

■ ISLAMIC STUDIES
PROGRAM

Tarasul hal Sambahayang:

Prayer and Sufi Spirituality in Sulu

Darwin J. Absari and Anne Christine Ensomo

UP CIDS

DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

is published by the

**University of the Philippines
Center for Integrative and Development Studies**

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni
Magsaysay Avenue, University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Telephone: (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268 / (02) 8426-0955

Email: cidspublications@up.edu.ph

Website: cids.up.edu.ph

Copyright 2024 by the
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

The views and opinions expressed in this discussion paper are those of the author/s and neither reflect nor represent those of the University of the Philippines or the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. No copies can be made in part or in whole without prior written permission from the authors/editors and the publisher.

ISSN 2619-7448 (Print)

ISSN 2619-7456 (Online)

Cover image credit

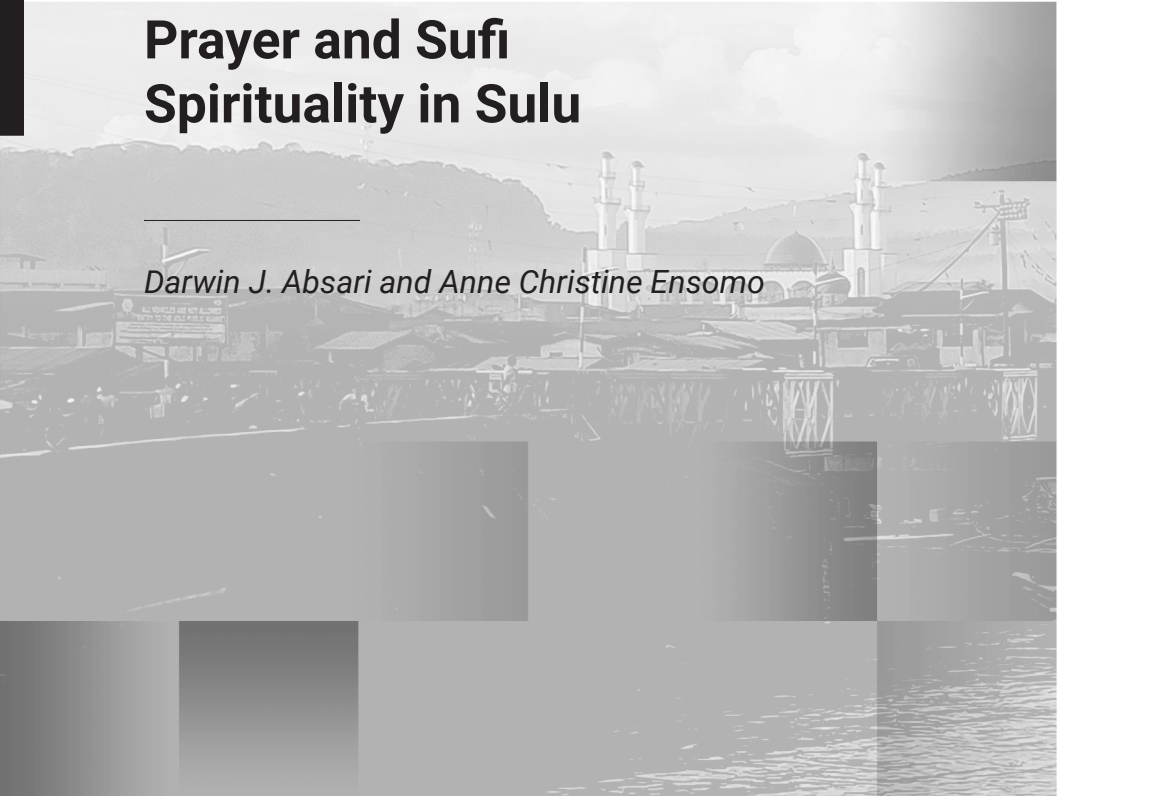
Photo of Tulay Mosque, Camille Lucille Bello, Taken March 13, 2021.

■ ISLAMIC STUDIES
PROGRAM

Tarasul hal Sambahayang:

Prayer and Sufi
Spirituality in Sulu

Darwin J. Absari and Anne Christine Ensomo



Tarasul hal Sambahayang:

Prayer and Sufi Spirituality in Sulu¹

Darwin J. Absari and Anne Christine Ensomo²

Introduction

This discussion paper represents a continuation and deepening of Dr. Samuel Tan's Jawi Studies project with the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), which began in the 1990s. Jawi pertains to a manuscript written in local language/dialect such as Bahasa Sug of Sulu using Arabic letters. Throughout the history of Islam in the Philippines,

-
- 1 This *tarasul* is taken from a Facebook post by Totoh Al on 16 September 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/252966902457589/permalink/543224070098536/>, Date accessed 2 April 2023. Habir Misah, Darwin Absari, and Anne Christine Ensomo translated the document to English, while Dr. Benj Bangahan edited it. The post on the *tarasul*, unfortunately, is currently inaccessible. The authors thank the author of the Facebook post for gracious granting permission to translate the manuscript.
 - 2 Darwin J. Absari (djabsari@up.edu.ph) is the Convenor of the Islamic Studies Program (ISP) of the University of the Philippines (UP) Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS). He is an Assistant Professor at the UP Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) and also serves as the College Secretary.

Anne Christine Ensomo (acensomo@gmail.com) is a PhD Candidate affiliated with Goethe-Universität Frankfurt and is presently undertaking research on the transmission of Sufism—by way of religious sources and literary aesthetics—in Southeast Asia, with Sulu as the main area of inquiry.

Jawi manuscripts proliferated, and they reflect the intellectual, legal, and theological foundations of Philippine Muslim History (PMH), as well as Filipino Muslims' understanding and appreciation of Islamic law and theology, among other things. However, these sources have not been fully explored. It is thus essential to continue the discovery, selection, translation, and annotation of such manuscripts. Jawi studies also serves as a strong counternarrative to the growing influence of strict orthodox interpretation of Islam that is deepening the divide between the Muslims and Filipino Christians. Nearly 30 years later since Samuel Tan launched the Jawi Studies program, the Islamic Studies Program of UP CIDS picks up where he left off, exerting efforts to find other Jawi manuscripts in the Philippines, including the present one.

About the Tarasul Manuscript

The manuscript on hand, “Tarasul hal Sambahayang” is translated here as “Tarasul on the Matter of Prayer.” Authorship and the date of its production (i.e. when it was written) is unknown, but it is nevertheless a useful marker of Islamic practice and thought in Sulu. It is a small but important piece that can help us continue to enrich the mapping of Islamic history and theology in the Philippines. Even so, the authors speculate that the tarasul in this study might have been composed recently (at least in the twentieth century), as seen from the use of some English words like “surrender.” Much of its content can already be found in old kutub (books) and classical tarasul, which was possibly begun in the 15th century C.E. after the Islamization process was completed. This only shows that *Pagtuhan* is very much alive in the present.

Tarasul is Tausug poetry that mostly expresses one's love towards the opposite sex. It is mostly composed of four lines in each stanza. Each line usually has seven syllables. However, some tarasul, such as *Tarasul hal Sambahayang*, express spiritual knowledge. For the longest time, it has become the medium of expression of *pagtuhan*, the Tausug spiritual tradition. At the same time, it is considered one of the most important literary traditions in the Sulu archipelago, and constitutes an important component of the Philippine Muslim intellectual tradition.

