

**Contested Belonging:
East Timorese Youth in the Diaspora**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University.**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.
This work is my own unless otherwise stated.

All photographs were taken by the author, except those attributed to Toby Hiscox and Steve Cox.

Fiona Crockford.

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About three months into the fieldwork, I got nervous about whether I had bitten off more than I could chew in taking on multi-sited research in such an intensely absorbing, but highly challenging field. I dreamt I was among a large group of people being led, by Sister Kath O'Connor (of the Josephite Sisters in Sydney), to the top of a high tower where people were leaping off in front of a massive crowd below. But as we were ascending, a madman started up the stairs behind us and I had to wrestle with him while everyone else escaped. I emailed Sister Kath immediately to ask what it meant. She suggested it might represent my struggle with the fieldwork: that I wanted to throw myself into it but the madness of taking on such a task was taking all my energy. Ask yourself, she said, what part of yourself the madman and I represent and why you're struggling with the madman. I did and have kept on asking that same question ever since.

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ABSTRATU

Peskiza ida ne'e esplora Timorensianessa hanesan identidade ida mak kompleksu no lao ba-oin ne'ebé 'fronteira' Timorensia, iha parte fiziku no psiko, ne'ebé marka tiha no marka fila-fali iha tempu bar-barak no fatin. Peskiza ne'e hare spesífikamente ho sensu dislokasaun no ambiguidade ne'ebé mak fó baze identidade sosial husi foin-sae Timorensia sira ne'ebé mak hela iha Australia iha periode ida ho transformasaun política iha Historia presente Timor-Leste nian (1997-1999).

Rekonhese diversidade esperiensa husi foin-sae diasfora sira, estudu ida ne'e fó atensaun liu-liu ba jersaun 'noventa' nian husi foin-sae Timor-oan sira, katak sira ne'ebé mak iha sira nia tinan-joven ou hahu tinan rua-nulu wainhira sira husik hela Timor-Leste depois Massakre Santa-Cruz 1999. Estudu ne'e konsidera dalan sira ne'ebé foin-sae sira negosia sira nia esperiensa husi dislokasaun no imensidade husi identidade Timorensia ida ne'ebé mak politizada makás tebes, dala-barak foin-sae sira forma sira rasik ho sintidu ida husi moris ida mak 'todan' no klean, no dalaruma sinti todan liu ho sintidu moral ne'ebé mak iha. Iha diasfora, evokasaun ba memória traumátiku sentraliza liu husi persersaun identidade uníku Timorensia nian no nia konstitui fila hikas liu husi mundu violadu ida. Nune'e uza memória hodi justifika identidade Timorensia ida mak spesífiku no hanesan hotu no hodi rekonstrui liu husi ritual públiku sira. Maibe, determinasaun diskursu monólogo demais hanesan ne'e bele ameasa hodi hanehan tiha experiensa heterozenu no possibilidade mudansa ba foin-sae Timor oan sira no diversidade espresaun cultural Timor nian. Estudu ida ne'e esplora relasaun entre diskursu monólogo ida ne'ebé artíkula identidade públiku ida mak metin-los ne'ebé hamosu Timorensianesa ida mak 'auténtiku' no dirkursu dialózikal hodi hamosu identidade hibrida sira ne'ebé mak ambigu liu tan.

Hau hahu hodi buka-tuir sasan husi istória, kultura, mitos no poder ne'ebé hamutuk hodi hamosu representasaun tomak ida husi Timorensinesa no foin-sae hanesan patriota no kolektividade ba sakrifisiu-an rasik. Hau argumenta katak ezizensia husi luta ba independensia husi okupasaun Indonesia bazeia husi hari buat spesífiku ida husi foin-sae sira iha Timor-Leste laran ne'ebé mak halo foin-sae sira hetan potencialidade no papel heróiku. Maibe, potencialidade husi identidade politizada ida ne'e, iha rai-laran ka iha liur, dala-barak la estavel no provisóriu hela de'it. Nomós, identidade hanesan

ne'e belemos habelar no haklot foin-sae Timor tan sira-nia performa sempre kahur ho strutura poder no relasaun ne'ebé mak sosialmente no espasialmente kondisional.

Depois hau esplika prosesu ba formasaun identidade no evalui fali entre foin-sae Timor disfora klean liu-tan. Muda-tiha husi luta imediata, 'hahalok' husi foin-sae Timorensia diasfora inevitável muda bazeia ba formasaun konhesimentu ne'ebé mak forma no produz 'foin-sae' sira no partikularmente 'foin-sae migrante' iha nasaun sira ne'ebé mak simu sira. Dala-barak foin-sae Timorensia sira senti tama iha let entre prátika sira ho kontradisaun no konstrusaun foin-sae nian, no diskursu ne'ebé kontra 'Timorensianesa' no 'Australianness' (nomós hanesan 'Timoresianesa' no 'Indonesianness'), maibe sempre iha fatin para truka-bamai. Nune'e, hau foti ezemplu husi sira nian kultura negosiasaun iha parte arte nian hodi hatudu oinsa foin-sae Timor sira buka atu envolve ho sentidu ida mak forte iha forma asaun sosial no hatudu forma testimonia oin-oin hanesan afirmasaun ba sira nia-an no identidade ida mak válida tiha prátika. Liu husi múzika, poezia no teátru, foin-sae Timor sira, tuir dalan oin-seluk no ho forsa oin-seluk, hatudu stratejía ne'ebé la sempre kontra ou la simpatia hasoru preokupasaun no importansia polítika husi zerasaun tuan Timor nian. Maibe naratívu báziku husi foin-sae Timor, hatudu katak sira nian identidade kesi-an iha relasaun kompleksu husi relasaun divergensia no interdependensia dispozisaun estrutura balun: pesoal no koletiu; global no lokal; diferensia no continuidade; liberdade no limite. Jestaun ba tensaun sira ne'e, nomós laiha serteza ba sira nia estadu legal iha Australia no krize polítiku iha Timor laran, izizi stratezia ba identidade ne'ebé bele foti husi ezistensia no referensia cultural no rekursu ne'ebé mak iha. Esperiensia husi foin-sae Timor oan diasfora sira hatudu dialéktika no karáter dependenti husi esperiensia kultural no identidade sosial.

Translated by Aderito Soares, ANU, December 2007

ABSTRACT

This research explores East Timorese identity as a complex and evolving identity in which Timorese ‘frontiers’, both physical and psychic, have been drawn and redrawn over time and through space. It deals specifically with the sense of displacement and ambiguity that underpins the social identities of young East Timorese living in Australia during a period of intense political transformation in East Timor’s recent history (1997-1999).

Acknowledging the diversity of experience among diasporic youth, the study focuses primarily on young ‘nineties’ Timorese, that is, those who were in their teens or early twenties when they fled East Timor in the wake of the Dili Massacre in 1991. It considers the ways in which they negotiated their experiences of displacement and the immensity of a highly politicised Timorese identity, often framed by young people themselves in terms of an embodied ‘weight’ and a viscerally deep, and occasionally overwhelming, sense of moral responsibility. In the diaspora, the evocation of traumatic memory has been central to the preservation of a uniquely East Timorese identity and its reconstitution in a breached world. Memory has thus been called upon to legitimate a very specific and homogenous East Timorese identity and to reconstruct it through public ritual. Yet an over-determination of such a monological discourse threatens to subsume the heterogeneous experiences and possible alterities of young Timorese and the diversity of Timorese cultural expression. This study explores the interplay between a monological discourse that articulates a cohesive public identity that implies an ‘authentic’ East Timorese identity and a dialogical discourse through which more ambiguous and hybrid identities emerge.

I begin by tracing the strands of history, culture, myth and power that combine to produce totalising representations of East Timorese identity and youth as patriotic and self-sacrificing collectivities. I argue that the exigencies of the struggle for independence from Indonesian occupation depended upon a very specific enactment of youth within East Timor through which East Timorese youth acquired a potent and heroic role. Yet the potency of this politicised identity has always been unstable and provisional, both within and outside of East Timor. As well, such an identity is both enabling and confining for young Timorese since its performance is always infused with power structures and relations that are both socially and spatially contingent.

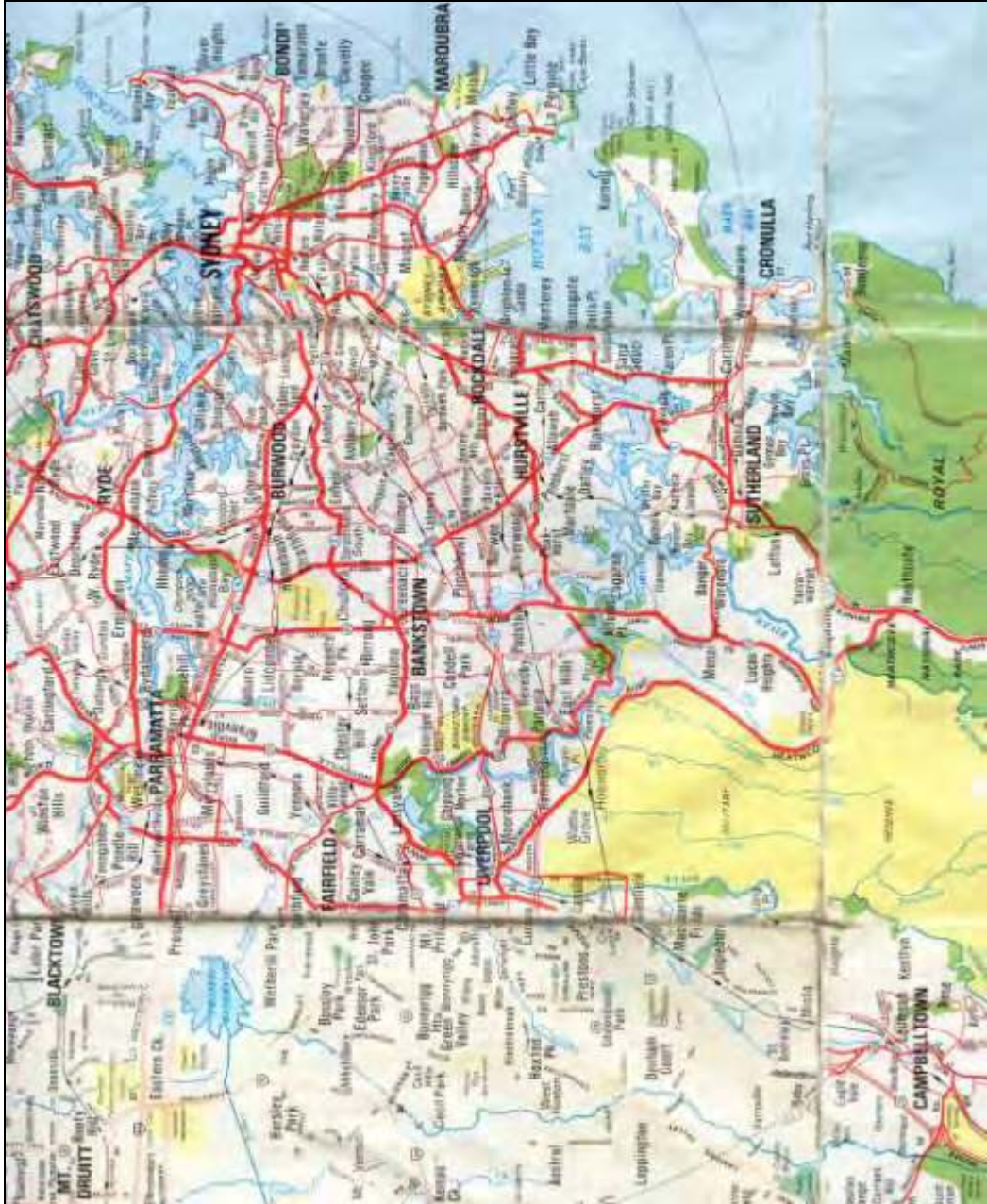
I then explore processes of identity formation and re-evaluation among young diasporic East Timorese in depth. Removed from the immediacy of struggle, the 'doing' of youth among young diasporic East Timorese inevitably shifts according to the different knowledge formations that frame and produce 'youth' and particularly 'migrant youth' in host countries. While young Timorese often feel caught between apparently contradictory practices and constructions of youth, and discourses that oppose 'Timorese-ness' and 'Australianness' (as well as 'Timorese-ness' and 'Indonesianness'), there is always room for slippage. Thus, I draw upon examples of their cultural negotiations in the world of the arts to show how young East Timorese sought to engage in meaningful forms of social action and deployed various forms of testimonial as a self-affirming and identity-validating practice. Through practices of music, poetry and theatre young East Timorese, in different ways and with varying force, deploy cultural strategies that are not necessarily inimical or unsympathetic to the concerns and political imperatives of older generation Timorese. The everyday narratives of young Timorese, however, reveal that their identities are entangled in the complex interplay of a number of divergent and interdependent structuring dispositions: the personal and the collective; the global and local; difference and continuity; freedom and constraint. The management of these tensions, as well as the uncertainties of their legal status in Australia and political upheavals within East Timor itself, required the creation of strategies of identity that drew upon both existing and new cultural referents and resources. The experiences of young diasporic East Timorese thus highlight the dialectical and contingent character of intercultural experience and social identities.

MAP 1
East Timor



MAP 2

Field Map of Sydney
Scale 1:182,000



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GLOSSARY

(BI) Indonesian word

(T) Tetun word

(P) Portuguese word

ABRI *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (Armed Forces of Indonesia), now known as *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI).

AIETD The ‘All-Inclusive East Timorese Dialogue’ series, held in Austria under the auspices of the UN, provided a forum for discussion and confidence building among leaders from across the spectrum of Timorese political, including pro-autonomy advocates.

APODETI *Associação Populer Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). Apodeti was the smallest and most conservative political party, consisting of only a few hundred supporters. They inclined towards integration with Indonesia and *Daerah Istimewa* (Special Region status).

ASDT *Assoção Popular Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). The democratic socialist ASDT party was formed in 1974 and claimed the immediate right to independence from the Portuguese colonial regime. It was reframed as Fretilin in 1975.

Assimilados (P) Descriptor conferred upon Timorese deemed to have attained an appropriate standard of civilisation (*civilizado*). *Assimilados* were granted Portuguese citizenship and voting rights.

Bahasa Indonesia Indonesian language.

Bairros de palapa (P) District of houses thatched with palm leaves.

Balibo Five The Balibo Five were a group of journalists working for Australian television networks who were killed in the town of Balibo, close to the East/West Timorese border, on 16 October 1975. They were investigating Indonesian incursions into East Timor prior to the Indonesian invasion on 7 December 1975. The group included two Australians, reporter Greg Shackleton, 27, and sound recordist Tony Stewart, 21; a New Zealander, cameraman Gary Cunningham, 27; and two Britons, cameraman Brian Peters, 29, and reporter Malcom Rennie, 28.

Buibere (T) Originally a Mambai term for “woman”; female counterpart of the iconic *Maubere* figure.

Civilizado (P) Civilised; Timorese eligible for Portuguese citizenship.

CNRM *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere* (National Council of Maubere Resistance). The CNRM was established in 1987 when resistance leader Xanana Gusmão resigned from Fretilin and declared the end of the politics of ‘party ID cards’ in favour of national unity or ‘non-partisanship’ (*apartidarismo*).

CNRT *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia* (National Council of Timorese Resistance). The CNRT was established in April 1998 as the peak body of the East Timorese people's resistance to the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. Its members were drawn from all political viewpoints, including the major political parties. It was formally established at a Convention of 200 East Timorese delegates in Portugal. Although held outside East Timor by political necessity, it was the first broadly representative gathering of East Timorese nationalists since 1975.

Creados (P) Young Timorese boys who assisted Australian commandos in WW2.

CRRN A National Conference in 1981 in East Timor led to the creation of the National Council of Revolutionary Resistance (CRRN). Xanana Gusmão was elected Political Commissar, President of CRRN and Commander of the armed forces of the independence struggle, Falintil.

Degredado (P) Banishees from various Portuguese colonies.

Deportado (P) Deportees, banished by the Portuguese administration to 'Portuguese Africa' for alleged subversive political activities.

Estado Novo (P) New Estate, Portuguese fascist regime established in 1933 under the dictator Salazar.

ETCC East Timor Cultural Centre (Sydney).

ETRA East Timorese Relief Association (based in Sydney and Melbourne), formed in 1992 at the behest of East Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão, and under the direction of his personal representative in exile, Dr José Ramos-Horta.

Falintil *Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*, Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor. Falintil was established in late 1975 as the military arm of the resistance movement against Indonesian occupation.

Fence jumpers The term refers to young Timorese activists who protested the occupation by gaining entry to foreign embassies in Jakarta in the mid-nineties.

F-FDTL *Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste* (Timor-Leste Defense Force). The F-FDTL was re-constituted from the national liberation movement and guerilla army known as Falintil (Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor).

Firaku (T) Term believed to have originated in the Portuguese colonial era to refer to people from the east; stereotypically characterised as temperamental, stubborn, trouble-makers.

Fretilin *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor was founded on 20 May 1974. It began as a resistance movement that fought for the independence of East Timor, first from Portugal and then from Indonesia, between 1974 and 1999. It was originally called the Timorese Democratic Association (ASDT). After East Timor gained its independence from Indonesia, Fretilin became one of several parties competing in a multi-party system.

Gerasaun Foun (T) Post-Indonesian invasion (1975) youth generation (*Geração Foun: P*).

Hananu Kore A'an (T) (Singing for Freedom) Sydney-based East Timorese youth choir.

INTERFET The International Force for East Timor was a multinational peacekeeping task force, mandated by the United Nations to address the humanitarian security crisis which took place in East Timor from 1999-2000 until the arrival of United Nations peacekeepers. INTERFET was commanded by Major-General Peter Cosgrove of the Australian Army.

Kaladi (T) Term believed to have originated in the Portuguese colonial era to refer to people from the west; stereotypically slow, quiet.

Katupa (T) East Timorese dish of woven palm leaves filled with glutinous coconut rice.

Kore Metan (T) Literally, the 'release of the black band' to bring closure to the period of mourning one year after the death of a relative.

Lafaek (T) Crocodile.

LGA Local Government Area.

Litsus The *penelitian khusus* (special research) screening test conducted by the Indonesian military. SMA (high school) and other graduates who sought *izin keluar* (exit permit) to attend university outside East Timor were obliged to undertake the test which took about three hours to complete. The investigation aimed to elicit details of personal and familial political affiliations and test loyalty to the Indonesian state.

Loromonu (T) West; people originating from the districts of Bobonaro, Covalima, Oecussi, Liquica, Ermera, Aileu, Ainaro, Manatuto, and Manufahi.

Lorosa'e (T) East; people originating from the eastern districts of Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem.

Lulik (T) Sacred rites or objects

Malae (T) Foreigner (also *malae Cina*, Chinese; *malae-metan*, Arab traders/African)

Mambai The largest East Timorese ethnic group, concentrated in the mountainous district of Aileu.

Maubere (T) *Maubere* was originally used by the Mambai, one of the poorest hill tribe people in Timor, to mean 'friend'. The Portuguese used it to mean backward and primitive, as a way of denigrating the Timorese peasantry. Fretilin made the word a symbol of what their movement represented: to be a *maubere* ('my brother or friend') was to be a son of Timor. It came to symbolise the reassertion of Timorese culture and the struggle against poverty and colonial subordination.

Mestiço/Mulatto (P) Mixed heritage Timorese.

Não indígenão (P) Native Timorese eligible for Portuguese citizenship.

Operasi Komodo (BI) Operation Dragon: Indonesian military operation that initiated the civil war in East Timor in 1975.

Operasi Seroja (BI) Operation Blossoming Lotus: Indonesian military code name for the invasion of East Timor on December 7th 1975.

Pancasila (BI) The ideological basis of the Indonesian state. The five basic principles are: faith in one god; humanity; nationalism; representative government and social justice.

Pembangunan (BI) Official Indonesian Government development program

PIDE Portuguese colonial secret police (*Polícia Internacional e da Defesa do Estado*).

Portugalização (P) Process of Portuguese cultural assimilation.

Revolução dos Cravos (P) Carnation Revolution, 25th April 1974: a bloodless coup hastened by a left-turn in Portuguese politics that precipitated the decolonisation of Portugal's "overseas provinces".

TAC Timorese Australia Council, based in Sydney NSW.

Tais (T) Traditionally woven cloth from naturally-dyed thread using a simple hand loom and a wooden cross-bar.

Tasi Feto (T) Female (northern) sea.

Tasi Mane (T) Male (southern) sea.

Tetun (T) / Tetum (P) *Lingua franca* of East Timor.

Tuba Rai Metin (T) Firmly Gripping the Earth.

Topasse Mixed race class of Timorese traders, also known as *Gente de Chapeo* (People of the Hat); *Larantuqueros* (people from Larantuka); and *Swarte Portugueezen* (Black Portuguese).

UDT *União Democrática Timorense*, Timorese Democratic Union. A conservative political party established following the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974. It originally advocated continued links with Portugal using the Tetun slogan *Mate Bandera Hum* (in the shadow of the Portuguese flag). UDT formed a fragile coalition with the leftist Fretilin party to work towards independence in 1975 but radically split with the onset of civil war. UDT and Fretilin again formed an alliance under the politically neutral umbrella organisation CNRT.

Uma Lulik (T) Traditional sacred house where ancestral bones are kept.

UNTAET The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor provided an interim civil administration and a peacekeeping mission in East Timor. It was led by

Brazil's Sergio de Vieira de Mello (United Nations Administrator) and the Philippine's Lieutenant General Jaime de los Santos (Supreme Commander of the United Nations' Peacekeeping Force). UNTAET was established on October 25, 1999 and abolished on May 20, 2002 with most functions passed to the East Timor government. The military and police forces were transferred to the newly created United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor (UNMISET).

PROLOGUE

Tuba Rai Metin: Firmly Gripping the Earth

I did not plan to do doctoral research on East Timor. I arrived at the Australian National University meaning to study the fishing industry in eastern Indonesia or perhaps, at the other geographical extreme, in the southwest corner of the Indonesian archipelago. My intention had been to explore the ways in which dominant discourses of nationalism and ethnicity within that context were being negotiated by migrant fisher communities and individuals on the peripheries of Indonesian state power. Such a project, I assumed, would require me to spend a lengthy and intensive period in ‘the field’; that is, within a well-defined and geographically remote site far from ‘home’, in keeping with disciplinary tradition. My twelve year-old son, however, entering a period of early adolescent anarchy, put his foot firmly down and flatly refused to take any further part in my plans. I could go if I liked, but he would not be moved. My parental powers of persuasion and logic, my attempts to cajole and spruik, thoroughly failed me. His stubborn refusal to entertain the possibility of life in an Indonesian fishing village thus caused me, somewhat reluctantly at first, to reconfigure my project and to consider the possibility of not only doing fieldwork closer to home, but of conducting fieldwork in a rather different way.

Needing to base myself in Canberra, I began to shift my thinking towards migrant experiences among Southeast Asian communities within Australia and more specifically within New South Wales. An accident of fate led me to an East Timorese art exhibition *Tuba Rai Metin* (Firmly Gripping the Earth) at the Canberra School of Art in September 1997 (Plate 1). There, I had the great fortune to meet a number of exiled East Timorese artists, performers and community leaders from Melbourne and Sydney, as well as a group of young East Timorese asylum seekers who were members of the Sydney-based choir *Hananu Kore A’an* (Singing for Freedom).



Plate 1. *Tuba Rai Metin* at the Canberra School of Art, September 1997

A multi-piece installation, *Tuba Rai Metin* was the collaborative project of two Australian-based East Timorese artists: a master weaver and senior member of Darwin's East Timorese community, Dona Verónica Pereira Maia and a young Timorese artist and community arts worker, Albertina Viegas. Although others were involved in the production of *Tuba Rai Metin*, it was the creative alliance of these two women that formed the axis around which the exhibition turned. Their collaboration yielded an arresting depiction of East Timorese refugee experience, of cultural crossings and survival. Their work explored the often contradictory and ambiguous meanings of the familiar and of 'home' against a backdrop of violent displacement and socio-cultural disjuncture. The artists themselves insisted that the project was not explicitly political or 'activist' art but primarily a work of remembrance. It was, they said, a memorial to an unacceptable human tragedy. It also represented for them a quest for the reconciliation of political factionalism within the East Timorese diaspora.

The installation drew culturally and creatively from the traditional East Timorese crafts of building, weaving and food preparation. It involved the construction of an *Uma Lulik* – a sacred house where the bones of Timorese ancestors were traditionally kept (Plate 2). *Uma Lulik* constitute a powerful presence in the East Timorese imaginary, symbolically linking generation to

generation and heaven to earth. Some were hundreds of years old when they were destroyed in Indonesian bombing raids in the late 1970s to mid-1980s and only three are said to remain standing near Lospalos, at the eastern end of East Timor (Turner 1992:iv). *Uma Lulik* signify the sanctity of East Timorese connections to their land. For East Timorese living in the diaspora, they also symbolise their link to, and their yearning for, their ancestral home. Images of *Uma Lulik* commonly feature in the homes of diasporic East Timorese. They are reproduced three-dimensionally, in miniature, and two-dimensionally in paintings and woven into cloth and mats; they are inscribed on bodies, on the ultimate home, as tattoos. Along with religious memorabilia, *Uma Lulik* prevail as distinct and cherished icons of East Timoresehood for those who have been radically displaced.



Plate 2. *Uma Lulik*

The focal point of the exhibition was a series of *tais*¹ (weavings) conceived and executed by Dona Verónica Pereira Maia (Plate 3). The *tais* she created for the

¹ *Tais* are traditionally woven from naturally-dyed thread using a simple hand loom and a wooden cross-bar. The work is painstaking and *tais* can be months in the making. They are intricately encoded with designs that reflect East Timor's regional and ethnic diversity and they have long been part of the currency of kinship and marriage. In the complex and complementary routines of gift-giving and receiving that marriages entailed, *tais* were offered by the 'wife-givers', along with coral necklaces and cooked rice. As symbolic 'female goods', these would be reciprocated by the 'wife-takers' with 'male' goods, for example goats, horses, metal disks. They are also a means of documenting the past. There are *tais* the size of church altars depicting images of cornucopia-style horns, cherubs and grapes, that reflect East Timor's Portuguese past and its Catholicised identity. During the 'silent' years of Indonesian occupation, *tais* became a

Tuba Rai Metin project record the names of the mostly young, unarmed East Timorese victims of the ‘Dili Massacre’ at Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 1991. Between each name she had woven a small crucifix which acts like a punctuation mark; a full stop; a question mark; an exclamation:

Julio C Real + Jose N Galhos + Jose Bibik + Jose Andrade + Chico Batavia + Celina Aileu + Carlos Soares + Domingas Oliveira + Domingos Costa + Duarte Acolito + Frederico Lospalos + Fransisco Fatima...



Plate 3. Dona Verónica’s *tais* memorial

Dona Verónica’s *tais* were a tribute to the memory of the young martyrs of the East Timorese struggle; a testament to the mass slaying of youth at the hands of the Indonesian military. Approximately 2,500 people had gathered that day to attend a Mass to commemorate the death of a young Timorese man, Sebastião Gomes Rangel, two weeks earlier. A demonstration had been planned to start immediately after the Mass, partly in frustration at the cancellation of a United Nations/Portuguese human rights delegation and partly in anger at Sebastião’s death. As the Mass at Motael Church ended, the crowd moved onto the streets and made its way towards Santa Cruz cemetery, the site of Sebastião’s funeral. By the time the procession reached the

vehicle for resistance and weavers incorporated the language of resistance into their designs: *Libertação; Viva Timor Lorosae; Viva Xanana!* The slogan *Recordação Timor Leste (Remember East Timor)* was woven into a scarf-sized *tais* destined for the Portuguese delegation due to visit East Timor in 1991 on a fact-finding mission. It was an appeal as much as a gift. The visit, however, was abruptly cancelled and the *tais*, too politically provocative to be worn or displayed publicly in Indonesian-occupied East Timor, was buried (Jenni Kanaley pers comm). During the Indonesian occupation, weavers attempted to satisfy a fledgling tourist market with gaudy-coloured scarves bearing innocuous expressions in Indonesian language. Woven in cheap, gold-inflected thread, they cheerfully proclaimed *Kenang kenangan Timor Timur* (a souvenir of East Timor) – a remembrance of a different order.

cemetery, the crowd had swelled to five or six thousand. Young Timorese scaled the cemetery walls unfurling Fretilin² flags while others approached Sebastião's grave to pray and lay flowers. At the same time Indonesian military began to surround the cemetery. There was no warning for the crowd to disperse. Many young people were shot in the back as they tried to run away.

Like the majority, and especially women, of her generation, Dona Verónica has never learned to write. The words she weaves are traced onto paper by younger members of her family and the shapes are then translated by her into cloth. Her *tais*, she said, were her way of relieving, and perhaps 'reliving', not only her own grief, but the collective grief of Timorese in exile. Like the *tais* meant for the Portuguese delegation, her *tais* also entreat the viewer to *Recordação Timor Leste* (Remember East Timor), but they do so explicitly through the memorialising of martyred youth:

These *tais* stand for the young people and their love for their homeland. They cherish each other, they trust each other, they are united to show that, dead or alive, helpless as they are, with limited resources and without support of any kind, they set themselves against Jakarta's forces but with only one thought in mind - to defend their homeland...They haven't spared themselves, they have sacrificed everything to show their love of country. This is no laughing matter, no! These *tais* are a record of these young people and how they died for their country. These *tais* show they were not afraid to die. They were not afraid of Jakarta's military might because they were defending what they knew was right...(Pereira Maia in *Tuba Rai Metin* catalogue, August 1996)

Dona Verónica's *tais* and the *Uma Lulik* were encircled by Albie Viegas' lead sculptures: twenty-two *katupa soldados*, marking the number of years since Indonesia's invasion of East Timor (Plate 4). The sculptures symbolised munitions, inspired by the hand grenade, but they also evoked the shape and texture of the popular Timorese dish *katupa* in which glutinous, coconut rice is wrapped in young palm leaves. Mounted on tripods, the *katupa soldados* initially appeared forbidding and sinister. The symbolic juxtaposing of lead and rice represented a poisoning of nourishment and yet, the rice-stuffing also suggested a softening; the possibility of something nurturing and hopeful.

² *Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)



Plate 4. *Katupa Soldados*

The exhibition opening was accompanied by a series of cultural performances enacted over a three-day period by members of the Sydney-based East Timorese community. Returning daily to the exhibition space, I witnessed the snaking processions of Timorese women dancing to the solemn and rhythmic drum beat of *tebedai*, the older women leading, younger women following (Plate 5). Arcane purification rituals were conducted and prayers enunciated. The youth choir sang a repertoire of protest songs in English (*Stand Up and Fight Back! You've Got Nothing to Lose!*) and in Tetum, the *lingua franca* of East Timor (*Mate ka Moris! Ukun Rasik A'an; Kolele Mai*) (Plate 6).³ My response was visceral. This was no simple demonstration of East Timorese cultural retrieval and re-articulation: there was something far more complex going on. I felt as if I were watching a piece of theatre unfold. *Tuba Rai Metin*, it seemed to me, was a symbolically and emotionally charged performance in which specific social obligations were being produced and elaborated.

³ *Mate ka Moris*: 'Death or Life! Independence' was written by Abé ho Aloz (Barreto Soares 1996:37). *Kolele Mai*: 'What is the reason?' This popular traditional Timorese song from the Baucau region uses a standard stylistic practice in which the story is punctuated by the story teller's rhetorical questions to the audience (Joliffe 1976:49). The lyrics of *Kolele Mai* were reworked by the Timorese poet, Fransisco da Costa Borja, as part of Fretilin's campaign of cultural revival in 1975.



Plate 5. Women performing *tebedai* (Timorese dance)



Plate 6. *Hananu Kore A'an*

East Timorese activists set up stalls selling political publications as well as East Timorese poetry: I purchased them all. The Timorese participants socialised and networked with exhibition attendees from a range of religious and community solidarity groups but critically, I think, they performed a social duty. The young choir members looked subdued and tired and, on this occasion, they sang slightly off-key. Yet, I was moved by their performance. Why was that? Albie Viegas, commented at the time: “The choir has been so good for these kids. It’s like they’re finding their voice; their voice is becoming stronger. When they first started singing, you could hardly hear them”.

This was the business of everyday life for East Timorese living in exile. It involved the articulation and amplification of a voice that needed to be heard, not only by the broader Australian public, nor indeed by an international audience, but by diasporic East Timorese themselves as an affirmation of their existence and as a palliative for their predicament. The exhibition was not so much concerned with the aesthetic expression of sacred art objects and traditions but with the complexity and tragedy of East Timorese lived experience. Indeed, the aesthetic preoccupation of *Tuba Rai Metin* and of the wider East Timorese community generally reflected that experience in expressly painful terms: grief for the dead; the pain of exile and the trauma of dislocation; the pain of survival and of suffering; the pain that comes from continually revisiting that suffering.

As a result of my accidental encounter with *Tuba Rai Metin*, my research took an unexpected and momentous turn. I took up an invitation to visit the East Timorese Relief Association (ETRA), a Timorese non-government organisation based in Parramatta in Sydney's western suburbs, with whom I would soon work as a volunteer. That visit propelled me into a complex world of East Timor diaspora politics and activism and, most importantly, towards research that focused on youth identities. I was 'in the field' before I knew it and the fieldwork quite suddenly acquired a life of its own. My initial disappointment at not being able to do fieldwork in Indonesia quickly evaporated and I became fully involved with this most compelling, inspiring and challenging of research itineraries. My central interest in the cultural formations that result from displacement, migration, exile and diaspora remained constant, but the focus shifted away from inter-island migrancy and marginality within Indonesia, to the context of displacement and loss in the East Timorese diaspora.



Plate 7. *Tuba Rai Metin* reconstituted, Djamu Gallery, Sydney, February 1999⁴

⁴ *Tuba Rai Metin* began its journey in Darwin in 1996 and travelled to Sydney and Canberra in 1997. It was re-presented in Sydney, at the Djamu Gallery on Circular Quay, in February 1999 (Plate 7). By that time, the installation had been reconfigured according to the major political shifts of that time, including President Suharto's resignation in 1998 and President Habibie's pledge to hold a popular consultation on East Timorese autonomy. The exhibition opening in 1999 was a major event for Sydney-based East Timorese, coinciding with the visit of East Timor's religious leader, Bishop Ximenes Filipe, Belo in Sydney. Both he and Dr. José Ramos-Horta, who shared the 1996 Nobel Peace prize, attended the exhibition's re-launch in February 1999. The catalogue noted the upbeat yet still uncertain mood of the diasporic community: "As talk of independence gathers international momentum, and it must be said, generates daunting levels of confusion, there is real promise and optimism about the future. In the current configuration the *Katupa Soldados* lie deflated at the *uma-lulik*, inside of which is the *Sumasu*, 23 latex pillows stuffed with unhusked rice from a recent East Timorese harvest. In providing nourishment, comfort and rest, they offer hope."

Introduction

What you chart is already where you've been. But where we are going, there is no chart yet.

Audre Lorde¹

¹ Audre Lorde in Grewal et al. (1988:130)

This research explores East Timoresehood as a complex and evolving identity in which Timorese ‘frontiers’, both physical and psychic, have been drawn and redrawn over time and through space. It deals specifically with the sense of displacement and ambiguity that underpins the social identities of young East Timorese living in Australia. These are identities that necessarily grapple with a fissured sense of home and belonging and the everyday “out-of-country...even out of language” experiences (Rushdie 1991:2) that constitute life in diaspora.

Questions of home and belonging are thoroughly contested among diasporic communities and the issue of identity is never quite settled, even for those who consider themselves more or less ‘at home’ in their sense of belonging (Brah 1996:2). The lives of East Timorese in diaspora have been profoundly shaped by the double disjuncture of radical political upheaval, violence and loss incurred by Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor since 1975, and of refugeehood and adjustment within complex new urban contexts. Timorese refugee experiences have involved multiple displacements resulting in transnational identities that cross and incorporate several worlds. This study seeks to understand how young Timorese have dealt with multiple and shifting social and physical landscapes and the simultaneous connections and disconnections between home, locality and nation these entail. In short, it seeks to provide some insight into the ways in which young Timorese create a sense of self and place in diaspora and how they live in, and imagine space.

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of youth, the study focuses primarily on ‘nineties’ Timorese youth – that is, young people who were in their teens or early twenties when they fled East Timor in the wake of the Dili Massacre in 1991. They are part of the *Gerasaun Foun*, the generation of youth brought up and educated during the period of Indonesian military occupation of East Timor under the authoritarian regime of President Suharto.² The terrain on which this generation grew up was significantly different to that of their parents, who were socialised under Portuguese colonialism, and to second-generation Timorese born and educated in diaspora. So too, their experience differs substantially from an emerging generation of youth in contemporary, post-occupation East Timor.

² Suharto’s twenty-two year presidency (1966-1998) concluded abruptly with his resignation in 1998, following mass student demonstrations in Indonesia.

As children, the nineties Timorese experienced displacement, military persecution and state-sponsored terror. As adolescents many of them became involved in clandestine activities and mass political protest. In exile, they were precariously positioned as asylum seekers within the Australian nation and caught up in protracted legal proceedings.

The research considers the ways in which young nineties Timorese negotiated their experiences of displacement and marginality in diaspora, as well as the immensity of a highly politicised Timorese identity, often framed by young people themselves in terms of an embodied 'weight' and a visceral, and occasionally overwhelming, sense of moral responsibility. In the diaspora, the evocation of traumatic memory has been central to the preservation of a uniquely East Timorese identity and its reconstitution in a breached world. Memory has thus been called upon to legitimate a very specific and homogenous East Timorese identity and to reconstruct it through public ritual. Yet an over-determination of such a monological discourse threatened to subsume the heterogeneous experiences and possible alterities of young Timorese and the diversity of Timorese cultural expression. This study thus explores the interplay between a monological discourse that articulates a cohesive public identity that implies an 'authentic' East Timorese identity and a dialogical discourse through which more ambiguous and hybrid identities emerge.

The unwieldy field: scope of the research and methodology

Fieldwork for this project formally took place between 1997 and 2000, during a remarkable moment in East Timor's recent history. The political upheavals occurring within Indonesia at that time signalled a sea change in Indonesia's relationship with East Timor, and indeed Australia. The financial crisis of 1997; the collapse of the Suharto New Order regime in mid-1998; the incumbent President Habibie's more conciliatory approach towards the province – these had opened up a space of opportunity in which the possibility of independence would become a reality. Yet despite the relative freedom of movement and expression these shifts occasioned within East Timor, Timorese themselves, both inside and outside, remained circumspect, noting the changes "with half an eye" (Benjamin Corte-Real, pers. comm. 1998).

The study was conducted primarily in Sydney's western suburbs, in the notional and geographic margins of that capital city where an estimated 6 to 8,000 East Timorese lived during the period of fieldwork, but the research also draws from the experiences of young Timorese in other diasporic locations including the UK, Ireland and Canada, as well as in East Timor itself. The global reach of the study reflects anthropology's shifting parameters and priorities. While traditional ethnographic methods once privileged a purely empiricist and positivistic method of anthropological data gathering in a single locale, much contemporary fieldwork no longer conforms to the conventional anthropological norm of intensive-dwelling-in-place for an extensive period of time (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The East Timorese diaspora represents emergent, dynamic and dramatically shifting cultural spaces, experiences and communities that are complexly linked by networks that transcend geopolitical boundaries through the continuous flow of bodies, money, goods, information and meanings. The identity narratives of young nineties Timorese cannot be easily enclosed within the frame of a suburb, a town, or even a nation. East Timoresehood as a field of sociality cannot simply be defined by place and co-residency but is better understood through the consideration of relationships across time and through space. I thus follow Tsing (2007:ix) in proposing an "ethnography of global connection" as a means to capture the spatially dispersed alliances and interconnections that shape and influence young Timorese lives in diaspora.

In the contemporary world, most of us feel that our sense of place and belonging involves explorations of not simply the fixed, the routine and the repetitious in our everyday lives, but also the apparently tenuous, the transitory and the impermanent. This is especially true for refugee communities and asylum seekers for whom notions of home and belonging are particularly fragile. These days, anthropologists too must deal more closely with the impermanence, incoherence and the fluidity of social relations. To grasp the full impact of Timorese diasporic youth experience in Australia required an innovative approach. As such, the research took up the challenges of 'multi-sited' ethnography as the most appropriate means of tracing the threads of a highly transnational process (Marcus 1995).

The difficulties of conducting long-term community-based field research among diasporic East Timorese in Australia have been noted by Askland (2007:236). To begin with, the East Timorese community in Sydney is not conveniently located within contiguous neighbourhoods. While the majority of Timorese households were located in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Fairfield and Liverpool, the community was scattered across areas as distant as Campbelltown and Blacktown (see Map 2). These LGAs are densely populated and traffic congestion is a key constraint to easy mobility through the city. In addition, while community organisations and social, religious and political events provided focal points for Timorese, the pulse of the research participants' lives ranged well beyond these sites of community engagement. There was no simple entry point into the lives of young Timorese and I spent a good deal of time, as Askland did, negotiating multiple points of entry through various organisations, activities and events in order to establish relationships with young nineties Timorese across Greater Western Sydney.

In my own case, fieldwork logistics were complicated by family commitments in Canberra and I regularly commuted to Sydney over a three-year period, spending weekends and school holidays at community meetings, participating in religious and social activities, attending political demonstrations, performing with a Timorese youth choir and doing volunteer work for a Timorese NGO. These were the foundational interactions through which I increasingly socialised with young Timorese whose own family and friendship networks spanned not only Sydney and other Australian cities but also Europe, Canada and parts of Asia. These were linkages I hoped to trace for, as much as their lives were grounded in localities such as Sydney's western suburbs, the experiences of young nineties Timorese were also made meaningful through overlapping and intersecting global interconnections.

When I first presented my research proposal at a seminar at the Australian National University, some interlocutors expressed concern that conducting field research in such an "unwieldy" environment of transnational linkages and dispersed neighbourhoods might yield superficial results (cf Passaro 1997). Yet, while I understood the practicalities of setting geographical boundaries, the fieldwork required that I move in and out of and across neighbourhoods and

events and people's lives, just as the East Timorese themselves did. In this way I felt that I would capture a better understanding of the reality of diasporic lives and the complexity of their social relations and trajectories. However uncontrolled and unmanageable it might have appeared, that was and is the reality of the globalised world in which diasporic Timorese, and anthropologists, live.

Since diasporic Sydney refused to be neatly spatialised, the fieldwork required a high degree of researcher mobility and resourcefulness. I came to rely on a wide network of people and organisations to help me negotiate 'the field' and maintain and follow connections. Technology also became increasingly vital to the organisation and maintenance of field relations in Sydney and beyond, especially the internet and the humble mobile phone. Chambers (1994:50-2) has described the Walkman as "a privileged object of contemporary nomadism...[which] contributes to the prosthetic extension of mobile bodies caught up in a decentred diffusion of languages, experiences, identities". The same can be said of the mobile phone. It is a medium used to reinforce and to map community through space, especially among the young. While many Timorese families in the western suburbs of Sydney were hard-pressed to afford and maintain a land-line, or had a block placed on outgoing calls as an economy measure, all of the young East Timorese I knew owned a succession of mobile phones and seemed to have an uncanny instinct for finding the best deals with maximum free-time.

Multi-sited fieldwork inevitably raises questions not only of project parameters and the taken-for-granted nature of fields, but of the negotiation of boundaries created and mediated by people themselves which are often complicated by boundaries constructed within the anthropological project. As Bolton (1999:154) points out:

Conventionally there is a crucial distance between the field and the university, between the place where research is undertaken, and the place where it is written. Conventionally also, this distance is exemplified in particular in entry and exit narratives, and the way in which this distance creates the anthropologist as outsider is taken to be analytically beneficial.

The assumption that an epistemology of “otherness” ensures objectivity is no longer viewed as a geographical given in anthropology (Passaro 1997:152). Indeed, the very boundaries that separate the seemingly opposed positions of researcher/researched and field/non-field are also potentially enabling linkages in our social interactions (Bolton 1999:154). Analytical distance is achieved less through the constitution of absolute boundaries than through our continual negotiation of the worlds of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and ‘I’ and ‘not-I’ (Nast 1994:57; Trinh 1997:415). In my own case, the field consisted of not one but many interconnected ‘heres’ and ‘theres’ that had me in a constant state of in-between-ness. This condition is familiar to all field researchers for our position is by definition an interstitial one. It is a heightened state, however, for the multi-sited fieldworker. When I first started the project, I imagined the Hume Highway that links Canberra to Sydney as a kind of dividing line between my home and the field. As time went on, the imaginary line became increasingly blurry as field-related activities and activism spilled over into my living room and my departmental office space in Canberra. Suddenly I was everywhere in the field - at political rallies in both Sydney and Canberra, in the ETRA office in Parramatta where I worked as a volunteer, at memorial services, at press releases, in meetings with NGOs and government institutions, in cyberspace, on the telephone, even at the cinema. ‘Home’ and ‘field’ spaces became harder to separate out, and to speak of going ‘into the field’ every time I drove to the western suburbs seemed faintly absurd.

Methodologically, I employed the classical anthropological techniques of in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, as well as conducting archival research and analysis of print and audio-visual media, including cultural artefacts, museum displays, dramatic and musical performances and poetry. The study is substantially based on in-depth interview material with a core group of seventeen young Sydney-based ‘nineties’ Timorese asylum seekers aged between 16 and 26 years, all of whom were affected by the events in 1991 that led to the Dili Massacre. Their narratives are enlarged by numerous informal discussions and interviews with extended family members and friends, both in Australia and in East Timor. The material is enriched by personal contact and dialogue via email with two Canada-based Timorese activists and informal interviews with several Timorese “fence-

jumpers” based in the UK and Ireland.³ The research also draws from encounters with young members of the clandestine movement, members of Falintil⁴ and leaders of youth organisations inside occupied East Timor. Many of these interlocutors, aged in their late twenties and mid-thirties, self-identified as ‘youth’. Their contributions helped me to understand the dynamics of social change within East Timor and the elasticity of the concept of youth in the context of the struggle for independence.

The fieldwork in Greater Western Sydney occurred within some of the most culturally diverse regions in Australia. In the city of Fairfield, which has the largest concentration of Timorese households, residents speak over 70 different languages other than English. More than half of Fairfield’s population was born overseas and almost all of these come from a non-English speaking country (DIMIA 2003; see Table 1, overleaf). The area attracts a significant proportion of newly arrived migrants and among those prioritised by Fairfield Council as “emerging communities” are: Afghani, Fijian, East Timorese, Hindi, Iranian, Sudanese, Turkish, Kurdish and Samoan communities (Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre 2002). The adjacent LGA of Liverpool, which has the second largest concentration of Timorese households, has an equally heterogeneous overseas-born population. Just under half the population speak a language other than English (LOTE) including Arabic, Italian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Hindi, Serbian, Greek, Tagalog, Chinese languages and Croatian (Liverpool City Council 2004).

³ The term “fence jumpers” refers to young Timorese activists who protested the occupation by gaining entry to foreign embassies in Jakarta in the mid-nineties. Some were granted political asylum in European countries where they continued to work as activists, supported by religious and solidarity groups. These young people maintained a far higher public profile as activists and spokespersons for the independence campaign than most of the Australia-based participants. This is not only because their exile was politically strategic but also because there was no significant pre-existing diasporic presence in these contexts. Solidarity groups in Europe, Canada and the United States therefore necessarily deferred to these young student activists as authoritative focal points.

⁴ *Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor). Falintil was established in late 1975 as the military arm of the resistance movement against Indonesian occupation.

Table 1

Main Non-English Speaking Background (NESB)
communities in Fairfield by Language Spoken

Language Total (of total population: 181,900)
Arabic 8794
Assyrian 8882
Cantonese 10592
Croatian 4066
Khmer 5842
Italian 8784
Macedonian 1885
Mandarin 4289
Maltese 1582
Polish 1098
Lao 2249
Serbian 4790
Spanish 8866
Tagalog 2249
Teo Chew 1601
Vietnamese 28050

Source: ABC Census data 2001
(Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre 2002:7)

Sydney's western suburbs are demographically among the city's youngest and fastest growing. Despite this, youth-designated spaces and facilities are limited and declining as local government policies respond to moral panics and move to 'defend' the public from the threat of 'disorderly' youth on the streets.⁵ Much has been documented about the historical under-provisioning of human services in western Sydney, such as education and health, and the ways in which this has contributed to the region's structural disadvantage (Hodge 1996). As well, media representations have routinely reinforced negative images of the western suburbs:

[T]he constant repetition of stories of problems and neglect, about the excess of disadvantage, crime, violence, unemployment and lack of facilities, services, wealth, education and so on, creates an image of the western suburbs as Sydney's western "other." Powell (1993:xvii)

⁵ By 2000, for example, Fairfield mall had been returned to traffic in order to prevent young people from loitering and gathering in groups. There, youth unemployment exceeded 20% (Sydney Morning Herald, 26/2/2000:1, 6-7). Thomas (1999:105) also notes that popular perceptions of the 'undesirable' public presence of Vietnamese youth in Cabramatta compelled one (non-Vietnamese) shopping centre manager to install close circuit surveillance cameras as means to evict Asian boys from his store.

Furthermore, Mee (1994) argues that the media's use of frontier metaphors in describing western Sydney as a violent and threatening place, with Cabramatta as its symbolic heartland and 'Asian' drugs capital, has contributed to this fearful 'othering'. The stigmatising of distinct urban spaces has very real consequences for those who are caught up in the skeins of structural and attitudinal discrimination. Cabramatta, for example, where many Timorese live and socialise and where the Timorese Australia Council is located, is a deeply impregnated term:

Cabramatta is an area encoded with several layers of meaning. It is spatially peripheral and is thus marginalized in several dimensions, being coded as 'migrant', working class and poor (Symonds 1997). Furthermore, it has developed a culture of resistance against the inner city – the centre – because being labeled 'Asian' also means being marginalised in the social structuring of the city and labour market. (Thomas 1999:86)

While the West is monolithically and oppositionally constructed in relation to Sydney's more privileged core, Mee (1988) suggests that it is more usefully and more realistically understood as 'a variety of western Sydneys'. These are, however, not discontinuous but interconnected spaces across and through which complex and shifting sets of social relationships are negotiated and encountered by young nineties Timorese.

Fieldwork in East Timor took place in October and November 1998. I took the opportunity to travel at the same time as Josephite Sister Joan Westblade, a health worker at the Motael Clinic in Dili, and Jenni Kanaley, who was then working with the Mary Mackillop Institute of East Timor Studies (MMIETS) using art and craft as a way of getting humanitarian aid into Timor. The Josephite Sisters from MMIETS, based in Sydney, were well-known and respected for their work in literacy and health and they travelled regularly to Timor. Being connected with MMIETS, however loosely, provided a veneer of non-threatening neutrality in an era when all foreign visitors to Timor were viewed with suspicion by the Indonesian authorities. The trip was organised for me by friends at the East Timor Relief Association, a Timorese NGO based in Parramatta in western Sydney. They were members of CNRT⁶ with strong links

⁶ *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorese* (National Council of East Timorese Resistance) was as a non-partisan umbrella organisation established by a National Timorese Convention in

to the clandestine network in East Timor. I was met at the airport and taken to the home of a CNRT activist and his wife, who were also the parents of three young asylum seekers living in Australia. Through them, I made contact with the families of other young asylum seekers as well as young activists in Dili. My field notes from that time recall the intensity of the experience and my confusion and nervousness on arrival:

At Dili airport, I am met by Pedro, Antonio, José and Dina. Pedro speaks good English, which is a relief as I'm struggling to resuscitate my Indonesian. He takes my arm and reminds me we can't talk freely here. I wonder who's watching, whether I'll be stopped and questioned, but no-one checks my documents. I am ushered into a car with tinted windows and Pedro, speaking rapidly, begins to tell me where we're going and what possible plans they have for me. He tells me things are much freer now, post-Suharto, but it's made clear to me that my movements have consequences – for me, for them, for others who may wish to make contact with me. I am not free to wander off on my own. I am to ask if I wish to go somewhere. It's clear that I have been placed in their care and they take this responsibility seriously, with good reason. I am fretting about the potential risk I represent for them and I try to think sensibly about the briefing I received from ETRA but I can't, it's too hot.

At José and Dina's, I give them the clothing, medical supplies and messages I've carried with me from Sydney. After we've talked and watched a video of their exiled children performing with the youth choir Hananu Kore A'an, it's time for a rest. I lie on my bed as rain falls from the sky and lightening rips through Dili. My ankles feel swollen. My face is flushed and sweaty, hair gone mad, coiling itself into clammy ringlets in the humidity...

Later in the evening, the younger members of the household emerge. They sing quietly and play guitars. I give them one of João's reggae tapes from Sydney. They are rapt, but very shy. I am uncomfortable being the centre of attention. As I talk to José in Indonesian, they are quiet as mice, taking in every word...

Field Journal, Dili 1998

This was a time when there were few *malae* (foreigners) in East Timor and a white face attracted a lot of attention. There were a handful of journalists and photographers in Dili, masquerading as “school teachers”, including the reporter John Martinkus who was investigating rumours of a massacre at Alas.⁷ Some remained for the commemoration of the Dili Massacre on November 12th, but others left to cover the *Reformasi* (Reformation) protests in Jakarta.⁸ It was, as I

Portugal in April 1998, aimed at uniting various political nationalist organisations. The leader of the resistance movement, Xanana Gusmão, who was then incarcerated in Cipinang Prison in Jakarta, was unanimously elected as its President.

⁷ See Martinkus (2001:83-87, 94-95, 97-107).

⁸ Following Suharto's resignation in May 1998, Vice-President Habibie took over the presidency and announced a new “Reformation Cabinet”. By November 1998, many Indonesians were tired of waiting for reform and worried by the economic crisis. Continuing demonstrations turned

have indicated, an extraordinary time for East Timorese and the sense of anticipation and optimism in Dili was palpable. Slogans on the streets declared “*Otonomi [Autonomy] No! Referendum Yes!*” and Indonesian police and military were noticeably low profile. Outside Dili was a different matter. Apart from a tense trip west, to Ermera, where we were given a Seiko watch believed to be that of deceased Australian journalist Greg Shackleton,⁹ and a family funeral at Bobonaro close to the West Timorese border, we were unable to travel freely in the districts. The eastern districts, in particular, had a heavy military presence and were declared too *panas* (BI hot).

Almost a year later, I undertook fieldwork in the UK and Ireland (August-September 1999). This coincided with the UN-supervised popular consultation in East Timor on August 30th, which saw a 98% turnout of East Timor’s voting population and in which 78.5% of voters rejected autonomy within Indonesia in favour of independence. The referendum took place without major incident but in the ensuing weeks thousands of Timorese were killed by anti-separatist militias, the territory’s infrastructure was destroyed and 500,000 terrorised civilians fled into the country’s interior or across the border into west Timor. I made contact with church and activist networks, such as TAPOL¹⁰ in London, and the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign (ETISC) and Amnesty International in Dublin, and joined demonstrations calling for UN intervention to end the terror campaign. Through these networks, I met and interviewed young Timorese student activists and solidarity workers living in London, Oxford, Liverpool and Dublin. They generally lived in areas of marked social deprivation within these cities, with sizeable migrant populations of mainly South Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. They relied heavily on the financial and practical support of religious and solidarity organisations which, in turn, provided the means for them to participate in high-level meetings and speaking tours across Europe.

violent and on November 13th nine demonstrators were killed during protests near Atma Jaya University in Jakarta.

⁹ Greg Shackleton was among a group of journalists, now remembered as the Balibo Five, who were murdered by Indonesian military troops on October 16th 1975 while investigating Indonesian incursions into East Timor prior to the Indonesian invasion on December 7th. The watch was returned to Greg’s wife, Shirley, through the solidarity network in Sydney but to my knowledge it was not conclusively identified as having belonged to the deceased.

¹⁰ TAPOL, meaning ‘political prisoner’ in Indonesian, was founded in 1973 to promote human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia.

Throughout the study, I juxtapose classical anthropological techniques and analytical modes of representation with a narrative and reflexive style of writing. Narrative styles of story telling are expressly used to ‘give voice’ to the key actors involved in this study, primarily young East Timorese and, where appropriate, to their parents and elders, Timorese community leaders and community workers, members of the Catholic Church and solidarity activists. In an attempt to foreground young people’s own accounts of their experiences, I have included not only extracts of their narratives from interviews but parts of interview conversations, as well as extracts from fieldwork journals, to reveal the dynamics of the research process and my own implication within it.

Most of the young people mentioned in the text have been given pseudonyms, out of respect for their privacy and vulnerability and some comprise composite personas to further obfuscate their identification. I do not conceal the identities of high profile young Timorese activists and musicians where they have spoken publicly at demonstrations, conferences and other public fora, or where respondents’ comments have been published with permission under their real names (for example, Crockford 2000). Where respondents spoke to me confidentially, however, I have taken care to disguise their identities whether they were public figures or not. Conversations in Australia were generally conducted in English and occasionally in *Bahasa Indonesia* or a mixture of both. In East Timor discussions were usually conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia*, although one interview with two very young Falintil commanders in East Timor was conducted in Tetun and translated for me, since they had been brought up and educated in the mountains and spoke only Tetun and Portuguese.

Given the vulnerability of youth and marginalised groups generally, and the nature of power relations between researchers and participants, ethical field practice has been of paramount importance (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998; Alderson 1995). Above all, developing a facility for active listening and an empathetic understanding of the social world of young people has been crucial to this research. Building relationships with research participants required sensitivity and, wherever possible, the use of methodologies based on friendship, trust, empathy and dialogue. It meant providing young people with safe ways of opting both in and out of the research to minimise any sense of

obligation to disclose information and respecting participants' preferences for, and enabling their control over, research methods and choice of milieu for our exchanges. It involved being accessible to respondents informally, sharing personal experiences and knowledge and being receptive to their questioning and curiosity concerning my own cultural and personal identity values. Methodologies that promote mutual respect also require an alertness of the limits of our social claims, as researchers, to participants' lives and experiences. Ethical research bestows upon us a responsibility not to engage in academic voyeurism and expose the hidden spaces that participants may occupy for strategic reasons (Nast 1994:58; England 1994:80-89). This behoves us to make carefully considered choices concerning the political and personal implications of our projects and our representational texts.

