

## SURVIVING KIRIM MANUSCRIPTS IN LANAOS DEL SUR: KIRIM AS AN INDEX OF MERANAW CULTURAL HERITAGE

**Mocsir Olomodin Macapodi**

Associate Professor, Mindanao State University (Main) Marawi, Philippines

### Abstract

*This research explores the significance of surviving Kirim manuscripts in Lanao Del Sur, specifically focusing on their role as an index of Meranaw cultural heritage. The study aims to investigate the historical background, content, and preservation status of these manuscripts, while also analyzing their cultural and social relevance to the Meranaw community. Through the examination of Kirim manuscripts, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique cultural heritage of the Meranaw people and the preservation efforts needed to safeguard this invaluable aspect of their identity. The findings of this research can inform cultural conservation strategies and support the recognition and appreciation of Meranaw cultural heritage on a broader scale.*

**Keywords:** Surviving Kirim, Meranaw cultural heritage, Manuscripts preservation, cultural identity, social relevance

### INTRODUCTION

New generation of Mëranaw historians with an intellectual bent have sharply critiqued the history of the Mëranaws of Lanao in the southern Philippines. This critique stems from what they saw in various Philippine history books, which were mostly authored by foreign and local non-Maranaw historians who disseminated inaccurate and prejudiced information about Maranaw society.

Additionally, some historians have overlooked the Mëranaws' contributions to the establishment of a stable country in the Philippines. Preserving the Mëranaws' cultural legacy—particularly their customs, beliefs, thoughts, and values as portrayed in early works written in Kirim—is another justification for the research. Hopefully, a digitalized system that adapts to the needs of technology can help conserve these priceless treasures even more. These will provide the millennial Mëranaws with convenient access to those written accounts, enabling them to acknowledge the enduring contributions of their ancestors.

Furthermore, as Kirim has made a substantial contribution to the early tapping of the educational training of the early Mëranaws in Lanao del Sur, this effort also intends to correct the false concept that the status of some Madaris is the training ground of terrorists.

Also, Abdulkareem et al. (2012) investigates the challenges that Nigeria's information and education systems face when it comes to preserving historical records in digital form. He disclosed that information must be kept forever as it is the foundation of human civilizations and life. However, there have always been formidable obstacles in the way of achieving this crucial goal (Fadare et al., 2021). Because of their importance to human society, languages, like all other components of human knowledge and culture, must be saved and preserved.

Consequently, it centers on the digital preservation of manuscripts and the issues that must be resolved in order to maintain the educational and information systems of different nations, which promote and emphasize the ideas of digital preservation and the digital conservation techniques required to preserve language manuscripts. It was determined whether or not techniques such technology emulation, migration, encapsulation, and restoration were feasible.

Additionally, it may be possible to recognize and promote the difficulties associated with using these and other tactics of preservation. Mekonnen et al. (2022) revealed another area that was mentioned: the treasures from the cultural heritage represent the previous human legacy and are valuable assets of the community. It fosters community cohesion and social integration by portraying both the cultural ideals of a society and its current and future ways of living. The goal of this research is to learn more about the methods and difficulties involved in conserving cultural assets in Central Ethiopia's North Shoa Zone (Bleibleh & Awad, 2020; Bolin, 2019).

According to UNESCO (2007) and Borges et al, (2011) emphasize the important of Safeguarding intangible heritage and sustainable cultural tourism, the Convention of 2003 delineates protocols for the protection and advancement of intangible cultural resources. It underlines how important it is for state parties to enact financial, administrative, technological, and legal steps to support training institutions for maintaining and transferring this kind of legacy. Programs for the broader public, especially young people, that focus on education, awareness-raising, and capacity-building are also recommended. Globalization, economic troubles, and shifts in cultural settings and lifestyles provide challenges for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Formal education should include intangible cultural assets, improve accessibility, set up incentive systems, create information-sharing organizations, work with the media, and encourage intercultural cooperation in order to overcome these problems (Su, 2013).

The Laklak Batak Manuscript, a priceless archive of Batak history and culture, was examined in previous research by Sihotang and Sitanggang (2022), which is evidence of the ongoing importance of cultural heritage preservation. The researcher celebrates the manuscript's significant cultural and historical value while simultaneously revealing ways to protect it from potential environmental, physical, and neglectful risks. Collaborations with specialists, organizations, and local communities are necessary to protect this cultural legacy of manuscripts. These partnerships are crucial to the preservation process since they help to turn the manuscripts from vulnerable to resilient. The book has been meticulously restored and stored in an ideal atmosphere to maintain its structural integrity and visual beauty.

