

Martial Arts among the Bangsamoro Muslim: History, Tradition, Culture, and Religion

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Originality:95% • Grammar Check: 100% • Plagiarism: 5%



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ABSTRACT

In *Islām*, there are four fundamental factors of social development and change – personality, tradition, accident, and people. The *Qur'an* says: “Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves [with their souls]. (Q-13:11). Therefore, the researcher’s aim is assessing the integration of *Islāmic* values in the teaching of martial arts in the youth for them be good followers of *Islām* thru inculcation in their minds and their behavior the real sense of a true *Muslim*. Essentially, this study is descriptive, which aimed mainly to serve as an exposition on the Religion, Traditional Culture, and History of the *Muslims* in the Philippines and their implication relevance to martial arts. The various data collected through in-depth study, interview and observation showed that *Islām* prepares people to be a fruitful citizen in the society. It also aimed for the total development of man not only in the religious aspect. Thus, Martial arts play a vital role in *Islām* not just as a means of self-defense, but as

a system of ethics. Man and fighting are by nature intimately related; in fact, history shows that they are inseparable. Locally, the Bangsamoro has a very rich historical foundation in martial arts that is directly derivable from the roots of *Islāmic* propagation. And as man became civilized, hand-to-hand fighting also became specialized and humanized and, gradually. Thus, the term martial art is recognized today as a specialized field of knowledge which should be inculcated together with education for the total development of the new generations leading to a society imbued with rich morality.

Keywords — Martial Arts, History, Tradition, Culture, Religion, Total development of man, Morality.

INTRODUCTION

The history of martial arts is as old as the history of the human race. It is the history concerning not only of the whole strategy of war science but the history of the development of man's instinct for survival. Because ever since man has thought of protecting himself from the dangers around him, he has tried to find out the devices to make himself stronger and mightier.

Along with these centuries-old martial arts, history is that of *Islām*. The latter is not only a religion; it is a way of life. It is an all-embracing system of life that covers all aspects of human existence, including martial arts. *Islām* is not just spiritual, it calls for action. So the *Muslim* must implement *Allāh's* vicegerency on them on earth, but they cannot do it with just prayer and supplication. They must seek the way, method or manner by which that trusteeship of the earth to them by God [*Allāh*] can be implemented.

The Bangsamoro, in general, are dominantly [if not natural] martial artist people because their religion and culture, even if not intended, have martial arts functions and values; in fact, their religion exhorts them to learn the martial arts, and most of their traditional lifeways, games, music, dances, some beliefs, and practices would enhance if not develop a martial capacity. Moreover, while resisting foreign domination for more than three centuries, they have acquired strong martial tradition from the best martial arts/civilized fighting school ever, the school of experience. (Alilaya, 1973)

To clarify this concept, the life of the Prophet *Muhammad* [peace and blessings be upon him] is a very good proof. He was born an orphan. He was a portrait of hardship, but the rigors of life only molded him into a strong and

consummate person. He was so trustworthy that even the people who hated him to the bone did not dare call him a liar. He was so mighty that he was the complete master of himself. *Muhammad* was the paramount exemplar of civilized or humanized fighting. He demonstrated throughout his life the perfect fusion of love, composure, and tranquility of mind while fighting; he was arguably the best embodiment of an ideal frame of mind in the oriental martial arts. (An-Nadawi, 1993).

The success of *Muhammad* was the triumph of righteousness. His formula for reform, his maxim for justice, his guiding star in life, and his might that would prevail over all odds were “*lā ilāha illa Allāh*” [there is no God but *Allāh*]. The Prophet had never gone to formal schooling, but he was a consummate embodiment of theory and action in his time, because he possessed the basics of all knowledge and skills: physical capability, mental and spiritual stability, sincerity, self-contentment, patience, concentration, good manners, and right conduct; he had eliminated the “sins of the heart” and the “vices of the tongue” (Al-Ghazzali, 1278 AH).

FRAMEWORK

A common saying in martial arts is trained both “internal and external.” The training involving the eyes, arms, feet, body, and stances refers to external training, while internal training involves the mind, heart, breathing, strength, and spirit. The latter is where the *Islāmic* teachings mainly find its relativity, while the history of *Islām* is to the former.

The following are the basic component of Martial Arts: discipline, stances, application, and weapons. Then, meditation can be used to develop focus, mental clarity and act as the basis for training. In many martial arts systems, meditation is considered to be an important component of basic training (Ahsan, 1971).

These learning areas of martial focus on the development of responsible and worthy home membership. It provides activities that emphasize the development of desirable work attitudes, basic work skills, and habits and the production of useful articles through learning situations relevant to everyday chores at home, school, and community.

