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**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF
AL-SHAHĀDAH (MARTYRDOM) IN THE SULU LITERATURE**

By

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ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive study of the Muslim Tausūg literature in the Sulu Archipelago, the formerly Sultanate of Sulu (13th-19th Century), recited from one generation to another that contain analysis of two literary texts entitled “The Battle of Jolo” (February 1974) and “The Battle of Zamboanga City” (January 5, 1989). Using the thematic type of content analysis on the frequency of phrases that mention *al-Shahādah* and *al-Jihād*, the finding is that several lines or passages speak of these concepts. In “The Battle of Jolo,” 67 out of 558 lines referred to these concepts. In “The Battle of Zamboanga City,” 54 out of 550 lines mentioned the said concepts. It is also clear that *al-Jihād* (the Utmost Struggle in the name of Religion, Race and Homeland) for the restoration of *Shari'ah* in the communities that profess Islam as a Way of Life, and *al-Shahādah* (martyrdom), are two inseparable concepts. A Muslim cannot attain *al-Shahādah* without going through *al-Jihād*. Likewise only a sincere Muslim who undertakes *al-Jihād* inevitably attains *al-Shahādah*. Each merges into the other. These two inseparable concepts are nurturing Islamic consciousness among the Tausūg freedom fighters in particular, and the Moro Muslims in general, throughout Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, as well as in Southeast Asia and the rest of the Muslim world. They are obliged in the teachings of the Qur'ān, Prophetic Traditions, and other Islamic injunctions, including the actual martial and military encounters of those who fought against the enemies of Islam and their struggle, to re-establish Islamic Law and Governance in the Muslim world, particularly in their ancestral homeland relative to the texts under study, and other related texts of similar nature which abound-though beyond the scope of this study-in Muslim Tausūg literature as well.

Given these facts and realities, the conclusion is that literature has preserved the experiences and idiosyncrasies of the Muslim Tausūgs that keep them abreast with one another of their cultural and spiritual values, as a source of their unity, strength and motivation to fight for the preservation of their rights and their posterity. The literature serves as a binding force and source of inspiration for the Muslim Tausūg Freedom fighters in their noble struggle.

Various implications are raised by this study, among which are:

First, the Tausūgs record their individual and communal exploits in their literature, through which their posterity reenact the struggles and experiences of their forebears that almost always were inspired by heroic deeds, either for the preservation of family honor, communal aspiration, national freedom or Islamic values.

Second, the real Tausūg freedom fighter never waver in his quest for justice but will fight to the end until he either achieves the objective or attains *al-Shahādah*, a fact which would pose a heavy obstacle to the adversary who must examine the problem closely to eventually resolve the centuries-old peace hiccups involving Muslims in what is now known as ‘Muslim Mindanao’.

ملخص البحث

هذه دراسة وصفية لصناعة الآداب لمسلمي توسوغ في أرخبيل سولو الذي عرف سابقاً بسلطنة سولو (إمارة سولو الإسلامية) في القرون ما بين الثالث عشر والتاسع عشر ميلادية وهي مبنية على تحليل نصين أساسيين هما "موقعة هولو" (فبراير ١٩٧٤م) و"موقعة مدينة زامبوغا" (٥ يناير ١٩٨٩م).

وهذان المرجعان يذكران كلمتي "الشهادة" و "الجهاد" في أماكن عديدة.

٦٧ من ٥٥٨ سطر في نصّ "موقعة هولو" تذكر هاتين الكلمتين وتذكران كذلك

في ٥٤ من ٥٥٠ سطر في نصّ "موقعة مدينة زامبوغا".

فكلمة الجهاد والشريعة لا تقبلان الانفصال أبداً فلا يمكن أن يستشهد الشخص

بدون المشاركة في الجهاد. فالتسليم الذي يستشهد يعتبر مسلماً حقاً.

فكلمة "الجهاد والشهادة" كلمتان معروفتان عند توسوغ على الخصوص وعند

شعب مسلمي مورو في مينداناو وسولو وبلاوان وجنوب شرق آسيا والمسلمين على العموم.