When compared to classical tarasul, a more precise presentation in the present manuscript can be observed. Also, some of the content that was not revealed in previous tarasul are featured here. Previous *mukali'*, or spiritual masters who

served as the holders of Pagtuhan, were more secretive, safeguarding the sanctity and sacredness of spiritual knowledge. Today, mukali', who are no longer old and illiterate, and are as young professionals, are more open. This is probably part of how God continuously shows His signs progressively throughout the era. Many spiritual sages see modernity as the highest form of God's Self-revelation in this world. This is evident, for example, through the internet, which has brought humanity closer. Through the internet, access to knowledge, even spiritual knowledge, has become readily available.

Below is the tarasul in its entirety, to be followed by an extensive commentary explaining Sufism and other concepts in Islamic law, theology, and spirituality, among others.

Salam balik hi sulat,
ha manga bunnal ummat.
Bang buhi' da salāmat,
lappas ha kiyamat.

With peace again we write
to the communities of the upright:
If life should be alright,
relieved from the judgment day's wrath.

Ini na in lilayan ku,
hal sin lima wakto.
Bang in sumba umamu,
Tuhan mag bak kamu.

This is my discourse
on the five daily prayers.
If worship is proper,
God, you will encounter.

Ampa in sambahayang,
ha ummat piya hinang,
Surga' bayang bayang,
wayi sibu sin hayang.

And this prayer is prescribed
For the believing community to abide
Upon paradise to stare
Its vastness without compare.

In ka farduh ha ini,
ha pag mi'raz sin nabi,
In tuhan Allah nag wahi,
Ha ummat hiparuli.

Prayer was made obligation
During Prophet's spiritual ascension
God Allah decreed inspiration
For the believing community to pay
attention

In kita ummat islam,
Wajib mag sambahayang,
Duun pa halawm liyang,
Katuh na maka tabang.

Subay ta hatihun,
Bang hawnu pa butangun,
Sambahayang mumusun,
Bat maingat batukun

Ha kahulug sin takbir,
Pa tuhan humādil,
In niyat, kaul pi-il,
Pa tuhan sumurender.

Haka-angkat sin lima,
Nafas junub nyata'a,
Sifat kamatay duun na,
In tawhīd mu lanyap na.

Lanyap na in tawhid,
Ha jasad mu nama-id,
Bang maraw ka sib,
Di' na kita hi palid.

Pag dagpak sin nafas,
Parayawa in ka kumpas,
Tuhan Allah nangatas,
Jasad nyawa dih mabutas.

Pag hulug sin takbir ta,
Nafas istinjah parayawa,
Ampa in pag bākan ta,
Duun ha ūt nya.

Tuhan sangat dakulah,
In takbir timugila',
Rabbul ālamin nag panyata',
Ha piyapanjari nagpa kita'.

We, Islam's followers,
are obliged to perform prayers
While inside the grave,
they will help us be saved.

Where to place it cognizant
we should be.
well-kept a prayer must be,
to return to it steady.

As takhbir is executed
in God's presence to appear
The intention, word, and deed
Are yielded to God's will.

As the hands are raised,
confirm the internal breath
there the sign of death
your intending oneness annihilates

Oneness is annihilated
to your body a farewell bid
when a well-glimpsed is made
swept off not our feet.

Know well when breath is consummated
As God Allah has guaranteed
body and soul cannot be separated

when our takhbir is released
contemplate well the external breath
Him we meet in between of this

God Preeminently Great
Takhbir exactly illuminates
Lord of the worlds has manifested
in the creation Himself He unveiled

Pag dagpak sin lima ta. Gimulgul pa Allah, In saka ula-ula. Tuhan kiya kitaan ta	To hug Allah as our hands clasped It is as if God we grasped.
Hangkan subay pangadji'un, In sambahayang ingatun Jasad nyawa iman tibuukun Pa Allah hambuukun.	That's why prayer should be learnt uniting body, soul and faith To Allah must integrate
Ampa in ka asal ta Amuna in kalima Parmata gusi sin Allah Pa jasad piyarah	our nature is Unity's word A gem from Allah's hoard To our body form bestowed
Nag jasad kita adam Nyawa nur sin tuhan Bang ta ini kahātihan In kita kakasihian.	We bear the body Adamic A light from God's own Spirit If this can be understood We shall then be adored
Kakasi nya kita Rahāsya' sin Allah Hangkan bang kumilā Ha baran mu lawaga.	We are His beloved A hidden secret of God If you want to recognize In your self you realize
Hangkan sa pag guruhan Amun sifat kawhaan Alif tū nag iyan Awn hambuuk kulang.	Hence there's a need to be taught regarding the twenty attributes the three alifs* did quote There's one that's left out.
In sifat kawhaan tag isa Gimā-ib na sya Pag sahadat mu amuna Katunggal sin Allah.	the attribute twenty-one unknown it has become as you do the shahāda It is the Oneness of Allah
In tuhan rabbul ālamīn Way sakutu sabanding	God the Lord of the Universe neither associate nor comparison there is,

**Alif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet*

Hi tudlu' mu pakain
 Pa tempat diin-diin
 In tuhan lain-lain
 Yaun ampa hariin?

you point Him anywhere
 to any location elsewhere
 God is so unique
 He is there but where?

Bang in sumba magpa sarap
 In tuhan dih humarap
 Duun shaitan sumasat
 Bang tawhīd naliligap.

If worship is hit and miss
 God towards you will not face
 that's when evils invite
 If Oneness is wrongly enticed.

Bang sumba lumabi
 Bukun kaput sin nabi
 Bang ha adlaw mahuli
 Sambahayang way jari.

if beyond the worship errs
 it's off the Prophet's course
 when Hereafter would come
 Prayer amounts to none.

Dii tana hataman
 In hāl sambahayang
 Saksi na in kirāman
 Waba'duh wassalam

we conclude here
 regarding the prayer
 Angel Kirāman* is the witness
 We pray for Allāh's peace.

**The angel recording one's actions*

Prayer in Tausug Discourse and Practice

In the Tausug context, prayer is qualified in terms of form, function, and performance. In “Tarasul hal Sambahayang,” the components of obligatory prayer, its formal requirements, as well as its theological grounding are explored in detail. This, in turn, provides a picture of the reception of Islamic principles in Sulu. From the formal requirements associated with prayer to its more inward aspects, the tarasul offers an elaboration of Sufi concepts, principles, and practices in Sulu. We look specifically at the Tausug articulation of *tawhid* (Oneness) and *fana* (annihilation), along with the significance of the breath.

In what follows, some key principles relating to the Sufi conception of prayer will be explored. In an attempt to situate specific concepts relative to a broader Sufi discourse, this paper aims to situate Sulu with respect to prevailing discussions on prayer while also drawing out nuances that are proper to the Tausug context, whether in terms of local expression or practice.

As a crucial dimension within Islamic discourse, Sufism provides an elaboration of the internal dimension of worship, one that is predicated on intention, presence, and sincerity (Katz 2013, 36–37). As a supplement to the legal underpinnings of worship, the inward, experiential aspect of prayer is given voice in Tausug Sufism, as shall be shown below. The local interpretation of *sambahayang* is hinged particularly on decorum, with emphasis on the propriety of the act of prayer, the sincerity with which it is carried out. These concerns are discussed in detail in the *tarasul* with the intent of educating followers, and lending depth and insight into the customary aspect of prayer.