Navigating the field: establishing a field presence and positionality

I began this project by working as a part-time volunteer for the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA). ETRA was formed in early 1992, within months of the Dili Massacre, at the behest of the leader of the East Timorese national resistance, Xanana Gusmão, and under the direction of his personal representative in exile, Dr José Ramos-Horta. ETRA primarily focused on public awareness campaigns and advocacy work, as well as raising funds for humanitarian aid projects within East Timor, but it was also involved in a number of community health, literacy and cultural projects in Sydney. Community development within Australia was complicated by the magnitude of settlement issues facing the Timorese community, its marginal status as an ethnic minority and the diversity within the community itself in terms of ethnicity, language and political affiliation. While development efforts inside East Timor were constrained in the pre-independence period, ETRA maintained a conflict-sensitive approach and contributed to agricultural, health and literacy programs through its links with the Catholic Church and Timorese and Indonesian NGOs. ETRA staff also participated in interagency consultation involving mainstream and ethnic-specific organizations at local, national and global levels and this became an important vehicle for mediation, networking and support.

My location as an ETRA volunteer, and later as their liaison officer in Canberra, and the support of ETRA's executive and staff were pivotal to the successful navigation and implementation of my project. It was they who initially encouraged me to attend cultural and political events in Sydney and in Melbourne and who increasingly included me in their, often indistinguishable, social activities and political work. They were supportive of my interest in 'youth' as a research focus and made special efforts to introduce me to young East Timorese in Sydney, as well as community and church leaders, journalists and solidarity workers. Importantly, Dr. José Ramos-Horta, at that time the Special Representative of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM)¹¹ graciously agreed to be an academic advisor to my project. His endorsement of the research proved critical at a time when East Timor related studies were not commonplace in the Australian academy.

ETRA was staffed mostly by volunteers, both East Timorese and Australian, all of whom operated under the direction of veteran diaspora activists, Agio Pereira,¹² Ines Almeida¹³ and Céu Brites.¹⁴ These three were politically affiliated with the politically inclusive and party-neutral CNRT having relinquished their former membership of the socialist-inspired Fretilin party. My alliance with ETRA inevitably shaped my perspectives and positioned me within East Timorese diaspora politics both in Sydney and beyond. The identification significantly helped to establish my credentials as a researcher, particularly when I was travelling overseas and needed to establish contact quickly with

¹¹ *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Maubere* (National Council of Maubere Resistance). The CNRM was reframed in 1998 as the *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorese* (National Council of East Timorese Resistance).

¹² Agio Pereira was studying in Portugal when Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975. He translocated to Australia in 1982. A biologist and singer, he became director of the Sydney-based East Timor Relief Association in 1992 and travelled extensively campaigning for East Timorese independence. Agio returned to East Timor in 1999, following the withdrawal of the Indonesian military, and was appointed General Coordinator of the CNRT's National Emergency Commission (NEC). He held the office of Chief of Staff to President Xanana Gusmão from 2002-2006.

¹³ Ines de Almeida fled to Australia with her family in 1975 and has lived most of her adult life in Sydney. She was an executive in the East Timor Relief Association and travelled extensively, participating in the 1997 Beijing International Women's Conference and the UN sponsored Intra-Timorese dialogue series in Austria. Ines returned to East Timor in 1999 and was appointed media relations officer in the Office of the CNRT President.

¹⁴ Céu Brites was born in East Timor in 1962 and fled to Australia with her family in 1975. She became an activist in the late 1970s and campaigned widely on women's issues, self-determination and human rights. She was an executive member of both the East Timorese Relief Association and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP). Céu took part in the 1997 Beijing International Women's Conference and worked for the Omomo Pacific Women's group. She returned to East Timor in 1999 to work for the Save the Children Fund.

Timorese activists or solidarity organisations. However, I was also conscious of the need for impartiality. Wise, (2002:88) whose fieldwork in Sydney overlapped with my own, has characterised ETRA as “ostensibly neutral” among Timorese organisations in Sydney. While ETRA promoted the all-inclusive political agenda of CNRT and actively encouraged the involvement of women and youth, ETRA did not constitute a politically immune space. Diaspora politics involved deep conflicts and tensions that refer back to the class-based UDT-Fretilin¹⁵ political factionalism of the past. Shifting political fealties and power struggles in exile divided families and fractured communities and those affiliated with CNRT were inevitably caught up within these dynamics. To fully understand the politics of diasporic identities, it was crucial for me to gain exposure to a broad range of experiences and perspectives. I therefore sought out individuals from across the political spectrum and participated in community events, performances and commemorative occasions, as well as both Fretilin or UDT functions.¹⁶ I was also a periodic member of the youth choir *Hananu Kore A'an* (Singing for Freedom), a cultural project initially established by ETRA for young Timorese asylum seekers but whose membership was in fact neither confined to youth, nor required Timorese ethnicity. As such the choir included a fluid coalition of Timorese of all ages as well as non-Timorese solidarity workers and musicians.

As the fieldwork progressed, the routine practices of anthropology and the practical work of political activism converged. Gradually, the tiny, overcrowded, chaotic ETRA office became for me a home of sorts. This was of personal importance since I did not have a home-base in Sydney. In the earliest days of the fieldwork, I commuted from Canberra by public transport and stayed in youth hostels in Central Sydney but as I needed to be more mobile, I reluctantly gave up the luxury of the train in favour of my own ageing VW fastback and began to rely upon the hospitality of East Timorese friends. As time went on I became increasingly involved in ETRA's work helping to translate documents from *Bahasa Indonesia*, editing reports, speeches, press releases and articles for

¹⁵ *União Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Democratic Union); *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)

¹⁶ Other Timorese political and community organizations in Sydney included Fretilin; UDT; the Timorese Australia Council (TAC); Timorese Chinese Association and the East Timor Cultural Centre (ETCC).

the newsletter *Matebian News*, and cataloguing archival materials. While I also spent a good deal of my time at public rallies and commemorations, I recognise that much of my learning came about during the more ordinary moments, hanging out with Timorese volunteers, who included young asylum seekers, waiting for things to happen; making dinner; running errands; shopping for food and office supplies and keeping people company. It was often at those times that people would reveal, quite casually, the most startling things about themselves and others involved in the worlds of diaspora and solidarity politics.

Somewhat unexpectedly, photography came to play an important role in my field research. To some extent, my role as photographer was established for me very early in the fieldwork. I was encouraged to photograph community occasions (rallies, commemorations, cultural celebrations) to provide images for ETRA's archives and for their newsletter, *Matebian News*. As an anthropologist whose brief was to blend in, observe and be generally inconspicuous, that role gave me a legitimacy and a freedom of movement at political and social occasions, enabling me to witness events and interactions from a variety of angles. Viewing the world from behind a camera paradoxically offered a simultaneous connection with and a detachment from people and events. Usefully then, the lens can operate as a filter of experience:

It's clear that one becomes hypersensitised during a period like this, as if the camera frees one to enter the world in a more vivid and uninhibited way. It's like a prosthesis for a capacity one never had in the first place or else lost, without realising it. (David MacDougall, pers. comm. 2000¹⁷)

When I visited East Timor in 1998, the photographic image became more compelling as Timorese continually implored *malae* (foreigners) to document and 'bear witness' to their lives on film. There was an acute understanding among East Timorese of the power of *malae* to project images out into the world. Returning to Australia in 1998, my photographs took on a different imperative providing a tangible link between people and places, particularly for those who could not, for legal and security reasons, return home. More tragically now, the photographs constitute a record, or a genealogy, whereby people mark

¹⁷ David MacDougall is an ethnographic film-maker based at the Centre for Cross Cultural Research at the Australian National University. The comment comes from a discussion about his field research and film work in an elite boys' boarding school in India.

off the living, the dead and the disappeared. It is gratifying that the possibility exists now to return photographs to those who feature in them, or at least to their families. Photographs ultimately represent so much more than just souvenirs from the field, or illustrations for our written work and formal presentations. They constitute potent artefacts that provide us with – in John Berger’s words (1989) – ‘another way of telling’. When words fail, images can eloquently speak.

Anthropologist as ‘witness’

When I first began the research in 1997, the range of emotive and sceptical responses my choice of field, and fieldwork, seemed to evoke among non-Timorese initially surprised me. In the early stages, a good friend warned of the risks of becoming too involved in the ‘East Timor issue’ citing the tragic death of East Timor activist, Michelle Turner.¹⁸ At the time, overly convinced perhaps of my own resilience and self-discipline as a field-researcher, I dismissed him as over-anxious and paranoid. Later, I had cause to reflect upon his concerns as East Timor slid further into chaos with accelerating militia violence and the traumatic revelations of the Alas and Liquica massacres in October 1998 and February 1999 respectively. As I watched East Timorese friends and colleagues grapple with their own personal and communal grief and the complexity of emotions and the helplessness that arose from being in a relatively safe and secure environment while friends and family were threatened and without protection, I too became increasingly depressed, saddened and appalled by the terror and trauma of unfolding events in East Timor. At the same time, I also felt a deepening moral obligation to stand in solidarity with people with whom I had spent so much time, who had shared so much with me and whose pain I was unable to ignore.

Acknowledging that a degree of detachment is a crucial safeguard against over-identification in any research context, negotiating the tension between those two poles is something many anthropologists must inevitably grapple with. The work of Nancy Scheper-Hughes in Latin America, for example, gave her cause to

¹⁸ The East Timor support movement was devastated by Michele Turner’s suicide in Hobart in 1995. She was considered a great friend of the East Timorese people and was the grand-daughter of an Australian commando who served in East Timor during WW2. She spent ten years interviewing hundreds of exiled Timorese in Australia and recorded their stories in her powerful book *Telling: East Timor, Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*.

reconsider the traditional role of the anthropologist as “fearless spectator” (1995:410).¹⁹ Her shift from cautious onlooker and commentator to politically committed and morally engaged anthropologist was encouraged by the activist men and women who drew her out of the private world of their shanty towns and squatter camps and into a world of police stations, public morgues and public floggings. The trade-off for losing the “chameleon-like ambidexterity” (1995:411) of a politically-uncommitted field researcher was the enrichment of her understanding of and relationships with the communities with whom she worked, as well as her liberation from the constricting theoretical and epistemological frames in which she had previously thought and worked.

Here my own field practice inevitably diverges from that of Wise (2002) whose research explored processes of identity making among East Timorese in Sydney’s West in the post-occupation period (1999-2002). Wise was at pains to avoid being politically positioned and therefore “chose to work with individuals and community groups outside of the struggle” (2002:10). Separating the ‘political realm’ and ‘quotidian Timorese-ness’, as Wise was able to do, was harder to achieve in the context of my own fieldwork which substantially took place prior to the dramatic and rapid decolonisation of East Timor in 1999. Like Scheper-Hughes, I did not set out to make activism part of my field activity and persona. Like Wise, my inclination was to position myself as apolitically and unobtrusively as possible. In the early days, public demonstrations made me slightly self-conscious and I recall with some embarrassment being handed a megaphone by a seasoned Australian activist/elder outside the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra in 1997. When I politely declined to speak publicly, he didn’t miss a beat: “Oh, that’s right,” he said, with visible satisfaction, “I forgot you academics like to sit on the fence!”²⁰ Yet it was an unavoidable fact that the politics of the struggle for independence infused my own as well as the everyday lives of diasporic Timorese to such a degree that there was often little separation

¹⁹ Scheper-Hughes’ research in Northeast Brazil documented the reproductive histories, moral choices and social practices of shanty town mothers concerning the survival and death of their young, hungry babies.

²⁰ In defence of politically engaged anthropology, Jeffrey Sluka has argued (2000:11), that many anthropologists have opted for principled research both as a means of ‘decolonising’ the discipline and of contributing to struggles for social justice. Both Scheper-Hughes (1995) and Michael Taussig (1984; 1987), for example, have appealed to anthropologists to “write back against terror” as a way of breaking the terrible silence and exposing the lies that are endemic in “cultures of terror”.

between public and private worlds. Public rallies and commemorations became as much a part of the research as sitting at people's kitchen tables drinking tea or going to the movies. Activism, quite simply, was a consequence of working at the interface of the public and the private, the physical and the emotional, the social and the political worlds of East Timorese.

Disengaging from the field

It was perhaps due to the intensity of my field engagement and the dramatic denouement of Indonesia's withdrawal from East Timor in September 1999, that ending the research and disengaging from the field was, for me, no simple exit. Leaving the field is characteristically something of a 'return home' for the researcher, but I found it impossible to pinpoint. The referendum in August 1999, which many people sensibly suggested would be a convenient point of closure for my research, only complicated the process of detachment. In October 1999, following the frenzy of post-referendum violence and the re-establishment of a UN presence, a new wave of refugees was airlifted out of East Timor. Some were given safe haven at the East Hills army barracks in Sydney where they remained until early 2000; they included the families of young nineties Timorese who had taken care of me during my visit to East Timor in 1998. The Sydney-based Timorese community rallied, including many of the young nineties Timorese asylum seekers who were employed by the Department of Immigration as interpreters. It was an intense time for everyone: the 1999 refugees were traumatised, anxious and disoriented and the young Timorese interpreters at times found the work emotionally draining. This was not a good point to depart from 'the field'. In fact I did not ever formally leave the field. Instead, the field, or at least significant parts of it, left me. A good number of my Timorese friends and colleagues from ETRA swiftly decamped to East Timor to help rebuild the shattered country, along with many other community leaders. Through 2000, I continued to be involved in ETRA's work with Timorese colleagues who remained but it was difficult to sustain our efforts in the absence of the key players. With the departure of so many of the former protagonists and mobilisers of Timorese communal affairs, so too community events became fewer and I simply found myself travelling to Sydney less and less. Since 2000, I have inevitably lost contact with some of the research participants yet many of the friendships I established during the fieldwork have endured. This lasting

connection has surpassed and erased our researcher/researched differential while at the same time providing me with a rich, longitudinal perspective on the lives and identities of young diasporic nineties Timorese.

Contribution of the research

The study contributes to a small but important body of work on East Timorese diasporic identities in Australia (Morlanes 1991; Thatcher 1992; Wise 2002; Askland 2005). While the work of Morlanes, Thatcher and Wise focuses more generically on diasporic communities within Australia, my own and Askland's research share a specific concern with youth. Theoretically, this study has more in common with that of Wise given our mutual interest in processes of diasporic identity-making in Sydney's western suburbs. My work explores these processes through the lens of nineties Timorese youth focusing on the complex interplay of a number of divergent and interdependent structuring dispositions and dialectical identifications, for example, communality and autonomy; freedom and constraint; exile and home; the global and the local. Askland conducted her field research among young nineties Timorese in Sydney and Melbourne between 2003 and 2004. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, she argues that the agency and practice of young nineties Timorese enabled them to positively negotiate their experiences of displacement and the challenges of their politically liminal status in the host country. She argues that youth are more open and flexible in responding to cultural change and that the asylum seekers' young age at arrival and access to formal education contributed to their successful resettlement. In particular, through their socialisation in schools and TAFE colleges, they were able to acquire the critical survival skill of language.

Our respective contributions similarly deal with the experiences of displacement and agentive capacity of nineties Timorese youth, but my own work features the conflictual complexity of Timoresehood and specifies the shifting dimensions of political agency. I focus in depth on the cultural strategies of identity deployed by young Timorese in negotiating the highly conflictual space of Timorese nationalist politics and its demand for allegiance during a period of intense political transformation in East Timor's recent pre-independence history. I thus address the creative frictions inherent in processes of identity re-evaluation, involving the ineluctable struggle between cultural inheritance ('where they're

from’) and the creation of new ethnicities (‘where they’re *at*’). These processes involve both transnational and intercommunal interconnectivities and disjunctures. This study thus moves beyond the resettlement and cultural accommodation issues detailed by Askland, to explore practices of ethnic experimentation among young nineties Timorese and to show how new forms of Timoresehood are being fashioned. In raising questions of marginality and power, my approach contributes importantly to the elaboration of identity politics within the emerging field of East Timorese youth studies.²¹

The research is by no means a comprehensive analysis of youth experiences, nor can it fully represent the plurality of young diasporic Timorese voices. Rather, it is an ethnography that captures something of the richness and diversity of individual lives and experiences, as well as identifying some general themes and trends in the cultural production of Timorese youth. As such this ethnography, through empirical research with young Timorese, contributes to the much larger and evolving project of East Timorese inventory-making. Given its focus on the diversity of experience among East Timorese youth in the diaspora and the complexity of social dynamics that involve *intra*- as well as *inter*-generational schisms and interconnections, the study has salience for contemporary youth politics and identity struggles within East Timor. While my project focuses primarily on youth identities in the diaspora, it speaks directly to the magnitude of trauma and the reconciliation of difference within Timorese communities, as well as the complex relations of power that operate to marginalise youth. The study raises fundamental questions of youth, identity, gender and difference which also have relevance across the Asia-Pacific region.

East Timor in the Australian psyche

The biographies of diasporic East Timorese, formed within the specific dynamics of Portuguese and Indonesian colonialisms, are also critically inscribed within the narrative of the Australian nation. It is partly journalism and journalists that have anchored the East Timorese independence struggle in the minds of Australians. An early

²¹ In this respect, Bexley’s doctoral research (forthcoming) provides a complementary study of East Timorese youth within Indonesia. Her work focuses on diasporic youth experiences and identity formation throughout the 1990s until post-independence in Indonesia, and later in Timor. (See also Bexley 2007a, 2007b, 2007c and 2007d).

focal point was the killing of the ‘Balibo Five’ in October 1975.²² It was the spilling of their blood – ‘our’ blood – that helped keep East Timor in the Australian popular imagination even as successive Australian governments opted for appeasement of Jakarta, evading the unassailable truth of Indonesian state terror and human rights abuse in the territory:²³

The murders of those five Australian-based journalists fuelled a lasting antipathy within the Australian media towards the Suharto regime and more generally towards the Indonesian state. Indeed, it is arguable that had those men simply been captured and ‘detained for their own safety’ while their equipment was destroyed, the course of Australian-Indonesian relations might have run much more smoothly. But the presumed murders, and a shambolic Indonesian cover-up in which the complicity of Australian officials was automatically assumed, set an entire generation of journalists against the New Order regime and any Australian attempt to deal with it from any basis other than a vaguely hostile reserve. (Birmingham 2001:46)

The deaths cemented themselves firmly in the Australian psyche. The memory of the journalists reverberated throughout the Indonesian occupation of East Timor and their legacy became part of our own, as well as the East Timorese, national political mythology.²⁴ While their brutal slaying contributed profoundly to Australian public sensibilities concerning the East Timor tragedy, the deaths of the journalists can only partly explain the depth of a most complex attachment. Other historical interconnections, such as the “blood bond” (Levy 1998:xiv) forged between Australian commandos and East Timorese during World War 2 when some 60,000 East Timorese

²² The Balibo Five were a group of journalists working for Australian television networks who were killed in the town of Balibo, close to the East Timorese/Indonesian border, on 16 October 1975. The group included two Australians, reporter Greg Shackleton, 27, and sound recordist Tony Stewart, 21, and a New Zealander, cameraman Gary Cunningham, 27, working for HSV-7 (Seven Network) in Melbourne, and two Britons, cameraman Brian Peters, 29, and reporter Malcom Rennie, 28, working for TCN-9 (Nine Network) in Sydney. In November 2007, a New South Wales coroner found that Indonesian soldiers had deliberately killed the journalists to prevent them from reporting Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor. The Indonesian Government has categorically rejected the findings, insisting that the journalists died in crossfire during a skirmish on the border. The coroner’s report has been referred to the Australian federal Attorney General. While the protracted investigations into the deaths of the Balibo Five have received significant media coverage in Australia, the murder of journalist Roger East by the Indonesian military in Dili on 7 December 1975 is less well known in the public domain.

²³ Perhaps this partly explains why East Timor continued to loom on Australian public horizons in a way that Aceh or West Papua - also the victim-provinces of Indonesian state violence and repression - did not.

²⁴ John Birmingham (2001:45) invokes Murray Edelman’s definition of political mythology as “unquestioned beliefs held in common by a large group of people which give complex and bewildering events a particular meaning”.

lives were lost, also helped to fuse an Australian-Timorese alliance and combine Australian-Timorese trajectories.²⁵

Yet it seems to me there is a deeper underpinning to these historical ties. The essence of Australian affinity with East Timor lies perhaps in the simple and enduring fact of East Timor's Portuguese colonial origins and presence in our region. Up until 1974, and perhaps still now, East Timor continued to represent a miniscule piece of Europe in our increasingly self-conscious 'Asia-Pacific' midst. Witness, for example, the plaque at the War Memorial built by Australian WW2 veterans in the hills above Dili and which is dedicated to: "The Portuguese, from Minho to Timor".²⁶ In this respect, the emplacement of East Timor within the Australian psyche represents a significant lived experience which has yet to be fully mapped, and which sheds light upon our own evolving national identity and consciousness.

Theoretical frames: diaspora and transnationality

This work is informed by a number of overlapping theoretical frames pertinent to understanding the negotiation of diasporic youth identities. Firstly, it draws upon anthropological studies which focus on global and transnational interconnectedness and the complex cultural formations that result from emergent diasporic and transnational spaces, identities and communities (for example, Werbner 1998; Appadurai 1990, 1996; Brah 1996; Ong 1997; Clifford 1994, 1997; Ang 1993a, 1993b, 2000; Chow 1991; Hall 1990; Gilroy 1987, 1990/1991, 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997). These studies view identity as relational, contextual and fluid but which, as the identity narratives of young Timorese show, are also anchored in the politics of history and location (Hall 1990).

The twentieth century was remarkable as one in which mass human upheaval and mobility became commonplace and in which exile, displacement and homelessness became emblematic of the postmodern condition (Heidegger

²⁵ In February 1942, a few hundred Australian commandos comprising the 2/2 and 2/4 Independent Company opposed the numerically superior Japanese invading forces in Portuguese Timor. The commandos, assisted by Timorese civilians, fought a guerilla war against the Japanese troops. At least 60,000 Timorese were killed by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945. Many of the surviving Australian commandos actively campaigned against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975-1999).

²⁶ Minho is a northern Portuguese province.

1977; Said 1990; Chambers 1994). Much of this mass movement was imposed rather than chosen, precipitated by territorialisations and deterritorialisations of various kinds. As well, post-WW2 labour migrations, accelerated by new processes of globalisation, triggered an increasingly heterogeneous presence in western cities. These coincided with processes of decolonisation which formally, if not actually, freed colonised peoples from the strictures of European colonial arrangements. It is one of imperialism's great ironies, as Stuart Hall has wryly observed (1997), that at the very moment that colonial powers decided to dispense with their colonies, counter-flows of newly decolonised peoples began to flood into imperial heartlands. The unruly influx of the 'Third World' into 'First World' cities profoundly disrupted an imperial order which relied materially and conceptually on the tidy separation of cores and peripheries. The eruption of difference into western cities – the result of mass migration and diasporic dispersal – thoroughly destabilised European imperialist imaginations and socio-spatial preferences. As imperial political economies declined, so too their cultural underpinnings began to give way. The crisp binaries of metropolitan Self and racialised Other, upon which imperial hierarchies of power were predicated and maintained, were and continue to be unsettled (but not unmade) by the complex intermeshing of the global and the local. The notional fixity of Self and Other, North and South, West and the Orient, here/there, familiar/strange, home/abroad, has become thoroughly problematic where this intermeshing finds that “[d]ifference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhoods, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth” (Clifford 1988:14).

Diasporas have thus emerged at the forefront of theoretical interest in the disciplines of social science and humanities generally. They are compelling as transcultural formations which, according to Chambers (1994:16-17),

interrogate and undermine any simple or uncomplicated sense of origins, traditions and linear movement [and which produce] mixed histories, cultural mingling, composite languages and creole arts that are also central to *our* history [my emphasis]”.

Diasporic settlements, as Chambers suggests, activate a complex and ambivalent politics of identity that unsettle meanings of home and belonging, not solely for diasporic settlers themselves but for the descendants of colonising generations.

Understanding the production of multidimensional global space where cores and peripheries intermix has meant a revisioning of the analytical concepts anthropologists have routinely used to conceptualise their fields of study. As such, a growing corpus of anthropological work has questioned the easy relationship between culture, community and place, as well as the socio-spatial images routinely employed in migration studies that reify and naturalise this relation (Malkki 1992; Rouse 1991). As a result, the conceptualisation of places, identities, cultures and difference, not as ontologically given but as historically constituted, has begun to erode exclusivist biases ascribed to cultures. The certainty of 'fixed' and self-contained identities and cultures has been paradigmatically reframed in more uncertain and inclusive terms. Tropes of fusion, hybridity, transculturation, creolisation, intermixing and diaspora have been deployed to capture the complex dynamics of a "thoroughly mixed up, interdependent, mobile and volatile postmodern world" (Ang 1993a:29). This new analytic language offers a means of interpreting the range of new phenomena – or newly found, since not all the hybridisations we now encounter are entirely new.

Understanding diaspora

The term diaspora derives etymologically from the Greek *diaspeirein* 'to scatter'. While diaspora archetypally refers to the dispersion of Jews following their exile from Babylon in 538 B.C., it has gained increasing currency in recent times as a "metaphoric designation for a number of human collectivities including expellees, political refugees, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities" (Safran 1991:83). Such a broad definition has been both embraced and critiqued by contemporary theorists. Tölölyan (1996:8), for example, argues that diaspora has become a "promiscuously captious category that is taken to include all the adjacent phenomena to which it is linked but from which it actually differs in ways that are constitutive, that in fact make a viable definition of diaspora possible." On the other hand, the very expansiveness and inclusivity of the term in its popular usage makes diaspora a useful descriptor for the complexity of lived experiences and collectivities that may not fit neatly within the putative borders of 'exile' and 'immigrant', 'political refugee' and so on (cf Behar 1996). Yet sweeping definitions of diaspora such as, for example, "that segment of a people living outside a homeland" (Connor 1986:16) risk losing meaning and

weaken its use as an analytical concept to explain the complexities of a transnationally interconnected world. It is important then to excavate some of diaspora's latent meanings.

Safran (1991:83) proposes that the concept of diaspora be assigned to expatriate minority communities that share a number of the following attributes:

1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral", or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.

Given these credentials, the East Timorese diaspora constitutes a genuine diaspora in almost every respect. Yet my purpose is not to situate the East Timorese, or any, diaspora in terms of genuineness or falsity but to focus instead on the style in which the diasporic community has been 'imagined' (Anderson 1983). Hall's metaphoric treatment of the concept of diaspora and identity as historically constituted and processual is useful and relevant here:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything else which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Hall (1990:225)

Hall thus conceives of diaspora identities as "those which are constantly producing themselves anew through transformation and difference" (1990:237). Diasporas are thus ever-shifting representations which provide an "imaginary coherence" for a set of historically constituted identities webbed together through transnational space.

Hall's emphasis on historicity and transformation is crucial to understanding the complex heterogeneity and contested nature of diasporic collectivities (cf Brah 1996:183). So too, it allows for the shifting representations and ambivalence of diasporic Timorese in the post-referendum period when exile no longer formally characterised Timorese experience (cf Wise 2000). Clifford's argument (1994:311), that diasporas are "not exactly" immigrant communities, is also apposite in the case of East Timorese. He refers to diasporic articulations of a politics of 'not-belonging', of being resident but 'not-here' to stay. Prior to the referendum in 1999, East Timorese diasporans publicly articulated a narrative of nation that centred on 'return'. Where the accent on return remains central to the cultural politics and imagined geographies of a displaced people, a strong dialectic of diaspora and homeland fundamentally unsettles relocation and adjustment, militating against reconciliation between 'where you're from' and 'where you're at'. The political shifts in East Timor since 1999 substantially altered diasporic Timorese self-perceptions and imagined itineraries. The de facto achievement of independence in 1999 and the very real possibility of return confronted many former exiles with a complex transgression of place and belonging and the sense of being simultaneously attached both here *and* there. This diasporic conundrum, according to Lavie and Swedenburg (1995:14), reveals "the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places – their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with "back home"". In this respect, Werbner's notion (1998:12) of diasporas as 'communities of co-responsibility' is important in

recognizing not simply their loyalty but their existential connection to 'co-diasporans' elsewhere, or in a home country. This sense of co-responsibility is expressed in tangible material gestures of charitable giving and complex forms of political mobilisation.

The constitution of diasporas as 'communities of co-responsibility' is relevant to both the pre- and post-independence East Timorese contexts. Prior to 1999, East Timorese diasporans' sense of co-responsibility focused largely on forms of political obligation and mobilisation. Since then, diasporan obligations have been more substantially expressed through charitable efforts and the remittance economy.

Trauma and memory

This study also draws from literature that explores how memory and in particular, traumatic memory generates and shapes a sense of self, place and belonging (Antze and Lambek 1996; Valentine Daniel and Knudsen 1995). Memory has assumed a renewed importance within contemporary culture and therefore, within the anthropological imagination. Once salient in anthropology for its role in the maintenance of oral traditions and envisaged as a repository or ‘storehouse’ of knowledge and experience, memory is now more complexly conceived as central to “embodiment and the creation of meaning” (Becker, Beyene and Ken 2000:320). Memories are produced out of bodily experience that enacts the past (Connerton 1989:72) and, in turn, they reshape the present and reconfigure experience. As such, memory is intrinsically tied to identity construction. Through the interleaving of current meanings and reconstructed memories, we attempt to make sense of our lives and create a coherency between the past, the present and possible futures. This creative process is structured through narrative practice, in which forgetting is at least as important as remembering:

Identity of any kind requires steering a course between holding on and letting go. Identity is not composed of a fixed set of memories but lies in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding. (Antze and Lambek 1996:xxix)

Yet, what is remembered and what is forgotten is not simply a matter of individual authority or choice. Personal memory is in constant articulation with social narrative. The self is thus ambiguously and imaginatively constituted; held in tension as both object and subject of memory, between the telling and the told. Life narratives overlap and interweave with collective memories, narratives of community and nation, and so constitute and contribute to, discourses of identity.

The extent to which memory and identity mutually reinforce each other has been a focus of anthropological inquiry. This literature crucially acknowledges that when identities are not at issue, be they individual or collective, neither is memory (Antze and Lambek 1996:xxii). Self-consciousness about the past is more likely where identities are profoundly threatened. The role of trauma emerges here as a central theme and is of particular relevance to this study.

Where trauma constitutes a radical rupture in the flow of a life narrative, notions of self and personhood may be thoroughly shattered. This is especially pronounced where embodied memories of torture, violence and abuse result in the breakdown of consensual reality, a process referred to by Elaine Scarry (1985) as the ‘unmaking’ of the world. The experiences of groups under threat of radical effacement, such as refugees and Holocaust survivors, for example, reveal the tyranny of double lives and self-estrangement that may result from ‘unspeakable’ acts of terror. Yet the trans-human scale of mass violence and terror also compels survivors to speak out and break the silence as Kirmayer argues (1996:189-190) in the case of the Holocaust:

Trauma shared by a whole community creates a potential public space for retelling. If a community agrees traumatic events occurred and weaves this fact into its identity, then collective memory survives and individual memory can find a place (albeit transformed) within that landscape.

For diasporic Timorese, cumulative collective acts of remembering, including written, theatrical and filmic accounts, and public commemorations and rituals, helped to create a public ‘space of solidarity’ in which the corrosive stories of suffering could be both recounted and received. The articulation and performance of embodied memories through narrative created a bridge between the past and the present. While corrosive, the testimonies of Timorese were met by the social capacity of Timorese themselves, as well as a community of sympathetic non-Timorese listeners, to bear witness. The invocation of memory under such circumstances helped to heal the extreme rupture of violent experience but the incommensurability of embodied terror may never be entirely resolved. The insistence on memory, despite the pain it elicits, motivates political action and agency in the face of unspeakable injustice.

Youth

In considering the ways in which the concept of youth is defined, constructed, represented and performed, I have drawn on the work of various scholars engaged in youth-centred research (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Skelton and Valentine 1998; Collins, Noble, Poynting and Tabar 2000; Butcher 2004). Over the past decade, youth studies has emerged as a distinct field of inquiry bringing together researchers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (including

anthropology, geography, sociology and cultural studies) and theoretical approaches. These studies have documented the diverse experiences and cultural modes of expression among young people, as well as the arbitrary ways in which the category of youth has been culturally and historically constructed and defined. The content and meaning of youth varies widely between generations and across cultures. Historically, the idea of youth, as well as ‘adolescents’ and ‘teenagers’, has been produced by social and economic forces and often framed by notions of delinquency.²⁷ In contemporary western societies, the designation of youth is popularly conferred upon young people between the ages of 16-25 years (Valentine et al. 1998:5). Yet there is no formal consensus on the temporal parameters of youth. Under Australian law, there is a host of legal demarcations of childhood and adulthood that cut across this chronology, such as voting age (18 years); consumption of cigarettes and alcohol (18 years); entry into the armed forces (16 years); driving (17 years); earning money (14 years); and consent to sexual intercourse (16 years). Furthermore, the passage between childhood and adulthood may refer to a far longer phase of vitality and productivity (Bessant et al. 1998). Thus, rather than framing youth as a phase neatly captured by biologically defined parameters, contemporary social research views youth as a context specific, highly fluid and problematic zone which is “ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood” (Valentine et al. 1998:4). This liminal positioning means that young people are subject to a variety of boundaries of exclusion which define youth negatively, in terms of what they are *not*, cannot do and cannot be (James 1996). It also renders those defined as youth potentially threatening since “they transgress the child/adult boundary and appear discrepant in ‘adult’ spaces” (Sibley 1995a:34-5).

Of course young people inevitably contest the restrictive controls and definitions imposed upon them and youth studies have increasingly focused on the various ways in which everyday resistances are enacted and interpreted. Yet, while theorists acknowledge that not all youth challenge the status quo and delve into deviancy, analyses of how the young carve out their own space and identities still tend to differentiate between ‘spectacular subcultures’ and more ordinary

²⁷ Societal panics concerning youth delinquency date back to the 17th century (Bessant et al. (1998:4). Springhall (1983:21) refers to the shepherd’s lament in Shakespeare’s *The Winters Tale* as evidence of classical notions of ‘youth-as-problem’: “would that there were no age between sixteen and three and twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest, for there is nothing in between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting”.

and ‘conformist’ practices (Valentine et al. 1998). In the context of this project, such a distinction is misleading. In the context of East Timor, non-conformism becomes conformism where young people have been more concerned with resisting Indonesian occupation rather than the values and beliefs of their parents’ generation. They have done so spectacularly and in ways that are construed as deviant from a broadly defined Indonesian perspective but in ways that conform to the expectations and socio-ideological perspectives of the majority of East Timorese.

Outline of chapters

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One is broadly contextual and returns to the distant and near past, as a complex, multilayered and multifaceted presence in the collective East Timorese psyche. The first three chapters attempt to unravel the strands of history, culture and power that combine to produce representations and definitions of East Timoresehood, youth and diaspora respectively. Taken together, these chapters prepare the ground for the subsequent elaboration of diasporic youth identities and experiences. Between the two halves of the study, I have included a photographic essay with images of young Timorese both inside and outside of East Timor. It provides a link between the broadly contextual and ethnographic components of the thesis.

Part Two of the thesis focuses on the specificity of nineties Timorese youth experience and the complexity of diasporic social dynamics that involve *intra-* as well as *inter-*generational schisms and interconnections. It recognises that, removed from the immediacy of the struggle, the ‘doing’ of youth among young diasporic East Timorese inevitably shifts according to the different knowledge formations that frame and produce ‘youth’ and particularly ‘immigrant youth’ in host countries. While young diasporic Timorese have often felt caught between apparently contradictory practices and constructions of youth, and discourses that oppose ‘East Timoresehood’ and ‘Australianness’ (as well as ‘Timoresehood’ and ‘Indonesianness’), there is always room for slippage. I thus examine the ways in which young East Timorese negotiated the tension between the more tightly-scripted roles and behaviours ascribed to Timorese ‘youth’ during the period of Indonesian occupation and the more generalised and permissive youth cultures and cultural influences available to them as migrant youth in diaspora.

Chapter One traces various interweaving strands of historical experience, culture, myth, collective memory and power that combine to produce East Timoresehood as a national collectivity. It explains how the radical accretion of a pan-East Timorese identity was profoundly shaped by the dramatic political upheavals, violence and loss incurred by the synchronous decline of Portuguese colonial authority and the aggressive rise of Suharto's New Order Government in East Timor, out of which a multiply displaced refugee diaspora emerged.

Chapter Two provides a basis for understanding the unique experiences of young Timorese who fled East Timor in the 1990s, in the wake of the Dili Massacre. This background is important in understanding youth as a discursive formation contingent upon available cultural meanings and political imperatives under Indonesian occupation. During this period, the category of youth was constructed and defined in negotiation and opposition with an Indonesian 'other'. The struggles and antagonisms of Timorese youth were thus uniquely framed within context-specific hierarchies and asymmetries of power. In outlining the specificity of historical experience of young nineties Timorese, the chapter prepares the ground for the elaboration of generational difference and the conflictive complexity of Timoresehood in exile.

Chapter Three maps the emergence of a Timorese diasporic presence in Australia and the processes through which a highly politicised communal identity was reconstituted in exile, centring on the moral restitution of sovereignty in East Timor and the mythology of return. It examines the expression of diasporic Timoresehood through an 'imagined community' created and sustained transnationally through the dynamics of long distance nationalism (Anderson 1992a). It locates the assertion of a politicised and unified Timorese identity within a highly symbolic discursive field generated through the 'diasporic public sphere', which simultaneously constitutes a site of ethno-nationalist mobilisation (cf Wise 2002) as well as intense localised struggles for power and legitimacy (cf Werbner 1998).

Chapter Four explores various differential markers of Timoresehood that derive from specific patterns of history, colonisation, occupation and migration. It

traces the ways in which processes of identity creation for young nineties Timorese involved the negotiation of significant tensions of difference. These differences were drawn not simply along *inter*-generational, but *intra*-generational lines. The narratives and vignettes that form the basis of the chapter reveal complex, contradictory and ongoing negotiations over identity in which Timoresehood is constituted as a highly contested terrain. I argue that young diasporic Timorese differentially placed themselves, and were placed, in relation to an authentic and highly politicised Timorese ‘core’ identity and that both ‘Australianisation’ and ‘Indonesianisation’ were variously deployed as signifiers of inauthenticity. In particular, the appearance of cultural resources and expressions of Indonesianness were apprehended by older generation Timorese as ‘matter out of place’.

Chapter Five demonstrates how a community of solidarity was achieved through the ‘ritualised’ performance of Timoresehood. It considers various ways in which many young nineties Timorese at times sought to incorporate a politicised or nationalist identity, enacted within the public sphere, into their repertoires of belonging in order to satisfy the need for “a point of comfort” during a period of intense personal and social transformation (cf Butcher 2004). Through their participation in ritualised communal acts of politicised re-memory, recovery and reconstruction, young Timorese were thus implicated in the creation of a ‘symbolic moral economy’ in exile through which they interconnected transnationally with communities of religious and political solidarity. These public rituals, orchestrated by the 1975 generation of lusophone-oriented Timorese, enabled the performance of unity which temporarily withheld articulations of difference. The chapter draws upon examples of their cultural negotiations in the world of the arts to show that, through practices of music, poetry and theatre, young East Timorese, in different ways and with varying force, deployed cultural strategies that reproduced and reinforced values of authenticised and emblematic Timoresehood.

In contrast to Chapter Five, Chapter Six explores youth and the strategic management of hybridity in Sydney’s western suburbs. It focuses on ‘lived’ rather than ritualised Timoresehood, documenting the micro-struggles of young Timorese that have less to do with the moral restitution of sovereignty in East

Timor and more with achieving a sense of pride as youth in the western suburbs. It demonstrates that the identity re-evaluation of young nineties Timorese is strategic and deliberate and substantially influenced by their multi-ethnic friendship groups and neighbourhoods, and their multicultural influences in the diverse environs of western Sydney. Yet, at the same time, they are continually synchronising old and new meanings with coordinates of identity conveyed by their parents, extended families and communities, as well as their peers and the media.

The concluding chapter then draws together the strands of theory woven through previous chapters to show how Timorese identities are constantly evolving through processes of contestation and accommodation. The identity narratives and cultural strategies of young Timorese reveal the interplay between difference and continuity, duty and desire, communality and individuality (cf Butcher 2004). The relative mobility and openness of youth and their easy engagement with ideas and cultural resources across ethnic and national borders, results in their shaping and being shaped by all kinds of global, cultural meanings (Wulff 1995). As such, the narratives and experiences of nineties Timorese reveal the contingency of an authentic sense of identity and place, as well as the limits of the lusophone-oriented generation's authority and influence over the representation of Timoresehood in the diaspora. Yet, the intensity of social change and their experiences of displacement and marginality, as youth, as migrants and as asylum seekers, also required strategies for change management that encompassed both the familiar and the new and which mitigated the discomfort of liminality. The chapter includes a postscript that begins in the wake of the referendum in 1999, with research participants' reflections on the shifting configurations of home and belonging, and their fears and dreams for a newly independent East Timor. These narratives speak of new estrangements and entanglements, of re-connections and revised itineraries highlighting the concept of identity as relational, contextual and fluid.

Note on terminology

Throughout the study, I use 'East Timorese' and 'Timorese' interchangeably just as the research participants themselves do. For East Timorese interlocutors, the designation 'Timorese' always implicitly refers to East Timorese and is never

used to signify ‘West Timorese’, whose nationality is Indonesian. I use the phrase ‘lusophone-oriented’ to refer to first-generation Timorese refugees in Australia (sometimes referred to as the ‘1975’ generation or ‘seventies’ Timorese) who were born and educated in ‘Portuguese Timor’, rather than Indonesian-occupied East Timor. The term presupposes a facility and affinity with Portuguese, rather than Indonesian, language and culture. The lusophone-oriented generation arrived in Australia from 1975 as formed adult personalities and as teenagers. Those who arrived among the first wave of refugees as children, and who mainly or wholly acquired their education in Australia, may be classified and may self-identify as ‘second-generation’ Timorese. I thus employ the category ‘second-generation’ as an umbrella term that includes both individuals born in Australia who have at least one parent born in East Timor and those who are Timor born but substantially socialised in Australia.

PART ONE

Chapter One

History: An Undetermined Journeying Practice

If a butterfly's wings can create atmospheric disturbances halfway round the world, who knows what might happen in our case? Storms? Cyclones? Tidal waves? What about the land mass, would it quake in empathy? Would the mountains explode? What about the rivers, would the tears from twelve hundred million eyes cause them to rise and flood?

Rohan Mistry ¹

¹ Mistry, Rohan (1996:230) *A Fine Balance*. London: Faber & Faber.

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory. It is important therefore to make an inventory.

*Antonio Gramsci*²

“Every voyage”, writes Trinh Minh-Ha (1994:9), “involves the re-siting of boundaries...an undetermined journeying practice.” The distinctive historical experiences of a people are thus constituted through multiple and interweaving journeys that may configure, through specific historical processes and conjunctures and a confluence of narratives and collective memories, into a single journey. Through such a confluence, a people come to be situated and constructed as a common ‘we’ which, as Trinh suggests, is never fixed or pre-given but always contested and subject to asymmetries of power (cf Hall 1990).

This chapter explores East Timoresehood as a complex and evolving identity in which Timorese ‘frontiers’ – both physical and psychic – have been drawn and redrawn over time and through space. It traces the East Timorese journey to national self-hood and the socio-economic and cultural conditions that made its trajectory possible. It documents the complex heterogeneity of East Timoresehood and acknowledges the paradox of an identity formed through relations of power established under colonialism and counter-colonial struggle with the Portuguese, but which subsequently deployed claims to Portugueseness, and the resources of Catholicism, as a defence against ‘Indonesianisation’ under Indonesian occupation (1975-1999). It argues that the Indonesian invasion of East Timor constituted a traumatic and highly symbolic moment in the East Timorese collective consciousness; a moment in which the specificity of an authentic East Timorese Self was mobilised, profoundly eclipsing the multiple alterities embedded within and across that conceptual binary.

The chapter prepares the ground for the subsequent elaboration of diasporic identities and experiences. It is by no means a thorough “inventory” of Timorese

² This translation is taken from Said (1997:15). The full passage may be found in the Italian text of Gramsci’s “Prison Notebooks”, *Quaderni del Carcere*, in Valentino Gerratana, ed. Turin: Einaudi Editore, (1975), 2:1363.

history and it inevitably reflects my own interpretation and assemblage of events. It offers instead a much distilled and fleeting evocation of Timorese origins and the drama of Portuguese and Indonesian colonialisms that have so powerfully shaped East Timorese destinies, past and present.

The Land

The geomorphology of Timor Island is powerfully shaped by an ancient and ongoing process of uplift caused by the fretting of Australia's northward moving continental plate against the southward shifting Eurasian plate. The chafing and grinding motion of these two massive land plates has caused considerable stratigraphic distortion, resulting in Timor's complex "ridge and ravine" topography. This dramatic and convoluted process – like a massive earthquake in slow motion – concertina'd the land into freakish relief, exposing a mountainous backbone the length of the island and leaving the terrain vulnerable to monsoonal rains, wind and soil erosion.

The gnarled and fissured forests of the ridge-backed hinterland were, and remain to this day, difficult to traverse and domesticate. Survival in such a precarious ecological environment thus required resilience and ingenuity as well as an intimacy and kinship with the seasons and agricultural rhythms. While the unruly topography isolated its people and inhibited communications between them, it encouraged the proliferation of social institutions and languages. These languages gave shape to ancestral histories and ethnographies handed down through the poetic recitations and chants of Timor's non-literate peoples.

The land is mythologised in East Timorese imaginations as a legendary reptile. Tradition has it that a crocodile transformed its body to provide refuge for the Timorese people, its head emerging in Kupang (West Timor) and its tail in Lautem (East Timor). Timor's whole-island identity is thus captured in the image of *Lafaek* - the crocodile - a unifying motif in Timorese mythology:

The legend says
and who am I to disbelieve!

The sun perched atop the sea
opened its eyes
and with its rays
indicated a way

From the depths of the ocean
a crocodile in search of a destiny
spied the pool of light, and there he surfaced

Then wearily, he stretched himself out
in time
and his lumpy hide was transformed
into a mountain range
where people were born
and where people died

Grandfather crocodile

- the legend says
and who am I to disbelieve
that he is Timor!

Xanana Gusmao³

The ocean that surrounds the Crocodile is split in two. To the north lies *Tasi Feto* the calmer, female sea: The sea that washes the southern shore is *Tasi Mane* – the male sea, known for its stormy, heroic and macho disposition.⁴ The Crocodile thus inhabits and constitutes a borderland between the northern and southern seas; between west and east; calm and storm; chaos and order; war and peace.

The ocean is also the domain of foreigners – *malae* (Tetun: from *melayu* meaning Malaysian), or *malaiia* in the dialect of the Mambai people of East Timor's hinterland.⁵ According to anthropologist Elizabeth Traube (1986), who

³ 'Grandfather Crocodile' (*Avô Crocodilo*) in *Meu Mar* (Gusmão 1998: 21)

⁴ According to HG Schulte-Norholdt (1980: 238-9), the directional relations of North/West/Female (*Feto*) and South/East/Male (*Mane*, or *Mone* among the Atoni) are common to both the Tetun of central Timor and the Atoni of West Timor. The terms *Tasi Feto* and *Tasi Mane* are also used by West Timorese in Amarasi on the extreme south-westerly tip of the island, although *Feto* here refers to the 'inner' sea and *Mane* to the 'outer'. This is also consistent with Mambae and Atoni associations of Male/Exterior and Female/Interior. Yet in Amarasi, it is *Tasi Feto* (the Female Sea) that has the more tempestuous nature.

⁵ Mambai constitute the largest among East Timor's ethnic groups. They are concentrated in the mountainous district of Aileu, 47 km south of Dili. While Dili is now home to a multi-ethnic

conducted fieldwork with Mambai between 1972 and 1974, the term is used to classify all non-Timorese, including Europeans, Chinese and Africans. The conflation of outsiders with the sea, says Traube, placed *malae* in the role of ‘younger brother’; the archetypal wanderer; the one who belongs to the world of ‘beyond’.⁶ Consistent with their journeying and expansive horizons, Mambai accorded Portuguese *malae* with executive powers and accepted, although not uncritically, their appropriation of political power over ‘speaking’ humanity (humankind). Conversely, Mambai as ‘insiders’ claimed seniority in the ritual realm. As the original inhabitants and symbolic ‘older brothers’, they were custodians of the place of origin and presided over a ‘silent’ cosmos of rocks, trees, birds, fish, reptiles, animals and plant life. This juxtaposition of speech and silence is a mythic imperative that requires that the ‘speaking mouths’ (humanity) acknowledge and make restitution for the sacrifices made by the ‘silent mouths’ (the environment) that enable human existence.

The balance between these oppositional realms – inside/outside; land/sea; indigenous/foreign; speech/silence; stillness/mobility – was ritually maintained by a system of exchanges between the ‘coast’ and the ‘interior’.⁷ Thus, Mambai requirements for reciprocity and order were theoretically maintained.

Rationalising the arrival of the Portuguese invaders as the anticipated ‘return’ of descendants of an original, ancestral younger brother from across the sea provided a *modus vivendi* through which ongoing colonial interaction and interventions might be understood and enacted. Into this cosmological order, the Portuguese arrived and were ritually assimilated through the anchor lines of kinship, exchange and obligation as the seafaring siblings of the people of the interior.

population, the city is located in traditional Mambai territory once dominated by Mambai speakers (Traube 2007:22).

⁶ Similarly, in her study of *kastom* in South Pentecost, North Vanuatu, Margaret Jolly (1994:21) describes how the Bunlap people contrasted the mobility of Europeans (*al salsaliri* – the floating ones) with their own rootedness as ‘people of the place’.

⁷ Traube suggests (1986:4) that the tendency of Mambai to realise symbolic dualism in social arrangements was in fact pervasive throughout eastern Indonesian societies.

The Portuguese

It was the scent of sandalwood as much as the lure of the sea that drew Portuguese seafarers to Timor's shores.⁸ Consummate navigators, and inveterate adventurers, they set their sights on distant horizons, obsessed with *alem* – 'over there', 'beyond'. Following the familiar cipher of constellations until they were familiar no more, they charted unknown waters and landfalls arriving, again and again, at the *fim do mundo* – the end of the (known) world, expanding and refining the world's geographic horizons. Their 'discoveries' gave rise to a new global spatial imaginary:

1434, beyond Bojador; 1452, Acores; 1457, Cape Verde Islands; 1471, Guiné; 1482, beyond the Equator; 1487, Cape of Good Hope...1499, India; 1500, Brazil; 1513, China; 1520, Fernao de Magalhães circumnavigated the globe; 1522, Australia; 1543, Japan... Imagine a century's voyages stretching imagination's frontiers across a 'world' whose very meaning grew and grew, each caravel's wake like weak elastic, overstretched by the enormity of the world and the appetite for it. (Hyland 1997:104)

The Portuguese first sailed their carracks into Timorese waters *circa* 1511. They were the first Europeans arrivals, but not the first *malae*. Long before the Portuguese, a flourishing trade in aromatic white and yellow sandalwood had already been established with the 'original' *malae* (Malay), *malae Cina* (Chinese)⁹ and *malae-metan* (Arab traders), (Ramos-Horta 1987:18). Despite sustained contact with Malay traders, there was no perceptible Indo-Javanese influence at the time of the Portuguese arrival.¹⁰ Timor Island appears to have remained relatively secluded from the dramatic economic, socio-cultural and

⁸ *Piper nigrum*, *Syzygium aromaticum* and *Myristica fragrans* (pepper, clove and nutmeg) were also highly sought after by Portuguese, Dutch and British merchants in the Spice Islands. Portuguese domination of the spice trade during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was enabled by the Papal Donation of 1493. Under papal supervision, the world was divided in half by the "Tordesillas Line" giving the Spanish free mercantile reign to the west of the line (including Mexico, California, Chile and the Philippines) and designating the eastern world - the "Orient" - to the Portuguese, from the Cape Verde islands to the Brazilian coast (Winchester 2003:13).

⁹ Patsy Thatcher (1992:64) suggests that although "Chinese interaction predates the Portuguese by 700 years, the depth of their integration with the local population has been superficial." The linguist Luis Felipe Thomaz explains (1981:60): "the Tetun vocabulary shows no traces of Chinese influence – a fact readily explained by the peculiar characteristics of the Chinese language and the indifference of this minority always closed in its own shell to the diffusion of its culture among the native population."

¹⁰ There are discrepancies in the literature, however. David Hicks (1990:1) suggests that Timor may have been a Javanese dependency by the end of the 12th century AD and follows the arguments of Coèdes (1968:239-240) who, contra other sources (Ramos-Horta 1987, Forman 1977), argues that Timor may have become a dependency of the Javanese Majapahit Empire by the fourteenth century.

religious shifts occurring in western Indonesia from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. As a result, while Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic beliefs circulated through Southeast Asia, Timorese remained “animists with an Iron Age culture...a hierarchical social structure...and a system of hereditary chiefdoms of a quasi-feudalistic type” (Thomaz 1981:62).

There were hundreds of kingdoms across Timor, each ruled by a *liurai* (royal chief) who had absolute power over his people, both nobles and commoners. Anthropological studies suggest that by the fourteenth century, Tetum speaking-people dominated the eastern half of the island and that by the sixteenth century the Portuguese encountered an island partitioned into two major conglomerates of chiefdoms: the Behale (Wehale) empire in the east, and reaching into the western half, and the Servião empire in the west – evidence perhaps for an emerging pre-colonial East/West cultural differentiation on the island (Hicks 1990; Thomaz 1981).

These pre-existing indigenous tensions may have arisen from twin prehistoric migration routes into the island of Timor. Timorese origins are a complex and hybrid tangle of Malay and Austronesian influences, a fact reflected in Timor’s mind-boggling range of languages and dialects and in divergent agricultural practices (Hull 1996; Fox 2000; Traube 1984). The islands of Oceania, including Timor, are thought to have been settled by ancient immigrants from South China, yet there is also evidence of a less archaic influence following a later westerly migration route through Southeast Asia. Linguist Geoffrey Hull (1996:43) suggests that this may partly explain the stereotypical split, referred to by East Timorese themselves, between *firaku* tribes to the east of East Timor and *kaladi* tribes to the west.¹¹ An alternative explanation frames the *firaku/kaladi* dualism as a more recent imposition – a consequence of the Portuguese colonial tactic of *Divide e Impera* (Divide and Rule):

The distinction was brought about by the Portuguese who forced people from the east...to brutally pacify the west...as happened with the Manufahi rebellion during the Portuguese Pacification Wars. These terms, and the divisions they signified, grew from the resentment engendered by these pacifications. (Guterres 1996:60-61)

¹¹ *Firaku* are stereotypically cast as proud, passionate and talkative in contrast to the more taciturn, slower-witted mountain dwelling *Kaladi* (Fox 2000:23).

It is clear that the politics of divide and rule were used by both the Portuguese and Indonesian regimes in East Timor. Research suggests, however, that the historical stereotyping of easterners and westerners did not produce the large-scale violence, mistrust and ethnic polarisation that has characterised the recent *Lorosa'e* (Eastern) / *Loromonu* (Western) conflict in post-independent East Timor (Trinidad and Castro 2007).¹² During the period of fieldwork, young research participants occasionally made reference to the fact that *firaku* (easterners) were more fiercely loyal than people from the west but this was never suggested as a basis for intracommunal conflict: the emphasis on Timorese as a united people was always paramount. Identification as *Lorosa'e* (Eastern) and *Loromonu* (Western) has become increasingly politicised since de facto independence in 1999, with easterners claiming “custodianship” of the independence struggle and stigmatising westerners as Indonesian “accomplices” (Trinidad and Castro 2007:12). The political dimensions of the *Lorosa'e/Loromonu* conflict are complex and convoluted. They suggest multiple and conflicting world views and values, and fundamental tensions between modern-traditional; urban-rural; elder-youth; and migrant-local subject positions. The issues of marginality and power these complex relationships raise are beyond the scope of my research but are central to the processes of nation-building and social inclusion in East Timor.

However ancient or recent the origins of *Lorosa'e/firaku*/eastern and *Loromonu/kaladi*/western identifications may be, the superimposition of Portuguese colonial structures and the ruthlessness of their divisive strategies inevitably impacted upon the way East Timorese people saw themselves and each other, militating against the formation of a coherent and self-conscious identity. Yet for the great majority of Timorese (and in contrast to the

¹² The internal conflict of April 2006 was precipitated by the disaffection of (ex-Falintil) soldiers from the western region (*Loromonu*) alleging discrimination within the F-FDTL (*Forças de Defesa Timor Lorosa'e*). In February 2006, 418 F-FDTL petitioners demonstrated at the President's office. In March 2006, 595 soldiers (one-third of F-FDTL) were summarily dismissed by the Government of East Timor. That month the incumbent President of the Republic, Xanana Gusmão, gave credence to the petitioners' grievance that their dismissal was due to discrimination of Easterners against Westerners within F-FDTL (Trinidad and Castro 2007:10). This encouraged the popular perception of a 'communal' conflict between *Lorosa'e* – *Loromonu*. Violence broke out on the streets and many people fled their homes and various *bairros* (suburbs) became 'No-Go' areas. Regional distinctions thus (re)surfaced during the crisis resulting in ethnic polarisation between people originating from Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem in the east and those from Oecusse, Liquica, Ermera, Aileu, Ainaro, Manatuto and Manufahi in the west.

Indonesian invasion in 1975) the arrival of Portuguese adventurers, both ecclesiastical and entrepreneurial, would not have been especially portentous. Initially, the scope of Portuguese influence was barely felt and the momentum of colonial expansion was, for some considerable time, uneven and ad hoc. The effective territorialisation of East Timor by the Portuguese took centuries to achieve.

Settlement

Initially, Portuguese interest in the island of Timor was almost entirely mercantile and their annual visits made scant impact on the majority of Timorese lives. There was a substantially maritime empire in which colonial settlements throughout Africa, India and Asia were confined to coastal enclaves known as *feitorias* or factories – an indication of their commercial focus (Pagden 2001:93). Portuguese ambitions in Asia were threatened by the arrival of the Dutch *circa* 1568 after which the subjugation of land and local chiefs became imperative. For the next three hundred years, the Dutch and the Portuguese would engage in struggle with indigenous Timorese and with each other for ownership of Timor island.

