

Book Reviews

Reynaldo C. Ileto. *Magindanao, 1860-1888: The Career of Datu Utto of Buayan*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2004. 113 pages.

This is a tiny volume (seven short chapters and only 113 pages from Chapter 1) that tells a big story no other book has ever done. For those who can connect with Datu Utto, the title and the sub-title says a lot already.

It tells the story of Datu Utto of Buayan during the twenty-eight years of the stated period, and also provides a broad and detailed background of the Maguindanao world in the last half of the 19th century.

Maguindanao is an ethnic group, one of the 13 Islamized communities in Mindanao, Sulu Archipelago and Palawan. The Magindanawons inhabit the lower and upper reaches of the Pulangi and the identify themselves as the Magindanao of *sa ilud*, downstream of the Pulangi, and Magindanao *sa raya*, upstream. Pulangi, means big river among the Higaunon of Bukidnon where the great river begins and flows through the Magindanao world whose life is in many ways defined by it. The Pulangi has been called Rio Grande by the Spaniards and redundantly Rio Grande River by the Americans. Magindanao *sa ilud* and Magindanao *sa raya* is home to two powerful centers of power. In 1619, Sultan Dipatuan Kudarat united the two principalities into the Magindanao sultanate. Magindanao is also one of the two sultanates which resisted all Spanish attempts to vanquish the Muslims, the other was Sulu.

In the second half of the 19th century, leadership of Magindanao *sa ilud* was extremely weak and the Spaniards were exploiting this weakness to the hilt, strengthening their presence both in *sa raya* and *sa ilud*. Belonging to the ruling family of Buayan, Datu Utto exploded into the limelight when he successfully fought the Spanish governor of Cotabato in 1864, thereby filling the leadership vacuum. In 1875, he signed a treaty with Spain whereby the Spaniards "recognized the independence of Utto's domains.. in return for non-harrassment of established Spanish positions and continued trade between *Sa ilud* and *Sa raya*." (p.77) For the next twenty years he obtained a relative peace for his people and a vibrant commercial relations with the outside. At the height of his power in the 1870s, he had united the

fragmented communities in the entire Pulangi valley, and he is reported to have four to five thousand slaves, one sure gauge of wealth and power in his world.

But that supremacy was not to last. In 1887 he lost a major battle to the Spaniards and on March 10, "Datu Utto sent his capitulation, signed by himself, Rajah Putri, and all the principal sultans and datus of Buayan. They acknowledged themselves as loyal and obedient subjects of the king of Spain, pledging henceforth not to use any but the Spanish flag." (p. 97) This was not the end of his career but towards the end of our volume, we are told that "bereft of wealth, expressed in terms of slaves, cash and firearms, the datu of Buayan could no longer attract a following. Nothing more is heard of him till his death around 1902." (p.109)

How good is the book? I can do no better than cite Datu Michael Mastura who wrote the foreword to the 1984 edition of the book. He traces his genealogical line to Datu Uttos' wife, Rajah Putri, and his own ancestors were direct participants in the events. Aware that Ileto has never been to Magindanao and based his account solely on the basis of archival and library sources, he said: "Even without this fieldwork, it is indeed a credit to his scholarship that Ileto has succeeded in reconstructing from research data a world that has as much fidelity to history as palpable reality." (p. xviii).

From my end, I regard this volume as the best ever account of the last half of the 19th century Magindanao history. If one wishes to grasp the present-day intensity of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's desire for self-determination, more than a century after Datu Utto, this book is a must read. ♦

Rudy B. Rodil

Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology



Rodolfo C. Severino. *Southeast Asia In Search of an ASEAN Community: Insights from the former ASEAN Secretary-General*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2006. 489 pages.

