

## “Turi” Among Selected Meranao Women Residing in Iligan City

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### Abstract

This paper is a qualitative study about *turi* (female circumcision) among *Meranao* Muslim women in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte. To determine certain sources of explanation for pervasiveness of the practice, the study identifies terms used when referring to *turi*, and description of beliefs. The essence of *turi* is examined by identifying and describing the methods used. Sixteen (16) key informants chosen through snowball sampling were interviewed from November 2006 to February 2007.

*Pag-Islam* and *turi* are the *Meranao* terms which the informants use to refer to female circumcision. Most of them believe that *turi* is a form of baptism of a girl child into the Islamic faith. The origin of *turi* is traceable to the patriarchal stage of Ibrahim (or Abraham in the Christian Holy Scriptures).

One implication of the findings on the study emerges from the shift in the terms used by the respondents, that is, from *turi* to *pag-Islam*. This modification implies that the concept of *turi* is evolving from ethno-traditional to religious.

*Keywords:* *pag-Islam*, *turi*, religious and ethno-traditional rituals, ablution

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## Rationale

Female genital mutilation is the term now generally used when referring to the traditional practices that entail the removal of part, or all of, or injury to, the external genitalia of girls and women. It does not include genital surgery performed for medically prescribed reasons (WHO, 1996).

Female circumcision is currently classified into three main types: excision of the prepuce and clitoris; excision of the prepuce, clitoris and labia minora; and infibulation.

Esmail R. Disoma (1999) notes the practice is referred to as *tori*. Clitoridectomy is performed on girls to ensure good childbearing when she gets married. Disoma states that however, some *Meranao* women do not consider it necessary and so, do not practice it. Despite the recognition of the importance of this sensitive issue, certain dimensions of this practice present major gaps in scientific knowledge. Current information on types of circumcision and their prevalence is derived from inadequate, fragmentary data on the worldwide scale. Moreover, although there is a growing body of data on the physical consequences and there is a growing concern among social scientists, little sound research has been conducted on the origin and the meaning of the practice in the locality.

A review of the literature shows that the amount of scientific information on female circumcision is relatively small. Clinical studies on the physical complications constitute the majority of research to date at the international level (Shandall AA, 1967; WHO 2000, 2001; Myers and Sherman, 2000; Ahmed, 2005, Essen, 2002). Locally, a quantitative study was done by Pinatacan and Arquisal focusing on the self-concept and attitude towards female circumcision among two groups of Maranao Muslim women in Iligan City, circumcised and uncircumcised.

The findings reveal that there is a significant difference in the self-concept scores between the two groups, with the uncircumcised obtaining higher self-concept. The data further reveal that the circumcised still consider it an imperative rite of passage for all young Maranao, although the *Qur'an* may not have directly prescribed the practice. Some informants view it as an integral part of their cultural and ethnic identity, while others perceive it as a religious obligation.

Saddarani (2001, unpublished thesis) briefly notes the practice among the Tausug. But neither she nor the study of Pinatacan and Arquisal (2001) look into the historical origins of the practice, or how it emerged among the *Meranaos* or other Filipino groups, nor looked at the physical effects or consequences. Nor have they described the social meaning of the practice although they have attempted to construct a symbolism that justifies the continuation and analyzes the emotional consequence of the ritual.

It is in this light that this study is undertaken.

### Review of Literature

Female circumcision dates to the time of the pharaohs in Egypt and is perpetuated in a given community for a variety of reasons. When the majority of women have been circumcised, those who are not are considered abnormal by themselves or their families. This has tremendous significance in terms of the desirability of a young woman for marriage which provides a major means for achieving economic strength and independence; thus, being unsuitable for marriage worsens a woman's ability to prosper. In addition, circumcision is believed to ensure cleanliness and chastity, and to minimize the sexual appetite of women (Pinatacan & Arquisal, 2001), reducing the likelihood that they will bring shame on themselves or their families through sexual indiscretions. The guarantee of a young woman's purity further enhances her attractiveness to potential suitors. Religious leaders in many of the communities that practice FGM also support the custom, linking the moral benefits listed above to religion; therefore, a devoted believer who wants to carry out religious duties to her or his utmost is convinced that FGM is associated with righteousness and purity, both valued by all religions, including Islam (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1997).

Female genital mutilation is mostly performed as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood and is undertaken in most communities between the ages four and 14 years. However, the age varies from area to area. For example, in Southern Nigeria, female genital mutilation is performed on babies in the first few months of life; while in Uganda, it is performed on young adult women. Meanwhile, in Iligan City (Pinatacan

& Arquisal, 2001), data show that the average age of children when the practice is done is eight years old.