Portugal succeeded in establishing a presence on the island partly because of the grit and determination of Dominican friars, intent on bringing Catholicism to the Spice Islands. Colonisation also led to the emergence of an anarchic *mestiço* (mixed race) population known variously as *Tupassi*, ‘Topasse’ or *Gente de Chapeo* (People of the Hat); *Larantuqueros* (people from Larantuka) and *Swarte Portugeezen* (Black Portuguese). They are variously described as the descendants of Portuguese soldiers, sailors, and traders – priests are not among the formal lists of possible progenitors – or of traders from China or Macau and even Dutch deserters and Goanese adventurers, who intermarried with indigenous women from Solor and neighbouring islands and ultimately married into Timorese royalty (Ramos-Horta 1987; Fox 2000). The Dominicans, the *mestiço* Topasse and Portuguese formed a triumvirate of fickle allies with competing claims to the hearts, minds, lands and resources of indigenous Timorese.

The Dominicans, sometimes known as “Black Friars”, began their evangelizing crusade *circa* 1567 on the island of Solor to Timor’s north, where they built the first permanent Portuguese settlement.¹³ Driven from Solor by the Dutch in 1613, they relocated to Larantuka in Flores and subsequently to Lifau in the Portuguese enclave of Oe-Cusse. For a century they constituted the Portuguese presence and administered the island on behalf of the Catholic Church. It was the Dominicans who kept the home fires burning while the largely absent Portuguese traders concerned themselves with the very lucrative import/export trade. Yet, as Hicks observes (1990:1), the quest for souls was considerably impeded by the friars’ own small number and the rugged terrain which made travel “arduous and slow – as it remained in the 1980s”.

By 1702, unnerved by the proximity and tenacity of the Dutch, the Portuguese Crown intensified its defence of the protectorate and imposed civil control of the island in lieu of the ecclesiastical administration. The Dominicans remained but a report to the Portuguese Crown in 1790 from the Viceroy in Goa (India) indicated that, far from papal authority, the friars’ conduct might have been less than holy:

...there are only seven or eight Portuguese on that island and several missionaries whose fruit is not so much what they reap in the vineyard of the Lord, as the liberty and licence in which they live. (In Hastings, 1975:60)

Their dubious reputation notwithstanding, by the seventeenth century the Dominicans had successfully converted a number of Timorese *liurai* who, according to Thomaz (1981:63), were more amenable to the option of being a “vassal of an apparently powerful distant king” than to the domination of encroaching Dutch merchants and their Calvinist priests. Their conversions, however, did little to facilitate the spread of Catholicism into the island’s interior. As late as the end of the nineteenth century, the naturalist Henry Forbes observed that “while most [*liurai*] spoke Portuguese and practiced both *Lulik* [animist rites] and Catholicism, their constituents neither spoke Portuguese nor practiced Catholicism” (in Thatcher, 1992:25). Ritual life in the interior,

¹³ A few years earlier the Dominicans had constructed “a palisade of lontar palms to protect local Christians but this was burnt down the year after by Muslim raiders” (Fox 2000:7).

apparently, remained as full and intact as the fringe-dwelling Portuguese colonial authority was tenuous.

Ironically, it was the footloose and unpredictable, *mestiço* Topasse who would ultimately strengthen Portuguese claims to sovereignty in the archipelago. A spirited and multilingual people, they quickly came to dominate commerce, establishing a strong grip on local seafaring and sandalwood trading networks. They are vividly portrayed by Hastings (1975:59) as

[a] skilled, literate and... free-booting pirate class reminiscent of the Caribbean... Quarrelling amongst themselves, manipulating the traditional chiefs in bloody little trade wars aimed at controlling the rich sandalwood industry, rebelling impartially against both Church and State *they nevertheless, in the final issue, invariably chose Portugal, the distant origin of their synthetic culture, in preference to Holland.* (My emphasis)

It was a Topasse, Captain Major Fransisco Fernandes of Solor, who led an army for the Portuguese against Timor's dominant Wehale kingdom in 1642. The date marked a watershed in Timor's history with Fernandes' brutal victory opening up a migration route for the Topasse community at that time resident in Lifau (Oe-Cussé). Weakening the power of Wehale chiefs enabled the Topasse to wrest control of the internal networks of the island's sandalwood trade and of Timor's political and religious centre.

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, both the Portuguese and the Dutch made futile attempts at challenging Topasse *de facto* rule of the island. Topasse familiarity with the convoluted topography of Timor's interior enabled them to contain Dutch encroachment from the west forcing Dutch troops to retreat from Kupang, their toe-hold at the western tip of West Timor, to the island of Roti. With the Dutch temporarily off-shore, resistance to Topasse political and economic domination came from three main opponents – Portuguese merchants, the Dominicans and indigenous Timorese themselves. As Taylor suggests (1999:4), the period was characterised by complex triangulated political conflicts and occasionally by temporary alliances against the Dutch.

From 1730, the irrepressible Dutch renewed their influence in the western half of the island by supporting local Timorese uprisings against the Topasse. When Topasse retaliations failed to make any impact on the Dutch, they were forced to

seek Portuguese assistance. The ensuing battle of Penfui in 1749 was violent and decisive. The Dutch finally secured the western half of the island and their victory determined the future territorial division of Timor. The decline of Topasse supremacy following the defeat at Penfui effectively strengthened Portuguese hegemony in the eastern half of the island. Yet indigenous resistance to both white and 'black' (Topasse) Portuguese continued throughout the eighteenth century. In 1769, Timorese incursions forced the Portuguese Governor and 1200 inhabitants to flee their administrative centre in Lifao and to resettle in Dili, a malarial swamp on the northeast coast of Timor.

The edge of empire

For many centuries East Timor had been the bastard colony - the most remote, the most rebellious and the most neglected. Portuguese officials dubbed it the "*ante-camara do inferno*" (gateway to hell).¹⁴ (Ramos-Horta 1987:21)

In many ways Dili symbolised, *par excellence*, East Timor's colonial status in the Portuguese empire. It was the final refuge for the Portuguese in Timor, as they shrank from the superior military and colonial might of the Dutch in the region and where, "amidst squalor, deprivation and death the administrative foundations of Portuguese Timor slowly took shape" (Hastings 1975:60). Slow indeed. According to nineteenth century travel accounts, the town seemed gripped by a tropical malaise. In 1825, a Dutch visitor to Timor, Lieutenant D. H. Kolff, expressed his shock at the squalor and misery of Dili where even the houses of officials were "miserable, dirty and poor." As for the officials themselves, they appeared to have "given themselves up to an indolent mode of life, all their actions being redolent of laziness and apathy" (quoted in Jolliffe 1978:32).

Two decades later, Lord Alfred Russel Wallace,¹⁵ a passionate British geographer who spent eight years in the Malay archipelago from 1854-1862 and

¹⁴ This was the title of a publication written, presumably in defence of Portuguese policy, by Teofilo Duarte (1930). The cover, reproduced in Geoffrey Gunn's *Timor Lorosae: 500 years* (1999) shows a rather alarming graphic of a sabre-bearing native brandishing a European head in one hand, with several more at his feet.

¹⁵ Alfred Wallace was a key nineteenth century scientific figure responsible for yet another cartographic delineation (the Wallace Line), based on the profound difference between the flora and fauna of the western and eastern halves of the Indonesian archipelago: cockatoos, platypus,

several months in East Timor between 1857-1861, described Dili as “a most miserable place compared with even the poorest of the Dutch towns” (in Dunn 1983:18). The administration, he wrote, was equally miserable:

Nobody seems to care about the improvement of the country...after three hundred years of occupation there has not been a mile of road made beyond the town, and there is not a solitary European resident anywhere in the interior. All the government officials oppress and rob the natives as much as they can, and yet there is no care taken to render the town defensible should the Timorese attempt to attack it. (Dunn 1983:18)

In fact, while nuanced historical documentation is scant, there is evidence to show that the Portuguese did attempt to fortify Dili as much to impede Dutch or British incursions as to ward off local attacks:

Although...the visiting Frenchman de Rosily claimed to have seen a citadel in Dili in 1772, this was probably the remains of the first earthen wall constructed by Governor Teles de Meneses, as it was not until 22 September 1796 that an order was given to construct a *fortaleza* in Dili. (Gunn 1999:111)

From here, the Portuguese began to mark out their imperial aspirations building fortresses along the coast from Batugade to Lautem. But as Gunn argues (1999:107), defences alone would have been useless without the strategic complicities and conciliations of certain *liurai*. Portuguese social relations with *liurai*, the hereditary power brokers of rural society, were built upon prior allegiances cultivated by Dominican missionaries in the region. These alliances were however intensely unstable and over time, subject to ever-shifting geometries of power not least between *liurai* themselves. In exchange for their loyalty – and by extension, the loyalty of their subjects – to the Portuguese crown, *liurai* received substantial rewards and privileges. The uneven bestowal of entitlements among *liurai* ensured continuing rivalry between ethnic groups making them easier to control. Over time some Portuguese married into the

oppossums and kangaroos to the east and Indo-European thrushes, monkeys and deer to the west, (as well as flying lemurs, tigers, wolves, rhinoceroses, tapirs, scaly anteaters). Wallace's observations led him to believe that biological divergences within the archipelago were due to geology, but exactly what drove that geology had not yet been sufficiently imagined. Plate tectonics were not to be identified until much later; the unsettling knowledge that the earth was mobile and unstable would not be readily accepted until well into the 20th century. Wallace was known rather derogatively as “Darwin's Moon”, a reference to his lesser status to Charles Darwin whose published works on the theory of evolution eclipsed Wallace's substantial contributions, based on lengthy and meticulous field-based studies in Brazil and the Malay archipelago, to evolutionary theory [see Winchester, 2003:56-63].

wealthy and politically powerful royal families of *liurai* forming an influential, educated *mestiço* elite.

The early settlement accommodated a diverse collective of constituents drawn into coexistence with the tiny Portuguese minority and with each other. Dili's early population included Mozambiquan slaves and *degredado* (banishees) from Macau, as well as Chinese trading families from other Timorese settlements including Dutch-occupied Kupang. By the mid-nineteenth century, Portuguese settlement involved a complex and unequal entrenchment of difference, with traditional political relations and social constructions of space overlaid by the race and class hierarchies of what Benedict Anderson (1993:26) has called a 'typical' Iberian colonial social order:

Underneath the Portuguese ruling stratum were, by rank, wealthy, apolitical Chinese, then the mestizos of mixed African, Arab, Portuguese and local ancestries, and a plethora of 'native' ethnolinguist communities.

These asymmetric relations were materially grounded in the distinct ethno-spatial arrangements of Dili's residents. By the twentieth century, Dili's population of 10,000 comprised four geographically distinct communities. The Portuguese community, mostly *sojourners*, occupied the architecturally distinct Farol quarter. Chinese trading families occupied Dili's commercial zone. A small community of Arab/Muslim rice growers and copra manufacturers resided in the locale of Kampong Alor (or 'Kampong Arab'), while Timorese residents dwelled in the peripheral zones of the city, the so-called *bairros de palapa* (a district of houses thatched with palm leaves), and worked in low status positions. The racially segregated living spaces of Dili's community were mapped together by the commercial requirements of an imperial economy.

Yet, Portuguese colonial society was distinct among European colonialisms for its capacity to exercise a more liberal attitude to intercultural marriage. Perhaps this indicates, as Gunn (1999:244) suggests, a more egalitarian ethos than other colonial regimes, or perhaps the Portuguese simply held to a different sexual ethic. The pride in which Portuguese viewed their contribution to miscegenation

is evident in the saying: “God created the Portuguese and the Portuguese created the *mestiço*” (Bender 1978:xxii).¹⁶

Beyond Dili, the vast majority of Timorese continued to live as subsistence farmers and peasant producers cultivating corn, sweet potatoes, cassava, beans and rice. Many communities kept a variety of livestock including water buffaloes, horses, goats and pigs and raised chickens and fighting cocks. Most indigenous Timorese communities did not engage in external trade and maintained a communitarian mode of production, engaging in restricted exchange for ritual purposes only. The development of a “bazaar economy” under colonialism and the subsistence mode of production have formed the backbone of Timorese economic life and survival throughout and beyond the Portuguese colonial period.

While their political connections and bargaining with local elites enabled the Portuguese to establish rudimentary structures of administrative control and the gradual recovery of commerce on the island, the purchase of their authority was highly contingent and unstable. The colonial project remained in constant threat from indigenous volatility and resistance, as well as the opportunism (piracy and looting) of Macassan and Buginese adventurers who took advantage of the unpatrolled coastlines.

Intensification of Portuguese authority

Portuguese colonial administration of Timor proceeded fitfully and idiosyncratically until the end of the nineteenth century. By 1894, a new Governor to the colony, Celestino da Silva, found a country wracked by "open revolt, internecine warfare, economic depression and anarchy" (Dunn 1983:19). Da Silva embarked upon a long campaign of pacification (code in colonial discourse for the violent suppression of native subordination or separatism), to quell the by now intergenerational wars against the Portuguese. Intensification of Portuguese authority in East Timor took place against a backdrop of recurrent and bloody rebellion lasting well into the twentieth century and culminating in

¹⁶ According to Bender, liberal multiculturalism is one of the great Portuguese colonial delusions and a sustaining myth of empire. In the early twentieth century, they even dreamed up a name for it: The myth of “lusotropicalism”, positioned the Portuguese as the non-racist creators of harmonious, multiracial societies in what they described as their ‘overseas provinces’.

the spectacular defeat of local ruler and folk hero, Dom Boaventura¹⁷ of Manufahi (now known as Same):

Timor was the last [Portuguese] colony to be pacified. In 1912, the Portuguese presence on the island was still very much in danger, threatened by the rebellion of the most important native king, Dom Boaventura... Until this date, the history of Timor has been a long story of rough campaigns, continuous changes, tight vigilance to establish, consolidate and protect the Portuguese domain on the island... Throughout it, epic deeds were registered, fought in desperation for life and death, so that the Portuguese flag would not be pulled down forever in those lands. Lifau, Mena, Cova, Ai-tutun, Laku-Maras, Kailaku, Manatuto etc. were scenes of the indigenous determination to extinguish, in slaughter and blood, the Portuguese name. (Artur Basilio de Sá, cited in Ramos-Horta, 1987:20)

Following the crushing defeat of Dom Boaventura, Governor da Silva began to tighten and rationalise civil and military administration throughout East Timor. There followed a period of relative stability in the inter-war years and “apparent peace and quiet industry” (Gunn 1999:209) that had less to do with progressive Portuguese-Timorese relations or any political inclusivity of indigenous people and more to do with “coercive dissuasion” enacted by the Portuguese secret police, the PIDE (*Polícia Internacional e da Defesa do Estado*).¹⁸

Revisioning empire: the Salazar years

In Portugal itself, the political ascendancy of Dr Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in 1932 and his *Estado Novo* fascist regime in 1933 brought an austere stability to a country on the verge of political, social and economic collapse. Portugal's shrinking economic fortunes had forced it into the margins of European capitalism. It had the resources neither to substantially exploit nor to develop its territories, particularly one as remote as Timor. On the brink of World War 2, Portugal was virtually bankrupt and struggling to afford the upkeep of an unwieldy and increasingly volatile empire.

The war temporarily ruptured Portuguese rule in East Timor. In 1941, despite Portuguese neutrality, East Timor became heavily embroiled in “a war fought between imperialist rivals” (Ramos-Horta 1987:20). Australian and Netherland

¹⁷ In the East Timorese popular imagination, Dom Boaventura's legacy of resistance is legendary. He is one of the few Timorese actually distinguished and named in colonial accounts.

¹⁸ Gunn (1999:261) notes that the PIDE were “[f]eared throughout the [Portuguese] empire for its capricious use of torture and violence.”

East Indies troops arrived, unsolicited, in Dili in December 1941. Australian requests to establish a base in Dili to 'protect' the East Timorese had been denied by the Portuguese Governor but, such was the fear of Japanese encroachment on Australian territory, they violated Portuguese sovereignty and the rights of their subject people anyway. Japanese forces swiftly followed, arriving two months later.

Allied bombing campaigns and Japanese scorched earth policies devastated East Timor as well as East Timorese livelihoods. Many Timorese were reduced to eating precious seed stock and as a result, died from starvation. Yet it was their partisan support of Australian commandos that cost them most dearly. Timorese villagers and *creados*¹⁹ supplied Australians with food, shelter and intelligence. Japanese retribution was brutal: 60,000 East Timorese were killed between 1941 and 1946 (Thatcher 1992:27). Their great sacrifice was famously acknowledged by the RAAF drop of hundreds of thousands of leaflets inscribed with the comradely refrain: *Friends, we will not forget you!* East Timorese did not forget the promise, although successive Australian governments would maintain a selective amnesia through the years of Indonesian occupation under the Suharto dictatorship.

The years between 1946 and 1974 constituted the second period of Portuguese presence in Timor, following the brief and brutal interregnum of Japanese occupation. Living conditions for the majority of East Timorese in the post-war years remained relatively unchanged, characterised by poverty, underdevelopment, lack of resources and lack of mobility. Most rural Timorese continued to depend on horses, subsistence farming, and the labour of children. As other European powers began to decolonise their former territories Salazar hung on, unwilling to relinquish the illusion of universal greatness the empire bestowed. As the Portuguese economy continued to deflate, so its parochialism grew. Salazar's propaganda ministry attempted to compensate for the Portuguese nation's diminishing status and relevance in Europe by revitalising the myth of empire, mobilising a grossly distorted sense of national destiny. Portuguese school children were among the primary targets of Salazar's

¹⁹ *Creados* carried the packs of Australian commandos. They were "young boys who attached themselves to individual Australians (the term...is often translated as servant, but it was a much warmer relationship, more like a personal assistant)" (Turner 1992:5).

reinvigorated imperialist mission; they were proudly shown maps intended to illustrate the slogan “*Portugal não e um pais pequeno*” (Portugal is not a small country). A Portuguese journalist interviewed in the Australian-made documentary, *Buried Alive*, explains:

When we began primary school we learned that the whole of Portugal from Minho to Timor was larger than the whole of Europe. We even had a map at our school which showed that the overseas provinces, together with European Portugal, were larger than continental Europe. (Adelino Gomes, 1989: video)

In fact, metropolitan consciousness of Portugal's furthest imperial possessions was slight and public enquiry was repressively and censoriously discouraged during Salazar's lengthy dictatorship. In the Portuguese colonial imaginary, Timor remained an “overseas province”²⁰ on the outermost rim of that country's empire; a provider of palatable coffee and a kind of Botany Bay for Portuguese *deportados* - a conveniently distant repository for troublesome opponents of Salazar.

At the opposite end of empire, East Timorese children schooled in Catholic convents by Jesuit priests were shown the same inflated maps, signifying the universal scope of Portugueseness. The Jesuit seminary at Dare, in the hills behind Dili, was attended mostly by indigenous Timorese boys, the sons of poor *assimilados*. Here, they were prepared for priesthood or for civil service; their heads filled with Portuguese heroes, language and culture, the poetry of Camões and Pessoa, prayers, novenas and the rosary. Lessons were conducted in Portuguese, Latin, English and French. Discipline was severe and punishments routine; some priests literally struck the fear of God into indolent boys. Xanana Gusmão²¹ (2000:8-9) recalls the seminary as a “prison for minors” and an “ante-

²⁰ “In common with a long Latin tradition, initiated by the Romans and followed by both the Spaniards in their Latin American empire and later the French in some of their colonies, including Algeria, the Portuguese constitution of 1820 and Constitutional Charter of 1826 had effectively used the term ‘provinces’ to describe the overseas possessions.” In 1910, with the republican revolution the territories were renamed ‘colonies’ to emphasise the transient nature of colonialism. The term ‘overseas provinces’ regained currency during the Salazar years of fascist government (1932-7) as Salazar sought to rebuild the Portuguese Empire and to convince the Portuguese people of the need for expansionism and increased “living space” at a time when other European colonial powers were dissembling (Figuieredo 1975:207)

²¹ Xanana Gusmão was born in 1946 and attended the Jesuit seminary *Nossa Senhora de Fatima* in Dare from 1959 to 1962. Xanana joined the pro-independence party Fretilin in May 1975. He was appointed leader of the National Council for Revolutionary Resistance (CRRN) in March 1981 and relinquished membership of Fretilin in 1988 to form the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM). He was captured by Indonesian forces in Dili in 1992 and sentenced to life

chamber for saints” yet the social dynamics of seminary life were not wholly characterised by religious zealotry and punitive retribution. The environment was also conducive to religious and political debate that encouraged a nationalist political awareness:

By 1959 some of the priests teaching at Dare were openly critical of the character of Portuguese rule. They taught about nationalist movements occurring elsewhere and about the more progressive development approaches that should be adopted in the province. (Thatcher 1992:29)

The seminary brought together boys of different ethno-linguistic backgrounds that encouraged cross-ethnic affinities. The future Apostolic Administrator of Dili, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, was among the seminary’s most famous students as were many of the future leaders of Fretilin.²² This generation of educated East Timorese youth would critically emerge among the leadership of political parties in the 1970s but in the 1960s their potency was latent. The repressive political environment, involving the hardline PIDE security forces, constrained popular expression of an articulate anti-colonial nationalism (see Gunn 1999; also Dunn 1983).

Entangled identities

The universal Portugueseness conferred on Portugal’s overseas provinces and subjects was primarily discursive. In a material sense, Portugueseness was available only to a select few and even then it was a highly qualified identification defined by a plethora of overlapping assimilationist descriptors. The assimilation policy conferred honorary Portugueseness exclusively upon those Timorese deemed to have attained an appropriate standard of civilisation (*civilizado*). To be *assimilado* – and therefore *civilizado* – you had to be educated or Catholic, speak Portuguese and preferably have a Portuguese name.

imprisonment in 1993. While incarcerated in Cipinang Prison in Jakarta (1993-1999), he was unanimously elected President of the non-partisan National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). Xanana was placed under house arrest in February 1999 and released in September 1999, following the popular consultation in which 78.5% of East Timorese voted in favour of independence. The CNRT was dissolved in 2001 and Gusmão won a landslide presidential election in 2002. He stepped down from the presidency in 2007 to form a new political party, the National Congress for the Reconstruction of East Timor (CNRT), and contest the parliamentary elections in June 2007. The newly established CNRT won 24% of the vote and 18 of the 65 parliamentary seats and formed a coalition with the Association of Timorese Democrats-Social Democratic Party coalition (11 seats) and Democratic Party (8 seats) putting Gusmão in a position to claim government.

²² Future political leaders of East Timor who also attended the seminary included future Fretilin leaders Nicolau Lobato and Xavier do Amaral, and Fransisco Lopes da Cruz (UDT).

In return, *assimilados* were granted Portuguese citizenship and voting rights.²³ By virtue of this Portugueseeness, *mestiço* and *assimilados* officially became *não indigeno* (not indigenous). Their Portugalised status distinguished them from the vast majority of unassimilated, indigenous Timorese enabling a measure of social and economic mobility. But it was a contingent Portugueseeness, marked by what Edward Said describes as the “dreadful secondariness” of colonial subjectivity.

The uneven impact of *Portugalização* (Portugalisation) and the race and class consciousness it imposed upon East Timorese social relations and identities is a theme taken up by the Lisbon-based Timorese writer-in-exile, Luis Cardoso. In his memoir, *Border Crossings*, Cardoso shows how Portuguese colonialism produced fraught and ambivalent subjectivities vulnerable to the multiaxial interplay of race, class and power. In the following passage he recalls, tragically, a childhood encounter that reveals how neighbourhood, place of origin, and skin colour endure as sites of overt ethnic demarcation and how easily *assimilado* subjectivity is undermined by the tenacious persistence of racialised social constructs. As a young schoolboy in the 1960s, Cardoso (2000:52-3) is attempting to locate and justify his own multiple identities to a *mulatto* (*mestiço* – mixed race) administrator, who sharply reminds him of his inferior place as an indigenous, mountain-dwelling *kaladi* within the colonial social order:

When I went to get my identity card, even before I was asked, I had already announced that I was from Cailaco, immediately adding ‘in the municipality of Bobonaro’, and, as if to plead some extenuating circumstance for that remote region, that hiding place and altar of rebels, I supplemented this with, ‘Province of Timor!’ ‘Ah, Bobonaro! The land of *kuda uluns* [horse eaters]!’ said the *mulatto* functionary in an ironic tone...He grabbed my index finger with all his strength, as if intent on breaking it, and pressed it down hard on a pad of black ink and then on a piece of card, leaving a dark smudge which I imagined to be a reflection of my skin or a photograph of my pagan soul. I had done my best to give an acceptable sequence to the facts, emphasizing the final phrase in which I deposited all the patriotism I had been filled with at school. Despite this, I was sent straight back to the most purely native part of my origins. ‘You lot don’t fool anyone!’ He paused, taking careful aim. ‘You eat what you ride!’

²³ Thatcher (1992:32) notes that: “Until 1959 only children of Luirai [royal] families or, children of mixed Portuguese/Timorese parentage, either civil servants or deportados, attended government schools...In 1964...[a]pproximately 2% of the population (those deemed to be ‘civilizado’) were franchised to vote”.

The vast majority of Timorese who were not *civilizado* were discursively and perjoratively constituted as *atrasado* (backwards) for in the psychology of colonialism, as Fanon has famously argued, a civilised status is always in relation to a savage and inferior one. Elizabeth Traube's study of Mambai (themselves archetypally identified as the peasant *kaladi*) provides important insights into Mambai perspectives on those who dwelt at that paradoxical and murky border between exterior and interior worlds, mimicking the appearance, dress and language of *malae*. While Mambai acknowledged the political superiority of Portuguese *malae* they remained ambivalent about Timorese "who have put on trousers" (Traube 1986:49).

Decolonisation & descent into chaos

On April 25th 1974 a bloodless coup in Portugal abruptly brought the 'myth of empire' to an end (Ramos-Horta 1987:26). The *Revolução dos Cravos* (Carnation Revolution) hastened by a leftward turn in Portuguese politics, was to have far-reaching implications for all Portugal's colonies, including East Timor. Four and a half centuries after their first appearance, the Portuguese turned their backs on Timor and fled for home – a move still now interpreted by many East Timorese as abandonment; a Judas-like betrayal. For the mountain-dwelling Mambai, the spectre of decolonisation brought a sense of impending chaos as "this matter of our younger brothers going away" threatened to tilt the cosmos off balance (Traube 1984). The seafaring younger brothers, it seemed to them, had forgotten their obligations to their Timorese kin.

Indeed, as in the past, East Timor now hovered on the periphery of Lisbon's agenda: The priority was to enfranchise the politically unwieldy and expensive African colonies, particularly Angola and Mozambique. In the rush for repatriation, Portuguese troops in Timor were dramatically reduced leaving the half-island vulnerable to the ambitions of external forces. The contrastingly peaceful Carnation Revolution had opened up an unpredictable political space in which the possibility of Indonesian invasion became viable and imminent, and from which diasporic East Timor would soon emerge.

Yet despite the lack of support from Lisbon, a young, educated East Timorese elite, inspired by the nationalist liberation movements of Portugal's West and East African colonies in Mozambique, Angola, Guiné Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe,²⁴ began to envision a more progressive and independent future. Initial euphoria in the first days of the metropolitan coup soon turned to anxiety as Timorese pondered their political options. By the mid-seventies, it is estimated that only 10% of the total population of 680,000 were literate and perhaps only 0.25% had received a formal Portuguese education (Cox 1995). This tiny, educated elite would fulfil a critical role in the social transformation of East Timor, providing leadership and direction in the chaos of the decolonisation process.

As the Portuguese government commenced a programme of rapid decolonisation, the educated elite had roles and responsibilities thrust upon them for which they were barely equipped:

I know of few countries less prepared than East Timor to suddenly face a totally new political situation. The Portuguese fascist regime had never tolerated political dissent, let alone parliamentary democracy... For almost fifty years there had been no political debate in Portugal, and certainly not in East Timor. (Ramos-Horta 1987:28)

With the limits on democratic public discourse suddenly removed, three dominant political parties quickly emerged: UDT,²⁵ ASDT²⁶ (which would soon become Fretilin)²⁷ and Apodeti.²⁸ In January 1975, the UDT and Fretilin formed a political coalition and began to map out plans for the eventual transition to self-government. Seeking to undermine the strength of the coalition, the Indonesian government began to intensify its campaign (known as *Operasi Komodo*) to discredit Fretilin and persuade UDT to disaffiliate from the political

²⁴ FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Mozambique); MPLA (the Marxist Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola), PAIGC (Partido Africano para a Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde); MSLTP (Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe).

²⁵ *União Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Democratic Union). Their political agenda was to achieve progressive autonomy under the Portuguese flag.

²⁶ *Associação Social Democrática Timorese* (Association of Timorese Social Democrats). The democratic socialist ASDT (subsequently Fretilin) claimed the immediate right to independence.

²⁷ *Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente*. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor was founded on 20 May 1974 (see Gunn 1999:265-6).

²⁸ *Associação Populer Democrática Timorese* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association). Apodeti was the smallest and most conservative party, consisting of only a few hundred supporters. They inclined towards integration with Indonesia and *Daerah Istimewa* (Special Region status). Ramos-Horta (1987:28) suggests that in Dili, support for Apodeti amounted to little more than ten families.

union. The Indonesian government demonised Fretilin as a radical, communist front and yet as Gunn (1999:268) argues to the contrary:

Portuguese Timor stands out as one of the very few Southeast Asian colonies where communism failed to take root... Marxist-Leninism has no history in Portuguese Timor. Rather, Fretilin's sense of social justice sprang from the Catholic church, Timor's communitarian traditions, and drew its allies from the people themselves...

By May 1975, the more conservative members of UDT had pulled out of the alliance and the coalition dissolved. In mid-August of the same year, false Indonesian intelligence reports of an imminent Fretilin takeover convinced the UDT leadership to act. Encouraged by the Indonesian secret service, it staged a coup and succeeded in capturing strategic sites in Dili. So began a civil war which lasted not more than three weeks but whose effects were deep and lasting. The death toll was estimated at 2-3,000 (Jardine 1995:55). The extent to which the failure of the UDT/Fretilin coalition was precipitated by factors other than external forces remains unclear. During a four-day hearing of the post-independence Truth Commission in December 2003, Mari Alkatiri (at that time Prime Minister of newly independent Timor-Leste) insisted that “without external interference there would never have been a civil war” and José Ramos-Horta (then Foreign Minister)²⁹ emphasised that the civil war “had been triggered by the superpowers in the context of the Cold War” (Schlicher 2005:66). João Carrascalão, one of the three UDT leaders in 1975, who has consistently contested the term “coup” to describe UDT's action, gave an unexpected testimony that would lead to a collective acceptance of responsibility among the parties for the fratricidal violence enacted at the time:

The movement of 11 August. The name of this was not the anti-communist movement, but the movement of 11 August... Many called it

²⁹ José Ramos-Horta was born in 1949 to Timorese mother and Portuguese father and was educated in a Catholic mission. From 1969 he worked as a journalist and was temporarily deported to Mozambique in 1970 by the Portuguese colonial administration. He was a co-founder and former member of Fretilin. On 28 November 1975 when Fretilin proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor, Ramos-Horta, aged 26 years, was appointed Minister for communications and external affairs. He left East Timor two days before the Indonesian invasion and remained in exile as international spokesperson for the East Timorese resistance. He was co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace prize with East Timor's Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo. Ramos-Horta returned to East Timor in December 1999 following the historic vote for independence and was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in a provisional government. Following the political crisis in East Timor in April 2006, Ramos-Horta was sworn in as caretaker Prime Minister. He replaced Xanana Gusmão as President of the Republic of East Timor in May 2007.

a coup d'état...it was not an anti-Fretilin movement, it was not to take power...it was not to start a war...we did not want blood to run, we didn't want violence...this violent action happened spontaneously from the base...I am responsible...there were no orders to kill from the parties. (In Schlicher, 2005:69)

The civil war not only ruptured families and traumatised communities as personal vendettas and bitter rivalries were played out, but it had the effect of giving substance to Indonesia's territorial claim to East Timor in the eyes of the international community. However, both the UDT and the Indonesian government had underestimated the level of popular support for Fretilin. By mid-September in 1975, Fretilin had gained control of Dili and around 3,000 UDT leaders, soldiers and their families had fled over the West Timorese border. It was the first major exodus in East Timor's history. Meanwhile, Fretilin began a campaign of *trabalho de base* (grassroots work) in rural areas, which included establishing literacy programmes and agricultural co-operatives. The programmes were facilitated by brigades of urban-educated youth who returned to their rural villages to encourage the development of a nationalist spirit through *consciencialização* (consciousness-raising).

Mauberism: a 'quintessential' Timorese

It was the fusion of traditionalism, modern nationalism and Freirian philosophy that distinguished Fretilin's cultural politics and won them broad popular support. There was a revisionist project that mobilised an essentialist notion of a precolonial Melanesian-Timorese identity and sought to reinstate subjectivities denied under colonialism. The strength of Fretilin's political project lay in its strategy of disalienation of rural, mountain-dwelling Timorese. Their quest for 'pure democracy' involved a revisionist retrieval of indigenous traditions, histories, and cultures from Portuguese imperialism. They co-opted the symbol of the *Maubere* man as a central motif of national pride and identity.³⁰ *Maubere* means 'friend' or 'brother' in the language of Mambai, one of the poorest hill people in Timor. The name, in lower case, was a perjorative designation used by the former Portuguese colonisers as a generic descriptor for 'native' East Timorese. Its intent was the abnegation of their ethnic and linguistic diversity

³⁰ The *Maubere* image remained an enduring and emotive symbol throughout the Timorese struggle for independence. The writings and speeches of Xanana Gusmão are replete with references to *Mauberism* as a specific East Timorese identity 'bequeathed' to the young Timorese. (See for example the interview conducted by Australian lawyer Robert Domm in 1990, in Aubrey 1998:131-143).

and the legitimisation of hierarchically structured social relations based on race. Encouraged by the Black Power Movement in the United States that successfully dislodged negative and inferior evocations of blackness through an overtly oppositional politics, Fretilin appropriated the term *Maubere* as a symbol of cultural survival and quintessential Timoresehood:

Fretilin made the word a symbol of what their movement represented; to be a *Maubere* was to be a son of Timor and a patriot. It came to symbolize the reassertion of Timorese culture and the struggle against poverty and colonial subordination.” (Luis Cardoso 2000:73)

The *Maubere* were valorised in the poems and patriotic songs of young Fretilin poets. Like African nationalist writers, these poets engaged in counter-colonial critique using the language of the coloniser, whose rhythms, sounds and grammar they had infiltrated and absorbed, as a means of ‘writing back’ against Portuguese imperialism:

I
We must/Nourish/A new life/To forget/That our people/Were slaves
II
We must/Struggle/In conquest/Of fear/That comes/From slavery
III
We must/Irrigate/This soil/With sweat,/With love/Fertilise it
IV
We must/Teach/Our people/What is/The cause/Of exploitation
V
We must/From this/Trodden/Trampled soil/Create/A new person
VI
We must/Throw off/The fear,/The weight/Of colonial oppression

WE MUST SHOUT ALOUD
THAT THE PEOPLE OF TIMOR
THAT THE MAUBERE PEOPLE
WILL NEVER BE SLAVES AGAIN

NO ONE
NOT ANYONE
NEVER ANYONE AGAIN

Francisco Borja da Costa ³¹

³¹ *The Maubere People will Never be Slaves Again* (English translation in Borja da Costa 1976:25-27). Francisco Borja da Costa was the Fretilin Central Committee’s Secretary of Information until he was brutally murdered by Indonesian paratroopers on the day of the invasion.

While Fretilin went about establishing a *de facto* government, ABRI (the Indonesian military) continued to make incursions into East Timor. When on November 28th, ABRI captured the East Timorese town of Atabae only 35 miles from Dili, Fretilin moved quickly to declare independence in the hope of securing international support. Only four former Portuguese colonies would officially recognise the new Democratic Republic of East Timor while western nations, who were complicit in Indonesia's plans to invade the territory, were silent. The Republic was to survive for nine days.

Invasion

The Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 marked a point of 'radical discontinuity' in the lives of East Timorese. This dramatic punctuation in East Timor's history has been responsible for the violent dispersal of East Timorese lives and cultures. While the majority of Timorese would have been aware of Indonesia's impending attack in 1975, the scale and ferocity of the onslaught when it came could scarcely have been anticipated. On that day, 7th December 1975, the sky over Dili filled with hundreds of paratroopers descending to the waterfront of East Timor's capital city. At the same time, thousands of Indonesian sea-borne troops were deployed in the final phase of *Operasi Seroja* (Blossoming Lotus)³² which began with the naval bombardment of Fretilin positions and went on to include indiscriminate acts of torture, slaughter and sexual abuse, as well as widespread looting of Timorese homes and businesses.

As Perera reminds us (2004:14), the "bodies of the dead act as borders, thresholds and points of connection, between spaces and between temporalities". In the memories and recitations of young adults who were child witnesses of the Indonesian invasion, the defilement of space and violently obliterated bodies form a permanent cartography of death:

I was eight years old when the Indonesians invaded my homeland. My parents had already left the country so I was living with my grandfather in Dili...What I remember most was the sight of Timorese corpses lying

³² The re-naming of acts or objects of aggression in war, often (as here) with absurdly incongruous poetic terms, is explained by Elaine Scarry (1985:66) as a means through which the full-blown revelation of injury and human suffering can be obfuscated. It is a descriptive sleight of hand; "The recurrence...of language from the realm of vegetation occurs because vegetable tissue, though alive, is perceived to be immune to pain; thus the inflicting of damage can be registered in language without permitting the entry of the reality of suffering into the description."

in the streets. Some of them were people I knew - neighbours, school friends. Their bodies were left in the street for several days and they were slowly decaying, so Dili had a very unusual smell. But people did not think much about the stench that came out of the corpses in the streets, we got used to the smell... .

Luís (early-thirties) Canberra

I was six years old when East Timor was invaded by the Indonesian Armed Forces... There was a football field near our house which served as an assembly point for Indonesian troops – both paratroopers who had dropped from the air over Dili, and infantry disembarking from landing craft in Dili Harbour. Those Timorese who passed near this area, mainly women and children seeking refuge in the adjacent Motael Church, were killed by the Indonesians. We did not leave the house for fifteen days. When I at last ventured out, I came across bodies in the streets, often half eaten by animals. On the beach (Areia Branca) nearest to us, a number of bodies had been washed up. I helped a Timorese nurse bury many of them on the beach. (Donaçiano Gomes 1995:106)

Within the first two days, an estimated 2,000 East Timorese were murdered, of which some 500 to 600 were ethnic Chinese (Jardine 1995:34).³³ Thousands more Timorese were killed by Indonesian troops within the first few weeks of the invasion. In the following fifteen months, the death toll had risen to between 50,000 and 60,000 (Jardine 1995:31). By 1979, almost one third of the pre-invasion population (approximately 680,000), are believed to have either been murdered by the Indonesian army, or to have lost their lives as a result of war-induced famine, disease and on-going military occupation (Carey, in Cox and Carey 1995:14).³⁴ Disruption to East Timorese lives has been pervasive. Regardless of ethnic, social and political difference, no East Timorese family has been unmarked.

Notwithstanding the deep entirety of East Timorese subjective experience, the memory of invasion as a ‘point-blank’ moment in which the preceding sense of Timorese lives and cultures was shattered needs to be seen in the context of a broader geopolitical landscape. Historical moments are part of global processes

³³ This is evidently disproportionate to the total population of Chinese Timorese at that time and has been attributed to extreme Indonesian racial intolerance of Chinese generally (Jardine 1995).

³⁴ The genocide and unmitigated suffering of East Timorese can be compared to that of Cambodians during the period of Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) although, in relative terms, the effacement of East Timorese was the greater. At least 1.5 million of 8 million Cambodians were killed (20% population) between 1975-1979 compared to one-third of the East Timorese population.

and complex configurations of meaning and power. As José Ramos-Horta has continually reminded western audiences, the tragedy of East Timor is that it was “a mere footnote” to the events of 1975 and to the strategic and security interests of powerful economic and political elites.

The invasion of East Timor occurred two days after the President of the United States, Gerald Ford, had completed a state visit to Jakarta with his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. It is now well known that they privately gave the Indonesian President Suharto US approval for the invasion. It is also well established that the Whitlam government in Australia knew very precisely of Indonesia's planned operations and that one of their key informants was the notorious Benny Murdani,³⁵ who was at that time head of the Strategic Intelligence Centre of the Indonesian Department of Defence and Security. Australia opted for a policy of "appeasement" of the Suharto regime, a decision made partly out of strategic self-interest (Aubrey 1998:286) and partly out of misguided refusal to heed any dissonant intelligence (Birmingham 2001:3).

The United States wanted to avoid the prospect of “a second Cuba” in Southeast Asia that might impede the free passage of US nuclear submarines through the Ombai-Wetar Straits that lie parallel to East Timor. The West was obsessed with the potential for communist insurgency in the region, yet the claim that East Timor represented such a threat turned out to be a feint. Nevertheless, the fear of a ‘domino’ effect throughout the region prevailed:

1975 was a bad year for the United States. The world’s greatest economic and military power suffered its first defeat ever, humiliated by a Third World peasant army. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were “lost” to the communists. That same year, Angola, endowed with oil and diamonds, became independent after a long guerilla war against the Portuguese. The United States tried to stop the Marxist *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) from gaining power by supporting two pro-Western factions, and enlisting racist South Africa in its crusade against “communism”... With the wounds of Vietnam still fresh, it wasn’t difficult for Suharto to persuade his American patrons that military action against East Timor was necessary to stamp out another “communist” enclave. (Ramos-Horta 1987: 87-8)

³⁵ Leonardus Benyamin Murdani was born in Central Java on 12 October 1932 and brought up as a Dutch-speaking Catholic. He is remembered in East Timor for his complicity in war crimes. Murdani became Commander of ABRI (the Indonesian armed forces) in 1983. In the same year, he was suspected of involvement in the state-sanctioned ‘petrus’ killings (*penembakan misterius* – mysterious shootings). He was Indonesian Minister of Defence from 1988 to 1993.

As Stuart Hall (1997:177) has written, “entities of power are dangerous when they are ascending and when they are declining, and it is a moot point whether they are more dangerous in the second or the first moment.” The violence of East Timor’s invasion and occupation by Indonesian forces was constituted in the context of the synchronous decline of Portuguese colonial influence and the consolidation of the Indonesian state through territorial expansion. The sudden and belated decolonisation of East Timor left an unsettling political vacuum into which Indonesia’s President Suharto, who had risen to power on the bloodbath of the anti-communist coup of 1965,³⁶ could be persuaded by the logic of his generals, the architects of *Operasi Komodo* (the military operation that initiated the civil war), and the designs of western powers to deny East Timorese the sovereignty of their own land.

Occupation

The integration of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia should have, had the East Timorese acquiesced to it, effectively erased the border that separates the former Dutch East Indies from Portuguese Timor. The border historically represents a political compromise negotiated in 1913 following centuries of colonial posturing and bickering as the Dutch and Portuguese hammered out their respective claims to Timorese territory. Inconveniently it split the island in two, leaving Oe Cusse stranded within Timor’s western, Indonesian half; a tiny island marooned in a half-island. Such was the power of the imperial project to fix, name and control colonial territories that their frontiers became over-determined and naturalised as fact. Indeed borders are not mere lines on paper; not simply the creative acts of colonial imaginations, nor postcolonial reinscriptions: Arguably they have profoundly material and, as Mohammad suggests (1994:230), embodied effects:

...boundaries [help] to structure the most intimate part of our lives: our identity. ‘I am Indonesian’ or ‘I am Singaporean’ – in saying this we have in fact chosen a way to react or behave within a certain situation, including feeling insulted or proud, restraining our feelings, dying.

This is not to suggest that colonial borders seal off identities in any totalising sense. As Murray argues (1997:4), they exist as ‘sites of cultural contest’ in

³⁶ The massacres of up to a million suspected Communists in 1965-6, following Suharto’s seizure of power, plunged Indonesia into deep political and social crisis and profoundly impacted on the national psyche (see Budiardjo’s account 1996:40-54).

which the legacies of colonialism, the social practices, ideologies and economies they engendered, persist through the post-colonial present (Said 1993:8). The Indonesian occupation radically reinforced the notion of the border as a static persistence through drastic technologies of regulation and fear. Life under Indonesian military rule was both spatially and temporally circumscribed through surveillance techniques, checkpoints, curfews and state-sponsored terror. The Indonesian state's stranglehold on Timorese mobility and personal freedom was pervasive and relentless and had the effect of a protracted suffocation.

Little wonder that the vast majority of Timorese resolutely turned their backs on Jakarta, the centre of Indonesian state power, rejecting the benefits of nationhood and development – or marauding imperialism, depending on your point of view. Their sustained refusal, from the moment of invasion in 1975, to comply with Indonesia's territorial imperative – to create a seamless national geography from its north-westernmost province of Aceh to easternmost 'Irian' ("from Sabang to Merauke" as the nationalist saying goes) – marked them off as insurgents, communists, a threat to Indonesian national, indeed global, security. So constructed, they came to represent an unruly presence within the Indonesian political and geographic imagination, a wild card, a thorn in the side of the Indonesian dream: 'grit in one's shoe' as Indonesia's former Foreign Minister Ali Alatas famously put it; "scum [that] must be eliminated" to quote General Try Sutrisno (in Birmingham 2001:36); the half-island worth "nothing more than a pile of rocks" (a petulant President Habibie, as Indonesia began to lose its grip in 1999).

These discomfiting images hardened into a language of contamination that scarcely held out the possibility of a national familial embrace. Herein lies the crux of Benedict Anderson's argument concerning East Timorese national self-consciousness, that the emergence of an East Timorese national identity had substantially to do with Indonesia's inability to sufficiently imagine East Timor as part of an Indonesian whole:

Clearly the greatest difficulty has been to persuade themselves that the East Timorese 'really' are Indonesians. If they were, there would be only the simplest task of scraping away a kind of superficial strangeness

attributable to Portuguese colonization, revealing a ‘natural Indonesianness’ underneath. (Anderson 1993:28)

Yet identities cannot be unmade or remade by an act of *pentimento*, the careful removal of cultural skins to reveal an underlying ‘original’. Over four hundred years of Portuguese colonialism could not simply be scraped away, as Anderson suggests, and even if a patina of Portugueseness could have been erased, what prior commonality might be revealed?

‘Indonesia’ and ‘East Timor’ emerged from vastly different colonial experiences and temporal orders. A Pan-Indonesian identity, apparent from the beginning of the nineteenth century, was forged out of bitter resistance and struggle throughout the archipelago against the Dutch. By the 1920s, the independence movement was thoroughly mobilised, fired by an uneasy juxtapositioning of Nationalism, Islam and Marxism. ‘The time inspired its own fever’ wrote Indonesian poet-journalist Goenawan Mohammad (1994:184) and that feverishness inspired an ethnically and culturally diverse population to sufficiently imagine themselves as a ‘people’. When liberation came in 1945, a constitution was drawn up that rejected human rights and rights of the individual as antithetical to national social harmony; it was hardly conceivable that a nation of patriots would need such protections now that the colonial oppressors had been overthrown. It is not only the Timorese people who live with this irony; the burden of postcolonial violence and sadism still lingers in the collective memories of the Indonesian people “like a kind of pornography which is cursed before being hidden under the pillow” (Mohamad 1994:166).

Beyond the social and political upheaval of Indonesia’s postcolonial redefinition, Portuguese Timor remained a tiny outpost at the fraying edge of a fading empire – Portugal’s imperial destiny writ small. Despite almost half a millenium of Portuguese presence the colony remained an oceanic backwater, the colonial legacy underwritten by the oppression of neglect. Yet, as linguist Geoffrey Hull argues (1996:40):

Not only was the impact of Portuguese colonialism on East Timorese society deep, but it had transformed an indigenous culture into a new hybrid one, so complex that it is now impossible to separate native and European elements without destroying the fabric of the culture itself and shattering the common ethnic consciousness.

Precolonial Timor was of course already culturally and ethnically hybrid; there was no single uniquely indigenous Timorese culture but, as Hull suggests, more than four hundred years of Portuguese colonialism left a profoundly Latinised imprint upon a largely Melanesian lineage society which, as Gunn has argued (1999:155), created new subjectivities out of “complex webs of [intergenerational] alliances and dependencies”. As a result, many Timorese still look back nostalgically over their shoulders to the motherland but it is a vexed relationship and one that underscores the ambiguity inherent in postcolonial formations. The postcolonial nation cannot simply jettison its colonial history at will; “[s]uch history is too deeply embedded in the cultural fabric to allow for an easy adversarial decolonising (Murray 1997:14).

Discussion

Colonial rivalries and territorial quests to possess and exploit the world’s ‘peripheries’ shaped the destinies of diverse tribal and indigenous peoples in both different and similar ways. With the cleavage of Timor island into Dutch and Portuguese halves, roughly coinciding with pre-existing indigenous cartographies, two distinct Timorese cultural formations emerged. East Timorese destinies were thus mediated through the specificities of Portuguese colonial relations, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices, its political rivalries and alliances.

Racialised social constructs provided the logic for social relations established under competing colonialisms, not simply producing hierarchical social categories – European/native; human/savage; advanced/backward; white/black and so on – but legitimising difference through the exercise of power; at worst through brutal repression. Naturally, other modalities configured in the constitution of racialised power relations, such as gender, ethnicity, class, language, generation and religion. The strategic and selective cultivation of *liurais* (male chiefs) and multilingual Topasse *mestiço* in the economic interests of the Portuguese, in return for allegiance to the Crown and conversion to the Catholic faith, elevated their respective cultural and economic status. While opportunities for self-transcendence for the majority of indigenous Timorese were few, education also transformed the lives of the, mostly male, children of

assimilados and conferred the benefits of a Lusitanian/Catholicised identity, while arming them with the resources necessary for anti-colonial struggle.

It is important to remember that the dynamics of colonialism are neither unitary nor linear. I return to Trinh's argument for a relationally and contextually constituted grasp of historicity (1994:9). The distinctive historical experiences of "a people" are multiply situated and textured by individual perceptions and encounters, as well as by fragile, often idiosyncratic, even accidental coalitions. Colonial elites were as heterogeneous as local, tribal communities and colonial projects were variously apprehended, misunderstood, adapted and enacted by actors – men, women and children – whose subjectivities undercut Same/Other positionalities. Just as the colonised engaged in various articulations (partial adoption, avoidance, cooperation, resignation) that were not always antagonistic to the European 'core', colonials sometimes acted in collusion with the people they patronised and dominated against the interests of the metropolitan power (Thomas 1994:60). A self-conscious East Timorese-ness was thus formed through the uneasy and unresolved dialectic of colonialism and through social relations saturated in inequality. The inevitable collisions and connections of everyday life under colonialism, in turn, embodied larger conflicts about continuity and change as global events and forces created uncertainty and instability in Portuguese Timor in the mid-1970s.

In the midst of unsettling dynamics of decolonisation, emerging anti-colonial struggle and the chaos and fragmentation of civil war, meanings of East Timorese-ness began to cohere around anchoring coordinates of national identity. The quest for an authentic East Timorese self entailed the discursive privileging of an essentialised, precolonial Melanesian Timorese identity through Fretilin's universal co-option of the indigenous *Maubere* figure as the central, unifying motif for the imagined nation. This archetypal identity, at once both romantic and tragic, subsequently became a rallying point of East Timorese resistance under Indonesian occupation. The Indonesian invasion served to sharpen the East Timorese collective consciousness. Prior to the invasion, the sense of a collective East Timorese identity was still diffuse. Despite their heterogeneous origins and the differential impact of war upon individuals, the Indonesian invasion constituted a defining moment in the development of an East Timorese

consciousness, when Chinese, *mestiço* (mixed race), and indigenous men, women and children became simply ‘East Timorese’ – de-gendered and de-ethnicised. From that time, despite massive dislocation and disruption, and perhaps because of it, the people of East Timor began to recognise themselves as a true collectivity, united by their traumatic confrontation with Indonesia.³⁷ In the context of Indonesian occupation, when the world turned 180 degrees and descended into chaos, East Timorese looked to the sea for signs of hope. Such was the transformative power of war that the silencing and entrapment of those within (the ‘inside waiters’) meant that those outside East Timor, both *malae* and exiled Timorese, became of necessity the ‘speaking mouths’; the ‘outside wanderers’ (Turner 1992:xviii). East Timorese activists would travel the globe as sacramental witnesses, driven by the spirit of resistance and the need to testify to the tyranny of Indonesian occupation. They would become the ‘voice of the voiceless’; the conduit through which East Timor’s epic tale would be told.

My aim in this chapter has been to trace various interweaving strands of historical experience, culture, myth, collective memory and power that combine to produce East Timoresehood as a national collectivity. The radical accretion of a pan-East Timorese identity was profoundly shaped by the dramatic political upheavals, violence and loss incurred by the synchronous decline of Portuguese colonial authority and the aggressive rise of Suharto’s New Order Government in East Timor, out of which a multiply displaced refugee diaspora emerged. Before moving to explore the context of diaspora and experiences of East Timorese refugeehood, I turn now to consider the context of youth, the *Gerasaun Foun*, the generation of youth brought up and educated under Indonesian military rule (1975-1999). My focus on the complex social dynamics and politicisation of this generation is crucial to understanding the unique experiences of young ‘nineties’ Timorese living in diaspora.

The following chapter thus explores the lived reality of a generation socialised into a culture of resistance and secrecy against the Indonesian occupation. It examines how youth as a social identity was profoundly shaped by the

³⁷ As Rey Chow (1991) has observed in her analysis of the 1989 Tienanmen Square massacre, there are pivotal moments when homogeneous identities emerge to eclipse difference. As an Asian American, Tienanmen made her ‘feel’ Chinese, despite her intellectual commitment to the hybrid and the heterogeneous.

interleaving of politics and religion and how the *Gerasaun Foun* became actively involved in the struggle as historical beings and makers of history.

Chapter Two

Spirits of Resistance: Youth, Religion & Radicalism

*Mate ka Moris Ukun Rasik A'an
Ne'e Hau Nia Rain, Rai Timor Lorosae*

Life or Death! Independence
This is My Land, the Land of East Timor

Abé ho Aloz ¹

*Jovens! Nós que trazemos no peito
O sonho da verdade,
Não deixemos o nosso Povo cair
Desalentado por entre grades e montanhas,
Por entre casas e bossa,
Vamos endurecer o nosso braço.
Levantai-vos comigo
Sairemos ao combate!*

Youth! We who carry in our breast
The dream of truth,
Let us not let our People fall
Disheartened in between prison bars and mountains,
Between houses and *bossa*,
Let us steel our arm
Rise up with me
We will go to battle!

João Aparício ²

¹ Lyrics of a song written by Abé ho Aloz and inspired by the cry of resistance by young Timorese at the Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 1991 (Barreto Soares, 1996:37-39).

² 'Bandeira Da Paz' (Flag of Peace) written by Lisbon-based poet-in-exile, João Aparício (1999:43-4).

This chapter explores the convergence of youth, religion and radical action in the East Timorese nationalist struggle for liberation from Indonesian occupation. It examines the conditions under which young Timorese were mobilised to act against Indonesian state power and resist processes of ‘Indonesianisation’. I argue that the exigencies of the struggle for independence from Indonesian oppression depended upon a very specific enactment of youth within East Timor through which East Timorese youth acquired a potent and heroic role. The nationalist project of imagining community thus involved the essentialised construction of a patriotic and self-sacrificing youth.

Under Indonesian occupation, youth constituted a significant site of struggle between the Indonesian state and the resistance movement: the radicalisation of the *Gerasaun Foun* (Young Generation) needs to be understood in this context. Education was a key instrument of governance through which the Indonesian state sought to acculturate young Timorese as Indonesian subjects and to institutionalise its ideals of model citizenry via political and moral discourses of modernity and progress (*pembangunan*). It was an ambitious, authoritative, and decidedly unreflective project and its effectiveness as a political technology was fatally flawed. If the New Order Government’s educational policy aimed at transforming colonised subjects into consenting citizens, so too, its practice enabled young Timorese to acquire an intimate knowledge of Indonesian institutions and language. Through this intimacy, the *Gerasaun Foun* developed a cultural dexterity and dialogic capacity which would enable them to negotiate the borders between centres and peripheries of power in the service of the struggle for independence. These negotiations involved various forms of complicity, mobility between adversarial spaces and domains of secret knowledge and the exercise of both bodily constraint and risky exposure. In short, the performance of political agency among the *Gerasaun Foun* entailed the precarious shadow play of ‘double lives’ but which, increasingly, involved revelations of mass youth dissent through the public performance of staged ‘events’.

The chapter underscores the symbolic potency of one such event, the Dili Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991, as an ‘epicentre’ in the struggle for East Timorese independence. While massacres in East Timor were not

uncommon, images of this particular event were captured by foreign journalists and circulated via international media networks. Dramatic media portrayals of the unfolding drama gave unprecedented global visibility to the hidden tragedy of East Timor, in which local youth emerged as heroic, yet tragic protagonists. As a global news event, the Dili Massacre generated a colossal impact producing new communities of solidarity and action across the world, not least within and across Timorese diasporic communities themselves. Yet, as much as it may be viewed as a globally manufactured spectacle, the Dili massacre is also important as a nexus for understanding the local, lived-in worlds of Timorese youth. The events of that time, their causes, consequences and implications feature in the micro stories of many post-1991 Timorese arrivals in Australia, not least as a crucial reference point in their formal applications for asylum.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the lived reality of occupied East Timor from the perspectives of young ‘nineties’ Timorese living in diaspora and the geography of danger that they, their friends and families negotiated on a daily basis. These narratives not only expose disjunctive experiences of routinised political violence but the ambivalence of more benign encounters recalled through the lens of childhood memories.

Youth-as-patriots: the emergence of an urban based intifada

If Indonesia thinks that by exterminating Falintil the war will end, they are wrong, because...the war will start again...

*Xanana Gusmão*³

By 1979, just four years after the invasion, the armed struggle was on its knees, depleted by relentless Indonesian military offensives and counter-insurgency operations aimed at terrorising the civilian population and inhibiting their contact with Falintil. Already 79% of the Supreme Command had been killed, including the Fretilin Vice President Nicolau Lobato (on 31st December 1978), and 80% of the 4,000 Falintil troops had been lost, their support bases destroyed and internal and external lines of communication had both been severed leaving the remaining combatants isolated from the outside world as well as from each other (Carey 1995: 6-7).

