

PRINCESS URDUJA: A SYMBOLIC SUBVERSION*

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The belief in the story of Princess Urduja, a warrior maiden who ruled Pangasinan a long time ago, persists to this day notwithstanding the well argued assertions of scholars that she never existed as a flesh-and-blood historical figure. This paper seeks to uncover the ideological justification of the mythic existence of Princess Urduja and Ibn Batuta, the man who is supposed to have immortalized her in his writings.

Ibn Batuta's narrative is the sole documentary evidence of the claim to her existence. An examination of the narrative becomes imperative, not only for the purpose of verifying its authenticity, but also to show how a *fabula* (story) has been produced by a discourse which does not necessarily follow or repeat it. What matters most in this study is no longer just a question of the storyteller's authority (in Batuta's case, credibility), but the poststructuralist problem in narratology where the importance of ideology, the relations between narrative and its context, intertextuality, and narrative embedding mediate to form a particular discourse.

The story of Princess Urduja came to the Philippines at a time when Euro-Hispanic metrical romances were in vogue, albeit belatedly, during the 19th century. As a narrative text (that which is structured), the story could have been inspired

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by the medieval castles and feudal kingdoms that serve as the backdrop of most metrical romance modes (*awit* and *corrido*), which are conspicuously absent from our own historico-anthropological landscape. As a discourse, it smacks of a race remembering its gender-fair, or even a matriarchal past, while confronting a present that is characterized by gender inequality. The centuries-old experience of Spanish colonization, personified by the macho Spanish conquistador, has created a female persona whose physical attributes equal, if not surpass that of men, and whose royal status approximates that of monarchical Spain.

The overdeterminations of patriarchal culture in the province of Pangasinan (known to have spawned two proto-ilustrado uprisings: Malong and Palaris) intersect with the polyvocal assertions of women leaders from the province. Among them are Geronima Pecson, the first woman senator, and Maria Magsano, a feminist novelist in the vernacular who led legions of women suffragists in the 30s, thus earning a presidential citation in 1966 for her feminist causes.

Through the ages the creation of myths by folks generally presumed to be “unlearned” has built an apparatus of symbols and metaphors worthy of study by the learned in learning centers. Far from being passive or static representations of society, these involve social processes. It would be simplistic to understand their manifest destiny only on the basis of permanently defined rituals and/or folktales as if these are immutable forms immune to the dynamic unfolding of events. Myths carry a simultaneity of cultural meaning perpetuated by symbolic practices that enact, reenact, or demolish a particular social order. The power of myth/ritual is derived from the raw articulations of a community of people and not from the official imputations of meaning by so-called authorities (the power of “myth” constitutive of ritual is said to be *sui*

generis, not from the interpellations of the state or the academe). And these articulations—precisely because they are raw—are not explicit, unequivocal statements of resistance. They may mimic life confronted by garbled realities, hence the response in equally garbled dreams, aspirations, responses in terms of equally garbled dreams, aspirations, as well as statements about perceived realities. It is in this light that Jules de Raedt defines myth as:

Succinct statements that cannot be glossed over. They have been in the making for millenia and have matured in the culture that produced them. Much of what the myth has to say is unconscious or subconscious to the narrator and his audience, but is nevertheless understood by all (Raedt 1989: 52).

While the folk who produce and reproduce myths are unconscious crafters of a mythical reality, the conscious reader of folk forms cannot be undermined; his/her reading of the text and subsequent interpretation thereof (of the narrative text transmuted into discourse) can be another case of ideological encoding which adds to the plethora of meanings the original narrative text already contains.

This is why the social communicative value of myth does not end in its very form and its function as a veritable reservoir of cultural meaning. What myth can communicate to us in unspoken terms through the centuries are not only a priori structures or institutions, (for structuralist narratologists) or meaningful discourses of resistance, dissent and subversion, (for poststructuralists) but also the interpretative understanding of the reader in relation to the myth's inherent power to designate anew cultural codes and meaning to the enrichment or depreciation of the original text. With the advent of print capitalism the reproduction of meaning is made available to us. Even the erstwhile esoteric has become easily

available. However, this must also caution us from indiscriminate acceptance of otherwise unverified information posing as veritable knowledge.