Circumcision, which is the excision of the prepuce of the clitoris, is the mildest form since the clitoris is preserved and the posterior larger parts of the labia minora. In Islamic culture, this is known as *sunna* which means 'tradition' in Arabic, because it is recommended by some *hadith* (defined as "story of a particular occurrence, it is the practice of the Prophet, his model behavior" (Adamec, 2003).

The practice of female circumcision is not only characteristic of non-western cities. Although the origin of the practice is unknown, African immigrants have brought these practices to the United States and Europe especially to Great Britain and France (WHO, 1993; Worsely, 1938; Bilotti, 2001; Abraham and Rubel, 2001).

It is believed that female circumcision is a religious requirement, although it is not central to the teachings of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) (Disoma, 1999; Toubia, 1993). The most common justification of the practice is that it is a religious mandate. The religion which has embraced the practice most in its culture is Islam. Although this custom did not originate in Islam, its strength lies in Islamic traditions. This is not only because some *hadith* are in favor of *Sunna* but it is also because Islam, as most other religions, regards female sexuality as a lustful instinct which must be controlled. Importance is given to women's 'chastity' and 'modesty'. Thus, although female circumcision is not prescribed by the *Qur'an*, it became more widespread in Muslim cultures than anywhere else. Although there are some Muslim groups not following the practice, such as those in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya (Ahmed, 1992).

Those who advocate FGM from an Islamic perspective commonly quote the following *hadith* to argue that it is required as part of the Sunnah (Tradition of the Prophet):

*Um Atiyyat al-Ansariyyah said: A woman used to perform circumcision in Medina. The Prophet (pbuh) said to her: Do not cut too severely as that is better for a woman and more desirable for a husband (Book 41, Number 5251)*

This, according to those who oppose FGM, is known to be a "weak" *hadith* in that it does not meet the strict criteria to be considered

unquestionable (classified as *mursal*, i.e. missing a link in the chain of transmitters in that none was among the original Companions of the Prophet). In addition, it is found in only one of the six undisputed, authentic *hadith* collections, that is, in the Sunna of Abu Dawud (Chapter 1888 cited in Bilotti, 2001). According to Sayyid Sabiq, renowned scholar and author of *Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, all *hadiths* concerning female circumcision are non-authentic.

According to this faction, even if the words attributed to the Prophet were actually spoken by him, an analysis of the text itself reveals that he is making a statement that does not translate into an injunction for circumcision. Interestingly, many leading scholars of the four major Sunni schools of thought consider female circumcision to be at least recommended, if not required. Yet we cannot ascertain from the *hadith* what type of circumcision was being performed or even which body part was being discussed. The scholars later state in general terms that only a small piece of skin (the clitoris or its hood, presumably, or perhaps part of the labia minora) the size of a "cock's comb" (the small appendage that sits atop the head of a rooster) was to be removed (Bilotti, 2001).

Despite the opinion of the scholars, female circumcision never became widespread among Muslims around the world and is essentially non-existent among the native inhabitants of Saudi Arabia and many other Muslim countries today. In contrast, male circumcision is universally practiced among Muslims; this is considered the continuation of a practice enjoined upon Abraham and his followers and is explicitly mentioned in several well-known sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ([www.fgm.org](http://www.fgm.org)).

Recognizing the need for a standardized classification, WHO convened a Technical Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation in Geneva, Switzerland in July 1995. The joint statement on female genital mutilation issued in April 1997 by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA gave the following definition to the practice:

"Female genital mutilation comprises all rituals involving partial or total removal of the external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons (WHO Technical Paper, 1997)."

Review of the literature on female circumcision shows that the bulk of studies had been conducted in foreign ground and are mainly focused on the clinical studies or the physical complications conducted in foreign settings. In recent years, however, the psychological dimension has been added, as well as, socioeconomic themes, in an attempt to identify the factors that play a role in the continuity of the practice.

Some epidemiological surveys have included questions on attitudes and behavior (Ahmed, et al. cited in David and Fernandez, 2001). Review of local literature notes that female circumcision is mentioned in several documents such as Ewing (1974), Disoma (1999), David and Fernandez (2001) and Saddarani (2001). Given the limitations of surveys and the nature of the interviews, the information gathered is largely limited to quantitative reporting of the proportion of those who support or disapprove of the practice, why they hold these beliefs, and their intentions towards their daughters. Other studies on female circumcision of qualitative design are anthropological documentations of the phenomenon and attempt to construct a social meaning and symbolism that justify its continuation (Brown, 1963; Toubia, 1980).