There are some cultural institutions which have significant contribute important legacy to collections but not continuous in series owing to diverse circumstances such as natural catastrophes, rats, and acidified papers leading things to become brittle. During the colonial era, many cultural artifacts were exported, while others were destroyed by conflict, fire, and the actions of ill-intentioned uneducated individuals (Edgerton, 2011). Collaborative preservation is necessary because incomplete series have an impact on the quality of information services provided (. The capacity of large-scale digital preservation efforts (LSDIs) to share or distribute the accessible series offers independent institutions the chance to obtain the full body of information at no additional expense. This is the subject of this study.

This is a major factor in the survival of important Moro cultural traditions, such as the Mëranaws', up until this day. According to the researcher, there have been previous studies that have rectified the historical misrepresentation of Mëranaws in the Philippines. The Mëranaws' distinctive historical local writing system, Kırım, serves as the study's focal point and might be a

key to unlocking hitherto hidden aspects of the Mëranaws' contributions to the intellectual history of the Filipino people. This will, in a sense, cause historians to adopt a less progressive viewpoint, which will have a significant impact on how the general public views history.

Arguments between historians and archaeologists have focused on whether or not the Philippines had a writing system before colonialism (Tan, 2008). Nationalists, for instance, argue that there is based on the findings of Baybayin (Porter, 2017). It is believed that at least sixteen (16) writing systems existed during the pre-colonial era, of which only baybayin is currently recognized. With the publishing of *Doctrina Cristiana*, which was written in baybayin, the alphabet gained widespread acceptance as a writing system among the people of Luzon and the Visayas (Kelly, 2012; Ilao et al., 2012). Kaye (2018) asserts that the structure of the Arabic alphabet (alif, ba, ta) is the basis for this alphabet. Moreover, baybayin dates back to the 13th century and developed in the Indian-influenced civilizations of Indonesia and Malaysia (Harun, 2019). Although other writing systems are disregarded, historical records attest to the existence of the Filipinos' pre-colonial baybayin writing system. As previously mentioned, Baybayin bore similarities to the Arabic alphabet, which served as the basis for the writing system used by the Moro, especially the Mëranaws. This is known as Kirim, and it demonstrates the Mëranaws' literacy in antiquity, which some Filipino historians have said was typified by oral tradition.

More so, it is true that knowledge was passed down orally through the generations, it could equally be argued—using Kirim—that written records served as evidence for this. Although Mëranaw is the language spoken, Kirim is an Arabic writing system (Al Makhdum, n.d). Furthermore, this style helped the early Mëranaws easily grasp the Islamic lessons taught at madaris, the plural of madrasah, or school. The Arabic text has to be expanded to include additional letters in the Mëranaw language due to their large vocabulary. Consequently, Islam became rather popular in Lanao, and Mëranaws became its main followers (van Binsbergen, 2013).

Therefore, in addition to examining the historical context, content, and state of preservation of these manuscripts, the researcher hopes to assess their cultural and social significance for the Meranaw community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the data gathered from the Meranaw family participants, whose households consist of a member or more who can write and understand *Kirim*, from resource persons who are experts in the historical developments of *Kirim*, from the archives of various libraries, and from other sources such as local museums in Lanao del Sur. There are 39 municipality that were recorded of having surviving Kirim Manuscripts with ( ). The discussion is organized in the following order: 1) The remaining Kirim in Lanao del Sur; 2) The development of Kirim as a language that the early Meranaws in Lanao del Sur used; 3) The contribution of the Kirim writing system to the Madrasah Schools in Lanao del Sur; and 4) A portfolio of Kirim as a Meranaw cultural index.

## DISCUSSION

### Surviving Meranaw Manuscripts Written in *Kirim*

Examples of Kirim manuscripts that have survived from Meranaw people who lived in several communities in Lanao del Sur are listed and shown in the photographs below. These papers were freely given with the researcher during his fieldwork and are kept in the homes of certain family participants. Being the original owners of these antiquities, the Meranaw family valued and preserved them. These Meranaw families wanted the Philippine government, as well as local and national initiatives, to assist in restoring the shredded pages of surviving manuscripts that date back to pre-Islamic times. They see these papers as the foundation of their intellectual heritage, which is virtually lost on modern Meranaws and is not recorded in history books. When asked about the possibility of exposing their personal documents for research purposes, the participants freely gave their consent; however, selection was made regarding the presented manuscripts, for some documents convey the same nature, content, and purpose.