واجب على المسلمين بناءً على نصوص القرآن والسنة والأحكام الإسلامية أن

يجاهدوا الأعداء لإستعادة الشريعة الإسلامية. ويذكر المرجعان بأن الجهاد واجب على مسلمي مورو لإسترجاع المناطق التي أخذها منهم الأعداء.

فالمرجعان اللذان سبق ذكرهما محفوظين من قبل مسلمي توسوغ ويعتبران نقطة

أساسية لتوحيد المسلمين وتمسكهم بعاداتهم وشمعون دينهم ويحثان على مشاركتهم في الجهاد لإسترجاع حريتهم التي أخذها منهم الأعداء. وقد صلت الدراسة إلى النتائج الآتية:

أولاً: من العوامل الرئيسية التي تجعل مسلمو توسوغ يشتركون في الجهاد هو حفظ النسل وكرامة المسلمين وحفظ حريتهم وبلدهم وتراثهم.


ثانياً: الجهاد عند توسوغ شيء ضروري لا يمكن تركه فإما النصر وإما الشهادة.

فالالتزام بالجهاد يجعل الحكومة الفلبينية في خوف دائم، فإذاً الحل الوحيد لهذه المشكلة التي استغرقت مدة طويلة هو استعمال الأساليب الصحيحة المناسبة لهذا الشعب المعروف

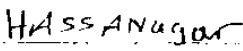
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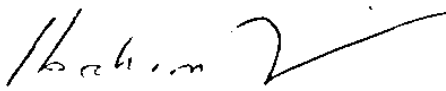
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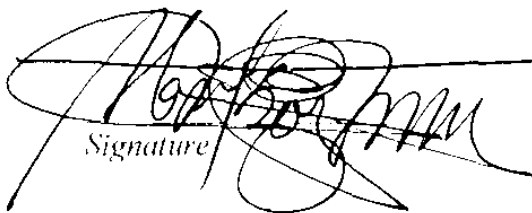
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AL-SHAHĀDAH (MARTYRDOM) IN THE SULU LITERATURE

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This simple piece of work is a product of a longer days, months and years, and a four decades consistence of nurturing and self-experiencing the inner meaning of *Sabar* which my poor but ever-inspiring and ever dedicating parents implicitly and explicitly taught me its innate natures alongside with the pristine purity of Islam as a natural way of life. Hence, this lifetime piece of humble work of hard toil and extreme hard work over a long period of trying times. This simple Dissertation is sincerely dedicated. The following are: My three lovely daughters; Fatima Nur-Hidayah, Fatimah, Nur-Hadanah and Fatima Nur-Hassanah, ever-inspiring and extra-patient wife, Hja. Darwisa Hassan-Matli and all students of Islamic studies, where sciences of Islam, its history, legacy, sciences, philosophy, education and academic teachings is being underlined and highlighted, alongside with secular, scientific and modern world educational system today. However, I have been, and still very much thankful, also on the other hand, to all and very fellow Islamic knowledge-seekers at International Islamic University, Malaysia. I would like to single out Badruddin Paguimanan Ahmad and Isnani J. Abdurahman, and the staff of Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon city, hence, this humble work, is also being dedicated. Lastly, dedicated sincerely to our great great grand-fathers who leave and die in our ancestral domain – the natives and the Muslim people and our Sultanates (Maguindanao and Sulu Sultanates) with their and questionable rights to self role and determination.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

One of the Muslim groups in the Philippines is the Tausūg. They inhabit the province (formerly Sultanate) of Sulu in the Southwestern part of the Philippines close to the country's southern boundary with Sabah, Malaysia. They spread in adjacent provinces such as Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga, and Palawan and in some principalities in the Davao provinces. They are also found scattered in the Eastern Malaysia State of Sabah and some in West Malaysia. As of 1995, the Tausūg Muslims of Sulu archipelago account for 96.59% of the total population¹ of about 536,207, making them the third largest Muslim group in the Philippines, excluding a number of expatriates in Sabah, distributed as follows: rural - 407,467 or 76% and urban - 128,740 or 24.01%. The largest of Muslim groups are the Magindanaon in the province of Magindanao alone, as of 1995, was 662,000². They are also settled in the Cotabato, South Cotabato, Saranggāni and other provinces. Second are the Maranaw, whose 572,000 populations are concentrated in Lanao del Sur Province. Several of them are also found in Lanao del Norte and other Central Mindanao provinces. A mosaic of Muslims belonging to the 13 ethnic groups in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, by and large, could be found in Metro Manila and other key cities of the Philippines, some as refugees as a result of the liberation war from 1974. There are also unspecified numbers of the Muslim Moro groups in Sabah, East Malaysia. The total Philippine population as of May 1, 2000, is 76,498,735.³