In connection with the term *salat*, whose basic sense in Arabic is “to pray or bless” (Murata and Chittick 1994, 11), constitutive of the act of praying is the utterance of the *shahadah*, a basic declaration whose performance is both a witness to God’s Pre-eminence as well as an “imitation” of (p. 11) or identification of God. At its core, prayer is a form of submission in which the heart, will, thought, and intention are held in conformity to the will of God (cf. Katz 2013, 59). Praying is thus a speech act in which this devotion of faith is realized. The utterance itself is the enactment of the belief, as if to actualize in a single statement the position of the believer in pure devotion, as well as the mediatory role of the Prophet Muhammad. The theological significance of prayer is, in this sense, borne out concretely to signify a relation of abasement embodied by the believer, who surrenders or submits before a sovereign God.

Beneath the obligation to pray is the assumption of right, which is predicated on the sovereignty of God, a right which demands “worship” and “servanthood” (Chittick 2021, 221). This implies that God’s supremacy, which is defined positively in terms of “rightness, reality, truth, and worthiness” in turn necessitates “worship” (p. 221). The act of worship is implied as a natural and necessary consequence of this inherent rightness. As a consequence and response, worship is the vehicle by which the human person fulfills his or her responsibility. To wit, worship is designated as the unequivocal relation between the rightfulness which God displays and the responsibility which this elicits in the human person (p. 221).

Implicated in this formulation is the idea of *haqq* or divine right. Embedded in this idea is a certain sense of propriety or ascription, in which each thing “give[s] God his due” (p. 224) to the measure of its relative proximity to divine right. Beyond the notion of rightfulness and worship outlined above is the idea

of tawhid, the underlying principle that sustains this relation. The unequivocal relation between rightfulness and responsibility is underpinned by tawhid. Where the oneness of God or tawhid is recognized, “worship” and “servanthood” can emerge (p. 224). Prayer thus constitutes an encounter that is sanctioned implicitly by tawhid.

On the Concept of Tawhid and Its Implication on Worship

The concept of tawhid, which is tackled in detail in the Tausug tarasul, pertains to God’s oneness (Murata and Chittick 1994, 11). This attribute sanctions that humans aspire for an imitation of God, an imitation that in turn influences and permeates their thought, intent, and act. This alignment has marked a controversial point in Islamic discourse, as questions pertaining to alterity between God and the worshipper arise as a consequence. By alterity, it means the unbridgeable distance between Lord and servant.

Central to the issue is the question of incomparability, which precludes any kind of proximity or association between God and any created thing. Considered a form of *shirk* (Chittick 2021, 223) or the sin of association (i.e. idolatry), the false interpretation of such likeness or imitation—to which the human person must aspire—can only be a grievous offense. The charge of *shirk* has overshadowed the discourse on oneness, something which Sufi discourse confronts. When such oneness implies the abrogation of the self, such that the self becomes subsumed under the divine, the locus of this union is put in question. When the self becomes the locus for this kind of divine manifestation, then the danger of association or proximity akin to *shirk* is evoked. This classic debate recurs as well in Tausug Sufism, as shall be demonstrated in the tarasul later.

Interestingly, this notion of resemblance as the basis of love is stressed by al-Ghazali (Katz 2013, 64), one of the greatest philosophers and theologians in medieval Islam. This similitude as the ground for relation indicates a metaphoric function, almost like comparability, which could be interpreted in a controversial light. In tracing this likeness in love, al-Ghazali tends to contradict the unequivocal distance and difference between God and man in every imaginable plane, thus reviving the classic debate on *shirk*. On account of this contentious

theme, there is a deliberate effort on the part of scholars to avoid any exegetical frame that might rest on the principle of resemblance (Katz 2013, 64).

Beyond the discussion on resemblance, the inward facet of worship evoked by an acknowledgment of tawhid deserves further attention. The injunction to oneness implied by tawhid is also concretely expressed through prayer, particularly in the training of one's thoughts, intentions, emotions and acts. By mobilizing one's internal life, one is realizing in oneself (Chittick 2021, 224) the prerequisites of tawhid. In deepening the expression of worship, Sufi discourse provides a complement to the necessary legalism associated with it.³ From the "cultivation of emotion" (Katz 2013, 62) to the engendering of pious feelings, the elaboration below will show the ranges, facets, and qualities of feeling and expression that is warranted by worship in Islam. Emphasis on the shades of this "interior intent" as a crucial aspect of prayer affirms its inherent value, as its own performative fulfillment, over and above any material gain (p. 47). These interior states and the shades of expressivity associated with them will consequently be cited as elements apparent in, whether implicitly or explicitly, in Tausug discourse, setting the stage for further discussion.

The different dimensions inherent to prayer or worship in Islam implicate the heart, aptly described as "a knowledge of the heart," as well as the physical posture that attends prayer, referred to as "voicing with the tongue," and "an activity with the limbs" (Murata and Chittick 1994, 37 citing the Prophet Muhammad). In this sense, prayer is described as involving not only the act itself but the whole person in its entirety, as well as an inward form of knowing. Beyond external expression or the fulfillment of the ritual, the kind

3 While acknowledging the classical divide between legalism and philosophical mysticism over the centuries, Katz takes the debate surrounding Sufism further by discussing their points of convergence. Far from privileging one over the other, he refers to the complementary role played by the mystical in revitalizing the necessary formalism of prayer (Katz 2013, 8): "The Sufi tradition, with its focus on the cultivation of subjective states of intimacy with God and on the interior meaning of religious texts and ritual actions, has offered a powerful alternative approach. Although historically there have been tensions sometimes between Islamic legal scholars and Sufi mystics, overall these two tendencies should not be imagined as reflecting separate and antagonistic groups of Muslims. Neither were introspective or esoteric concerns the exclusive purview of Sufism. Rather, legal analysis, affective engagement, and mystical speculation have been complementary components of the piety of vast numbers of individual Muslims, including scholars."

of “submission” which prayer demands “pertains to thoughts” as well as “doing the beautiful.” The latter is interestingly rendered in terms of the purity and appropriateness of the intention (p. xxxiii). This inward, intangible dimension is a crucial component of Islam and of faith (p. xxxiii).

The consonance of the heart and intention to the goal of the prayer is emphasized by al-Ghazali, who stresses, by way of demonstration, that prayer is “being occupied by the Greatness and Magnificence of Allah Almighty” (Al-Ghazali 2010). In being possessed by this wholehearted concentration, one effectively brings the heart in consonance with the body, allowing for a form of submission that is wholly singular (p. 292).

In doing so, the verbal aspect of prayer, the forming of “letters and sounds,” this “utterance” (p. 307) bears weight only to the extent that the intent is acceptable. If this kind of performance succeeds in the pure articulation of imploration or supplication, then the follower’s prayer would be deemed acceptable. In addition, emphasis is placed by al-Ghazali (p. 308) on the presence of the heart, an interior state that renders the external expression of significance. Expressed in terms of *ikhlas* and *niyya*, this duality of concentration lends substance and significance to the external supplement of prayer, as shall be seen below. Complementing the external and embodied aspect of prayer, *ikhlas* is the vital element which is believed to harbor an answer from God, a pure quality eliciting a response (Katz 2013, 36). The completion of prayer is thus evident in the dual aspect of outward performance buttressed by inward purity and devotion.

Prayer as an Exercise of the Heart and Mind

Once crucial concept to elaborate on this point is *dhikr*, defined as “remembrance” or “mindfulness” (Renard 1996, 53). As an internal quality, *dhikr* places emphasis on the intrinsic value of prayer, demoting the benefit or utility that one derives from supplication to a secondary role (p. 53). Prayer is hence seen foremost as the affirmation of the positive element of relation beyond any expectation of “largesse” (p. 53) or reward. Both a characteristic and an exercise, *dhikr* pertains to an intimacy between God and a person. In a sense, it is mediated by pure, unalloyed attention, which in turns allows for intimacy, as well as communion with God (Katz 2013, 59). This conversation or dialogue (p. 59) takes place in the mind, without distraction, free of desire for anything beyond communion and contemplation. It is no wonder that *dhikr* has been attributed to individual and

communal activities belonging to mystical Sufi orders (Renard 1996, 54) to the extent that it brings to the fore undivided, wholehearted attention.