There appears to be an agreement among scholars and policy analysts that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is at the crossroads of its evolution. As the Association reaches its fourth decade of existence, Southeast Asian leaders have intensified their efforts to strengthen and institutionalize the regional grouping as evidenced by calls for greater community-building and swift adoption of a Charter. Without doubt, these calls for reforms, if realized, would substantially transform ASEAN and set the path for its future development. It is unfortunate, however, that while the political leaders are already talking about ASEAN's future, their respective constituencies remain largely unaware of the Association. It is in this light that the release of Rodolfo Severino's book is considered by many as a welcome development. Written by one of the foremost experts on ASEAN, the book is intended to facilitate better understanding and appreciation of the regional grouping. The author set this as its primary objective due to the fact that "there remains much misunderstanding about what ASEAN is and how it does things, what it has been meant to be and do, what it has done and what it has failed to do, what it can and cannot do, and the promise of what it could yet become and accomplish." By sharing his knowledge and insights as a former ASEAN Secretary-General (and as a former ASEAN Senior Official for the Philippines), Severino hopes to make his humble contribution in rectifying this misunderstanding, and in the process, encourage greater popular interest and involvement on ASEAN.

The book is divided into eight (8) chapters that provide in-depth descriptions of the most contentious and most timely issues confronting ASEAN. The author's attempt to highlight the interrelationships among these various issues, while consciously ensuring that each chapter can be read separately in accordance with the interest of the reader, is commendable and very helpful indeed. However, since the book is more descriptive than analytical, no set of arguments was explicitly forwarded, and no theoretical framework was used in examining the issues. The author essentially presents the facts, relying extensively on his knowledge of ASEAN documents and processes, and on interviews of key personalities (primarily government and former government officials and technocrats) involved. It must be noted,

however, that the author also occasionally presents his analyses of the issues, and these insights appear to be very valuable for those interested in how ASEAN really works. Coming from an insider with a long experience on ASEAN affairs, the author's examination of the issues reveals a wealth of information on the *realpolitik* within the regional grouping.

Severino starts with an examination of the nature and origins of the so-called "ASEAN Way." He argues that this preference of ASEAN for informality, loose arrangements, and consensus has been largely shaped by the sub-region's diversity, fragility, vulnerability and mutual suspicions and conflicts among Southeast Asian countries. In reaction to erroneous comparisons between ASEAN and European Union's institutions and processes, he correctly asserts that "Southeast Asia is not Western Europe" since there are significant differences "in the nature of the two regions, in the circumstances at the time of founding of their respective associations, and in the relationships among the founding states." He then assesses the fruits of "ASEAN Way", noting that this *modus operandi* was critical in the success of ASEAN in preserving peace and security and in fostering economic development in the sub-region. The author, however, recognizes that there is a pressing need to change some aspects of the "ASEAN Way" in order to prepare the Association for the challenges of an increasingly competitive world and make it more responsive to the demands of its people.

ASEAN, contrary to usual criticisms about it, has not been impervious to change. It has been continuously evolving for almost forty years, although definitely not in the same rate as other regional organizations in the world. When the circumstances demand for it, however, the regional grouping has shown that it can act decisively and swiftly. This can be best observed in ASEAN's response regarding the issue of membership expansion. The Association, for example, immediately reached out to Vietnam (and Laos) after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces from Cambodia and the political settlement that followed in its wake. Equally significant is ASEAN's decision to admit Myanmar, despite the strong opposition of some Western countries and the members of the media and civil society. According to Severino, the decision was due to "strategic" and "tactical" considerations. Strategically, embracing Myanmar into the fold lessens the leverage of China and India on the military state. Tactically, engaging Myanmar, rather than isolating it, was perceived by ASEAN as a much better solution to address

whatever problems that the country posed. Likewise, the decision to postpone Cambodia's admission until the settlement of its domestic political conflict shows that ASEAN can amend its rules according to the needs of the time. The author notes that two important observations can be drawn from the delay in Cambodia's membership: (1) it was the first time that ASEAN conditioned membership on the domestic situation of the prospective member; and (2) whether ASEAN's actions did not constitute interference in the country's internal affairs (although Cambodia was not yet an ASEAN member when the claimed "interference" occurred).