¹ *Sahifah Newsletter*, Vol. IX No. 4, vol. X. No. 1 A Quarterly Publication of the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines. (Nov.–Dec. 2000, Jan-March 2001), p 11

² *The Countryside in Figure*, National Census Office (NHO) Publication, 2000 edition.

³ *New Straits Times*, 8 August 2001, National Section, p 2.

A careful analysis of the history of the Muslims in present day Philippines, particular the Muslim Moro Tausūgs, will reveal that their character, attitude, natural ability, skill and disposition, are not only the result of what they have made of themselves but also what others have forced them to become. True to their name (*tau*, meaning people and *isug*, brave), the Tausūgs have fought-off foreign aggressions and state terrorisms to preserve their Islamic way of life, freedom and sovereignty.

Their struggle against foreign invaders has become a trademark of their identity and national unity. It has also become a rallying point not only for the Moro Tausūgs but also for other groups of Muslims in the Philippines, in preserving their freedom against foreign domination, intimidation and colonization. Besides their justification for going to war, just like other freedom fighters in the world, is due to self defense and other circumstances, such as being provoked by other groups. These are reflected in their way of life, their arts and literatures. Literature, often the most potent expression of people's experiences and sentiments, bears witness to the Tausūg's struggle for survival amidst series of adversities and predicaments, in war and peace, which they recorded in *kisxa* (stories) or *shair* (ballads) from one generation to another.

The Sulu Tausug literature, however, is largely unexplored and its importance is still unknown to many. Although attempts have been made to investigate and write about it by the Tausugs themselves, as well as by other Muslims and non-Muslims alike, no serious and detailed literacy study about it has been conducted so far.

The Tausug literature is rich in both oral and written forms, influenced by the Islamic literature in all its strands, be it Malay, Arabic, Persian, and the like. It has become the cornerstone of their thoughts, values, and principles. It is immersed in deep patriotism due to around five centuries of intermittent struggle since the coming of the Spaniards in 1521 up to the present generation, against oppressive colonial forces. Their

literature, therefore, is worth investigating because it is written and recited or sung from one generation to another, on the basis of actual heroic experiences in the field of combat and in the blood, sweat and tears of the Tausūg warriors, of known and unknown heroes and martyrs.

Indeed, one of the springs of inspiration of this study is the realization that Islam played a very important role in various parts of the Malay world, and that the Tausūgs of Sulu have been at the forefront of such role since their Islamization in c.a. 1380.⁴ Malay Muslims have done significant Islamization activities. At the same time, they have been successfully resisting syncretism influences not only from pre-Islamic elements but also from Western influences, including those un-Islamic socio-cultural and religious practices of the indigenous inhabitants in the region. Most importantly, they have been resisting and defending Islam from the adversaries and from dominant un-Islamic socio-cultural and political institutions they happened to be in. In sum, their Islamization activities, where the Sulu Sultanate (1390-1983) dominated as a Muslim empire that stretched from most part of the present Philippines to Sabah, now East Malaysia, in which the Sultanate enjoyed an epoch of glory that still glows in folklore and legend, as preserved in their oral and written literature, is worth an intensive investigation. It will serve as one of the most important legacies that the Sulu Sultanate had once upon a time established.

Among the recurrent themes in the Tausūg literature, that of “martyrdom” stands out. This springs out from the concept of *al-Shahādah* in the Qur’ān.⁵ Being a devout Muslim

⁴ It was during the era, when “the Golden era for Islam in China was during the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), during which time the Muslims integrated into the Hun Dynasty and started to use Chinese names, encompassed some of the Islamic traditions and continued to wear the Islamic mode of dress, eat Islamic cuisine.” *Al-Nuwaar*, February 2005, p. 5.