Then in Islam, we have Islāmic education command not to forget to train the body, mind, and heart in pursuit of attaining even the least level of Prophet *Muhammad*'s embodiment of a developed human being. Thus, during the lifetime of Caliph *Umar ibn al-Khattāb* ordered that children be taught swimming, horse-riding, military arts. (El Kardani, 1989).

Finally, comes the Bangsamoro people who were mainly, if not all, subscribers of *Islām* having a very rich foundation in martial arts as evidenced by the historical records of their struggle.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to describe the Bangsamoro martial arts and to evaluate the ancient Bangsamoro traditional culture, with a view of examining and analyzing the validity of the integration of *Islāmic* Values in the teaching of martial arts, so that the young generation can learn the teachings of *Islām* not only through enrolling in the *Arabic* schools, but, instead, they can acquire the needed education in the Western-oriented medium of instruction as well. In essence, the purpose of this study was to look at different aspects of how we regard the mind and body relationship in the martial arts, how we develop this relationship, how we can feed back what we have learned into the training and our daily lives? Which are all for the objective of reaching total development of man.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive and/or qualitative research design. The method was used to gather necessary data including textual information, interview, and observation of various techniques used in martial arts. The purpose is (i) to gather data martial arts in Autonomous Region in *Muslim* Mindanao, (ii) to collect various techniques and tactics of the Bangsamoro martial arts, (iii) to get relevant information about history, tradition, culture, and religion of the Bangsamoro martial arts.

Research Site

Initially, this study began upon the queries which the World Organizer of Martial Arts (WOMA) regarding the Bangsamoro Martial Arts presented to the researcher. After accumulation of resources to answer them, he was offered to enroll in their educational institution and therein he realized this research thru the means of an online medium.

As broad as the topic seems, the study was heavily centered in Lanao del Sur of the Autonomous Region in *Muslim* Mindanao (ARMM). This for without a doubt is because ARMM is the home of the Bangsamoro which they defended valiantly and successfully from the years of invasion from different oppressors.

Participants

For being a *Muslim* scholar and a martial artist at the same time, the researcher was ecstatic for the fruition of this study as he was able to get in contact with the variety of styles in the field of self-defense.

Presently, there are about over 50 clubs in the whole province of Lanao del Sur who were part of the WOMA – ARMM. Although mainly dominated by Meranaos, the said organization has masters and disciples who are Maguindanaon, Tausug, Kalagan and other *Muslim* dominated tribes in the Philippines that were brought together and united under the name of Martial Arts and *Islām*.

Among the participants also were prominent *ulamā* and traditional leaders of the Bangsamoro people, specifically that of Meranaos. The researcher interacted with them for the enrichment of the historical texts found by the former in the books and journals of some of the libraries situated in Lanao del Sur.

Instrumentation

The data gathering for this study was done through an in-depth study and reading of available literature including internet references; utilizing existing records as the major tool, and direct personal interviews with selected informants who are expert in the problem.

The main instrument used was a set of questionnaires. Before the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents of the participating clubs, a letter of permission was sent. When permission was granted, a collection of data was started immediately. Letter of request for the instructors to patiently answer the questions was distributed along with the questionnaires. The researcher personally delivered the questionnaires to the respondents in their respective clubs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islām in the Philippines

The periods following the demise of the Prophet *Muhammad* led to the expansion of *Islām* to Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, *Islām* was spread throughout the world by three methods. First, is thru the *Muslim* traders in the course of their commerce; second, thru learned men who set out from India and *Arabia* to preach and deliver the message of *Islām*; and lastly, thru holy war. (Alilaya, 1973)

Islām first obtained a firm footing in Southeast Asia in North Sumatra via the trade route from India and the west. Being the main trading center of the area,

Malacca became the great stronghold of the faith, from where it spread out. *Islām* influence then intensified and reached as far as ancient Malaysia which in turn would expand in the yet to be found in the Philippines (Cesar, 1973).

In the early 14th century, the strength of the Sulu *sultānate* was enhanced by Malay leaders who helped the natives in developing politically, economically, and religiously. Rajah Baguinda is one of those Sumatran princes that came to the Philippines in 1390 together with a group of learned men in *Islām*.

Islām taught the natives the concept of monotheism. This enlightened them on the absolute oneness of God and emphasized to them the quality of an *Islāmic* Nation [*ummah*] described by the Holy *Qurʾān*, as a single nation [Q-21:92]. This concept refers to the fraternal bond binding them all as a single body emphasizing the importance of brotherhood kinship in *Islām*. Their adherence to the *Islāmic* faith changed the destiny of their fragmented society to a Single Nation, the *Islāmic Ummah*.