Epidemiological studies on the prevalence of female circumcision by type among different populations are available but they vary widely in representation and validity. These typologies are mainly based on clinical studies on the severity of removal of part of the woman's sexual organ (Daniell and Roels cited in Worsely, 1938; Shandal and Verzin in Hosken, 1982; WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA, 1997). Despite the diversity in the approaches of the authors and researchers and in the information generated, one cannot help feeling that something has been left unsaid in local research.

Using the quantitative design, the study conducted by Ahmed, et al. (cited in David and Fernandez, 2001) in Sudan, and that done by Pinatacan and Arquisal (2001) in Iligan City, tackle female circumcision. The former focused on re-circumcision (RC) while the latter deals with self-concept of the circumcised and uncircumcised *Meranao* women. An important aspect of Pinatacan and Arquisal's study was the belief of the informants' definition of the practice to be a requirement of Islam and that it is a cultural requirement of *Meranaos*. The study reveals that most of the circumcised informants specify that those who do not go through the rite are considered to be *da ma-Islaman* (not Islamized).

On the whole, there is little in-depth research on the beliefs and behavioral factors that influence adherence to the practice, the decision-maker in the family, and when and how the practice is done. Female circumcision among the *Meranao* residents of Iligan City is a good subject to study since the only existing study made in the locale is limited self-concept of a few selected women using a quantitative research design.

### Objectives

This study examines the perceived persistence of *turi* among selected *Meranao* women residing in Iligan City. Specifically, it focuses on the terms used when referring to *turi*, beliefs tied to *turi*, perspectives about the origin of *turi*, behavioral factors that influence adherence to the practice, the continuance of *turi* in terms of the pervasiveness of the practice in their family, the reasons given, the decision-maker in the family, the methods and materials involved, and the experiences they went through.

Although surveys have been done in other countries, there is limited information about the topic here in the Philippines. This study hopes to provide additional empirical information on *turi* among the *Meranaos* of Iligan City.

### Methodology

For this study, the qualitative research paradigm was utilized. The design is also termed as the constructivist approach, the interpretive approach, naturalistic, or the postpositivist or postmodern perspective.

The study was done in Iligan City as the locale of the research. The city is located in the northeastern part of Mindanao facing the Iligan Bay, 795 kilometers southeast of Metro Manila. Iligan covers an area of 813.37 sq. km. comprising 44 barangays. Iligan is literally and geographically located at the crossroad of the rich culture of the *Meranaos* of Lanao del Sur, the Higaunons of Bukidnon, and the dominantly Christian settlers

and migrants. Based on the 2000 census, there are 18,757 *Meranaos* in Iligan with 9,240 males and 9,517 females (NSO, 2000).

The central subjects of this study were selected *Meranao* Muslim women who have gone through and can recall their *turi* (female circumcision), mothers of the women or girls who were circumcised, and an elder who had been performing and still practices *turi*. The sample of the study included 10 circumcised women, 5 mothers of the circumcised women, and 1 practitioner (*magtuturi*). The informant-informants were not necessarily the daughters of the interviewed mother-informants.

Since this is a qualitative study, the key informant interview method was used which paved the way for other information and insights which were otherwise not possible in a structured interview. The interview guides contain questions on their socio-demographic profile and specific questions regarding the origin of female circumcision, perspectives and experiences of the informants. Follow up interviews were conducted when clarifications were necessary. Since the author does not speak the *Meranao* language, the services of an interpreter were availed of throughout all the interviews. Each interview session lasted between 30 to 120 minutes. Clarifications were asked in the course of the interview. Using the snowball method, after each interview, the informants were asked to recommend other possible informants.

Secondary data including documents such as *hadiths* were also searched and retrieved from the World Wide Web and from library archives.

The researcher coded the data as soon as the data were available. Identification and description of patterns and themes from the perspective of the informants were based on the problem statements. The data were organized categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly and continually coded initially by case, then across cases.

### Discussion of Results

A total of 16 key informants, 10 daughters, 5 mothers and 1 *magtuturi* (practitioner) whose ages range from 18-57 years old were chosen for this study. Majority of the daughter-informants are single, all of the mother-informants are married and the *magtuturi* is widowed.



