

Kukum Kalilintad and the Council of Elders: Culturally Rooted Peacebuilding and Rido Settlement in a Former Conflict-Affected Municipality in Mindanao, Philippines

Cyrus E. Torreña, DPA, MNSA¹, Alan A. Maglantay, PhD²

¹1202nd Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion, 1202nd CDC, 12th RCDG, Reserve Command, Philippine Army

²College of Criminal Justice Education, Sultan Kudarat State University, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100601067>

Received: 24 June 2026; Accepted: 29 June 2026; Published: 11 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines how a former conflict-affected municipality in Mindanao, the Philippines, rebuilt peace through culturally rooted mechanisms. It is guided by three objectives: to identify the local actors and mechanisms through which clan conflict (rido) was settled in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, between 2019 and 2026; to examine how customary and faith-based authority enabled the reconciliation and reintegration of former conflict actors; and, to determine what the case contributes to scholarship on hybrid and locally grounded peacebuilding. Although research on the Mindanao conflict has documented how rido sustains everyday insecurity even where larger peace agreements hold, far less is known about how individual local government units actually settle such disputes on the ground. Using a historical case study design, the study draws on a focus group discussion with four municipal department heads, key informant interviews with business, Army, and police informants, and a life-history testimony from a former rebel turned public servant, comprising nine informants in total, triangulated against documentary sources and analyzed through reflexive thematic and historical narrative analysis. The findings show that security stabilization functioned only as an enabling condition, while the decisive work of peacebuilding was performed through rido settlement, a locally devised mechanism called Kukum Kalilintad, an active Council of Elders, the moral authority of the religious sector, and the culturally mediated reconciliation and reintegration of former conflict actors. This study argues that Kukum Kalilintad operates as a standing, first-instance settlement forum that fuses customary adat and agama authority with formal local-government structures, and therefore constitutes a distinctive model of hybrid peace infrastructure; it further argues that reintegration in Palimbang was achieved through community recognition rather than programmatic disarmament. The case extends the literature on the local turn and hybrid peacebuilding by showing how a single LGU can institutionalize customary justice without erasing it.

Keywords: Rido Settlement, Customary Justice, Hybrid Peacebuilding, Council Of Elders, Conflict Transformation, Bangsamoro, Mindanao

INTRODUCTION

Some places are remembered first by their wounds before they are recognized for their beauty. Palimbang, a coastal municipality in the province of Sultan Kudarat in the southern Philippines, has long been one of these places. For decades its name carried memories of armed conflict, displacement, clan feuding, political unrest, and institutional disruption. The most painful event associated with the municipality is the Malisbong Massacre of September 1974, a Martial Law-era atrocity in which at least 1,500 Moro residents of Barangay Malisbong were killed, and which received official recognition only decades later. In recent years, however, the municipality has begun to narrate itself differently, through the Maguindanaoan phrase *Manisan Ka Palimbang*, meaning Palimbang is beautiful. This paper is concerned not with that phrase as a slogan but with a prior and more demanding question: how, concretely, did a municipality so marked by violence settle the disputes that had kept it unsafe?

The literature on the Mindanao conflict offers a partial answer. It establishes that violence in the region is not reducible to Moro separatism or state-rebel confrontation, and that localized conflict, particularly rido or clan feuding, is a major and durable source of everyday insecurity. It further establishes that rido is resistant to purely military and legal responses, that it interacts with electoral rivalry and shadow economies, and that it continues to threaten peace even after the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. What this literature describes less often is the granular, municipal-level practice of settlement: the specific actors, mechanisms, and cultural authority through which a local government unit (LGU) actually brings a feud to rest and keeps it there.

This study addresses that gap by examining the culturally rooted peacebuilding mechanisms in Palimbang between 2019 and 2026. It is drawn from a larger qualitative historical case study of the municipality's transformation, but it isolates and develops a single dimension of that study: the local machinery of dispute settlement. The analysis foregrounds three mechanisms that recurred across the accounts of informants, namely the settlement of rido, a locally devised body called Kukum Kalilintad, and an active Council of Elders working alongside the religious sector. It also examines how these mechanisms enabled the reconciliation and reintegration of former conflict actors. The central argument is that peace in Palimbang was not principally a product of security operations or infrastructure, but of culturally legitimate conflict-resolution practices that were institutionalized within, rather than displaced by, the formal apparatus of local government.