Before the arrival of foreign colonizers to the Philippines, *Muslims* enjoyed full independence as they already had a well-organized form of government, the *sultānate*, which attained various achievements at the height of its power. The *sultān* served as both political and religious leaders, protector and defender of *Islām*, following the *Islāmic* political system of no separation between church and state. As a religious leader, the *sultān* was called Shadow of God in the earth [*zil-lullahi fil ardh*], based on the *Islāmic* political point a view that man, particularly a leader, is the vicegerent of God.

Bangsamoro

Bangsamoro is literally translated into “moro nation.” Almost all Moro lives in Mindanao and other parts of the southern Philippines. For this, Mindanao is considered the homeland of the Moro people.

With the coming of the Spaniards and the American, the Bangsamoro declined. Both colonial powers incorporated the independent Bangsa *Islām* into the Philippines state, reducing the power of the *sultān*, especially during the American regime.

Muslims had successfully resisted the Spanish colonizers, especially in the Mindanao region, but it cost them a lot. Those natives who settled in Luzon and Visayas fell to the hands of the Spaniards after few attempts of resistance; the *Muslim* continued to defend their Nation, People, and Religion (Cesar, 1973).

Spain made use of different propaganda to win the war and name-calling is one of them. The *Muslims* of Mindanao were branded with the name Moros,

which is primarily negative. They were used synonymously with terms such as pirates, barbarians, juramentados, and others.

However, *Muslims* in the Philippines have used since then the term Moro as the rallying point for the unification of the different native communities that adheres to the teachings of *Islām*. Using the important principle of brotherhood in *Islām*, those different tribes were consolidated into one body or nation that would amplify their strength and force against any entity that tries to put them under foreign sovereignty.

Starting from the Spanish colonization up until the American regime even to this very moment, Moros have remained faithful to *Islām*. When there is imminent danger of foreign invasion, the *Muslims* resorts to *Jihād* to defend their faith. This deepening *Islāmic* awareness has become the mobilizing factor that fuses the different Moro tribes into a single nation as part of the *Islāmic* universal concept of *Ummah Islāmiyyah*.

The right to self-determination is the right of peoples everywhere to determine their political status freely and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development freely. The right to self-determination has political, economic, social and cultural aspects. For the right to be fully effective, the realization of the political, economic, social and cultural sovereignty of peoples is crucial. Self-determination is a continuing process where people continue to make choices to achieve human security and to fulfill human needs. (Lingga, 2007)

As early as the middle part of the 15th century, the Bangsamoro people are already experienced in statehood and governance. There were already states and governments having diplomatic and trade relations with other countries like China in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and the islands of Basilan and Palawan by the time the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the Philippines, the *Muslims* of Mindanao, had already established their own.

This goes to show that *Islām* stands on record as the first political institution, the first institutional religion, the first educational system and the first civilization in the Philippines and that its economy was far advanced than those of the other indigenous communities. But before the Bangsamoro could fully grow into full nation-statehood, a series of foreign colonial interventions came their way.

The Bangsamoro region is what is known popularly as the home of the *Muslim* Filipinos. This land includes the provinces of Basilan, Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Palawan, Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay. The cities of Cotabato, Dapitan, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan,

Marawi, Pagadian, Isabela, Puerto Princesa, and Zamboanga are also included in part.

The Martial Arts

The word martial means “to do with war” and martial arts are ways of fighting and training to fight. Some of the first martial arts were designed to kill or harm opponents. Others were invented to help people defend themselves from attackers. This is called self-defense.

Man and fighting are by nature intimately related; in fact, history shows that they are inseparable. Scholars in martial arts have advanced that hand-to-hand fighting is as old as the human species, and its early form was crude and savage. But as man became civilized, hand-to-hand fighting also became specialized and humanized and, gradually, more sophisticated and involved into what is now known as the “martial arts.” With advancement in civilization, man has devised ways and means to facilitate his activities, invented tools to make work easier and developed more advanced skills in barehand fighting and weaponry. Thus, in the modern world, the term martial art is used to mean civilized special skills in barehand fighting and/or weaponry.

The martial art is one of the products of civilization. Thus, the martial arts is a “beautiful” way of fighting; it is civilized fighting; a harmonious blending of scientific or highly effective fighting skills with good manners and right conduct, through a civilized [philosophical, religious, ideological] martial way (Alilaya, 1973). The martial arts, therefore, are inseparable from the values of discipline, willpower, humility, cleanliness, and sincerity. In their highest forms, the martial arts involve love, composure, and tranquility of mind while in the state of fighting. The martial arts is one of the manifestations of the degree of physical and spiritual refinement a person has attained.