Most of the key informants obtained higher education in the Arabic school with majority of the daughter-informants reaching the *Ephithida* (elementary) level while the mother-informants, the *Edadhi* (high school) level. This suggests that the mother-informants were more knowledgeable about the *Qur'an* and other Arabic and Islamic doctrines compared to the daughter-informants. Although some of the key informants do not have a formal education in Arabic or Islam, they are still informed about such topics through the help of their husband and family members and through trainings sponsored by the *M'adaris* and the Department of Education.

Almost all come from the Muslim-dominated municipalities of Lanao del Sur, although most of the daughter-informants come from municipalities Lanao del Norte which are considered Muslim-dominated, such as, Tubod, Balo-i and Piagapo. Some of the informants come from Iligan City and Cotabato City which can be considered 'melting pots' of ethnic groups in the country.

About half of the daughter-informants have fathers working in the government while those of the others are already retired. A majority of the mothers of daughter-informants are government employees, a few are full time housewives, while some those of the rest already had passed away. Most of the husbands of the mother-informants are college graduates who had obtained the *Ephithida* (elementary) level in the Madrasah.

### Terms used to refer to *turi*

Terminologies used by the informants to refer to female circumcision include *pag-Islam* and *turi*. Most of the mother-informants and the *magtuturi* use the term *pag-Islam* to refer to female circumcision. Two of the mother-informants, namely Mona and Roina, use both terms. While the majority of the daughter-informants use either *pag-Islam* or *turi*, the rest used both. The informants' background in the Arabic school may have a bearing on the choice of terminologies used since most have attained at least elementary level at the Madrasah.

## Beliefs about *turi*

Most of the informants believe that *turi* is a form of initiation of the child into the Islamic religion. They also believe that *turi* is written about in both the Qur'an and *H'adith*. A few of the informants believe that *turi* will curb the sexual urge of the girl. The Qur'an and the Sunna are the main sources of Islamic law. The Sunna is composed of the practices of the Prophet Mohammad and his companions which are in the form of *hadiths*.

## Perspectives about the origin of *turi*

The mother-informants narrate stories that they had heard about the origin of *turi* which date back to the time of Ibrahim (Abraham). In contrast to the mother-informants, some of the daughter-informants could not recall any stories which might tell them where the practice emanate from, while four of them say that they have forgotten the stories told to them. Only two of the daughter-informants could narrate stories that had been told to them about the origin of *turi*. It is said that the practice of *turi* started with Ibrahim and Sarah which can be presumed came from a *hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira (*Volume 4, Book 55, Number 578*). However, there are sections of the Islamic community which believe that the *hadith* only refers to female circumcision as commendable but not obligatory. Shariah law classifies actions into five categories, namely, mandatory, commendable, permissible, detestable and strictly forbidden. Female circumcision falls within the category of the permissible. This suggests one reason why the practice is still pervasive in the community.

## Pervasiveness of *turi*

Among the mother-informants, 100 percent of their female family-members underwent *turi*. All of their daughters who were capable of understanding it have undergone *turi*. Among the daughter-informants, most of them (6 out of 10) say that *turi* is observed by all members of their family. A small number of the key informants state that in their respective families, it is only they, themselves, and their respective mothers underwent *turi*. The reasons given for the non-observance of *turi*

by some of their family members include not knowing a *magtuturi* who could perform *turi*, distance of residence, being born in Manila, and fear for the ritual.

### Reasons given for observance of *turi*

Several reasons are provided by the informants for undergoing *turi*. These can be categorized into two: religious and ethno-traditional "*andang a ola ola*" (traditional or customary way). For those who believe it is a religious requirement, certain texts, especially some *hadiths*, have been interpreted to support the practice. A girl is not considered a true Muslim if she does not observe this requirement. Another reason cited is tradition. A ritual is a set of actions, performed mainly for its symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community.

### Decision-maker in *turi*

The *turi* works to secure the social fabric of the community. The mother or grandmother, being the head of the Meranao extended family, is the source of wisdom about the norms required of the Muslim *Meranao* daughters. A majority of the mother-informants and daughter-informants say that it was their mother and grandmother who decided that they should undergo *turi*. Only three relate that it was both their parents who decided about *turi*.

The majority of the informants would allow their daughters to go through the ritual. It is generally believed that *turi* be continued for religious and ethno-traditional reasons.

### Age when *turi* was performed on the informants

The age when the informants underwent *turi* ranges from 2-9 years old for the mother-informants, and 3-7 years old for the daughter-informants. The stage when the child undergoes *turi*, according to Babo Aminah, is when the child is capable of understanding and remembering the ritual.

