

PHILIPPINE MUSLIM LITERATURE*

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In Muslim Mindanao, in the southern islands of the Philippines today there are changes taking place which are of great socio-cultural impact on the new generation of Filipino Muslims and which would also have significant meanings for writers of Africa and Asia.

These changes are political, economic and social and are the fruits of an increasing understanding of the history and aspirations of our Moslem brothers and sisters.

The democratic revolution led by government under the leadership of President Marcos is radicalizing our society as a whole and our Moslem and non-Moslem communities. Radicalization is being initiated by different government agencies established to bring to Mindanao and our Moslem brethren and other cultural communities the benefits of national progress. These agencies are the following:

The Mindanao Development Authority which is providing strategies for the economic and social development of Mindanao. And this includes the building of infrastructures not only for the faster movement of agricultural and industrial products but also of information and communication from the areas close to sources of hydraulic and thermal powers which are now being developed and improved.

The Development Bank of the Philippines has a countryside development program which is also being extended vigorously in Mindanao.

The Amanah Bank which was established last year to serve the needs of our Muslim brothers and sisters is distinguished from other banks in the Philippines in that it has been directed by President Marcos to follow closely the precepts, principles and values of Islam with respect to the borrowing of money and financial assistance to those who want to contribute to the further development and commerce and trade in the area.

There is also the Mindanao Executive Academy which President Marcos inaugurated to help discover and prepare Moslem leaders and executives who shall manage the natural and manpower resources of Moslem communities.

There is also the Mindanao State University in Marawi City in Lanao which is gaining the attention and support of many Moslem and non-Moslem educators, scientists and cultural workers. It is deve-

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veloping a curriculum that allows for not academic learning but also activities for collective action on community problems that the Moslems learn better how to cope with life in a modernizing society.

Also there are more and more educational institutions, both private and public that are re-orienting previously held concepts about the education of both Moslems, Christians and other non-Moslems in Mindanao, particularly Cotabato, Sulu, Basilan, Lanao, Zamboanga. The scholarship programs for members of our cultural communities are also opened and has been in fact one of the major resources of support for qualified Moslems and non-Moslems from cultural communities for their education.

The academic institutions in Mindanao as well as those in the U.P. systems and the Ateneo de Manila in Manila, and in Cebu and Dumaguete are helping discover, promote and develop Muslim cultural traditions. The folklore traditions are being researched on and initial efforts have been done towards research and publication of more bibliographic materials on Muslim literature. It will not be too long when there will be more historiographical studies as well as comparative studies on Muslim and non-Muslim literature.

Also, as Dr. Cesar Adib Majul, our respected scholar and historian, a Filipino of Arab parentage, has once suggested, more and more Muslim youth as well as non-Muslims are beginning to know more and more about Islam, the message of the Quran, the hadiths, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. For the Moslem Filipino, the Islamic virtues of compassion, mercy, bravery and cleanliness, steadfastness, patience, candor and love of learning are virtues of the New Society of the Philippines, inculcating together with the virtue of self-discipline and positive involvement not only in the present but also in the future of the society and the nation. And surely these virtues are not new. They were only submerged under the negative colonial economic and political structures that created a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society in Asia and Africa. In the Philippines, as President Marcos once wrote, the colonial experience of oppression, exploitation and injustice brought forth new generations of new Filipinos — the new Filipinos of the Propaganda Movement which he mentioned in his keynote address for his Symposium, the new Filipinos of the national liberation movement of the Filipinos, the Katipunan, the New Filipinos of the Philippine American War, and of the Commonwealth period when Filipinos struggled for complete, absolute and immediate independence from the United States, the new Filipinos of the Second World War, of postwar period of rehabilitation and reconstruction, and now the New Filipinos of the democratic revolution of the present led by government under the leadership of President Marcos.

And the Islamic virtue of love and learning is gaining force again

in the Philippines as well as in other Asian and African countries led by intellectuals, writers and cultural workers and enlightened nationalist leaders in government, in the universities and schools and among the masses of our people.