When the story about Princess Urduja was retold in the writings of the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, and his notable biographer, Austin Craig, the story gained legitimacy. It went unchallenged and easily found itself in the *Stories About Great Filipinos* (1925) by Benitez and Benitez, and later in the *Encyclopedia of the Philippines* (1953) by Zoilo M. Galang.

The canonization of Urduja in the anthology and encyclopedia and the institutionalization of her character as a Great Malayan Leader prove that a chronicle can be historically validated through corroboration by seemingly infallible academicians like Rizal and Craig, and the legitimizing act of publication. But Urduja's historicity cannot be rooted in the power of declarations and publications alone. It must spring directly from that document where an account of an ancient kingdom was first contained.

Ibn Batuta's Historical Narrative, A Fiction

It all started with the account of an obscure 14th century Arab traveller known as Ibn Batuta. His account was published in the *Cathay and the Way Thither* (1916) whose editor Henry Yule was one of those who aggressively participated in the on-going debate regarding the exact location of the amazon kingdom of Tawalisi (cited in Zafra 1977: 157). He argued that the most likely location of this kingdom is somewhere down south, pinpointing to the Kingdom of Soolo or Suluk which is northeast of Borneo. French scholars believed otherwise and forwarded the idea that it could be found either in the Isla de Celebes or probably in Tunking, coast of Camboja, Chochin-China or in Tawal, a small island adjoining Bachian, one of the Moluccas (*Ibid*: 156).

But Rizal, making his own calculations in terms of leagues, estimated that this must be in the “neighborhood of the Northern part of the Philippines” (*Ibid*: 158-159). This commentary is contained in one of his letters to Dr. A.B. Meyer of Dresden, Germany. No less than historian Austin Craig corroborated Rizal’s findings in a 1916 pamphlet with the title, *The Particulars of the Philippines’ Pre-Spanish Past* wherein Batuta’s account has been cited. Based on these commentaries, the elusive Kingdom of Tawalisi has been theoretically established, referring now to the northwest province of Luzon which is the old Caboloan, now Pangasinan. And, as has been mentioned earlier, Craig’s corroboration of Rizal’s estimates proved the so-called historicity of Tawalisi and Princess Urduja, meriting its inclusion in the anthology of *Stories of Great Filipinos* of Benitez and Benitez, the first instance when this story assumed the aura of history.

About six hundred years ago, Pangasinan was an important kingdom. At one time, the ruler of Pangasinan was a woman whose name was Urduja (Quoted in *Ibid*:153).

Zoilo M. Galang would have a more detailed description of the amazon warrior and her kingdom.

When Pangasinan was a kingdom, about seven hundred years ago, there lived a famous woman ruler in that dominion. Young, beautiful and well educated, Princess Urduja was reputed to be a good warrior who personally led her soldiers to the battlefields (Quoted in *Ibid*).

It is Dr. Zafra’s contention that because of the inclusion of the Story of Princess Urduja based on Ibn Batuta’s account, many were led to believe in the truthfulness of the claim.

Gregorio Zaide had already included her in his history book, *The Philippines Since Pre-Spanish Times*. This is how Zaide describes the Princess:

Quite a number of famous women had appeared like shooting meteors across the firmament of Philippine history. Among them was . . . Princess Urduja, said to be the Amazonic ruler-warrior of ancient Pangasinan, who was visited in 1349 or 1348 by Ibn Batuta, Mohamedan traveler from Morocco (Quoted in *Ibid.*).

Pangasinenses, in particular the literatti, have been so proud and honored to be part of an historical legacy of a royal kingdom widely touted as the richest of all kingdoms in pre-hispanic Philippines, with Princess Urduja who was also the most beautiful and gallant princesses of all time. It is to be emphasized, however, that it is her beauty, rather than her vaunted ferocity and prowess in battle, which Pangasinenses admire. Her imaging as an exotic beauty proliferate in children's books, comic books, and even the movies.