The issue of non-interference was more exhaustively discussed by Severino in the succeeding chapter. He begins the discussion by asserting that "(t)he doctrine of non-interference or, more precisely, the policy and practice of states committing themselves to refrain from interfering in one another's internal affairs has been around for a long time, long before ASEAN was born – or conceived." Indeed, non-interference has been the main principle governing the international system since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. The ASEAN Way, however, has been described primarily in terms of this principle, together with other widely accepted doctrines of inter-state relations like sovereignty and legal equality of states. While there are indeed some bases for ASEAN overemphasis on non-interference, the author contends that the principle is not adhered to and applied on dogmatic and ideological grounds. "It springs from a practical need to prevent external pressure from being exerted against the perceived national interest — or the interest of the regime", he says. More importantly, Severino stresses that ASEAN has intervened in some domestic circumstances that were perceived to be affecting the member-states and the grouping itself, such as in the 1986 EDSA Revolution in the Philippines, in the 1997 clashes between Prime Ministers Hun Sen and Ranariddh in Cambodia, among others. Citing more controversial issues such as the Asian financial crisis, the threat of haze and SARS, East Timor, the situation in Myanmar, and human rights in general, the author makes the reader rethink the utility of non-interference in this era when an increasing number of problems demand consolidated efforts to be solved.

As a matter of fact, the existence of "common problems" and the importance of "regional solidarity and cooperation" to address them have been the driving forces behind the establishment of ASEAN. One of the

main concerns that confronted the region at that time was the preservation of regional peace and security, although this was not explicitly stated in ASEAN's founding document. In the chapter on regional security, Severino asserts that "security has been and largely remains at the core of ASEAN's existence" and that "ASEAN Security Community has been ASEAN's central purpose from the beginning." He then presents the different security issues in the sub-region such as the Sabah dispute, Vietnam's incursion into Cambodia, the flow of Indochinese asylum-seekers, the skirmishes on the South China Sea, and international terrorism. Aside from this, he also describes the various instruments and mechanisms adopted by ASEAN to address these security issues, namely ZOPFAN, TAC, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN + 3, ASEAN-India, EAS, ADSOM, among others. While the author's discussion of these security issues, instruments and mechanisms are respectable enough, one cannot help but notice his tendency to downplay, if not totally ignore, the contributions of Track II in ASEAN affairs. In the case of ARF, for example, he only says that "ASEAN-ISIS...has also contributed to ARF thinking" (aside from CSCAP). This description, of course, is an understatement. It does not recognize that the ARF evolved from the proposal of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) in 1991 for ASEAN to use the PMG forum for political and security dialogues with the non-ASEAN countries in the region. The author's account of AFTA is much worse, since there was no mention at all of the role ASEAN-ISIS played in the formulation of the agreement.

AFTA is the key topic discussed by Severino in the chapter about the regional economy, although he also highlights the importance of freedom of trade in services/labor, coordination in customs procedures, harmonization of product standards, provision for regional transport facilities, stipulation of an open regime for passenger air services, and promotion and protection of investments. The author's most interesting insights, however, are on the stumbling blocks to regional economic integration. He cites three impediments to the goal of an integrated regional economy. First, he notes that "(r)egional economic integration seems to have become stuck in framework agreements, work programmes and master plans." These measures, while beneficial for integration, have not been put into effective operation due to ASEAN's lack of compliance and enforcement mechanisms. Second, the author points out the "lack of knowledge" about ASEAN's economic integration efforts, particularly AFTA. To make matters worse,

whatever is known about these efforts suffers from "lack of credibility." This is evidenced by the low utilization rate of tariff preferences under AFTA, the stagnant and even shrinking share of intra-ASEAN trade in ASEAN's total trade and the apparent irrelevance of AFTA investment decisions. Finally, "most ASEAN governments do not feel sufficient identification of the national interest with regional economic integration." This can be seen in the lack of enthusiasm to incorporate regional economic integration measures into national pieces of legislation, with tariff reductions serving as the only exception.