To elaborate on the idea of intimacy, we explore the element of speech and communication, particularly its hidden or private aspect. In a sense, prayer is a conversation that implies and affirms the relation between the servant and his God. Al-Ghazali (2010, 306) points out for instance “the different narrations” which prayer can assume, a figuration that implies disclosure and relation. As opposed to the “speech of the heedless,” the “narrations” (p. 306) referred in here connote a continual unfolding.

From Intimate Disclosure to Ethical Action: The Dynamics of Prayer

Interestingly, this interior state of prayer is further accentuated by an aesthetic element captured by the phrase, “doing what is beautiful” (Murata and Chittick 1994, xxix). The phrase itself connotes a merging of both the aesthetic and ethical dimensions, which the act of prayer touches upon. If prayer is a form of doing, then the performance of it also effects a concrete change, an apparent transformation on an aesthetic level. This act of doing is the realization of the positive attributes of “the beautiful, the good, and the right” (p. xxviii), attributes that find their summation in God (p. xxviii). As such, the act of prayer entails both conformity and imitation that aspire toward positive qualities. The movement from the aesthetic to the ethical outlined here takes as its presupposition God Himself as the ultimate referent. Prayer is thus an act that both approximates and realizes this transcendental referent in a partial, contingent form. Also, in performing prayer, the believer signifies, whether through “the word” or “the act” a form of adoration. In a way, prayer vocalizes, through gesture and act, the posture of adoration that is assumed by the whole of creation (Padwick 1961, 10). Its resonance encompasses the visible world, conveying as it does, both in visual and vocal terms, a transcendental sign.

The Affective Dimensions of Prayer

Added to the aesthetic aspect of prayer referred to above are its affective states, which constitute yet another facet of the interiority sketched here. Apart from “presence of heart” and “attentiveness” (Katz 2013, 56), such emotions as

“... joy, love, and other affective states” (Katz 2013, 56) are implicated in prayer. A prayer that is done right properly engenders these pious feelings. When the initial state of “presence” is achieved, as is the knowledge that accompanies this inward commitment, the attendant feelings of “awe..., hope..., and shame” (Katz 2013, 63) are generated. These emotions are thus depicted as a necessary consequence of the fulfillment of decorum in the act of praying. They also serve to “enliven” the experience, which adds to the legal requirement a rich range of pious emotions of securing it because those in power might advance their own interests.

The generation of pious feelings is in turn inextricably linked to reverence and the necessary postures of prayer. These include such a range of emotions, including “reverence” leading to “sincerity,” “shame” that produces conscientiousness, “fear” which prevents one from sinning. Also included are the more positive emanations, affectively, of “love” as a sign of devotion, as well as “awe,” which eliminates one’s “sense of self-sufficiency” (Chittick 2021, 225), these pious, affective states range over the interior landscape of the person in prayer. They also inflect the “formalism” (Katz 2013, 65), which tends to dominate the initial discourse of prayer. This shows the variety of affects, which is unleashed in the act of prayer.

Fascinatingly, this aspect is referred to in sensuous terms, lending an embodied appearance to an abstract notion. Citing ibn al-Qayyim, a theologian and scholar in Syria who was born in 1292 C.E. and died in 1350 C.E., Katz refers to this as the non-representational dimension of prayer by which the richness of emotion is given expression. This aspect, which is beyond language or discourse, is expressed by ibn al-Qayyim in terms of a “sweetness,” according to Katz (2013, 67).

Prayer in Tausug Discourse and Practice

Tarasul hal Sambahayang tackles in detail the topics and discourses relating to obligatory prayer, its function and the concept behind it, as well as the attendant theological issues that arise. More pertinently, the proper execution of prayer is discussed as the function of takbir. Other issues of theological import, such as tawhid, as it is interpreted in the Tausug context, are also dealt with, along with its practical implications for prayer. In a manner that is simultaneously

didactic and explicatory, the manifestation of tawhid in creation is also touched upon, thereby constituting an ontological element to a mystical poetic form, which is meant to be primarily instructive. Straddling between the abstract to the affective, from the theological to the pragmatic, the tarasul in question demonstrates the discursive flux and practical fluency that is associated with the topic of prayer in its specific articulation in Sulu.

We (the authors) have grouped some stanzas according to their themes or topics and analyzed them, to the best of our understanding, as within the framework of Pagtuhan.

Salam balik hi sulat,
ha manga bunnal ummat.
Bang buhi' da salāmat,
lappas ha kiyamat.

With peace again we write
to the communities of the upright:
If life should be alright,
relieved from the judgment day's wrath.

Ini na in lilayan ku,
hal sin lima wakto.
Bang in sumba umamu,
Tuhan mag bak kamu.

This is my discourse
on the five daily prayers.
If worship is proper,
God, you will encounter.

Ampa in sambahayang,
ha ummat piya hinang,
Surga' bayang bayang,
wayi sibu sin hayang.

And this prayer is prescribed
For the believing community to abide
Upon paradise to stare
Its vastness without compare.

In ka farduh ha ini,
ha pag mi'raz sin nabi,
In tuhan Allah nag wahi,
Ha ummat hiparuli.

Prayer was made obligation
During Prophet's spiritual ascension
God Allah decreed inspiration
For the believing community to pay
attention

In kita ummat islam,
Wajib mag sambahayang,
Duun pa halawm liyang,
Katuh na maka tabang.

We, Islam's followers,
are obliged to perform prayers
While inside the grave,
they will help us be saved.

To begin with, the nature and function of obligatory prayer in the Tausug context is dealt with, presented in a way that reinstates basic tenets in Islam concerning prayer. In verse 4, it goes “Prayer was made obligation. During Prophet’s spiritual ascension/God Allah decreed inspiration/ For the believing community to pay attention.” The mandate, which had originated in the Spiritual Ascension of the Prophet,⁴ in turn became the occasion for both inspiration for and an injunction to the believing community to discharge obligatory prayers. The Qur’an (4:103) says, “Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.” In another verse, the Qur’an (11:114) says, “And establish the prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night. Indeed, the good deeds drive away the evil deeds. This is a Reminder to those who are mindful of Allah.”

Salah or the five canonical prayers is mentioned 65 times in the Qur’an. These five canonical prayers are the *fajr* (composed of two raka’at⁵ or units performed before sunrise), *zuhr* (four raka’at performed at midday), *asr* (four raka’at performed between Zuhr and sunset), *maghrib* (three raka’at performed at sunset), and *isha* (four raka’at performed between Maghrib and midnight). These five daily prayers constitute the second pillar of Islam. The Prophet said, “Islam is based on the following five principles: 1) to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle; 2) to offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly; 3) to pay Zakat (i.e.,

4 The Prophet Muhammad narrated his spiritual ascension: “Then Allah enjoined fifty prayers on my followers when I returned with this order of Allah, I passed by Moses who asked me, ‘What has Allah enjoined on your followers?’ I replied, ‘He has enjoined fifty prayers on them.’ Moses said, ‘Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction) for your followers will not be able to bear it.’ (So I went back to Allah and requested for reduction) and He reduced it to half. When I passed by Moses again and informed him about it, he said, ‘Go back to your Lord as your followers will not be able to bear it.’ So I returned to Allah and requested for further reduction and half of it was reduced. I again passed by Moses and he said to me: ‘Return to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it.’ So I returned to Allah and He said, ‘These are five prayers and they are all (equal to) fifty (in reward) for My Word does not change.’ I returned to Moses and he told me to go back once again. I replied, ‘Now I feel shy of asking my Lord again.’ Then Gabriel took me till we reached Sidrat-il-Muntaha (Lote tree of; the utmost boundary) which was shrouded in colors, indescribable. Then I was admitted into Paradise where I found small (tents or) walls (made) of pearls and its earth was of musk” (Al-Bukhari 1997, Volume 1, Book 8, Hadith 349; see also Chapter 17 of the Qur’an).

