The men and women in Islam

complement each other. In the short stories, the Muslim men carry out what Allahu Taala 'God, the Exalted, said:

Men are in charge of women because Allah hath made them one of them to excel the other. So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. (Quran 4:34)

This paper has shown that from a feminist stylistic reading of the three short stories, the female Muslim Filipino authors play a major role in the development of current gender discourse specifically on the image of Filipino Muslimah.

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