³ Interview with Robert Domm 1990 (in Aubrey 1998:139)

Thousands of refugees who had fled their homes in the wake of the invasion, eking out a marginal and peripatetic existence in the company of Falintil in the mountainous interior, had by this time surrendered, forced out by desperation and sickness induced by hunger and the impact of military napalm attacks. The few who remained continued to exist as outlaws, continually on the move to evade capture. In Dili, in 1998, I interviewed two young female members of Falintil who described for me their experience of transience as children born into the resistance:

According to our experience, we were just kids in those times and we didn't know exactly where we were going to live...As we grew up we started to ask our parents and brothers and sisters, why do we live in a place like this? Why we always move around? Run and run around days and nights, always moving. Where exactly is our home? Why we have to sleep on the ground and on the stones? Why we use leaves for mats and roots for pillows? And then they started to explain that, at the moment, Indonesian dogs came to our country and took over our houses and our land. That's why we're here living with wild animals in the jungle to defend our country Timor Lorosae; to defend our right and the right of all Timorese people. [They told us] even though you are a woman, you also have the right not to be scared, to fight the Indonesian dogs that invade our country...And for our education, we are only studying in the jungle like reading and writing, but only if the situation is good. But if the situation is not good, when the enemy came we have to run and hide...In the jungle there are very old women, old men, blind people, no teeth, also young men and women. We live as suffering people...Our friends, a lot of them have died and disappeared. We live in blood and bones during this time.

Fiter and Peregrina (19) Dili ⁴

By 1981, political and military leadership under Xanana Gusmão had reorganised and the non-partisan CRRN⁵ had replaced Fretilin as the highest body in the national struggle. From that time, the armed resistance shifted strategically from offensive to defensive and the clandestine movement and diplomatic front became increasingly vital. At the same time, a new generation

⁴ The interview with Fiter and Peregrina took place in Dili in 1998. As they were visiting Dili only briefly, and clandestinely, they responded to my questions (written in *Bahasa Indonesia*) by letter in Tetum. As young women brought up in the mountains, they had never been to an Indonesian school and were therefore not *Bahasa*-speakers.

⁵ National Council of Revolutionary Resistance – the antecedent of CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance) formed in 1988 and CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) established in 1998.

of East Timorese educated by the Indonesian state was beginning to mobilise against Indonesian state hegemony and domination. From the early eighties, high school students in Catholic schools began to form cells and tentatively made contact with Fretilin and Falintil cadres in the mountains. Schools run by the Catholic Church allowed students significantly more latitude to organise politically than state run schools where “you were not even allowed to mention the name of resistance leaders” (Pinto 2001:33) and where songs linked to the resistance were forbidden. The prevailing culture of oppression in East Timor merely drove the youth resistance deeper underground:

In a colonized culture, secrecy is an assertion of identity and of symbolic capital. Pushed to the margins, subaltern groups construct their own margins as fragile insulations from the “center.” Secrecy is the creation of centers in peripheries deprived of stable anchorages. Cultural resistance inspires the production of fragments as a counterpractice to imperial agendas. (Feldman 1991:11)

As domains of clandestine activity and knowledge, schools, universities and youth organisations became important sites of cultural resistance and political agency. As much as schools were intended as sites of socialisation for the ‘Indonesianisation’ of East Timorese youth, they were also constructed by young people themselves as a space where assertions of Timorese identity could be secretively nurtured and maintained:

Under the Indonesian occupation, I had to go to school where I was forced to learn the Indonesian history, their heroes, their culture, anything but the culture and reality and history of my country. Reaching high school year 12 was already a painful journey for me. What kept me going was that the school became a stage of encountering, meeting with my colleagues, some very experienced passing onto us their information, their experience and their knowledge. That kept us going back to school, making us feel that we can turn this negative environment into something part of the resistance. (Corsino 1998:14)

Through the 1980s, the clandestine youth movement gradually developed its networks across the Indonesian border, crucially through Renetil⁶ the national organisation of Timorese students in Indonesia, whose networks included Indonesian as well as international activists involving journalists, intellectuals and human rights advocates who were sympathetic and active in solidarity

organisations.

The youth movement received unqualified support from the leadership of the armed resistance. Following a pledge of commitment from Catholic students within East Timor and those on scholarships in Indonesia (dated 7th September 1985), Falintil Commander, Xanana Gusmão, issued a lengthy message outlining a historical, political and cultural rationale for the struggle, and encouraging an explicitly youthful patriotism, emphasising politico-diplomatic mobilisation rather than military action:

On behalf of the CRRN and the glorious Falintil, as well as on my own behalf, I express our profound esteem and congratulations to you on your energetic and courageous stance at this historic time of vital importance to our thousand-times heroic and beloved *Maubere* people! I address myself today especially to you, Beloved Youth and *Maubere* Patriots, for you are the vigorous blood of our people and the promise of the future of our beloved Homeland, East Timor. In this bloody journey of our people your participation in the struggle for national liberation is a moral duty and, above all, it is a political and historical obligation. (Gusmão 2000: 85-86)

Xanana's response, written some eight months later on the 20th May 1986, gives an indication of the extent of Falintil's isolation and the difficulty of communication in the early years of occupation. Yet, despite the limits of such interaction, the impact of Xanana's written communiqués were greater for their infrequency and remarkable for the sophistication of the leadership's grasp of world affairs. The elevated language, its cadence and rhythms, had an authoritative and pulpitarian quality, the legacy of a seminarian education perhaps. Written in the register of a public speech, the letters had the eloquence and performative power of a skilful piece of oratory. The 1986 appeal to youth was profoundly inclusive; it repeatedly and affectionately inscribes the recipients as "Beloved Youth and *Maubere* Patriots!" (the salutation appears some 34 times). The idiom of *Maubere* nationalism draws significant affective power from notions of authenticity, inheritance, incorruptibility and the rhetoric of blood, martyrdom and sacrifice:

⁶ The *Resistencia Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor Leste* (National Resistance of Timorese Students) was founded in 1986 by Timorese students who had been sent to study in Indonesia. It was formally recognised by the national resistance on 20th June 1988.

Beloved Youth and *Maubere* Patriots, the youth is the promising force of our people; the youth is the hope of constructing our Homeland; the youth is the guarantee of the future of our nation. You are this force; you are this hope; you are the guarantee. Our people's eyes rest on you; our elders, our fathers, are giving you the duty to continue this struggle. Many young people have already given their lives for this struggle. Very many of our *companheiros*, young like you, have fallen beside our parents... Children of two, three, four and five years of age are already working for the resistance of our people – many of them have suffered imprisonment, torture, banishment and threats! Many of them bear these atrocities with heroism, and are not fooled by the sweets which the criminal occupiers offer them to buy information about their parents, their relatives and colleagues! They are living examples of courage, living examples of the struggle, living examples of a conscience that is transmitted from parents to children – from the massacred parents to orphans who survive this conscience runs in the *Maubere* blood in our veins, impregnates our flesh and penetrates our bones and our innermost being! (Gusmão 2000:107)

The invocation of *Maubere* as a signifier for 'the people', with its concomitant identification with poverty and oppression, is recurrent in nationalist discourse and it is an image that profoundly captured the popular imagination with enduring effect. Traube has written for example (2007:10), that in post-independent Mambai narratives "the *Maubere* symbol evokes a capacity to suffer and endure that is central to popular nationalism" and which is linked to the notion that the nation "was 'purchased' ... 'not with silver or gold, but with the blood of the people' (*ba los nor os-butin nor os-meran fe al, mas nor povu ni laran*)". The explicit use of the term of 'purchase', she argues, evokes "the Christian economy of salvation" and it is no accident that the destiny of the suffering people is narratively entwined with that of a "Christ-like" martyred prophet: where cultural codes of reciprocity demand redistributive justice, it is axiomatic that "those who suffered and sacrificed for independence should be recompensed" (Traube 2007:21).

The strategic articulation of Christian and pagan symbolism is also signified in Xanana's address to the Catholic students such that youth are at once the inheritors of *Maubere* conscience and Christian militants:

Beloved Youth and *Maubere* Patriots! Your identification as true children of East Timor signals a religious commitment that is at the same time political! This manifestation of patriotism and faith renounces the false propaganda that the *Maubere* resistance is a resistance essentially 'communist'. Fretilin is a Movement of Liberation in which the militancy

of Christians, as well as non- Christians, co-exists. (Gusmão 2000:126)

The invocation of a liberation theology that collapses the dual spiritual identities of Animism and Catholicism works both as a defence against accusations of Marxist extremism, as well as signalling a higher moral purpose. Here, Gusmão's appeal to youth also relies upon the "Christian economy of salvation" and the uncompromising vision of a single righteous path and moral choice. The biblical language entreats youth to endure suffering and risk death in the service of the nation, in anticipation of ultimate victory and freedom from bondage:

“...Beloved Youth and *Maubere* Patriots, the path is still arduous and difficult as is the sacred duty that belongs to us... The objective we pursue is simple; the objective for which we fight and give our lives is simple, but sacred: independence for our Homeland and freedom for our people! And for this objective we will pay any price necessary: our independence or our total extermination! Because nothing else will be left to us, to die for this ideal will constitute a duty for every child of East Timor. We count on you, Beloved Youth and *Maubere* patriots, to continue to fight for the supreme and legitimate aspirations of our people, of our thousand-times heroic and beloved *Maubere* people! (Gusmão 2000:122)

The mobilising metaphors in Xanana's speeches set out an exemplary position, using carefully chosen language aimed to uplift and inspire allegiance among youth. The terms of reference of his discourse were highly prescriptive, laying out what unequivocally *ought* to be done and what could not under any circumstances be negotiated. His communiqués thus contributed substantially to the discursive formation of East Timorese national identity through the circulation of political texts.⁷ Yet while his speeches have been published in two excellent volumes, the politics of Xanana's discursive practice and their impact on the *Gerasaun Foun* remains disappointingly unstudied. I am mindful of Shore and Wright's argument (1997:18) that while "anthropologists have conducted their work *through* language they have seldom made studies *of* language [my emphasis]". The importance of such historical analysis would shed light not only on the mobilisation of youth during the struggle but also on contemporary youth disillusionment and frustration in post-independent East Timor and their sense of betrayal, articulated in terms of 'being tricked' (Bexley

⁷ The circulation of cultural artefacts by diasporic political organisations included publications and recordings of key political speeches, songs and messages from the resistance. These, as Wise

pers. comm. 2007).

The task of analysing the discursive power of resistance language and rhetoric is wholly beyond the scope of this work, but it is important to acknowledge Xanana's political astuteness in weaving together the strands of East Timorese society in a policy of national unity. Most important, for the purposes of this chapter, was the informal agreement between the resistance movement and the Church: Xanana knew no movement could succeed in this profoundly religious country without the Church's support. The complex and dynamic relationship between theology and politics has powerfully and dynamically informed the construction of East Timorese identities since 1975. It is a relationship poignantly and prestigiously acknowledged, in 1986, by the Norwegian Nobel Committee's joint conferral of the Peace Prize upon Bishop Carlos Belo and José Ramos-Horta, respectively the spiritual and secular personifications of the East Timorese struggle, which aimed "to honour their sustained and self-sacrificing contributions for a small but oppressed people" (Cronau 1997:2).

An identity in suffering: the radicalisation of the Church

A church that lives with the people, a church that suffers with the people, a church that cries with the people, a church that receives the same humiliations as the people, is a church that can never abandon the people! The church serves the people and because it serves the people it can interpret the wishes and the sentiments of the people. A church like this has the complete trust of the people; a church like this is a church of and for the people! (Gusmão 2000:124)

From 1975, the Catholic Church in East Timor dramatically transformed itself from an instrument of the former Portuguese colonial state into an indigenised Church in the service of the people. Its identification as such crucially provided "a cultural space, a public place not occupied by Indonesian authorities, a sense of inner liberty" (Archer 1995:127). Timorese were thus able to gather in large numbers for public worship and Catholic feast days, as well as *lutu* (mourning) and associated commemorations of the passage of death (such as *kore metan*, held to celebrate the first anniversary of the death of a relative and 'release the black band' and bring closure to the period of mourning). Such public practice

argues (2003:88), were crucial communicative strategies for the sustenance of long-distance ethno-nationalism among diasporic East Timorese.

enabled Timorese to both locate their grief through ritual mourning and to contest the limits of state monopolisation of space. In the process, the distinction between public and private space became increasingly blurred. At *kore metan*, for example, domestic spaces became more fluid, as large numbers of guests congregated to show their respects, spilling out of front rooms into front yards and ultimately into the streets, as a procession of vehicles, transporting possibly a hundred people or more and led by the bereaved family, made its way deliberately towards the cemetery. Such events were not simply a manifestation of Timorese religious devoutness. They were public displays of non-adherence to Indonesian cultural and religious values and beliefs and they were attempts at circumventing the pervasively felt Indonesian control over their lives. They also constituted important opportunities for social interaction and the strengthening of social capital.

Through the sacralisation of place and the practice of populist devotions, East Timorese were thus able to construct a very visible geography of resistance; that they were able to do so is as much a consequence of Indonesian state coercion as the Church's protection. Intent on the erasure of animist practice and belief in the Outer Islands, the Suharto Government forced the East Timorese to choose an official religion recognised by the Pancasila doctrine.⁸ It was perhaps one of the great miscalculations of Indonesian state policy:

As Ben Anderson points out, with regards to the Catholic Church in East Timor, Jakarta finds itself in a strange bind for it has found itself both wanting and distrusting Catholicism's spread, recognizing, on the one hand, that as official members of the Catholic Church the population will enjoy protection according to the logic of the religious provisions of the Pancasila state ideology and, on the other hand, fearing the emergence of a popular Catholicism, which, as in nineteenth-century Ireland or Communist-ruled Poland, has become a powerful expression of common suffering. (Carey 1995:10)

Despite almost half a millennium of Portuguese colonialism and Catholic ministry in East Timor, the majority of East Timorese resisted Christianity's embrace. Those who did convert were mostly among the elite and their faith was expressed as a syncretic mix of Catholicism and customary beliefs and practices,

⁸ Pancasila is the ideological basis of the Indonesian state. The five principles are: faith in one god; humanity; nationalism; representative government and social justice.

which the Church was obliged to accommodate. Prior to the Indonesian invasion, barely a third of the East Timorese population identified as Catholic. Post-invasion figures suggest a substantial increase; between 1975 and 1998 affiliation with the Catholic Church rose from around 30% to 90% (Smythe 2004).

Yet it was not simply Indonesian state coercion or mere pragmatism that drew Timorese to the Church. Under threat of extinction and subject to acts of violence and oppression of medieval proportions, East Timorese turned to the Church for safety and spiritual solace. Sealed off from the world, Timorese suffered the humiliation of being imprisoned in their own land. The Church offered a means to subvert the crushing effects of Indonesian state violence and intimidation. It became the foundation of the East Timorese capacity to resist ‘Indonesianisation’, offering a vehicle through which the expression of a specific national identity might be articulated. Indeed, mass affiliation with the Catholic Church since 1975 enabled Timorese to frame their struggle in terms of a conflict between a Catholic ‘us’ and a largely Muslim (Indonesian) ‘them’. Politics, religion and the moral right to the restitution of the land thus became inseparable:

*Vomita tua fúria, ó Tássi-Mane!
Some a nau gigantesca do inimigo,
Sem flores e velas e sem cruz de Cristo,
Porque o seu seio só gera homens do inferno...
Cobre-a com a tua água salgada;
Prende-a com a tua âncora poderosa
E sepulta-a nos abismos do esquecimento da ilha.*

Disgorge your rage, Tassi-Mane!
The gigantic vessel of the enemy vanishes,
Without flowers and candles and devoid of the cross of Christ
Because its womb begets but men from hell...
Cover it with your salty water ,
Seize it with your mighty anchor
And entomb it in the island’s abyss of oblivion.

João Aparício⁹

In isolation from the Universal Church, Timorese clergy became increasingly desperate and correspondingly more strident in their criticism of terror tactics of

the Indonesian state. A major document issued in 1985 and signed by the Council of Priests, including (then) Monsignor Belo, explicitly named the violent repression of East Timorese cultural identity as genocide:

In East Timor, we are witnessing an upheaval of gigantic and tragic proportions in the social and cultural fabric of the Timorese people and their identity is threatened with death ...An attempt to Indonesianise the Timorese people through vigorous campaigns to promote pancasila, through schools or the media, by alienating the people from their world view, means the gradual murder of Timorese culture. To kill the culture is to kill the people. (Cited in Archer 1995: 124)

The drafting and dissemination of such texts was an intrinsically political act – an indication of the growing politico-moral role of the Catholic Church in East Timor at that time. The Church that had dwelt for so long under the weight of Portuguese colonialism was reconfiguring itself and re-defining its relationship with the people, the socio-political order and the ‘other’ – the occupying force. Just as the East Timorese resistance movement had done, the Church had learnt to speak in the vernacular and connect with the Timorese people. Importantly, it had evolved a more explicitly indigenous character.

The growth and radicalisation of the Catholic Church in East Timor inspired a revolutionary spirit and mass defiance especially among the younger generation. The will to resist and oppose an oppressive power and to confront absolute danger, unarmed, required a transcendence of self and the desire to transform one’s existence at any price. That impulse required a refusal of the borders that kept East Timor secluded from the world. The Church thus became a major institution of resistance providing a site of solidarity, albeit an unstable one, from which resistance could be organised and sustained both materially and spiritually.¹⁰

Ultimately, the Catholic Church in East Timor became a powerful rival of the Indonesian state that nurtured resistance. Meanwhile, by 1989 a proliferation of youth organisations had strengthened the urban-based clandestine movement

⁹ ‘Tássi Mane’ (Aparício 1999:72)

¹⁰ Archer (1995:129-31) describes the precarious moral space in which the Catholic Church found itself, negotiating the ever-present threat of violence as well as the difficult ethical question of Indonesian state and military patronage bestowed in anticipation of leveraging political debt.

that would replace the armed guerrilla force.¹¹ This was the breakthrough year in which the occupied territory of East Timor was ‘opened up’ to Indonesians and foreigners and which marked the “beginning of non-violent actions in the cities and in the villages” (Pinto 2001:34). The opening gave rise to a number of strategic and youth-driven pro-independence demonstrations, each linked to key religious events, beginning with the Papal Mass at Taci Tolu in October 1989¹² and including the commemoration of Sebastião Gomes Rangel’s death on 12th November 1991, which ended in tragedy at Santa Cruz cemetery.

Youth as a “state of spirit”

To fully grasp the will to resist ‘Indonesianisation’ among East Timorese youth, it is critical to appreciate how the concept and practice of youth changed as a consequence of the Indonesian occupation. In understanding the ways in which the concepts of youth and youthfulness were being understood and experienced by Timorese themselves on a daily basis, I have found notions of ‘performativity’ particularly helpful. Indeed, in the East Timorese context, to speak of youth as a chronological descriptor misses a pertinent contextual understanding of youth as a cultural and political marker, as well as a transition which has expanded to fit the needs of a people engaged in political struggle.

Speaking at a conference in Melbourne hosted by ETRA and entitled *It’s Time to Lead the Way*, exiled East Timorese student activist Donaçiano Gomes gave the following definition of youth (1996:115-116):¹³

To be young...is a state of spirit, a force of will, a quality of imagination, an emotional intensity, a victory of courage over cowardice, and a desire for adventure instead of a love of comfort. One who has lived a certain number of years is not old, but one who has deserted one’s ideals is...Timorese youth have inherited a unique capacity for patriotism and nationalism in the face of any foreign occupation. Hundreds and thousands of our young people from all political and social categories have embarked on the great crusade for independence...

¹¹ For example, OJECTIL (Organisation of Catholic Youth); OJETIL (Organisation of Timorese Youth); OPJLATIL (East Timorese Student Youth Organisation); IMPETTU (East Timorese Student Association).

¹² Donaciano Gomes (1995:106), who was himself present at Taci-Tolu, recounts how, despite military intimidation prior to the Pope’s visit, he and other young Timorese demonstrators proceeded with their public protest at the end of the papal mass. Reprisals quickly followed including the detention and torture of interrogatees, including the author himself.

¹³ The conference entitled “It’s Time to Lead the Way” concluded a six-month public awareness-raising campaign launched by Professor Noam Chomsky in Melbourne early in 1995.

At the same conference, activist and refugee Quintiliano Mok outlined the role of the student organisation Renetil (1996:106):

Defending the rights of the *Maubere* people is a sacred duty for all the sons and daughters of *Maubere*. It is to be carried out boldly, selflessly and relentlessly. Students and young people are an integral part of the *Maubere* people. They have a role to play in this difficult stage of the history of East Timor. It is at the front line of the struggle: to achieve liberty and freedom, for the nation, land and state.

More recently, Fernando de Araujo (2000:108), co-founder of Renetil and former political prisoner, reflected that the *Gerasaun Foun* (youth generation)

refers to those that were not part of the 1975 leadership ([who are] now in their fifties and above) and who do not have the same long-standing factionalisms and party conflicts as the older generation. Among other things, intellectual formation under Indonesian colonialism and language facility are also different.

These definitions illustrate how the concept of youth is informed by interrelated beliefs, values and emotions that are historically and culturally specific. When I visited East Timor in 1998 I was told that, in the past, the transition from childhood to adulthood was marked by marriage and by 'wearing clothes', thus the physical body was used as a marker to conceptualise a naturally continuous development uninterrupted by the threshold or liminal space of 'youth' or 'adolescence'. The invention of a transitional phase in which youth prepare for adulthood and experience emotional and intellectual maturation was fostered through the development of limited and selective formal education under Portuguese colonialism and more broadly through mass education under Indonesian occupation. Yet for the youth activists cited above, youth is defined not as biologically driven but as a 'spirit' or state of mind and a 'sacred' and patriotic calling. Here, youth is represented as an heroic and, through the gendered ascription of the symbol of *Maubere*, nominally masculinised identity.

For Araujo, generation and language are key markers for understanding youth as an identity. This convergence of meanings significantly broadened the parameters of youth, based on the historical, linguistic and cultural specificity of their post-1975 experience (and foreshadowing the potential for future

generational conflict). Araujo, like Mok, also refers to the primacy of the 'foot soldier' role of youth, re-articulated by the CNRT leadership leading up to the referendum in 1999, as *pião avançado* (frontline pawns) whose chief responsibility was to "shield the ranks" of the older generation leadership. The subtext of this metaphor also suggests a space of vulnerability and expendability: in the game of chess, pawns are players of least value and are usually dispensed with first. But youthful investment in the hardship of struggle was sustained and animated by the promise of a utopic future. This vision is encoded in the narratives of young Timorese activists who referred to East Timor as "Paradise" and themselves as "Paradisians".

Cast as the East Timorese *intifada*, the *Gerasaun Foun* could be viewed as 'adults-in-waiting', whose futures, dreams and aspirations must be placed on hold while they fulfilled their critical task. In this sense then, it seems that the idea, as well as the practice, of youth in the East Timorese context became protracted as a consequence of struggle. As such, Timorese in their mid to late thirties might refer to themselves, and may be identified as 'youth'. Leaders of student movements, for example, who may be married and may even have children, might self-identify as youth despite the fact that these were conventionally seen as classifiers of adulthood. Indeed, some of the more politically active members of the younger generation made conscious decisions to forestall marriage and children until independence, on the grounds that the distractions or attachments of familial responsibility might compromise or diminish an individual's capacity to act decisively under pressure. Such explanations were offered matter-of-factly as a necessary renunciation of the self and condition of resistance.

It is the case that, as a result of the Indonesian invasion and subsequent occupation, Timorese understandings of the life-course as a normalising frame of reference have been profoundly disrupted along with traditional family structures. Speaking to me in Dili in 1998, Maria Domingas, a co-founder of the women's NGO *Fokupers*,¹⁴ argued that official definitions of youth lost their meaning in the context of war, since youth had "no boundaries" under

Indonesian military rule; when fifteen-year-old kids had to live and beg on the streets to support themselves and their families; when they were detained, tortured and imprisoned in adult jails. Under such circumstances, children became adult very fast. Paradoxically then, youth had become an elastic concept while at the same time, childhood was foreshortened. Inevitably, youthful needs and ambitions were subordinated to the struggle. This sacrifice has been framed within nationalist discourse, and by young Timorese themselves, as a sacred duty. As a result, the young have been popularly valorised as heroes and moral agents and those who lost their lives commemorated as martyrs. Through this representation, youth came to symbolise selfless courage, hope and regeneration.

Santa Cruz: spirits of resistance

*Por vós, ós heróis, eu choro,
Sem vos ver
Neste solo que adoro,
Sem o ter*

For you, oh heroes, I cry,
No longer seeing you
On this land that I worship
But do not possess

João Aparício ¹⁵

There are moments that act as a fulcrum, when there is a tacit understanding among people that life has become untenable and that resistance is the only possible course of action. Such moments of mass defiance, according to Paul Routledge and John Simon (1995), emerge within political movements as “spirits of resistance”. They are not part of formal strategic political planning, neither are they rationally calculated actions, yet they emerge spontaneously as revolutionary coalitions, in which a “paradoxical ‘heterogeneous affinity’ is experienced:

The spiritual moments we refer to are those described by Foucault as the

¹⁴ *Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae* (The East Timorese Women’s Communication Forum) was founded in 1997 to assist women survivors of violence and promote women’s human rights.

¹⁵ The poem ‘Heróis do Dia 12’ was written at the Santa Cruz cemetery, Dili, 20 November 1991 (Aparício 1999:58).

“irreducible [moments] in which a single man, a group, a minority or a complete people asserts that they will no longer obey and risk its life before a power which is considered unjust” (1981, page 5). It is at these moments that “life will no longer barter itself, when the powers can no longer do anything”. Such moments can most appropriately be described in spiritual terms because they are manifestations of an ‘inner experience’ which is felt during revolutionary moments. Such experiences are lived as theatre, ceremony, spontaneity, or ritual as the demonstration of the will of those who are capable of confronting the utmost danger while opposing oppressive power... They are spiritual because the revolutionary experience is not only political, but also the expression of a “desire to renew [one’s] entire existence” by changing one’s way of being in the world” (1988, page 218). (Routledge and Simon 1995: 473)

The conditions under which thousands of young Timorese met in Dili on 12th November 1991 to mourn the death of Sebastião Gomes Rangel, killed inside Motael Church two weeks earlier by Indonesian security forces, were inherently risky.¹⁶ As a culturally and religiously designated event, funeral attendance was formally sanctioned by the Indonesian state yet by their very numbers, the mourners left no doubt that the power to define and control space in East Timor’s capital city was being publicly contested. The event also underscored the power of the dead to mobilise the living. Sebastião’s funeral provided the performative means through which this critical mass would express their anger and frustration at the contradictions of their collective existence.

For Timorese, the profanation of sanctified space and the sacrificial patterning of violence epitomised by Sebastião’s death triggered immense public outrage. Their outrage was intensified by the Indonesian Government’s abrupt cancellation of a much-anticipated Portuguese human rights delegation, scheduled for November 4th. A public demonstration had been secretly planned to coincide with the visit and preparations had involved the painstaking – and dangerous, in a culture of intense political surveillance – creation and assemblage of *tais* (weavings), banners, flags and posters in Portuguese and English that would declare Timorese resistance to integration. The abandonment of the deputation deprived them of a rare opportunity for the public and

¹⁶ Military officials in East Timor denied claims that Sebastião was killed by government forces insisting that he died during a clash between pro and anti-integrationist youths at Motael Church. Information received by Amnesty suggested that the “pro-integrationists” involved were military intelligence agents or informers. In April 1992, five East Timorese were charged with “acts of violence leading to the death of a “pro-integrationist” also killed during the incident” (Amnesty International May 1992:2).

ritualised performance of populist dissent. Their desperation, however, transformed into “a fierce cold courage” (Carey, in Cox 1995:49) as plans for the demonstration were swiftly reconfigured to coincide with the remembrance ceremony for Sebastião Gomes.

In the procession that followed the early morning mass at Motael Church on 12th November, the congregation of mostly young Timorese progressed to Santa Cruz cemetery unfurling banners, waving Fretilin flags and chanting slogans through the streets of Dili:

...through the streets of the city
Youth in a crazy alliance and crazy with courage
Do not tremble before ABRI's gaze
They shout the words of command
“Long live East Timor!
Long live Christ the King!
Long live the Vatican!
Long live Portugal!
Long live Xanana!
Long live the young people of East Timor!

*Em Díli, pelas ruas cidade,
Dos jovens tanta união e tanta força!
Não tremem perante o olhar das ABRI,
Gritando palavras de ordem
“Viva Timor Leste!
Viva Christo Rei!
Viva Vaticano!
Viva Portugal!
Viva Xanana!
Viva a independência!
Viva juventude de Timor Leste!”*

João Aparício ¹⁷

Emboldened by their collective apprehension of public space and the presence of foreign journalists, they tested the limits of a geography of danger where their public presence *en masse* marked them as potentially anarchic and therefore vulnerable to police and/or military intimidation and violence. By the time the procession reached the cemetery, the crowd had swelled to four or five thousand, including uniformed children from a nearby school. Most of the rallyists continued on toward Bishop Belo's residence but around 1,000 mainly young

¹⁷ *Pátria Amada*, (Aparício 1999:55).

Timorese remained in front of the cemetery entrance and others, including the Gomes family, filed through the cemetery gates to pray and lay flowers at Sebastião's grave.

For hundreds of these young people, the journey to Santa Cruz cemetery turned out to be a fatal trajectory. As truckloads of Indonesian military carrying automatic weapons surrounded them, Santa Cruz rapidly transformed from a ceremonialised zone of sanctuary into an arena of fear, violent injury and death. Without any warning to disperse, the military opened fire on the terrified crowd who fled into the narrow streets or scrambled for cover behind tombstones inside the cemetery. Many were shot in the back as they tried to run away:

*Mar de sangue banha o seus corpos.
A Pátria desditosa chora indignada
E os jovens debaixo d'armas,
Em uníssonos confiantes proclamam:
"Por Ti morremos, ó Pátria amada!"*

Sea of blood soaking their bodies
The unfortunate homeland cries with indignation
And the youth with inferior weapons
In unison confidently proclaim:
"For you we die, the beloved homeland!"

João Aparício ¹⁸

The power of the iconic image

You are
a witness watching
young leaves
falling down

one by one

Abé Barreto Soares ¹⁹

The Dili Massacre powerfully registered a moment of acute, international public recognition. The video footage shot by Yorkshire Television's Max Stahl stopped viewers around the world in their tracks. Amid the chaos of terrified

¹⁸ *Pátria Amada*, (Aparício 1999:55).

¹⁹ 'In Memoriam' (Barreto Soares 1996:16)

young Timorese under Indonesian fire, ducking and weaving through tombstones and gun-shots at Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery, we witnessed the unforgettable image of a young man dying before our eyes, cradled in the arms of a friend. It was an agonising piece of footage but also powerfully compelling. Agonising, because we looked on as spectators, observing the *agony* of both the dying youth and of his friend who was powerless to do anything but hold him; and masterful, because it was this piece of footage that forced the world to watch and bear witness to genocide.

It was clear from the dizzying array of images projected from Stahl's hand-held camera that he was himself ducking and weaving to avoid the bullets. Neither Stahl nor the other foreigners present should have been privy to this public display of military power and abuse. It was an aberration, wrote Noam Chomsky, stating the obvious (1998:194-5): "[M]assacres are supposed to be conducted in secret; they're not supposed to be conducted in front of television cameras." Yet here it was in horrifying and bloody technicolour, irrefutable visual evidence of human suffering that exposed the brutality of the Indonesian military regime and, in stark contrast, the moral courage of Timorese youth.

In the bleakest tradition of a religious painting Stahl's footage, as well as stills taken by British photographer Steve Cox, engrained themselves uncomfortably and irreconcilably in viewers' imaginations – the sacrificial body, beauty dying in torment, innocence encountering evil (Plate 8). Like the image of the suffering Christ or a martyred saint, we the viewers were in equal measure inspired and appalled, mesmerised and repelled by the images of Dili's bloodied children. We were face to face with the martyrdom of youth, of a people, and of a country.

The sheer force of these iconic images moved many among the viewing public to mobilise support for East Timor's struggle for independence. East Timor was now no longer just another political skirmish somewhere 'out there'. It was real, it was in our homes, and it was an outrage. It was a terrible crime against humanity in which Australia was thoroughly implicated:

[The footage] provoked both international condemnation and the activities of people like my colleagues and me to support East Timor's

right to self-determination, their freedom from human rights abuses, and to inevitably confront my Government's record of complicity in one of the longest ongoing acts of genocide since the Nazi Holocaust. (Aubrey 1999: 280)



Plate 8. Image of martyred youth²⁰

According to historian Peter Carey, the impact in Portugal not only mobilised the Portuguese politically but significantly changed material conditions for local Timorese exiles in as much as it gave them unprecedented visibility:

The public showings of Max Stahl's footage of the massacre led to a genuine outpouring of emotion which led to major changes in the way the exiled East Timorese community were viewed and treated...Prior to November 1991, none had been offered scholarships and bursaries to continue their studies in Portugal and many were living in squalid accommodation in the Val de Formo area to the north of Lisbon – a sort of *favela* [slum/shanty town]. After November 1991, there was a much more concerted attempt to provide them with the requisite social services and better public housing. They didn't live well, but the sort of government allowances they now began to receive did make a difference.

Email correspondence, 16/2/2000

As well as stunning an international television-viewing public, the images indelibly stained the imaginations of diasporic Timorese, especially the young:

The media release of the massacre showed that the majority of the participants were young people themselves and this alone aroused a sense of personal responsibility and obligation amongst the Timorese youths in Australia, to claim the struggle as their own. (Rodrigues n.d.)

²⁰ Images of the immediate aftermath of the Dili massacre were smuggled out of East Timor by photographer Steve Cox (Cox and Carey 1995:60)

If you saw the news footage of the massacre in November 1991, you would have seen thousands of young people who were just babies (or not even born) when the Indonesians invaded; thousands of young men and women, even children, marching in peaceful protest. And then hundreds of them giving their lives in the front line as the Indonesians fired their M16s...I believe the Dili massacre brought home to most of us, that it could easily have been one of us in the front line, if our parents had not escaped. It brought home that if our roles were reversed and we were the ones inside, then we would hope that someone out there would be speaking for us. (Elizabeth Exposto 1996:33-4)

The killings had always gone on but Dili [the 1991 massacre] was beyond the pale...We ate, drank, slept outside the embassy [Indonesian Consulate] in Darwin for a couple of weeks...Timorese padlocked the fences and threw away the keys. There was a lot of anger because they [the Indonesians] had desecrated a sacred place.

Sara (19) Sydney

A momentum grew out of the tragedy and the East Timorese struggle, as well as diaspora politics, changed forever. In 1995, Pat Walsh, the Director of the Human Rights Office at the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), wrote that Santa Cruz had become “a paradigm for the whole East Timor saga. Like the 1976 Soweto massacre in South Africa, it may yet prove to be a turning point in East Timor's history” (1995:149). Walsh's reference to Soweto was entirely apt. The mobilisation of thousands of black South African high school students, protesting against the use of Afrikaans in their classrooms, ended in carnage as riot police fired tear gas and live ammunition into the crowd, killing some 500 people. Here too, police violently transgressed the sanctuary of religious institutions where many students had fled for safety. According to South African writer Gillian Slovo, daughter of anti-apartheid activist Joe Slovo, the event brought to an abrupt end ‘the long quiet frightened years’ (1997:114). A new generation of black South Africans were driven by a revolutionary spirit inspired by the political events unfolding around them – most importantly perhaps the decolonisation struggles in the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. The horror of Soweto had unleashed a latent and irrepressible anger:

Nobody knew it then but they were the first wave in what would eventually become the storm that annihilated apartheid. My father told

me at the time that Soweto taught him that it is the young who change history because only the young have the courage to defy death. So it was in '76. As the ships and guns and tanks were aimed their way, the children kept coming. (Slovo 1997: 114)

Slovo's account evokes a 'David and Goliath' imagery that resonates in other epic youth-driven uprisings.²¹ It also suggests the inherent instability of regimes of power and domination that are "always anxiously regrouping, reinventing and reinscribing their authority" (Jacobs 1996:14). Reflecting on the challenge to Israeli military supremacy posed by young Palestinians in the Second Intifada that began in September 2000, and the hardening of the Israeli military's tactical response toward them, John Berger has written that "this power of the powerful is accompanied by a furious frustration: the discovery that, despite all their weapons, their power has an inexplicable limit" (Berger 2003:22). Equally, the student-led democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989, that brought together a million people in non-violent protest, threatened the limits of state power. The violence with which Deng Xiaoping's Government suppressed the democracy movement demonstrates the enormity of the contrast between a grotesquely over-armed military and a community of youth who, nevertheless, "with innocence and naivete, shook the basic foundations of a totalitarian government" (Chapnick 1989:17).

Such spirits of resistance threaten regimes of power by their sheer "seizure of presence" and refusal to be silenced (Routledge and Simon 1995:489-91). While not immune to the violence of reprisals and 'deterrents', the transcendent spirit of unity they inspire resists dissimulation. Just as the guerrilla resistance had imperilled the smooth territorialising of East Timor in the early years of occupation, the youth driven intifada now confronted the Indonesian state with an uncompromising message – *Pátria ou Morte* (Nation or Death); *Mate ka Moris, Ukun Rasik A'an* (Live or Die, Independence). The Dili Massacre became synonymous with the struggle for self-determination, inscribed in collective memory as a revolutionary moment in which 'incorruptible' youth appeared as heroic protagonists. The public protest that preceded the killings was energised by an all but spontaneous political act in which a generation of

²¹ Yassar Arafat, in a speech to the UN in Geneva 13/12/88, deployed the same biblical reference referring to the young heroes of the intifada known as the *shabab* or "children of the sacred stones" (Routledge and Simon 1995:489).

young people took to the streets, unarmed, in peaceful protest against a repressive state power. The massacre itself was visually documented by foreign reporters and held up to international scrutiny. Like Tiananmen, the evidence of military brutality was shamelessly revised and denied by a corrupt and intransigent leadership, and sanitised by domestic media trained in self-censorship.²² The spirit of resistance demonstrated by young Timorese was engendered in an atmosphere of quixotic heroism and the brutal denouement conferred martyrdom on a nation's youth and sacralised the sites on which they were slain.

The politics of martyrdom and sacralised space

For whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Luke 9.24

Nationalism and religion were inextricably bound in the articulation of Timorese resistance and the symbol of the martyr and the sacrifice of youth, infused with religious meaning, have been memorialised in everyday religious practice, as well as in popular songs and poetry and in the communiqués of resistance leaders. In the poem, *Aqui Jaz* ('Here Lies', subtitled 'An epitaph for Balbina'),²³ Abé Barreto Soares suggests that the power of martyrdom lies in the fact that martyrs do not grow old as the living do. Indeed, their sacrifice bestows eternal life and they live on in the minds of the living and serve as a powerful mnemonic. The dead thus inspire the living to resist:

Here lies
her lovely body

Her soul
is always
with us

fanning the fire
of our revolution

²² The magazine *Jakarta Jakarta* was the first Indonesian publication to run a story on the events at Santa Cruz following the Indonesian government's official press release. Despite careful and necessary "refinements" to minimize the risk of contradicting the official report, the article was declared "non-pancasilaist" (ie un-Indonesian) and *JJ*'s editor at the time, Seno Gumira Adjijarma, was suspended from duties for two years (Adjijarma 1995:18).

²³ The poem is dedicated to the memory of a young guerrilla woman killed by the Indonesian army in October 1989 (Barreto Soares 1996:30).

Aqui Jaz reminds the reader that the memory of the dead is not merely conceptual. Balbina's body is part of an embattled terrain, thus the land is more than a passive template for the inscription of violence. Since 1975, East Timor's landscape has become a deathscape in which the stored repertoires of historical narratives and collective actions inhere and are ritually animated. Cemeteries in East Timor are full of mass graves, the names and dates indicating that whole families were wiped out, sometimes on the same day. Entire villages were erased as a consequence of Indonesia's aerial bombardments and napalm raids. Some were almost entirely emasculated. These are *desa janda*, widow villages, where entire adult male populations were exterminated as retribution for Indonesian military casualties.

Timor's cemeteries have thus acted as 'living' and highly animated spaces. They are often extremely beautiful and well-cared for, they are everywhere and Timorese spend a lot of time in them. During the years of occupation, cemeteries and churches provided 'sanctuary' spaces where Timorese could formally gather in large numbers and relative safety. Increasingly, as these sacrosanct spaces became sites of more active resistance, they were also increasingly violated by Indonesian military and their militias. They are at once landscapes of sacredness, of politics and of memory.

By the end of the occupation, assaults on these formerly 'immune' spaces – including the killing of priests and nuns – by members of Indonesian-backed militia were routine:

Houses had been turned into torture chambers, warehouses into incarceration centres, every corner, every tree, the gravel in the park, the electricity posts, held the story of injustice. (Lennox 2000:198)

Aftermath

In the immediate aftermath of the Dili massacre, the Indonesian government went into damage control although official spokespeople were reportedly "tripping over themselves with conflicting explanations" concerning the military's conduct, none of which corresponded with eyewitness accounts

(Jenkins 16/11/91). As the news broke in Australia, reports quoted an unnamed military spokesman saying the trouble began when “100 separatists carrying Portuguese-made G-3 rifles and grenades” were discovered among the crowd (Austin 14/11/91:7). The following day, the Sydney Morning Herald (15/11/91:9) cited regional military chief, Major General Sintong Panjaitan saying the army deeply regretted the “tragedy” but the soldiers had simply misheard a “don’t fire” order. He also alleged that the rallyists had stockpiled rifles, grenades, pistols and knives inside the cemetery and that the troops had only opened fire after a pistol shot was fired and a grenade thrown at them. Indonesia’s Foreign Minister Ali Alatas was quoted as saying the crowd was “wild and unruly” and that Timorese youth had attacked a local Deputy Commander with a machete.

By November 16th reports suggested up to 180 Timorese had been killed although official Indonesian sources acknowledged only 19 dead and 91 wounded. Later estimates suggest that, as a result of the systematic violence inflicted upon Timorese at Santa Cruz and in the frightening aftermath of what would be remembered as the ‘Dili Massacre’, 271 people were killed (including New Zealand citizen and Sydney-based student, Kamal Bamadhaj), 250 disappeared and 382 were wounded (Carey, 1995:51).

The defence mounted by key Indonesian military personnel suggests a singular misreading of the momentousness of the events in Dili. Remarks by Lieutenant General Try Sutrisno (at that time the Indonesian Armed Forces’ Commander and later, Suharto’s Vice President), quoted in *Jayakarta*, a military-controlled newspaper and reprinted in foreign newspapers, attracted widespread international condemnation:

[P]eople who refuse to toe the line have to be shot...the armed forces are determined to wipe out who ever disturbs stability...They continued to be obstinate. Finally, yes, they had to be blasted. Delinquents like these agitators have to be shot and we will shoot them. (The Age, 21 November 1991)

While Sutrisno’s comments were deemed “idiosyncratic, even for an Indonesian military officer” (Mackey and Ley 1998: 87), his remarks echoed the decisive voice of military hardliners on the subject of successionism. General Mantiri,

Commander of the eastern Indonesian military region, was quoted in *Editor* magazine on 4 July 1992 as saying:

We don't regret anything. What happened was quite proper (*wajar*)...[t]hey were opposing us, demonstrating, even yelling things against the government. To me that is identical with rebellion, so that is why we took firm action. (Carey 1995: 52)

In an attempt to quell foreign diplomatic outrage, President Suharto ordered an enquiry into the incident and a report by the National Investigative Commission recommended the removal of two senior officers and court-martials of eight officers involved in the killings. The relative leniency of these measures (they received between 8-18 month sentences) contrasted starkly with the treatment of the young Timorese dissidents held responsible for demonstrations both inside East Timor and in Indonesia. One week after the massacre, a peaceful demonstration held by Timorese students outside the Hotel Indonesia and at western embassies in Jakarta on November 19th resulted in 70 arrests. Fernando de Araujo and João Freitas da Camara, both members of the student resistance movement Renetil, were arrested for 'masterminding' the protest and sentenced to nine and ten years imprisonment respectively.²⁴ They were among several Timorese students charged under Indonesia's Subversion law, which carries the maximum penalty of death, since their actions were deemed "politically motivated and [sought] to separate East Timor from Indonesia" (Amnesty International, 1992:6). Other participants in the Jakarta protest were charged under Articles 154 and 155 of Indonesia's criminal code with publicly "expressing feelings of hostility, hatred or contempt toward the Indonesian government" (Amnesty 1992:30). A further group of 24 young Timorese suspected of anti-government activity were "reportedly confined outside Dili and receiving "mental guidance" (Amnesty 1992:8).

While arrest and interrogation had always been part of social life under Indonesian occupation, from 1992 the Indonesian armed forces demonstrated their frustration at the growing assertiveness and defiance of Timorese youth by increasing their tactics of physical and psychological intimidation and terror

²⁴ Fernando de Araujo (La Sama) was a co-founder and Secretary General of Renetil (Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor Leste). He spent six and a half years in Jakarta's Cipinang Prison with Xanana Gusmão and other Timorese political prisoners. João Freitas da Camara was chief of Renetil's Jakarta branch.

(Taylor 1999; Aditjondro 2000). The irony of this response is that the intensification of violence only inspired in younger generation Timorese a hardening of anti-Indonesian attitudes.

Ambivalent horizons: refusing Indonesianisation

More than a year before the tragedy at Santa Cruz, a report undertaken by the University of Gajah Mada had presciently warned of “various [adverse] social dynamics” that were rapidly developing in East Timor as a result of traumatic and deleterious impacts of integration (Carey 1995:14). The report specifically acknowledged ongoing military conflict, economic exploitation and the exclusion of Timorese from meaningful political and economic participation in their own development, as critical sources of youth disenfranchisement. Despite the considerable financial resources committed to *pembangunan* (development) in East Timor, including universal education and population regulation as integral components of economic growth, Suharto’s ‘New Order’ regime relentlessly pursued policies predicated upon a basic asymmetry. Its obsessive concern with security and the imperatives of ‘Indonesianisation’ reinforced an architecture of domination which embedded multiple forms of violence as part of the décor of occupation and which ultimately helped in the constitution of youth as highly politicised subjects.

Aditjondro (2000:158-188) has identified an ensemble of key tactics through which the Indonesian state sought to domesticate the Timorese population. They include physical terror; the depurification of women’s bodies through rape, prostitution and forced fertility control; symbolic violence; demonisation of key resources of Timoresehood; demographic dilution of the Timorese population via transmigration programs and the dispersal of East Timorese youth throughout Indonesia. All of these constitute “deterritorialising” practices, sustained by ideology and violence which, as John Berger has written of the Palestinian occupation (2003:22), are intended as “a constant reminder of who are the victors and who should recognise that they are the conquered...[and which reinforce for the conquered]...the humiliation of playing the part of refugees in their own land”.

In 1998, I met many young Timorese in Dili who spoke about *penjajahan*

simbol (symbolic colonialisation) as one of the means through which the Indonesian state sought to subjugate them. Their critique centred on the symbolic domination and appropriation of religious iconography and the insidious ‘gift’ from the coloniser to the colonised:

The statue of *Kristus Raja* – Christ the King – stands upright and stony on a hill that overlooks the sweeping curve of Dili’s northward-facing harbour. He faces West, levelling his gaze at the horizon far beyond the deserted beaches below and the shabby remnants of seaside shelters once enjoyed by a trickle of foreign visitors (*malae*) to the former Portuguese East Timor. The now-untenanted shelters are the ghostly relics of a time before Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor. They suggest a time when European desires and social preferences had only barely begun to insinuate a new social aesthetic upon East Timor’s seaboard and coastal communities, for better or worse. My Timorese companions are too young to remember this, they were born in a different time and context, but they are well aware of the significance of this near-past and the routes envisioned by this now silenced culturescape.

Field Journal, Dili, November 1998

Kristus Raja is similar to, but not a replica of, the massive and imposing figure of *Cristo Rei* – Christ the Redeemer – in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro. There, Cristo’s arms are spread eagled in a wide embrace so that His body forms a cross. His powerful bearing unambiguously signals to the nation’s Catholics: ‘Behold, I am King!’ Here in Dili, Kristus’ demeanour is less dynamic; more subdued. Holding His palms forth, in a gesture of supplication and (some say) invitation, He beckons from the eastern extremity of the Indonesian archipelago towards Jakarta, Indonesia’s cultural heartland and the seat of political power - the centre of a largely Muslim nation.

The statue of Christ was bestowed upon the East Timorese people in 1996 as a ‘gift’ from the Indonesian state. It was an act of legitimation, giving the official nod to East Timorese Catholicism in a magnanimous public demonstration of the Pancasila principle, symbolising the social myth of religious tolerance. Yet most East Timorese found the symbolism and the flashy display of Indonesian largesse patronising and offensive. Some said was Kristus ugly; that he looked like Beni Murdani – one of the generals responsible for *Operasi Komodo* - Indonesia’s brutal invasion of East Timor in 1975. Some found Kristus’ westward orientation submissive and deferential – a disposition that is categorically un-East Timorese, in that it acquiesces to Indonesian imperialism.

Others simply shook their heads at the insidiousness of *penjajahan simbol* – the symbolic colonial domination of the East Timorese people.

The metaphorical juxtapositioning of General Murdani and the Light of the World signalled a collapse and a confusion of archetypal borders between the sacred and the profane, the numinous and the diabolical, the political and the spiritual. For so many East Timorese, Kristus' doppelganger, the murderous, mortal Murdani – himself a Catholic – represented the embodiment of evil, a creature of darkness. Murdani could have been Mengeler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin.²⁵ Any sense of religious affinity Murdani may have felt with Timorese Catholics seems to have been eclipsed by his patriotic determination and commitment to purge Indonesia of suspected communists.

As a concrete expression of Indonesian state principles, Kristus is replete with references to Indonesian Nationhood. At 27 metres tall, He is said to represent the 27 provinces of Indonesia, with East Timor as the Nation's most recent acquisition. There are 1945 steps, people say, to the top of Fatucama Hill on which Kristus stands – the number corresponds to the year in which 'Indonesia' became a Republic. Some say the steps are divided into 76 'levels' recalling the anniversary of Integration with Indonesia on 17th July 1976. This was the date, twenty years on, envisaged for Kristus' official dedication had construction deadlines and Presidential schedules prevailed. They did not and, after much nervous hand wringing on the part of pro-integrationist Governor of East Timor, Abilio Jose Osorio Soares, desperate for a show of Presidential support, Kristus Raja was finally inaugurated on 15 October 1996.

The event transformed Kristus into a spectacle, a performance space for President Suharto and his Generals to parade the success of Indonesian investment in East Timor since 1976. Public inventories of 'development' and 'progress' are a peculiar proclivity of many authoritarian regimes. In this case, the litanies of achievement were intended to evoke a contrast between

²⁵ While the tyrannies of political figures such as Pol Pot, Amin and Mengeler are well-known and well-documented, I want to point out that the orchestration of state-sponsored terror is not solely a masculine impulse. Former Rwandan Minister for Family and Women's Affairs, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, for example, is alleged to have personally directed squads of Hutu men to torture and butcher Tutsi men, and to rape and mutilate Tutsi women. She stood trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania in 2003.

Indonesia's own benevolence and the neglect and exploitation of the former Portuguese colonial power. Indonesian newspapers carrying stories on Kristus were careful to satisfy Indonesian government sensitivities, listing economic indicators in mind-dulling detail:

[President Suharto] said East Timor's economic growth rate of 10 per cent per year was much higher than [the] Indonesian average of 6.8 per cent. He said the per capita income had grown from Rp80,000 (US\$34.2) in the mid-1970s to the current Rp600,000 (US\$265.5). [He] said there were now 811 schools compared with only 51 some time back and that these days, East Timor has four universities. The amount of roads [sic] have also multiplied 100-fold to 2,100 kilometres. (Indonesian Observer, 16/10/96:13)

At the same time, journalists made cursory and non-committal reference to Timorese discontent at their exclusion from formal economic decision-making processes, as well as the fact that Kristus had been paid for largely out of the pockets of East Timorese civil servants.

Like the majority of subjects in Indonesia's Outer Islands, East Timorese knew they were meant to express gratitude for the 'gifts' foisted upon them and that what gratitude really meant was that they had no right to dissent. Yet they have paid dearly for Indonesian development and not only in rupiah. Young East Timorese who were sent to Indonesian universities knew well that information about East Timor was skewed and muted by government-sanctioned, propagandist media reports and by journalists' fear of being declared 'non-Pancasilaist'. As Maubere Moko, a London-based East Timorese student activist, told me bluntly, "All they [Indonesians] have on their TV screens is development in East Timor – the statue of Kristus Raja is a good example. But these developments have been built on people's blood and people's bones!"

Only too conscious of that fact, the East Timorese Nobel Laureate, Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, had been reluctant to participate in such a politically-motivated project. Yet, compromised by reports condemning him for anti-Indonesian remarks,²⁶ he agreed to attend the inauguration and later to

²⁶ I refer here specifically to the German *Der Spiegel* magazine report in which Bishop Belo is alleged to have said that Indonesian troops had been treating the East Timorese like dogs and slaves (Indonesian Observer, 13/11/1996:2; 22/11/1996:1). Yet this was only one of a number of attempts by Muslim organisations and Javanese politicians and generals to discredit Belo (see Aditjondro 2000:181-2).

consecrate the monument. Not long after the Bishop's blessing, Fatucama Hill was inauspiciously struck by a series of minor landslides. It was as if the very land itself had moved to protest on behalf of its people imposing its own will like the *rain-fila*, the land spirit and trickster that reverses the directional order of human comings and goings, causing a slippage of time and space, pasts and futures. It was as if the land had enacted its own *intifada* in a mighty effort to 'shake off' the misconceived product of Indonesian development and destabilise the foundations of Indonesia's imperialist adventure, plunder and piracy. As the ground began to move beneath Kristus' feet, so the land began to crumble into the sea predicting perhaps the coming of a redemptive chaos.

So too, the sea conspired against the Indonesian state, foiling the military's attempts at concealment of its war crimes:

The sea beneath Kristus' gaze is full of danger, sadness, trauma and fear. Most Timorese do not swim there. Only a few small boys, slippery as seals, cavort in daylight in the darkened waters at the city's edge. Most young people say they will not swim nowadays because the sea is so polluted it turns the skin black. As well, they warn of the *buaya* that lurk in its depths:

- *Buaya?*

- Yes, you know, like a snake but bigger: *Lafaek. Crocodilo...*

- Ah, Crocodile...

Their anxieties betray the deeper, darker fears of an ocean where, since 1975, the bodies of Timorese, both living and dead, have been unceremoniously dumped. From the first days of Indonesian occupation, when scores of East Timorese were lined up on Dili's wharf and shot - falling, or being pushed, forwards into the sea,²⁷ the Indonesian military has attempted to cover its tracks this way, using methods of body disposal that leave barely a trace except, of course, in the testimonies of witnesses and unwilling accomplices, and in the bones that wash up on the shore.

Field Journal, November 1998

Disappearance was used routinely and effectively in East Timor as a weapon of terror, just one option in a now familiar repertoire of counterinsurgency policies

²⁷ See Michelle Turner (1992:104-5) for East Timorese testimonies of this horrific experience. Australian free-lance journalist, Roger East, was also among those shot at the harbour's edge. Refusing to turn around, he was shot in the head at point-blank range. East had gone to East Timor to investigate the killing of the five Australian-based journalists ('The Balibo Five') in October 1975. He was the only foreign national to remain in East Timor after the official invasion on 7 December 1975.

and practices that included torture, rape, death squads and mass murder. It is the very routine-ness and endemic character of these practices that helps constitute ‘cultures of terror’ whereby collective fear and intimidation of communities ensure social control and the maintenance of politico-economic status quo (Sluka 2000:22). Yet, the bodies of the dead refused to be disappeared. Their transgression of threshold spaces (being/non-being; presence/absence; visible/invisible; secret/public) attests to the “legitimizing potential of the politically encoded corpse” (Feldman 1991:235). While the re-emergence of bodies of the dead can hardly be understood as an intentional act of political agency, their visually symbolic re-presence helped to subvert the logic and technologies of state terror that sought to erase and silence them in the first place, thus testifying to the truth claims of the living (Perera 2004).

In the memories of children

and...

The tears dried
in the memories of the children
replaced by the sweat of the struggle
because the children grew up

Xanana Gusmão, (Cipinang, 5 November, 1995)²⁸

The Indonesian state’s failure to socialise young Timorese into acceptance of integration has frequently been framed in terms of their ‘ingratitude’ for the benefits of *pembangunan* (Anderson 1993; Mackey and Ley 1998:101). Yet those Indonesians associated with Indonesia’s New Order regime, themselves the *pemuda* (youth) generation of 1945 who played a key role in the anti-colonialist struggle against the Dutch, displayed a remarkable lack of reflexivity concerning the similitude of their own and Timorese historical experience and formation as political subjects:

Fluent in Indonesian, as the young Indonesian nationalists seventy years earlier had become in Dutch, these youngsters now knew their rulers intimately, and through the Indonesian language had varying access to the Indonesian intelligentsia and the Indonesian press, and through both

²⁸ From the poem *Gerações* in Gusmão (1998:36-39).

to the outside world...[Further] The holocaust of 1977-79 was in the childhood memories of young East Timorese, and they had direct experience of the systematic repressions of the 1980s. In these ways, Jakarta vastly deepened and widened East Timorese nationalism. (Anderson 1998:135)

The impact of violence and traumatic memory on young lives cannot be underestimated. As the resistance leader Xanana Gusmão told Australian journalist, Robert Domm, in an interview recorded clandestinely in the mountains in September 1990:

They saw their parents being massacred, they saw their mothers being maltreated, as well as their relatives and friends, and they also felt the weight of war against our people. Many of them lived in the mountains for the first three years. Others from the very beginning were under enemy control. It's inevitable that a youngster that sees his father massacred should feel hatred towards the assassin. It is obvious that a youth who witnessed these atrocities around him cannot dissociate and alienate himself from the whole situation in which we all live. (Gusmão 2000:143)

Many young diasporic Timorese who experienced the early years of occupation have spoken about their experiences in vivid terms. At a public meeting in Sydney on 28th May 1998, Quintiliano Mok gave the following account:

[In 1979] I am ten years old and I go to visit my father in prison because I have some food for him. After I have seen my father, prison officials take me aside and bring some young prisoners out in front of me. I am ordered to beat the prisoners with a baton and burn their lips with lighted cigarettes. I am also told to fire a pistol at a prisoner's head. I am scared to do this because I know I could kill the prisoner but I am more scared of the soldiers who tell me I must fire the pistol. When I pull the trigger I discover there were no bullets in it. The military police laugh at their joke. I laugh too, but more from fright than anything else.