5 A unit contains movements such as standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting.

obligatory charity); 4) to perform Hajj (i.e., Pilgrimage to Mecca); 5) to observe fast during the month of Ramadan” (Khan 1997, 2:8).⁶

As a succor against the peril of perdition, the tarasul affirms that “While inside the grave, will help us be saved” (Verse 5, Lines 3-4). Here, prayer is seen as a means of salvation, dispelling and assuaging fear of damnation. The evocation of fear is a way of inducing, inversely, feelings of pious reverence and urgent seriousness where prayer is concerned. As a prevention to further peril, prayer is described as a source of help on which followers can rely.

Another benefit of salah mentioned in the Qur’an (2:186) is that it allows one to communicate with God. God says, “And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely, I am near, I respond to the call of the one who prays to Me, so he should respond to Me and believe in Me, so that he may be led on the right path,” and it “prohibits immorality and wrongdoing . . .” (Qur’an 29: 45). However, the succeeding lines of the tarasul emphasize the importance of knowing the spiritual component of salah:

Subay ta hatihun,
Bang hawnu pa butangun,
Sambahayang mumusun,
Bat maingat batukun

Where to place it cognizant we should
be. well-kept a prayer must be,
to return to it steady.

This stanza refers to a particular concept of salah as understood by the Tausug that corresponds to the body parts of a human being. As mentioned above, salah is composed of raka’at or cycles. The two raka’at of the fajr prayer, as seen in many Jawi manuscripts in Sulu, correspond to a man and woman. In other manuscripts, they correspond to body and soul. Four raka’at of zuhr correspond to the two hands and two legs. The Asr prayer with four raka’at refers to two ears and two eyes. Three raka’at of Maghrib prayer are the mouth and two holes of the nose. Four raka’at of the ‘Isha prayer correspond to the chest of the human body. Each rak’ah actually has a divine origin. For example, the origin of the two raka’at of the Fajr prayer represent the essence and attributes of God, and so on (Tan and Hairulla 2007, 62–64).

6 The hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad are contained in various collections, such as those of Sahih al-Bukhari or Jami’at-Tirmidhi. “Narrated by” signifies that the person concerned first heard it from the Prophet and passed it on to later generations until it became part of a collection like al-Bukhari’s, which was first completed in 846 CE.

What the tarasul means is that each raka'at should be distributed to where it corresponds, so that by performing the five canonical prayers, which entails a total of 17 raka'at, one is actually establishing or creating a "self" from these prayers. This way, when one dies, one transforms into the self he created through prayer in his entire life, uniting his body and soul in the process. When one dies, the body will not be left to decay inside the grave. This way of dying is known in Sulu as *talbang*, which literally means "to take off from the grave." This is the highest form of dying in Sulu, when both the body and soul return to the afterlife.

Ha kahulug sin takbir,
Pa tuhan humādil,
In niyat, kaul pi-il,
Pa tuhan sumurender.

As takhbir is executed
in God's presence to appear
The intention, word, and deed
Are yielded to God's will.

The word *takbir* mentioned in the first line refers to the phrase, *Allah-u Akbar* ("Allah is the Greatest"). This is called *takbirat-ul-ihram*, where prayer is formally opened or begins. The word *ihram* in this context means the imposition of limits. When a prayer is opened by takbir, one's action is already limited to prayer, and he cannot do and say other things except what is required in prayer.

Entering a prayer is standing in the presence of God, requiring presence of mind. Thus, the tarasul says that intention, words, and deeds must all be submitted to God. According to Tausug mukali', the gesture of raising both hands towards the ears as one utters the takbir signifies that one is placing everything behind or forgetting everything to focus on God. The key to this focus or stillness is the internal breath or the inhale.

Lanyap na in tawhid,
Ha jasad mu nama-id,
Bang maraw ka sib,
Di' na kita hi palid.

Oneness is annihilated
to your body a farewell bid
when a well-glimpsed is made
swept off not our feet.

Reaching the state of stillness of the mind in the presence of God enables a worshipper to fix his attention in prayer, regardless of his surroundings. This is

the essence of the phrase, “swept off not our feet” in the last line of the stanza above. A worshipper who has reached this state also stands firm in his belief and is no longer swayed by the temptations of the world. This represents the kind of worship that keeps a believer at a distance from the temptations of the world—a realization of what the Qur’an (29:45) says, “Surely prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing . . .”

The next lines of the tarasul deal with takbir as a statement of faith. In verse 11, for example, the expression of faith, as in the “God Preeminently Great Takbir exactly illuminates/ Lord of the worlds has manifested.” In this statement, God’s pre-eminence is declared, a declaration which is matched by a further unveiling in the next line. Just as the takbir is an act of declaration, so is nature seen as a manifestation of God’s pre-eminence. “Lord of the worlds has manifested in the creation Himself He unveiled” (Verse 11, Lines 3–4). In this sense, the manifold senses of unfolding, in which the Greatness of God is displayed, are explored, ranging from the inner life of prayer to the objective world of nature.

Tuhan sangat dakulah,
In takbir timugila’,
Rabbul ālamin nag panyata’,
Ha piyapanjari nagpa kita’.

God Preeminently Great
Takhbir exactly illuminates
Lord of the worlds has manifested
in the creation Himself He unveiled

Hangkan subay pangadji’un,
In sambahayang ingatun
Jasad nyawa iman tibuukun
Pa Allah hambuukun.

That’s why prayer should be learnt
uniting body, soul and faith
To Allah must integrate

Interestingly, the function of takbir is described here in terms of the recuperation of the organic unity of body, soul, and faith. The integration of these aspects speaks of the return to the wholeness of the self, which is expressed in the line, “That’s why prayer should be learnt, uniting body and faith/ To Allah must integrate” (Verse 13). Indicating an indissociable unification, this line demonstrates the integrative wholeness which the self acquires through prayer as it is rooted in Allah.

The Significance of Breath in Tausug Discourse on Prayer

Haka-angkat sin lima,
Nafas junub nyata'a,
Sifat kamatay duun na,
In tawhid mu lanyap na.

Lanyap na in tawhid,
Ha jasad mu nama-id,
Bang maraw ka sib,
Di' na kita hi palid.

Pag dagpak sin nafas,
Parayawa in ka kumpas,
Tuhan Allah nangatas,
Jasad nyawa dih mabutas.

As the hands are raised,
confirm the internal breath
there the sign of death
your intending oneness annihilates

Oneness is annihilated
to your body a farewell bid
when a well-glimpsed is made
swept off not our feet.