The study is guided by one principal question and two subsidiary ones. The principal question asks how local leadership, security actors, barangay officials, elders, and community leaders restored peace and public trust in Palimbang. The subsidiary questions ask, first, what role customary and faith-based mechanisms played in settling rido and reintegrating former conflict actors, and second, what the Palimbang experience contributes to scholarly understandings of hybrid and locally grounded peacebuilding. By answering these questions, the study aims to move discussion of Palimbang beyond journalistic description and to situate its peacebuilding within the comparative literature on customary justice and the local turn in peace studies.

Conflict, Custom, and the Local Turn: A Review of Related Literature

Rido and localized violence in Mindanao

Rido is commonly defined as a form of feuding or clan conflict characterized by recurring hostilities between families, kinship groups, and communities, often expressed through retaliatory acts meant to avenge a perceived affront, injustice, or injury (Torres, 2007, 2014). This definition distinguishes rido from isolated criminal incidents: a feud is not a single act of revenge but a cycle of retaliation that may draw in families, clans, armed supporters, and at times local governance itself. Rido tends to occur where state authority is weak or where communities perceive a lack of justice and security, which makes it both a symptom and a cause of institutional fragility.

Rido does not stand apart from the wider armed conflict. Local feuds may be misread as insurgency-related incidents, while armed actors may be drawn into clan disputes (Torres, 2014). The Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System has shown that violent conflict in the region cannot be reduced to rebellion alone, identifying political violence, shadow economies, resource disputes, and identity-based violence such as rido as distinct but interacting drivers (International Alert, 2014). Political rivalry is repeatedly identified as one of the strongest triggers of rido, becoming more dangerous when fused with maratabat, the cultural value attached to honor, pride, and family status (Orozco, 2022). The consequences are intergenerational, encompassing grief, disrupted schooling, displacement, and a heightened disposition toward retaliation among the young (Orozco, 2022). Recent analysis confirms that rido continues to threaten political stability in the Bangsamoro despite formal autonomy, complicating elections, decommissioning, and peacebuilding (Buonaventura, 2025).

Customary and faith-based dispute resolution in Muslim Mindanao

Because rido is rooted in honor, kinship, and locally meaningful conceptions of justice, scholars and practitioners have argued that its resolution cannot rely on formal law alone. Communities in Muslim Mindanao have long relied on traditional leaders, councils of elders, Shari'ah courts, and Indigenous practices to settle disputes

(Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2013). In Maguindanaon communities, Datus and Councils of Elders occupy a central place in settlement because they carry social prestige, customary authority, and moral legitimacy; the Walay na Kukuman, or Council of Elders, functions as a traditional legal body guided by adat, agama, the Qur'an, and Hadith (Datumanong, 2013). Islamic conflict-resolution methods and Shari'ah courts contribute culturally and religiously appropriate avenues for Muslim communities (Pigkaulan, 2013), and traditional settlement is often perceived as more accessible, affordable, and convenient than formal mechanisms (Makalingkang, 2013). Indigenous T'duray practices in Upi similarly demonstrate that customary systems are living, not residual (Uka-Lingga, 2013).

The religious dimension of these mechanisms is significant. Religion can be ambivalent, capable of justifying violence yet also serving as a powerful resource for reconciliation through moral teaching, mediation, and the rebuilding of trust (Appleby, 2000). Conflict resolution that takes culture and religion seriously can draw on values of forgiveness, justice, and the restoration of relationships, provided these are engaged substantively rather than superficially (Abu-Nimer, 2001). Faith-based actors may be effective mediators precisely because they possess legitimacy and access where formal institutions are distrusted (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). In the Philippine setting, religion-based civil society organizations and grassroots interfaith movements have contributed to mitigating conflict and building coexistence among Muslim, Christian, and Indigenous communities (Garcia et al., 2024; Corpuz, 2025).

Conflict transformation, positive peace, and the local turn

The study is framed by four interlocking perspectives. Lederach's (1995, 1997) theory of conflict transformation holds that peacebuilding is not the mere ending of violence but the long-term rebuilding of relationships, structures, and patterns that sustain conflict, and that it must be grounded in the social and cultural resources of the community rather than imposed from outside. Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative peace, the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, the presence of justice, cooperation, and conditions for living with dignity, cautions against reading the silencing of guns as the achievement of peace. The local turn in peace studies gives analytic weight to local actors, local agency, and local understandings of peace, arguing that interventions become more durable when communities define their own needs (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Closely related is the concept of hybridity, in which sustainable order emerges from the interaction of customary and formal institutions rather than the replacement of one by the other (Mac Ginty, 2011).