In the process we are discovering and developing our Moslem literature, our literature in the major languages of our country, and our literature in Pilipino or national languages.

Philippine Muslim literature, it must be immediately said, is still mostly oral literature. It was not until very recently that Muslim literature written by Muslim Filipinos found encouragement. It was not until very recently also that some of the oral Muslim literature was systematically researched. A number of songs, stories, poems, narratives, sayings, proverbs, riddles and epics were and are being tape-recorded, transcribed, translated and published.

There are two aspects of Philippine Muslim Literature:

1. Muslim literature written or recited by Muslims.
2. ~~Muslim literature which is literature~~ written about Muslims by Muslims or non-Muslims.

This paper shall provide an overview of the above two subjects. And some recommendations to further help in the discovery and development of Philippine Muslim literature will be made.

Let's Begin with Prayers

There are two types of prayers, *sambahayang* or *salat* liturgical prayer performed five times daily, and the *duwaa*, devotional prayer said when a faithful feels an extraordinary need to pray the *duwaa*. It is said that one of the most beautiful prayers recited in Arabic is the *Fatiha*, from the opening chapter of the Qu'ran.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment, Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way; the way of those on whom Thou has bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose portion (destiny) is not wrath, and who go not astray.

The *duwaa* is recited for good journey, for enlightenment in business venture, for the health of children, cure of illness and thanksgiving.

The Filipino Muslims also cherish *hadith* or sayings of Mohammed which form part of the *hutba* or sermon in Friday prayer service.

An example is the following:

Fasting is a protective covering from the fires of Hell, so let there be no unseemly speech, no foolish acting during fasting. If a man is attracted and vilified during fasting let him say twice: "I am fasting, for by Him in Whose hand is my soul, the odour from the mouth of him who fasts is sweeter to Allah than the perfume of musk."

Another example of the *hadith* is "Virtuous innocence is goodness of character, and wickedness is that which is knit to your soul which you would hate people to get to know about."

Among the Muslims, particularly among the Tausogs, there is an oral tradition called *hadis* which is said to be similar to the Christian *pasyon*. The *hadis* poem or *tarasul* is translated as a homiletic song. The *hadis* comments on specific Muslim jurisprudence as in the *Kissa* or long story *The Story of the Tradition of Marriage (Kissa sin Hadis sin Duwa Magtiyaun)* which is sung by a girl during wedding rites to the accompaniment or *gabbang* or bamboo xylophone, the *oyula* or local violin, or the *suling* or native flute.

Islam in the Philippines

As earlier mentioned, Islam was introduced to the Philippines about 200 years before Christianity came to the islands. In the middle of the 14th century Arab traders came from the Malay peninsula, from Borneo then to Sulu and then to the southern coasts of Mindanao. It is to the Arab missionary Shariff Makdum that the introduction of Islam into the country is traced, when he landed in Sulu in 1380. And the Arab scholar Abu Bakr further propagated Islam. Abu Bakr married the daughter of Raja Baguinda who became Sultan of Sulu. In Mindanao, Shariff Mohammed Kabungsuwan, soldier, missionary and trader, landed with an army of Samal in 1475 at the mouth of the Cotabato river. The son of Sharif Ali Jainal Abidin, a descendant of Prophet Muhammad, migrated to Johore in the Malay Peninsula, and there married the Johore sultan's daughter Jusu Asiquin. And he had three children, Ahmad who founded the sultanate of Brunei, Alawi who founded the Sulu sultanate and Kabungsuwan who founded the Maguindanao sultanate by the end of the year 1500. One of his descendants is Sultan Dipatwan Qudarat, fearless fighter and recently proclaimed a Philippine hero by President Marcos for Qudarat's defense of the Islamic faith and Philippine liberty from foreign intruders.