With reference to the age of the daughters of the mother-informants, circumcision of all the daughters was performed by their

female relatives, while for a few, it was performed by the mothers of the mother-informants, or the grandmothers of the daughters.

### Location or setting of *turi*

Most of the informants underwent *turi* in the homes of their families in Muslim-dominated areas in Lanao del Sur. All of the informants were circumcised inside a vacant room. Only the mother, grandmother, or other female relatives could be present in the room. Men are prohibited from witnessing the event.

Choosing the day of the circumcision is important and is dependent on the beliefs of those who make the decision. Some of the key informants say that it should be on a Friday, before evening sets in. Some among the mother-informants also say that it is good if it is done during the religious celebrations of Islam such as Sa Abban, Dul Haida, and Ramadhan. The month of Safar, which falls on February this year, is considered *haram*.

### Ritual in *turi* and materials used

Before the ritual, all of the informants said that ablution (ritual washing before praying) was made by the *magtuturi*, the child herself, or the *magtuturi* will perform the ablution on her. One respondent says that she bathed in the river. There are 14 kinds of materials used in *turi*, each for a purpose. Some of the informants said that the *malong*, *kumbong*, new clothes, and gold jewelries constitute part of the materials needed for the *turi*. Majority reveal that the needle is used in four ways. First, to get something from the clitoris. That something is considered *haram* or impure. To be able to enter *surga* or heaven and to ensure that prayers will be heard by Allah, a portion of the clitoris is taken (exact size of tissue not known). The informants describe the tissue removed as whitish with the viscosity of the egg white. Another purpose of the needle is to move it in circle around the clitoris and along the labia majora, or to touch on the more private parts or clitoris. It is also used to prick the clitoris.

*Turi* is commonly started by saying a prayer. This is followed by having the girl lie on a bed. Among older girls, the underwear is cut and the cotton and needle touch the private parts. If the girl is still a young

child, she is made to take off her underwear. A *tawar* (magic chant or prayer) is murmured before the subject several times during the ritual.

After the *turi*, *kandori* is offered to the *magtuturi* by giving away the materials used (such as knife, bowl, etc.) for safekeeping since these must not be re-used in the household. A simple celebration is tendered after the *turi* attended by the parents and the *magtuturi*.

### Conclusion

While the exact origin of female circumcision is not known, this study validates the claim that "it preceded Christianity and Islam" (Ahmed, 1992). *Turi* is believed to have been practiced by the *Meranaos* even before the advent of Islam. The *Meranao* as minority ethnic group in the Philippines, has protected its traditions by, among other things, such practices as endogamy and *turi*. But the hand of globalization cannot be stopped as, even now, the beliefs of the *Meranao* are bombarded from several sides. Religion for the *Meranao* has been and still is a great unifying force. The Islamic resurgence being experienced around the world is felt here in the Philippines. There are many young men who have studied in the Middle East and North Africa and are now back in their native land trying to revive Islam to its original form through their position in the Ulama or the political system. Now the Muslims of the Philippines find themselves under attack from all quarters. The culture that had withstood Spanish and American influences is now besieged by Western and Middle Eastern Islamic fundamentalist influences. Islam being embedded in the *Meranao* culture has enhanced their conservatism and religiosity.

Despite this situation, there are practices in the *Meranao* culture which have survived. The reason for this could be the integration of the practice into religion and tradition. A part is also played by the socialization process in the *Meranao* society. The children are expected to follow their parents, second only to God.

Oftentimes, in a society where the position of a woman is highly protected, the importance given to virginity and purity is the reason why female circumcision still remains a very widespread practice despite an emerging tendency, especially in urban Iligan, to do away with it as something outdated and not prescribed by Qur'an. Behind *turi* lies the

belief that, by the symbolic act of removing parts of girls' external genitals, sexual desire is minimized. This permits a female who has reached the critical age of puberty and adolescence to protect her virginity, therefore her honor, with greater ease. This is also related to the *Meranao's maratabat* which is associated with the protection of their family name. Protection of the reputation of the woman is very important. A *Meranao* woman is characterized as "*belangatao a babay*" (ideal *Meranao* woman) (Bongaros and Orcajo, 2007) which is defined as the image of what a *Meranao* woman ought to be and should strive for. This characteristic makes them ideal wives which the Qur'an considers as the highest achievement (Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, 1994).