In Marawi City, only a few *Kirim* manuscripts have survived due to the 2017 Marawi Siege that befell the city.

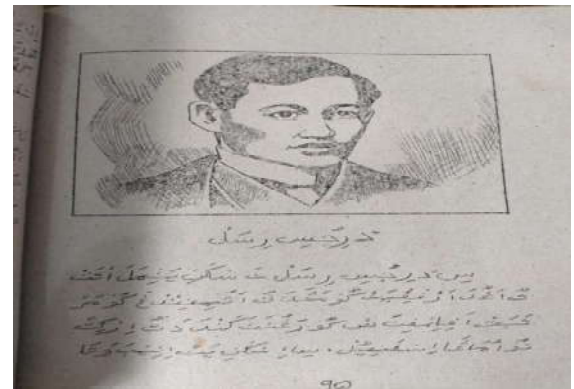
Table 1. Matrix of Surviving Manuscripts (Kirim) Per Municipality

Municipality	Number of Surviving Manuscripts	Kind of Manuscripts
Amai Manabilang	16	<i>Darangen and Salsila, Adimat, Laqam</i>
Bacolod Grande	10	Darangen , Salsila and Postion
Balabagan	24	Daragen, Spells, Salsila, Position, Manyatakan
Balindong	5	Darangen Salsila , Bolong and Adimat
Bayang	7	Salsila, Darangen, Positon and Spell
Binidayan	13	Bolong, Adimat , Darangen and Salsila
Buadi Poso	11	Adimat, Short Stories, Spell, Posion and Bolong
Bubong	5	Katao, Salsila and Darangen and Bolong
Butig	7	Darangen, Salsila, Potion and Spell
Calanogas	9	Salsila, Darangen, Spell and Bolong
Ganassi	11	Salsila, Darangen and bolong
Kapai	13	Potion, Spell, Katao, Adimant Darangen and Salsila
Kapatagan	9	
Lumba Bayabao	15	Darangen, Salsila, Bo;ong, Katao, Spell and Potion
Lumbaca Unayan	7	Darangen Salsila , Bolong and adimat
Lumbtan	13	Salsila, Darangen, Potion, Spell and Adimat
Lumbayanague	7	Salsila, Darangen, Bolong Adimat and Katao
Madalum	11	Potion, Salsila and Adimat
Madamda	15	Darangen, Salsila, Adimat , Bolong Spell and Potion
Maguing	17	Adimat, Balong, Darangen, Katao, Potion and Spell

Malabang	13	Salsila,Manyatakan,Darangen,Bolong, Adimat,Potion and Spell
Marantao	6	Salsila, Darangen,,Bolong,Potion and Spell
Marawi City	4	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong
Marogong	12	Adimat, Bolong, Darangen Spell, Potion,Salsila
Masiu	12	Salsila, Darangen,,Bolong,Potion and Spell
Mulondo	8	Salsila, Darangen,,Bolong,Potion and Spell
Pagayawan	11	Salsila, Darangen,,Bolong,Potion and Spell
Poona Bayabao	39	Adimat,Bolong,Darangen,Spell, Potion,Salsila,Katao,Short Stories,Manyatakan,Kapa Usman,Parokonan
Piagapo	13	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong
Pualas	7	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong
Ramain Ditsaan	12	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong
Saguieran	7	Adimat,Bolong Katao Darangen, Salsila
Sultan Dumalundong	14	Adimat,Bolong Katao Darangen, Salsila and Kapag Usman
Sultan Gumander	9	Adimat,Bolong Katao Darangen, Salsila
Tagoloan	11	Adimat,Bolong Katao Darangen, Salsila
Tamparan	6	Adimat,Bolong Katao Darangen, Salsila
Taraka	13	Adimat,Bolong,Darangen,Spell, Potion,Salsila,Katao and Short Stories
Tubaran	16	Adimat,Bolong,Darangen,Spell, Potion,Salsila,Katao,Short Stories
Tugaya	11	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong
Wao	23	Daragen,Salsila, and Bolong

The Meranaw people of Lanao del Sur are the only ones who currently possess any Kirim manuscripts. Furthermore, only the legible materials are shown in the presentation. The existing ones, with relatively good quality, showcase a few important blood life situations of the Meranaws in the area of politics, such as the “Taritib and Ijma,” their ancient literature depicted in Meranaw literary cultural heritage (the Darangen and other literary stories), and healing skills expressed in “potions and rituals.” All of these samples are evidence that the Meranaw writing system existed a long time ago in the form of *Kirim*.