Initially, after man had experienced the bitterness of fighting and wars or any event that involved violent struggle, the effort to tame or educate his natural tendency to fight could have been suppressive, as perhaps exemplified by the Biblical commandment “Thou shall not kill,” revealed unto Prophet Moses more than three thousand years ago. But when humanity realized that it was impractical to altogether eliminate the instinct of man to fight, it approved of the tendency of individuals or group of individuals to prepare for situations that called for attack and defense. Thus the beginning of the science of civilized warfare or military arts.

As humanity advanced in time and developed in civilization, religious and philosophical concepts were eventually adopted as controlling parameters of the

martial psyche of man. Oriental scholars agree that the earliest of these controls was set [accidentally] by the Indian Buddhist monk named Boddhidharma.

In the Middle East, we can single out a few: Moses, David, Solomon, and even the famous warriors trained by the *Bani Makhzūm* of the *Quraysh 'Arabs*, the Zoroastrianism devoted rulers of the Sassanids in Persia. In the seventh century A.D., the *Muslims* believe that the best among the best embodiments of spiritual stability, warfare, religiosity, and leadership has appeared in the person of Prophet *Muhammad* (This belief is further strengthened by Michael Hart's The One Hundred, a list of one Hundred most influential people in the history of mankind; *Muhammad* ranked first.). But almost six centuries after the first patriarch of Buddhism, Shakyamuni Buddha, and about five centuries before Buddhism's 28th patriarch, Boddhidharma, the paramount example of "non-violent resistance" [probably, the most ideal form of civilized or humanized fighting –compare this also with *aikido's* "non-violent" approaches to combat] was seen in the person of Jesus. Boddhidharma, Jesus, *Muhammad*, and virtually all the prominent martial artists in the Orient, have a common denominator [although they differ in degrees]: religiosity, spiritual stability, and physical capability. (Alilaya, 1973)

In a similar light, the obligatory five times daily [*ṣalāt*] ritual prayer help stimulate the soul and the body which greatly aids in trying to achieve such profound wisdom which clearly emphasized by perfecting and conditioning the body and obtaining a high level of fitness. Then follows the ritual duty of pilgrimage [*hajj*], demanding a great deal of physical and mental effort. Indeed, *Islām* mandates harmony of "A sound mind in the sound body."

Bangsamoro martial arts refers to the meeting of ancient and newer fighting methods devised in the Philippines, the most popular of which is known as Arnis. This was initially realized as the Filipino people developed battle skills being a direct result of their ever-changing circumstances. They learned out of necessity how to prioritize, allocate and utilize common resources in combative situations. They have been heavily influenced by the phenomenon of the cultural and linguistic mixture. Some of the specific mechanisms responsible for this are wars, political and social systems, technology, trade, and practicality. The native tribes focused on combat with sticks, knives, swords, spears, and bows and arrows, while practicing unarmed combat forms.

Originally, kuntaw traces its roots back 1500 years to ancient China. Trading ships between the Philippines and Indonesia are presumed to have introduced Chinese Kun-Tao, kun means fist and tao: a way of; thus kuntao signifies a way of

the Fist. The Muslims adopted it and made Kuntaw a secretive art taught to the Bangsamoro people and thus kuntaw can be traced back to the southern Filipino island of Mindanao which is predominantly Muslim. *Kuntaw* has incorporated techniques from *silat*, and some forms even changed their name from *kuntaw* to *silat*. Styles which combine both *kuntaw* and *silat* together are sometimes called *kuntaw silat*. (Alilaya, 1973)

In the 15th century, *silat* was used extensively to keep treason and colonialism at bay. The one who practices *silat* begins and ends his practice by submitting to *Allāh*. He worships and fears none but *Allāh* the Most Glorious One. Therefore, the pesilat has never been the aggressor but merely a defender. As the pesilat matures, his exercises are no longer physical but more spiritual and metaphysical. And ultimately, the Bangsamoro of the Southern Philippines was in fact never subjugated by the Spaniards and the Americans using only with their bladed tools out of scarce and more natural resources.

Martial arts originating from the Far East is impressed with deep mystical and spiritual foundations coupled with the doctrines and philosophical beliefs of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and *Islām*. *Islām* aroused the appetite of its followers to practice and excel in *Wu Shu* [military arts in Chinese], as a sacred practice. This is reflected in a famous *Islāmic* proverb; some consider it a saying of the Prophet *Muhammad*, inspiring *Muslims* to “Seek knowledge, even in China.”