⁵ *Shahādah*, the verbal noun from *Shahida*, a verb means successively, 1) to be present (somewhere), as opposed to *ghāiba* “be absent” whence (2) see with one’s own eyes, be witness (of an event) g: whence (3) bear witness (to what one has seen): (4) attest, certify. *Shahādah* can be thus mean in the first place ‘that which is there’, whence ‘that can be seen’, as in the Qur’ān in which Allāh (s.w.t) is described as *Ālim al-Ghaybī wa al-Shahādah*. “He who knows what is invisible and visible,” (al-Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-An’ām*, 6:73; Al-Qur’ān, *Sūrah al-Tawbah* 9:94; 9:105 and *Sūrat al-Rā’d*, 13:9, etc.). Another sense, more commonly used, is that of witnessing, the declaration by means of which the witness to an event testifies to the reality of what he has seen (or claims to have seen); this is the sense in al-Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:282-3 (in

group, the Tausūg find the concept of martyrdom particularly appealing even if it means death.⁶ For the purpose of attaining freedom for their homeland and Islam, they struggled to restore the Sultanate form of government, to reestablish their Islamic way of life. They want to make the word of Allāh (*Subhānahū wa Ta'āla*)⁷ superior in their homeland as they were once practiced and enjoyed under the leadership of the Sultan. Various oral and written literary forms abound mostly in heroic deeds of well-known and unknown martyrs, a status which inspires everyone to undertake similar exploits of bravery and heroism, in the way of Allah (s.w.t), Islam, homeland, race and freedom.

The 'Concept of Martyrdom' has often struck controversies because it is usually inappropriately taken out of context. In South Philippines today, Muslims who are determined to face death are labeled by non-Muslims as fanatics and the moment one slays scores of infidel enemies in defense of the Cause, he is labeled at once a criminal or "terrorist". On the other hand, Muslims see it as martyrdom, a glorious act that merits Allāh (s.w.t)'s trust and reward for the sake of homeland, race and religious freedom.

regard to a debt); Verse in *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, 5:106-8 (in regard to a bequest) *Sūrat al-Nūr*, 4-6 (concerning adultery) *Sūrat al-Talaq*, *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (at the time of a divorce), and, from this point of departure, in legal language. A third usage (not directly Qur'ānic but implicit in *Sūrat Al Imrān*, "Truly, the Religion with Allāh is Islam.. " *Sūrat al-An'am* 6:19, "Say (O Muhammad, (PBUH) "what thing is the most great in witness" Say Allāh (the Most Great) is Witness between Me and you; this Qur'ānic verse has been revealed to me that I may therewith warn you and whomsoever it may reach; Can you verily bear witness that besides Allāh there are other *Ālihā* (Gods)? Say "I bear no (such) witness!" Say: "But in truth He (*Allāh*) is the only one *Ilāh* (God). And truly I am innocent of what you join in worship with Him.(s.w.t)" and in *Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn*, 63:1 "When hypocrites come to you (O Muhammad (PBUH), they say: "We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allāh". Allāh knows that you are indeed His Messenger and *Allāh* bears witness that the hypocrites are liars indeed.) Is the religious sense, in which the *Shahādah* denotes the Islamic profession of faith, the act of declaring: "There is no God but *Allāh* and Muhammad is the Messenger of *Allāh*". Finally, by extension of this third sense, *Shahāda* can refer to the supreme manner of affirming the Islamic faith, that of the martyr in the Cause of Islam. (in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition (1991). 9:201. The Third Sense Extension is the Main Concerned of this Study.

⁶ You did indeed wish for death (*al-Shahādah*-Martyrdom) before you met it. Now you have seen it openly with your own eyes' (al-Qur'ān, *Sūrat Āli Imrān*.143).