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the resolution of rido should be examined not as a technical security task but as a relational, cultural, and institutional process. They also imply that the most analytically interesting cases will be those in which customary authority and formal governance are combined. It is precisely such a combination that the Palimbang case presents.

METHODS

Research design and locale

The study employed a qualitative historical case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). A case study is appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand a bounded phenomenon in depth using multiple sources of evidence, and a historical orientation was adopted because the analysis traces a process across time, from the remembered violence of the Martial Law period to the settlement practices of 2019 to 2026. The bounded case is the Municipality of Palimbang, a predominantly Muslim, tri-people municipality where Muslim, Indigenous Peoples, and Christian communities coexist. Palimbang was selected because it offers an analytically rich instance of a former conflict-affected LGU that developed its own conflict-settlement machinery.

Participants and data sources

Participants were chosen through purposive, criterion-based sampling. Three criteria guided selection: direct

knowledge of, or lived experience with, the municipality's conflict history; a role in its governance, security, economic, or peacebuilding life during the period under study; and willingness to give informed consent for a study touching on sensitive matters. Applying these criteria yielded nine human informants. Four were municipal department heads who took part in a focus group discussion (FGD) and held institutional knowledge of governance and peace-and-order initiatives; one was a business-sector representative able to speak to safety, mobility, and economic confidence; two were Philippine Army informants familiar with the area's conflict and stabilization; one was a Philippine National Police (PNP) or Municipal Engaged Special Police Operations (MESPO) informant; and one was a former rebel and public servant, referred to here by the pseudonym Kanda, selected for a life-history interview because her trajectory connected historical violence, displacement, reintegration, and reconciliation. Sampling was guided by informational sufficiency rather than statistical representativeness, consistent with the case study design. Documentary sources, including accomplishment and award records, were treated as material for triangulation rather than as participant data.

Table 1 Sources of Data Used in the Study

Source	Type	Contribution to the analysis
Municipal department heads	Focus group discussion	Institutional accounts of governance, peace-and-order initiatives, and local settlement mechanisms
Business-sector informant	Key informant interview	Links among safety, mobility, rido settlement, and economic confidence
Philippine Army informants (2)	Key informant interview	Security-sector perspective on prior conflict and stabilization
PNP / MESPO informant	Key informant interview	Public safety, fear of authority, and police-community trust
Former rebel / public servant (Kanda)	Life-history testimony	Lived account of violence, displacement, reintegration, and reconciliation
Accomplishment and award records	Documentary sources	Triangulation of peace mechanisms and development outputs

Data gathering and analysis

The principal instruments were a semi-structured FGD and interview guide, a life-history guide for Kanda, and a document-review guide. Interviews and the FGD elicited narratives about the municipality's condition before 2019, the changes observed through 2026, and the actors and mechanisms that contributed to peace. Recorded data were transcribed, and statements in Filipino and Bisaya were retained in the original with working translations to preserve meaning.

Analysis followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). The researchers first familiarized themselves with the transcripts through repeated reading; second, generated initial codes capturing meaningful units across the data set, such as references to rido, elders, religious leaders, fear of authority, and the reintegration of former conflict actors; third, collated the codes into candidate themes; fourth, reviewed the candidate themes against the coded extracts and the full data set; fifth, defined and named the themes in relation to the research questions; and sixth, integrated them into the analytic narrative. This procedure generated several major themes, of which the present study develops one, security stabilization and culturally rooted peacebuilding, together with its subthemes of stabilization, rido settlement, Kukum Kalilintad, the Council of Elders and religious sector, and reconciliation and reintegration. Reflexive thematic analysis was complemented by historical narrative analysis, which situated the themes within the municipality's movement across time, and by documentary analysis, which compared participant claims with written records. Convergence across the FGD, interviews, life-history testimony, and documents was treated as triangulation supporting a finding, while divergence was flagged and interpreted rather than smoothed over.