During the “Battle of Trench” in 625 CE, the Prophet showed an example of how this principle is applied. He adopted a stratagem put forward by *Salmān al-Fārisi*, to defend *Madinah* by constructing a defensive trench surrounding the city. Such a plan was totally unknown to the *Arabs* but was commonly used by the Sasanids in Persia. (An-Nadawi, 1993)

In 651 CE during the Tang Dynasty, a delegation was sent to China by Caliph *‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān* [644-656 CE] from *Madinah*, led by *Sā‘d ibn Abī Waqqās*, from *Banī Zuhrah*, the clan of *Āminah* daughter of *Wahb*, mother of the Prophet *Muhammad*, who arrived at the port of Guangzhai to deliver the peaceful message of *Islām*. *Sā‘d* was one of the most courageous warriors and commanders. He was known as one of the best archers in history. Accordingly, he never missed his target. Before *Sā‘d* journeyed to China, he had engaged in many battles along with many prominent Companions like *Alī bin Abī Tālib*, a skilfull swordsman, who was honored with a famous sabre “*Dzul Fiqr*,” by the Prophet who exclaimed: “No sword can match *Dzul Fiqr*, and no young warrior can compare to *Alī*. *Alī* was honored with the title “*Asad Allāh*” [The Lion of God] for demonstrating exceptional bravery in his courageous fighting

skills and his spectacular swordsmanship. His mastery in swordsmanship gained him popularity and a tremendous influence on the *Muslim Ummah* [nation]. Starting from Morocco to North-Western China, early *Muslims* practiced what was called as the art of stick fighting of *Ali* or known more popularly as “*Ali*’s stick.” (Khamouch, 2007).

A frame of mind involved in martial arts is known with various names: *wu-shin* [“nothingness” or “no-mind-ness”] in Chinese *kung fu* [gung fu]; “fighting without fighting” in *jeet-kune-do*; “*Prajna Immovable*” in *Japanese swordsmanship*; “mind like the moon reflected in still water” in *karate*; “love” or “harmony with the universal *ki* [life force]” in *aikido*; “*lā hawla wa lā quwwata illa billāh*” [there is no Way and Power except *Allāh*’s] in *Islāmic silat*, and may be known as “*daa kandowadowa*” [literally, no hesitation] in the fighting psychology of the *Muslims* in the Philippines. It requires the absence of fear, anger, hatred, jealousy, lust, envy, covetousness, pride [arrogance], and vanity in one who is fighting. (Alilaya, 1973)

A classic example in *Islāmic* history of one whose appropriate frame of mind has spilled out in combat. During a lull in the Battle of *Uhud* [March 22, 625], there was one *Quraysh* who has been harboring a pledge to kill the Prophet because of the humiliation of his son in the Battle of *Badr*, one year and a week earlier. The man, named *Ubayy bin Khalaf*, mounted on a large and powerful horse, rushed out to challenge the Prophet for single combat.

“*Ubayy Ibn Khalaf* was approaching the Prophet on his horse. He saw the Companions move out of the way. He saw the Prophet waiting for him, and grudgingly he admired the man he had seen out to kill. The Prophet was wearing two coats of mail. He wore a chain helmet, the side-flaps of which covered his cheeks. His sword rested in its sheath, tucked into a leather belt, and in his right hand, he held his spear. *Ubayy* noticed the powerful, broad strong enough to break a spear in two. The Prophet looked at magnificent sight.” (Ibn Hisham, 1995)

The fact that the Prophet *Muhammad* was one of the strongest *Muslims* during his time was not popularly known even among *Muslims*. He was only mentioned always as being the mastermind, but there were very little records shows his valor and strength in the field of battle. His great strength together with the fact of his being divinely selected makes him a formidable opponent he would probe to anybody. However, as *Ubayy* was had just killed a *Muslim*, his spirits were high and he was undaunted by the Prophet’s presence. (Akram, 2009)

“As *Ubayy* reached the Prophet, he pulled up his horse. He was in no hurry. Not for a moment doubting that *Muhammad* would await his attack, he took

his own time overdrawing his sword. And then suddenly it was too late, for the Prophet raised his spear and struck at the upper part of *Ubayy's* chest. *Ubayy* tried to duck but was not quick enough. The spear struck him on the right shoulder, near the base of the neck. It was mind wound but *Ubayy* fell off his horse, and in the fall broke a rib. Before the Prophet could strike again, *Ubayy* had risen and turned tail, running screaming towards his comrades. They stopped him and asked how he had fared, to which *Ubayy* replied in a trembling voice, "By *Allāb*, *Muhammad* has killed me." (Ibn Hisham, 1995)