Know well when breath is consummated
As God Allah has guaranteed
body and soul cannot be separated

In connection with the diminution of the self-outlined above, yet another dimension emerges, one which plays a crucial role in Tausug discourse on prayer. In addition to the discipline of sincerity—of *niyya* and *ikhlas* (Katz 2013, 36), there is also the paradoxical quality of self-abrogation but also of a certain completion mediated by *fana*. This movement is discussed here in relation to the notion of the breath. As a form of discipline, which is executed along with the other prerequisites of prayer, the breath figures in Tausug discourse as an imaginary space wherein a meeting with God takes place. As a place that is beyond tangible reality while simultaneously touching upon the spiritually real, the breath is imbued with a special significance.⁷

In verse 8, the dual movement of annihilation and consummation is expressed thus: “As the hands are raised, confirm the internal breath/ there the sign of death your intending oneness annihilates.” In the act of *takbir* described in the first phrase, “as the hands are raised,” the physical posture that is required in prayer is supplemented by an “internal breath.” Through the breath, this “sign of death”—which marks another imaginary turn—ushers self-dissolution, the disintegration of the self. This loss of the self is paradoxically maneuvered by “an intending oneness” (verse 8) which, in turn, annihilates and consumes the self

in this all-pervading oneness.⁷ The sign of death is simply the self subordinated to, and eclipsed by, this oneness. In one stroke, the breath accomplishes the dual act of dissolution and perfection as much as it does intend or actualize a transcendental state.

In the next line, the process of annihilation is further elaborated, particularly as it is directed to, and occurs in, the body. In tending toward self-abrogation, the self is transported out of the body, as indicated by the line “to your body a farewell bid,” a momentary displacement of the self. Following this movement, a recuperation ensues, in which the integration of the body and spirit is affirmed, as in the line “Know well when breath is consummated/ As God Allah has guaranteed/ body and soul cannot be separated (verse 9). In this line, the breath is seen as the site for the figuration of the dual and paradoxical movement of annihilation and, consequently, the affirmation of the integrity of body and soul. What is mapped out in this verse is the ecstatic movement precipitated by the breath and the consequent reunification which follows.

In the line, “when our takhbir is released/ contemplate well the external breath,” the execution of the breath is emphasized as a pause or caesura, coinciding with contemplation and bringing the mind in transcendent alignment with the divine. This in-between, liminal gesture seems to coincide with the breath, which in turn figures and effects a spiritual state for this divine meeting to occur. The breath, in this sense, which functions as a medium and as a site that is not bound to space and time and which, in its execution, brings about a transcendental state.

Pag hulug sin takbir ta,
Nafas istinjah parayawa,
Ampa in pag bakan ta,
Duun ha ut nya.

when our takhbir is released
contemplate well the external breath
Him we meet in between of this

Pag dagpak sin lima ta.
Gimulgul pa Allah,
In saka ula-ula.
Tuhan kiya kitaan ta

To hug Allah as our hands clasped
It is as if God we grasped.

7 Ibid.

In prayer, God and the worshipper communicate. The first stanza above identifies this meeting point to be in the middle of the takbir, or the phrase *Allah-u Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), the opening of prayer. Tausug mukali' hinted in the second stanza, between the 'alif of *Allah* and the ra⁸ of *Akbar*, that in the softness of breathing, God manifests Himself to the worshipper. According to the second stanza above, the gesture of placing the hands on the stomach or above the navel is actually a form of embracing God as though He is seen. This reflects the concept of *ihsan*, which relates to the inner dimension of religion in a hadith. A tradition on the authority of Umar (i.e. a companion of the Prophet; the second caliph) speaks of how Angel Gabriel appeared to Prophet Muhammad while he was in a mosque with some of his companions. Umar said:

While we were one day sitting with the Messenger of Allah, *sallAllahu 'alayhiwasallam*, there appeared before us a man dressed in extremely white clothes and with very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him.

He sat down close by the Prophet, *sallAllahu 'alayhiwasallam*, rested his knee against his thighs, and said, 'O Muhammad! Inform me about Islam.' Said the Messenger of Allah, *sallAllahu 'alayhiwasallam*, 'Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity save Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, that you should perform salah (ritual prayer), pay the zakah (alms), fast during Ramadan, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (the Ka'bah at Makkah), if you can find a way to it (or find the means for making the journey to it).' Said he (the man), 'You have spoken truly.'

We were astonished at his thus questioning him and telling him that he was right, but he went on to say, 'Inform me about *iman* (faith).' Prophet Muhammad answered, 'It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (*qadar*), both in its good and in its evil aspects.' The man said, 'You have spoken truly.'

8 "Alif" /ا/ is the first letter in Arabic. "Ra" /ر/ is the tenth letter. In the phrase *Allah-hu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), "alif" appears in the first word Allah while "ra" is seen as the last letter of the word *Akbar*.

Then he (the man) said, 'Inform me about *Ihsan*.' He (Prophet Muhammad) answered, 'It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you.'

The man said, 'Inform me about the Hour.' He (Prophet Muhammad) said, 'About that the one questioned knows no more than the questioner.' So the man said, 'Well, inform me about the signs thereof (i.e. of its coming).'

Said he, 'They are that the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress, that you will see the barefooted ones, the naked, the destitute, the herdsmen of the sheep (competing with each other) in raising lofty buildings.' Thereupon the man went off.

I waited a while, and then he (the Messenger of Allah) said, 'O 'Umar, do you know who that questioner was?' I replied, 'Allah and His Messenger know better.' He said, 'That was Jibril (Angel Gabriel). He came to teach you your religion.' (Khan 1997; Sahih al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 2, Hadith 48)

The Reality of the Self in Tausug Spirituality

Ampa in ka asal ta
Amuna in kalima⁹
Parmata gusi sin Allah
Pa jasad piyarah

Our nature is Unity's word
A gem from Allah's hoard
To our body form bestowed

Nag jasad kita adam
Nyawa nur sin tuhan
Bang ta ini kahātihan
In kita kakasihan.

We bear the body Adamic
A light from God's own Spirit
If this can be understood
We shall then be adored

Kakasi nya kita
Rahāsya' sin Allah
Hangkan bang kumilā
Ha baran mu lawaga.

We are His beloved
A hidden secret of God
If you want to recognize
In your self you realize

9 Kalima in this tarasul refers to the phrase "La ilaha illah Allah" (There is God but Allah).

In a turn which may be seen as strikingly explicatory, the concept of prayer is given elaboration in the subsequent lines. In particular, verse 14 reads, “Our nature is Unity’s word/ A gem from Allah’s hoard/ To our body bestowed,” indicating a division between form and matter, word and materiality, in the act of creation. The nature of creation itself is described, in which word or utterance is seen as issuing from the tawhid, which in turn gives form and life to the body. An embodiment of the word, creation is cast here in terms of a neo-Platonic causality,¹⁰ in which an idea or inspiration animates matter.

In another inflection, the process of creation is rendered in terms of signs, in which a word or utterance is imprinted on created matter, and the very substance of the thing itself is rendered in terms of “Unity’s word.” As a kernel of truth and transcendent sign, the word issuing from tawhid, and the oneness which it indicates, is what engenders nature and brings it about. Nature is thus an inscription of this sign, regulated as it is by the principle of oneness. Described as “a gem from Allah’s hoard,” the particular form or principle in question here pertains to that which forms or sustains the body, hence the subsequent line, “To our body form bestowed” (verse 14). In this line, the peculiar formation of the body, of the corporeal, and its material is given elaboration.

In the next line, verse 15, which reads “We bear the body Adamic/ A light from God’s own Spirit,” the ontological basis of creation is furthermore affirmed, with the Adamic body as the primary type representing the creative act. As a paradigmatic figure, the Adamic body is considered the first sign of creation of the corporeal manifestation of an idea. Interestingly, there is also a shift in the metaphor employed, particularly the use of “light,” a metaphor that signifies the idea of emanation of creation¹¹ from God’s Spirit (verse 15).