⁷ *Subhānahū wa Ta'āla* (Glory be to him, the Most High) is henceforth abbreviated as (s.w.t). This is always attached to the proper name of God, wherever "*Allāh*" is written. Similarly, it is uttered vocally as a praise to "No One But He" the Lord of Majesty and Bounty," by a Muslim whenever and wherever "*Allāh*" is mentioned.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study addresses the following important questions:

1. What is the concept of *al-Shahādah* (Islamic martyrdom) as expressed in the oral and written literature of the Tausūgs?
2. What are the Qur'ānic basis of *al-Shahādah*?
3. What motivates a Tausug to undertake *al-Shahādah*? And what are the expected rewards for attaining martyrdom?
4. What other concepts related to martyrdom further shed light on its meaning and significance?
5. How does *al-Shahādah* affect the conflict in the southern Philippines between Muslims and the Philippine Government? In the same vein, how does it affect the ongoing peace process?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to fulfill the following primary objectives:

1. To understand and analyze the concept of *al-Shahādah* (Islamic martyrdom) from two narrative texts in the Tausūg literature.
2. To situate the concept within the Qur'ānic framework in general and the historical experience of the Tausūg in particular.
3. To identify and describe the ways in which a Muslim attains *al-Shahādah*.
4. To relate martyrdom to other similar concepts, and
5. To point out the implications of martyrdom on the conflicts situation and the ongoing peace process between the Muslims in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan and the Philippine Government.

Besides the above objectives, the secondary objectives of the study are: 1) to conduct a historical-descriptive examination of the Tausūg customs and traditions, educational system, and literary influences. 2) to trace the origins and roots of Sulu Muslim literary traditions, and 3) to fathom the depth and intensity of the Tausūgs' faith in their religion, commitment in their defense of faith, race, nation and freedom against all sorts of invaders through the sentiments expressed in their literature.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Being the first to undertake a detailed investigation of the literature of the Moro Tausūg, this study sheds light on the importance of literature in society, as a document of history, experiences, values, problems and challenges, and longings of a group of people. Sulu Muslim literature, mostly poetic in form, dating from the early 14th century AD, mainly extols the virtues of the Tausugs - their bravery, generosity and hospitality, war against all sorts of intruders, traditional manner of revenge and their display and practice of Islamic consciousness. However, the Sulu Muslim literature, or the literature of Muslims in the Philippines, is relatively unstudied due to the marginalization within the dominant Roman Catholic population of the country.

Sulu Muslim literature thus provides a glimpse of a group of people in Pre-Spanish or pre-Christian Philippines or, at the time, of the early contact with the West. It may therefore add more valuable knowledge to bridge information and communication gaps on the history of the Tausugs.

This is the first attempt to tackle a systematic study on the influence of Islamic thought and literature upon the Tausugs. It thus contribute to the knowledge on the extent of Tausūg participation in the spread of Islam in the Malay world, particularly the

southern part of the Philippines, a subject opened up as a consequence of the researcher's registration in the course entitled "Islam in the Malay History and Cultures" which is offered by the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization-International Islamic University, Malaysia. Scholars and researchers will benefit from such a realization that somewhere in the Malay world, in the Sultanate of Sulu, the Islamic concept of *al-Shahādah* had been and is still being practiced to such an extent that the Tausūgs have almost perfected it as an art, along with *al-Jihād*, a related concept.

In Sulu archipelago, and its neighboring areas where the Tausugs are concentrated, the transmission and the composition is oral. The folklores are very much alive in the minds of men, and in this study, in particular, the Tausugs living in this place and other areas under the influence of the Sulu Sultanate. It is preserved by the Tausugs in their memory, recited by the folklorists to yolk audiences and retold as a sequel by an active tradition bearer. Many well-known Tausug in the Sulu archipelago recorded these folksongs from an oral source. It could be classified into three groups: Folk narratives, folk speech, including their own style of riddles and proverbs, and folk songs. The Tausūg folk narratives include all traditional literatures (local and the Islamic inspired ones) that tell a story, in prose or in verse, including myths, legends, and folktales. Heroic narratives are generally in verse, but occasionally, in the case of the two narratives (The Battle of Jolo and the Battle of Zamboanga) been rendered or recorded in prose, the two taken as subject of this study.

The narrator preferred sitting down and normally make some gestures when stressing important points while the narration goes on.