During one of the annual conferences on Princess Urduja held in Pangasinan, local scholars passionately defended the embattled Princess, and tried to convince the oppositionists of her existence as a historical figure with evidence drawn from a proliferation of materials and documents. Among them was Professor Antonio del Castillo who vigorously presented sixteen known evidences purporting to prove the historical validity of the Princess's story. These evidences are culled from his book, *Princess Urduja, Before and After Her Time* (1986). One of the pieces of evidence, according to del Castillo is the linguistic reference to objects presumed to exist in the exact place. Quoting William Henry Scott, the words *gawat wabatec katur* are in archaic Pangasinan *gawat ka batec* meaning a dye or paint, and *kutoro* which means pencil or an implement used for writing. He also mentions two key witnesses, the Franciscan Fr. Odoric of Pergons, Italy (1324) and of course, Hadji Ibn Batuta of Morocco (who according to del Castillo was a Muslim priest), who were both on their way to China through the



From Jaime Carlos de Veyra. 1951. *Quien fue Urduja? Urduja un ser mitologico: estudio historico*. Manila: Nueva Era Press.

Arab route when they chanced upon this progressive kingdom.

Interestingly, del Castillo states that Fr. Odoric of Pergons happened to be the first priest to offer mass in the Islands in 1324. This was in the island of Thalam-asin, the neighboring kingdom of Tawalisi, the former being under the rule of Urduja's father. All these information according to del Castillo can be read in a book, the *Black Cross*, a post-war publication in 1917 or 1918 which was transcribed by Luther Parker, an American then working as a Superintendent of Public Secondary Schools in the Philippines. Del Castillo further claims that Austin Craig accepted as valid the book's assertions.

Another local scholar, Catalino Catanaoan, an anthropologist dabbling in journalism, strongly attests to the historical reality of Urduja and her kingdom. He pointed out that there were indeed artifacts excavated from Bolinao, Pangasinan in 1964, giving a very close semblance to the description of the kingdom contained in Batuta's account. These artifacts are dated somewhere between the 11th and 12th centuries, again approximating the period cited in the account. Bolinao is now an archaeological site and is believed to have been a center of culture and trade linking Luzon to China before the onset of colonial rule. Thus, claimed Catanaoan, Bolinao is the lost ancient Kingdom of Tawalisi (Catanaoan 1990).

Pangasinense historian Dr. Rosario Cortes who taught at the Department of History in the University of the Philippines and the first to research and write a comprehensive history of the province, demolished all claims made by del Castillo and Catanaoan in that conference. Echoing the arguments made by Dr. Nicolas Zafra, Cortes, together with Professor Rose Maria Icagasi, pronounced the story of Princess Urduja as more "fakelore" than history.

In that same conference, papers presented were predominantly focused on the investigation of the exact location of the Kingdom of Tawalisi. Old arguments resurfaced, some rehashed. But only a few managed to go back to the basis of such a story and question its authenticity. One of these was Dr. Mamitua Saber of Mindanao State University who disparaged the entire account noting what Professor Charles Beckingham of London University who translated the account from Arabic to English said:

I am increasingly skeptical about Ibn Batuta's alleged travels in Southeast Asia and China. They do not seem to me to be a genuine account of real journeys — I suspect that the problem is not so much identifying where he went as finding the source of information he gives (Saber 1990).