10 Riddell (2001) outlines the influence of Greek philosophy upon Islamic thought, an idea which is widely corroborated and is confirmed in this Tausug example.

11 Choueiri, Youssef M., and Knysh Alexander provide an instructive account of the turns in speculative philosophy and its afterlives in Sufi thought and discourse in *Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West*.

Following this shift in nuance, the image of light shows the participation in essence of a created thing,¹² which in and of itself, outside of the range of the divine Spirit, is of no significance or materiality. This inflection in thought and imagery indicates the idea of emanation, where in creation is thought to emerge from the One. In providing a vehicle for this ideation, the shift to light indicates the valence of local appropriation, particularly as it is manifested in this tarasul.

Although it would appear that this added layer of thought would seem extraneous to the organicity of the previous light metaphor, the connection is in fact justified by the creative principle or agency outlined here. If the physical body is a concrete manifestation of divine inspiration and decree, then it follows that the self is the locus of realization. It meant that every aspect of the self—thought, intent, and deed—should be perfectly aligned with the divine agency at work in creation. Following the principle of tawhid, this implies that the self is then held in conformity with the divine principle of oneness.

In the next line, “We are His beloved/ A hidden secret of God/ If you want to recognize (God)/ In your own self you realize” (verse 16), this quality of intimacy or interiority is emphasized in which the self is portrayed as the locus of realization. This conformity to the divine agency is enjoined on the part of the believer. As seen in the line “We are beloved,” which shows the special status of the believing community, the privileged status of the believer is also emphasized. Additionally, the phrase “A hidden secret” is used to further stress this kind of secrecy and confidence, an internal aspect expressed through relation, in the context of this dialogue (Renard 1996, 55).

In yet another inflection, the line, “If you want to recognize/ In your own self you realize” (verse 16) provides another element to the sense of intimacy or interiority evoked here. Apart from the relational element, this line suggests an interiorization. From this description, a certain controversy arises, one which had been previously mentioned, concerning the indissolubility of the boundary between self and God.

12 For a thorough discussion of the topic as it is discussed in the Tausug context, Darwin Absari (2021) provides an exhaustive analysis of exemplary tarasul, especially as they touch upon themes relating to the self-sufficiency of God. In his work, the knowledge system of the Tausug is foregrounded as a site in which speculative concepts are redrawn.

The Twenty Attributes and the Certainty of Worship

Hangkan sa pag guruhan|
Amun sifat kawhaan
Alif tū nag iyan
Awn hambuuk kulang.

Hence there's a need to be taught
regarding the twenty attributes
the three alifs* did quote
There's one that's left out.

**Alif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet*

In sifat kawhaan tag isa
Gimā-ib na sya
Pag saḥādat mu amuna
Katunggal sin Allah.

the attribute twenty-one
unknown it has become
as you do the shahāda
It is the Oneness of Allah

In tuhan rabbul ālamīn
Way sakutu sabanding
Hi tudlu' mu pakain
Pa tempat diin-diin
In tuhan lain-lain
Yaun ampa hariin?

God the Lord of the Universe
neither associate nor comparison there
is, you point Him anywhere
to any location elsewhere
God is so unique
He is there but where?

In the first stanza above, the author of the tarasul then describes God being unique and incomparable, but whose presence is found everywhere. This has been expressed in many verses of the Qur'an, "Glory to Him! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!" (10:18); "Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!" (6:100); "Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him)" (9:31); "There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things)" (42:11); "And He is with you wheresoever ye may be" (57:4); "To Allah belong the east and the West: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing" (2:115).

Finally, the succeeding two stanzas describe the uncertain, and thus invalid, worship of the ignorant. This is a kind of worship where the worshipper who has no knowledge of God can be easily destroyed by the devil. It is important for a worshipper to focus on God while praying. However, this can only be done when a worshipper knows God Whom he worships. According to the mukali', whatever one thinks while praying becomes the object of one's worship. In Sufi literature:

It is related that Muhammad al-Ghazzali once rebuked his younger brother Ahmad, saying, “People of every social rank, from every land, come to this city to perform prayer behind me, considering this good for their well-being in this world and the provision for their lives hereafter. Yet you, even though you are my brother and live close to me, refuse to say prayers me.” Ahmad replied, “If you stand to lead prayers and struggle your utmost to say them in the full sense of the word, I will never turn away from following you.”

At noon, Muhammad al-Ghazzali stood up to perform the prayers. Halfway through, Ahmad broke off, moved away, and continued his prayers in a different corner of the mosque.

After the Imam completed his prayers, he came over to Ahmad and criticized him for his actions. Ahmad answered, “We were faithful to our promise. We followed you until you went to the stable to give water to our camel. We weren’t able to continue our prayers after that because we lack an imam to lead us.”

With affection and friendship, Muhammad replied, “Glory be to God! He indeed has a group of His friends who are spies of our hearts. My brother spoke truly, for it passed through my mind as I was delivering the prayer that I’d forgotten water to my camel.” (Fadiman and Frager 1997, 62)

God, through the Qur’an, speaks of worshippers who are neglectful and unmindful of their prayers, “So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers. Those who (want but) to be seen (of men). But refuse (to supply) (even) neighborly needs” (Qur’an 107:4-7). In another verse of the Qur’an, God commands the believers not to pray with an unsettled mind, “O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say . . .” (Qur’an 4:43). Further, God commands believers to “[g]uard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind)” (Qur’an 2:238). This middle prayer mentioned in the Qur’an is the prayer of the heart. According to one of the famous spiritual masters in Islam, Sheikh al-Jilani (d.1166 C.E.), the prayer of the heart signifies true worship. The heart is the essence of the body, so when the heart is heedless, the meaning of worship is lost. This is similar to the presence or the stillness of the mind explained previously.

While physical salah, or canonical prayers, are prescribed at specific times, the inner salah is done constantly. This is known in Islam as *salatan daimun* or the eternal prayer. The Qur'an (70:19–23) mentions this: “Truly man was created very impatient. Fretful when evil touches him, and niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to Prayer. Those who remain steadfast to their prayer.”

Bang in sumba magpa sarap
In tuhan dih humarap
Duun shaitan sumasat
Bang tawhid naliligap.

If worship is hit and miss
God towards you will not face
that's when evils invite
If Oneness is wrongly enticed.

Bang sumba lumabi
Bukun kaput sin nabi
Bang ha adlaw mahuli
Sambahayang way jari.

if beyond the worship errs
it's off the Prophet's course
when Hereafter would come
Prayer amounts to none.

Dii tana hataman
In hāl sambahayang
Saksi na in kirāman
Waba'duh wassalam

we conclude here
regarding the prayer
Angel Kirāman* is the witness
We pray for Allāh's peace.

**The angel recording one's actions*

From the discussion above, the various dimensions of prayer in discourse and practice have been elaborated, offering a picture of the inward, mystical bent characteristic of Islam in Sulu. The function and practice of obligatory prayer in the Tausug context along with its conceptual and theological nuances have been outlined. Following trends in Sufism, while simultaneously casting a local inflection to it in exegesis and practice, the *Tarasul hal Sambahayang* explores the significance of sincerity (Katz 2013, 36) as a continuation of the principle of oneness. With the conformity of the intent, heart, and deed, and the proper execution of prayer, the person proves himself true. In prayer as well, through one's external posture and the submission of the heart, the theological resonances pertaining to tawhid are implicitly realized. With the worshipper portrayed as belonging to a special community, in which intimacy and meeting could take place, the idea of individual and congregational worship is fleshed out as well. Specifically, the expression of takhbir and the relational aspect of

worship are foregrounded in the text, indicating the vertical as well as collective aspects of worship.