According to Majul (see his *Historical Background of the Muslims*

in the Philippines and the Present Mindanao Crisis, mimeographed 1971): Islam "increased the sense of moral worth of those who embraced Islam and gave them new ethical outlook on life, society, and nature." Islam's first principalities were among the Iranuns, Maguin-danao, Buayan, Tausog and Samal. In spite of linguistic differences, dynastic loyalties, kinship ties and regional peculiarities, Muslim groups, according to Majul, "formed one single spiritual community and shared a common culture distinct from those of non-Muslims in the islands."

From 1565 to the end of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the "Moro Wars" were carried out. The Spaniards considered these wars (which came in several stages according to Majul) as a continuation of the Holy Crusades. Islam represented, according to Majul, "the ideological force and provided elements of an elementary form of nationalism against the forces of imperialism, colonialism and Christianity that were intruding into the world of the Malays in the 16th century."

One may ask the question, if Islam had contributed much to literature and scholarship and science from its Middle East origins to the Western World, why didn't the Muslims in the Philippines have any literary, academic and scientific pursuits and achievements?

According to Dr. Samuel K. Tan, the apparent lack of literary pursuits was not due to lack of native talent or intelligence but was due to the following factors which hindered the development of intellectual activities:

1. There was no intellectual atmosphere in Philippine Muslim societies in which debate or controversy could stimulate literary production. Relatively secure from outside fears, the Muslims were content to just verbalize their feelings and imaginations.
2. Spanish anti-muslim literature did not get into Muslim consciousness. The only contact between the Spaniards and the Muslim was in battle.
3. There was no common linguistic vehicle in Muslim societies. There was no system of mass education in which a written language could flourish.
4. The frequencies of conflicts in Muslim societies prevented the development of a leisure class which is necessary for intellectual stimulation and growth. Costly feudal wars, colonial wars and non-creative labors sapped the energies of the people, particularly the intelligent and creative.

Forms of Oral Literature

While it is true that the above-cited factors did not allow for the flowering of a written literature by Muslim Filipinos, there is now being preserved and now being rediscovered through tape-recording, transcription, translation and publication of Muslim oral and written literature like the following:

1. *Salsila* or *tarsila* which is written family tree or genealogy of past reigning sultans or royal datus, authenticating thus the claim to title and nobility and authority which is rooted in descent from Muhammad. The most famous of these *salsilas* is the Kiram house *salsila* reproduced by Saleeby in 1908.

According to recent studies, some stories heavy in ethnohistorical and even fictitious details are given the name *salsila*. A most recent example is the *Relation Between the Sultan of Istanbul and that of Jolo* (In Sulu studies No. 3). And there is the *salsila* narrated by Panglima Jumadil Osima of Jolo, *Salsila sin Kasultansultanan ha Lupa Sug* (The genealogy of the Sulu Sultans) which is said to be a fragment of a longer *salsila*.

2. The *kissas* is usually a long story or tale. They deal with known characters, religious or historical events in the past or in recent times and are sung or recited. The stories teach and edify and at the same time entertain.

The *kissa* include tales about the creation of the world (kaawn) and origin stories (usulan) which are recited.

Examples of a creation *kissa* is the *Apu Adam iban Apu Hawa* (Grandfather Adam and Grandmother Eve).

An origin *kissa* is *In Tau Nakauna* (by Damsani, et al.) and *Kissa sin Usulan sin Katantan Bungang Kahuy iban sin Binatang Halal* (The story of the origins of the Fruit Trees and Permitted Food) taken down by Jainal. There is a blending of traditional Tausog features with Islamic beliefs in the *kissas*.

3. The *katakata* are considered the folktales and folk narratives which are fictitious but have moral lessons.

Examples: *Hangdangaw* (Damsani, et al., 1972:191--229); *Munabi*, *Sultan Sulayman* and the *Calura Bird*

(Alawi and Rixhon, Abdul and Rixhon 1974).

Widespread among the Samalan-speaking groups of Sulu and outside Sulu are the stories of the tricksters Abunawas and Pusjung.