As Raymond-Yacoub argues (1997:38), torture always takes place in the context of a perverted relationship between humans and aims to destroy the volition, personality and autonomy of more than the captive subjects of torture themselves. Quintiliano's testimony tells of his younger self rendered complicit with (and therefore guilty of) the performance of violence enacted upon his compatriots resulting in the corrosion of meaning as he is implicated in what turns out to be a theatrical 'game' of death, a simulation whose intention is far from a joke. Such coercive brutality constitutes a psychological assault which

imprints a profoundly political message in both the psyche and the soma of the recipient/s. It is a form of torture aimed at instilling fear and compliance. The boundary between being forced to watch and participate in acts of violence can be very thin.

The two interviewees below illustrate how entire communities were embroiled in macabre scenarios of violence as enforced participants and/or observers in the late 70s and early 80s. They refer to the involuntary witnessing of sexual humiliation, torture and execution, involving both simulated and actual mutilations (the shearing of women's hair and the severing of heads), as well as of coercion into grotesquely pantomimed acts of celebration. They describe how the bodies of the living and the dead were violently staged and circulated as political texts, as markers of warning and as spectacles of deterrence (cf Feldman 1991:7-9).

To speak of sexuality in East Timor is taboo, but the Indonesian military cut off women's hair and forced them naked to sit opposite men - which is their own brother or father - prior to all the men being executed (in the village of Alahutei, Irara). Women and children were forced to slash their husbands and fathers with knives. The military decapitated the men and paraded their heads around. Some were buried alive...In Lospalos we come from a very strong Fretilin background - there's no question about loyalty. I was in the jungle as a child for five years and we saw terrible atrocities. In one village near mine the Indonesian military held a party before they executed [the people]. It's really disgusting. The military told people [in another village] to dress up for a special celebration. They forced the women and children to hack the men with knives. First the men had to dig their own graves. (Maupitine is the name of the village) Afterwards the women were used for sexual slavery...When people ask "why are you still smiling?" I say: What can you do? You have no choice.

Maubere Moko (29) London

Anabela, a young asylum seeker now living in Sydney, was only one year-old when the Indonesians invaded but vividly remembers, as a six year-old child, being made to look at the severed heads of Fretilin soldiers killed by the Indonesian military:

If they bring people's heads from the mountains, the [Timorese] have to make like a *tebedai* [traditional dance] to celebrate that "now we kill another one, another mountain people [Falintil soldier] that's against us" [She pauses to demonstrate how the Falintil soldiers were executed]. And we have to stand there and shout "Merdeka!

[Freedom!]" And then we have to do like an *upacara* [ceremony] and [the Indonesians] put up the flags and the heads. And we have to stand properly and look at them, we can't move... Sometimes we're so scared, at night you can't sleep because you remember the dead people's face like this and some [of them] like, they're all black [shudders visibly]. And my mum had to close our eyes, but when you close them, Indonesian people say: "Don't close [their eyes]! Let the children look!"

Anabela (25) Sydney

The sense of impotency and despair of parents unable to protect children from experiencing collectivised acts of terror was intense. Yet, through bearing witness, youth became a medium for the memorialisation of these unthinkable and unimaginable events; the knowledge inscribed in their bodies. It is in this sense that resistance to Indonesian occupation may be understood as an 'inheritance' (cf Franco 1985:414):

The children just kept watching, witnessing... You couldn't call [them] away – that would be too dangerous; for the Indonesians that would mean you are opposing them. (Justino, in Turner 1992:177)

The Indonesians... know they have lost all chance of being accepted by the Timorese. The only way left now is to get rid of the Timorese... [b]ecause the hatred will get stronger. We have seen this with the present generation of Timorese youth the Indonesians have educated: They have the energy to defy, they are less cowed than the older people. (Alfredo Pires, in Turner 1992:184)

When foreigners ask us 'is it true?' our heart is torn... I feel so frustrated when they ask if these stories are true. I say: What evidence do you want? I am the evidence!

Maubere Moko (29) London ²⁹

The narratives of young diasporic Timorese women also reveal the lived reality of predatory behaviour and sexual harassment (cf Sissens 1997). As young women's bodies matured, they increasingly became targets of unwanted sexual harassment and coercion. The defilement of women's bodies has been named by Aditjondro (2000) as one of five key strategies of state terror deployed by the Indonesian state. As Aditjondro

²⁹ I met Maubere Moko in 1999 when he was a student activist in London. He had previously worked as a journalist for Reuters in Jakarta and was particularly appalled by Indonesians' scepticism and incredulity concerning Timorese testimonies of collectivised violence. These were frequently met with denial and disbelief in Indonesia where access to information about East Timor was censored by strict controls. There is now, however, substantial evidence to support the veracity of Timorese testimonies (CAVR 2005).

has argued, rape, forced prostitution and involuntary fertility control had a profound demographic and cultural effect in East Timor, a legacy which has incurred enduring discrimination and hardship in the post-independent era.³⁰

Many young respondents who participated in this study cited their own and/or their families' fear of and vulnerability to sexual abuse among the reasons for their flight. In this narrative, Anabela, a young twenty-five year-old 'nineties' Timorese living in Sydney and a survivor of the Dili Massacre, maps an encounter that begins fairly benignly but becomes increasingly disquieting as the story unfolds:

Anabela: When [my sister Rosa and I] were 10 and 12 years old we live in Manatuto next to KODIM³¹ because my dad work there. And one of the big military he saw us and he wanted both of us, my sister and me, and that guy ask, you know, he want to bring little young people to dance, like a disco dance group thing and he ask my dad to...[trails off]

Fiona: To let you go and dance for him?

Anabela: Yeah. So my dad's scared but he say ok. And he [the military officer] want to adopt Rosa cos she's really white. In Timor, Rosa's colour's very liked, you know.³² And when she was little she was like very Portuguese look and he really want to adopt Rosa and my mum and dad said, if you want them to join with the party I don't mind, but to adopt her I don't think so. And we join the group and every afternoon we have to go dancing, dancing, play volleyball with him...about 6 or 7 of us.

Fiona: All girls?

Anabela: Yeah

Fiona: He just wanted you to dance for him?

Anabela: No, no, do like a presentation in a shop or something. I remember Boney M. Do you know Boney M? They have to dance to that. I still remember, I got the photos but I think that everything burn now.³³ Yeah, and after he bring us there, he's like, I don't know, maybe we are little so we thought that he's treating us like his kids or something. He takes us to Baucau, to Dili, oh everywhere to dancing...

³⁰ For example, the stigma and shame attached to survivors of rape and sexual slavery frames women as *estrage* (damaged or destroyed) and negates their contributions as patriots during the Indonesian occupation (Harris-Rimmer 2007).

³¹ *Komando Daerah Militar*, District Military Command.

³² The attractiveness of lighter skin was frequently commented upon in East Timor and people spoke of the rare beauty of red hair and fair skin, most commonly found among women in the eastern region of Los Palos. In Sydney, young Timorese women often told stories of Indonesian soldiers' preferences for lighter-skinned Timorese girls and the frightening consequences of this especially, for *mestiço* (mixed race) girls.

³³ Anabela's mother burned her diaries and other belongings following a house raid by the military.

Fiona: So you had quite a good time?

Anabela: Yeah, [laughs] and then after that about we was like 12 and 14...and it's like he's thinking something else now. You know, you growing up and people thinking like different things. And he went to my dad and he said, you know I really want to adopt Rosa to be like my daughter. And he's asking all the time and my dad have to send both of us to Dili and we stay there at least one year and we coming back to Manatuto and we live there, Bella studying SMP like Year 9. Me, I have to move to Dili [to go to High School] to my older sister. And Rosa's living with my parents in Manatuto and he's [the military officer] chasing her and my dad's like really worried.

Fiona: How old was he, the Indonesian military guy?

Anabela: Old! Fifty something! He's like, you know, when we was little girls we thought he was like parents for us. Ok, he give us biscuit, give us chocolate, and that time chocolate biscuit was very expensive you know. And sometimes he ask his wife to send clothes from Jakarta. And he bring us like little tops, nice tops, nice mini-skirts, so after we so happy [laughs]. We little girl, you know, we was happy.

Fiona: And did Rosa get scared as she got older?

Anabela: Yeah, every time she went to school, cos she was Year 9, my older brother have to, my dad bought a motorbike, and my brother have to pick her up everywhere.

Fiona: Was it like that for all the girls? Did the military hassle you a lot?

Anabela: They do, especially the police. Police worse than the military.

Nina [Anabela's 16 year-old niece]: And they see a pretty girl and, oh my God, they gonna...[sighs] make us scared.

Anabela: They chase you...

Nina: Yeah, like that, make us scared, just following us every place.

Fiona: So how did you protect yourselves?

Nina: Like wouldn't talk to them, just walk, like you don't care about them.

Anabela: All walk in a group...

Nina: Never walk alone...

Intimidation and surveillance also feature centrally in the narratives of young Timorese men. Paulo, for example, was nineteen years-old when I first met him in Sydney in 1998. Like so many young nineties Timorese, he had routinely been involved in public demonstrations as a high school student and had been targeted by the military because of familial links to the resistance:

Kopassus [Indonesian secret police] were following me. They were asking questions because my dad's involved in Falintil and later, CNRT. I got scared because if they arrested you, you never going to come home, you disappear.

Paulo (19) Sydney

Paulo's father, Fernando, had previously been arrested, detained and tortured by Kopassus (Indonesian secret police) and Paulo had a series of fading Polaroids showing the injuries that Fernando had sustained during interrogation, brought into exile as evidence. Fernando's younger brother, Paulo's uncle Rui, bore a striking resemblance to Fernando himself: Rui had been mistaken for him, arrested and subjected to beatings and other forms of torture by the military police. Now, Paulo's own involvement with the military police was about to intensify. Such tales are testament to what Feldman (1991, 85-146) refers to as the "collectivisation of arrest". Feldman has written eloquently of the relation of arrest and interrogation to the enculturation of violence in Northern Ireland where "[a]rrestees were extracted as insignias of dangerous and conspiratorial collectivities" (1991:88) and where communities have become "socialized to the repeated occurrence of abrupt, violent death" (1991:106). Arrest in that context, argues Feldman, cannot be understood as a means for direct criminal prosecution: The British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary were indiscriminating in their selection of arrestees. Rather, arrest was a mechanism for intelligence gathering and capture constituted a form of 'social death', in the sense of a rite of passage that definitively and irrevocably produces and brands political subjects.

In the post-1991 climate of intensified repression in East Timor, families who could summon the resources and access the appropriate support networks attempted to break the relentless genealogies of political violence, arrest and capture by sending their teenage children into exile. For Paulo and his two younger sisters, Natalina & Fatima, and their Uncle Rui, the decision was presented as a fait accompli:

My dad told Rui, "my life's a mess now, I don't want people to take responsibility for me. You must go to Australia with my kids". He had no choice, he had to agree. It was lucky cos my mum's adopted brother was based in Sydney since the seventies. He's a priest and my mum thought he was a way of getting us out. We had to get passports. My mum asked her friends and there was an INTEL agent who others had given bribes for visas and tickets. He had a contact in Bali, he gave our names and we had to pay a lot of money. Then it was about 2 -3 months for us to go. We left Dili January 3rd 1995 and the Indonesian contact took us to a hotel. Two days later they told us, you can leave tonight, your visas ready.

Natalina (18) Sydney

So began their life-changing voyage into exile.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored the synthesis of historical processes and forces that combined to produce a specific categorical youth identity. Under Indonesian occupation, the *Gerasaun Foun* was ambivalently constituted within Indonesian hierarchies of citizenship and subject to powerful forms of exclusion and collectivised political violence. The materially disenfranchising effects of processes of Indonesianisation thus helped to constitute and mobilise the *Gerasaun Foun* as a collective vehicle for the ideological and tactical advancement of East Timorese resistance. Through political praxis that involved both clandestine work and more spectacular public protest, Timorese youth became actively involved in the struggle as historical beings, as makers of history. Both the resistance leadership and the Catholic Church were complicit in encouraging and legitimising their oppositional practice. Their formation as political subjects and patriots, encapsulated in the iconic signification of ‘*Maubere* Youth’, has been discursively framed in terms of sacred duty, sacrifice and renunciation of the self, evoking the “Christian economy of salvation” (Traube 2007:10). The constitution of youth as spirits of resistance and moral agents is, in the same moment, construed as both empowering and self-abnegating.

In the final decade of occupation, following the formal ‘opening’ of the province to the outside world, the fusion of religion and politics became increasingly apparent in youth spatial practices and contestations over the ownership, control and use of public space. Through the strategic staging of ‘events’, public protest became orthopraxy for the *Gerasaun Foun* and, by their sheer ‘seizure of presence’, youth came to represent for the Indonesian state a hydra-headed threat to national security. The Dili Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991 became a hinge point in the struggle for independence and a critical calendrical marker, emblematic of the temporal disruption of East Timorese life cycles under occupation, as hundreds of young lives were prematurely extinguished. The ensuing military crackdown and intensification of intimidation, arrest, interrogation and retributive punishment did not, ultimately, serve as the

decisive deterrent anticipated by the Indonesian state. The raw experience of Santa Cruz had been captured on film, instantly exposing the artifice of Pancasila tolerance, and the circulation of these images through global media profoundly mobilised communities of solidarity throughout the world. This gave significant momentum to the resistance movement and, in turn, signalled the unravelling of Indonesian colonising power in East Timor.

This chapter has provided a basis for understanding the unique experiences of young Timorese who fled East Timor in the 1990s, in the wake of the Dili Massacre. Their narratives reveal the biographical significance of formative experiences of state-sponsored terror and the depth and breadth of the enculturation of violence in occupied East Timor. All of the young Timorese who participated in this research had been implicated in some form of clandestine political practice prior to their departure and most had participated in communal protest. For some, the shift into diaspora intensified their political practice while for others, the impetus fell away. My focus on the historical contingency and constructedness of a totalising representation of youth as politicised and moral agents is important here, for political agency is, as Feldman has argued (1991:1-2) situational and radical spatial reconfigurations inevitably impact upon the performance of identities.

The diasporic journeys and transformative struggles of young nineties Timorese like Paulo, Natalina, Anabela and Rosa, whose narratives appear in this chapter, centrally inform this study and are elaborated in subsequent chapters. But first, the narrative logic of the work requires an interruption to the chronological flow of events and a return to the seminal moment of East Timorese diasporic formation in 1975. In the following chapter, I map the contours of that formation. Analysis of the historical specificity of the East Timorese diaspora is important since experiences of emplacement are differentiated, reflecting both cultural continuities and discontinuities.

Chapter Three

Floating Lives:

The East Timorese Diaspora 1975-1999

This chapter traces the formation of an East Timorese diasporic presence in Australia from its genesis in the radical political upheavals of 1975, through the turbulent years of national captivity. It begins to unravel the complex heterogeneity of Timorese diasporic experience, noting the marked differences in the biographies of successive ‘waves’ of Timor-born arrivals in Australia and the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions that framed their trajectories. At the same time, it examines the complex forces and interactions through which Timorese were able to construct and publicly articulate a coherent and highly politicised transnational identity whose master narrative eclipsed the everyday hybridity of Timorese lives and histories.

As an emerging and ethnically diverse refugee community, Timorese have been precariously positioned within the Australian national space, their political and economic location undermined by Australian state indifference, as well as interventions of bureaucratic and judicial state power. Nevertheless, diasporic Timorese have collectively demonstrated a remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in dealing with East Timor’s forced enclosure and the travails of their refugeehood. This chapter illustrates how dominant discourses of home and return, and the ‘invention’ of an authentic Timorese-ness helped them resist their deterritorialised existence. The refusal of Timorese activists to lose sight of their predicament and their determination to globalise the tragedy of East Timor required the mobilisation of transnational resources. The chapter thus considers the means through which a strategic Timorese-ness, as a political project, was imagined and enabled.

While the chapter is largely descriptive, the empirical details of the deterritorialisation and re-territorialisation strategies of East Timorese refugees open a window onto conceptual themes in contemporary anthropology. Much work, for example, has focused on the contingency of links between people and places (Appadurai 1991; Malkki 1997) and how communities of imagination are created and sustained transnationally through the phenomenon of long distance nationalism (Anderson 1992a, 1992b, 1994; Skrbiš 1997, 1999). Of particular interest in this study is the long-distance orchestration of political and nationalist passion centring on a beleaguered homeland. While physical interaction with the homeland was prohibited, East Timorese long distance nationalism was

embroiled in a broader and highly symbolic discursive field generated through the ‘diasporic public sphere’ (cf. Wise 2002; Werbner 1998). This chapter explores the Timorese diasporic sphere as both a critical site of ethno-nationalist mobilisation and a site of intense localised struggles for power and legitimacy.

Conflict & dispersal

The East Timorese exodus began in the madness of civil war, forcing thousands of East Timorese into a protracted exile. The first wave of East Timorese refugees arrived in Australia between August and late September 1975. Up to this point, there had been no significant outflows of East Timorese: only very small numbers had left the half-island and most of these were enforced and/or temporary exiles. While some 535 Timor-born, mostly Portuguese and *mestiço* Timorese, were evacuated to Australia during WW2, it was the influx of refugees fleeing the civil war that formed the nucleus of the present Timorese community in Australia.¹

In the days following the UDT-led coup d’état on August 11th 1975, East Timor descended into the bitterness and tragedy of communal violence from which the traditional anchorage and cultural authority of kinship provided no protection. Communities, neighbourhoods and families fractured along factional lines, old enmities and personal vendettas were brutally played out and senseless acts of violence inspired revenge and more violations. Visions of a unitary nation began to fray as reason lost its moorings with the disintegration of communal, familial and domestic integrity revealing the malevolent face of humanity. As Naila Habib argues (1996:98) the easy adversarial separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’/‘good’ and ‘evil’ becomes untenable when political violence is interiorised. The nature of civil war thus calls identity and meaning profoundly into question.

From the outside, the appearance of archaic tribalism in East Timor received a reifying substantiation through media-driven allegations of heinous criminal

¹ Of the approximate 535 WW2 evacuees, 500 returned to Timor at the war’s end (Thatcher 1991:3). Other temporary exiles included Timorese *deportados* (deportees), banished by the Portuguese administration to ‘Portuguese Africa’ for alleged subversive political activities, and young Timorese students sent to Lisbon in the 1960s and 1970s on scholarships.

acts. Australian newspapers carried grisly stories of fratricide and the slaughter, torture and intimidation of ‘innocents’ – babies, children, women and priests (Ramos-Horta 1987:54; The NT News 26/8/75:1; 29/8/75:2). While the reports may have been exaggerated, they had the effect of depoliticising the situation and, in the process, damaged Fretilin’s reputation. Yet, the violence of the civil war was a surface expression of deeper socio-economic and ideological context. The colonial encounter produced uneven divisions of power, privilege and differently evoked loyalties played out through the logic of violence and counter violence (Said 2000:294; Fanon 1963). As Melbourne-based community leader, Abel Guterres, explained:²

In hindsight, we were really unprepared. We wanted to be free from colonial status but it was very emotional, not really rational. A lot of people didn’t think about the geopolitical ramifications. Most of the leadership had no idea; if they had they wouldn’t have started the civil war. And the East Timorese character is war-like, so anything was possible. Timorese who worked for the police were commandeered into joining the coup. But most people were not part of UDT - they saw them as elitist and neocolonial.

In Dili, as fighting between the ideologically opposed UDT and Fretilin factions intensified, many civilians remained barricaded in their homes while others sought refuge at the Bishop’s residence and the Cathedral of St Antonio, then in UDT-claimed territory. Two neutral zones on Dili’s waterfront – the governor’s residence in Farol and the harbour administration buildings and wharf – provided spaces of tenuous sanctuary from the hostilities for Portuguese and Timorese employees of the Portuguese Colonial administration and a number of Chinese residents. Here they waited in anxious anticipation for the moment of rescue.

For some, the moment arrived on the morning of August 12th when a Panamanian registered cargo ship, the Macdili, left for Darwin with 272 evacuees consisting mainly of families of Portuguese Army personnel but including some wealthy Chinese, Australian workers and a number of international tourists. Eleven days later the Lloyd Bakke, a Norwegian freighter on its way from Port Kelang in Malaysia to Darwin, answered an SOS from the Portuguese Governor and diverted to Dili. It arrived in Darwin on 25th August

² Formerly President of the Melbourne branch of the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA), Abel Guterres is now East Timor’s Consul General in Sydney.

with 1150 refugees on board (including 500 Timorese, 274 Europeans, 90-100 Chinese, 40 from Cape Verde, 8 Goanese, 1 Japanese and 1 Indonesian), crowding the decks or jammed into its holds.

The Macdili returned and picked up a further 722 evacuees amid continuous gunfire and bombing. The grossly overloaded ship sailed out of the harbour under fire from the UDT on August 27th, leaving the city in flames and the wharf still crowded with men, women and children waiting to be rescued:

My last sight of East Timor was of a piece of land surrounded by fire and it is engraved forever in my memory. I cannot forget the pain of leaving, of feeling so helpless. Australia adopted me and welcomed me with open arms. But it is not easy to be in exile. One always lives thinking about the others who stayed behind. (Cecilia D. Sequeira Goncalves, in Bird, 1999:27)

Not all the Timorese escapees fled by sea. As Fretilin forces moved eastward toward the UDT stronghold in Baucau, the UDT received information that Indonesia would supply them with ammunition to be delivered to Baucau airport in the early hours of September 4th. The promise was not fulfilled and realising their betrayal, a sense of desperation took hold. A panic-stricken UDT soldier, armed with grenades and automatic weapons, forced his way on board an RAAF Caribou offloading medical supplies for the International Red Cross and demanded the pilot transport he and his family to Darwin. When the pilot finally acquiesced, the soldier turned to a group of civilians waiting at the airport and motioned for them to board the plane. The Caribou left Bacau with 42 Timorese men, women and children on board.

By chance, Abel Guterres, then a 19-year-old school teacher employed by the Portuguese government, was caught up in the commotion that day:

I didn't really understand politics back then. I was young and I joined UDT because my friends did. At first it was very social; it was politics and parties. It was a matter of destiny that I got caught up with the hijacking. I was at the airport with a friend and we were curious about Darwin. I left Timor just with the clothes I stood up in...

They arrived in darkness and were detained as illegal immigrants in an underground cell at Darwin Police Station for two days. Then they were flown to

Melbourne and housed in a migrant hostel, as Darwin was still under reconstruction after being flattened by Cyclone Tracy in December 1974. It would be twenty four years before Abel, returning to East Timor for the first time in 1999, would see Darwin in daylight.

The civil war effectively came to an end on September 24th, when the leaders of UDT, Apodeti and Kota,³ along with their families and supporters, sought refuge in West Timor. Most of the approximate 10,000 fugitives returned to East Timor but several hundred UDT fighters and civilians remained in Indonesian territory before eventually being “repatriated” to Portugal in August-September 1976. They arrived in Lisbon, according to Luís Cardoso (2000:110) “stripped of dreams” and ironically constituted as *retornados* (returnees), exiled to a homeland they swore allegiance to but had never seen. Despite an Act of Integration in 1976 that incorporated East Timor, illegally and in defiance of international law, into the Republic of Indonesia as its 27th province, the United Nations continued to recognise Portugal as the legal administering power. Hence, the East Timorese *retornados* were officially eligible for Portuguese passports and citizenship and were therefore not technically classified as refugees.

The first East Timorese arrivals in Australia were relatively privileged under the Portuguese colonial regime. They were lusophone-oriented town dwellers who worked for the Portuguese administration or in business. Most were politically conservative UDT sympathisers who either came from old elite families (descendants of native Timorese royalty) or middle class *mestiço* families and educated Timorese *assimilados*. Through the 1970s and 1980s, the vast majority of Timor-born arrivals in Australia were admitted under Special Humanitarian Programmes (SHP) that aimed to reunite Timorese families dispersed through Portugal and its former colonies including Mozambique and Macau. Among these groups were supporters of the leftist Fretilin party, some of whom had been radicalised as students on Portuguese scholarships in the 1970s. Their presence in Australia would influence the scope and direction of the East Timorese independence movement. The UDT remained a minority, but nonetheless vocal, political party in exile even as the popularity of Fretilin and

³ *Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain* - Timorese Warriors Union (traditional monarchists).

subsequently the CNRM/CNRT grew.

During this period substantially higher numbers of ethnic Chinese fled Timor, relative to indigenous and *mestiço* Timorese: their comparative wealth, and extensive family and business connections, expedited their escape at a time when East Timor was a 'closed province' and no-one could leave or enter without formal authorisation. As Wise suggests (2002:66) corruption flourished under these conditions. Profiteering was standard practice within the Indonesian military and bureaucracy during the occupation, and many Indonesian officials accrued substantial revenue through accepting bribes to falsify documents and disregard border control protocols. At the same time, there were many East Timorese government employees, airport workers and students who worked clandestinely to assist the passage of their compatriots.

Protracted exile

For many of the original 1,647 Timorese arrivals, as refugees escaping the civil war, Australia was an unpremeditated destination; a fluke of destiny. In their desperate attempts to exit Timor, they had simply climbed aboard evacuation vessels with scant belongings and little concept of an itinerary:

I came to Darwin with most of my immediate family on a Norwegian cargo ship in August 1975. I had no idea where we were going, what was this place Australia. (Albie Viegas, *Sei Hakilar* video, 1997)

Nor did they grasp the implications of their impending exile. The first Timorese arrivals expected to go home within weeks. Sustained by an optimistic belief in imminent return they looked upon their circumstances as a temporary sojourn:

We never thought we'd stay here for good. We were just waiting for the situation to stabilize so that we could go back. (Nancy, in Wise, 2002:57)

One thing still vivid in my memory is [that]...I said that two weeks was the most we could stay in Darwin before we went home...Once those two weeks had passed and I saw there was no way of going home, there was no choice but to earnestly learn the language and wait for The Day to come. (Abel Guterres, in Bird, 1999:150-1)

The reality of exile took hold when news of the Indonesian invasion sealed their fate. The sundering effect of the invasion was experienced as both temporal and spatial: it severed linear time into two irreconcilable parts and separated the island from the diaspora, effectively creating the two East Timorese idioms of homeland and exile. The notion of total rupture in people's lives, of the loss of substance of a world, cannot be overstated. In 1996, a sixteen year-old Melbourne-based Timorese, Mina Lay, told a conference audience "[t]he Indonesian invasion is like a great, big, black spot in the memories of many Timorese migrants" (1996:21). It was an image repeatedly invoked in Timorese recollections of events and in the reiterations of young Timorese, retelling the stories of their parents' suffering. It was, as the Australian journalist John Pilger has written (in Cox and Carey 1995:7), to suggest a moment of shock "when proper time and sequence ended":⁴

After the invasion everything went silent. We had no communication with our families. Then the Fretilin radio was captured in 1976 and things were very difficult. The question in your mind was, has anyone survived or have they [the Indonesians] cleaned them out?

Abel Guterres (early forties) Sydney

The silence and uncertainty of the immediate post-invasion years left exiled Timorese in a terrible vacuum. Cut off from home and family, with limited English and no formalised infrastructure in Australia, they nevertheless had to begin to rebuild their lives and a sense of community. Beyond meeting their basic needs, the immediate priority was to secure Australian residency and learn English, resources that would subsequently enable them to organise politically and actively lobby the Australian government to help reunite families. The 1,647 Australia-based refugees became residents in 1976, admitted under a Special Humanitarian program that recognised their right to protection.

A new phase of Timorese migration to Australia occurred during 1979-1986. Emigration from East Timor was by this time extremely risky as it was still a

⁴ The radical pre- and post-disjuncture of East Timorese lives can be compared to that of Palestinians in Lebanon who refer to 1948 as, "the year of the disaster (*al-nakbah*) as the temporal marker signifying the beginning of the contemporary and ongoing state of statelessness, of life in exile (*al-ghurbah*)" (Peteet 1995:173). Like Palestinian refugees, East Timorese publicly continued to demonstrate their resistance to exile.

closed province and population movements were effectively hobbled by military surveillance and strict controls. Escape now involved costly bribes to Indonesian officials and long delays for exit visas. Those who managed to negotiate the necessary bureaucratic and financial hurdles were mostly urban or rural-educated elites. Many were Timor-born Chinese with business connections outside of East Timor. Thatcher's analysis of Australian immigration data shows that the 3,168 Chinese who arrived in Australia during this period fled either directly from East Timor, or via Macau on family reunification programs. A further 1,654 Timorese, including some UDT civil war refugees, mostly migrated from Portugal, or from East Timor using Portugal as a transit point (Thatcher 1992).

By this stage, Australia had become a preferred destination for East Timorese exiles for personal and strategic reasons. Life in Portugal was extremely tough for East Timorese and many were appalled by the harsh conditions and the daily indignity of 'being a refugee'. Many experienced migration as a profound devolution of circumstances. In 1998, I interviewed Lucia, an Australian-based Timorese woman in her early thirties, who had escaped by ship to Lisbon as a teenager in the early 1980s. She had been born in Portuguese Timor, as it was then, close to the West Timorese border. Her mother was indigenous Timorese, her father Portuguese and a UDT sympathiser:

[In Portugal] we were living in tents up to our knees in mud. It was terrible, so different to our life in Timor. In Timor, we were well-off and we had a big, modern house and servants. My father owned a lot of land and we had a lot of cattle. In Balterros [a Lisbon district], we were really poor, we had nothing. And we were all mixed together, Timorese from all over Timor, from different backgrounds. Some from the east were educated even though they came from poor backgrounds but being from the west, we considered ourselves more culturally refined. Everyone knows that [is the case].⁵

Gil Santos, a Melbourne-based musician and founding member of the East Timorese band, the *Dili Allstars*, migrated to Portugal as a child in 1982. His father had been a modestly successful businessman in Dili but had 'disappeared' in the frenzied confusion of the civil war. His mother was smuggled out of Dili

⁵ It is interesting to note that Lucia's East/West characterisation contradicts the popular *kaladi* as 'hillbilly' archetype (cf Chapter 1, this thesis).

with the help of his father's Timorese-Chinese business associates. Once established, she sent for the children three years later. This pattern of progressive family relocation was a common strategy among Timorese refugees and one that frequently involved making impossible decisions about who should stay and who should leave. Gil remembers life in Portugal as intense, but he also sees it as socially and politically transformative:

Life was very hard. Portugal had been held up as a 'paradise' but the reality was a shock. There was a lot of community in-fighting. My family shared an apartment with seven other families, including African refugees. There was a lot of tension. At first, we lived in Saldanha where many Timorese and other refugees lived. The circumstances were better by then than for the first Timorese refugees in '75. The shantytown conditions changed people politically. Most who had arrived in '75 were UDT conservatives with the means to flee the civil war and invasion. Many Timorese were radicalised by the Portuguese refugee experience. A lot of young people whose parents were staunchly UDT became dedicated Fretilin supporters.

The Timorese exiles in Lisbon were overwhelmingly homesick, even those with strong loyalties to Portugal. The physical distance from home exacerbated their sense of psychological alienation. East Timor's closure left them isolated and anxious about the fate of family members left behind. As Jill Jolliffe observed, in her foreword to Luis Cardoso's memoir (2000:xi), East Timor was not then a popular cause and Timorese exiles were thrown on their own scant resources. What the Timorese discovered in the motherland was a moribund and marginal economy that mirrored their own. Australia not only offered family reunion for some and a more generous social welfare system, but proximity to East Timor. The social isolation felt by geographically dispersed Timorese is poignantly expressed by a Timorese exile in Africa: "I want to go to Australia because when the wind blows from the north it brings a message from home. The winds that blow in Mozambique have no message for me" (in Thatcher 1992:170).

Gil Santos was fifteen years old when he and his family translocated to Australia in 1985. Arriving in Melbourne, he sensed a kind of "identity crisis" among Timorese there:

The eighties was a terrible time. East Timor was still sealed off from the outside, the resistance was flagging and morale was very low. A lot of Timorese people were apolitical. Some were ashamed to identify as Timorese and called themselves Brazilian or something else.

Yet the shift to Australia affirmed Gil's own sense of identity as a Timorese. He discovered books about East Timor were freely available in public libraries. He was inspired by and became involved with Fretilin activists in Melbourne. Coincidentally, radio contact between Fretilin activists in Darwin and Fretilin Central Command in Timor was re-established in the same year bringing renewed hope on both sides of the Timor Sea.

Positionality & belonging in multicultural Australia

From their transit point in Darwin, the 1,647 refugees who arrived in 1975 were initially resettled in migrant hostels in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide and subsequently made homes in these and other metropolitan areas. Their early relocations, as well as public housing policies and distribution patterns, had a bearing on the way Timorese constructed their homes and neighbourhoods, influencing what Arjun Appadurai (1995:205) has called "the spatial production of locality". In Sydney, Timorese settlement is largely focused in the western suburbs, particularly in the suburbs of Fairfield and Liverpool, clustering around the migrant hostels of Cabramatta and Villawood. Appadurai (1995:209) also makes the point that "the production of a neighbourhood is inherently colonising". As such, Sydney's west has continued to be the major focus of Timorese settlement and many of their key community and welfare organisations are concentrated there. The community is otherwise geographically dispersed through Botany, Randwick, Campbelltown and Blacktown.

The reality of their refugee status and experience often meant taking semi- or low-skilled jobs and financial pressures to repay loans to those who had helped with emigration costs. Consistent with employment patterns of immigrant groups from Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) countries, Timorese have been most substantially represented in the manufacturing sector (Table 2). This occupational concentration, as well as low levels of educational attainment, accounts for the high unemployment rates noted in the 1991 Census (23.3% compared to 11.2% the total NSW population), given that the Australian economy experienced a significant downturn and industrial restructuring between 1986-1991 (Coughlan & Thatcher 1997:260). The fact that Timorese men were predominantly employed in the sector, and therefore vulnerable to

redundancy, may account for comments made by community workers during the fieldwork to the effect that “it’s much easier for women to find work; men’s roles are diminished in Australia and they have experienced a loss of esteem”. It is difficult to know whether this was actually the case or whether women were more willing to undertake work not acceptable to men. However, the 1991 Census data reveals that language proficiency and educational qualifications among Timorese women were noticeably lower than those among their male counterparts. Coughlan and Thatcher (1997:253) suggest that Timorese women therefore faced a “triple disadvantage due to their gender, coming from a non-English speaking background...and being a refugee”, although it could be argued that, as women of colour, their disadvantage was four-fold (cf Mohanty 1991). Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that women’s economic contributions and participation in the paid workforce also had positive effects on their sense of self.

Compared to other refugee communities with similar income levels and length of residency, dwelling occupancy rates of East Timorese reveal low levels of home ownership and an especially high concentration in government rental accommodation (Table 3). Indeed, most Timorese I met during the fieldwork lived in small rented apartments, often close to public transport and usually in close proximity to other Timorese. Most households were non-nuclear and often included extended family members. The sense of vulnerability among older generation Timorese seemed to be especially acute and they relied almost solely on each other for their social and emotional needs. There also appeared to be considerable interconnectivity and interflow between cities, with high levels of interstate mobility to visit relatives or for political events.

Nineteen years after their arrival, a community report commissioned by the Timorese Australian Council (TAC, 1994:1-2) in Sydney expressed concern at the tenuousness of Timorese settlement in NSW, describing the community as

a vulnerable ethnic minority with emerging needs [arising from their] lack of English, refugee or uprooted background, low level of education and skill, cultural distance from the Australian majority and lack of consolidated community structures and resources...[They have a] large youth and young adult population;...high unemployment; low individual income levels; and, low rates of home ownership.

Table 2
Percentage* distribution of industry of employment by gender, 1991 Census

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.0	0.0
Mining	0.3	0.2
Manufacturing	41.9	35.4
Electricity, gas and water	0.0	0.0
Construction	2.5	0.4
Wholesale and retail trade	21.7	20.1
Transport and storage	2.7	0.9
Communications	1.8	1.1
Financial, property and business services	2.9	6.4
Public administration and defence	2.5	2.6
Community service	4.5	11.3
Recreational and personal services	7.2	7.9
Not classifiable	0.0	0.6
Not stated	11.8	13.1
Total number	2 010	1 411

* Percentages may not total 100.0 per cent due to rounding
Source: ABS (1991 Census) cited in Coughlan & Thatcher (1998:261)

Table 3
Percentage* distribution of nature of dwelling occupancy,
1991 Census

<i>Nature of dwelling occupancy</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Owned	8.0
Being purchased	31.6
Rented	55.3
Other/not stated	4.3
Not applicable	0.9
Median number of bedrooms in dwelling	3.7
Median number of residents in dwelling	4.9
Total number	7 345

* Percentages may not total 100.0 per cent due to rounding
Source: ABS (1991 Census) cited in Coughlan & Thatcher (1998:263)

The report found a paucity of ethno-specific services available to the Timorese and acknowledged that a lack of basic demographic information prevented the community from effectively lobbying the government for appropriate services. It therefore produced a community profile based on available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1986 and 1991 Census of Households and Populations. The data was, however, fraught with inaccuracy as a direct result of the Australian Government's *de jure* recognition of Indonesian annexation of East Timor. From May 1989, East Timor was no longer coded as a country of birth and residents who indicated East Timor as such were coded as born in Indonesia.⁶ As Thatcher and Coughlan have argued (1997:245), Australia's political position ultimately had the effect of both concealing data on East Timor-born and inflating Indonesian-born data, thus creating a dual distortion:

This is yet another example of how political intervention in the workings of bureaucracies serves political objectives which are often at odds with public interest and research agendas, and where political intervention forces bureaucracies to supply misinformation to the public.

As Hage (1994) has argued, it is crucial to recognise how institutionalised and discriminatory state practices help to produce populations that are precariously positioned within the national space and how this impacts on a community's sense of belonging in the host country. Australia's official statistical mapping of East Timorese into the nation as an undifferentiated and falsely ethnicised, Indonesian-born, entity has had distinctly uneven material effects in terms of health, welfare and citizenship, proving that the effects of displacement are multiply experienced and inscribed. Through such 'invisibilising' practices, the limits of national integration are drawn and materialised. It is equally important to acknowledge that the constituents of the East Timorese community, as an internally diverse collectivity, have located themselves differently in relation to Australia's multicultural society and polity as well as to each other.

⁶ East Timor was reclassified following East Timor's de facto independence from Indonesia. The Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC Category no 1269.0), revised on 21 December 1999, states: "The Australian Government no longer considers East Timor to be part of Indonesia. Indonesian sovereignty in East Timor ceased with the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1272 establishing the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor. East Timor is now recognised as a self-governing territory under United Nations transitional authority."

One of the major axes of difference within the diasporic community is that referred to by Thatcher (1992) as the ‘twin’ or ‘parallel’ Timorese-Chinese and Timorese communities. Despite centuries of Chinese presence in East Timor, Timorese-Chinese maintained distinct linguistic difference as Hakka speakers, as well as culturally specific practices and values. While many Timorese-Chinese acquired substantial capital through their commercial engagement under Portuguese colonialism,⁷ they were constituted as socially inferior in Portuguese Timor and thus rarely intermixed or intermarried with Timorese and Portuguese. Positioned in but not fully of Timor, they maintained a politically passive presence remaining substantially non-aligned through the events of 1974-1975. Their social encapsulation has persisted in exile partly through established pre-migration inter-ethnic patterns of social distance in Portuguese Timor, partly through their long sojourner tradition and their reliance on the resources of Chineseness, and partly through their constitution as ‘Asians’ within Australia. Described as a “minority within a minority” (Chung 1994:11), they actually comprise more than half of the Timorese population in Australia yet they have maintained a relatively low public profile and have generally not participated in the social and political activities of the broader East Timorese community.

Thatcher’s research (1992:214) suggests that, by the late eighties at least, Timorese-Chinese had begun to put down roots and were more willing to make financial and emotional investments in Australia than other Timorese: “[They] are slowly and tentatively departing on a path toward partial integration, while many of the Mestizo Timorese seem to be actively working against it”. Yet while they have articulated a feeling of being ‘at home’ in Australia, Timorese-Chinese have also demonstrated a desire to retain their distinctive ethnic identity as Hakka-speaking Timorese-Chinese and remain separate within the broader community, expressed both physically and discursively through their efforts to patrol social borders with a discursive Australian ‘other’ (Thatcher 1992). While the ‘tolerance of difference’ articulated through Australian multicultural policy has encouraged enclave grouping and discouraged a broader social engagement, it has also enabled Timorese-Chinese to pursue their own culturally appropriate

⁷ Timorese Chinese domination of the commercial sector and import export trade was established through transnational flows and networks connecting small shops in tiny mountain villages with wholesale stores in Dili, and markets in Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore (Bird 1999:165).

goals and carve a space for themselves in a sometimes hostile and challenging environment. As refugee-turned-settlers, they largely remain hidden from view but at the same time, they have been highly organised actors in the negotiation of their own localised predicaments and struggles (TAC 1994; Wise 2002).⁸

As Thatcher suggests, the non-Chinese Timorese population publicly demonstrated a more provisional acceptance of national belonging in Australia (see also Coughlan and Thatcher 1998:244, 263). Yet East Timorese political subject awareness and relationship to Australia was by no means unitary but refracted through the prisms of ethnicity, class, status and power, as well as nationalist aspirations. As Wise points out (2002:181), belonging is relational and is as much about reception as representation, involving patterns of recognition, appearance and racism. The levelling impulse of bureaucratic management of refugees also contributed to the patterning of East Timorese identity experiences.⁹ Thatcher (1992:206) and Wise (2002:182) have both argued that experiences of racism in Australia most profoundly impacted upon the relatively privileged 1975 *mestiço* elite. In Timor, their elevated social status was recognised and their loyalty to Portuguese values and customs rewarded. In exile, the subtleties of culture, history and language were lost on Australian relief workers and agencies that were indifferent to East Timorese cultural and ethnic differentiation, conferring upon them an impersonal, generic otherness. Some of the new arrivals found this doubtful and reductive egalitarianism astonishing: their Portugueseness and their class were invisible it seemed and, worse, irrelevant. Many sought to deal with this disruption to their self-image by self-consciously asserting their social and political difference as non-Fretilin, lusophile Timorese. Others, demoralised by the civil war and the humiliation of UDT's defeat, simply disengaged from politics altogether. Following the Indonesian invasion in 1975, however, political fealties began to shift among some former UDT supporters and their families:

⁸ For a discussion of the complex articulations of Chineseness, Timoresehood and Australianness, see Wise (2002, Chapter 5:186-192).

⁹ Cf Knudsen's commentary (1995:20) on how relief programs in refugee camps imposed a homogeneous collective identity on Vietnamese refugees, negating and frustrating camp dwellers' self-ascribed personal identities and views of social reality.

I learned about politics in Australia from friends who were connected with unions and humanitarian agencies. One friend taught me that, “in a democracy you speak your mind”. In 1976, I saw the UDT were doing nothing and I couldn’t do that, so I joined Fretilin.

Abel Guterres (early forties) Sydney

The invasion and the experience of exile had a profound impact on the politicisation of many Timorese in the diaspora and the emotional appeal of Fretilin’s nationalist vision provided a compelling *raison d’etre*. Many of the educated Timorese and middle-class *mestiço* who translocated to Australia from Portugal were Fretilin supporters who had been radicalised by their experience as students in Lisbon in the early seventies. They regarded their activism as a political and moral obligation inextricably tied to the restoration of their now enslaved homeland:

My attachment to East Timor became deeper than ever when I learned the concept of nationalism with Fretilin in 1974. I finally realized that we could only express our national identity if East Timor became independent. This feeling was kept alive because of the courage and determination of my people to fight against the odds to establish our national identity. (Almeida 2001:13)

Sara, a young second-generation Timorese who identifies as ‘Timorese-Australian’, was born into a Fretilin activist family in Darwin and later relocated to Sydney. She acknowledged the pioneering role of her parent’s generation thus:

Sara: My parents are part of the generation that came here as young people in the seventies and eighties. They got an education here or in Portugal and learned to speak English pretty well. They didn’t have a safety net back then, they had to make their own way and build the community from scratch. It was hard for them, they hated being here, but back then there were jobs and opportunities so they developed an ‘all for themselves’ attitude.

Fiona: All for themselves?

Sara: You know, they were really driven, like really focused...they had their own agenda. It was all about politics and getting what they needed for the struggle...and there was always this stream of people through the house, you know, people like Rob Wesley-Smith, Ken Fry, Shirley Shackleton, Denis Freney and other activist celebrities...¹⁰

¹⁰ These are all long standing activists in East Timorese solidarity network: Rob Wesley-Smith, Denis Freney and Ken Fry were crucially involved in helping to maintain communications with Falintil throughout the struggle (see Wesley-Smith, 1998:83-102). Ken Fry was also a Member of Parliament in the Whitlam Government (1974-1978) and member of two bipartisan delegations to East Timor prior to the invasion; Rob Wesley-Smith was a spokesperson for Australians for a Free East Timor (AFET) in Darwin; Denis Freney was founder of the

Sara's comments suggest a pragmatic and strategic positioning that enabled pro-independence Timorese activists to both assert their political agenda – the restoration of East Timorese sovereignty – and survive as a marginal refugee community within the Australian nation. To an extent the prevailing socio-economic conditions in the post-Whitlam Government years were conducive to such a politicised fashioning of ethno-nationalist identity. The White Australia Policy had been officially annulled in 1973 and while refugee, migration and employment policies remained selective and controlled, they were generally less racially discriminatory. Australia in the 1970s was also inspired by the leftist politics of a privileged post-war generation. It was a period animated by social movements that drew diverse groups into associative solidarity - the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, Aboriginal Rights, feminism, student politics, anti-war and anti-nuclear activism. Initially through the mobilisation of Fretilin, Timorese formed many long-standing political and progressive religious alliances with individuals and groups and these played a significant role in helping them advance their practical and political agenda, and acquire the cultural capital to negotiate the political/bureaucratic system.¹¹

Intransigent class-based UDT/Fretilin political factionalism and leadership struggles endured in exile with each party flagrantly excluding the other from their respective activities. Although their mutual suspicion and boundary marking did not significantly diminish with time, a rapprochement of sorts was achieved through the abolition of orthodox party politics and creation of a united national front (the CNRM)¹² in 1988, which invited UDT into the broad coalition.¹³ The Dili Massacre in 1991 also had a profoundly cohering effect in

Campaign for the Independence of East Timor (CIET); Shirley Shackleton is the wife of Greg, one of the journalists murdered by the Indonesian military in October 1975 on the East/West Timorese border.

¹¹ It is worth noting that, while many early supporters of the East Timorese struggle also happened to be members of the Catholic faith, the mainstream Catholic Church did not become actively engaged with the issue until after the Dili Massacre in 1991.

¹² The *Conselho Nacional de Resistencia Maubere* (National Council for *Maubere* Resistance) was the precursor to the *Conselho Nacional de Resistencia Timorenses* (CNRT, or National Council for Timorese Resistance). Resistance leader Xanana Gusmão established the CNRM in 1987 in an effort to subdue internal political antagonisms. He had subsequently left Fretilin to act as a party-neutral leader.

¹³ Although, as Agio Pereira has argued (1996:156), national unity was always an integral concept in the formation of Fretilin as a revolutionary national 'front', the shift to CNRM was critical to East Timor's political evolution since it established "a new era of nationalism rather than revolutionism".

the diaspora and partially attenuated internal frictions. In Sydney, a new inclusive committee was formed to coordinate consolidated political action:

Under this Committee we organised one of the biggest street protest [sic] with over five thousand participants to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. The march was led by three symbols of the East Timorese Resistance – FRETILIN, UDT and FALINTIL flags. After the massacre, every single year, all the national days, the 12th of November and the 7th of December, were commemorated under the National Unity policy until 1999 – the referendum year. (Almeida 2001:19)

While political conflicts remained a source of concern within the Timorese community in Sydney, the unresolved situation in East Timor itself had the effect of focusing communal attention and energy on the national struggle for independence and away from critical psycho-social and economic settlement concerns (STARTTS 1999:30), thus reinforcing the tenuousness of Timorese settlement in Australia (TAC 1994:52). The independence struggle was rarely distanced from the daily materialities of Timorese lives in the diaspora, even for those who vigorously attempted to distance themselves from it. Even as they rebuilt their lives, an ambivalent belonging prevailed. The sense of waiting for resolution or redemption underscored the notion of Australia as surrogate home.

The ‘nineties’ Timorese arrivals

The influx of refugees in the nineties brought a new life to the struggle. There was a sea change and the minority became the majority. The struggle was changing and the young people were starting to influence the older generation’s ideas.

Gil (30) Canberra

According to Thatcher, Timorese migration to Australia during 1990-1997 was qualitatively different to prior migrations. Until then, arrivals had either been officially identified as evacuees (as in WW2 and 1975) or their applications for residency formally processed prior to arrival (even as exit visas may have been purchased through bribes). During this migration flow, however, Timorese “for the first time...resorted to subterfuge” (Thatcher 1998:6). While 1,004 Timorese were officially admitted under a Special Assistance category program, (and 18 arrived as ‘boat people’) an approximate 1,650 arrived on tourist visas masquerading as visitors, only later revealing their intention to seek asylum.

Many of these newer arrivals were survivors of the 1991 Dili Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery. Many were university and high school students, often no more than teenagers, sent into exile by their families for their own safety. In the wake of the massacre, young, urban-educated East Timorese were summarily targeted by the Indonesian military for suspected anti-Indonesian political activism. The result was an environment of escalating intolerance, persecution and paranoia as the Indonesian authorities refined techniques of state terror originally unleashed on the population in 1975. Their quests for asylum were variously assisted by the financial resources of relatives already in exile, the support of the clandestine network within the diaspora and especially within Indonesia, the susceptibility to bribery and, occasionally, the political sympathies of Indonesian officials and airport and customs workers, as well as the support of political and religious solidarity organisations outside of East Timor. Many of them did not tell their families they were leaving for fear of reprisals. Some of the younger unaccompanied arrivals did not even know they were leaving until the day of departure:

The journey to Australia was not exciting at all. Australia's a big place, we didn't know the language, might get lost. It was really scary. Even Bali [seemed] like a big city to us! Can you imagine Australia? We were really, really sad because we never been apart from our parents. Our uncle reassured us, he was the adult he had to be strong. Our mum's adopted brother, the priest, had to say mass that morning and he was late to pick us up. You know the funny thing was they gave us a form to fill out and we didn't know what to do so we threw it away. We were the last person to get out, everyone collected their bags already. We just stick together until our mum's brother came.

Natalina (18) Sydney

My cousins and uncles were all involved in Fretilin and our house in Santa Cruz was always check by the military. My auntie went to Bali to get a visa from Bambang.¹⁴ Bambang fix a lot of tickets for Timorese. I stayed with him for two days in Denpasar but the flight to Australia was cancelled and I stayed one night in a hotel with a guy from Kalimantan. My older brother gave me about 150 dollars but the guy from Kalimantan stole it. I flew to Melbourne next day with only \$1.50. My brother's wife's uncle met me at Melbourne airport and I lived with his family for one year. I live in Sydney now with 5 other Timorese, all nineties Timorese. They help me find a job. I arrive in Sydney on Sunday and start work in a factory next day. I miss my mother a lot, I cried a lot at first.

Mario (21) Sydney

¹⁴ Bambang is a pseudonym for an Indonesian immigration official at Denpasar airport who was sympathetic to East Timorese campaign for independence and assisted many Timorese with visas.

After the [Dili] massacre, I feared for my life. So many young people were taken away, never seen again. I started to look for ways of leaving my family and my homeland. My preparation to leave wasn't easy but in 1993 I encouraged myself to take an English course in Bali. In 1995, my dream became a reality. I left Bali with help from family members in Australia. I came to Australia on a tourist visa and then applied [for political asylum] through Legal Aid. But even today I am still fighting, like other Timorese, to stay in this country. I was happy when I arrive in Australia because I knew that I'm now physically free. But I felt lonely and frightened here. I had to adapt to a new society which is totally different from mine. All of these obstacles affected me a lot, including the progress of my education.

Maria (25) Sydney

The military came many, many times to search my house after 1991. My mum was so scared because they point a gun at her and they threatened to take me and Rosa away. My parents want to send us to Australia but they didn't tell us anything. In 1993, we went to my uncle's place in Jakarta cos he was working there. My auntie in Adelaide paid the bribes for our passport to Australia. My sister Rosa and me thought we were going on a holiday!

Anabela (25) Sydney

The nineties arrivals both *came from* and *arrived in* a very different political context to earlier Timorese refugees. This is important as it underscores the heterogeneity of diasporic experience as well as signalling significant axes of inter- and intra-generational difference within the East Timorese diaspora. As Avtar Brah has argued (1996:182-3), while each empirical diaspora must be situated according to its own historical specificity, it is important to acknowledge the particularities of their formation. Furthermore, the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of arrival are crucial to our understanding of how any group is accommodated and positioned within the new host culture:

The manner in which a group comes to be 'situated' in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices is critical to its future. This 'situatedness' is central to how different groups come to be relationally positioned in a given context. (Brah 1996:182-3)

As young, Indonesian-educated, *Bahasa Indonesia*-speakers, the nineties arrivals came from a highly politicised context where violations in surveillance, restrictions of free speech, arbitrary arrest and torture were routine. They arrived in a political environment in which the sympathies of the Australian Government, as Wise points out (2002:61), were jaundiced by their cynical

pursuit of Australia's strategic interests, namely, seabed resources in the Timor Sea and 'appeasement' of Jakarta.¹⁵

During the nineties, both the Keating and Howard Governments engaged in an elaborate and contradictory game of musical chairs, repositioning themselves at whim and exploiting every possible loophole to undermine and evade Timorese appeals for protection. Thus Timorese applications for refugee status were relentlessly contested on the grounds that they were legally entitled to Portuguese citizenship. This was a blatant hypocrisy given the Australian Government's repudiation of Portugal's right to intervene on East Timor's behalf in the Timor Gap debate:

Portugal can point to no basis on which its position can be identified with that of the people of East Timor. Its alleged sovereignty has not been accepted by the East Timorese people. Indeed, it was shortly after Portugal's withdrawal that Portuguese sovereignty was repudiated by political groups in East Timor. At the end of November 1975, in the vacuum created by the withdrawal, Fretilin proclaimed itself the Government. In response, the other political parties also declared the independence of the territory, and declared themselves the Provisional Government of East Timor...¹⁶ (ETRA 1997:4)

The Australian Government's insistence on the dual nationality principle was challenged by the Federal Court when, in 1997, it returned the test case of Kim Koe Jong to the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) for reassessment. The judges decided that while Timorese asylum seekers¹⁷ may be entitled to Portuguese citizenship, the RRT had not adequately considered whether this citizenship was 'effective'. According to Portuguese citizenship law, to be eligible for citizenship Timorese must prove their parents were Portuguese citizens and that they themselves were born in East Timor. Such a requirement represented a significant barrier to 'effective' citizenship where Timorese were unable to access their own or their parents' records and since Portugal did not recognise Indonesian civil registration certificates. A submission by Timorese groups to

¹⁵ John Birmingham (2001:2), following Donald Watts, defines appeasement as " 'purchasing peace for one's own interests by sacrificing the interests of others' "

¹⁶ Counter-Memorial of the Government of Australia, 1 June 1992, Section II: Portugal's Rights Are Not Identified With Those of the People of East Timor, p.111.

¹⁷ Asylum seekers are "people who apply to the government of a country for recognition as a refugee and for permission to stay because they claim to fear persecution in their own country on the grounds of race, religion, political beliefs or nationality, or because they belong to a particular social group. Until the government has considered their applications against the definition contained in the UN convention, they will not be recognised as refugees" (DIMA 1997:2).

the Australian Government requesting the asylum seekers be granted a Special Visa argued further that

the Portuguese authorities have made it clear that they will not accept deportations of East Timorese from Australia. Thus...the resolution of the nationality issue may well be purely theoretical and the financial and human cost of the continuing delay unacceptably high.¹⁸ (ETRA 1997:3)

For the asylum seekers themselves, who felt little or no emotional attachment to Portugal, its culture or its language, the prospect of being deported to Portugal was mystifying. Like many young asylum seekers, Anabela, who had arrived in Sydney in 1994 with her younger sister Rosa, clearly expressed her frustration as well as her refusal of that option:

We [would] rather go back to Timor than start again in Portugal. Our brother, he's studying there and *we send him* money for food and clothes! We already waited so long here...we wasted so much time. Our friends who stayed in Timor, they already graduated.

It is one of the tragedies of their specific displacement that many of the young asylum seekers sacrificed their education, both in East Timor and in universities across Indonesia, only to be excluded from tertiary education in Australia. The Australian government's refusal to grant them permanent residency meant that they were classified as international students and therefore expected to pay substantial fees for tertiary education. Their temporary bridging visas entitled them to work, access to primary or secondary schooling and basic healthcare.¹⁹ Some of the research participants in this study were young enough to attend high school on arrival, while others attended English classes funded by the Catholic Church and subsequently obtained casual employment, mostly through Church and familial networks.

As Askland (2005:75-6) suggests, their lack of secure status in Australia profoundly impacted upon their sense of belonging. As the legal deliberations

¹⁸ "Proposal for a special visa category for East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia", dated 12 March 1997. The document was signed by a number of Timorese organizations, including the Timorese Australian Council (TAC), UDT, FRETILIN, the Timorese Chinese Association, Active Senior Citizens Group and the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA).

¹⁹ The class 'A' bridging visas East Timorese asylum seekers received predated the introduction of the TPV (Temporary Protection Visa). These were introduced in 1999 in the context of moral panics centred upon border protection and illegal boat people. TPVs are mostly held by refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan who arrived between 1999 and 2000. As Askland (2005:74) points out, the key difference between TPVs and the bridging visas held by Timorese is that TPV holders are formally recognized as refugees while asylum seekers have no formal status.

dragged on without resolution, hopes rose and fell and the asylum seekers continued to live their lives in an existential limbo. The pressure on the Timorese community was very great and tensions arose out of frustration and financial and emotional exhaustion. Some of the asylum seekers were forced to move from place to place on a weekly basis to lessen the burden on individual families. Among the young men who had been most intensely involved in the clandestine movement, some struggled with pent up anger, suspicion and insecurity. Domestic violence, overcrowded housing, difficulties with access to education and finding work exacerbated the adverse effects of pre-migration mass trauma. As Sister Kath O'Connor, a Josephite sister and member of Christians in Solidarity with East Timor (CISSET) ²⁰ told me:

They escape trauma and arrive to find a lack of interest, an alien environment, a generation gap between themselves and the earlier arrivals. They're Indonesian-speaking and sometimes scorned by the more established migrants. They don't have a proper family life and they're pessimistic about forming relationships. They lose their spiritual base; they lose hope.