Hence, Ibn Batuta's narrative was subjected to full scrutiny. What appears below are excerpts from Batuta's account whose narrative was the sole basis of all these controversies:

. . . Thereafter we reached the land of Tawalisi, it being their king who is called by that name. It is a vast country and its king is a rival of the king of China. He possesses many junks, with which he makes war on the Chinese until they come to terms with him on certain conditions. The inhabitants of this land are idolaters: they are handsome men and closely resemble the Turks in figure. Their skin is commonly of reddish hue, and they are brave and warlike. Their women ride on horseback and are skillful archers, and fight exactly like men. We put in at one of their ports, at the town of Kaylukari, which is among the finest and largest cities. It was formerly the residence of the son of their king. When we anchored in the port, their troops came down and the captain went ashore to them, taking with him a present for the prince. When he enquired of them about him, however, they told him that the prince's father had appointed him governor of another district and had made his daughter, whose name was Urduja, governor of the city.

The day following our arrival of the port of Kaylukari, this princess summoned the ship's captain and clerk, the merchants and pilots, the commander of the footsoldiers, and the commanders of the archers to a banquet which she had prepared for them, according to her custom. The captain wished me to go with them, but I declined, because being infidels, it is not lawful to eat their food. When they came into her presence she asked them if there was anyone else of their company which had not come. The captain replied, "There is only one man left, a *bakhsbi* (that is, a *qadii*, in their tongue), and he will not eat your food." Thereupon she said "Call him," so her guards came (to me) along with the Captain's party and found her sitting in full state. On my saluting her she replied to me in Turkish, and asked me from what I had come. I said to her "From the land of India." "From the pepper country?" she asked, and I replied "Yes!" She questioned me about this land and events there, and when I had answered she said "I must positively make an expedition to it and take possession of it for myself, for the quantity of its riches and its troops attract me." I replied, "Do so." She ordered me to be given robes, two elephant loads of rice, two buffaloes, ten sheep, four pounds of syrup, and four martabans (that is, large jars) filled with ginger, pepper, lemons, and mangoes, all of them salted, these being among the things prepared for sea voyages.

The captain told that this princess has in her army women, female servants and slave-girls, who fight like men. She goes out in person with troops, male and female, makes raid on her enemies, takes part in the fight, and engages in single combat with picked warriors. He told me too that during a fierce engagement with certain of her enemies, many of her troops were killed and they were all but defeated, she dashed forward and broke through the ranks until she reached the king against whom she was fighting, and dealt him a mortal blow on her lance. He fell dead and his army took to flight. She brought back his head at the point of a spear, and his relatives redeemed it from her for a large sum of money. When she returned to her father

he gave her this town, which had formerly been in her brother's marriage by various princesses, but she says, "I shall marry none but him who fights and overcomes me in single combat," and they avoid fighting with her for fear of the disgrace that would attach to them if she overcame them.

We then left the land of Tawalisi and after seventeen days at sea with a favouring wind, sailing with maximum speed and ease, reached the land of China.

Various interpretations of the narrative, especially those which were orally transmitted caught the fanciful imagination of storytellers. According to Professor Icagasi, the ones

who really hammered into the consciousness of the Pangasinenses the Urduja image were the Benitezes, Galang, Zaide, Pedrito Reyes and Jose Karasig, (the latter published *Britf Biographies* with an item on Urduja). These books were read by schoolchildren, or, if not, by their teachers who passed on the story to them. Having imbibed the story as history, the members of the generation that grew up from 1925 to 1940 and beyond have already implanted in their consciousness the reality of the amazon princess which could not be completely destroyed by the scholarly revelation of Prof. Zafra (Icagasi 1992: 47-48).

Thus, as far as history or historians are concerned, Ibn Batuta's narrative is a "*fakelore*," a complete fiction. If we take the observation made by Professor Beckingham that it is not a "genuine account of real journeys," the presumption is that there are distinguishing factors which identify a real from an imagined adventure. What are these distinguishing factors? Or what makes a narrative real? These questions will bring us to the role of social institutions and how these constitute structures.

Princes Urduja as *Myth*: Truth in Fiction and the Concept of the “Possible World”

Why does the image of Princess Urduja continue to persist in spite of the academic declaration against her biological reality? What are the manifestations of this persistence?