## Stories of Folk and National Heroes



1: Story of Jose Rizal in *Kirim* script

2. Story of Datu Sumakwel in *Kirim* script

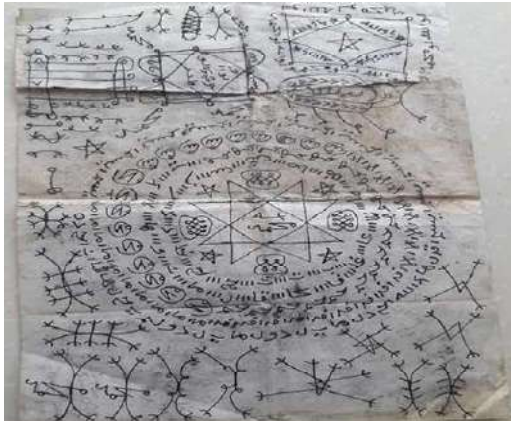


4. A sample of *laqam* used by woman

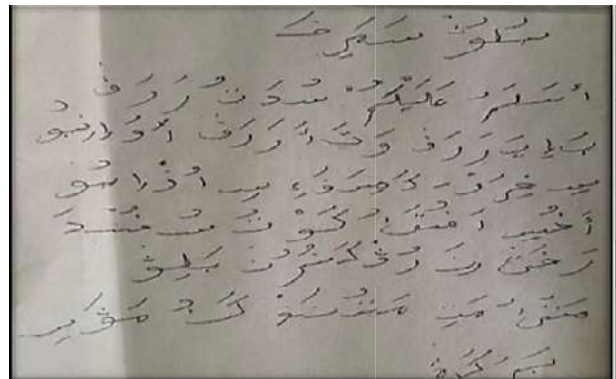


3. A sample of *adimat* (amulet) in *Kirim* script

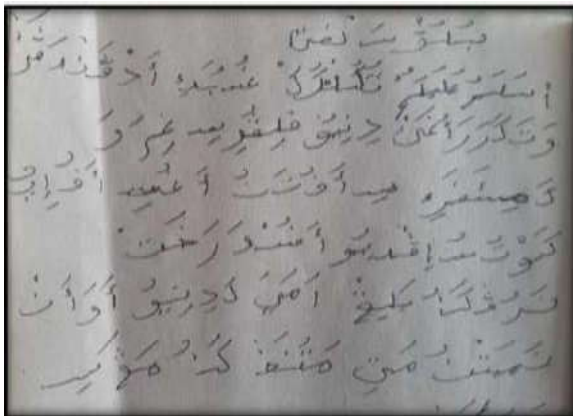
(*Bolong* (Medicine or Healing Skill))