The narrative, most of the time, change according to the nature and make up of the audience. The expert narrator can change his topic from one sub-topic to another. The audience's preference by gesture, could change the mood or sub-topic of the main story

or plot in the narrative. This is because most of the professional narrators in Sulu archipelago are humbly omniscient ones in their own right. They knew many things about the characters and events and can move about in time and place as well as from character to character and enter the minds of any character.

The theme of the narrations, Muslims in Southern Philippines, specifically the Tausug Moros, can be stated or implied. Their literary works commonly have more than one theme. The readers' reactions determine the large part which themes be perceived are important. And in most cases the story within the narration, gives a capsule of the history of the freedom fighters who are very much willing to die as *Mujāhidūn* in defense of their faith – and – Islam, race and homeland. A moving story describes a hero, who is willing to die in the name of Islam rather than be subdued by an enemy. He struggled against incredible odds, to bring justice back to his own community of the believers.

Moreover, the study points out significant implications to how martyrdom, through the concept of *al-Shahādah*, and the related concept of *al-Jihād*, must be interpreted. Using the *emic-etic* perspective of anthropology, interpretation by outsiders (*etic*) are unlikely to be acceptable. Only the native's viewpoint (*emic*) can be acceptable.

Lastly, the study has impressive implications to the present situation in southern Philippines. An understanding of Islamic martyrdom and other Tausūg protests, sentiments, and popular religious practices expressed and recorded in their literatures may open the way for some measures to ease up new vistas and hopes for lasting peace in the Moro homeland of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago and Palawan. It may then constitute a permanent contribution to harmony and prosperity in the Southeast Asian Region.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Of the existing literary forms and genres of the Tausūg literature, the study centers only on the *kakissa-kissahan*, or stories of heroic exploits of the *Mujāhidīn* and the *al-Shuhadā*. Such stories abound among the Tausūg. Two of them are the subject of content analysis in this study. They are the “Battle of Jolo” and the “Battle of Zamboanga City”. The poems or narrations about the Tausūg patriotism and some of the *al-Khitābats* (Friday congregational prayer sermons) about *al-Jihād*, *al-Shahādah* and *al-Shahid* are also content-analyzed to support the contention and assumption of this study that the Tausūg literature is heavily influenced by the Islamic concept of Martyrdom.

The content analysis limits itself to analyzing the concept of *al-Shahādah*, or in the Tausūg language, *Parrang Sabil*, within the story structure of the two texts and within the Qurānic framework of interpretation. Other modes of interpretation, which takes into account Western approaches, are outside the scope of study.

ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

The study structures its assumptions with the concept of martyrdom in the Tausug literature at the center, while its sources are derived from: (1) The Qur’ān, (2) Tausūg History, (3) Islamic Aesthetic/Literary Philosophy, and (4) The unexplored solution to the Moro problem in the country. Reference the centuries-old conflict in the southern Philippines, the most logical solution to honestly resolve the Moro problem, is to return the Moro rights to self-determination. After all, history reveals the truth, while historical and cultural evidences proved to be genuinely reliable too.

This is the first endeavor to tackle a systematic study of the influence of Islamic thought and literature upon the Tausug literature. ISTAC’S subject, “Islam in the Malay

History and Culture,” opened the idea of writing this topic. The inspiration derived from this subject provided the impetus to unearth the reality that somewhere in the Malay World the Islamic concept of *al-Shahādah* has been studied, practiced and, to some extent, its art is almost perfected by the Tausugs, and that *al-Jihād*, as well, is highly regarded as the sixth pillar of Islam.

Lastly, the study points out significant implications to the general situation of Muslims in southern Philippines. An understanding of Islamic martyrdom and other Muslim protests, sentiments and popular religious practices expressed and recorded in their literature, may open the way for some measures to unearth new vistas and new hopes for lasting peace in Moroland in particular, and to contribute to better harmonious relationship and prosperity in the Southeast Asian region, in general.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Literature and its Social Relevance

The literature of a people who are being oppressed is naturally one of protest, a belligerent literature. The protest ranges from social comment, illumination, evaluation, and criticism that calls for revolution and separation from the oppressor. The Tausugs who feel the injustice and oppression by the system they have to endure for centuries, have expressed their vision, way of life, tradition, values, beliefs, aspirations, and longings in a literature characterized heavily by protest, belligerence, and revolt. On the other hand, for the Moros of Muslim Mindanao, literatures are written works which are artistic in nature that contain memorabilia of value.