This lack of commitment to regional integration contrasts with ASEAN's vow to keep itself politically and economically open to the outside world. In the chapter "ASEAN and the World", Severino tackles the relationship of the regional grouping to the external powers, both individually and as a group. Specifically, he discusses the ASEAN + 3, the EAS, the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations, and the Association's linkages with China, India, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, United States, European Union and Canada. Most of the author's accounts in this chapter are descriptive and not very substantive and comprehensive. Nonetheless, the chapter answers the question with regard to the "stagnant and even shrinking" intra-ASEAN trade. It points out that "(u)ntil today, ASEAN member-countries' trade, investment, and other economic relationships have been largely with developed economies." It also correctly underscores the need for ASEAN to remain united in order to deal effectively with external powers, although it is unfortunate that the author did not push this point further. Moreover, the reader is also left wondering why APEC was conspicuously absent from the discussion.

In the next chapter, Severino goes back to the issue of ASEAN Community and asks the big question "Is it for real?" The author describes in great detail the contents of Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, or Bali Concord II, which intends to establish an ASEAN Community founded on closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing pillars namely political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation. He also discusses the Vientiane Action Plan (VAP), which he describes to be "breathtaking" because of the extremely short deadlines it provides for carrying out concrete measures to realize Bali Concord II. More importantly, the author raises some serious concerns about the Bali Concord II proposal.

One of which is ASEAN's lack of institutional capacity to implement community-building in a comprehensive manner due to bureaucratic turfs. He also observes that "ASEAN has seen too many instances of its leaders agreeing on far-sighted, even visionary decisions, which officials then fail to follow through and carry out in good time, although it is often those same officials who draw up and recommended the decisions in the first place." Finally, Severino also emphasizes the need for developing a sense of regional identity, building regional awareness, and fostering mutual understanding among ASEAN people as essential components in community-building.

Looking at future prospects of ASEAN, the author reiterates that the realization ASEAN community would be critical for the success of the regional grouping in the coming decades. He argues that forging a sense of regional identity and strengthening of regional institutions are equally important in order for ASEAN to remain relevant to the rapidly changing times. He states that "(i)nstitutional strengthening and intensifying a sense of identity with the region are mutually reinforcing and have to be simultaneously pursued." He ends with a very timely discussion of the ASEAN Charter, noting that the charter would place ASEAN on "a firm legal footing, define its institutions, and embody its values." Even as he remains committed to the importance of having a charter, he cautions that this legal document can only makes a difference if ASEAN member states substantially internalize its contents and genuinely believe that regionalism is beneficial for them.

Despite its limitations in terms of depth and omission of certain pertinent facts, *Southeast Asia in Search of an ASEAN Community* should be given enough credit for its clarity, comprehensiveness and revealing insights. The author's straightforward yet rigorous scholarship will appeal to all those interested in ASEAN, from a general reader to a specialist. Indeed, this piece of literature contributes much to understanding and analyzing the processes, dynamics and prospects of the regional association. It is therefore a must for all those who want to grasp the most important issues confronting ASEAN today and how these would impact on the regional grouping's effectiveness in the future. ♦

Celito F. Arlegue
Department of Political Science
University of the Philippines-Diliman

Torres III, Wilfredo Magno (ed.) 2007. *RIDO: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*. Makati City: The Asia Foundation. 348 pages.

Amidst the discussion regarding Philippine politics and society which centers mostly on scandals and bickerings in the government, this book arrives and gives us a new focus of study. Particular attention is given to clan feuding and revenge (popularly known as *rido*), although as mentioned in the Introduction, "this phenomenon has been documented in places such as the Balkans, Scotland and the Appalachian region of the United States, as well as in some Southeast Asian regions." *Rido* may also have some resemblance with the "revenge raids" and the inter-village warfare in the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon or with lowland clan feuds such as that between the Crisologos and the Singsons. It is interesting to note, however, that in Mindanao, local *rido* often triggers large-scale conflicts that eventually draw in the military and paramilitary forces, separatist groups, local bandits and other armed actors, and even civilians. This book gives us a picture of the complexity of such phenomenon and its potential capacity to blur the lines of conflict and the definition of justice in the communities.