The Government's apparent immunity to the hardships its intractable approach imposed was counter-balanced by support demonstrated within the Australian community. The Sanctuary Network, established by the Josephite sisters through CISSET and coordinated by Sister Kath, aimed to protect asylum seekers threatened with expulsion; supplement their welfare needs including cash support, the provision of English classes and other services and orchestrate a political campaign to challenge the Government's position. The initiative attracted the support of 10,000 Australians who, according to the Network's manifesto, were "willing to commit civil disobedience by providing safe houses and other support services for asylum seekers facing deportation". It also won the endorsement of World War II veterans, union movements and community and inter-faith religious groups, as well as a number of high-profile Australian performers including Paul Kelly, Mental As Anything and Renee Geyer.

The Howard Government prevaricated for so long on the issue that the Sanctuary Network's agenda was never fully mobilised. The Federal Court appeal was dropped at the end of 1999 by which time, East Timor was no longer

²⁰ CISSET is a Christian ecumenical group founded in 1982 in Melbourne and inspired by a visit to Australia by Monsignor Da Costa Lopez.

occupied and the applicants had no grounds for fear of persecution. It would take at least another five years before their cases were resolved.

Being a refugee: resisting deterritorialisation

When you look at the word “refugee” many people think [about] those coloured people who come to our country and steal stuff from us, use our social assistance...But you take a look at the thing they call “refugee”. All of us who go through this, it’s very hard, we cannot even describe the impact of being a “refugee”, what it does to your spirit...

Bella (26) Sydney

The comment above, made by a young, Canada-based, East Timorese activist at a conference in Sydney²¹ captures the point that refugee experience is marked by the erosion of trust; that the refugee both “mistrusts and is mistrusted” (Valentine Daniel and Knudsen 1995:1). The experience of violence and persecution that frequently precipitates refugee-hood; the terror incurred by those circumstances; the trauma of flight itself are constitutive of a ‘radical disjunction’ between a familiar way of being in the world and a new social and political reality. This ontological rift of being raises broadly existential questions. The crisis of meaning, and therefore culture (the term ‘culture shock’ does not adequately convey its profundity) which confronts political refugees both individually and collectively, requires the resolution of the “ultimate inexplicableness of experience” (Weber [1915] 1958).

The political refugee’s predicament is not simply that which faces the immigrant – of being a stranger in a strange land – but of reconciling a fundamental psychic and social estrangement not of their own making. The political refugee cannot simply go home. The enforced nature of refugee experience, the sense of being cut adrift, impels the exile into the “perilous territory of not-belonging” producing “mutilations” as much as cultural creativities (Said 2001:177). Edward Said has famously named the condition of exile “a crippling sorrow of estrangement” (2001:173):

²¹ Bella Galhos was speaking at the Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference held in Sydney, 10th April 1998.

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted...[even] the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever.

This sense of existential disfigurement is aptly captured in a poem entitled “What is a refugee?” by Sudanese refugee Andrew Mayak (1995:11) in which he metaphorically contrasts the fluidity and ease of home with the mutilation of exile. In the former, one is “free like a fish moving in the water”, in the latter, “you are like a dog without a tail.” The loss of home or ‘habitus’ – the amalgam of practices linking habit with inhabitation – fundamentally threatens the integrity of ‘being-in-the-world’ and is experienced as an embodied and psychic ‘dis’ ease:

when our familiar environment is suddenly disrupted we feel uprooted, we lose our footing, we are thrown, we collapse, we fall. But such falling... is a shock and disorientation which occurs simultaneously in body and mind, and refers to a basic ontological structure of being-in-the-world (Binswanger 1963:222-225; Reich 1949:435). In this sense, uprightness of posture may be said to define a psychophysical relationship with the world, so that to lose this position, this “standing,” is simultaneously a bodily and intellectual loss of balance, a disturbance at the very center and ground of our Being. Metaphors of falling and disequilibrium disclose the integral connection of the psyche and the physical... (Jackson 1989: 122-123)

Many first-generation Timorese refugees spoke of feeling ‘shell-shocked’ at the ‘unmaking’ of their world. The loss of home and land, as well as the social relations grounded in it, was experienced as a deep and enduring bereavement, characterised as “mourning in a strange land” (Pereira Maia 1999). As well they experienced feelings of impotency, a loss of self-trust, and profound guilt at being unable to protect their families at home:

I came to Australia in 1993 and the worst thing for me here has been knowing that my countrymen are dying every day and that I have no way of preventing it. (Antonio Bernadino Noronha Alexandrino Joaquim, in Bird, 1999:131)

As subjects deprived of stable anchorages, the recovery of meaning, trust and culture for diasporic Timorese required the capacity to reconcile the fluctuations of an unpredictable present with the past. The rest of the chapter describes how they imaginatively constructed a meaningful and coherent ethno-nationalist biography as a way of dealing with profound uncertainties about life, culture, trust and the future.

Myths of homeland and return: the search for roots

As Wise suggests (2002:107), the specificities of the East Timorese diaspora resonate with aspects of other refugee diasporas who, as enforced or impelled migrants, have “quintessential deterritorialised identities” and whose attachment to homeland is emotionally compelling. In the Palestinian diaspora, for example, “ethnic communal consciousness is increasingly defined by – and their political mobilization has centred around – the desire to return to the homeland” (Safran 1991:87). The myth of return is a phenomenon known to many different migrant groups (Naficy 1991; Margolis 1995; Skrbiš 1997; Dorfman 1998) but, as Skrbiš (1997:447) points out, the myth is mobilised for different reasons. For Palestinians, argues Peteet (1995:170-1), ‘return’ constitutes a refusal to accept a deterritorialised existence:

The insistence on return evidences an active refusal to endorse contemporary colonial projects in Palestine...Resistance to exile itself and resistance to the legal designation “refugees” are central motifs in Palestinian exile culture...Palestinians seek return rather than assimilation or resettlement elsewhere, to a site where the restoration of trust as a cultural basis for everyday life and security is territorialized. For such an enterprise a national entity is crucial...

So too, re-territorialisation has been a nationalist project for many diasporic East Timorese and they have collectively sustained myths of homeland and return as a response to the indeterminacy of their fate. Indeed, it is one of the defining characteristics of diasporic East Timorese communities that exile was believed to constitute only a *temporary* displacement. The first Timorese arrivals expected to go home within weeks. Up until East Timor’s decisive rejection of Indonesia’s illegal occupation in August 1999, there was always a sense that, for most East Timorese, the condition of exile was made bearable by the prospect of an eventual return home. This perceived temporariness, it seems, prevented many East Timorese from putting down roots and building futures within their host countries:

Living in Australia, I feel like I’ve borrowed someone else’s house to live in for a while. (Laca Pires, in Bird, 1999: 98)

...it’s like – you don’t have any plans for the future. Like I said, you are forced out. It’s not like – I’m going to another country and going to start over. It’s not like you have a plan where you want to go. But for Timorese people, I think they feel, or for myself I felt like I was floundering - you know. Like I didn’t

have...a plan. You know – because I was always waiting to go back. (Manuel Branco, in Wise, 2001:37)

The hardest thing in Australia is that I can't have dreams. I am 60 years old and though I have my pension and I can survive, the limitations of language and age mean I can't dream of doing anything else. (José Maria Mok, in Bird, 1999:18)

The eschatological insistence on return as an abiding destiny may be viewed as a safeguard to sanity and an attempt to impose order on an unruly or dystopic world. Ariel Dorfman (1998:118) endured both his childhood exile from the United States in Chile and subsequent exile in reverse, from Chile in the United States, by “uselessly telling myself what all exiles tell themselves as they fantasize about returning home tomorrow; this distance is a mere parenthesis, a punishment that will end if only I can stay the same, if only I can foil time”. In the Timorese diaspora, the foiling of time and the stabilising of self found expression in the imaginary construction of homeland as a privileged and constant location. While the real East Timor was engaged in every day processes of change, homeland in the diasporic imagination remained fixed in the primordial past:

Before the war, I remember Timor to be green, idyllic, peaceful and connected. (Albie Viegas, *Sei Kilar* video, 1997)

Before the [Indonesian] invasion, East Timor was an island of peace, stability, racial tolerance, where people came from so many different groups. All coexisted in peace.

Maria (25) Sydney

As Skrbiš argues (1997:439), the construction of ‘beloved homelands’ or ‘sacred lands’ in nationalist discourses powerfully shape migrants’ social identities. Homelands are frequently portrayed as utopian, uncontaminated places of romantic imagining that resist the intrusion of change. This idealisation is especially (but not exclusively) common among first-generation migrants despite the negative experiences in homeland settings that gave rise to their displacement. Where such negative experiences are perceived as a consequence of aggressive and exploitative external forces, the homeland can become a “sentimentalized object which can nevertheless ask for both patience and

sacrifices” (Skrbiš 1997:448). In such a portrayal, a besieged and oppressed homeland can assume the status of a ‘bleeding’ or ‘victimised’ homeland. In Skrbiš’ case study of Croatians in Australia, love for the homeland constituted a subversive symbolic duty required by anyone desiring ‘authentic’ membership in the diaspora community. The power of their symbolic dependency on the homeland was only intensified by its inaccessibility. This is a point taken up by Ruth Behar (1996:148) who writes that, in the case of second-generation Cuban-Americans, the sorrow and anger at being bereft of country rendered ‘return’ an obsession:

[It] has everything to do with the way the abandoned island became for us a forbidden territory. By imposing a blockade against Cuba, the United States effectively cut off communication, and made the desire for a bridge especially urgent.

The eulogising of homeland as a sanctified space was central to narratives of the nation articulated in the East Timorese diaspora during the period from 1975 to 1999. East Timorese cultivated a highly romanticised view of their homeland expressed as a yearning to return and the subversion of Indonesian occupation and its ‘defilement’ of East Timor. The inscription of East Timor as a pure, and eminently feminised domain, enabled the symbolic confinement of and resistance to the contamination of ‘Indonesianisation’ while emotively invoking homeliness, familial loyalty, devotion and obligation. In his poem ‘Timor from Overseas’, Abé Barreto Soares (1996:18), writes:

She is a mother
in deep sorrow
Her cheek is wet
shedding teardrops
But she remains/steadfast

The gendering of East Timor as a motherland, in spite of its masculinised mythical origins as ‘Grandfather Crocodile’ (Chapter 1, this thesis), finds much in common with the symbolic construction of ‘sanctuary space’ in Latin America (also discussed by Feldman (1991) in relation to the transgression of Northern Ireland’s “no-go” areas) where the notion of home as an ‘immune space’ or refuge is conflated with the feminised figures of the mother-virgin-church-monastery-priests-nuns and children (Franco 1985:414-20). The

sanctuary as tophilic space in Latin America represents an ethical landscape of “community, familial and domestic integrity...informed with transcendent, idealized, and utopian resonances that contribute to its ideologies of resistance” (Feldman 1991:39). However, the sanctuary space cannot fully protect the community where the counterinsurgency state simultaneously appropriates the signifiers of sanctuary and erases them through systematic violations. This analysis is pertinent in the case of East Timor, where the Indonesian state articulated discourses of familial belonging, feminine purity and religious tolerance enshrined in Pancasila, while engaging in, as Franco puts it, ‘deterritorialising’ practices that decimated the sanctuary.

The notion of East Timor as an embattled, exploited, “bleeding” homeland inspired a sense of political and moral obligation and outrage among Timorese in the diaspora, such that resistance became inextricably tied to the maintenance of an endangered culture as a counter to deterritorialisation:

Timor is a country that so many nations have borrowed and used up – as if it was their own...I must stand up for my country. I feel I must continue to protest. I must strive to keep my culture strong. (Verónica Pereira Maia in *Tuba Rai Metin* catalogue 1999)

Thus the quest to reclaim and memorialise a past moral order and tradition has been integral to the diasporic resistance movement and empowerment of the exile community. For East Timorese, as collective survivors and victims of state violence and near genocide, cultural survival in the diaspora required the summoning of an essentialised (but lost) culture.

Agio Pereira (1996) has spoken of a ‘cultural renaissance’ in diaspora during the early phase of exile:

The patriotism which influence[s] the behaviour of Timorese abroad, creates an environment where everything perceived as ‘traditional’ is valued and performed...The *tebes*, *tebedais* and *bidus*²² have become cherished by the Timorese community in the diaspora, largely due to our constant search for

²² “*Tebe* is a group of people singing in a circle while holding hands, or sometimes holding each other more tightly with their arms stretched across each other’s shoulders. As they circle they stamp the ground with their feet, in time with the rhythm of the song. *Tebe* is popular with Timorese because through it they are able to express their feelings. The themes of the lyrics range from day-to-day activities, to jokes (sometimes about sexual relationships) to criticism of the authorities” (Alfredo Pires, *Timor the Journey of Sounds* CD, cited in Bird 1999:164). *Tebedais* and *bidus* are traditional dance forms.

primitivism. By primitive I mean 'pure' in its origin... Many cultural centres and groups [were] formed to sustain a sense of patriotism [and] to develop culture as such... the existence of these cultural groups and centres are a testimony of this determination to survive as a people and a nation.

As Pereira suggests, Timorese mobilised essentialist notions of a precolonial identity by the appropriation of 'privileged' cultural symbols that attach to the notion of an authentic *Maubere* culture. The proliferation of cultural groups throughout the diaspora performed traditional dances, and sang and narrated traditionally-inspired nationalist songs and poetry. Theatrical performances romanticised pre-invasion rural village life and emotively invoked the ongoing tragedy of occupied East Timor. Through the regeneration of ancestral values and emblems, Timorese sought to create meaningful moral allegories that would both mobilise the emotional, aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of local Timorese and performatively communicate the urgency of their political concerns to western audiences (Morlanes 1991). Of course, as Morlanes has argued (1991:312-4), the recreation of Timorese ethnic symbology was inherently hybrid and improvised. Few Timorese exiles would have self-consciously identified as *Maubere* prior to 1975, nor would they have necessarily been moved to embrace a uniquely East Timorese precolonial culture. The definition and assertion of a deeply rooted identity gave cultural meaning and visibility to a transcendent and exemplary Timorese, yet its ascription and enactment was nevertheless hotly contested within local communities.

The retrieval of the past and the search for roots are recurrent in refugee narratives that seek to resist the levelling and neutralising of difference imposed in host countries (Valentine Daniel and Knudsen 1995:5). It is often especially so among older generation refugees whose loss of personal autonomy and authority in the resettlement process is most keenly felt. The retrieval of the past is therefore an attempt to reconstitute the self as a 'bearer of culture'. Here, Dona Verónica, a Timorese elder based in Darwin and well-known as a master weaver, situates her own identity as profoundly 'rooted' in the past, in contrast with the ephemerality of modern (western) culture:

Through the way I dress, through the way I speak, through the things I make I return to the ways of the past. Some of the things I do, imposed on me by modern life have little meaning they lack substance. They are shallow superficial things, lasting no longer than the leaves or fruit of a plant. The

things I wish to create are things of value. They have deep roots that enable the plant to thrive...to send down still deeper roots...I must help nurture the plant from generation to generation. (*Tuba Rai Metin* catalogue 1999)

As self-identified ‘bearers of culture’, individuals like Dona Verónica were pivotal in the rebuilding of social capital and the production of locality within Timorese communities, as eighteen year-old Sara remembers:

In Darwin, we used to go to Dona Verónica’s for parties. Her house was Timor-style, they lived outdoors mostly sitting on the patio at the back of the house making *tais* and baskets. She taught us younger ones to make things, like *katupa* [woven palm leaves filled with coconut and rice].

Given that locality is not simply materially produced but “socialised and localised through complex and deliberative practices of performance, representation, and action” (Appadurai 1995:206), the embodied knowledge and symbolic value of various rituals of belonging performed by elders such as Dona Verónica must be acknowledged as crucial to East Timorese processes of rebuilding and re-imagining culture and community in exile. Yet these are also processes in which the local and the global are complexly entwined and which are subject to multiple frictions and the partial and positioned visions of political actors.

In the following section, I briefly explore the means through which a transcendental diasporic unity was achieved and expressed and a ‘critical community’ mobilised through the “constructive power of political passion and the ebbs and flows of community self-organisation” (Werbner 1998:22). This is explored at length in Wise (2002: Chapter 3) drawing upon theorisations of the “diasporic public sphere” deployed by Werbner (1998) and Appadurai (1996:21-22). For the purposes of this research, this notional sphere has particular relevance as a key diasporic institution dominated by, mostly male, lusophone oriented orators and political activists. This command of the diasporic public sphere, and the discourses circulating through it, had implications for the visibility and political agency of young, Indonesian-speaking, nineties Timorese arrivals.

The diasporic public sphere

Werbner (1998:12) defines the diasporic public sphere as

a space in which different transnational imaginaries are interpreted and argued over, where aesthetic and moral fables of diaspora are formulated, and political mobilization generated, often in response to global social dramas...and the heroic or villainous protagonists that embody major global dramas.

Global dramas, in turn, produce localised interpretive communities that may translate into social and political action. The East Timorese diasporic sphere was powerfully visibilised by the globally-transmitted tragedy of the Dili Massacre in 1991 in which images of martyred youth were juxtaposed with those of a murderous Indonesian military. This pivotal 'mediatised' event magnified and centralised East Timorese diasporic struggles for representation within wider political domains and arenas of power through "the complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (Appadurai 1996:49). Elaborating on Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community, Appadurai (*ibid*) argues that, in the new global order, the imagination has assumed new social significance:

[T]he imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.

As a refugee diaspora, the work of imagining community was made more urgent and more poignant by the traumatic circumstances of their dislocation and East Timor's forced enclosure and captivity. Bereft of homeland, building a sense of community at long distance thus crystallised around the quest for national liberation. In this sense, argues Wise (2002:107), 'diasporic community', 'homeland' and 'nation' were complexly interwoven in East Timorese diasporic social imagination. In this sense too, they are exemplary as a diasporic community of 'co-responsibility' whose political commitment centred not solely upon national fealty, but on their deep 'existential' connection to a transnational collectivity (cf Werbner 1998:12).

The East Timorese diasporic public sphere evolved through the skilful formation of strategic alliances with key international and religious organisations, as well

as diverse civil rights and activist networks.²³ These interconnections enabled the independence movement to transpose and appropriate positive meanings and legitimacy derived from chains of symbols, ideas, keywords and images invoking emancipatory discourses of democracy, freedom, human rights and sovereignty. The political narratives of key diasporic orators, for example, called upon Australia's unpaid debt to East Timorese for their support of Australian troops during WW2 and drew heavily on the politics of liberation theology, as well as exploiting the persuasive power of libertarian discourses within the international diplomatic arena. Indeed, the range of cultural and political investments placed by various groups in the East Timorese independence struggle is striking. Each of the diverse political, religious, humanitarian and celebrity networks that rallied behind the East Timorese cause had their own stake in the moral restitution of East Timorese sovereignty. In Australia, the Josephite Sisters, who formed the Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies (MMIETS), were driven not simply by altruism but by the Catholic Church's lack of responsiveness to the tragedy of East Timor and the inertia of a powerful and privileged minority within the Church hierarchy who supported the status quo:

If the Australian Church was being a truly prophetic witness and believed in social justice, what more would it be doing or saying about East Timor? (O'Connor 1996:138)

The WW2 veterans of the 2/2 and 2/4 Independent Companies who, aided by Timorese civilians, immobilised over 30,000 Japanese troops through the execution of guerilla attacks, were concerned to retrieve the memory of a forgotten history and repay the debt of a 'blood bond' with the East Timorese (Levy, in Aubrey 1998: xiv). Indigenous Australians linked the East Timor struggle to their own, in recognition of their common histories of colonialism

²³ Among the East Timor Relief Association's impressive list of patrons and sponsors, for example, were the following: Professor Fred Hollows, Justice Elizabeth Evatt AO, Pat Walsh (ACFOA Human Rights Office), Tom Uren, Janine Haines (former leader of the Australian Democrats), Reverend Dorothy MacMahon (Uniting Church), Senator Nick Sherry, The Honourable Michael Hodgman QC MP, Janet Hunt (Executive Director of the International Women's Development Agency), Martin Ferguson (ACTU President), Marcia Langton (Indigenous Australian activist and academic), Thea Astley, Bishop Hilton Deakin (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne), Dr Keith Suter (President of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney), Pat O'Shane (Indigenous Australian activist and magistrate), Father Maurice Heading. ETRA also established close relationships with a number of regional NGOs including ACFOA (Asian Cultural Forum of Development), 'Focus on Global South' (based in Bangkok), IID (International Initiatives for Dialogue) and CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations).

and respective emancipatory quests. Countless political and solidarity groups mobilised in protest against the entrenched power and apparent immunity of the Whitlam-led Australian government and its bureaucracy, as well as the complicities of subsequent governments.²⁴ The convergence of these and other critiques in space and time formed a powerful counter-hegemonic language through which East Timorese became embedded within the Australian imagination as an idiom of resistance.

The Timorese protagonists at the centre of communal affairs in Sydney mostly arrived in Australia as young adults during the 1970s and early 80s and were educated either in Australia or Portugal. Many were instrumental in the establishment of the key political and community organisations, assuming roles of civic responsibility. Over time, they became involved in international circuits of travel as spokespersons and delegates at UN conferences and other high-level fora throughout the world. Their high profile activism and cosmopolitan mobility belies the image of refugee underprivilege and marginality. They are, to use Hannerz's phrase (1990:246), exemplary figures in transnational cultures of the global ecumene who are "people with credentials, decontextualised cultural capital [that] can be quickly and shiftingly recontextualised in a series of different settings".²⁵ Yet their public roles as bearers of an emancipatory quest and mobilisers of a critical community consumed their lives such that there was little separation between their public and private lives and personas. And for all their cosmopolitanism, none were exempt from parochial frictions and factionalism in the local arena.

Clearly, there was no natural central ground or agreement on civic and political issues, nor upon the constitution of 'authentic' membership within the diasporic community. These antagonisms were not hidden, but increasingly played out transnationally. Preparations for the first Timorese National Congress, held in

²⁴ Gough Whitlam was Australia's Prime Minister at the time of the Indonesian invasion in 1975. He and Richard Woolcott, Ambassador to Jakarta from March 1975, were determinedly pursuing a program of "constructive engagement" with Indonesia and there is much documentary evidence to suggest that they were both privy to and acquiescent of the Indonesian Government's plans to invade Portuguese East Timor.

²⁵ The cultural capital they acquired in the years of exile both equipped them for new roles inside a now independent East Timor and inevitably set them apart from Timorese who remained in-country. The physical and cultural distance they have travelled and the multiple crossings they have made in exile have redefined them as politically sophisticated 'outsiders'.

Lisbon in early 1998, for example, were extremely tense. UDT delegates refused to recognise Xanana Gusmão as the National Leader and had objected to the use of the term ‘Maubere’ by the CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance). The issue was resolved when Xanana proposed the term Maubere be replaced by ‘Timorese’ (National Council of Timorese Resistance). The official opening of the Congress itself was delayed when UDT delegates staged a walk out, contesting the status of selected delegates. Later discussions on the adoption of a Magna Carta of rights for East Timor and CNRT rules were impeded by protracted disputes over the definition of ‘East Timorese’ for voting purposes and by constant disagreements and disruptions between the parties (Pereira 1998:7). A temporary compromise was achieved on the issue of the national flag, ultimately decided by practical concerns rather than principles. The new CNRT rules proposed that, in the interests of fairness, both UDT and Fretilin flags would be used simultaneously but Australian-based delegates rejected the proposal since the dual-flag strategy had been deployed during protests outside the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra with unsatisfactory results: “It not only looked silly, one delegate said, but also when the wind blew both flags wrapped around each other and nothing was seen” (Pereira 1998:12). It was agreed that the flag of Falintil would be adopted as the symbol of unity, but without the word ‘Falintil’ on it.

The articulation of a monological discourse of united East Timorese resistance within the diasporic public sphere has taken place across and through such contestations and ‘perspectival’ visions. For the post-1991 cohort of young Timorese in Australia who, as part of the politically mobilised *Geração Foun* identified with the non-partisan umbrella organisation CNRT, the enduring and deeply entrenched political antagonisms and struggles for power articulated in the diaspora were deeply perplexing:

We're just Timorese. There are too many political parties not fighting for Timor but who's gonna be on top, you know, which flag will go up [in a post-independent East Timor].

Felipe (19) Sydney

In this respect, their concerns resonated with those of young second-generation Timorese who were not emotionally embroiled in the internecine rivalries of

their parents' generation. The creation of the CNRM/CNRT was a direct attempt to moderate exclusionary political visions and vocabularies that threatened to destabilise the resistance movement. The restructuring of the political terms of reference and the vicissitudes of the struggle for independence in the post-1991 environment involved the social re-imagining of a transcendent East Timorese-ness. My interest in this process lies, firstly, in the complex ways in which the boundaries of a collective Timorese-ness were constantly being redrawn and reinvented, but more specifically in how young nineties Timorese were constitutively engaged in the renegotiation of Timorese ethnicity in exile. In analysing their experiences, it is important to explore not simply how they grappled with the new social and political realities they faced, but also how they themselves were encountered as new arrivals within the broader diasporic community in Australia. The young nineties cohort inevitably brought with them different sets of situated understandings, expectations and cultural competencies based on their interactions and activities within East Timor. Their experiences illuminate the frictions, divergences and uneasy accommodations that are continually at play within any ethnic community. The divisions, conflicts and inequalities apparent within all social groupings not only undermine the notion of a bounded, internally coherent community but underscore the fact that 'cultures' and 'communities' cannot simply be mapped together (Amit-Talai 1995).

Discussion

In this chapter, I have mapped the emergence of a Timorese diasporic presence in Australia and the processes through which a highly politicised communal identity was reconstituted in exile, centring on the moral restitution of sovereignty in East Timor and underpinned by the mythology of return. In so doing, I have focused on the ways in which East Timorese rebuilt and re-imagined a sense of place and community in exile. For diasporic East Timorese, concepts of home and homeland are refracted through their experiences of displacement, a condition in which the idea of loss is continually reproduced through their everyday lives as refugees. While physical interaction with the homeland was largely prohibited through the years of national captivity, the ongoing relationship with East Timor connected diasporans through time and space with a mythologised homeland derived from the landscape of memory.

The concept of home, like identity, is mostly taken-for-granted when it is not at risk. The scale of Indonesia's violent assault on the East Timorese impacted psychosocially and existentially on Timorese lives and identities. Under threat of radical effacement, diasporic East Timorese publicly asserted an 'authenticised' identity as a form of reactive resistance against the genocidal policies and practices of the Indonesian state. The anchoring of an authentic and transcendent East Timorese space became vital to the performance of ethnonationalist belonging and the refusal of deterritorialisation. Such a politicised public discourse of identity of necessity left little room for expressions of hybridity and heterogeneity. Yet the East Timorese diaspora has also created new geographies of identity saturated with the politics of transformation and in which a multiplicity of social meanings interact and vie with the hegemony of a unique and univocal form of East Timorese ethnicity. It is this tension between an 'essentialised' articulation of East Timoresehood and the articulations of alternative and contingent East Timorese identities that lies at the heart of this ethnography.

The chapter acknowledges the critical role of the '1975' generation of lusophone-oriented Timorese community leaders and activists in the rebuilding and re-imagining of community and culture, and in mobilising a 'critical community' of political solidarity in exile. I have shown how a counter-hegemonic language of East Timoresehood meshed with the interests of diverse political, religious, humanitarian and celebrity networks that rallied behind the East Timorese cause. The success of the diasporic East Timorese resistance movement is testament to the power of overlapping and intersecting emancipatory discourses that became embedded in the structures of politics and space. The diasporic public sphere thus privileged an exemplary and unitary East Timoresehood articulated through the idiom of resistance. This representation was powerfully visibilised and reinforced through the global media.

Acknowledging that identities are always contested and in process, the chapter also takes account of the divisive potential of local struggles for power, political factionalism and perspectival visions among those who dominated the 'diasporic public sphere'. I have attempted to show how class, status and political affiliation played a key role in shaping differential identifications among

lusophone-oriented Timorese refugees in Australia. It is clear that different relations of power among Timorese are reproduced through their differential collective group histories. The contestation of Timorese identities cannot be disarticulated from imperial cultural practices that unevenly produced colonised subjectivities. So too, Timorese lives and identities are shaped by the levelling impacts of refugeehood as well as their location as a migrant minority within Australia and expectations and responses of mainstream society that do not recognise nuanced markers of Timorese cultural heterogeneity. Ethnicity is thus both structured and structuring, inflected by ambivalent experiences of marginality and expressions of resistance.

The influx of young Timorese arrivals during the 1990s introduced new dimensions of difference into the diasporic social world. The biographies of nineties Timorese were markedly different from those of earlier arrivals and those born in exile. The differently defined values that young nineties Timorese represented and embodied added a new layer of complexity to the constitution of Timoresehood.

In the following chapter, I explore Timoresehood a site of continual struggle and negotiation in which meanings of Timoresehood are in process.

PHOTO ESSAY

Photographs from East Timor and the Australian diaspora

EAST TIMOR



DIA DOS DEFUNTOS, SANTA CRUZ CEMETERY

The thing that strikes you about East Timor is the cemeteries. They are often very beautiful and well-cared for they are everywhere and people spend a lot of time in them. Cemeteries and churches provide the only public spaces where Timorese may officially gather in large numbers. Increasingly, these sacrosanct spaces have been violated by the Indonesian military and their militias. They are at once landscapes of sacredness, of politics and of memory. On this particular day, ‘The Day of the Dead’, families take flowers to place on the graves of deceased relatives.



OAN KIAK (ORPHANS)

Orphanages were unknown in East Timor prior to the Indonesian invasion in 1975, but now there are many *oan kiak* (orphans) who may have lost either one or both parents, as a result of the war and ongoing military occupation, or whose parents are too poor to care for them and to pay for their basic education. These young girls live in an institute in Dare, near Dili, overlooking a military post.



BOYS IN THE CEMETERY

I found these boys behind a large grave site where a *Kore Metan** was taking place. Such occasions can be very long and the solemnity of things can sometimes bring on a sudden lapse of gravitas, besides which, as a *malae* (foreigner), they simply found me screamingly funny.

* *Kore (release) Metan (black)*: Literally ‘untying the black band’. This ceremony marks the end of a twelve-month period of mourning.



GRAFFITI

The emergence of a nascent street culture in Dili is evident from the graffitied walls that celebrate the two most popularly celebrated youth icons, Xanana Gusmão and Bob Marley. We passed this wall several times before I was allowed to take a photograph from a car with tinted windows. When the chance came, I was on the wrong side of the vehicle and had to lurch over fellow passengers – the glass pulled back with just barely enough room to squeeze the lens through.



I really don't know what to say about this photo, except that I find it deeply confronting. There is in the eyes of some young Timorese a terrible knowledge. This knowledge is of a repression so violent, so great, that it is quite literally unspeakable. The photo was taken very early in the morning, just inside the Santa Cruz cemetery on November 12th 1998, the 7th anniversary of the 1991 Dili Massacre. The words in Portuguese on the wall behind the three men read simply: 'Our Father'.



BANNERS

On November 12th 1998, at Santa Cruz, students displayed banners depicting acts of torture perpetrated by the Indonesian military. We few foreigners who were there were propelled to the centre of the crowd and urged to take photographs to “show to the world”. Aside from graffitied walls, these were the first and only paintings I saw in East Timor. While some older Timorese still practice the more traditional art forms of weaving and carving, there did not appear to be an obvious culture of artistic expression among young Timorese. This is hardly surprising in a society where, in general, survival is about *not* giving shape to one’s personal emotions, beliefs, knowledge and experience.



MAU HUDO

I was fortunate to meet Mau Hudo (José da Costa), a veteran resistance fighter and the Vice Chairperson of Fretilin, in East Timor in 1998. Possessed of a lively intellect and generosity of spirit, he was highly regarded by the younger generation of resistance. Following the referendum on August 30th 1999, during the period some Timorese refer to as 'Black September', an unknown number of Timorese were killed or disappeared – Mau Hudo among them. He was believed to have been shot while searching for his family on the West Timor border. This photo was taken on 12th November 1998, at the commemoration of the Dili Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery. Mau Hudo (left) is warmly greeted by student leader Vasco.



RE-ENACTMENT

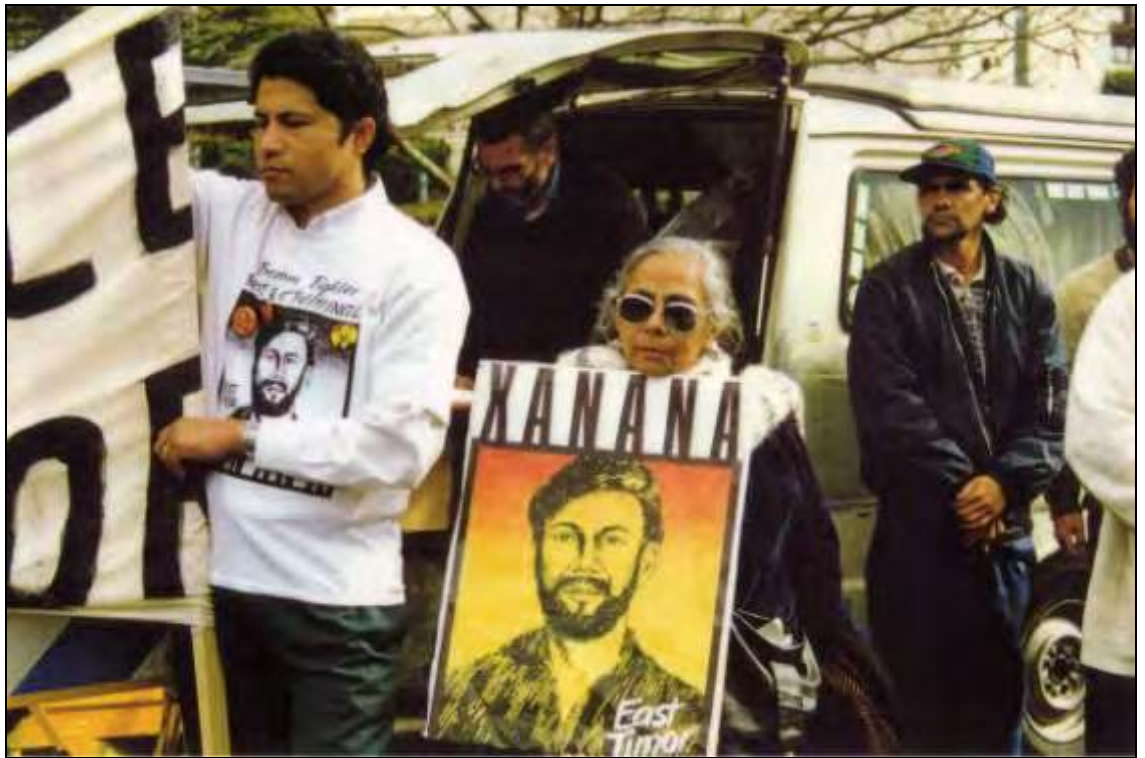
At the cemetery in Santa Cruz on November 12th last year, students performed a re-enactment of the 1991 Dili Massacre. Aware of the high emotion and grief expressed by people around me, but equally conscious of the responsibility of documenting the unfolding drama, I kept taking photos until I ran out of film. After that, I was conscious of a strange and rather terrible sound. It was a kind of deep, raw sound of a woman crying. To my absolute amazement, I realized it was me. After the re-enactment, the heavens opened dumping a solid wall of rain on Dili. People said it was the tears of the dead.

AUSTRALIA



PROTESTING THE INVASION

Every year there is a Timorese pilgrimage to Canberra on December 7th, to mark the anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. There is always a rather sombre church service, followed by a demonstration outside the Indonesian Embassy. In 1998, the gathering was very small but the guys were really fired up and it was hard not to be affected by their energy and passion. Some of them had come down from Sydney, but others had driven all night from Melbourne so they'd had virtually no sleep and were running on adrenaline. This year (1998), the Timorese protesters were joined by a solidarity activist from Indonesia seen here holding a banner (left of picture).



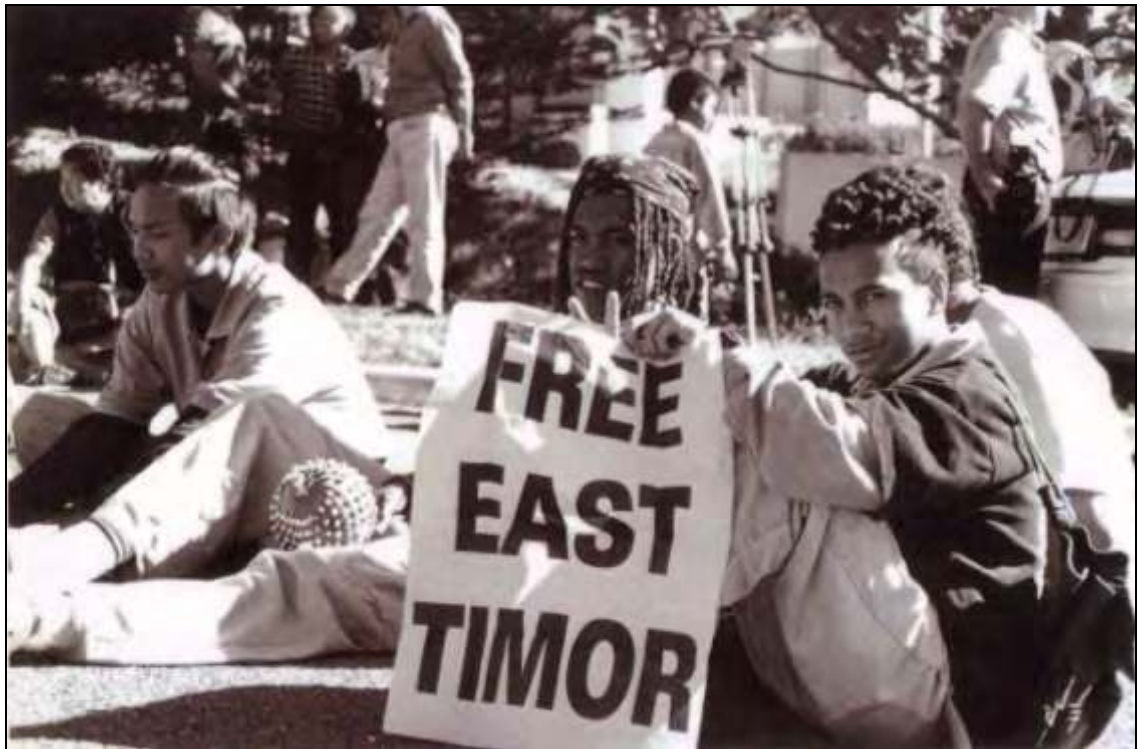
DONA NATALINA RAMOS-HORTA

This picture was taken at a demonstration outside the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra on 17 July 1998, on the anniversary of Indonesia's illegal annexation of East Timor as its 27th province. It shows Dona Natalina, mother of the 1996 Nobel Peace Laureate Dr José Ramos-Horta, holding a placard of the Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão. A tough and tireless activist, Dona Natalina commands enormous respect in the Timorese community.



LIQUICA

April 1999 was a terrible month. It began with the massacre of dozens of unarmed Timorese by pro-Indonesia militiamen in Lliquica, in the grounds of a Catholic church. On Monday 19th April, Timorese from Sydney and their Australian supporters held a rally outside the Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra. Over 200 protesters carried white paper doves as a symbol of peace. Youth representatives from the Timorese community in Sydney carried a large cross bearing the names of all those killed and disappeared at Lliquica. The young woman in the picture was reading a letter to Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, urging him to increase diplomatic pressure on the Indonesian government to curb military excesses in East Timor.



FREE EAST TIMOR

As high school students, these young Timorese routinely participated in public demonstrations in Dili. Arriving in Australia in 1995, they found the lack of public militancy, especially among young Australians – as well as the general lack of support for the Timorese struggle – profoundly shocking.



HANANU KORE A'AN

The youth choir comprises mainly, but not exclusively, young asylum seekers. Membership is in fact very fluid and often included non-Timorese musicians and vocalists. Coincidentally, the recording session for the movie 'Punitive Damage' fell on the same day as the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney. After we finished singing, everyone was in a good mood. Moments after taking this photo we were on Oxford Street, buying plastic silver tiaras and staking out the best viewing spots.



THE STUDIO

This photo was taken in a studio in Surry Hills where the youth choir *Hananu Kore A'an* was recording songs in Tetun for the soundtrack of the movie 'Punitive Damage', which documents the events of the 1991 Dili Massacre. Musical director Stephen Taberner had wanted "something ethereal, not too earthy", something that would "float above the visual images" in the film. In spite of the apparent chaos in the studio, he got that.



TRANSCULTURAL SOLIDARITY

A young Columbian activist, linked to the East Timor solidarity movement through the her parents' human rights work with refugees in Switzerland, stands beside the pro-East Timorese façade of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy 'office' on the lawns opposite Old Parliament House in Canberra.



BLEEDING DOVES

Outside the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra, at the end of a long demonstration, a weary policeman stands yawning beside the memorial to Timorese resistance leader Konis Santana. Shortly afterwards, one of the policemen in the background collapsed, not once, but several times. His knees kept giving out.

PART TWO

Chapter Four

Not You/Like You: Contested Timorese-ness

[Youth is] the stage where people begin to construct themselves through nuance and complexity, through difference as well as similarity.

Willis (1990:8)

This chapter explores the interlocking themes of sameness and difference as they figured in the identity narratives of young diasporic Timorese in the pre- and immediately post-independence period between 1997 and 1999. The mapping of sameness and difference in the historical, mythical and contemporary identity narratives of East Timorese has shifted over time and through space according to prevailing relations of power, political institutions, mobilising discourses, material conditions and available ideologies. In the preceding chapters, I have shown how a self-conscious Timorese emerged out of the ambivalent cultural politics of domination as well as the exclusivist and excluding racialising, or ‘othering’, practices of both the Portuguese colonial and the Indonesian neocolonial states. Under threat of radical effacement during the period of Indonesian occupation, the representational and discursive constitution of an ‘authentic’ and ‘sacred’ Timorese helped to inscribe an antagonistic conceptual divide between a Timorese ‘Self’ and an Indonesian ‘Other’. So too the nationalist project of imagining community involved the essentialised construction of patriotic and self-sacrificing ‘youth’. In reality, Timorese subversion of Indonesian hegemonist politics and practice was not always construed or enacted in such starkly oppositional terms. Nor were the essentialised categories of ‘Timorese’ and ‘youth’ uncontested and unmediated by fractured subjectivities. Rather, the urgency of the Timorese nationalist project necessarily relied upon the subduing of potentially disruptive articulations of internal variability.¹

The concern of this and subsequent chapters is to explore the dynamics of identity making and re-making among young Timorese and how they deployed both essentialised and hybridised understandings of their cultural positioning as ‘East Timorese’ and as minority youth in diaspora. For diasporic Timorese during the period of exile, concerns with the embattled present and uncertain future of the Nation inevitably overlaid and meshed with a kaleidoscope of localised, place-based micro-struggles and postcolonial possibilities within complexly structured urban contexts. Contemporary cities are exemplary sites of ‘our meeting with the other’ (Barthes 1981:96) and as much as they are

¹ More recently, of course, these issues are acutely at stake within post-independent East Timor where the defining identity of a ‘Timorese Us/Indonesian Them’ no longer has primacy and as the unruly articulations of difference confront and disrupt the urgent need for a broad national sameness.

regulated by constructs of difference and privilege, they are also saturated with possibilities for creating new, hybridised spaces and ways of living (Skelton and Valentine 1998). The complexities of choices and decisions faced by young Timorese in their everyday interactions and negotiations in diaspora often involve the repositioning of normative familial and communal relations creating both inter- and intra-generational discontinuities and frictions.

In this chapter, I suggest that the tendency to focus on intergenerational conflict within the wider East Timorese community tends to obscure the complexity of social dynamics and overlooks the diversity among Timorese youth itself. Cultural tensions do not exist purely along generational lines. The narratives and vignettes that form the basis of the chapter reveal complex, contradictory and ongoing negotiations over identity in which Timoresehood is constituted as a highly contested terrain. Indeed, beyond the commonality of a collective experience of displacement and loss, it is difficult to speak of a single “authentic” diasporic experience, because each individual’s experience is uniquely shaped by different sets of social relations according to gender, generation, age, class, ethnicity, language and so forth. Like any diasporic community, the East Timorese population in exile is characterised by diverse sets of circumstances. In Australia, for example, East Timorese are Australia-born, Timor-born, Portugal-born and Taiwan-born; refugee and non-refugee; fluent in English and non-English speaking; educated and working class. Personal histories are also marked by different historical contexts. Timorese may have experienced life under Portuguese colonial rule, Indonesian military rule, both, or neither. Yet these distinct and even disparate narratives also expose interweaving, common threads of experience and identifications.

Understanding hybridity

In its contemporary usage, hybridity is a key and yet highly contentious term in understanding the conflictive complexity of intercultural encounters within postcolonial contexts (Bhabha 1987; Rushdie 1989), in cultural and national ‘border’ zones (Anzaldúa 1987) and among refugees and displaced peoples (Malkki 1992). Hybridity has thus been used as an organising principle to explore the ‘positive indeterminacy’ and interstitiality of a diasporic subjectivity (Ang 1993b:33). Such a focus highlights the discursive and political basis of

contemporary diasporic identity formations rather than the mere fusion of 'porous' cultural elements (Lo 2000:156). The hybridisation of contemporary culture is therefore conceived as

a process of disruption, disarticulation, critical interrogation: intercultural contact and the intermingling of different cultural groups, traditions and forms also always involves the destabilisation and contestation of prevailing cultural purities, essentialisms and chauvinisms... In other words, the concept of hybridity, used critically, involves 'an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining' [Young 1995:22]. (Ang 2000:xix)

Based on Bakhtin's concept of organic-intentional hybridity (1981), this dialectical model of cultural interaction allows for the co-presence of both adaptation and resistance to change among ethnic groups and national states:

What is felt to be most threatening is the deliberative, provocative aesthetic challenge to an implicit social order and identity, which may also be experienced, from a different social position, as revitalising and 'fun'. Such aesthetic interventions are thus critically different from the routine cultural borrowings and appropriations by national and ethnic or migrant groups which unconsciously create the grounds for future change. (Werbner 1997c:5)

It is this focus on the intense dynamics, the to and fro movement, at play in the constitution of cultural identities that interests me in the particular case of young nineties diasporic Timorese. For one thing, youth is itself an ambiguous border zone in which intergenerational tensions of cultural adaptation-resistance are typically played out. Of even greater significance perhaps are the cultural and linguistic differences between nineties youth and the '75' generation of lusophone-oriented diasporic Timorese, the outcome of radical social change and cultural transformation within East Timor between 1975 and 1999. Complicating these intergenerational distinctions are intra-generational differences between nineties Timorese and second-generation Timorese-Australians. The arrival of nineties youth in Australia thus simultaneously expanded and unsettled the cultural dynamics within the diasporic community revealing what Bhabha refers to as the "uncanny of cultural difference":

cultural difference becomes a problem not when you can point to the Hottentot Venus or to the punk whose hair is six feet up in the air; it does not have that kind of fixable visibility. It is as the strangeness of the familiar that it becomes more problematic, both politically and conceptually... when the problem of cultural difference is ourselves-as-others, others-as-ourselves, that borderline. (Bhabha 1989:72)

The issue of authenticity – of being a ‘real’ Timorese – continually surfaced during the fieldwork through everyday negotiations of the singular/plural self. Analytically, these contestations over authenticity may be interpreted in explicitly spatial terms:

The further one moves from the core the less likely one is thought to be capable of fulfilling one’s role as the real self, the real black, Indian, or Asian, the real woman. The search for an identity is...usually a search for that lost, pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic self, often situated within a process of elimination of all that is considered other, superfluous, fake, corrupted, or Westernised. (Trinh 1997:415)

The construction of insider/outsider identities as discrete categories, clothed in the guise of cultural difference, is an arbitrary act that presupposes the discontinuity of space. Yet differences are not only found between insider/outsider constructs but within them (Trinh 1997:418). Cultures, societies and nations do not, in reality, as Gupta and Ferguson have argued (1992:6), exist unproblematically as discontinuous spaces. Culture is not a spatially localised phenomenon. While the space of ‘in between’ may be experienced as phenomenologically real – and it is a recurring motif deployed by diverse groups of young people negotiating the complexities of rapid social and personal change (Butcher 2004) – it cannot be mapped as a fixed site between two discrete locales or positions. Rather, as ‘borderlands’, in between spaces constitute “an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialisation that shapes the identity of the hybridised subject” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:18).

Being “in-between”

The life of a young East Timorese living in Australia, is best described in terms of a conflict. At one end of the spectrum there is the struggle to succeed and fit into the Australian societal structures. It is part of human nature to seek comfort and acceptance in an environment to ensure survival...[but] there is also the need to explore your ancestral routes [sic] to question what it means to be a Timorese. Understanding the historical path which has contributed to your very being is essential in fulfilling a broad comprehension of your own identity, and will aid the search conducted by Timorese of where they fit in the wider Australian society. (Rodrigues n.d.)²

² Rodrigues, S. (n.d.) “‘Juggling Identities’: A Youthful Perspective on the Question of East Timor”. VII Jornadas de Timor da Universidade do Porto.

In a short paper entitled “Juggling Identities”, Sandra Rodrigues writes of the dilemmas of young second-generation Timorese who, like herself, are “caught in the crossroads, juggling the difficulties of which identity to assume” (ie Australian versus Timorese). Taking her circus metaphor further, Rodrigues suggests that reconciling the tension between the desire to belong as a Timorese and the need to “fit in to the society in which [you] live” requires a careful balancing act. Negotiating the articulated poles of Timorese and Australianness therefore means working the borders, not as naturally occurring demarcations but spaces where difference is enunciated, and where there are both collisions and connections (Anzaldúa 1987; Anzaldúa and Hernandez 1996).

Articulations of ‘in betweenness’ are most commonly framed by Timorese themselves, both young and old, in terms of an inter-generational divide. The restrictions and contraventions of parental and communal expectations pervade the narratives of most young Timorese, just as the narratives of older generation Timorese frequently register disapproval over ‘un-Timorese’ behaviour among the young and the corrupting influence of a morally impoverished and self-centred Australian culture. Older generation Timorese often lament the “loss of culture” among the young (*lakon kultura abut*). Young Timorese are criticised for “becoming foreign” (*sira malae oan*), for “forgetting” the struggle, for being apathetic, apolitical, undisciplined, too materialistic.

It is indeed their very resourcefulness and adaptation to the cosmopolitan contexts in which they find themselves that is perceived as problematic. When young Timorese do assert their independence they are frequently chastised for being rebellious and disrespectful; for not spending more time with older relatives at home; for not taking advice and not listening:

There are many fights between the youngsters and the elders. The older generation should accept the changes due to a different culture and society. They should understand that the youth did not ask to be different, it's because they are living in a different society they feel that they are different from the older generation... (Zac, young asylum-seeker, Sydney, in TAC, 1994: 57)

My mum is always comparing me to her, how she used to do all the house duties for her family. Some parents don't realise that if they are too strict on their kids the kids can turn out really bad. Mum has to realise that we are in Australia and I have a mind of my own. (Young person, in TAC, 1994: 46)

I am so confused whether I am Australian or Timorese. I have been here for over 8 years and my family keeps pressuring me that I have an attitude like an Australian when I stand up for myself. I really enjoy the Australian culture, it's like everyone has rights and it's okay to make mistakes. (20-year-old Timorese-Chinese woman, in Chung 1994:40)

While the strictness of older generation Timorese is often cited by young Timorese (both second-generation and nineties arrivals) as a key factor contributing to generational conflict, the social isolation of older generation in diaspora has also been identified as a major impediment to their settlement in Australia (TAC, 1994:44). Negotiating their own culture shock, financial hardship, language difficulties, work pressures or lack of employment skills, older generation Timorese are often ill-equipped to provide adequate support and advice to young people. In contrast, young people's apparent openness to, and expression of, wider cultural influences is often perceived as a threat not only to adult authority, but to familial cohesion. Young women, in particular, express frustration at older relatives' attempts to exercise control over their lives and at expectations that they will conform to "typical Timorese-style" (broadly construed as conservative, Catholic and patriarchal) codes of conduct and dress. Hard-line disciplinary approaches have on occasions driven young women out of home and in extreme cases led to ostracisation by older family members.

At a dinner organised by ETRA in early 1998, I met seventeen year-old Esperanza, a young nineties Timorese who lived with an elderly aunt. She was extremely vivacious and would not stop talking. She had just had her hair cut in a new style and was sashaying around the tables we were laying for dinner, singing pop tunes at the top of her voice. She confided that she had a Greek boyfriend but she couldn't tell her auntie because "she'd go bananas". When I asked if that was because she had a boyfriend or because he was Greek, she cried "Maybe both!" A few months later, I realised I had not seen her at the usual Timorese functions and asked around to see how she was. No-one seemed to know where she was living and no-one had seen her but they'd heard she had

been in big trouble with her auntie. Her relationship with the Greek boy had been discovered and she'd been summarily told to leave:

Esperanza was real cheeky, but she just wanted to have a boyfriend, go out. It was really sad. Tia [Auntie] threw her out, she won't speak [about it], like she don't wanna hear that name. Then it was, like, [Esperanza] *had* to go and live with her boyfriend then 'cos she didn't have no place to go. She done nothing really wrong, but for older Timorese it's like that.

Anabela (25) Sydney

While generational differences clearly do generate specific tensions both within and outside of East Timor, it is misleading to conceptualise youth as a homogeneous category with their own discrete set of interests. The singular focus on intergenerational schisms obscures important axes of difference. The stories told by young diasporic East Timorese show how, in different ways, youth cuts across other identities based on language, education, personal histories and experiences of migration. Each cohort has been socialised in radically different cultural, historical, linguistic and therefore political, contexts. Many young Timorese who have come to Australia since the Dili Massacre in 1991 draw the distinction between themselves as 'nineties' (Indonesian-educated) Timorese, as opposed to 'seventies' Timorese who have either been born or educated in Australia between 1975 and 1991. While some seventies Timorese defer to the 'authenticity' of nineties Timorese experience and acquiesce to a perception of themselves as privileged, even spoilt, others are more defensive. Sensitive to criticisms that place their own Timoresehood in question, some invoke the rhetoric of the moral panic of 'Asianisation':

They look different, wear Indo-clothes...They bum around, they're resentful cos they didn't ask to come here. They're resistant to Australia, to learning English...They don't make an effort to fit into Australian society. It's like in Cabramatta - the Asian crime - they expect to do what they did in their own countries and that people will accept that. The ones who've come out recently feel like they've done their bit [in the struggle]. They get into the freedom of Australia. They've got short-term thinking. They get caught up in crime. They [especially males] resolve conflict by physical violence.

Isobel (21) Sydney

These self-perceived and experienced differences are important. Young nineties Timorese arrived in Australia, a country they perceived as democratic and which

they assumed to be sympathetic to their struggle. They came from places where young people, predominantly high school and university students, led the popular uprisings that gave voice to public dissent. They came from places, like Dili and Baucau, which barely resembled Australian cosmopolitan cities, but which, for them, symbolised nonetheless the urban centres of political struggles. Enthusiastically, they attended their first public demonstrations in Australia, unconstrained by military forces and fear of death, where public protest is actively *assisted* by Australian police. Imagine their confusion and disappointment when only a handful of Australians turn up. Imagine their profound shock at the lack of Australian militancy on the streets – and especially among Australian youth. Suddenly the world is full of competing claims for political and cultural recognition. In the everyday flow of life in Sydney's western suburbs, the Timorese struggle and your own Timorese-ness, are no longer the central focus of public concern. How to reconcile to this dramatic shift in social reality where there is no template for effective action? Where strict parental or adult values and authority may be ineffective, may even be counter-productive?

Within this cultural and physical landscape, young nineties Timorese strove to find some kind of a fit. As migrant bodies 'out-of-place', young Timorese had to learn to negotiate the diverse rhythms and ways of being in a complex world of new social and economic relations, as well as new restrictions and new freedoms. In this endeavour, the social networks they developed were vital to processes of adjustment and to the exploration and accumulation of new identities. Peers frequently assumed more significance than family since they were experiencing similar physical and emotional adjustments. This was especially the case for young newer arrivals cut off from familial support. As young unaccompanied migrants and as asylum-seekers, many young nineties Timorese were dependent upon the support and generosity of 'sponsor families', extended family members and family friends already established in Australia. Stretching resources to accommodate the new arrivals often placed immense strain upon households whose members felt obligated but not always financially or emotionally equipped to support them indefinitely. The obligation to offer hospitality confers honour in East Timor where obligations can be elastic, even limitless and unwillingness to meet obligations can cause shame. The protracted

nature of both the resistance struggle and the processing of asylum seekers' visa applications intensified the tyranny of obligation.

Inter-personal and inter-familial conflicts inevitably erupted and many young people relocated frequently as their quest for asylum in Australia dragged on.

They [the nineties arrivals] were very unsettled; they didn't know what was 'normal'. They'd come from a situation where they were watched by the military. They were living on the edge. That's why the level of domestic violence was so high. They weren't brought up in a normal loving, caring environment. And there was a high degree of mental illness. A few of them got into drugs and ended up in prison. A lot of them hadn't developed a work ethos, that wasn't helped by the Indonesian education system which didn't teach critical thinking. They weren't trained in lateral thinking or problem solving.

Community Leader (mid-forties) Sydney

The uncertainty of their legal fate intensified the sense of liminality for nineties Timorese. Yet all the young Timorese interviewed for this research claimed they would rather live with impermanence in Australia than take the only other option open to them and 'return' to Portugal, the colonial homeland they have never seen and whose language they do not speak:

To go to Portugal, for us it's hard, difficult to learn Portuguese language, and it's far from Timor. In Australia I can work, send money to help my brother [a student in Lisbon]. He has only little money, little food. If they [the courts] say no, can't stay in Australia, I prefer go back to Timor.