The more popular are the Pusung stories in which Pusung always tricks the sultan. The Pusung stories are irreverent toward the sultan, and this is explained by Rixhon as a mechanism of the Tausog to avoid placing their leaders on too high a pedestal. The Pusung stories bring the datu or sultan down to earth as human beings. According to Rixhon the Pusung tales are a way of vicariously getting even with the authority. And it is said that Tausog folk literature has counterparts in Malay peninsula and in Sumatra.

4. *Tigumtigum* or *tukudtukod* or riddles, remain popular forms of oral literature. And not unlike Tagalog-Bisayan riddles they are used during celebrations, after the fasting, on death anniversaries and others. The riddles develop poetic wit and sharpens observation. Recited, the riddles are longer than, say, the Tagalog riddles. There are professional singers who perform and are popular because of their knowledge of many riddles.

Examples: Miyanaw agakagak
 usug iban umagak
 bang magbak magdugpak
 biya patungsipak
 inut ku hinang
 daing ha higad dingding
 tanduk nagbabeingbing
 tukuran niya--(kambing)
 Slowly moving
 When boy and girl meet
 they clash and the
 noise is like
 bamboo cracking.
 Hiding I peeped
 through a hole
 their horns
 were locked
 what are they? (*goats*)

5. *Masaala* or *daman* — the proverbs.

The first known collection of Muslim proverbs was done in the 1920s by Carvan, an adviser to Sultan Jamalul Kiram.

Examples:

Bang kaw sumud pa bay
subay mu kaingatan in lawang
guwaan mu
(When entering house
know the door you will use for exit.)
In lasa onam ubu di hikatapuk
(Love like a laugh cannot be hidden.)

And the proverb, *there is no smoke when there is no fire* has also been adopted into a Tausog *daman*, *wayruun asu bang way kayu*.

When a young man goes a-courting, he may be greeted by the girl's father in this way: *Unu bagun gikus* — what kind of vine are you twining: And the young man may answer:

Manata lupu
Kimita pagtanuman
bang awan na katanaman
duun na magjambangan
(I am surveying the field
for a place to plant
and should I pick one
there I shall make a garden.)

6. *Pituwa* --or maxims.

Examples: Salggu laggu dusa mallaggu
pa in amnun

(However heavy the sin it
is better to forgive.)

Atay nagduruwaruwa
wayruun kasungan niya

(He who cannot decide
will have no future.)

Ha palangay niya gumuwa
in pangkat niya

(The character of a person
is known by his origins.)

7. *Maiikmata*---or coded speech in which words are inverted, mixed, twisted. Involving a play of syllables and letter inversion, it hides feelings partly in playful mood.

8. Love spells could be the equivalent of Tagalog "kulam?" or *usog*. This is said to belong to the field of magic. They are love spells:

Examples: Udud ha mata kitaa aku mari
 udud ha siki panawa aku mari
 subay kaw wala nakaduri kan ina mu
 ampa kaw di kumasi kaku
 (Little caterpillars in the eyes
 look at me here
 little caterpillars on the feet
 walk to me here.
 As surely as you have missed at
 your mother's breast,
 just as surely you'll love me.)

9. *Baat* or songs

Perhaps the equivalent of the kundiman, the Muslim Tausog *baat* expresses unfulfilled love for a sweetheart or the death of a loved one. The *baat Kamasaan* is said to be classic love song sang by the widow of Tuwan Nahuda, a ship captain whose death was kept from his crew by his wife who took over the ship. Another classic *baat* for lovers goes this way:

Unu in hilangan
 sin hidlaw kan junjungan
 ayir bajangjang
 sukkal bandeding di kapasangan
 hi ula katumbangan
 bang maisa kulangan
 dayang in pagnganan
 (What shall I sing to lessen pain?
 there's nothing like his being here,
 O beloved, who if asleep
 speaks the name of the lover.)

The *sindil*, popular in Sulu, is an on-the spot teasing song, with a sequel the *liyangkit*, which is accompanied by the *gabbang*, *suling*, and *biyula*.