The *lā hawla wa lā Quwwata illa bilLāb* ["there is no Way and Power except *Allāb's*], is a couple of steps higher than "no-mind-ness" or full determination. It is "oneness" [in the sense of being vicegerent] with the Maker/Source of all Material and Spiritual existence; it uses *ihklās* [intuitive sincerity/innocence/non-dualism/way of nature [*sunnatullah*]] - "no-mind-ness" and focused thought are just portions of these- to attain a level where one can spontaneously actualize or "physically manifest" the power of *Allāb*. In effect, an attacker or an adversary actually goes against nature [and who could stand against nature?] or against the Maker/Source of nature, thus causing either gradual or instant destruction to himself. (Alilaya, 1973)

Every human being needs martial arts or civilized fighting for this reason: Chances to be attacked and the necessity threat for defense are indelible from worldly existence. Thus to neglect the cultivation of martial arts [or civilized fighting] is either to remain abject to violent oppression, injustice, and chaos or follow the ways of barbarism-the excessive and unjustified use of force-in defending oneself. In either case, life becomes miserable.

The Moro Wars

For more than three centuries of resistance to foreign intruders, the *Muslims* in the Philippines have accumulated rich traditions in martial. Since 1521 when Lapu-lapu [who is believed to be a *Muslim*] brought Ferdinand Magellan his knees in the battle of Limasawa, through the carnage of Lamitan, Balangingi Island, Marawi, Bud Dajo, Bud Bagsak, up to the present century, the *Muslims* in the Philippines have been fighting the metamorphic forces of colonialism and imperialism. Thus they have acquired legacy in fighting from the best martial art school throughout history, the school of experience. But unlike the barbarians who have developed crude and savage ways of fighting from their harsh ecology and unrefined ways, the *Muslims* in the Philippines have been refined by their *Islāmic* culture. (Alilaya, 1973)

The numerous expeditions of the Spaniards supported by the conquered natives to the *Muslim* lands in the Philippines, the frequent raids of the *Muslims* on places already controlled by the Spaniards and the *Muslims* from about the coming of Legaspi in 1565 to the last days of Spanish dominations in the Philippines, have been lumped together by some historian under the heading “Moro Wars.” The Moro Wars, in addition to their being deadly and devastating, were encounters of agility, power, endurance, timing, courage, determination, patience, organization and skills in hand-to-hand combat. In these contests for supremacy, both the Spaniards and the *Muslims* did really win and lose. The *Muslims* were able to preserve their way of life at the expense of peace and lagging behind in virtually all aspects of modern development; while the Spaniards were able to demonstrate their “crusading spirit” at the expense of spoiling their gains in the Visayas and Luzon.

Moro Fighting and the Martial Arts

It is a historical fact that the *Muslims* were influenced by the culture of the great Hindu-Malayan empires of Sri Vijayan [7th-14th century A.D.] and Madjapahit [13th- 16th century A.D.] Sri Vijayan and Madjapahit Malays according to reports were skilled warriors, farmers, and seamen. (Inosanto, 1982) The Ternatans and Borneans, who may have already received training in martial art of *silat* which is believed to be developed in the state of Malacca as early as the eleventh century A.D. (Mustaffa, Ahmad, & Wong 1978), were closely related to the royal families of Sulu and Maguindanao, and were having strong trade and cultural interactions long before the coming of the Spaniards to the Philippines. The Spaniards could be threatened by the martial arts sophistications of the *Muslims* in the Philippines from their interactions with the Ternatans; in fact, one of the reasons of the Spaniards’ mercenary expedition to Maguindanao in 1521 was to drive away the Ternatans who have knowledge in warfare (Majul, 1973) which, by this time, was virtually in the form of martial arts. By implication, the Chinese who have studied and developed their martial arts for more than 4,000 years (*Ming and Kung, 1985*) particularly in the art of chi kung [internal kung fu], must have a significant contribution to the fighting, the capacity of the *Muslims*. It was learned from Chinese sources that as early as the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the Suluans and the Chinese were already having a progressive trade. Often times, the Suluans would detain some Chinese, for fear of not coming back to trade again, until the latter’s trading vessels would call back to Sulu (*Majul, 1973*). Chances were high that these detained Chinese belong

to the elite, and hence, would be possessed with training in martial arts as it is an integral part of their norms. Moreover, there was an exodus of Chinese to the Philippine islands, possibly via Sulu during the height of the Manchu invasion of China in the 12th century A.D. (Inosanto, 1982).

Perhaps, more important than their learning from other peoples who have a rich heritage in martial arts was their accumulated practical learning synthesized from centuries of fighting invaders. Along with this belief, the author propounds that the martial skill of the *Muslims* was continuously honed by their resistance to foreign invaders while they hold fast to their way of life and their religion of *Islām*.