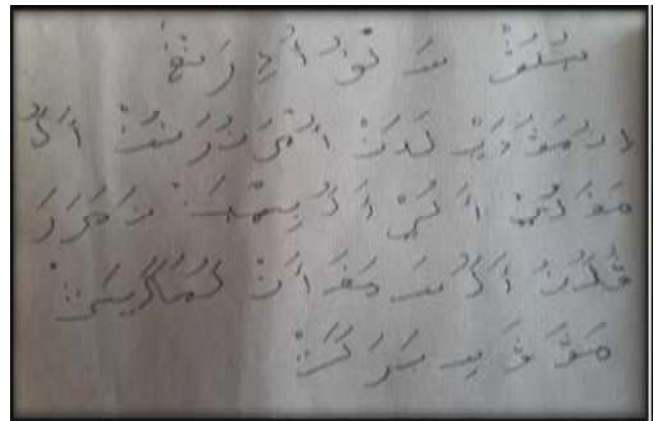
5. A sample of *laqam*



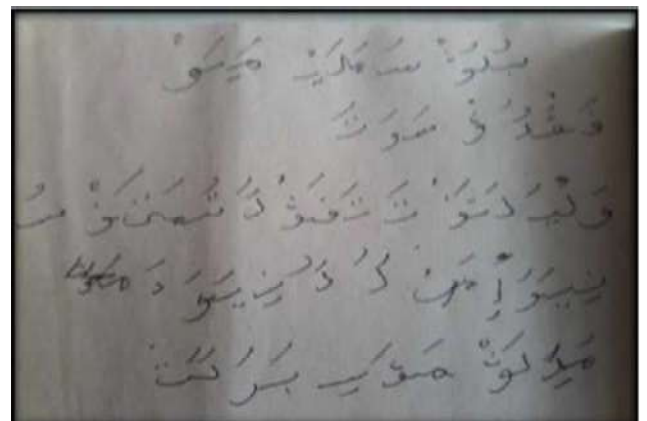
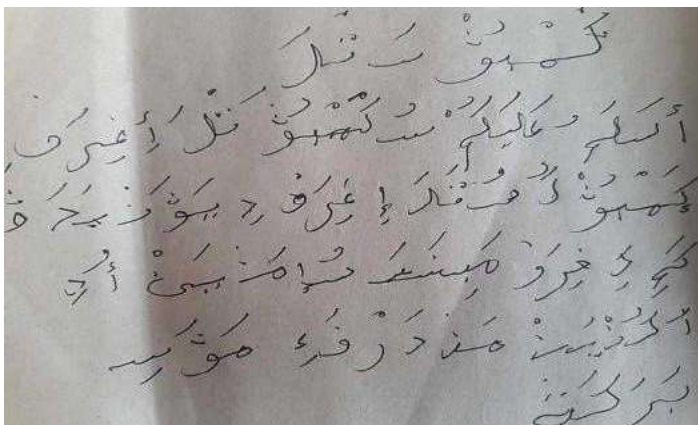
6. A sample of *bolong sa mariga* in kirm script



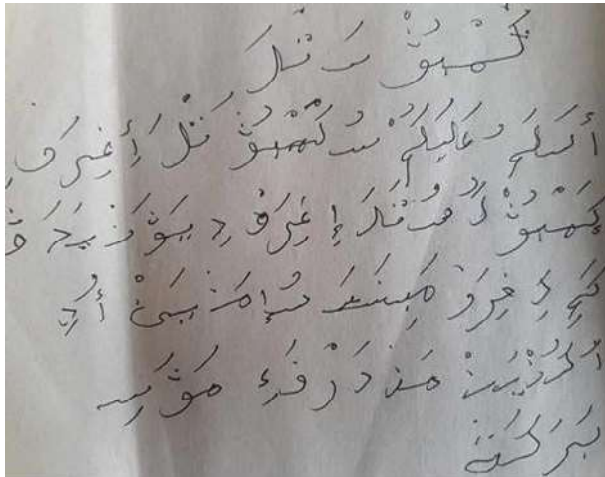
7. A sample of *bolong sa lögët* in kirm script



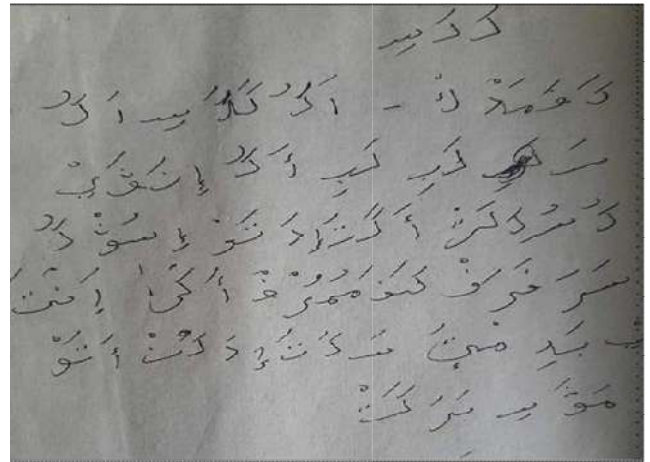
8. A sample of *bolong sa ranëg* in kirm script