Trustworthiness was pursued through triangulation across the FGD, interviews, life-history testimony, and documents; through thick description of the historical and cultural context; and through reflexivity, given that the topic involves local politics and conflict memory. Documentary records associated with the municipal leadership were treated with deliberate caution and used only to corroborate, not to establish, claims, in order to avoid reducing the analysis to praise of a single administration. Ethical care was observed throughout. Kanda's testimony, which involved personal experiences of violence and displacement, was treated as a survivor-witness narrative rather than as a source of dramatic evidence, and informants participated on the basis of informed consent and with attention to sensitivity and risk.

FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that peace in Palimbang was restored through a multi-actor process in which security stabilization served as an enabling condition while the decisive work was carried out through culturally rooted settlement. Five subthemes structure the presentation below: stabilization as enabling condition; rido settlement as the pivot of local peacebuilding; Kukum Kalilintad as a locally devised hybrid mechanism; the Council of Elders and faith-based moral authority; and the culturally mediated reconciliation and reintegration of former conflict actors. Selected informant statements are presented in Table 2, and developed in the discussion that follows. Original Filipino and Bisaya statements are retained to preserve meaning.

Table 2 Selected Statements on Culturally Rooted Peacebuilding

Source	Selected statement	Emerging meaning
Business-sector informant	<i>Na solve ng Local Government ang Rido.</i>	LGU role in rido settlement
Business-sector informant	<i>Sa ngayon, wala na akong marinig.</i>	Reduction of rido incidents
Department heads	<i>Parang almost settled na kasi yong mga major na mga Rido settled naman siya.</i>	Settlement of major feuds
Department heads	<i>Ise-settle muna sa Kukum Kalilintad.</i>	Local settlement mechanism
Department heads	<i>Meron na tayong Council of Elders existing.</i>	Active Council of Elders
Department heads	<i>Kukum Kalilintad ... only ang Palimbang lang ang gumawa ng ganyan.</i>	Locally devised innovation
Department heads	<i>Religious sector natin always man tayo ... lalo na sa Islam.</i>	Faith-based engagement
Former rebel / public servant	<i>The trust that he gave me as chair for peace, reunion and reconciliation.</i>	Inclusion of former conflict actors
Former rebel / public servant	<i>Lahat! Basta lahat-lahat na. Attended by the high-ranking of the PNP and the military, and BARMM also officers was there.</i>	Multi-institutional ownership
Former rebel / public servant	<i>After the peace and reconciliation wala ka nang naririnig na may barilan sa iba't ibang mga barangays.</i>	Reduced armed incidents
Department heads	<i>Dating brigade commander ngayon nagiging barangay captain ng barangay Bamban.</i>	Reintegration into civic life

Security stabilization as an enabling condition

Informants consistently described a prior environment in which armed personalities moved openly, ambush and kidnapping were live threats, and both land and sea routes were unsafe. Against this background, security actors mattered, but their contribution was framed as enabling rather than sufficient. The Army's role was described less in terms of combat than of presence and outreach, particularly through the Community Support Program,

which created a bridge between security forces and residents in a municipality where civilians had been afraid even to approach authority. One Army informant captured the change in a single word:

Malaya, sir, ang diperensiya.

The sense of freedom, of being able to move and participate without fear, was treated by informants as the clearest sign that stabilization had taken hold. Yet the same informants were careful not to attribute peace to force. The PNP/MESPO informant emphasized that the deeper problem was a damaged relationship between civilians and authority inherited from the Martial Law period, recalling that residents had been afraid to approach officials at all. Restoring safety therefore required rebuilding trust, not merely deterring crime. In Galtung's (1969) terms, the reduction of direct violence was a precondition; positive peace depended on what was built next.

Rido settlement as the pivot of local peacebuilding

If stabilization was the enabling condition, the settlement of rido was the pivot on which peacebuilding turned. Because clan feuding had been a principal source of restricted mobility, fear, and fractured trust, its resolution was experienced as the single most consequential change. The business-sector informant attributed the settlement directly to the local government and reported that feuding had effectively gone quiet:

Na solve ng Local Government ang Rido. ... Sa ngayon, wala na akong marinig.