Spirituality and Fighting

Among the Oriental martial artists, it is an undisputed fact that the highest stage in the cultivation of fighting skill could only be attained after the physical techniques are fused with spirituality. This could not be surprising to those who have some degree of intimacy with the martial arts, because fighting cannot be really effectively performed with mere muscles; it should have appropriate courage and concentration, things which can be only obtained in abundance, from most religions and/or philosophical concepts. In Southeast Asia, for example, it has been an open secret that accomplished practitioners and masters Moro, Malaysian, and Indonesian martial arts [*silat*] are deeply spiritual. (Inosanto, 1982)

But this is not exclusive to the Orientals. A glean from the religious history of the Middle East can show that the fusion of spirituality, fighting, and extraordinary endurance was attained by the Semitic prophets: Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, and *Muhammad*. A reading on the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and *Islām* will inform us of the defeat of the Pharaoh and his mighty army by Prophet Moses and the Israelites, the slaying of Goliath by David, the superhuman endurance of Jesus during his death march to Calvary, the decisive defeat of the more than one thousand-man well-equipped army of the *Quraysh Arabs* in the “Battle of *Badr*” by just a little over three hundred ill-equipped *Muslims*. But perhaps, the most extraordinary example of the fusion between spirituality and fighting was demonstrated by Prophet David when ‘he slew the Syrians of seven thousand men which fought in chariots and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host’... Divine intervention was a determining factor of this event, but the point is that these people had demonstrated uncommon courage, determination and psycho-physical stability which were undoubtedly derived from their being religious. (Alilaya, 1973)

The *Muslims*, aside from their Prophet *Muhammad*, had also known other fine embodiments of fighting and spirituality, a few of them: *Hamzah*, the “Lion of *Allāh*”; *Alī*, *‘Umar*, *Ibn Al’ās*, *Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd*, the “Sword of *Allāh*” and *Salāhuddin al-Ayyobī* [Saladdin], the conqueror of the Mongols.

Self-control is the best measure of spirituality in martial arts, and the *Muslims* believe that an exemplar of this was demonstrated by Prophet *Muhammad* when the about 10,000 strong *Muslim* armies triumphantly entered *Makkah* in the 10th of *Ramadhān* in the 8th year of *Hijrah*. (An-Nadawi, 1993) In spite the strength at his disposal, he freely forgave the *Makkans*; the people who had caused untold miseries on him and the early *Muslims*. This was also described by Lyn-Pole in this manner; “The day of *Muhammad*’s greatest triumph was also his grandest victory over himself.”

In the “Middle Ages,” Christian Europe has also known the fine embodiments of physical skill in combat and the psychological stability derived from the religion of Christianity through the knights of the crusades.

In the Orient, it is believed that the Kshatriya [warrior class] of India, the shaolin warrior monks of China and the “night warriors” of medieval Japan [not the ones we see in the movies], the hwarang do of the Silla dynasty in Korea, and the elite warriors of the Hindu-Malayan empire of Sri-Vijaya were also “spiritualized.” In the Southern Philippines, during the later half of the nineteenth century [decline of the *sulṭānates*], another fine embodiment of religion and physical skills in combat had emerged; the early *sabīrs*.

Distinct from all other world religions, *Islām* exhorts its believer to learn and cultivate the martial arts to be used only in the Way of *Allāh* [*jihād fi sabilillāh*]. The religion itself is inseparable from martial arts; most of its religious rituals, even if not intended, have martial art functions and values. These functions and values, largely in terms of mental and psychological stability.

When *Islām* reached the Philippines, it brought with it an indelible agent of purification and liberation. The paganistic culture of the people which came into contact with *Islām* was educated and, gradually, its *harām* [prohibited] aspects were eliminated and supplanted with *Islāmic* values. The long process of *Islāmization*, which was believed by scholars to have begun with the existence of the first *Muslim* settlement or community in Sulu sometime in the last quarter of the thirteenth century or even earlier [about two hundred ninety years before Miguel Lopez de Legaspi reached, in 1565, a part of the territory now claimed by the Philippine state], resulted in the physical, moral and spiritual transformation of the *Muslims* as an independent people in the *Ummah Islāmiyyah* [*Islāmic*

community] in the Malay world. (Majul, 1973) This event explains why they fought and died for their *Islāmic* ideology during the period of colonialism in their homeland.