The patriarchal system in the *Meranao* society may also have an influence on the views held by the informants that *turi* reduces the girl's sexual urges, preventing her from committing a shameful act which is a affront to the *Meranao maratabat*. Patriarchy is observed in the unequal treatment of women and men in most religions, including Islam, which allows a man, more than the woman, control over her sexual desires.

It should be noted that two informants who belong to the daughter-informant category, oppose female circumcision, as they oppose any tradition that is old and invalid. They deem it inappropriate because it is a cultural "tradition," not part of Islamic teachings.

An implication of this study pertains to the nature of social and cultural change. The terminologies used by the informants, from *turi* to *pag-Islam* imply a modification of this once traditional *Meranao* practice to an Islamic ritual. This modification may signify the evolutionary transformation of a concept accompanying the rise of fundamentalist Islam. One informant's pronouncements show some forms of cultural deviation from the normative belief of majority of her co-informants. Casual interviews with some students also indicate changes in this practice. Change may also be observed at the international level with the interest of Western and Arab feminist advocates and researchers focus on female circumcision. This point to a pattern of change that is already occurring and may be expected to occur in greater extent and magnitude in the foreseeable future.

*Turi* practiced among the informants of this study, consists of three parts, each of which comprises a sequence of ritual acts. It is a type of ritual referred to as syncretic since it combines elements from the *andang a ola ola* or old 'magical' practices and some Islamic components.

The details of the ritual vary and variations are expressed in the type of paraphernalia used particularly the needle and the knife. Another major variation is seen in the option of removing something or not from the girl's clitoris.

The symbolism found in the ritual paraphernalia, although many of the old meanings have been forgotten, signify the role played by women in the socialization process in the Muslim *Meranao* society. The impact of religion may be observed in the beliefs held and reasons advanced by the Muslim *Meranao* about the ritual.

In sum, contrary to the mode of female circumcision practiced in certain relatively poor and less educated Islamic societies like Sudan and Egypt, the findings of this study indicate that female circumcision among *Meranao* women informants represent another variant since it does not clearly involve excision of female external genitalia. It takes on a symbolic kind which is referred to either as "*turi*" or "*pag-Islam*". As such, it constitutes a ritual or rite of passage indicating a shift in the status of a circumcised female from one stage in her life cycle to another.

Although it is not directly mandated by the Holy Qur'an, female circumcision has been viewed as a form of initiation into Islamic faith (*pag-Islam*) based on the prescriptions of Sunna. This represents an evolution of the concept from one that is customary or traditional to one that is religious-inspired -- a process which anthropologists refer to as syncretism of Islam with the local cultural practices.

The nature of female circumcision being mainly symbolic, this practice could not constitute a ritualized form of child abuse nor can it adversely affect physical health, although it may be viewed as a form of violation of women's human rights if done against her personal will. Nevertheless, it could create positive perception of one's self-concept as an Islamic adherent even as it reinforces social approval from her own family and community.

Indeed, female circumcision, and its patterns viewed in terms of origin, terms used, beliefs and continued operationalization, even as these are influenced and in turn, influence certain components of the socio-cultural context where it is lived, mainly takes on the interpretation or construction of the very people who have direct experiences in it. As such, its persistence indicates both peculiarities and similarities with the way it is practiced in other societies, both in the local and the global realms.

### Recommendations

Among the limitations that have constrained this study is the inability to locate more *magtuturi* (practitioner) who could elaborate on the practice of *turi*. Getting more practitioners may help explain the modification in the terms used to refer to female circumcision. The terms in themselves demonstrate *turi* as an evolving concept. An increase in the sample size of practitioners who in will be involved further studies of this kind may aid in validating the findings of this study.

It is also advisable to conduct further studies in the hometowns of the informants, particularly in the Muslim dominated areas, where most *magtuturi* (practitioners) are located in order to dig deeper on the historical background of *turi*.

This study had not taken into account the examination of the differences, if any, between generations. It is advisable that the informants be expanded to include the grandmother, mother and the daughter in order to examine possible changes taking place across these generations of *Meranaos*.

Efforts should also be made in examining further the effect of the *madrasah* and the *tabligh* on the changes that are indicative of the climate among the younger generation of Muslim *Meranaos*.

The ethnic background of the researcher may also have a bearing on the results of the study. An 'outsider' from the group being studied who is unable to understand or speak the *Meranao* language may have influenced the responses of the informants. It is recommended that for future studies, the researcher must be a native, if not, one who has mastery of the language spoken by the informants.



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