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**Wilfredo Magno Torres III, ed.**

**Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict  
Management in Mindanao (Expanded ed.)**

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## **Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao** (Expanded ed.)

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University and the Asia Foundation, 2014. 451 pages.

The long quest for peace in Mindanao is complex, involving historical, political, economic, and personal layers of conflict. Among these is *rido*, a violent feud that involves entire clans warring against each other in a cycle of violence that could last decades. *Rido* cuts through all the layers of conflict, silent and simmering until the merest incident ignites a conflagration that could affect other forms of armed violence, such as an insurgent war, and trigger a bigger confrontation. The editor of this volume, Wilfredo Magno Torres III, an anthropologist working on conflict management, explains that the phenomenon of *rido*, “characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between families and kinship groups as well as between communities,” “frequently occurs in areas where government or a central authority is weak and in areas where there is a perceived lack of justice and security” (3). The book presents the results of a project conducted by the Asia Foundation to study the people’s perception of the *rido*, obtained through group discussions and community meetings. At the same time, it is a deeply moving and powerful account of the lives of those who have been affected by the protracted violence, and the honesty and vulnerability that emerge from the personal essays should compel other individuals and institutions, particularly politicians, to reexamine their own roles.

This book is an expanded edition of the 2007 publication, which is intended “to carry the story forward to the present.” The new material is found primarily in Part Two, a significant collection of essays that examine the dynamics of *rido* and propose steps toward its resolution. The editor’s own contributions are no less enlightening, both being a comprehensive overview of the *rido* phenomenon and of the various approaches that may work toward attaining peace. *Rido* remains a compelling work in the understanding of the deep social and cultural aspects of clan-based conflict. The epilogue on the mitigation of localized conflict is a particularly valuable guide to the complex path of understanding the interwoven conflicts in local political units. Clan wars are not confined to Muslim groups, although the highest

number of rido incidents has been recorded in the predominantly Muslim provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Lanao del Norte, and Sulu. Any serious effort by government or nongovernment entities to institute an action program for conflict resolution will be served by the insights and procedures offered in this book.

The sixteen essays are divided into two parts, the first being composed of studies on the concepts of rido, its characteristics, consequences, and mediation efforts. Qualitative data are presented on aspects of rido such as the municipalities with rido; the causes of rido by ethnic group; its consequences; the profiles of victims, assailants, and mediators; the number of rido cases by year; and various other information. The essays present their own insights on the cases discussed, but some are more detailed and contextualized than the others. For example, the inventory of existing rido in Lanao del Sur from 1994 to 2004 provides an excellent summary of Maranao sociopolitical conditions, identifying the process by which the people have come to live simultaneously under two types of political organizations, the modern state of the Philippine republic and the indigenous system of territorial and political communities known as *phangampong*. One can recognize this dichotomy in any of the ethnolinguistic Philippine groups, exhibiting a modern Westernized exterior yet deeply traditional within. The parallel systems can work together in resolving feuds, but they can also be a source of conflict as when land ownership systems differ: communal and ancestral as against private and titled, producing violent intra-clan disputes.

The second part presents the efforts of various groups and individuals to work for peace. The essays are more reflexive and offer more conceptual analyses of feuds, arms, and mediation. The first two essays in the second part could not have been written by more different writers, Gerard Rixhon, a Belgian-born naturalized Filipino, and Alber Husin, a natural-born Filipino Tausug. Both staunch peace advocates, Rixon and Husin bare in their essays a heartfelt anguish over their experiences of rido, which do not fail to involve the reader in their desire not only to comprehend the events but also to seek lasting solutions. It is particularly poignant at this time to read the incisive and powerful ethnographic study of Husin on the symbols of the *kalis*, a traditional bladed weapon, and the Armalite rifle in Tausug society, showing the deep-rooted cultural elements that antecede the entry of Islam in Sulu and the fusion of the Armalite rifle into Tausug identity. Husin, a Mindanao expert on conflict studies working for the education and development of

indigenous peoples, was felled by an assassin's bullet in 2013. Rixhon's essay provides very significant insights in his comparative study of the revenge patterns in Sulu and Corsica, France: in a society where people own little that is tangible outside of a simple home and a small piece of land, the family's intangible honor or self-respect counts as the most precious matter to defend even at the cost of one's life. Fierce loyalty to the family builds up due to a hostile environment, and personal identity is fused with the clan, so that honor and shame are felt by the entire family. Husin affirms this observation in his piece, showing that revenge may be exacted from any other kin and not necessarily from the actual assailant himself as it is the clan that feels the grief. Thus, conflicts are perpetuated and enlarged.

Rido persists in areas where the formal structure of the justice system is weak such that "when the state cannot provide any sense of security, the citizens feel compelled to provide for their own safety" (343). It is thus a form of "grassroots justice" or "private justice," the terms evoking the dangers these actions carry. The feuds are at first economic (e.g., land disputes, economic rivalry, animal rustling), then political and personal (e.g., crimes against honor and chastity, rivalry over a woman). Loose firearms proliferate, from high-powered rifles to heavy mortars. The large cache of firearms consisting of more than a thousand assault rifles and several heavy machine guns seized in areas near the Ampatuan mansion in Maguindanao indicates the extent of the ongoing illegal arms trade. The 2009 Maguindanao massacre that occurred after the publication of the book's first edition is an abject example of the "conflict cocktail" environment and could have been a relevant addition to this volume.

Significantly, customary laws and traditional methods remain despite the existence of Islamic and state mechanisms. The indigenous (pre-Islamic and pre-Christian) aspects of culture call for greater examination of the warrior concept in the development of the ethnic state. In the *Hudhud* chants of the Ifugao in northern Luzon, the hero Aliguyon heads out in a *reto* (challenge, a linguistic variant of "rido") against his father's enemy, but it is the latter's son Pumbakhayon who responds to the challenge. Both men, equally skilled and brave, engage in a drawn-out battle that takes a toll on their communities, the fields lying fallow because they could not be planted as the battle raged. The epic fight lasts three years, interrupted only by Aliguyon's mother calling out for them to eat. Eventually the conflict is settled by intermarriage between their families. Although *Hudhud* is an Ifugao epic,

it possesses the basic outline of a rido, its consequences, the woman's role, and the eventual settlement. The rido may be prompted by a desire to restore family honor, termed *bantug* or *bantugan* among the Maranao. In their epic, *Darangen*, the hero is named Bantugan, a brave warrior with unmatched fighting prowess, indicating a link between war and honor. These are signs of the yet unexplored cultural roots and connections of the indigenous warrior tradition to the perpetuation of rido in the present.

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