



## The Filipina in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Shadow of the Maria Clara Ideal

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### Abstract

Despite leaping progress in improving the gender gap in the Philippines, the inescapable shadow of the *Maria Clara* ideology continues to plague Filipina's progress in the 21st century. *Maria Clara* an ideology that prevails as the ideal Filipina, submissive, pure, innocent, significantly lingers even in today's socio-political discourses. The researcher scrutinized; 1. How did patriarchy a lasting legacy of Spanish colonialism construct the *Maria Clara* dogma? and 2. How did the state, religion and education remain the hegemonic tools that perpetuate the persisting *Maria Clara* ideal even in today's Philippine society? In the lens of feminist literary criticisms and post-colonial feminist theory the researcher employed literary and historical analysis in elucidating the construction of this ideology and how it was maintained. The researcher culminated that patriarchy is the institution that continues to oppress women particularly in post-colonial societies such as the Philippines. The construction of the *Maria Clara* ideology exalting her on the pedestal is a manifestation of this patriarchal hegemony that continues to impede women's progress in the Philippines. The researcher argues that the function of woman in post-colonial societies within the context of Catholicism as part of the ideal familial unit has been harbored and used by the state, and is deeply ingrained in the socio-political fiber of the Philippine society impeding women's freedom and gaining equal footing with men. The researcher argues that Filipina's must reclaim the image of *Maria Clara* her indigenous roots, the westernized version of her, the modern, and all the parts of her that was vilified by centuries of different phases of colonization to create a new Filipina woman unencumbered by her past.

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