Department heads corroborated this, noting that the major feuds in particular had been brought to settlement. The significance of this finding lies in what rido settlement requires. As the literature establishes, a feud is not an interpersonal quarrel amenable to ordinary law enforcement; it involves families, clans, armed supporters, and cycles of honor-bound retaliation (Torres, 2014; Orozco, 2022). To settle it, a municipality must mobilize cultural understanding, local legitimacy, and respected mediators rather than coercion alone. The Palimbang accounts indicate that the LGU did not attempt to displace customary settlement with formal adjudication; instead, it convened and underwrote it. This pattern, in which formal governance hosts customary process, anticipates the hybrid character of the municipality's signature mechanism.

Kukum Kalilintad: a locally devised hybrid mechanism

The most distinctive finding of the study is the existence of a local conflict-settlement body that informants called Kukum Kalilintad. Department heads described it as the first venue to which disputes were brought, ahead of the formal courts:

Ise-settle muna sa Kukum Kalilintad.

They further identified it as a local innovation, emphasizing that Palimbang was unique in having created such a body:

Kukum Kalilintad ... only ang Palimbang lang ang gumawa ng ganyan.

Although informants referred to Kukum Kalilintad briefly rather than describing its internal procedure in detail, their accounts, read alongside the documented features of analogous Maguindanaon settlement bodies, indicate how it functions operationally. A dispute, most consequentially a rido, is brought to the body as a first-instance forum before it is taken to the formal or adversarial system. The body convenes figures who carry customary and religious authority, principally the elders and Datus of the Council of Elders together with religious leaders, whose deliberations are guided by adat and agama, the Qur'an, and Hadith rather than by statutory law alone (Datumanong, 2013). Its orientation is restorative rather than punitive: to establish the facts, address the honor and grievance at stake, negotiate apology or compensation where appropriate, and restore the relationship between the feuding parties so that the cycle of retaliation is broken. Because the local government convenes, recognizes, and underwrites the body, its settlements carry both communal legitimacy, grounded in the social prestige of the mediators, and institutional weight, grounded in the authority of the LGU, and they are sustained less by coercive enforcement than by public acceptance and the standing of those who broker them.

Two features make this mechanism analytically important. First, its very name signals hybridity. The term joins the language of customary adjudication, *kukum*, with *kalilintad*, peace or order, echoing the *Walay na Kukuman* or Council of Elders documented in Maguindanaon practice as a traditional legal body guided by *adat*, *agama*, the *Qur'an*, and *Hadith* (Datumanong, 2013). *Kukum Kalilintad* is thus not a foreign import but a vernacular institution, intelligible and legitimate to the community in a way that a formal court is not. Second, it was deliberately positioned as a first-instance forum within the municipality's governance, settling disputes before they escalated into the formal or adversarial system. In this respect it operates as what the peace-studies literature would call a hybrid peace infrastructure: a standing local institution that fuses customary authority with the convening capacity of the LGU, rather than a one-off mediation or an informal practice tolerated at the margins of the state. It is this combination of vernacular legitimacy and institutional backing within a single standing body, convened and underwritten by the formal local state yet governed by customary and religious authority, that makes *Kukum Kalilintad* a distinctive model of hybrid peace infrastructure rather than an instance of customary justice merely operating in parallel to the state.

The claim that Palimbang alone devised such a body should be read as the informants' perception rather than as a verified comparative fact; what matters analytically is that the municipality treated the institutionalization of customary settlement as a deliberate act of governance. This is consistent with Lederach's (1995) insistence that durable peacebuilding be built from a community's own social and cultural resources, and with the hybridity thesis that order emerges from the interaction, not the replacement, of customary and formal institutions (Mac Ginty, 2011).

The Council of Elders and faith-based moral authority

Kukum Kalilintad did not operate in isolation. Department heads reported that an active Council of Elders existed within the municipality, and that the religious sector, particularly Islamic leadership, was routinely engaged in the work of governance and peace:

Meron na tayong Council of Elders existing.

Religious sector natin always man tayo naga kwan, gina kwan ni boss yang religious lalo na sa Islam.

The presence of elders and religious authority supplied the settlement machinery with something that neither police nor courts could provide: moral legitimacy grounded in the community's own normative world. Elders carry social prestige, historical memory, and customary authority, while religious leaders draw on a moral vocabulary of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Datumanong, 2013; Abu-Nimer, 2001; Appleby, 2000). Their involvement helps explain why settlements were accepted rather than merely imposed. It also illustrates the local-turn argument that peacebuilding becomes meaningful when it recognizes the capacity of local actors to define and legitimate peace (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). In a tri-people municipality, this culturally and religiously plural authority structure was not incidental to settlement; it was its foundation.