Anabela (25) Sydney

It is somewhat ironic that Anabela, an asylum seeker and part-time hotel worker, managed to help subsidise her brother's studies in Europe. She could not pursue her own education in Australia since, without permanent residence, she was classified as an international student and therefore required to pay prohibitively high fees. In Timor, she had aspired to study politics and international relations at university. She sat the entrance exam in Dili in 1991, aged 17-years-old, but did not pass and believes the results were rigged because of her suspected involvement in clandestine activities. Her brother had won a scholarship to Portugal but Anabela and her younger sister, Rosa, were sent to Jakarta in 1993, where they stayed with an uncle for almost a year until arrangements could be

made to send them to Australia. An aunt and uncle in Adelaide raised the AUD 3,000 per head needed to pay for illicit passports and visas. They had agreed to sponsor the girls so they could apply for permanent residency but, on arrival in Sydney, the girls were met by another aunt and uncle who persuaded them to apply for refugee status. With little understanding of English or of the implications of the decision they had followed the advice but, as their apprehension of the legal ramifications grew, they felt betrayed and resentful that they had been poorly advised. As asylum seekers in Australia, Anabela and Rosa could work to supplement the Red Cross payment they were entitled to but employment opportunities were limited and employers were not always willing to take on non-resident workers.

When we lived with Auntie Maria and Uncle Jimmy, it was hard. They're very adapt to Australia, everything's money, money, money. That's the most important. When we came, we young and don't know what to do, don't speak much English. We just cooking and cleaning for them, we couldn't go anywhere. If we go somewhere and we're late, they lock us out. One day, I said, that's it, finished and me and Rosa left there and got our own place. It's really hard sometimes and we have to struggle, but we have to be strong, it's better.

Anabela (25) Sydney

While there was a lot of support politically for the asylum seekers within the Timorese community, one community leader I spoke to in Sydney was privately critical of the “short-sighted” preference of most young asylum-seekers to remain in Australia and not seek residency in Portugal. His response underscores the class/ethnic bias of some older generation, lusophone-oriented Timorese, but it also negatively contrasts a kind of ‘Sylvania Waters’³ Australian materialism with a superior Portuguese intellectualism, besmirching Australia as a ‘soft option’:

Yes, they think they are better off here, for those who don't want to study, maybe, who have no ambitions about the future. They want to go

³ *Sylvania Waters*, a documentary television series which followed the lives of an Australian family, premiered on Australian television in 1992. A 12 part co-production by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the controversial “reality” show focused a national microscope on the values and behaviour of Noeline Baker and Laurie Donaher and their mostly adult children. Noeline and Laurie's unwed status, Noeline's drinking problem, Laurie's racism, their materialism and the family's routine domestic disputes, all became issues discussed widely in the Australian media. The series took its name from the wealthy harbourside suburb in southern Sydney where the Baker/Donaher family lived.

and find work and in a factory and then buy a car on loan, hopefully, buy a house on loan, mortgage their life, for the rest of their lives...many Timorese have these kinds of ambitions. At least a used car has a priority and if they don't have a job, if they don't have anything, that's fine too because the social security system is quite good. They can live well, relatively speaking, without a job. Social security provides them with enough to eat and drink. That does not happen in Portugal because salaries are much lower and the cost of living there's higher than here...In terms of studies, I would say that Portugal would be better, because Portuguese nationality opens up the doors...but what is true is that it's tough. First you have to learn the language and adjust to the education system. They [nineties Timorese] come from a very bad education system in Indonesia.

Community leader (50) Sydney

In fact many young nineties Timorese did aspire to a car and a mortgage in Australia just as many seventies Timorese did but, for the most part, these were not options available to them while their applications for asylum were still pending.

Demonising Indonesianness

If Timorese-ness, as it was being discursively represented and constructed in the diaspora in the late nineties meant explicitly 'Not-Indonesian', then young Bahasa-educated nineties Timorese were ambiguously placed. With the rise in militia activity through 1998-9, there was a growing tendency within East Timor towards a construction of deviant youth that contrasted sharply with that of heroic and patriotic youth. Western media representations of 'youth-as-trouble' began to mimic and reinforce this view. Louise Williams' article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (20/2/99), entitled 'Timor's Lost Generation', reflects this negative representation:

[Timorese youth are] a generation schooled in violence...To their elders this new generation, which has grown up knowing only Indonesian rule, is now rebellious beyond reason, lacking the cultural brakes on violence they might have learnt if their identities as Timorese had been maintained.

Here, young Timorese are monolithically described as deviant, almost alien, occupying a different world to their parents and one in which they have lost access to the resources of Timorese-ness. Indeed many older generation Timorese hold Indonesianisation responsible for what they perceive as increasing legitimacy of violence among the young, contrasting their own childhood

experiences with what they view as a culturally and morally impoverished upbringing under the Indonesian regime. Indeed, Indonesian cultural inferiority is a recurring motif among Timorese both within and outside of East Timor:

Timorese are more cultured than Indonesians. Why should we go back to sitting on the floor and eating with our fingers when the Portuguese taught us to eat with knives and forks?

Madelena (mid-forties) Sydney

The Indonesian mentality is raw, unformed. They're not allowed to think, to work things out... We find ourselves superior to them. They have nothing new to say. We're used to thinking freely. At the university in Indonesia where I studied, there was no initiative... (Justino, in Turner, 1992:182)

The former etiquette of Portuguese culture has been lost. Youth are not exposed to other forms of conduct. They are struggling with oppression, low-quality schooling, a justice system with no credibility...

University lecturer (late thirties) Dili

This is only partly nostalgia for a mythologised past. The speakers are comparing their colonial experiences under Portugal and Indonesia, so that Portuguese colonialism, set against the archetypally brutal Indonesian occupation, emerges as comparatively benign and more cultured. Such comparisons externalise 'the enemy', achieving order in the midst of chaos, delimiting barbarism and distancing 'them' from 'us'. At the same time, they differentiate generational experiences and orientations in a way that denigrates and demoralises the young, placing them in a culturally ambiguous position. It could be argued, however, that survival in Indonesian-occupied East Timor depended on young people's ability to enact a form of cultural mimicry, a crucial practice for those in the clandestine network. Resistance activities at times required a duplicitous engagement with agents of the Indonesian state. Such strategic mimesis exacted a cost:

I had a sense of having two identities. In my heart and soul I will never ever recognise myself as part of Indonesia. But to survive under the Indonesian government and military regime, I had to pretend to be a good Indonesian citizen in my own country. We had no choice.

Doli (24) Sydney

To protect myself and my family, I had to pretend to be loyal to the Indonesian government...I joined the military youth corps. For three years I lived a double life, helping the underground resistance while wearing an army uniform...(Galhos, in ETAN Report 1998)

I did well at high school and wanted to continue my studies at university. There was no university in East Timor [at that time] so I had to go to Java. Before I left, I had to pass a screening or 'loyalty' test conducted by the Indonesian military...While I was at university, I kept asking myself 'for whose sake am I studying?'...I was suffering profound inner conflict and had to do something to resolve it. So in 1990 I began associating with members of RENETIL, the East Timor students' resistance organization. (Barreto Soares, in ETAN Report, 1998)

So “being double” has a distinctly politicised meaning. As I suggested in Chapter Two, their intimacy with Indonesian culture and language enabled Timorese youth to develop a dialogic capacity that mobilised their political agency. While the enactment of double lives constituted a source of internal conflict, it might also then be viewed as a resource.

The politics of language

We're sitting around the table in Tia's small kitchen while she and her friend prepare *katupa* for a community lunch in honour of the Portuguese Ambassador in Sydney. Tia and her friend are speaking in Tetun, the language they are most at home with. Tia also speaks some *Bahasa Indonesia* but her friend, who migrated years earlier than Tia, does not. Their English is limited and I am hobbled by my lack of Tetun. Speaking *Bahasa* would exclude Tia's friend and anyway, there is some discomfort and stigma around the use of *Bahasa* among older generation Timorese. So Josefina and I speak in English, using *Bahasa* only sparingly when an anglo word or phrase eludes her, and she translates back and forth. The two older women are talking about their upbringing in Portuguese Timor. They both speak fluent Portuguese of which I have a rudimentary grasp but with which Josefina, as part of the *Bahasa Indonesia*-speaking generation, is unfamiliar. As we stumble along conversationally in this multilingual microcosm, I am aware that Antonio, who is 9 years old and the only male resident in the household, is skirting the walls studiously pretending to ignore us. Then suddenly:

- *Portuguese is dumb!*
- *Oh? I say, surprised. And what languages do you speak?*
- *English!* He replies emphatically.
- *And Tetun*, Josefina corrects him.
- *Well, that's dumb too!*
- *Hei!* Josefina chides him gently in Tetun, *Ita labele moe ho imi-nia lian* (You shouldn't be ashamed of your language)

Field journal 24/1/98

This brief scenario gives the merest glimpse into the complex world and contested terrain of language, identity and identification in everyday life. The three residents in this household are all 'nineties arrivals' but their subjectivities are differently hybridised and constituted according to the various markers of difference (age, gender, generation, experiences of colonisation and therefore language) and discursive repertoires available to them. Tia privileges Tetun and Portuguese over the politically charged *Bahasa Indonesia*; Antonio rejects Portuguese and Tetun in favour of the apparently superior English; Josefina values Tetun as her first language but in the company of her 'nineties' friends commonly converses in the argot of 'Tetumengbahasa'⁴ – but these acts of agency or 'self-inscription' occur within wider social and cultural fields that include 'othering' practices produced and imposed by dominant cultural discourses, as well as within the local Timorese community itself. Tia's lack of confidence and limited exposure to anglo-speaking contexts mean that Josefina and Antonio must act as cultural and linguistic mediators. Where her tentative interactions in the public sphere (in the street; at the supermarket) and lack of English are met with brusque impatience, even derision, her response is to retreat into the comfort of the Tetun-speaking milieu. For Antonio, formal and informal encounters in the classroom and in the playground and for Josefina at her workplace – a "lolly factory" where she packs boxes – also require the deft negotiation of borders of inclusion and exclusion. Antonio's insistence on English as his preferred language may be due in part to a feeling he cannot yet articulate; that his own and other 'foreign' languages have only limited value in the wider society. For young non-English speaking migrants, economic and social imperatives mean that linguistic code shifting becomes both a requisite and desirable survival skill. English language competency can provide a buffer against racism as well as enabling the successful navigation of diverse

⁴ A linguistic intermixture of Tetun, English and Bahasa Indonesia.

technologies and multicultural environments of western Sydney. In addition, perceived cultural tensions between young seventies and nineties Timorese began to relax once newer arrivals begin to acquire English language skills:

We get on alright because now we talk, they can understand. Because, before, it's hard, you know. Some [seventies] Timorese don't speak Timorese [Tetun], only English...but now it's alright, we talk, they can understand...but before, it's hard.

Paulo (23) Sydney

Of course, skilful code shifting implies so much more than simply acquiring a lexicon and it is as much a requisite competence for migrants as for colonised subjects, as Fanon has argued (1970:14): “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied in that language...[m]astery of language affords remarkable power”. Speaking in language is to grasp a cultural system and to accumulate the shared resource of a specific speech community. The explicit link between language and identity cannot be understated. Language is emblematic of “groupness” (Edwards 1985:7). Invoking the Indonesian proverb *Bahasa menunjukkan bangsa* – ‘language shows us who we are’ – Goenawan Mohammad (1994:14) also reminds us that, whether realised through the medium of speech and/or written form, language also reveals what is valued and what, or who, is neglected and marginalised. Timorese are of necessity “inveterate code-switchers” the result of Timor’s complex anthropology, successive colonisations and since 1975, mass migration (Gunn, reg.easttimor). The unique and peculiar dilemma of nineties Timorese is that they are Indonesian-speakers in a culture whose in-groupness is fractured along linguistic lines. For the generation of Timorese who were educated under Portuguese colonialism, Portuguese language is constituted as a site of resistance and refuge against which Bahasa Indonesia is negatively produced and conflated with Indonesianness. Young people are thus implicated in the activation of a competitive discourse of Timoresehood through the politics of language.

Towards the end of 1998, an intriguing debate on language emerged on the e-forum ‘reg.easttimor’ that illustrated how profoundly language is contested as a location of identity. It began innocently enough when Abé, a young Timorese

activist/poet based in Ontario, Canada, posted the following poem written to commemorate the Dili Massacre:

High on the hills
Under the cloudy sky

The crosses: black and white
Standing firmly

Mesmerizing the melancholic chanting
Of the church hymn,

“TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!
TIMOR, TIERRA DEL SANTA CRUZ!”

The poem provoked an angry response written in Portuguese:

Why this great absurdity? Why use Spanish in a poem about Timor when Spain had nothing to do with the colonisation of Timor Leste? [...] P.S. The Portuguese idiom is the idiom of the revolution. Portuguese is the idiom prohibited by the Indonesian dictatorship!

Abé defended his use of the Spanish “Tierra del Santa Cruz” saying it was “a poetic impulse”. More strategically, he also tried to shift the discursive frame away from the sphere of the national and towards a globalised human rights agenda, re-aligning his own identity with it:

Please don’t get me wrong, I am and will always be an East Timorese nationalist but not a narrow-minded one. I tend to identify myself as a “citizen of the world”.

The exchange generated a frantic volley of postings, written in Portuguese and English, from Timorese respondents in Australia, Canada, Brazil, Italy, New Zealand, Indonesia and the US. While some of the Portuguese-speaking respondents used the forum to express hostility and resentment towards Indonesian-speaking youth, the discussion also provoked serious debate around the respective advantages and disadvantages of Tetun and Portuguese as potential national languages and the urgency of linguistic research and planning for the future. Yet the forum itself was fascinating and addictive as a space in and through which Timorese ‘turf’ was being fought over and fractured

identities revealed. Like many list members of reg.easttimor, I followed the unfolding debates avidly as fiery exchanges that bordered on racialised antagonism flared, simmered and lapsed into temporary silence while key players managed to draw the conversation back to the business of a viable national language policy.

The debate was instructive in its disclosure of the ways in which borders of difference are actively policed and maintained. João Saldanha is a Timorese academic, then in his thirties, who was educated in *Bahasa Indonesia* and subsequently in English as a postgraduate student in the United States.⁵ While he reads and understands Portuguese he is not a confident speaker. In one of his postings on the e-forum, he describes an encounter that illustrates the limits of code switching and the marginalising impact of linguistic border policing at work:

The last time I tried to use Portuguese was in the AIETDs (1995, 1996, and 1997).⁶ Every time speaking, I stared across the isles [sic] other participants were...*rir a minha custa* [laughing at my expense]. Then I realized that my Portuguese was Tetunbahasagues. It was dumb to take three years to realize that but it is never too late to shift gears. So in the last AIETD (October 1998), I shifted to English fully...and add Tetun here and there. Then the laughter was replaced by complaints, *Imi kolia Ingles de'it, agora ita lahatene* [If you only speak English, we can't understand you]. Again I realized, the East Timorese are full of dilemma.

I pursued the issue of language with Abé, the Canada-based activist, via email. Much of his poetry was originally written in *Bahasa Indonesia* and had been subsequently translated into English for the benefit of an English-speaking readership.

I feel very much at home in using *Bahasa Indonesia* to express myself poetically. Yes, it's been part of my life and many other Timorese who have been educated under Indonesian education system. I personally do not want to lose it...For sure you have been told that speaking to Timorese in Bahasa Indonesia is considered as the language of the

⁵ João Mariano Saldanha was at that time Executive Director of the East Timor Study Group (ETSG), a Timorese think tank. He has a PhD in economics and politics from the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California at San Diego.

⁶ The 'All Inclusive East Timorese Dialogues' (AIETD) were held under the auspices of the UN as a forum for discussion and confidence building among leaders from across the spectrum of Timorese political, including pro-autonomy advocates. Delegates from the CNRT were highly critical of the UN 'Talk Fest' format and in 1998 argued for "a true intra-Timorese dialogue [which will] produce palpable results only when it takes place in East Timor and involves the clerical, political hierarchies and traditional authorities among others" (Almeida 1998:5).

oppressor is politically sensitive. I can understand the uncomfortable feelings of some Timorese who have never experienced the Indonesian life style whenever they encounter those who have, using Indonesian as the tool for self-expression. I can understand their worrying East Timorese culture to be gone if more and more young Timorese continue to use Indonesian in their life. I really hope that worries will not transform into a paranoia.

One thing I would like to challenge my Timorese compatriots is that if Indonesian is considered as the language of the oppressor, then let's be fair to treat the Portuguese likewise. I find a little bit strange with my Timorese compatriots overseas who feel so comfortable in using Portuguese as their "adopted" language, but at the same time feel irritated whenever they encounter those other Timorese youths speaking Indonesian. The struggle of Latin American and some African countries is an interesting one to compare. Take Angola, for example. I find it interesting to notice Angolan writers using Portuguese to express the struggle for freedom, yet they maintain their spirit as Angolans...

The point that I would like to make it very clear here is that speaking Portuguese and Indonesian, it does not mean one will be automatically cut off from the spirit of being an East Timorese. Both languages in my view, actually help to introduce to the outside world the heart of the Timorese struggle: the pursuit for peace, justice and freedom...

Email correspondence (3/12/97)

All of the young nineties Timorese interviewed for this research speak and were educated in *Bahasa Indonesia*. The stigmatisation of the Indonesian language and the implication that speaking *Bahasa Indonesia* constituted a form of 'Indonesianisation' and therefore diminished or corrupted young nineties Timorese culturally was a source of frustration and puzzlement for them. As Anabela, a young asylum seeker living in Sydney, argued:

They [older generation Timorese] make us feel bad, like we're not really Timorese or we *bihu* [spies (f)] or something...but we grew up in that language, it's part of us, you can't separate.

She also recognised the strategic potential of code switching: "They don't like when we speak [Indonesian] cos then they can't understand". The ability to switch to Indonesian, while broadly disapproved of, could be a useful distancing strategy and a means of privacy if she and her friends didn't want others to know what they were talking about. Speaking Indonesian could also be a means through which to assert individual autonomy and overtly challenge discriminatory attitudes within the broader community as Maria suggests. Maria is also seeking asylum in Australia. She is the same age as Anabela (25 years) and arrived in Australia around the same time in 1995. Like Anabela and Abé,

who she also knows well, she feels that *Bahasa Indonesia* is an important part of who she is and says she feels empowered by it:

I write poetry in *Bahasa [Indonesia]*, like Abé. It's more strong. Yeah, more force than try to write in English. You know that Xanana poem, 'Timor Woman'? I want to read in *Bahasa [Indonesia]* at the Cultural Festival.⁷

Anabela's earlier reference to being labelled 'un-Timorese' or *bihu* was not an over-reaction on her part. The vexed issue of authenticity – of being a 'real' Timorese – continually surfaced during the fieldwork in both veiled and overt attacks against Timorese perceived as "Indonesianised". In January 1998, I attended a community meeting convened by Ciset⁸ in Croydon where Domingos, a nineties Timorese in his early thirties, talked about an HIV/AIDS project he was involved with which targeted young people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB). Domingos, as a *Bahasa Indonesia* speaker, had been selected as part of a multilingual team to develop a video and resource kit in a number of different languages. He was quizzed closely by other Timorese in the room as to who was funding the project (it was the Australian Commonwealth Government) and whether he was being employed as an Indonesian or a Timorese. As the line of questioning became hostile, the McKillop Sisters who were present tried to steer the discussion in a positive direction but Domingos became increasingly flustered, finally exploding defensively with "You can't call me Indonesian! Look at me [he gestured to his skin] I am a *full-blood* Timorese!" It was a deliberate counter-swipe at his critics whose skin was far lighter than his own. The room fell momentarily silent and the Sisters diplomatically moved to another agenda item.

The cultural politics of Timorese-ness

On 23rd May 1998, the NSW branch of Fretilin hosted a celebration for the East Timorese community at the White Eagle Hall in Cabramatta to commemorate its 24th anniversary. The event featured a theatrical performance, entitled 'Ina Lou'

⁷ Xanana's poem was originally written in Portuguese. Maria planned to translate and perform it in Bahasa Indonesia for a Cultural Festival held at Circular Quay in Sydney in early 1999. In the end, knowing her choice of language would be contentious, she did not proceed with the plan.

⁸ Christians in Solidarity with East Timor was an initiative of the Mary McKillop Sisters in Sydney.

(Dear Mother), which the promotional flyer described as “a play dedicated to all East Timorese mothers and orphans [and] inspired by the death of Isobel Lobato”. Isobel was the wife of Nicholas Lobato, a co-founder of ASDT and a Fretilin Commander and Vice President who had led the East Timorese resistance until his death on 31st December 1978. Isobel had been publicly murdered by the Indonesian military on Dili’s wharf on 7th December 1975. There were so few publicly celebrated East Timorese women so I was curious to find out more about her, what significance she held for East Timorese, and how she was being represented within the narrative of the nation.

By the time we arrived at the White Eagle Community Hall, it was packed out. Young men loitered on the steps outside, smoking and laughing. Inside, the hall was decorated in the familiar Fretilin colours. Long tables in the centre of the room groaned under the weight of home-cooked food prepared and fussed over by Timorese aunties, dressed up in traditional *tais*. Groups of men gathered around the bar chatting and drinking beer while most of the women and children sat around drinking coke. Some of the kids, maybe six and seven years old and dressed in party frocks and bow ties, skipped across the floor stopping briefly to contemplate the images attached to the front of the stage depicting the torture of East Timorese men and women, before skittering off to re-join their playmates.

I sat with Anabela and her friends half-listening to their gossip. It was a favourite topic of conversation: How absurdly strict their older female relatives were and how they tried to cramp their style. This time it was a story about Tia Z; “She expect us to wear dresses down to here [indicating ankle bones] like *she* does!” They’d been horrified when Tia Z had tried to muscle in on a trip they’d planned to ‘Wonderland’, but they’d somehow managed to head her off at the pass. They continued chatting and joking as the drama “Ina Lou” unfolded on the stage before us. It followed a familiar format: Scenes of ‘idyllic’ Timor with women weaving and grinding corn and children playing contentedly nearby. Then there was José, a young nineties Timorese, dressed as a Falintil fighter sitting on a rock, giving a thoughtful soliloquy in Tetum. Then a dramatic explosion of jackbooted, gun toting Indonesian *barit merah* (red berets) onto the stage accompanied by sinister music and then a scene of spectacular confusion as the screaming women and children try unsuccessfully to escape from the *barit merah*, who bludgeon and bayonet the bodies until they fall silent.

I am struck by the surreal dissonance of my surroundings. The young women on my table haven’t skipped a beat and seem blissfully unaffected by the re-enacted horror. They are clearly caught up in more immediate issues, jokes and complaints about boyfriends, treacherous girlfriends and recalcitrant aunties. Because I cannot speak Tetun, I am still trying to make sense of the drama I have just witnessed. I turn to Anabela’s 21-year-old sister Rosa:

- Hey Rosa, tell me about Isobel Lobato. I couldn't work out who she was.
- Isobel who? she answers vaguely, scanning the hall. I'm not sure. Show me. Where is she?
- Rosa! I say with mock disapproval, She's one of your national heroes! She was killed in 1975!
- Oh really? Oh My God! she shrugs by way of an apology and then cracks up laughing at her gaffe.

Field journal 23/5/98



Plate 9. Young Timorese gaze at photos depicting torture at a celebration of Fretilin's 23rd anniversary in May 1998. Photograph taken by Toby Hiscox (aged 12).



Plate 10. Re-enactment of the Indonesian invasion at the celebration of Fretilin's 23rd anniversary in May 1998. Photograph taken by Toby Hiscox (aged 12).

Rosa was born after the invasion, so it's conceivable she really hadn't heard of Isobel Lobato as she later insisted, or perhaps she had forgotten, or perhaps she was feigning ignorance because she thought it was uncool to profess to know such things. But I was reminded of comments made by the young Timorese activist, Bella Galhos, at a conference in Sydney a month before. Bella, then coordinator of the Canada-based organisation ETAN (East Timor Alert Network) had been invited to join a panel on "Women's Struggles" and she had controversially spoken about the need to recover women's voices and experiences within what she saw as a dominant, masculinised discursive order:

I must say that I am inspired by the women who have fought in the past and I definitely want to carry out their struggle. In East Timor, it seems many believe that it's enough for East Timorese women just to be singing, cooking, looking after the family and family values, and cultural, religious and traditional attitudes. Until today it seems like not many East Timorese women have played an important role in our struggle, that many of us can only play a supportive role in our struggle. But as a East Timorese woman, I have so much respect and admiration for those hero women who fought and died for women's right to be recognised in the past, such as Rosa Bonaparte and Maria Gorete... The OMPT [*Organização Popular Mulher de Timor*] is an example of where East Timorese women began to play their part in politics in 1975 but I agree with Dr George Aditjondro⁹ when he reminded us in one of his papers that he can never recall one single anniversary of this organization. Why is that? We do have party for Falintil. We do have a party to remember Fretilin. We do have a party for UDT. But do we have a party for these women who are dying? Have we ever remembered those organizations of women? We claim that we're working side-by-side, men and women working together, but do we allow them really to speak? Sometimes in this movement, often East Timorese women fought with a baby under one arm and a gun in the other so their fellow fighters in the mountains could carry on the struggle. Despite all the difficulties women have gone through and still facing, they are the most excluded group when it comes to decision-making and leadership. It's about time for all of us... to remember those women whose voice are still silent and not represented. I'm not blaming men for this. What I want is for men and women to engage with each other, so we can see the meaning of working side by side is really something, not just empty spaces.

She explained to me later that it was the experience of exile that had made her begin to question aspects of East Timorese political culture and a leadership that seemed to her inaccessible, unrepresentative and resistant to change:

⁹ Dr George Aditjondro, an Australian-based Indonesian academic and journalist who was also present at the conference, has written widely in support of East Timorese independence.

I was really shocked with the Timorese here [in Australia]. Old Timorese men here have old ideas, old party issues. CNRM is more flexible, welcomes everyone to participate and contribute. All the old parties, the leaders are not flexible. It's not a surprise that young Timorese don't want to be involved [in the struggle].

Bella referred to her “defection” to Canada as a defining moment in her life, one both painful and liberating. It was from that moment that she began to develop a strong sense of herself as “a Timorese”. An enthusiastic and ambitious university student, she had been selected to represent Indonesia as a youth ambassador on an exchange program in Canada. Before leaving East Timor, she was subjected to several weeks of interrogation, including the notorious *Litsus* test,¹⁰ and sent to Jakarta for “training”. There, she was placed under intense pressure to act as an Indonesian agent and to engage in propagandist work overseas. Prior to that time, she explained that, despite her own experiences of trauma and loss, she did not fully comprehend what was going on in her country:

You become closer to your issue or your people when you are far away - when you lose them. As someone who grew up under military occupation and faced the system of Indonesianisation, someone who didn't really know our identity as Timorese...coming out to Canada, I've had the opportunity to learn more about myself and to know more about my struggle.

Bella's experience showed that the effects of processes of ‘Indonesianisation’ were both brutal and profoundly subtle, even beyond the level of conscious awareness. Part of the irony of the Indonesian colonial logic, however, was that its very attempts to cultivate East Timorese youth as exemplars of Indonesian nationalism also provided the basis for resistance. As part of a new generation of young, educated, East Timorese, Bella gained access to a world beyond the forced isolation of East Timor. This ultimately enabled her, and many others, to reject the intolerable demands of the Indonesian State.

This raises interesting questions concerning how individual life choices are conditioned. Why, for example, for those like Bella there is a critical point of politicisation while, for others, there is a need to distance themselves from the traumatic past. In Bella's case, the internal conflict that resulted from cumulative loss, post-traumatic stress and the insecurities of exile turned to a rage so

¹⁰ *Litsus*: The *penelitian khusus* (special research) screening test conducted by the Indonesian military. SMA (high school) and other graduates who sought *izin keluar* (exit permit) to attend university outside East Timor were obliged to undertake the test which took about three hours to complete. The investigation aimed to elicit details of personal and familial political affiliations and test loyalty to the Indonesian state.

passionate that she became “a very loud person for my country”. While Bella’s response was to actively engage with the effects of her treatment at the hands of the Indonesian State authorities, there are many young Timorese who chose to distance themselves from the trauma of the past – either their own, or their parents, or both – and who were not willing to engage in public debate in the way that Bella was. Either way, the experience of exile was never conflict-free and many young East Timorese struggled with the pain and personal anguish which results from displacement.

On a practical level, Bella acknowledged that many young Timorese outside East Timor lacked the necessary language and communication skills, as well as educational opportunities, that might enable them to participate more fully in the struggle for East Timorese self-determination. She suggested that, while low levels of fluency in English constituted a barrier to confident public self-expression, it was also the exclusionary practices of solidarity groups that placed limits on the participation of Timorese youth. In her opinion, well-intentioned solidarities often failed to encourage and facilitate Timorese involvement and leadership within their organisations.

Bella again raised the issue of increasing young people’s political capacity in another public forum on “Youth Perspectives” arguing that the range of political identifications and roles currently available to young Timorese were too limiting given the changed, and changing, contexts in which they now lived. In particular, she argued for the need to educate young women politically, in order to equip them for effective participation in formal political processes. She suggested that young women’s reluctance to engage in the political domain was partly due to cultural constraints that placed strict limits on their roles and behaviours. Thus, she called for Timorese leadership in exile to adopt a more flexible and democratic approach that would encourage the active inclusion of all young Timorese in decision-making processes. Her criticisms caused considerable tension among other Timorese participants. In keeping with the general tone of the conference, which took ‘struggle’ and ‘solidarity’ as its twin themes, others had kept the discussion within the frame of the nationalist struggle – in terms of the conflict between a Timorese ‘us’ and an Indonesian ‘them’. Bella, on the other hand, had interpreted the conference brief more

broadly raising questions concerning basic human rights and the democratic management of difference *within* the Timorese broader community. Responding to her comments, Fretilin delegate Harold Moucho, an Australian-educated Timorese then in his early thirties, defended Fretilin as a gender-inclusive party:

In terms of the women's struggle, from the first hour of 1974 and the foundation of Fretilin, there has always been women in the decision-making and leading the struggle...As it is today, we have women that are in the decision-making process within Fretilin and there are also leaders within Fretilin and soon we'll have more women. We don't look at the struggle as being a women's struggle or a men's struggle, we look at the struggle as the people of East Timor struggling for independence. We don't at the moment have the luxury to have a women's struggle, or a men's struggle, or a youth struggle.

Filomena de Almeida, a Portuguese-educated Timorese in her forties and President of NSW Fretilin, spoke of her identity as a Timorese nationalist:

My comment is, when I left East Timor, I was 19-years-old. I was also young, I didn't know anything about East Timor culture, because I was assimilated in Portuguese culture without realising it was a foreign culture. But overseas in Portugal, I learn from my friends from Fretilin how to be a real Timorese. It means that, as Timorese abroad, we have to organise ourselves and learn from each other. It's all right to be independent, not be affiliated with any organization, but if you want to put more input into your struggle, you need to be organised. So that's why I joined Fretilin and I benefit from that. I learned to be Timorese, very nationalist, and it was Fretilin that provided the means to educate me. As a woman, I was free to do whatever I wanted to do...

For a community engaged in unrelenting political struggle, Bella's feminist critique may have almost breached a taboo. Yet, to understand the realities of young Timorese lives we need to bring into focus, not only the complex relations of power that potentially disempower young women and men, but also the social relations that cut across those divisions in surprising ways, to reveal commonalities. For example, although their experiences were shaped by different historical and political contexts some twenty years apart, Bella and Filomena identified similar processes of having to unravel and dismantle their colonized Indonesian and Portuguese selves and of having to resituate themselves as Timorese in a different context.

Closeness, distance and the weight of being Timorese

The immensity of a highly politicised Timorese identity, often framed by young Timorese themselves in terms of an embodied 'weight', and the viscerally deep,

occasionally overwhelming, sense of moral responsibility described by many young diasporic Timorese, recalls Ruth Behar's despair, as a second-generation Cuban migrant in the United States, over

the enormous sorrow of being countryless, the enormous rage of being countryless. And I also experience the other side of this: the enormous rage of having nothing but patria, nothing but fatherland – or death, patria ou muerte, the nationalist Cuban credo. (Behar 1996:142)

The sense of being engulfed by identity and nation was powerfully expressed by twenty six year-old activist, Bella Galhos:

As an East Timorese [in exile] you want to carry on the struggle so badly...[but] sometimes I feel like I'm breathing East Timor, sleeping East Timor, eating East Timor...and somehow you come to a point where you're completely burned out...

Bella (26) Sydney

Of all the young Timorese I spoke to, Isobel was the most critical of what she saw as a very narrow world of Timorese culture and of political activism. Born in Sydney, she defines herself unproblematically as “Timorese-Australian” referring to herself as “cosmo” [-politan] and acknowledges that she is fortunate because, as refugees, “mum and dad's generation did all the changing”. As the child of politically active parents, she grew up having to share them with the struggle and as a result she has very mixed feelings:

I spent so much time, as a child, waiting around at meetings and not having a 'normal' life. Lots of us did. There was this stream of visitors in and out of our house. I resent the fact that there was no time left for family after activism but I admire them too. I feel guilty for even saying that.

Yet for Isobel, with her body piercings and tattoos, that social and political world became too close for comfort. As a child, she had dutifully replicated the dance steps taught to her by older women and had performed *tebedai* wearing the traditional *tais* (woven cloth) at multicultural festivals. “I started dancing when I was about four or five. I don't remember being taught, I just knew.” By age sixteen, the “hot, thick *tais*” had become almost unbearably confining. “I did my bit”, she says dryly, but in her own personal quest for independence she has put the past firmly behind her and finds it hard to understand why others cannot,

or will not. She is dismissive, for example, of nineties Timorese who dwelt upon the trauma of the past.

After Isobel's parents separated, Isobel was estranged from her father for a number of years. In an attempt at a rapprochement with her father and to resolve some of her mixed feelings, she moved to Melbourne where he lived and stayed in his house for a few months. Disappointingly for Isobel, her father's life and household were still dominated by the struggle:

At weekends you get up in the morning, hair everywhere, and there are all these strangers around. And you think, who the hell is this? It's like you're public property. Your house is somewhere *other* people feel comfortable. Dad comes home and almost passes out every night. People don't see what it does to him.

At times, Isobel's disapproval of those who monopolise her father's time almost borders on contempt. Her response has been to eschew any involvement in her father's political life. She stubbornly resists her father's requests for help at the community centre where he and other activists work: "I despise the place and anyway, he spends enough time there for both of us." While her judgements are harsh, her story is compelling because of her brave but futile attempts to reclaim the home-space her father represents. She knows she can be demanding and that her "tantrums" and pleas for attention make him feel conflicted. Yet she also knows that the struggle must always take precedence and that this is the inevitable choice that activist parents must make. Gillian Slovo, daughter of African National Congress (ANC) activists Joe Slovo and Ruth First, has written of the impact of their political involvement on herself and her sisters as children (1997:98):

We were brought up in a political culture which used self-sacrifice as its fuel. It never went away, this conflict between the demands of the 'one' and the needs of the 'whole'. Our parents were rebels, they saw a wrong and they fought to make it right. To do that they had to turn away from the subjective. Their eyes were on a greater prize than self – they were fighting for humanity.

Isobel's response was to engage in acts of rebellion, like not "doing the typical migrant thing of going to uni", getting eyebrow rings and tattoos, as well as

engaging in potentially self-harming behaviour; “I got them back on New Years’ eve by taking all this ecstasy”. Yet defining herself in terms of opposing the political struggle meant that she could never quite escape it.

Many young nineties arrivals articulated a sense of being “closer to the struggle” than diasporic Timorese youth who were born and/or socialised in Australia and that, as such, they not only provided a vital link between home and diaspora but that they actively embodied it. Recalling traumatic events, for example, scars on the body may be used to endorse privately disclosed life stories. The physical body itself then becomes a site of remembrance whose authority cannot be refuted. Among nineties Timorese youth who have been politically active in the diaspora and who continue to be involved in campaign work, there is also a sense of frustration with Timorese youth who have chosen to distance themselves from the struggle, that “they do not know real hardship and suffering”. And just as Indonesianisation is conflated with youthful impulsiveness and violence, so political passivity is seen as a consequence of Australianisation, not only by the older generation but by some nineties Timorese:

Young Timorese in Australia are very passive...I told people there, I'm not coming to look for a better life but to stop the bloodbath...

Maubere Moko (29) London

For Bella Galhos, the passivity and disinterest of Timorese youth in Australia is partly a consequence of Australianisation and partly of the infantilisation of young people by Timorese leadership:

I just went to a Timorese party and it's completely Australianised! Some of them were my old friends and they can't even talk to me. This is Australianised, westernised... Here in exile, people forget we're supposed to be the voice of the voiceless. Youth participation in the struggle is just demonstrating, dancing, singing. Their role is so little, being angry and screaming at demonstrations. [They] need to put anger into action. It's like you have no brain, get all the youth together for screaming or dancing – leadership says, “they're not ready yet” [for more important roles]. But when?

Yet for some young nineties Timorese, exile brought a radical depoliticisation and a sense of paralysis. As a survivor of the Dili Massacre, Anabela suffered chronic traumatisation which rendered her ‘voiceless’:

In her small apartment in western Sydney, Anabela shows me some grainy black and white photos of the demonstration that preceded the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991. It’s hard to distinguish but if you look closely you can see Anabela’s face in the crowd. She looks excited and very, very young. She talks about the trauma counselling she had after the massacre from a traditional healer in Dili. The bullet that grazed her killed her friend Eulalia. She told me:

They started shooting, oh my god, people falling on the floor. That’s why I got this [points to the scar above her eyelid] I saw my best friend die. She was 15 years-old. She go “Muuuummm!” And I turned and [the bullet] hit me, then her...I totally changed my mind after 91. When I came here I was more traumatised than Rosa. You know Milena? She used to interpret for me in counselling at Fairfield. I couldn’t speak for a long time. I could have been involved in Timorese demonstration here but it was too hard. People judge you, but I just needed to forget.

Field journal, 22/1/99

Many young nineties Timorese refer to their own lives in the diaspora in terms of ‘struggle’ and ‘sacrifice’:

I do not feel psychologically free...I realise life is a struggle and that we must face and fight for our lives wherever we are. We must be courageous and suppress our feelings in order to keep going.

Doli (25) Sydney

At the same time, they characteristically subordinate their own personal suffering and sacrifice to the trauma experienced by those ‘at home’:

Psychologically it’s awful because we’re a long way from our families...but it’s not as bad for us as for those in Timor. Sometimes we feel guilty living [in diaspora] we can go to movies, we are free...

Dino (late twenties) Dublin

Young Timorese have to think about [the struggle] in general, not personal terms. If we compare our plight [in diaspora] with Timorese in Timor, especially Falintil, we have a different situation. They face the enemy. For us it’s psychological pressure. It’s different for exiles since ‘75. They have become more assimilated.

Kupa (late twenties) London

As I have argued elsewhere (Crockford 2000), there is a discernable ‘hierarchy of suffering’ here which would seem to be integral to the construction of Timorese identity. Prior to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, there was little sense of a collective East Timorese identity. If it is true that the invasion served as a defining moment in the development of East Timorese self-consciousness, when the people of East Timor began to recognise themselves as a true collectivity, united by the shared experience of their traumatic confrontation with Indonesia, then being a ‘real’ Timorese must partly be predicated on ‘suffering’. This suffering is not just hierarchised, but spatialised in such a way that it must be continually reinscribed in diaspora as a necessary condition of exile, with the notion of ‘homeland’ as an abiding destiny.

The weight of a political culture in which self-sacrifice prevailed and in which personal needs were over-ridden by the needs of the ‘whole’ impacted to a greater or lesser extent on all young Timorese, whether they formally engaged in political activism or chose to distance themselves from it. For young Timorese who have grown up in Australia there is often a deep sense of responsibility for these unexperienced events:

[my family have] continuously reminded me of the suffering of my people, reminded me of my identity, and to take full advantage of the opportunities offered here in Australia, so that one day I can return and help build East Timor. (Maria Teresa Santos 1996:25)

The recurring motif of moral obligation figures centrally in East Timorese identity narratives and this theme is taken up in the following chapter. While young nineties Timorese grappled with the generalised chaos of life in urban Sydney and processes of youthful exploration and fitting into new social networks, the inevitable pull of the struggle for independence compelled many to engage in periodic public performances of political practice. In understanding the political agency of East Timorese youth, it is important to recognise that agency is not simply a question of deciding to act or not act. For young nineties Timorese there was no simple demarcation between being political and de-politicised. As Feldman observes (1991:1) political agency has

no fixed ground – it is the effect of situated practices. Agency is predicated on self-reflexive, interpretive framings of power which are embedded not only in language but in relational sequences of action...The cultural construction of the

political subject is tied to the cultural construction of history. This intersection results in political agency as an embodied force.

Thrust into a new social environment, embodied behaviours learned in East Timor are not simply reproduced but enacted strategically. Political agency is thus mediated by shifting possibilities and constraints of social life.

Discussion

As part of the *Gerasaun Foun*, brought up and educated during the military occupation of East Timor, young nineties Timorese arrivals embodied both authentic experience and cultural difference. The embodied dispositions of young nineties Timorese, the way they moved, spoke and engaged in the world, revealed a rupture between conceptions of Timoresehood in Australia and Timoresehood in East Timor. This rupture underscores the notion that social being is both spatially and temporally constituted (Heidegger 1962). The identities of Timorese, both in East Timor and in exile, are continually infused with new meaning and are subject to transformations within shifting cultural and environmental contexts. The intense dynamics at play in the constitution of East Timoresehood within the diasporic community have revealed the strangeness of the familiar, cultural discontinuities and frictions (Clifford 1988; Bhabha 1989; Trinh 1997).

The chapter has explored how processes of identity creation for young Timorese involved the negotiation of significant tensions of difference. I have argued that young diasporic Timorese differentially placed themselves, and were placed, in relation to an authentic and highly politicised Timorese 'core' identity and that both 'Australianisation' and 'Indonesianisation' were variously deployed as signifiers of inauthenticity. As much as young people are popularly imagined and represented as somehow deviant, or merely frivolous and uniformly won over by superficial trappings of 'western culture', it is important to recognise that they engage in strategies of identity that make use of a range of cultural resources, both established and new. Such strategies are multiple and not mutually exclusive, involving "pragmatically slippery" acts of reduction, accretion and division in the formation of complexly hybridised identities (Noble and Tabar 2002:130-131).

Clearly, the multiplicity of situated subjectivities produced among East Timorese in the diaspora were in frequent collision with the dominant discursive construction of an imagined East Timoresehood that rests on the discourse of authenticity. Within such a dominant discourse, tradition and modernity are polarized, the latter conceptualised as a corrupting force. Where culture is publicly deployed as a trope to signify a difference that is fixed and immobilised, the ‘appearance’ of hybridity, understood as cultural fusion, may be condemned as fake and a dilution of the ‘real’. Failure to measure up to an ‘authentic self’ may result in a cognitive dissonance, the feeling of being “[n]ot quite the same, not quite other” (Trinh 1997:418). This underscores the argument that ethnicities are produced through the dialectical engagement of publicly enunciated, dominant discourses that reify and essentialise culture and the everyday demotic discourses of face-to-face communities that decentre and dissolve the myth of an essential core identity (Baumann 1996). While demotic discourses (enunciated from ‘below’) unsettle the dominant discourses of power (enunciated from ‘above’), it is crucial to recognise that they are not epistemologically opposed. The two are always co-present and in tension and are a crucial dynamic in processes of cultural change.

In the following chapter, I consider the ways in which young nineties Timorese sought to reconcile their experiences of difference and cultural disjuncture, both in relation to the Timorese community and mainstream society, through reification processes that specified an authentic and emblematic Timoresehood. I explore their engagement in communal acts of public protest and testimonial as a means to both alleviate the disjuncture of cultural change and fulfil social obligations.

Chapter Five

Performing Timorese-ness in Diaspora:

'Singing in the Multitude'

This chapter explores ‘strategies of intensification’ deployed by young nineties Timorese as a means to negotiate the highly conflictual space of Timorese nationalist politics and its demand for allegiance, as well as mitigate intracommunal frictions. It considers various ways in which they at times sought to incorporate a politicised or nationalist identity, enacted within the public sphere, into their repertoires of belonging in order to satisfy the need for “a point of comfort” during a period of intense personal and social transformation (cf Butcher 2004). Through their participation in ritualised communal acts of politicised re-memory, recovery and reconstruction, young Timorese were thus implicated in the creation of a ‘symbolic moral economy’ in exile (cf Wise 2002) through which they interconnected transnationally with communities of religious and political solidarity. These public rituals, largely orchestrated by leaders of the 1975 generation of lusophone-oriented Timorese, enabled the performance of diasporic unity which temporarily withheld articulations of difference.

Building on the notion of guilt and obligation as a social phenomenon among migrant communities (Hage 2002:201) and an understanding of diasporas as exemplary *communities of co-responsibility* (Werbner 1998:12), I suggest that the magnitude of trauma attached to East Timorese dislocation resulted in acute forms of ‘survivor guilt’ among Timorese refugees which intensified the sense of social indebtedness to and responsibility for events and people in the homeland. Strategies of intensification are ways of affectively and socially maintaining a visceral sense of connection to people and place and of implicating oneself in a remote social reality. This chapter examines one such strategy, the dramaturgical use of testimony, as a self-affirming and identity-validating practice that relies upon the complex interplay between individual and collective memory. I draw from examples of political protest and poetic, theatrical and musical testimony to show how young nineties Timorese sought to implicate themselves, in various ways and with greater or lesser degrees of intensity, in the social reality of East Timor and the struggle for independence. Through the performance of these various forms of testimony, these young people acquired a presence within the diasporic public sphere, and achieved recognition and legitimacy within broader spheres of influence. The examples in this chapter reveal that their performances were not simply re-enactments of

‘authentic’ Timorese: they also illustrate the creative potential of young Timorese lives and ‘culture-in-the-making’.

Protest, religion & ritual noise

In Chapter One, I suggested that the transformative power of war and the silencing of those within East Timor (the ‘inside waiters’) placed a moral imperative upon those outside East Timor (the ‘outside wanderers’), to testify to the tyranny of Indonesian occupation and to become the ‘voice of the voiceless’; the conduit through which East Timor’s epic tale would be told. In her compelling collection of Timorese testimonies, Michelle Turner (1992) invoked the Mambai cosmological reference to ‘speaking mouths’ to describe the moral obligation of diasporic Timorese, as well as those in communities of solidarity, to speak for the dead and the suffering (‘the silent mouths’). Here, I suggest that Timorese testimonies mimic the Mambai cosmological imperative that required ‘speaking mouths’ (humanity) to acknowledge and make restitution for the sacrifices made by the ‘silent mouths’ (the environment) by engaging in ‘ritual noise’ (Traube 1986). I use this term as a metaphor for the practices of public protest into which young diasporic Timorese were able to channel their energies and embody the spirit of resistance. As young Timorese activist Bella Galhos told a conference audience in Sydney in 1998 “because of the anger I have inside me, I turned out to be a very loud person for my country.” Many of her compatriots did likewise through public protest and formal testimonials; others used the creative arts – poetry, art, theatre, dance and music – as forms of testimony and political action. Their noisy presentations, made to the gods of the world’s most powerful nations, echoed the highly complex multimedia display of Mambai rituals and performance which involved “words, acts, objects and places as well as percussive music” (Traube 1986:16).

For Mambai, ceremonial clamour enabled the merging of humans, as unique noise makers, with the wordless natural world. It was a means by which human beings might offer a gift as restitution to the cosmos, in exchange for life. Percussive instruments and ‘ritual noise’, as Traube suggests (1986:17), have long been used to forge links between the social, natural and supernatural worlds across cultures and belief systems; she invokes the biblical reference (Psalm 97:4-9) in which man and nature together “make a joyful noise” before the

Lord.¹ The quest for exchange and intimacy with the cosmos resonates with the clamour of exilic Timorese protest, although these were not uniformly joyful. Public performances and community events in the diaspora were often symbolically and emotionally charged. Demonstrations and commemorations marking evocative dates in Timor's recent history routinely reinscribed a collective trauma and memory in explicitly painful terms; grief, loss, the pain of dislocation and of remembering. They were frequently suffused with religious imagery – the sacrificial form of Christ; bleeding doves; the martyrdom of youth, of a people and of a country.

Political demonstrations were variously accompanied by choral repertoires of Timorese nationalist and protest songs, and by stately processions of women in traditional dress dancing to the beat of sacred drums and gongs, as well as the more conventional protest modes of slogan chanting, speech making and flag waving. Busloads of Timorese would annually converge on Canberra to demonstrate outside the Indonesian Embassy. Many young Timorese in their teens and early twenties had made these journeys with friends and families for as long as they could remember. There was an annual pilgrimage to Canberra, for example, on December 7th to mark the anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. In 1998, the gathering outside the Indonesian embassy was unusually small and there were no Timorese women present, just a group of perhaps twenty young Timorese men. Some had come down from Sydney, but others had driven all night from Melbourne so they'd had virtually no sleep and were running on adrenaline. Leaping up and down, draped in *tais* and Fretilin flags, and ululating wildly, they hurled themselves across the road towards police guards and charged the cars and personnel who entered the embassy gates. It was a vibrant (or provocative) display of youthful masculinity (or aggression), depending on your point of view, which stopped short of actual confrontation or breaking the law. The calendrical cycle of events also included demonstrations against East Timor's integration into the Republic of Indonesia on July 28th and the memorialisation of the Dili Massacre on November 12th. Typically these occasions drew upon the support of various local and interstate

¹ Cf also Psalm 159:3-6: "Praise him with harp and lyre, praise him with tambourines and dancing, praise him with strings and pipes, praise him with the clamour of cymbals, praise him with triumphant cymbals. Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh. Allelujah!" Yet as Le

solidarity groups, and included speeches from Fretilin and CNRT leaders, as well as representatives of the Catholic Church. Such public rituals imposed a temporal rhythm on the indeterminacy of Timorese lives. Yet these rituals of remembrance were more than simple acts of commemoration: their performance symbolically collapsed the temporal dimensions of past, present and future, enabling participants to share in the *illusio* (Bourdieu 1990) of affective connection across time and space.

As Wise has argued (2003:154), through the use of Catholic ritual, devotion and iconography in various forms of protest, East Timorese in exile deployed strategies of *affective intensification* which created “an incredible affective pull into a sympathetic community of struggle, the Timorese community of suffering”. In her analysis of the role of trauma and affect in the formation of diasporic Timorese identities following independence, Wise draws from Hage’s work on homesickness and nostalgia among Lebanese migrants (2002: 192-205), in which he argues that migration is a fundamentally ‘guilt-inducing’ process. For Hage, this process may be understood through the anthropological theorisation of gift exchange: through the gift of life, we accrue a state of indebtedness which may be expressed religiously, (as in Mambai cosmological notions of obligatory ritual noise, for example), or socially, expressed through obligation to a communal entity such as the family or the nation. Migration constitutes a profound breach of reciprocal responsibility, however involuntary, and the sense of guilt attached to that breach is greatly intensified for migrants whose homeland is in crisis, hence the activation of desire to be implicated, through strategies of intensification, in the reality of homeland.

In the same volume, El-Zein also makes the point that a sense of ambiguous belonging and ‘betrayal’ may be exacerbated by too close an identification with the host country (2002:230-1):

if we resist a place, refusing to let it define our identity and become part of us, even as it opens its arms for us, we feel - rightly or wrongly – that this unevenness is a threat to our older allegiances. Belonging, as much as it is voluntary, becomes a form of betrayal... Do not migrants remain outsiders forever? Do they not turn themselves into second-degree citizens? Do they not end up in an impasse if they lack the

Gall (2000:66) points out the psalms “express to God the full range of human feelings when “touched” by misfortune or happiness, persecution, fear or tenderness.”

courage to return? And what about the debts they owe to their native lands?

For refugees who are forcibly displaced from their homelands, the sense of betrayal is intensified by the very act of survival (Raymond-Yacoub 1997). Survivors of trauma and torture can often feel an overwhelming responsibility for the fate of those who did not survive and the fact that they themselves live in a relatively safe and secure environment while others remain exposed to danger and extreme hardship. The burden of ‘survivor guilt’ is frequently expressed in sustained efforts to evoke traumatic memory and in the insistence on the accountability of the present to the past and responsibility of the living to the dead. As Wise argues in the case of East Timorese survivors (2003:155), the sensory experience of ritualised Catholic devotions provided the means through which individuals could share the sacrifice and suffering of others in an embodied way, but also in the supreme sacrifice of Christ:

The once isolating rupture of unruly pain and emotion associated with individual trauma is made meaningful through sympathetic identification with the suffering of Christ. It in turn becomes channelled into the warmth of a moral community of suffering (cf: Werbner 1997), and offers a sense of martyrdom in the name of the struggle, thus giving a sense of repaying that enormous debt, owed to the homeland.

Indeed, the embodied practice of both religious devotions and ritualised protest affectively narrows the space between the self and a transcendent community, implicating the participant in the collective quest for the moral restitution of East Timor’s sovereignty. At the same time, the eschatological promise of redemption is brought into play through the collapsing of the logic of time, bringing the past into the present and anticipating the future. Through the constant renewal and remembrance of Christ’s/East Timor’s sacrifice, whether through the act of communion or signified mnemonically in acts of protest and re-memory, worshippers/protesters are importantly implicated as proxy witnesses to the testimonies of the dead and the disappeared and the silenced:

When partaking of the eucharist, Christians become contemporaries of the crucifixion in the present of the Church, according to a ritual that will last “until he [the Lord] comes (1 Cor 11:26).” (Le Gall 2000:46)

Through acts of public testimony and the continual replaying of pain and suffering, diasporic Timorese enacted continuities across space and time,

connecting histories, biographies and topographies, and simultaneously giving evidence and bearing witness (cf. Perera 2004).

Testimony and the plural self

There is, as anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1997:95) suggests, a significant tradition of testimonial or *testimonio* as a “narrative form and political weapon” among oppressed people:

The testimonial is “a life told to a journalist or anthropologist for political reasons” [McClintock 1991:223], and its defining feature is that it has “an implied and often explicit ‘plural subject’, rather than the singular subject we associate with traditional autobiography” [Sommer 1988:107-130].

Therein lies testimony’s transgressive power. For McClintock (1991:220), testimony blurs the biographical, autobiographical and oral history in which “the single identity of the speaking self splinters into a multiple fluidity of identification”. Testimony is therefore a paradoxical narrative, “heteroglossic” in nature and is “not so much...a perfect record of past, as a fabulated strategy for community survival” (McClintock 1991:222). For Audre Lorde (1983), the life story delivered as testimonial constitutes “biomythology” which refuses the “single, authoritative, engendering voice” of autobiography.

African American writer, Natasha Tarpley (1995:2-3) has also written eloquently of the power of inscription that testimony brings for those who have experienced and inherited multiple and traumatic displacements as a result of colonisation and slavery. She argues that the articulation and performance of testimony has both metaphysical and ontological power in that it re-integrates the breached world of the displaced, reconciling space and form, and anchoring the ephemeral:

While the stories we tell are important, it is the act of telling and of hearing them told that sets us free... Testimony from the verb to testify: to bear witness, to bring forth, to claim and proclaim oneself as an intrinsic part of the world...[offered] a means by which the slave could make herself visible, in a society which had rendered her invisible; by which he could explore the sound of his own voice when he had been rendered silent...[it was] a way to define and redefine one’s humanity; to ground oneself in community...[it] helped to fill in the frame of the body, that gave it weight enough to anchor itself to the earth, instead of floating, a thin and airy shadow, above it.

The work of testimony, as Tarpley explains it, is a self-affirming and identity-validating practice that relies upon the interplay between individual and collective memory. This is a dialogic act of telling and being heard which is not open to individual interpretation or confession, but authorised by a ‘community of listeners’ and which therefore cannot be understood out of relation to communities (McClintock 1991; Antze & Lambek 1996; Wise 2003:159). Acts of testimony are thus a matter of both internal liberation and an attempt to bridge the ‘radical gap’ that separates survivors of terror and persecution from the external world – a world so entirely dissembled by human to human cruelty. Testimony spoken publicly is a sound that disrupts the silencing practices of oppression and terror. It is inherently subversive and therefore risky. Testimonies performed for the stranger court rejection, disapproval and retribution, but they are part of an urgent and often compulsive quest for recognition as Primo Levi (2000:6) has written in the context of the Nazi death camps:

The need to tell our story to “the rest”, to make “the rest” participate in it, had taken on for us, before liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs.

This phenomenon was, according to Australian journalist and veteran East Timor commentator John Pilger (1998:160-1) “suffered *en masse* by the East Timorese, especially in exiled communities. ‘Who knows about our country?’ they ask constantly. ‘Who can imagine the enormity of what has happened to us?’” In the quest for public recognition and solidarity, testimonial constituted a powerful means of communicating the tyranny of life under Indonesian occupation to western audiences. It offered a means through which strangers to such experience might apprehend an otherwise abstract, immense, horrific and incomprehensible knowledge and through which they were invited into an intimacy with the world beyond the narrator; a world that had been so entirely dissembled by human cruelty.

Re-memory or re-description is thus a supremely political act for it demands action and justice. The writer Salman Rushdie acknowledges this in his essay ‘Imaginary Homelands’ (1991:14): “re-describing a world”, he says, “is the first step to changing it”. Milan Kundera’s observation (1978:4) that “the struggle of

man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” is salutary. In countries like East Timor where people are placed under strict surveillance behind sealed borders, memory is a subversive weapon. Technologies of terror are used to blunt its potency and prevent its articulation (see Aditjondro 2000:158-188). Precisely because description constitutes such a challenge to the nature of an official and dominant reality, those who take on the mantle of witness do so at great risk to themselves, their families and friends. While the relative safety of exile opens up a space of possibility in which the unspeakable may be voiced, many were unwilling to testify lest their actions rebounded savagely on relatives and comrades at home. State intimidation it seems has no respect for borders.

Throughout the period of fieldwork, I both heard and read countless testimonials of the nightmare scenarios privately and publicly recounted by young nineties Timorese. They all had a depressingly familiar ring. In this respect, to relate one story is to tell them all and this, in fact, is what some people do.² In the context of the East Timorese struggle, stories of the Self were subordinated to the epic tale of the Nation. As such, narrators might reiterate others’ tales as their own. Conversely, they might tell their own in the guise of others. What is important is that these stories of ‘home’ reinscribed a collective trauma and memory upon young East Timorese lives and identities, both within and outside of East Timor.