No less than UP history professor Dr. Rosario Cortes noticed that the official residence of the governor in Pangasinan is named after the Princess — the Urduja House. She also mentioned during the 1990 Urduja National Conference in Lingayen that the newly formed Women in Development Foundation composed of active professional career women of the province at that time had Urduja as their symbol. Similarly, another all-women's group in the field of mass media organized themselves and called this organization Urduja Women in Media.

Parents christened their newborn babies Urduja. After several years, the same babies would act out roles on stage, portraying the Princess in her royal costume, complete with big round earrings and jungle paraphernalia. The name Urduja would be a popular choice for restaurants and such public establishments in various parts of the province.

But this is only true for the older folk. That generation of children born amidst the popularity of the Urduja name would by now have children of their own, who in all probability would hardly be even aware of this ancient myth. This was the intention of UP anthropology Professor Jerome Bailen, who likewise hails from Pangasinan, when he conducted a survey in the area to determine how many still remember the Princess Urduja story or at least have heard of it.

The result showed that slightly over 50% of Pangasinenses can still remember or recognize the Princess, and most of these were the oldtimers or those belonging to an older

generation. Those who had no more recall of her story were mostly represented by the younger generation. Could this be attributed to the withdrawal of Princess Urduja from children's history books and/or from their social studies subjects? This can not really be ascertained since there are still schools who continue to discuss Princess Urduja in the classroom. As explained by some schoolteachers, they do mention the Princess to their pupils but not as a figure in history anymore, say, a heroine, but instead as a legend or a folktale in their literature classes. But how about the others who may not exactly know the difference? In the University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS) some teachers make their students research about Urduja's historicity and her story's authenticity. The debate on the national level is duplicated inside the classrooms of UPIS. As to which perspective prevails is subject to the teacher's interpretation.

Does the outcome of Bailen's survey indicate the beleaguered status of Urduja, Icagasi asks, and she answers. "It seems, that Urduja is passing away with the older generation" (Icagasi 1992: 48).

Has she really passed away with time?

A significant number of visual artists have represented the image of Princess Urduja in their art. Fe Mangahas, an active critic and advocate of women studies, attempted to analyze a carousel of slide pictures of such representations. Mangahas' collection of Urduja images mostly by male artists, revealed that she had been the object of folk fascination with the use of colorful tapestries which remind us of middle eastern kingdoms or scenes from Scheherazade's *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. These images are male-constructed, hence, are depictions of a beautiful, enchanting Princess rather than powerful visions of a maiden warrior in her fighting form. The Princess Urduja from these visuals may not correspond to the amazon prin-

cess described in the narrative text. The transmuted visual image has the amazon character emasculated, rendering it passive, powerless and mystical. Mangahas averred that contemporary symbolisms of Urduja exactly relate to the romantic notion of an enchanted kingdom with the trappings of fantasy and the magical. Yet, in spite of this diminution of character of Princess Urduja in paintings and book illustrations, for example, the fact remains that the production and reproduction of the princess's vibrant image cannot be suppressed by time, and that her story continues to play in the fertile minds of Pangasinenses and even those not from the region.

The myth of Princess Urduja therefore persists to exist not in the positivist sense of objective reality, but as a semiotic sign where cultural meanings reside waiting to be interpreted and translated. As de Raedt had put it, "(myths) have been in the making for millenia" and have been produced and reproduced unconsciously by the folk. Its discourse transcends the categories of time and has the capacity to explain, justify or transform a given social order. Princess Urduja as myth responds to the problems posed by patriarchal ideology. It responds through cultural negation or symbolic inversion by presenting as an alternative an amazon kingdom where women warriors are highly esteemed and respected because of their skill and prowess in battle. Its negation or inversion of phallogocentrism celebrates the female persona. Princess Urduja challenges the male when she declared that she would only marry the person who could overpower her in a duel. The struggle towards gender equality has been equated with patriarchal values such as power, triumph and honor. Whose narrative discourse is the myth? Ibn Batuta or Pangasinenses? A female native literatti or the collective consciousness of Filipinas?