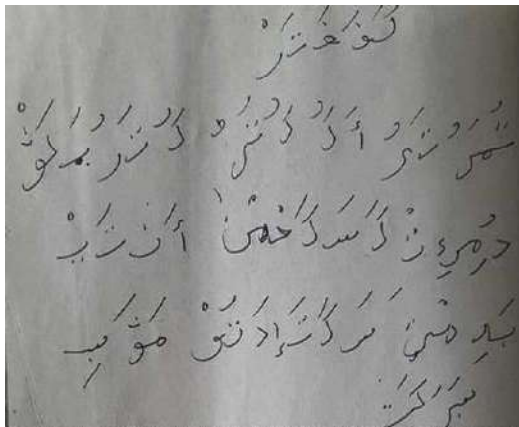
9. A sample of *bolong sa mayaw* in *kirim* script



10. A sample of *kambong sa pamikiran* in *kirim* script



11. A sample of *kambong sa t'la* in *kirim* script



12. A sample of *kakasi sa kapamdak* in *kirim* script





Mëranaw loanwords from Sanskrit (Picture taken from Mindanao Quarterly Vol.8, p. 156)

The Meranaw manuscripts, which include salsilah (genealogy), kakasi (potions), bolong (medicine), and darangen, symbolize the identity of Meranaws. One can visualize the social life of early Meranaw people by reading these linguistically essential historical manuscripts. These manuscripts provide an automatic sense of unity and belongingness among them, especially when the language used is Kirim, a remnant of their origin. Since Meranaw culture is intrinsic to the Meranaw language, it cannot be denied that the latter shaped how the Meranaw live their lives. Kirim is no doubt a part of the evolution of the Meranaw language. Here, the significant scribbling of Kirim has helped the preservation and reproduction of written documents such as Darangen and other parcels of Maranaw literature. Darangen has been regarded as the authentic source of how to be a Meranaw: their principles and ethos, which have been attributed to Indaraptra and Suleiman, Bantugun, and other early Meranaw heroes. The best way to understand the source of life and living of a Meranaw people can be well understood in their Darangen. These are the few revealed books to understand how they really preserved and utilized the Kirim manuscripts. This cultural index of Kirim manuscripts fortifies the claim that the Kirim language has played a vital part in the development of the intellectual history of Meranaws. Such intellect among the Meranaws has contributed as well to the colorful history of the Philippines, particularly the Filipinos' writing systems. The pages of history books that described Meranaws and Muslims as antagonists must be discarded. The Kirim manuscripts are evidence of the religious and moral quest of the Meranaws to make themselves better human resources for the progress of the country.

As mentioned, and shown in a few images, the quest of Meranaws to be better Muslim Filipinos was initially revealed in the ancient Kirim on the healing index. Their thirst to heal people is timeless. More Meranaw medical doctors are coming their way to address local and global health crises. This fact must be recorded in history books rather than their perceived antagonism.

Furthermore, the priceless literary piece of the Meranaws, the Darangen cultural index in Kirim, opines that the intellectual creativity of the Meranaws, aside from their visual arts, is not a record of the past but is a language of timelessness. Numerous Kirim manuscripts that have survived tragic occurrences are currently being used as inspiration to talk more about unexplored aspects of Meranaw identity.

Many kirim manuscripts have been produced, including tales of folk and national heroes, the first episode of Darangen titled "The first ruling period of Diwatandaw Gibon," general Salsilah, and the usage of amulets, laqam, and kakasi. These writings provide proof that education was a real thing among the Meranaw people in the past. Kirim can be used for a variety of purposes, such as writing down family histories, practicing medicine, practicing witchcraft, or recording epic tales passed down from their ancestors that have been passed down through the generations, similar to what is now known as Darangen. Whether or whether the kirim was affected by Arabic, it has evolved into a useful instrument for learning about the prehistoric lives and perspectives of our ancestors on many occurrences.

### ***Conclusion***

*In the conclusion*, the Meranaw people's adapted Arabic writing system, known as Kirim, played a significant role in recording the oral traditions of the Meranaw people. Kirim had just seventeen characters at first, but Arabs added twelve more when they introduced new letters. Because of the nga sound, Kirim now has a total of 28 characters. The Meranaw people ultimately accept this slow transition, particularly when the language is expanding and changing due to word borrowing from other languages. The fact that Meranaw was borrowed from Sanskrit is noteworthy because Sanskrit terms were employed in situations when Meranaw terminology for certain items were lacking. The epic legends of Darangän are replete with instances of borrowed terms, some of which are still in use today.