In Chapter 1, Jamail Kamilian presents a record survey of 671 cases of feuding families in nine provinces in Mindanao, of which 389 are unresolved. These provinces are Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay. Through key informant interviews with congressmen down to the municipal level, military and police officials, and community leaders, it was able to show that Lanao del Norte and Sulu have the highest number of *rido* cases, while Sultan Kudarat has the lowest. It was not clear, however, when this survey was conducted but we can surmise that it was done sometime after the Asia Foundation made a household conflict survey in late 2002 and the Social Weather Station survey released in 2005. Kamilian also presented in tabular form the initial causes of conflict, the initial cases of *rido* in the Philippines, the ethnic affiliations of conflicting clans, institutions where people usually go for peaceful settlement of conflict, perceptions on *rido* management concepts, and responses to questions on the impact of *rido* in the socio-economic development of Mindanao.

Chapters 2 to 7 present the dynamics, understanding, responses and management of *rido* in Mindanao. Abhoud Syed Lingga interestingly points to the early conflicts among contending clans and how this escalates into *rido* due to the absence of an acceptable mediator who can control those who attempt to spoil the mediation process. Such respected mediators are usually political and religious leaders or kin who may have some knowledge on legal procedures, traditional justice system, settlement via blood money, Qur'anic verse, and taking an oath in order to make everyone accountable for their actions.

The strength in Moctar Mactuan's observation in Lanao del Sur (from 1994-2004) lies in showing the discrepancy in understanding the concept of revenge killing between that of the Philippine legal system and the Meranao. While it is defined as murder or homicide in the former, it can be considered as an act of retributive justice in the latter. Matuan recommends a transformation in the concept of Meranao *maratabat* (equated by many writers as "pride, honor, and self-esteem") from mere "saving face" into a protection of one's dignity or status which encompass other aspects of social living (Matuan in Torres III, 2007: 95).

Management of conflict is the common aspect of the discussion in Chapter 4 (by the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center and the Notre Dame University Research Center) and Chapter 7 (by Monalinda Doronila). Studies on celebrated cases of *rido* is further discussed by the United Youth for Peace and Development in Chapter 9. A comparative study on the Tausug and Corsican clan is given by Gerard Rixhon in Chapter 10.

The book offers a very interesting perspective in Jose Jowel Canuday's discussion of *rido* within the context of large-scale and small-scale community armed conflicts (in Chapter 8), particularly in five Central Mindanao areas; namely: Linantangan (in Mamasapano), Buliok (in Pagalungan), Maguindanao, Nalapaan and Gli-gli Pikit (in North Cotabato), and Lebpas (in President Roxas, North Cotabato). He talks about how the military resources of secessionist movements and of the government become entangled in the localized conflict. Such occurrences happen when: (1) conflicting armies capitalize on the already existing conflict; (2) the parties to localized conflict are able to exploit the military resources of both forces;

and (3) participants of localized conflicts are themselves part of the military resources of the government and the rebel.

Canuday elaborates on Hannah Arendt's conception of violence in the political realm as "a phenomenon in its own right" in her book *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology* (edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1969). Meaning to say, violence is not a mere predisposition of a particular group of people in a certain culture, but rather something that itself follows certain rules and meanings. Being a phenomenon, violence in the context of class feuding blurs the lines of loyalty among its participants. This offers the reader clarification as regards the difference between the MILF and the MNLF, and challenges our naïve assumption that all members of paramilitary forces like the CAFGU, SCAA, and the CVO, are always one with the AFP in supporting the national government.

Through Canuday's article, the book provides a bonus to all the readers interested on the subject of Mindanao, wars, and conflict dynamics and management. It displays a mark of graceful sensitivity because of its employment of a multilayered analysis which, indeed, touches on the different peculiarities of the issue of domination, accommodation, and resistance (which many other studies haphazardly generalize as a function of Mindanao's "violent culture".)