Supek (1988) and Pertierra's (1995) studies demonstrate the inherent transformative power of ritual/carnival. The latter further states that the power of ritual is *sui generis*. Time has reinvented the myth of Urduja but it has not successfully devalued its meaning. Why is the gender discourse structured through a myth? Myths are outside the rigid literary conventions set by Western master narratives. Since they are in the realm of the folk, the power of myths emanates directly from folk consciousness, collective tradition and belief system. Greimas' axiomatic assertion that structure precedes meaning (Greimas, 1987) is belied in the Urduja myth. While it did take the form of a myth, the gender discourse may always assume other forms or structures because the power to articulate a collective experience cannot be suppressed by any given structure. Culler's (1981) insights on the fabula will enable us to view the Urduja myth as a reaction to the power relations in a patriarchal society, which will find articulation in the myth or the fabula which he defines as a "semantic structure independent of any medium."

The Urduja myth as a structured literary text began at a time when Euro-Hispanic metrical romances (the *awit* and *corrido*) were the staple reading materials in the 19th century. Nowhere can early scholars find the Princess Urduja myth in Spanish chronicles said to document pre-hispanic Philippines. Neither is it contained in the *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609) of Antonio de Morga which was considered by Rizal to be the most reliable because less biased pre-hispanic account, thus inspiring him to annotate and republish it in 1891 so that natives of the Philippines could have a glimpse of their past, a golden one it was. If indeed the myth was a product of feudal Philippines under the Spanish colonial rule, it would be interesting to study how the idea of a pre-hispanic Princess surfaced — perhaps borne out of the desire of many

colonials to at least parallel the royal kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula. *Ilustrados*, including Rizal and del Pilar, were victims of the Eurocentric impositions of the colonial master so that the natural tendency for them was to react in a defensive ethnocentric posturing exhibited through their romantic reconstruction of the past. Because the colonial yardstick dictated who we were and who we were not, Filipinos or the Christian populace almost always wanted to prove that they approximated, at least, the colonizer and/or the colonizer's culture.

It is no wonder then why Filipinos until today are so fixated on titles, recognition awards, honors, or perhaps, even terms of endearment. Not a few mothers call their daughters "Princess". Too, Filipinos, in general are so transfixed with the idea of powerful, majestic kingdoms like a cultural hang-over which can be observed in our literature and cinema. Clodualdo del Mundo conceptualized and produced the royal life of Prinsipe Amante which was spoofed in the early 80s as the corrupted Prinsipe Abante. Movies in the 50s and 60s saw a flowering of this royal motif almost always reenacted by the same actors and actresses such as Rogelio dela Rosa and Norma Blancaflor. Through the years, tv sitcoms such as the now defunct *Okay Ka Fairy Ko* and the very popular *Home Along Da Riles* utilize this royal motif in some of their episodes. It would not be surprising then if animated pictures such as *The Beauty and the Beast*, *Anastasia*, and *Mulan*, to name a few, have successfully hit the local box-office record. The *awit*, *Florante at Laura* and the *corrido*, *Ibong Adarna* were also instant successes on screen. Even ex-president Ferdinand Marcos whose call for building the "New Society" used the concept of the "Golden Past" popularized by writers and activists who wanted to show the downgrading of native civilizations as a consequence of colonization by foreign rulers and their culture. The reason he

gave for wanting to change the name of the Philippines to Maharlika rests on the historical existence of natives called Maharlikas. These were a free and aristocratic people.

This lingering hangover with the feudal culture of kingdomship is actually a reaction to the Eurocentric yardstick which defined our “sense of being and becoming” (Azurin 1993). Christianized Filipinos found themselves always pitted against the white peninsular’s *costumbres*, their manners derided as *barbaro*. By 1834 with the opening of Manila to world trade and its consequent material transition into cash crop economy, secular literature would have found its way to the pueblos dominating the erstwhile religious texts. The *Urbana at Feliza*, a product of the times, is a manual for decorum in the form of *epistolario* (letters). It enumerates the do’s and don’t’s and defines propriety among newly civilized peoples. The obsession to become civilized (in ideological terms, to be Hispanized) bred a culture of counterpart where Filipinos’ penchant for imitation/mimickry could be understood as a consequence of this obsession. The *ilustrados*, or in Dr. Zeus Salazar’s terms, the *aculturados*, became the necessary conduits of this colonial mentality. The Pangasinan *anacbanuas* (*ilustrados*) relished this idea of a Princess who once inhabited their land. Their lineage gives them a sense of kingship that would depict an ideal pre-hispanic setting.