Literature reflects the kind of society the writer is born into. It is intertwined with events, affecting people and being affected by time. The events and problems of the

present society are dissected and its evil is directly and indirectly tackled. It is a document of a contemporary age.⁸ Literature expresses the experiences of the writer's way of spending life and society. Events in literature take shape in the environment of the present and are indelibly stamped by it. From the passions, which spring from the order of society, the writer gives coherence and a more precise form to the desires inherent in men's material and spiritual lot. This is because no writer lacks an attitude to society, especially so in a period of marked social changes and political controversies such as the present. His attitude cannot fail to appear in what he writes. The extreme surfaces in protests, in the form of nostalgia for a great past. The author wants to make his literature a tool for reform or revolution.⁹ And the Tausūg epic literature, written mostly in prose and poetry, is to be studied and evaluated as one that is heavily influenced by Islamic literature, so that it could be properly identified among the Muslim literary works in the Muslim world. In this connection, let me quote Prof. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attās when he writes, "... when one puts words in their proper places so that their true meanings become intelligible, and sentences and verses in like manner such that prose and poetry become literature, then that is *adab* toward language".¹⁰

Still, Prof. Syed Muhamma al-Attas explains *adab* towards language further. Dr. Nor Wan Daud says:

An *adab* towards language means the recognition and acknowledgement of the rightful and proper place of every word in a written or uttered sentence so as not to produce a dissonance in meaning, sound and concept. Literature is called *adabiyyah* in Islam precisely because it is seen as the keeper of civilization, the collector of teaching and statements that educate the self and society with *adab* such that both are elevated to the rank of the cultured man (*insān adabī*) and society.¹¹

⁸ Wilson Martin, *Literature and Society in Brazil* (London: University of Nebraska Press), vii, pp7-8.

⁹ R.D. Charques, *Literature and Social Revolution* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), pp.10-43, 46.

¹⁰ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attās, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam – An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995), p.18.

¹¹ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attās* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1998), p139. Henceforth cited as *Wan Daud Educational Philosophy*.

The Islamic viewpoint is similarly inclined to a literature of social relevance. In the Islamic tradition, knowledge is divided into revealed and acquired. Literature falls under the acquired knowledge. Yet it is rather different from other fields such as the natural science and social sciences. It is even nearer to the realm of revealed knowledge for it depends on the intuitive experience to be able to acquire knowledge.¹²

Through the intuitive experience of the individual, the mode in which literature expresses itself assumes a social dimension and interacts with society. According to Sayyid Qutb, literature is always derived from one's vision of the universe. He cited Omar Khayyam whose poetry is based on the poet's vision of life.¹³ Islam views no human society as divorced from its social role, but what social role literature has in Islam has been eroded by the inroads of Western influences in education, philosophy and the mass media. Inspired by Western secularist philosophy, a distorted and fragmented picture of man emerged. The literature that was produced robbed him of the noble ideas of life and imbued it with meaninglessness and hollowness.¹⁴

With political domination of the West in Islamic countries and the influence of Western education, the Muslim world came to accept Western literature. In time, poets and writers, enhanced by Western literary norms and values, emulated the West and also produced a type of literature which came into conflict with the traditional forms and values prevailing in the Islamic world.¹⁵

As a result, literature failed miserably, a backlash occurred and a revival of Islamic thought dashed. One manifestation was the emergence of a consciousness about the

¹²Seyyid Ali Ashraf, *Literary Education and Religious Value: The Islamic approach*, Muslim Educational Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 4, 55.

¹³Seyyid Qutb, *Fil'al-Tarikh Fikrah Wa Minhaj* (Beirut, 1978), 13-16, Quoted by M.A.M. Shukri in his "Towards An Islamic Theory of Literature," *Islamic Studies*, xxxiii No. 4 (winter 1413/1992): p 441.

¹⁴M.A.M. Shukri, "Towards an Islamic Theory of Literature," *Islamic Studies*, Winter 1413/1992, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan, p.412.

¹⁵Ibid., p.412.