Canuday also views localized conflict as a form of "modern war" where the energies of passion is unleashed and eliminates the distinction between private and public domains, as well as the clear aim of the state as an actor. Modern war, as opposed to the "total war" defined by Karl von Clausewitz, does not really fit our conception of war where states as involved (as in World Wars) which is why it is often discounted as serious war. But "the structures and resources for warfare are effectively established at the level of the communities, building the condition for the interplay of community and large-scale armed conflicts, the small and the big wars" (Canuday in Torres III, 2007: 260).

Overall, this book's worth may be summarized in at least three points. First, it provides the experts and non-experts alike, Filipino students,

intellectuals/ scholars, as well as non-Filipinos, a different aspect of looking at Philippine politics and society. More than attracting the reader's attention away from the center of power in the national level, it provides a rich conversation and information as regards the peculiarities of the situation in the local level in Mindanao. Secondly, it gives us an insight on how *rido* affects and is affected by the various outlook even in the national and global level. The views on the dynamics of local dynastic struggles are further complicated by the outside patronage in terms of economics and even armed support. For one, it engenders an unfair stereotype regarding Muslim values and ideals. The issue is much more complicated.

The complex dialogue on *rido* in this book also includes an interesting insight on how extremists magnify it by tending to define Islam as incongruent with other faiths, so much so that Muslims who think otherwise are being purged of their "non-Islamic elements".

Third, as a product of numerous seminars, conferences, workshops and dialogues (among various individuals, institutions, and agencies in the public and private sectors), it serves as an expression for the quest for peace and prosperity in southern Philippines. The various recommendations on a unified effort to solve the problem, however, is being weakened by endemic graft and corruption. The impact of Western liberal democracy seen to provide more traditional power to local elites also tends to aggravate the situation by snatching from the community the enjoyment of the fruits of economic progress which could be a favorable foundation for peace and justice in the region. Among the implications related to this are the ignored weaknesses in disarmament and gun control, the continued sponsorship of violence by the local elites themselves, and the promotion of the idea that pride comes through the yielding of weapons.

Samuel K. Tan provides an insightful conclusion of the book. First, he affirms the recommendation in Chapter 6 regarding the imperative of recovering the ancestral domain to Muslim political jurisdiction and control especially since land is equated with their life, identity, culture, and survival. Currently, ancestral lands are being lost to modern subdivisions, commercial buildings, factories, public structures and multinational enterprises in the absence of equitable sharing of the benefits of growth and production. This

land dispute and economic inequality often precipitate the occurrence of *rido*. Because of economic problems, the community tends to search for outside economic support but this exposes them to adverse external interests, influences, and exploitation which do not really answer their basic needs. Second, he mentions that the aspects of *rido* depend on what external forces are involved. *Rido* may be justified as an acceptable way of asserting the traditions of Islam, as what Ustadz Abdulrajak Janjalani (founder of Abu Sayyaf) and other forms of radicalism would declare. It is, therefore, of paramount importance for any researcher "to give priority to the etiology of conflict" (Tan in Torres III, 2007: 329). Third, he identifies that population growth should be checked together with the launching of programs against graft and corruption, as well as for disarmament and gun control.

Finally, after stating that the end of *rido* lies in the program based on historico-political conditions, he puts forth the suggestion of establishing the two federal Muslim states – the Islamic State of Sulu (which includes Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan) and the Islamic State of Muslim Mindanao – because these two states reflect the inherent historical variation between the traditions in the Muslim South. While the former is rooted in the ancient Sultanate of Sulu, the latter is attached to the Sultanate of Maguindanao. Given such set up, the distinctness of the Bangsamoro society would be represented, adopting "the Qur'an as their Constitution, the Shari'ah as their legal system, and the Hadith and *sunna* as their complimentary source of guidance" (Tan in Torres III, 2007: 331) while maintaining nominal ties with Philippine sovereignty, currency and national security. ♦

Elmer L. Jover
College of Arts and Sciences
University of the Philippines - Visayas