However, the Arab traveler Ibn Batuta describes the Kingdom of Tawalisi in terms of the ancient kingdoms found in Asia Minor. As was mentioned earlier, visual representations of this kingdom reflect the middle-eastern tapestries rendering the entire picture more exotic, more enchanting. This means that Christian Filipinos’ concept of kingdom is solely based on those found in the Iberian Peninsula such as the Christian states of Aragon, Castille, and Navarre, to name a few. Yet, Princess Urduja’s Kingdom of Tawalisi in the land of

Thalam-asin is akin to the Muslim kingdoms found in ancient civilizations. Little do we realize that eastern civilization antedated the Roman empire and this ideological contraption (i.e., civilization) was a belated phenomenon in Euro-Hispanic political experience. In other words, Christian Filipinos erroneously have contextualized the appreciation and understanding of Princess Urduja's Kingdom from the point of view of a feudal colonial state. It would not be surprising therefore, if our Muslim brothers from the South have their own concept of a Princess, including royal titles such as rajah, datu and sultan. Muslim Maranaos call their princess, *bai*. Other Muslim groups such as the Taosugs and Maguindanaos have their own prince and princesses. The lifestory of Princess Tarhata of Muslim Mindanao was made into a bio-film in the 50s even before bio-flicks became a trend in Philippine movies. William Henry Scott's principalities enumerated as one of the four types of Philippines pre-Hispanic societies would point to Muslim Mindanao as the most politically sophisticated and socially elaborate society in pre-Spanish times (Scott 1982: 139-143). The Sultanate of Sulu in ancient history occupied a very powerful and influential position vis-a-vis the international community. In fact, Henry Yule author of the *Cathay and the Way Thither* opined that it could possibly be in the Sultanate jurisdiction of Soolo or Suluk. The historical and political link of Muslim states in Mindanao to the ancient desert civilization belies the notion about civilization as a monopolized Western experience. As a Western construct, the term has been associated with megalithic structures such as castles and kingdoms, churches and catacombs. Because the absence of these structures from the surface of the archipelago meant a deficiency in culture or civilization, Christianized Filipinos imagined communities in this fashion. Hence, the Kingdom of Tawalisi and its Princess Urduja will

come at a time when *ilustrados* (or in Pangasinan, the *anacbanuas*) were busy disproving allegations of primitiveness and barbarism, proving otherwise, in a manner that will approximate the feudal culture of the colonizer. Until now, Filipinos are fond of romanticizing Philippine past with Princess Urduja's Kingdom or the Lost Paradise Island of Lemmuria.

Therefore, as a structured narrative, the *fabula* or the story of Princess Urduja is in itself a complex network of literary codes and conventions which would require a conscious reader to decipher and/or decode. The story of the colonization of literary forms and its traditions compels an interpreter to go beyond the textual ideology in order to verify the purposiveness of such a text. The myth of kingdoms and princesses are defensive responses to the onslaught of Hispanization (later, Americanization and/Saxonization)

As a discourse, the myth of Princess Urduja is the raw articulation of a collective experience against the excesses of patriarchal culture. Demystifying the story of an amazon kingdom, it presents an alternative milieu while it subverts the existing patriarchal order.

If the categories of history fail to underscore the truthfulness about Princess Urduja and the Kingdom of Tawalisi, the reality of our colonial experience and a patriarchal culture cannot be denied nor obscured by other discourses. As in Lewis' concept of a possible world, truth can be excised from fiction.

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