Crucial to the Tausug religious imaginary is the figuration of intimacy, rendered in terms of an encounter. As a believer bearing the divine seal, the worshipper is deemed as participating in, subordinated to, a oneness. When the self is annihilated by this oneness, it ultimately becomes a site in which an ecstatic meeting between the divine and the human person takes place. To conjure this state, Tausug spirituality deploys the breath as a supplement to prayer, figuring it as an external ritual inducing a spiritual reality.

From the propriety and decorum demanded among the pious in prayer to the expectation of sincerity, wholeheartedness, the imitation of oneness in prayer (Katz 2013, 47, 59; Murata and Chittick 1994, 11) to the relational and intimate aspects of prayer, the various themes which are pertinent to Sufi discourse in Sulu have been dealt with at length. Additionally, the interior dimension, manifested concretely in the context of divine revelation and, consequently, the realization of truth within the self, is elaborated at length in this tarasul. The idea of a complete annihilation of the self in the context of divine revelation, such that no trace of the self remains, remains pivotal in the conception of prayer as well as the relation between Allah and man implicit in prayer.¹³ From this view, the obligatory concept of prayer is explicated in a way that is cognizant of the mystical dimensions of prayer, one in which the self as locus but also as a non-entity is foregrounded. This inward turn in an obligation or pillar, whose fundamental satisfaction is external, ritual-based, shows the completion of prayer in the Tausug setting.

13 Darwin Absari offers an illustrative analysis of exemplary Tausug orature, particularly *daman* and *tarasul*, as pithy statements of Sufi concepts as *kahambuuk* (union), *kamisla'* (dissolution), and *katunggal* (oneness) (2021, 193). His discussion sheds light on the local articulation, whether on the level of exegesis or metaphor, of these germinal concepts.

Bibliography

- Abdul Haq, Muhammad. 1984. "The Meaning and Significance of the Shahadah." *Islamic Studies* 23 (3): 171–87. www.jstor.org/stable/20847269
- Absari, Darwin J. 2021. *PagTuhan: The Tausug Spiritual Tradition*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- ‘Ali, ‘Abdullah Yusuf. 1983. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications.
- al-Jilani, Abd al-Qadir. 1993. *The Secret of the Secrets: Revelation of Islamic Sufism and Mysticism*. Malaysia: S. Abdul Majeed & Co.
- al-Ghazali, Abu Hamed. 2010. *Revival of Religion's Sciences (Ihya Ulum ad-din) Vol 1*. Translated by Muhammad Mahdi Al-Sharif. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah.
- al-Junayd. 1976. *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd*. Edited and translated by Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader. London, England: Luzac and Co.
- Chittick, William. 2021. "Worship." In *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, edited by Tim Winters, 218–36. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Corbin, Henry. 1964. "Mundus Imaginalis." *Cashiers Internationaux de Symbolisme* 6: 3–26. doi:10.5151/9788580392852-08.
- Fadiman, James and Robert Frager, eds. 1997. *Essential Sufism*. New Jersey: Castle Books.
- Katz, Marion Holmes. 2013. *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (translator). 1997. *Sahih Al-Bukhari*. Vol. 2. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Publishers and Distributors.

- Knysh, Alexander. 2005. "Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West." In *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, edited by Youssef M. Choueiri, 106–31. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Murata, Sachiko and William Chittick. 1994. *The Vision of Islam*. Paragon House, 1994.
- Padwick, Constance. *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer Manuals in Common Use*. 1961. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).
- Renard, John. 1996. *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Riddell, Peter. 2001. *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Tan, Samuel K. and Munap H. Hairulla. 2007. *Jawi Documentary Series No. 4: Basila Kitabs*. Quezon City: UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies.
- Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn. 1995. *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*. Point Reyes, California: Golden Sufi Center.

The UP CIDS

Discussion Paper Series

Discussion Papers feature preliminary researches that may be subject to further revisions and are circulated to elicit comments and suggestions for enrichment and refinement. They contain findings on issues that are aligned with the core agenda of the research programs under the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

THE PROGRAM

The **Islamic Studies Program (ISP)** seeks to advance the critical and strategic roles of Islam in nation-building. It is determined to lead the Filipino communities to know Islam deeper and, consequently, deal with the existing stereotypes against Muslims. The three-fold research component includes Hikma, the historical and Islamic knowledge for the modern age; Philippine Code of Muslim Personal Laws (PD 1083) and Islamic institutions in the Philippines, reviewing its implementation and addressing gaps and challenges; and the Moro story, presenting historical narratives on the Muslim Filipino and identifying intellectual sources of Philippine Islam.

Editorial Board

Rosalie Arcala Hall
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Janus Isaac V. Nolasco
DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Program Editors

■ EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING CLUSTER

Dina S. Ocampo
Lorina Y. Calingasan
EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

Fernando dC. Paragas
PROGRAM ON HIGHER EDUCATION
RESEARCH AND POLICY REFORM

Marie Therese Angeline P. Bustos
Kevin Carl P. Santos
ASSESSMENT, CURRICULUM, AND
TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH PROGRAM

Ebinezzer R. Florano
PROGRAM ON DATA SCIENCE FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

■ SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL STUDIES CLUSTER

Rogelio Alicor L. Panao
PROGRAM ON SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL CHANGE

Darwin J. Absari
ISLAMIC STUDIES PROGRAM

Herman Joseph S. Kraft
STRATEGIC STUDIES PROGRAM

Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran
Frances Antoinette C. Cruz
DECOLONIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

■ DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans
PROGRAM ON ESCAPING THE
MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP: CHAINS FOR CHANGE

Antoinette R. Raquiza
Monica Santos
POLITICAL ECONOMY PROGRAM

Eduardo C. Tadem
Ma. Simeona M. Martinez
PROGRAM ON
ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Leonila F. Dans
Jose Rafael A. Marfori
PROGRAM ON HEALTH
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

■ NEW PROGRAMS

Maria Angeles O. Catelo, PhD
FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

Weena S Gera, PhD
URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Benjamin M. Vallejo, Jr.
CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Rosalie B. Arcala Hall, Ph.D.
LOCAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES NETWORK

Editorial Staff

Lakan Uhay D. Alegre
SENIOR EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE

Jheimeel P. Valencia
COPYEDITOR

Kristen Jaye de Guzman
JUNIOR EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE

Mikaela Anna Cheska D. Orlino
Jose Ibarra C. Cunanan
LAYOUT ARTISTS

Get your policy papers published. Download open-access articles.

The *Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives* (PJPP), the annual peer-reviewed journal of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), welcomes submissions in the form of full-length policy-oriented manuscripts, book reviews, essays, and commentaries. The PJPP provides a multidisciplinary forum for examining contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political issues in the Philippines and elsewhere. Submissions are welcome year-around.

For more information, visit cids.up.edu.ph. All issues/articles of the PJPP can be downloaded for free.

Get news and the latest publications.

Join our mailing list: bit.ly/signup_cids to get our publications delivered straight to your inbox! Also, you'll receive news of upcoming webinars and other updates.

We need your feedback.

Have our publications been useful? Tell us what you think: bit.ly/dearcids.



**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Telephone (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268
(02) 8426-0955

Email cids@up.edu.ph
cidspublications@up.edu.ph

Website cids.up.edu.ph