Culturally mediated reconciliation and reintegration of former conflict actors

The final subtheme concerns the people whom peacebuilding had to reabsorb. The reintegration of former conflict actors in Palimbang was striking for being civic and political rather than narrowly programmatic. Department heads recounted that individuals once associated with armed groups had assumed positions of local leadership, including a former brigade commander who became a barangay captain and another former conflict-connected figure who became a vice mayor:

Dating brigade commander ngayon nagiging barangay captain ng barangay Bamberan.

This pattern departs from the standard model of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, in which reintegration is conceived as the delivery of assistance to ex-combatants. Here, reintegration was achieved through community recognition and the conferral of civic office, an outcome that presupposes a prior reconciliation between former conflict actors and the communities affected by violence. The life-history testimony of Kanda makes this mediation visible. A survivor of the 1974 violence who later became a public servant, she was entrusted with a formal role in reconciliation:

The trust that he gave me as chair for peace, reunion and reconciliation.

Her account also conveys the inclusive, multi-institutional character of the process. Asked whether Muslim, Christian, and Indigenous communities participated, she answered emphatically that everyone did, and that the gatherings were attended by senior police and military officers and by Bangsamoro regional officials:

Lahat! Basta lahat-lahat na. Attended by the high-ranking of the PNP and the military, and BARMM also officers was there.

Crucially, she linked reconciliation to a concrete reduction in violence at the barangay level:

After the peace and reconciliation wala ka nang naririnig na may barilan sa iba't ibang mga barangays.

Kanda's narrative demonstrates that reintegration in Palimbang was a social process of identity, relationship, trust, and belonging rather than a transfer of benefits, and that former conflict actors could become agents, not merely objects, of peacebuilding. Her own summary, that where there is peace, there is progress, expresses the lived logic that the community placed at the center of its recovery.

DISCUSSION

The Palimbang case yields three contributions to the literature on rido and on locally grounded peacebuilding. The first concerns the relationship between security and settlement. Across the accounts, security stabilization was necessary but not the active ingredient of peace. The Army's outreach and the reduction of armed incidents created the conditions under which people could move and trust, but the disputes themselves were resolved through culturally legitimate mediation. This is consistent with the argument that fragile transitions require a balance between security and the slower relational work of conflict transformation, and that the silencing of guns is not yet positive peace (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 1997). It also supports the caution, drawn from comparative peacebuilding, that interventions which attend only to large-scale conflict dynamics while neglecting local violence will leave everyday insecurity intact. In Palimbang, it was precisely the everyday, the feud between clans, that the municipality learned to address.

The second contribution concerns institutional form. Kukum Kalilintad is best understood as a hybrid peace infrastructure. The customary-justice literature has documented the persistence of elders' councils, Shari'ah courts, and adat-based settlement in Muslim Mindanao, but has often presented these as parallel or competing systems standing alongside the state (Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2013). The Palimbang case shows a different configuration, in which an LGU deliberately institutionalizes customary settlement as a first-instance forum within its own governance, neither abandoning the formal system nor allowing it to crowd out custom. This is hybridity in the strong sense theorized by Mac Ginty (2011): not the toleration of tradition, but the construction of a standing institution from the interaction of customary and formal authority. The mechanism's vernacular name, its grounding in adat and agama, and its embedding within municipal governance together make it an instructive model of how the local turn can be operationalized rather than merely invoked.

The third contribution concerns reintegration. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration paradigm has been criticized for treating reintegration as the weakest and most technical of its components, focused on the delivery of livelihood assistance to ex-combatants. Scholars have argued for a social conception of reintegration centered on acceptance, identity, and belonging. Palimbang offers an empirical instance of exactly this: reintegration accomplished through civic recognition, with former conflict actors assuming barangay and municipal office, and mediated by a reconciliation process that was inclusive across the tri-people communities and joined by security and regional authorities. Kanda's trajectory, from survivor of conflict to chair for peace and reconciliation, embodies the claim that former conflict actors can become bridges rather than residual risks. Reconciliation and reintegration here were not separate stages but a single culturally mediated movement, which helps explain why the reduction in armed incidents was experienced as durable.