Furthermore, the presence of cultural indicators points to a very well-preserved Meranaw culture that dates back to antiquity. The early Meranaws were a powerful society able to carry on their traditions from before the advent of Islam, thanks to Kirim, a mechanism for preserving stories. As a result, a number of compilations of Meranaw customs and traditions were documented, demonstrating the depth of their institutions and belief system. These records addressed a broad range of subjects, including lexicography, literature, fortune telling, and medicine.

## Recommendations

The preservation of Kirim, a cultural heritage and identity of the Meranaw people, is crucial, that;

1. It should be appreciated, sustained, and preserved by various institutions, including government authorities, tribal leaders, academicians, and civil society organizations.
2. Kirim should be integrated into the social studies and history curriculum of the Meranaws to ensure its survival.
3. The Department of Education should teach Kirim as early as elementary, with instructional materials provided for learners and teachers.
4. The government should support Meranaws knowledgeable about Kirim to produce more texts using it.
5. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts can provide moral and financial support for Kirim literature and invite them to conferences and gatherings related to culture preservation.
6. Researchers should conduct further studies on Kirim, focusing on manuscript content and their impact on the Meranaw people.
7. Additionally, researchers can analyze surviving manuscripts written in Kirim to determine if they have linkage to literature from neighboring Southeast Asian countries, particularly Muslim-dominated ones.

## References

- Abdulkareem, M. Y., Isah, A., & Issa, A. O. (2012). Challenges of digital preservation of manuscripts to the Nigerian education and information systems. *Library & Archival Security*, 25(2), 119-131.
- Al Makhdam, K. Visit Blog Explore Tumblr blogs with no restrictions, modern design and the best experience. Fun Fact There are dozens of funny blogs to kill time on Tumblr. #Darangen.
- Bleibleh, S., & Awad, J. (2020). Preserving cultural heritage: shifting paradigms in the face of war, occupation, and identity. *J Cult Herit.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2020.02.013>

- Bolin, A. (2019). Imagining genocide heritage: material modes of development and preservation in Rwanda. *J Mater Cult.* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183519860881>
- Borges, M. A., Carbone, G., Bushell, R., & Jaeger, T. (2011). *Sustainable tourism and natural World Heritage: Priorities for action*. IUCN.
- Edgerton, D. (2011). *The shock of the old: Technology and global history since 1900*. Profile books.
- Fadare, A. S., Pagua, B. D., & Fadare, C. M. (2021). Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Success Stories of Neophyte Principals: Impact on School Leadership and Management. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies*.4(5), 183-194. <https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v4i5p115>
- Gumanoy, A. D., Adlawan, A. H., Fadare A. S., & Malinis B. G. (2022). Madrasah Teachers' Attitude and Acceptability towards Physical Education. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies*. 5(1), 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v5i2p102>
- Ila, J. P., Santos, T. I. D., & Guevara, R. C. L. (2012). Comparative analysis of actual language usage and selected grammar and orthographical rules for Filipino, Cebuano-Visayan and Ilokano: a Corpus-based Approach. *Electrical and Electronics Engineering Institute. University of the Philippines Diliman*.
- Kasusse, M., Njoku, I. S., Badu, B. A., & Mwakyagi, A. J. (2016). Case studies of Large-Scale Digital Preservation Initiatives (LSDIs) as a Conservation Strategy for Heritage materials in Africa.
- Kaye, A. S. (2018). Arabic. In *The world's major languages* (pp. 577-594). Routledge.
- Kelly, P. (2012). Your word against mine: How a rebel language and script of the Philippines was created, suppressed, recovered and contested. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 23(3), 357-378.
- Porter, C. J. (2017). *Language, Tagalog regionalism, and Filipino nationalism: How a language-centered Tagalog regionalism helped to develop a Philippine nationalism*. University of California, Riverside.
- Sihotang, M. M., & Sitanggang, T. (2022). Cultural Heritage Preservation and Manuscript Conservation: Safeguarding the Laklak Batak Manuscript of Batak Culture in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Humaniora*, 11(2), 85-101.
- Tan, S. K. (2008). *A History of the Philippines*. UP Press.
- Su, R. (2013). Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.
- UNESCO. (2007). Safeguarding intangible heritage and sustainable cultural tourism: opportunities and challenges. UNESCO-EIHCAP Regional Meeting. Hué; Viet Nam.
- van Binsbergen, W. (2013). The historical interpretation of myth in the context of popular Islam. In *Theoretical Explorations In Africa* (pp. 199-234). Routledge.