It is performed during weddings, the visit of dignitaries, feastdays evening concerts and other merrymaking. It was

suggested by Rixhon that the audience should pay attention to the words, rhymes, sounds, and to know the performers and their audience and the setting. In the *sindil*, originally counts most, and even if there is redundancy, this is excused and not considered boring, if in the process some more original rhymes or ideas are presented. One recorded *sindil* and *liyangkit* was done in 1972 in Luas, Parang, at the house of Iklali, Jainal, who invited the staff of the Coordinated Investigation of Sulu Culture. It is said that it referred to the unrest in Sulu, the principal singer's personal discomfort.

Today, on the local radio station of Jolo, love messages are read by the radio announcer, and they are mostly love poems or love pledges. These are *tarasul*, love poems (p. 83). Let me read the translation of one from the English to Filipino:

Ang ulan at araw
Kailangan sa mundong ibabaw
(Rain and sun is needed by earth,
O Merciful God, let the garden bloom.)

10. The *langan* are songs for certain festivities usually written by a teacher, and other *langan* are lullabies. Among the lullabies are *dindang* or *dungdang*. Let me read one:

Dungdung ba uti tug na kaw
ba liyalangan ta sa kaw
(Sleep child
song will put you to sleep
but child it is not your fault
if the singing hurts the ears.)

Much of the above cited oral literary forms are from the Tausog traditions. They are part of the work being done by the Coordinated Investigation of Sulu Culture headed by Gerald Rixhon of Notre Dame of Jolo College. That, more or less, is an overview of Muslim literature in oral forms, and represent literature by Muslims.

Literature About the Muslims

Much has been written about Filipino Muslims. Tan divides them into Hispanic, American, Filipino and Muslim. The Hispanic writings

presented biased preconceptions and Spanish perceptions, and the accounts were mostly of Muslims raids, piracies, slavery. Among these accounts are those of Combes, *Historia de Mindanao*; Jose Montero y Vidal's *Historia de Pirateria*; Vicente Barrantes (*Guerras Piraticas*), Pio del Pazos (Jolo: *Relato Historico*). And the Spanish chroniclers usually had two assumptions, says Tan.

1. The Muslims or "Moro", as they were called, savages, pirates should be Christianized or put to the sword.
2. That all the Muslims belonged to only one ethnic group uncivilized in culture and debased by Mohammedan religion.

American militarists like Leonard Wood, John Pershing, Tasker Bliss and Harry Bandholz assumed Spanish assumptions.

But it was Najeeb Saleeby, an American Arab, who in his studies, *History of Sulu, Moro Problem, Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion*, and *Moro Documents*, pursued the idea that Muslims were a free, proud and sensitive race, that they were rich in culture, loyal to traditions, devoted to Islam. Tan lists Frank Carpenter, Henry Stimson, Charles Townsend and Mrs. Llorillard Spencer as having sympathetic views on the Muslims. Some American travelers and collectors gathered myths and legends (Bateman), Ziegler collection of Sulu Folklore, and travel memoirs of Percy Hill, as well as the educational materials developed by Frank Laubach.

Since after the war, historical and anthropological interest in Moslem culture increased through the efforts of Clifford Smith (1948), Dorothy Rogers (1953) Peter Gowing (1970) Thomas (1972). Mednick studied Maranaw social organization, Kiefer, Tausog armed conflict, Nimmo, Badjao culture, Ashley, Sulu linguistics, Seiher, Sulu Zamboanga archaeology, and Rixhon, Sulu oral traditions.

Filipino writers also assumed the biases of Spanish writers. Official reports, according to Tan, are filled with suspicions and mistrusts. The persistence of colonial influence, Tan suggests, prevented changes in the direction of Filipino literature on the Muslims. One exception cited by Tan are the writings of Teopisto Guingona, Senior, who served in various administrative capacities in Mindanao. And we may include here the book of Dr. Jose Orosa, on the People of Sulu. Events like the Kamlum uprising attracted the interest of Filipino journalists in Muslim problems.