These contributions are subject to the limitations of the design. The study rests on a small purposive sample within a single municipality, and several of its key informants are connected to the institutions whose success the analysis describes; independent and dissenting voices, including ordinary residents and parties to specific feuds, were not represented. The analytic window of 2019 to 2026 coincides with a particular leadership period, and documentary records associated with that leadership, although used cautiously and only for triangulation, carry an evident interest in portraying transformation favorably. The claim that Kukum Kalilintad is unique to Palimbang is an informant perception that this study cannot independently verify. The findings are therefore offered not as statistical generalization but as an analytically generalizable account of how culturally rooted settlement can be institutionalized in a former conflict-affected LGU.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study asked how a municipality long defined by violence settled the disputes that had kept it unsafe. The answer, in the Palimbang case, is that peace was built less through force than through culturally legitimate conflict resolution institutionalized within local government. Security stabilization opened the space; rido settlement, a standing Council of Elders, the moral authority of the religious sector, and a locally devised body called Kukum Kalilintad did the substantive work; and former conflict actors were reabsorbed through community recognition and inclusive reconciliation rather than through programmatic disarmament. The municipality's transformation is therefore best read as an instance of hybrid, locally grounded peacebuilding, in which customary and faith-based authority were combined with, rather than displaced by, the formal apparatus of the state.

For other local government units facing clan conflict and fragile peace, the case suggests several implications. Settlement of localized violence may require the deliberate creation of vernacular, first-instance forums that carry customary and religious legitimacy, rather than reliance on formal adjudication alone. The reintegration of former conflict actors may be advanced more effectively through civic recognition and inclusive reconciliation than through assistance narrowly conceived. And security operations, however necessary, are likely to yield durable peace only when paired with relational and cultural work owned by the community. Future research should test these propositions comparatively, examine the gendered and elite dynamics of bodies such as Kukum Kalilintad, and incorporate the perspectives of residents and feuding parties whose voices this study could not capture. Such work would help determine whether the Palimbang model can be generalized, and under what conditions hybrid settlement institutions sustain, rather than merely declare, peace.

REFERENCES

1. Abu-Nimer, M. (2001). Conflict resolution, culture, and religion: Toward a training model of interreligious peacebuilding. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(6), 685–704.
2. Appleby, R. S. (2000). *The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
3. Bercovitch, J., & Kadayifci-Orellana, S. A. (2009). Religion and mediation: The role of faith-based actors in international conflict resolution. *International Negotiation*, 14(1), 175–204.
4. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
5. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
6. Buonaventura, A. (2025). Clan violence and political stability in the Bangsamoro [verify publication details].
7. Corpuz, J. (2025). Grassroots interfaith dialogue in Mindanao: The role of a faith-based movement [verify publication details].
8. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
9. Datumanong, S. (2013). The role of Magindanaun Datus in conflict resolution. In *Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Traditional and Islamic conflict resolution mechanisms in Mindanao* [verify editor and pagination].
10. Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191.

11. Garcia, R., et al. (2024). Religion-based civil society organizations as peacebuilding stakeholders in Mindanao [verify full author list and publication details].
12. Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. (2013). Traditional and Islamic conflict resolution mechanisms in Mindanao [verify full title and publisher].
13. International Alert. (2014). Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System report. International Alert Philippines.
14. Lederach, J. P. (1995). Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures. Syracuse University Press.
15. Lederach, J. P. (1997). Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies. United States Institute of Peace Press.
16. Mac Ginty, R. (2011). International peacebuilding and local resistance: Hybrid forms of peace. Palgrave Macmillan.
17. Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2013). The local turn in peace building: A critical agenda for peace. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), 763–783.
18. Makalingkang, A. (2013). Perceptions of traditional dispute settlement in Maguindanao. In Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies [verify pagination].
19. Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
20. Orozco, M. (2022). The lived experiences of rido among the Meranaos: A phenomenological study [verify publication details].
21. Pigkaulan, N. (2013). Islamic conflict resolution and the contribution of Shari'ah courts to dispute resolution in Mindanao. In Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies [verify pagination].
22. Torres, W. M., III (Ed.). (2007). Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao. The Asia Foundation.
23. Torres, W. M., III (Ed.). (2014). Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao (Expanded ed.). Ateneo de Manila University Press.
24. Uka-Lingga, F. (2013). Traditional conflict management among the T'duray in Upi. In Institute of Bangsamoro Studies & Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies [verify pagination].
25. Yin, R. K. (2018). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.). SAGE.