Islām and the Martial Arts

The word '*Islām*' is derived from the *Arabic* root '*silm*' which means, among other things, peace, purity, submission to the Will of God and obedience to His Laws. (Abdalati, 1975) However, *Islām* is not only a religion but a way of life [*dīn*] built upon its principles. *Islām* is the "all-pervasive law which governs all that comprise the universe, which regulates all that is in the heavens and the earth, from the tiniest speck of dust to the magnificent galaxy" (Dimaro, 1989), it governs all aspects of human existence; politics, law, economics, the sciences, military actions and all other human endeavors, including martial arts.

Islām, the way of life of *Muslims* must be observed in all daily activities, ranging from the simplest personal purification to having an interrelationship with other people. Obedience to divine guidance is obligatory to every *Muslim* because it is the only valid basis of judging the value of human action. As a book of divine guidance, the *Qur'ān* was revealed as a criterion of right and wrong. And *Allāh* promises that whosoever follow His guidance, "*there shall be no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.*" (Q-3:4)

The *Islāmic* belief system is anchored on the belief that God is the Creator, sustainer and Sovereign Lord of the whole creation. Everything originates from God and everyone is responsible to Him. Man, being God's vicegerent [*khalifah*] on earth is accountable to all his actions. If he does well, he will be rewarded; if he does evil he will be meted the corresponding punishment. Among the meanings of what *Allāh* has said in the Holy *Qur'ān*: "*whose doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doeth evil an atom's weight will see it then.*" (Holy *Qur'ān*, 99:7/8) The Prophet has said in this manner: "*Every one of you is a guardian and everyone will be asked about his subjects.*" (Al-Bukhari, 1981)

Muslims who are true to their religion must be efficient workers for "*Allāh likes those who perform their duty into perfection*" as the Prophet said. In fact, it is the consensus of *Muslim* scholars that the proper performance of *Islāmic* rituals as prayer [*ṣalāt*] and fasting [*ṣaum*] is already training for discipline and efficiency.

Islāmic Prayer and Basic Principles of Martial Arts

Worship [*ibādāt*] is the essence of all *Islāmic* activities including learning the martial arts. Prayer in *Islām* is the chief of all worships because it is the best way of instilling a consciousness of *Allāh*.

The objective of martial arts is humanized ways of self-defense through a system of mental and physical training. For the *Muslim*, prayer should be the backbone of that training. However, unlike the hard school of martial art, and the strenuous movements in Western athletics, the self-defense training in *Islāmic* prayer is not apparent to one who is used to irreplaceable waste of energy and development of bodily organs. A *Muslim* who is sufficiently trained in the correct performance of *Islāmic* prayer provides protection against mental and physical stress. A *Muslim* considers it as the ultimate cure to all forms of human ailment. (Alilaya, 1973)

In the performance of *Islāmic* prayer, the physical actions are slow and not forceful. The movements are parallel to the movements in the soft school of martial arts where energy is conserved rather than wasted. Practitioners of the soft school concentrate on breathing flow, control and circulation of their internal body energy rather than giving attention to the activity of their muscles. Similarly, in spite of the movements, while praying, a *Muslim* can focus all his actions, thinking, and feeling to the presence of *Allāh*. At the time of fighting, tremendous energy of the *Muslim*, most probably accumulated and conserved in prayers and other religious devotions is released, proof, which explains why in the pious act of *jihād fī sabilillah*, they can conquer odds.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the important findings of the study, the researcher formulates the theory that, generally, the Bangsamoro are martial. This could be inspired by at least one of the following: their religion, their culture and traditional lifeways; their historical experiences; and, their legacy from other peoples who have a rich heritage in martial arts –the Chinese, Malays, and Indians. From this theory, three corollaries could be derived: One, in general, the psyche of the Bangsamoro is religiously and patriotically martial. This could probably help explain why their religion, history, and traditions must be heavily considered in dealing with them. Two, the resistance of the Bangsamoro which lasted for more than three centuries against the Spanish menace was also made possible by their capacity in fighting. Dr. Majul argued that political organization that was relatively more advanced than those of the other inhabitants of the country, and the natural tendency of the *Muslims* to resist any form of outside dominations, galvanized by their will to defend their way of life, were responsible for the people's remarkable resistance to more than three centuries of Spanish menace. While that leaves virtually no room

for argument, it must be further said that without the inherent capacity of the *Muslims* to fight, such a feat is not likely possible; any tendency to resist colonial domination in the era of colonialism also depends on the capacity to fight.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

This research was translated into Meranao dialect and debuted as a book in the Meranao vernacular. Its first copies were given to the public for free as customarily observed by the researcher. The researcher also intends to publish the book in the English language. The book format of this research was mainly a historical manuscript with diagrams serving as manual to those who want to learn the martial art style of the researcher, Taekwondo, in their own. This would be a huge contributor to the attainment of the totality of man's development.

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