Literature by Muslims are now being taken down and translated. Ibrahim Jubaira, who received a Presidential Merit Award in 1971, is

a well-known writer in English and a book of his short stories will be published, according to recent news reports, by Harper. The following Muslims write or have written about Muslim life and aspects:

1. Saber on Maranaw Social Problems
2. Imao on Sulu Art
3. Santanina Tillah Rasul on Sulu education
4. Baradas on Maranaw customary law
5. Madale on Maranaw literature
6. Mastura on Islamic law
7. Ikalı Jainal on Sulu kinship
8. Jainal Rasul on Muslim identity and law
9. Glang on Muslim political problems
10. Samuel K. Tan on Sulu history, Muslim uprisings, movements, disturbances
11. Majul in his book *Muslims in the Philippines* as well as essays and treatises on various spiritual and cultural aspects of Islam and Philippines Muslim history
12. Eric Casino on Maranaw art

It has been noted that what are being propagated about Philippine Muslim culture are mostly the dances although there have been significant research and data gathered about Muslim art there are still many aspects of Muslim culture that need to be researched and the researches validated.

Surely we need more folklore studies while acknowledging the efforts of Ateneo de Manila Institute of Philippine Culture, Notre Dame of Jolo College for Sulu's oral traditions; Mindanao State University for Maranaw cultural traditions.

Philippine government agencies like Mindanao Economic Development Authority and the Mindanao Executive Development Academy are doing initial efforts to systematically organize studies on Muslim Filipino culture.

While there has been archaeological work done earlier, the full reconstruction of pre-Spanish and pre-Islamic societies in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan is still to be done with wider perspectives.

Perhaps, a theoretical framework for Muslim studies as Dr. Tan suggests is needed. He claims that the usual approach is unitary—there is only one Muslim problem. This is unrealistic, inappropriate and ineffective according to Dr. Tan for the following reasons:

1. The Filipino Muslims are divided into six ethnolinguistic groups.
2. The common experience of the Muslim people is the strug-

gle was much longer and persistent but the struggle was not really organized.

Dr. Tan suggests a pluralistic approach which recognizes basic Muslim differences, and the utilization of a "social science methodology" which could start with:

1. Comprehensive bibliographical survey of all Muslim literature.
2. A historiographical survey of Muslim studies.
3. A sectoral research group on mutually inter-dependent or inter-related studies. And this means collection, classification and interpretation of oral literatures by scholars native to the place.

Dr. Majul suggests that Muslims as well as non-Muslim Filipinos should:

1. Know more about Islam, the message of the Qu'ran, and Hadith, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad Islamic.
2. Develop the virtues of compassion, mercy, bravery, cleanliness, steadfastness or patience, straight talking and above all, the love of learning.

For the further discovery and development of Filipino Muslim literature, more opportunities for scholarships in various cultural disciplines should be provided for by both government and private sectors and cultural and literary organizations. The Philippine media only occasionally provides discussion, and very limited at that, on Muslim culture. The DPI and the Mindanao State University are publishing Salam, but the impact of publication, so far, is insignificant. Perhaps, a more frequently issued and mass oriented paper in Arabic with a news magazine format could be considered.

The broadcast media, are hardly discussing Muslim literature and arts. And the efforts of Muslim scholars and artists are not well-known yet to be published.

A shift from presentations of Muslim dances to literary discussions and presentations could be helpful in popularizing and even encouraging Muslims to write about themselves and bear individual and collective expenses.

While economic development funds are welcome and necessary, funds are equally needed to create conditions for Muslim literary developments in terms of periodic literary contests in Arabic or in

English. Translations into Pilipino of the literatures of Mindanao cultural communities could also be undertaken.

The Philippine Government Cultural Association may help in further appreciation, in the discovery and development of Filipino Muslim literature by providing for Muslim literary oral traditions to be also presented in symposiums. Also, members should be able to contribute to a modest library of Muslim literature and studies, and to hold colloquiums on various literary forms, even comparative studies on Muslim and non-Muslim Filipino literature.

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