Yet to continually revisit the sickening reality of human suffering, particularly of one’s own people, can be difficult, depressing and often emotionally exhausting work as Abé Barreto Soares disclosed:

Talking about human rights abuse in East Timor is like pulling a scab off an old wound. For any East Timorese like me who experienced the brutal invasion and occupation of their country by the Indonesian military, it is hard to make a decision between speaking out or not speaking out about human rights abuse in East Timor...

Email correspondence (April 1998)

² In November 1998, I attended the first East Timorese women’s conference in Dili with about 150 women many of whom had travelled from the districts. At question time, scores of women formed a long queue and began to meticulously give their testimonies of personal suffering one by one. Their stories were almost exactly the same and followed a very specific narrative pattern. It was a genre I recognised from the testimonials that ETRA was compiling in Sydney intended for publication. A few of the more educated and politically sophisticated presenters became impatient with the departure from formal conference protocol. Yet the gravitas and dignity of this ritualized collective narration had a deeply religious and mesmeric quality.

Then why choose to continually relive the traumatic past if remembering is so painful? Elie Wiesel addressed the question in his 1986 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Referring to the Nazi Holocaust he answered:

if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices...and that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation...We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormenting, never the tormented.

In his own response to the issue, Abé quoted the Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran:

*"I love freedom and my love for
True freedom grew with my growing knowledge
Of the people's surrender to slavery and oppression and tyranny"*

Like [Gibran], I too am touched by people's need. I cannot sit on the fence and watch them suffer. I have to do whatever I can...Although exile is very painful...I realize I am in an extraordinarily privileged position for unlike my colleagues in Indonesia and East Timor, I can now work for the future of my country without the fear of being arrested or imprisoned, without the fear of 'disappearing'. It is urgent for the East Timorese that we have people outside who are prepared to speak on behalf of all of those who cannot speak for themselves back in East Timor. The message of [the massacre at] Santa Cruz cemetery is that anyone who dares to resist the Indonesian occupation of my country, anyone who dares to protest, anyone who dares to cry out to the rest of the world from inside East Timor, will be killed. It is a monumental price for any nation to have to pay for its right to self-determination.

Email correspondence (April 1998)

In a later exchange, we discussed a poem Abé had written, entitled 'Your Grief' (Barreto Soares, 1996:25), in which he explicitly reveals his desire to keep the pain of East Timor alive:

I can't, I can't
let your grief
be buried alive
That way, my dear Timor

I like, I like
digging up your grief
Let me do it, okay!

I like, I like
ornamenting it
on the wall
of this old building
again
Let me do it, okay!

I was intrigued by the confession. It was the first time I had heard anyone openly express the need to testify to East Timor's tragedy in terms of desire, rather than moral responsibility. In response, Abé wrote:

As a poet I will feel very sad if the pain of East Timor is not 'celebrated'. It is a precious thing. I mean, if it is not remembered, recorded and ornamented, then what is the use of me claiming as the child (the son) of that mother called Timor Lorosae? It is part of me. It has to be dug up. It has to be told in stories, songs, poetry... It will be a 'collective memory' of East Timorese being passed from generation to generation. I cannot afford to let it 'go with the wind'. I use the image of 'old building' to illustrate the sense of history...

Email correspondence (January 1999)

I realised then that this was both a poem about love and a poem of, in Wole Soyinka's phrase (1975), 'indictment'. The tenderness with which such a painful history is thus poetically apprehended constitutes, perhaps, a deeply political act.

Poetic testimony: *I am the one singing in the multitude*

Edward Hirsch (1999:194) has written of the poet's role and responsibility to testify that "[t]here is a terrible splendour imposed on the poet who says 'I can describe this'". He cites, for example, the Russian poet Anna Achmatova: "*I stand as witness to the common lot, survivor of that time, that place*" and Argentinian poet, Juan Gelman, who wrote for those who were killed and disappeared in Argentina's "Dirty War": "*I have laid them out in my memory / to keep on searching for the light*". The poetic voice, says Hirsch (1996:6), has the ability to link abstract experience to the reader's own interior: "You are reading poetry – I mean really reading it – when you feel its seismic vibrations – the sounding of your depths". The oceanic quality of a poem is possible because poems are not just about words, nor even the emotions they inspire, but because they evoke an 'affective connection'. They are waves of communication that convey the rawness and subtleties of human experience between strangers. In this sense, poetry is a relation, an invitation into intimacy with the author and their subject.

Poetic communiqués are fragile – poets send words out into the world as a 'message in a bottle', to use Hirsch's metaphor, and they can only hope their dispatches will be stumbled upon; will be 'seen' and 'heard' and may resonate with those who encounter them. There is no guarantee. The nineteenth-century

Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa made the point succinctly: *Songs of the Portuguese / Are like ships on the sea / They come from one soul to another / At risk of being shipwrecked* (in Hyland 1996:230). Poetry must ultimately appeal to the basic humanity in us, to the genuine capacity of humans to share the joys and sorrows of others. The point is, says Hirsch, that poetry is ‘transformative’.

In September 1997, I purchased a small manila-covered volume of poetry from a stall run by ETRA at an East Timorese art exhibition outside the School of Art in Canberra. The collection of poems, entitled *Come with me, Singing in a Choir*, was written by the young poet in exile, Abé Barreto Soares, resident in Canada since 1991. Abé had arrived in Canada in September of that year to participate in a student exchange program but, following the Dili massacre in East Timor’s capital two months later, he had sought and been granted political asylum. The massacre, in which hundreds of young, unarmed, East Timorese were murdered by the Indonesian military, radically changed the course of his life – as it did also for so many of his young compatriots who were forced to flee the violence of post-massacre reprisals.

It was the final poem in the collection, entitled *I am the One Singing in the Multitude: The litany of the oppressed* that first captured my attention (see Appendix). The epic scale of its narrative described a deep experiential turn in the collective fate of a people which had profoundly altered their sense of themselves and of their collective destiny. The ‘oceanic’ impact of that poem has never left me although many years on I now have a broader, albeit more cerebral, appreciation of its power and meaning. Originally written in *Bahasa Indonesia* the English translation is inevitably less nuanced yet this barely seems to impinge upon its force. For me, this epic poem has continued to act as a metaphor for contemporary East Timorese displacement. It is an elegy to the suffering and dislocation of the ‘unhomed’ – not simply the physically uprooted but those for whom the border between home and the world has been most profoundly and unjustly breached.

On the most basic level, *I Am The One* articulates the routine experiences of East Timorese people under Indonesian military occupation. It is both a historical record and a lament about human rights abuses committed since Indonesia’s

invasion of the former Portuguese colony in 1975. Its documentary style of delivery is somehow the more shocking for its systematic listing and its determination to memorialise the terrible events that have shaped East Timorese lives since that time. Reading the poem aloud, the words become dirge-like, a passionate expression of grief akin to what Edward Hirsch (1999:5) calls “a voicing, a calling forth [that exists] somewhere in the region – the register – between speech and song”. The conscious movement between the autobiographical ‘I’ and the biographical ‘he/she/it’ works like a Greek chorus, to communicate the shared and ongoing tragedy of East Timor. It weaves a continuous thread linking human to human; human to non-human; past to present; generation to generation.

This mobility makes for ‘convincing political poetry’, according to Steve Gregory (Barreto Soares, 1996:ix) “for the simple reason that it is difficult to negotiate the ever-changing boundary between the personal and the collective”. Difficult indeed, but essential perhaps for a people faced with genocide. Muhammad Siddiq has observed the same fluidity of personal/collective, documentary/autobiographical distinctions in Palestinian literary narratives. The metaphorical collapsing of genres, he says, is a deliberate strategy to (re)construct “a continuous, recognisably Palestinian discourse with which to beguile the insidious effect of diaspora and deterritorialisation of Palestinian identity” (Siddiq 1995:88). *I Am The One* has a similar imperative. It too seeks to subvert the shattering effects of, in this case Indonesian, state violence by constructing an unbroken monologue in which the ‘I’ that writes becomes not simply the scribe or messenger but a collectivity embodying the historical and geographical, the biological and the sociological. The poem’s narrative slips between the first and third person unselectively proclaiming the experience of East Timorese men, women and children, telling a tale not simply of courageous resistance but of the complicities and conciliations that are a necessary consequence of war and colonisation. For example:

*I am the woman who was forced to become your companion.../
the governor who has to be a shadow puppet...*

The narrative moves too between the human and the non-human, the living and the dead, delimiting the boundaries between humanity and the

natural/supernatural world. This incessant shifting and juxtaposing of literalities – age/gender/time/place – has a strategic urgency that is both political and spiritual in its intent. A people under siege, as Siddiq suggests, must stress the continuous in order to resist the exclusionary, divisive and invasive practices of a repressive order, as well as the racialised state discourses that portray them as less than human. Equally, they must necessarily find a transcendent meaning beyond the limits of mortality and the otherwise meaningless sacrifices and brutalisations they have endured. Human lives are ephemeral but the spirit of a united people cannot be crushed.

Unity and commonality are recurrent themes in East Timorese nationalist verse. The revolutionary poet Francisco da Costa Borja, for example, killed by the invading Indonesian forces on 7 December 1975, wrote (in Jolliffe 1976:33):

*Streams flowing together become rivers
Rivers increase, whatever opposes them*

*So must the children of Timor unite,
Unite against the wind that blows from the sea.*

*The sea wind whips the kabala
Whips our eyes bloody, our backs bloody*

*Makes our tears roll down, our sweat flow down
Sucks the fat of our earth, the fat of our bodies*

*Streams flowing together become rivers
CHILDREN OF EAST TIMOR – UNITED, RECLAIM OUR LAND!*

In Borja's, as in Abé's work, humanity merges with the natural world. This contiguity of humans and the natural environment is more than a recognition of their basic biogrammar. It is a reference to the animistic roots of East Timorese belief systems and to an ancient symbiosis. In *I am the One*, human suffering is reflected in a now defiled physical environment – polluted, napalmed, broken, burned. Their mutual identification makes the East Timorese quest to reclaim their spiritual and temporal sovereignty the stronger.

The imagery also suggests a search for wholeness. As anthropologist and poet Michael Jackson suggests, poetic metaphor may help to coalesce the personal body and the body of the world, merging the ego with the object of meditation

and rendering the disjuncture caused by trauma and crisis less stark:

In forging links between personal, social, and natural worlds and in reforging these links when we break them, poetry fosters wholeness of Being. But poetic metaphor also accomplishes this act through a scale reduction in which social, natural and personal worlds correspond evenly, so allowing us to feel equal to the wider world. In this sense poetry may be likened to the art of miniature painting... Reduction in scale and objectification extend our power over a homologue of a thing, so allowing it to be grasped, assessed, and apprehended at a glance. (Jackson 1989:154)

Stylistically, the continuity between People-Land; Self-Community; Past-Present; Exile-Home; Spiritual-Physical is suggested in Abé's poem's unbounded form. It proceeds in an unpunctuated flow – one sentence, 112 lines long – giving it an insistent, almost religious, intonation. Abé chooses to subtitle his poem *The litany of the oppressed* for good reason: Litanies are religious recitals, half-sung, half-chanted by clergy and congregations in a recurring formula. The allusion reflects the centrality of religious expression in East Timorese life under occupation. The cadence mimics the familiar, ritual motions of embodied and repetitive Catholic prayer and worship. Like a religious incantation the repetitions are used to hypnotic effect and are meant, as Hirsch suggests (1999:22) to “loosen the intellect” and access the spirit. For the reader, the relentless “I am” is almost unbearable in its iteration of the collective suffering of a people. Yet it is equally celebratory: a testament to faith and to cultural survival. The ‘I am’ stands as an affirmation of existence and of hope. It says; I/We embody all these things – death, torture, rape, daily humiliations both subtle and blatant – yet I/We endure.

The end of the poem becomes a song of victory, inspired by the resistance cry of East Timorese youth, as they were surrounded by Indonesian military at the Santa Cruz cemetery on November 12th 1991: ‘*Mate ka Moris!! Ukun Rasik A'an/* Life or Death!! Independence!’ To this heroic refrain, the poet contributes his own voice “singing in the multitude”.

The metaphor of song is particularly apt here not least because music plays a central role in East Timorese social and religious life. East Timor has a rich and fluid oral tradition in which “words are not generally fixed, but can change according to the circumstances of performance” (Jolliffe 1976:12). Since the

invasion, song has also provided East Timorese with a means to circumvent the regulatory and restrictive controls of the Indonesian regime. Shirley Shackleton, who travelled to East Timor in 1989 to plant a tree in memory of her husband and four other foreign correspondents who were murdered by the Indonesian military in 1975, gives a poignant account of the way song is used as a vehicle to convey an otherwise unauthorised attempt at communication (1995:118):

I...planted the tree alone, the military police and soldiers lounging nonchalantly nearby...seemingly out of nowhere a *capella* choir began to sing. The police said afterwards it was only local Timorese children practising for Mass. Months later...I realized that there had been no 'coincidence' at all, the singing practice had been exactly timed to coincide with the tree-planting ceremony. In this way, the people of Balibo had participated directly in the occasion despite the prohibition of Indonesian authorities. It was a moving example of the strength of the resistance of ordinary East Timorese against Indonesian rule.

I am the One is, in a sense, a call to arms. It is unequivocally patriotic in its implicit conviction that effective resistance requires that those who have the resources must, by any means, speak, sing, and act out and *testify* on behalf of those who are silenced. Those who are able must help to give the lie to official 'facts'; the propaganda of the Indonesian state and the complicities of the global community. This takes courage and fortitude and the following section chronicles the involvement of a group of young diasporic nineties Timorese in staging a series of mediatised events in Canada in 1997.

'Team Timor': testimony and the media

In Chapter Three, I made the point that the diasporic sphere was an arena of passionate debate and creative tension dominated by mostly male, lusophone-oriented East Timorese community leaders. As an arena in which collective interests are imagined and narrated, the communal space of diasporic politics is a site of constant struggle and negotiation, in which women and youth have had to battle for legitimacy. The example, in Chapter Four, of Bella Galhos' challenge to the masculinised symbolic high ground and the defensiveness with which it was received, exposes the ambivalent cultural politics of this domination.³ In this section, I give an example of a high profile initiative in

³ As Werbner argues (1998:22), it is important not to attribute male defence of political power simply in terms of conservative 'patriarchal' attitudes (as in fact Bella herself and other young

which Bella and fellow nineties Timorese activists participated as protagonists in an ambitious and creative media campaign which gave them visibility in the global diasporic public sphere. Sponsored by Oporto University, the campaign was designed by the participants and a US-based activist, Constâncio Pinto,⁴ with input from East Timor Alert Network (ETAN) volunteers. The participants included thirteen exiled members of the CNRT and two Indonesian activists.

The launch of 'Team Timor' on 12th November 1997, the sixth anniversary of the Dili Massacre, was designed to coincide with President Suharto's visit to Canada for the fifth APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit in Vancouver. The Timorese participants, aged between twenty and forty-two years, including two delegates from Canada, three from ETRA in Australia, seven from Portugal and one from the Netherlands, were each invited to testify in a mediatised mock trial of Suharto for crimes against humanity. The participants had undertaken a series of intensive media and communication workshops in Ottawa, in preparation for their testimonies:

The preparation was very difficult, but it was a valuable experience for all of us. Because we did this work we felt a sense of ownership for the campaign – we wanted it to be a success because this was our campaign. We were a very diverse group – we were young women, young men. We all have had very different experiences. It was very different, culturally, for a young woman like me to try and teach older people my experience. At first we all thought we knew everything. When we started giving each other honest criticism to improve our talks, it was very hard, and sometimes we fought. It wasn't just about correcting our English, but it was also about being ready for questions from the media... We all learned to work tighter as a group. The Timorese learned to express themselves effectively, and our workshops gave us the confidence we needed. (Bella Galhos, in Etan, 1998:11)

Their testimonies were presented to an audience of journalists, trade unionists and various solidarity groups and sympathetic supporters in front of a now iconic image, twelve feet-high, of a young girl in a bloodied dress shot during

nineties Timorese did), but to understand male anxiety as symptomatic of their marginality in spheres of influence beyond diasporic communal politics.

⁴ Constâncio Pinto was CNRM/CNRT representative to the United Nations and the US. As a student activist in East Timor, he helped to organise the peaceful demonstration of November 12th 1991 and fled into exile via Indonesia in 1992. He worked with the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) and other peace organisations in the US campaigning for East Timorese independence. Constâncio returned to East Timor in 1999 and was appointed to the CNRT's Research and Planning Commission (CRP) as International Affairs coordinator.

the massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery by the Indonesian military (Plate 11). One of the first to testify was twenty-five year-old Josefina Ribeiro (Australia) who tearfully spoke of the abuse of women's reproductive and sexual rights in East Timor, including her own experience of forced sterilisation and being sexually abused by an Indonesian teacher:

I still remember the day they came into my classroom freshly as if it were yesterday. All my male classmates were asked to leave the room. All the girls were asked to line up, so they could give them the [Depo Provera] injection...*This is a story of many Timorese women and what they go through in everyday life* [my emphasis].⁵

During three hours of graphic and harrowing testimonials, several other young Timorese detailed their family members', friends' or their own experiences of imprisonment, torture, harassment and intimidation, as well as the atrocities they had witnessed during the 1991 demonstration at Santa Cruz. João Antonio Dias described watching Indonesian soldiers killing wounded Timorese by banging their heads against rocks. Aviano Faria told of how he had been dumped in a morgue with truckloads of the dead and dying and had survived the massacre by pretending to be dead. Twenty year-old Tomás Alfredo Gandara (Portugal) testified as one of East Timor's 'stolen generation', children who were kidnapped and taken to Indonesia for adoption. His parents were Fretilin supporters who had been killed by the Indonesian military in Los Palos in 1979 and he and his five year-old sister had been adopted and then abandoned by their Indonesian 'parents', and he grew up in a number of foster homes in Java:

Even though I was young, I still remember hearing people in pain, screaming. I remember hearing the sound of gunfire and I remember hearing bombs exploding and the drones of helicopters flying overhead. I also have a clear recollection of my body being covered in flies.

Alfredo Rodrigues (Portugal) joined the guerrillas in 1981 at the age of twelve. His parents were shot and killed in 1986 and he had himself been captured and imprisoned in the "Hotel Flamboyan", the notorious and bizarrely named detention centre in Bacau. He gave a detailed description of techniques of torture inflicted upon him during this and subsequent periods of detention, pulling up his shirt to reveal bullet wounds and scars on his back. The testimonies and

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the systematic abuse of women's reproductive and sexual rights under Indonesian occupation, see Sissons (1997).

subsequent discussions left the participants and many of the audience emotionally drained (ETAN Report 1998).



Plate 11. Sacralised youth⁶

A people's tribunal subsequently found "strong evidence against Suharto and determined he should be denied entry to Canada under the Canadian Immigration Act or charged under the Canadian Criminal Code for crimes against humanity" (The Ubysey, 18/11/97 cited in the ETAN Report 1998). From November 13th to 26th, the Team Timor participants dispersed and continued the campaign work separately in different cities across Canada, speaking and performing Timorese songs at universities, high schools, churches, clubs, union buildings, at demonstrations and on radio and performing rituals of remembrance, laying flowers and wreaths on the steps of embassies and consulates.

The initiative was massively successful and attracted broad and sympathetic media coverage (see campaign materials and clippings, ETAN Report 1998). While the campaign did not prevent President Suharto from attending the APEC summit, it profoundly embarrassed the Indonesian government and succeeded in raising awareness and building new solidarities in Canada and beyond. It was

⁶ This now iconic image was taken by photographer Steve Cox, who witnessed the massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery on November 12th, 1991 (Cox and Carey 1995:64).

remarkable, in diasporic politics, for its positioning of Timorese youth as central actors on the global political stage. For the most part, opportunities for young nineties Timorese to participate in such high profile political activism were limited. In the remaining part of the chapter, I explore the localised experience of young nineties Timorese in Sydney and focus on their engagement in theatrical and musical forms of testimony, as examples of the cultural creativity of young diasporic East Timorese themselves and as a purposeful form of social action.

Kadoras ba Liberdade (Steps to Freedom)

Awareness of intergenerational tensions and concern for the plight of nineties Timorese asylum seekers, led to a number of creative projects aimed at challenging cultural divisions within the community. One such project was initiated in 1995 by ETRA (East Timor Relief Association). In an attempt to assist young refugees to articulate their experiences of trauma and displacement, ETRA with funding from the Australia Council, sponsored a community theatre project called *Kadoras ba Liberdade*⁷ (Steps to Freedom). The project was intended primarily as a vehicle for newly-arrived, nineties Timorese youth to re-enact their stories of leaving East Timor, although performers also included some 'seventies' Timorese youth and older generation Timorese. Project facilitator and long time ETRA volunteer, Kieran Dwyer, outlined the vision of the project at a conference in Melbourne in August 1995 (1996:150):

The process will unfold the stories and the stories will relate to...the deep sense of isolation and alienation from homeland, to very simple but everyday problems of coming to a new country (having to deal with language, having to deal with generational problems)...it's been fantastic having older members of the community getting together with teenagers. You get one side of the story from the older members of the community and the teenagers say 'Yeah, yeah, but that's not what it was like for us, that's your side of the story!'...The play will be a celebration of identity, of East Timorese identity in Australia and in East Timor. It's particularly invaluable to have a lot of members involved who are recent arrivals; so again there's a link being forged between those people and the young East Timorese people who have grown up in Australia. It will be mostly in Tetun, partially in English as well, because we'll be exploring the role of what language means and what it's like to learn a new language. So it's about bringing people

⁷ In Tetum, *kadoras* means a big, hollow bamboo tube used as guttering, or for channeling water. The title of the drama probably refers to the method of irrigation using a *kadoras* as a 'conduit' to freedom. My thanks to Professor Geoffrey Hull at the Faculty of Education and Languages, University of Western Sydney, for assistance with this translation.

together from different strands of the East Timorese community, and it will be about exploring identity.

The project did not entirely conform to this plan, however. As it turned out, the performance became less a celebration of intracommunal diversity that the Australian facilitators had hoped for and more an expression of ‘authentic’ Timorese-ness. The shift reveals the tension between the broad political and cultural ideological visions animating the respective performance of Australian multiculturalism and Timorese nationalism. Rather than focusing on cultural adaptation to life in Australia, the narrative, as interpreted by the Timorese performers, followed a more familiar thematic format. As indicated in the previous chapter, performances of traumatic events were a common feature of Timorese diasporic life and they were enacted in a highly stylised and emotional manner. Musical director of *Kadoras*, Stephen Taberner (interview 1999), referred to this as a ‘melodramatic’ approach:

The kids were uncomfortable with theatrical directives that encouraged them to experiment with different forms of dramatisation. They seemed more comfortable with melodrama. Maybe they don't want to get too close to the pain...maybe the ‘heaviness’ of the melodrama, ironically, enables them to maintain a ‘lightness’. Maybe acting ritualistically keeps it safe. They're not actors anyway...

His comment is pertinent. The risk of retraumatisation through re-living traumatic events is well recognised (Harris-Rimmer 2007). The ritualised narration of collective trauma perhaps constitutes a self-protective and distancing mechanism.

Like the drama of ‘Ina Lou’ described in Chapter Four, *Kadoras* opened with scenes of ‘idyllic’ pastoral East Timor. Performers took turns to deliver short monologues describing the richness of Timor’s languages and cultures and the unique environmental qualities of the various districts. There followed a marvellously dramatic soliloquy of a *Lia Na’in* (wise elder)⁸ in dialogue with unseen, unheard *lulik* (ancestral spirits) using the 20th century dialect of Tetun Praça (“Tetun of the Capital”, a profoundly Portugalised form of Tetun, now

⁸ *Lia Na’in* is translated in Hull (1996) as an ‘intriguer’ or ‘gossip’ but the term also refers to a wise, culturally knowledgeable man or woman who mediates intracommunal disputes.

considered archaic by contemporary Tetun speakers within East Timor).

Roughly translated, the *Lia Na'in* delivers a message of impending doom:

We are all suffering in the East and in the West. The land is shaking [a reference to the intervention of rain-fila, land spirits] in East Timor we are going to be divided. Some will stay and some will go to other countries. Our heavy words will have a great impact because we will continue to suffer and our tears will flow because we're thinking of East Timor. There will be a change in Timor, other people will come and live there, they will use other languages. Timorese won't possess the country or the language any more.

Suddenly a cry rings out:

The barit merah [red berets] are coming! Wake up and run away!

The performers re-enact the early years of occupation as groups of displaced Timorese endured aerial attacks, sowing crops and making gardens for food and then abandoning them as the military closed in. The unfolding drama describes the terror of children separated from parents, the destruction of the land and the brutality and menace of *barit merah*. But the narrative's central message is the fighting spirit of the East Timorese and the anguish of a tormented country:

Twenty years we've been fighting the Indonesians from East to West. Very cold, the hills are very green. You can hear Tasi Mane [the southern male sea] screaming. Falintil fighters come and join us and sing for our country.

The performers sing *O Hele Le* (a song of resistance banned during the occupation) and there is a recital of the genealogy of the dead and decimation of country:

Maria Gorete 1979, raped tortured and disappeared; Matebian 1978, heavy bombardment, disease and starvation; Migi died Santa Cruz November 12th 1991; Feli died 12th November 1991; Massacre at Kraras, 1983...

Finally, the drama turns to the flight of the post-Dili Massacre nineties Timorese:

We could not bear the suffering any more. Some of us had to pay bribes to get out, some of us had to jump embassy fences, some of us escaped by boat. The people of East Timor are forced to separate.

The performers re-enact the dramatic escape of eighteen young nineties Timorese by boat, the only group of Timorese to do so during the twenty four year occupation. The story closes at the point of arrival in Australia:

We're sad to leave our brothers, sisters, parent and our friends. It took us three years of planning to escape. On 24th May 1995 at 11pm, we left from Tibar (Dili) to Australia. Six days felt like six years. At the time it's very hard, there's no future, there's no end. Look to left, look to right, see only water. We pray to God and the spirits to lead us. On 30th May 1995, we arrive in Darwin. We meet again with [Timorese] friends.

Eighteen year-old Natalina, her nineteen year-old brother Paulo and their seventeen year-old friend Felipe were among the young performers, as were many of the participants in this research. When I asked what they thought of *Kadoras*, Natalina said:

I was fifteen, Paulo was sixteen and Felipe was fourteen when ETRA ask us if we wanna do the play. At first we thought, what we wanna do this for? It seems a bit silly, you know? But then they [ETRA] explain that in Australia, a lot of people don't know anything about Timor. We must show them about Timor, the districts, how it used to be a beautiful country and it's been destroyed...As a Timorese, we feel we should get involved. Like with the singing, it's like a message for Timorese and others. When I was at school, they didn't know where Timor was and I feel good when I explain to them about Timor. My teachers asked me to talk about East Timor, like a spokesperson for others to know about it. They learned from me and I learned from them. But, oh my God, sometimes you don't always want to be talking about it [the independence struggle], like you're just a normal person too.

For young Timorese like Natalina, communicating the tragedy of East Timor was a social imperative which also provided a point of connection with the broader Australian community. The endorsement of her Timoresehood by non-Timorese peers and teachers conferred an authority and ascribed positive sense of Timorese ethnicity upon her. Yet the burden of responsibility as a bearer of the emancipatory mission at times seemed to conflict with the everyday process of leading a 'normal' life as a young person, an issue which is more fully explored in Chapter Six. Nevertheless, young Timorese were empowered through their public performance of 'formal' Timoresehood. Natalina, Paulo and Felipe were among a number of nineties youth whose public profile as East Timorese asylum seekers brought them into contact with a range of influential

political actors and celebrities. The outcome of these collaborations and alliances gave oxygen and visibility to their particular predicament.

Hananu Kore A'an

The youth choir *Hananu Kore A'an* (Singing for Freedom), evolved from the *Kadoras ba Liberdade* project at the instigation of the young participants themselves. Again, it was facilitated by older generation Timorese and Australian members of ETRA and it comprised mainly, but not exclusively, young nineties asylum-seekers. Membership was in fact very fluid and often included Timorese with permanent residency in Australia, as well as occasional musicians and vocalists who were neither Timorese nor particularly young (myself among them). *Hananu* thus constituted something of a microcosm of Timorese in diaspora as well as an intriguing coalition of identities, which worked to promote a positive representation of Timoresehood, challenging perceptions of young diasporic Timorese as politically powerless.

Importantly, their involvement in the choir enabled young asylum-seekers to establish a niche within the sphere of Australian multicultural community arts, as well as assert their presence within prestigious Australian public spaces - such as Sydney's Town Hall, the Opera House and the State Theatre. The significance of this should not be underestimated. Public performance generally means being visible and being heard. In this context, it means 'claiming entry' to a national public sphere as a minority migrant voice within multicultural Australia. It provides, as Ruth Finnegan argues in her book *The Hidden Musicians* (1989:327-8)

a channel to a socially recognised position [that enables performers to make] a significant aesthetic contribution [which may be] particularly emotive for individuals regarded as in some way 'marginal'.

Hananu's musical director and double bass player, Stephen Taberner, is an Anglo-Australian, drawn to the project "by politics but also by the cultural exchange". He cites the 1998 'Choral Sea' project (performed at Sydney's Town Hall) as a pivotal moment for young Timorese performers on their musical journey. The event included performances by Tongan, Samoan, Lebanese and Tibetan choirs, as well as the well-known Aboriginal musicians Archie Roach

and Ruby Hunter. On this occasion *Hananu* were joined by a stage choir of 270 people to perform a new song, 'Freedom', dedicated to the Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão. Some of the young choir members were evidently quite overwhelmed by the powerful sense of solidarity of this musical collaboration and of somehow being united with other performers in their struggles and experiences of marginality. This, as Goodman suggests (1997), constitutes a multiculturalism that moves beyond official policies of cultural tolerance to promote the interests of universal human rights and self-determination: these are performances that not only bridge migrant/non-migrant divides but transcend national borders linking histories of colonisation and displacement. For non-Timorese choir members the experience was equally emotive, their participation enabling them to express their solidarity with specific Timorese concerns and conscience, while contributing their voice to a broader transcultural movement for human rights.

The choir was also personally transformative for some of its young performers. As an observer of many of the choir's performances and practices over a two-year period, I was often inspired by the fire and passion of individual performances. One young female soloist used to perform with clenched fists, head held high, posturally defiant. As their director acknowledged, "it's this kind of performance that keeps you in touch with what it's really about". What this means is that such performances transmit the conviction that they (the young performers) embody a continuity of experience that link the cultures of home and diaspora. This is evident in the way in which songs themselves are remembered, restyled and renegotiated. For example, '*He He Le Le*' - a traditional harvesting song - was taught to the choir by a young woman whose memory of it was sparked by her reunion with other diasporic Timorese during the 'Team Timor' campaign for social justice in Canada, in 1997. The meaning of '*He He Le Le*' was, like so many Timorese songs, reworked as a consequence of the Indonesian occupation. It is now sung as an allegory to the struggle for self-determination in which the performers sing:

let us dance the *tebe*⁹
good or bad we will dance;
we are embroidering a cloth,
what name shall we place in the cloth?
we will put Xanana's name for he is our leader;
for a long time we the Timorese have been courageous,
standing strong before, still standing strong, we are East Timorese¹⁰

He He Le Le
He He Le La
Ami isin maubere, klamar mos buibere

Lisensa Maun Alin
Ami tebe lai
Tebe diak, tebe aat
Ami tebe lai

He He Le Le...

Husi Loro Sae, to'o loro monu
Ori otas, ori wain
Timor asuwain

He He Le le...

Suku lenso desfiado
Tau naran sa
Tau naran Xanana
Ita matan-dalan

He He Le Le...

The traditional way of singing ‘*He He Le Le*’ endures. While the chorus is sung by men and women together, the verses are sung alternately by men and women in a kind of conversation with each other.¹¹ Yet there was some contestation between the young woman teaching it to the choir and a young male performer over wording that refers to the gender of the singers of the song. I refer to the line in the chorus ‘*Ami isin maubere, klamar mos buibere*’ (our body, and our soul). The young man was insisting on the traditional use of ‘*maubere*’ twice. *Maubere* literally means ‘pauper’ or ‘peasant’ but, as noted in Chapter 1, in the popular language of struggle refers to ‘we the people’ or ‘the common people’ who were valorised in the songs, poetry and rhetoric of Fretilin, Timor's

⁹ Traditional East Timorese performance of dance and drumming.

¹⁰ This translation is reproduced from Hananu's CD ‘*Free Xanana, Free East Timor*’, produced by the East Timor Relief Association (ETRA) in Sydney, 1998.

¹¹ This is known as *soe lian* (throwing words).

nationalist movement.¹² The prefix *mau-*, however, refers to the masculine gender. In Canada, performing the song with other diasporic Timorese (from Australia, Canada and Portugal), the young woman had been urged by her female friends to alter the second ‘*maubere*’ to ‘*buibere*’, substituting the prefix *bui-* that denotes the feminine. Such tensions and struggles are not inconsequential, but signify ‘culture-in-the-making’ – the processes of continuity and change referred to earlier. The tussle over language in this instance may provide insights into the shifting of gender consciousness as a consequence of both political struggle and diasporic life. In the event, the young man’s patriotic attachment to the use of ‘*maubere*’ as a generic and politically potent term was challenged and overruled by young women in the group, concerned with voicing their own political concerns.

Of course music provides just one possible pathway to social action among many. Yet, as Agio Pereira (1997) and James Goodman (1998) suggest, while its effects may be more diffuse than more conventional forms of campaigning, in the context of Timorese diaspora politics its impact, along with other cultural activities, has been highly significant. Poetry and song have been, since the waning of Portuguese colonial influence and subsequently, the Indonesian occupation, powerful vehicles of political expression among a largely illiterate people “who operate from a rich oral tradition in which the words are not generally fixed, but can change according to the circumstances of performance” (Jolliffe 1976:12). Thus, the modality lends itself to a flexible application which has, in diaspora, involved musical collaborations with, as well as the political sympathies of, internationally-renowned musicians such as Midnight Oil, U2, Yothu Yindi, Peter Gabriel, Buffy Sainte-Marie and many others.

As far as understanding what it is that the practice of music provides for individual performers themselves, reasons are simultaneously very simple and highly complex. There is on one level the sheer sociability of collective music-making. Yet, as Finnegan (1989) suggests, there also seems to be a whole constellation of meanings and values attached to the practice. These are

¹² According to Jill Jolliffe (1976:10): “The Maubere of the FRETILIN songs refers to the illiterate mountain people, despised under the Portuguese regime. Under the FRETILIN regime, the Maubere became a symbol of national pride, in what young Timorese describe as their quest for ‘pure democracy’.”

variously kinetic, intellectual, emotive, verbal, aesthetic and spiritual. Emotionally and kinetically, there is the shared experience of articulating a shared identity through song. When young diasporic Timorese are reunited, for example, they feel “like family – speaking our own language, singing and dancing in our own culture” (Abé Barreto Soares 1998:33) and performing songs at conferences are remembered as ‘special moments’, not only for young Timorese performers, but for non-Timorese conference participants: “[The singing] was definitely the highlight of the conference. Many women commented on how powerful and strong these Timorese women seemed.”¹³

As a community choir, the quality of *Hananu's* performances varied. I remember vividly my first encounter with *Hananu* when they sang at the opening of the *Tuba Rai Metin* (Firmly Gripping the Earth) exhibition at the Canberra School of Art in September 1997. They were only a few in number. They were tired and sang slightly off-key, yet it was still a moving performance. The next performance I witnessed, at the ETRA 1997 Annual Dinner in Melbourne with Jose Ramos-Horta as special guest, was vibrant and polished (Plate 12). Of course, like any other social process, involvement in community music is never uncomplicated, nor consistently harmonious. There were frustrations and dissatisfactions, particularly where social lives and choir commitments clashed and as interest waned or involvement became more or less burdensome at different times. Lack of community resources meant that practicalities like transportation fell to the few, usually older, choir members with vehicles and valid licences. According to one regular, volunteer driver, rounding up choir members for performances was a major headache and you had to factor in the several extra hours needed first, to locate choir members and then to wait for everyone to get ready. Some younger choir members eventually lost interest and dropped out altogether, complaining that they were sick of the songs and wanted to include new material, or write their own songs. Others dropped out, then reappeared intermittently. The choir coordinators felt frustrated by the erratic attendance of even some of the best young performers: “Those with talent are

¹³ Karen Urchak (ETAN Report 1997:44), participant at the Second International ‘Women's Conference Against APEC’ in Canada, November 18th 1997, at which two members of *Hananu* performed.

never there enough”. Including new material meant making a commitment to regular practices and fluctuating numbers made that difficult.



Plate 12. *Hananu Kore A'an* performing at the 1997 ETRA annual dinner in Melbourne with guest of honour, José Ramos-Horta, seated at front left

Yet the continual forming and re-forming gave the choir a spontaneity, a life and logic of its own: “You can never predict...people turn up to performances you've never even seen before!” (Taberner interview 1999). This was the case when *Hananu* was chosen to provide the musical soundtrack for the documentary film *Punitive Damage* in 1999 (Plate 13).¹⁴ A group of about twenty choir members attended the regular practices at the Cabramatta Community Centre leading up to recording in March that year. When the film premiere was screened at the 1999 Sydney Film Festival in June, *Hananu* was invited to perform on stage at Sydney's State Theatre. Choir numbers suddenly swelled and *Hananu* gave a particularly vibrant performance to an enthusiastic international audience. For the film-makers, both the involvement of the choir, (that is, the young East Timorese performers), in the film itself and their performance at the premiere gave a validity and ‘authenticity’ to their project and contributed to the integrity of the film. For the East Timorese community members in the audience, the performance was significant too for the role that the music, and those who

¹⁴ *Punitive Damage* was released by Occasional Productions, in association with the New Zealand Film Commission and NZ On Air. The film reconstructs events leading to the death of a young New Zealand activist, Kamal Bamadhaj, along with over 200 young Timorese at the Dili Massacre on 12th November 1991 and documents his mother's subsequent attempts to bring those responsible to justice.

performed it, played in the evocation and re-articulation of public memory - in this case, the memory of the 1991 Dili Massacre and slaughter of the hundreds of young Timorese by the Indonesian military. Yet it was the non-Timorese in the audience who were demonstrably overwhelmed by the film and its music. For many of them, the sheer presence of young Timorese represented a brief moment of authentic connection with the East Timorese struggle itself.



Plate 13. Poster for the documentary film *Punitive Damage* for which the youth choir, *Hanamu Kore A'an* provided the music.

I suggest that as a local, grassroots initiative – one that, while steered by older generation community leaders at ETRA, was generated by young nineties Timorese themselves – the choir and its members made an important contribution to the cultural politics, institutions and traditions of both East Timorese and Australian societies. It is important here to emphasise that when cultural processes are formed by young people themselves, then what we are dealing with is the stuff of youth culture. Often this is all too easily dismissed as ‘sub’ culture but, as Wulff suggests (1995:6), youth culture is “valid in its own right”. In this particular instance, the initiative constitutes a ‘multi’cultural strategy that draws on transnational linkages and intercultural exchange (cf Vered-Talai 1995). As such, it enables participants to engage in a discourse that accommodates the processes of both continuity and change. In emphasising the

cultural agency of young Timorese, I do not discount the continuities that exist between generations, nor the bonds that extend beyond the community. The choir has consistently been supported by older generation Timorese, as well as by non-Timorese supporters. The very collaborativeness and inclusivity of the choir, in fact, reflects a shift in strategy among the wider Timorese diasporic community in general, towards a more culturally based political activism, enabling what Goodman (1997) has termed a ‘cross-national community of conscience’ and which Pereira (1996) refers to as a ‘maturing’ of the Timorese diasporic community.

The premiere of *Punitive Damage* at Sydney's State Theatre in June 1999 was to be *Hananu*'s final major public performance, although none of us knew it at the time. While some of the younger members had expressed boredom with choir and a desire to “do something different”, a fairly committed core group remained and there had been talk of recording a new repertoire of songs. It is perhaps inevitable that, after the referendum in August 1999, when East Timor achieved de facto independence, the impetus of the choir was lost as shifting individual and communal orientations and priorities provoked a new series of displacements in the diaspora. Older, key choir members and supporters, along with community leaders, returned to East Timor as soon as practically possible to help rebuild the nation. In their absence, younger members of the choir, in fact young diasporic Timorese generally, were left to contemplate their uncertain futures and the implications of return.

Interestingly, many young members of *Hananu* also belonged to an all-Timorese choir established by the Mary MacKillop Institute in 1997 and directed by Sister Susan Connelly. This choir still exists, although there are few remaining original members. The ‘Mary MacKillop East Timorese Singers’ had a slightly different focus to *Hananu* and celebrated Timoresehood through religious choral music, as well as traditional Timorese songs. The fact that the MMETS choir endured in the post-independence period, while *Hananu* did not, is significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, with independence, *Hananu* had perhaps reached a natural point of closure: its role in mobilising public support for the East Timorese struggle for independence and highlighting the predicament of nineties youth as asylum seekers, as well as providing young Timorese with the means to play an

active role in the political campaign were, inevitably, no longer focal issues for diasporic East Timorese. Yet there was no reason why *Hananu* could not have been reframed in the post-independence context if its young participants had so wished and had there been a support structure to enable its reformulation.

Hananu lost impetus because of a fundamental intergenerational difference in orientation and political imaginaries. For the drivers of ETRA's creative projects, members of the '75 generation who had been at the centre of communal affairs and political life in diaspora and whose trajectories were inextricably bound to that of the nation, the centre of political power had now shifted. They returned to East Timor to take up positions in the Office of the CNRT and to play a role in the transition to self-government. As ETRA's director, Agio Pereira, said at the time "we are part of this process, we have no choice". Yet the trajectories of young nineties asylum seekers were not fixed in the same way. Where the centre lay for them was far less certain.

As a postscript to this chapter, I include a short vignette from fieldwork in Ireland as testament to the strength of transnational communities of solidarity and the mobilisation of processes of globalisation from below. In the days that followed the popular consultation on East Timor's independence on August 30th 1999, the country descended into hell as the Indonesian TNI-backed *Aitarak* (Thorn) and other militia unleashed a ferocious campaign of retribution echoing the atrocities of the invasion in 1975. At that time, I was in Europe, conducting interviews with East Timorese student activists. While I was in Dublin, I connected with the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign (ETISC) and through it, with members of the Dublin branch of Amnesty International who were coordinating rallies at various foreign embassies. Because of my links with *Hananu Kore A'an* and because the only other people in Dublin who could carry a tune in Tetun were busy being spokespeople for East Timor, Amnesty sent me off to the Loreto Girls' College to teach protest songs to Year 10 students. The following day, the Dublin bus corporation laid on free public transport for anyone attending the rally outside the United States Embassy. Amnesty's Director, Mary Lawlor, and Campaign Manager, Frank Jennings, read out East Timorese testimonies and presented a letter to an embassy official addressed to the UN Security Council, urging for immediate and unconditional access for humanitarian agencies and independent monitors to the thousands of Internally

Displaced Persons (IDPs) in both East and West Timor where thousands had fled. I then led the impromptu and very enthusiastic Loreto Girls' choir in several eccentrically Irish-accented rounds of 'Mate ka Moris' (*mat-hay ka mooriss ookoon rassikhan*).¹⁵

Mate ka moris ukun rasik a'an (2x)
Ne'e hal nia rain (2x)
Rai Timor Loros'ae

Hau nia bei sira, fo hela ona mai hau
Rai rohan nee, nudar riko soi ida

Hau musti hakilar, Hau musti haklalak
Bainhira ema hadau hau nia rain

Hau hakarak fo riko maka hau hetan
Bah au nia oan sira maka moris ikus

Life or Death!! Independence (2 x)
This is my land – the land of East Timor (2 x)

My Ancestors have given me
This piece of land as an inheritance

I have to shout, I have to cry out
When people take my land

I would like to offer the inheritance I have
To my children who will be born later

The legacy of *Hananu* did not end with its disbanding in 1999. Timorese traditional and protest songs have since been incorporated into the repertoires of mainstream Australian community choirs. Music remains, and will continue to be, an important performative focus for Timorese youth in the newly independent nation as they engage in processes of cultural re-definition.¹⁶ For young Timorese in the diaspora, music may yet provide a means to build bridges between the cultures of 'home' and 'away', holding out possibilities for a cultural exchange that allows for a sense of differential communality, that is, a sense of identity that moves beyond uncomplicated origins and a fixed authenticity. Certainly, the revolutionary possibilities of musical performance have been critical to the political project of asserting Timoresehood in response

¹⁵ Lyrics written by Abé Ho Aloz (Barreto Soares 1996:37).

¹⁶ The Australian Broadcasting Corporation youth radio station Triple J, maintained a running commentary during 2000 on this very issue, reporting from East Timor on the local demand and global search for East Timorese music.

to the genocidal policies and practices of the Indonesian regime, but it is the reconciliatory potential of music which may now enable young Timorese to transcend differences.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored ways in which young nineties Timorese creatively deployed the notion of an authentic self through their participation in practices of public protest and testimony in diaspora. Testimony, remembrance and suffering became central to the creation of an authentic East Timorese identity during the Indonesian occupation. Through ritualised forms of public protest and performance, diasporic Timorese routinely engaged in processes of ‘remembering’ and ‘reliving’ the past, most notably in their marking of evocative dates in their recent history and by re-enacting traumatic events. These occasions provided the means through which a critical community, united by their shared trauma and suffering, could be imagined and affectively experienced. As ‘strategies of intensification’ underpinned by survivor guilt and social obligation, such performances provided contexts of togetherness and reintegration, as well as a transcendent connection with the social reality of a homeland in crisis. Participants were thus implicated in a moral and sacred space through which they could publicly make restitution for the exilic ‘gifts’ of survival and freedom denied to those who remained and those who perished. For East Timorese, the embodied practice of religious devotions and ritualised protest, articulated through tropes of suffering and sacrifice, narrowed the space between the self and the collective; past and present; home and exile; the living and the dead.

The enactment of testimony has also been explored here, as a means of personal and political affirmation and empowerment for young Timorese, through the media of theatre, poetry and music. Through creative community projects, especially through their participation in the community choir *Hananu Kore A'an*, young nineties Timorese connected with intercultural and transnational communities of solidarity and experienced a positive sense of ‘being Timorese’ within the broader public sphere. Yet while they participated willingly in these community-driven events, there was often a sense that their agency was designated, rather than intentional. As I suggested in Chapter Two, in East

Timor, public protest became orthopraxy for young Timorese under Indonesian occupation. While all participants in this research had been implicated in forms of clandestine political practice prior to their departure, the shift into exile recontextualised their political agency and practice. For one thing, in diasporic Australia, grassroots political praxis was not driven by youth as it was in East Timor. For another, the adaptive demands and confusions of life in exile and the juggling of new social roles inevitably led to a redefinition of identity boundaries. As a result, the management of intense social and cultural change required a strategic mobility between multiple identities and the compartmentalisation of their ‘spaces of display’ (cf Butcher 2004). It was as if these formal ‘performances’ of politicised Timoresehood sometimes impeded the everyday normalcy of their ‘lived’ Timoresehood, as in Natalina’s comment that “*sometimes you don’t always want to be talking about [the independence struggle], like you’re just a normal person too.*” Besides, the recognition they derived, during the struggle for independence, from their public performances as East Timorese asylum seekers was abruptly compromised in 1999, by their ambiguous positioning in the post-independence period as asylum seekers whose homeland was now free. I return to this issue in the closing chapter, but for now I want to underscore the situatedness of young nineties Timorese political performance and to suggest that, in many ways, the identities they were creating in exile were concerned foremost with reconciling the difference between, as Paul Gilroy (1991) famously put it, ‘where you’re *from*’ and ‘where you’re *at*’.

In the following chapter, I focus on the lived reality of young Timorese in the western suburbs of Sydney and the ways in which they were creating rather different kinds of Timorese identities.

Chapter Six

*Constructing Timorese-ness in the western suburbs of Sydney:
Youth and the strategic management of hybridity*

This chapter continues with the theme of identity formation among young nineties Timorese, focusing on the strategic management and manipulation of hybridity in suburban western Sydney. It deals directly with the cultural flux characteristic of exile and complex heterogeneity of everyday lived experiences of ‘being Timorese’ in the diaspora, beyond the narrowly construed and totalising category of a self-conscious East Timorese nationalist identity. Acknowledging the importance of cultural and ethnic intermixture in the diverse environs of western Sydney, the chapter draws on the micro-perspectives of young Timorese men and women, their multi-ethnic friendship groups and neighbourhoods, and their multicultural influences. Here, such small-scale youth cultural analysis profits from the concept of ‘microculture’ as a useful point of departure (Wulff 1995). This analytical shrinkage of scale correspondingly brings acting subjects more sharply into view as individuals pursuing cultural concerns according to their specific experience and on their own terms. While macro-forces do profoundly shape and constrain phenomena at the local level, microcultural studies reveal that everyday face-to-face interactions encourage agency, enabling young people to generate cultural strategies through which to manage the multiple frictions and contradictions of their lives on a daily basis and which may also, in turn, impact at a societal level.¹

My aim in this chapter is to capture a sense of the “complex, contingent forms of positioning and identification which youth of migrant background fashion in response to their socio-cultural locations” (Noble & Tabar 2002:131). Young Timorese in Sydney, like any diasporic youth, are engaged in continual processes of identity re-evaluation involving the ineluctable struggle between cultural inheritance (‘where they’re *from*’) and the creation of new ethnicities (‘where they’re *at*’) (Gilroy 1991). These processes involve the complex interplay of a number of divergent and interdependent structuring dispositions and dialectical identifications, among them: communality and autonomy; freedom and constraint; exile and home; the global and the local. Such frictions are integral to the ebb and flow of cultural change. Studies that explore these dynamics among migrant youth suggest that young people commonly deploy strategies of identity that draw upon both hybridised and essentialised

¹ Wulff (1995) gives the example of how the anti-racist micro strategies of young, ethnically mixed friendship groups of teenage women in Britain have the potential for long term political impact.

understandings of their cultural positionings (Butcher 2004; Noble and Tabar 2002; Ang et al 2000). While, in the previous chapter, I explored the strategic enactment of essentialised Timorese identities, this chapter focuses on practices of ethnic experimentation among young nineties Timorese to show how new forms of Timoresehood are being fashioned.

As Wise (2002:164) has usefully illustrated in her analysis of the complex and overlapping articulations of Portugueseness, Europeanness, Asianness, Chineseness and Australianness among East Timorese in Sydney, the cultural production of identity in everyday praxis is always in tension with the politics of recognition. Her discussion of contemporary Timorese ethnicities centres upon “the relational aspects within and between East Timoresehood and Timorese Chineseness” and therefore frames East Timoresehood “in relation to shifting axes of majority/minority such as Europeanness/Asianness and Australianness/Asianness” (Wise 2002:208). Her research and, indeed, my own findings reveal the extent to which being ‘misrecognised’ may be a source of frustration, bafflement and indignation. Here, however, I argue that the cultural strategies deployed by young Timorese also attempt to exploit the politics of misrecognition. The empirical complexity of young Timorese lives and social relations reveal that misrecognition can also provide a space of innovation, creativity, playfulness and subversion, even refuge where they could negotiate the raw complexity and often invisible borders of safety and danger associated with city life.

The chapter, like the last, draws centrally on the stories and experiences of young nineties Timorese men and women, aged between sixteen and twenty six years old. They are the same young people who were caught up as teenagers and young adults in the political events of 1991; most were involved in the ETRA choir, *Hananu Kore A’an*, and some were occasional ETRA volunteers.

“East Timor? It’s a small island near Jamaica”

I’m running late for an interview with Paulo and his friends. Racing up the stairs of Paulo’s apartment block, past the graffitied map of East Timor, I’m dismayed to find no-one home. Maybe they got sick of waiting or maybe they forgot. Maybe they didn’t really want to do the interview in the first place? I’m in the process of writing an apology note to slip under the door when I hear a scuffle in the stairwell. Mario appears from the basement car park, harassed and breathless like me. His car battery’s dead, he’s got no jumper leads and neither have I. Mario’s the only one of the boys who has a car, in fact he’s the only one who currently has a job. He doesn’t have a key to Paulo’s apartment so we’ll have to go looking for Paulo in my car. Outside on the street, we catch sight of Sebastião loping towards us, instantly recognisable with his tightly bound rasta knots. There’s a moment of confusion when Mario hops into the passenger seat beside me leaving Sebastião on the pavement, arms akimbo in mock exasperation, “How’m I gonna get in, man?” They sort themselves out and we drive off. I’m thinking we’re going to the other side of Liverpool, but they direct me to the next street where we find Paulo at a Samoan friend’s place. The ever cool, rasta-haired Paulo emerges and, with him, the familiar strains of a reggae beat filter into the street. He jumps in and we drive the 200 metres back to his apartment.

Field Journal, 23/3/99

The location of East Timor as “a small island near Jamaica” invokes the stock reply of Sebastião, a 17-year-old nineties Timorese living in western Sydney, in response to frequent inquiries about his place of origin. While the fictive Caribbean heritage spares him the boredom of relentlessly having to explain his ‘real’ identity credentials, it is a diversionary tactic that exploits the politics of misrecognition and indulges in a genial teasing. His fabrication humorously plays on Australians’ lack of awareness of East Timorese geopolitics, at least in Sydney’s western suburbs in early 1999,² but you could be forgiven for being misled: dead cool in their dreads, a number of Timorese boys in his Liverpool neighbourhood consciously cultivate rasta style in appearance, music and attitude.

² It is hard to imagine that public awareness was so sketchy then, now that East Timor occupies so prominent a place in the Australian imagination. Despite the long sustained efforts of diasporic activists, solidarity groups and journalists to keep the East Timor in the public domain, the tipping point of widespread public attention did not occur until well after the Howard government’s belated decision to support the idea of a referendum in East Timor, when evidence of the massive scale of TNI and militia inflicted atrocities could no longer be ignored and INTERFET troops were finally deployed in September 1999.

The cultural preference for rasta style among young nineties Timorese is not surprising. Rastafari teachings of unity and freedom, of black pride and resistance, articulate a language of solidarity and struggle among oppressed and displaced peoples via the medium of reggae music. It is a language that has resonated with youth across the globe, and over time (Wulff 1995; 1976; Sansone 1995; Jourdan 1995; Hebdige 1990). Its anti-racist politics and invocations of popular uprising and promised lands, and for many its celebration of the power of ganja, have a widespread and enduring appeal. Yet, like any cultural influence, reggae music and rasta style are always unevenly taken up and incorporated into so-called local youth cultures. How their meanings and practices are interpreted and performed in different places at different times will depend on their interaction with local specificities and the social relations within which cultural influences are mediated. The wearing of dreadlocks and the consumption of reggae music may have everything or nothing to do with a sense of solidarity and political commitment to a cause. It will almost always have to do with some sense of 'belonging' to a fashion, a scene, or philosophy; and it will always be embedded in a complex constellation of power relations, not least the myth-creating impulses and spatial structures of global fashion and music industries.

Musical taste and practice among young nineties Timorese have a significant bearing on their sense of self and the projection of local identity. Key taste categories (reggae, ska, rap) registered an affective investment in a global cultural politics in which the identity referents of ethnicity and class are foregrounded as unambiguous markers of resistance. In the late nineties, for example, many young Timorese in the western Sydney listened to the iconic Bob Marley, as well as performers such as British ska band UB40 and South African reggae artist, Lucky Dube, whose most popular releases include titles such as 'Captured Live', 'Slave', 'House of Exile' and 'Prisoner'.³ Paulo, Sebastião and their friends were well aware of the literal meaning of UB40 (abbreviated code for the dole application form in the UK) as well as the class divisions and social stigma implied by the term. As asylum seekers and welfare recipients, they identified to a certain extent with the class dimensions of British

³ The South African reggae artist Lucky Dube was tragically shot dead on 18 October 2007 in a botched hijacking in Johannesburg.

ska music yet, rather than signalling any specific lines of continuity with working class British youth, the appeal of ska for young Timorese lay primarily in the fact that it is a youth style high in ‘blackness’.

Lucky Dube was an oft-cited favourite among participants in this study, both male and female. He is described by “Australia’s first world beat magazine”, appropriately named ‘Diaspora’ (2000:11), as a “true African hybrid sprung from *mbaqanga* [South African jive] and Jamaican roots”.⁴ In Sydney, a local Timorese band, Reggae Temptation, welded their own fusion of Jamaican, Brazilian and Timorese music with such reggae numbers as ‘Fire in East Timor’: a ‘true Timorese hybrid’, perhaps, or at least reggae with a lusotropical twist. Reggae Temptation regularly performed at Portuguese clubs in Petersham, Marrickville and Port Kembla, as well as at Timorese functions, with a repertoire that included *merengue* and *samba* as well as traditional Timorese folk songs. The incorporation of Brazilian and Portuguese influences inevitably has to do with East Timor’s historic location within the Portuguese transcontinental empire, as well as the particularities of Timorese migration routes over the twenty-five years since Indonesian occupation. Reggae Temptation was originally formed by a core group of young Timorese musicians who were forced into exile as children in the mid-seventies following the Indonesian invasion. They grew up as Portuguese-speaking Timorese in Lisbon’s immigrant ghettos later translocating to Australia, although band members now included more recent nineties arrivals. Their rather cosmopolitan blend of cultural influences is perhaps befitting of the multicultural urban environment of western Sydney. Yet, for all its cosmopolitanism, Sydney’s West is still a ‘world’ in a locale. The western suburbs are not the (more affluent) North Shore, after all.⁵

⁴ Dube’s status in world beat circles is legendary partly due to the fact that his first album, *Rastas Never Die*, was banned by the South African government in 1985, but also because of his ‘inspired’ performances. Recalling a cover of the Marley classic ‘One Love’, a journalist in *Diaspora* magazine wrote that Dube’s performance was “*imbued with the spirit* of the high priest himself” (my emphasis). The channelling of Marley’s “essence” sits unproblematically with the author’s evocation of his status as a “*true African hybrid*”. It is through such eulogising accounts, argues Chambers (1994:38), that black performers are compelled to “support the burden and unity” of authentic representation.

⁵ Sydney’s North Shore, situated across the harbour from Sydney’s CBD, has an entirely different character to that of the western suburbs. The lower North Shore is a sizeable commercial centre and includes the trendy harbourside suburbs of Neutral Bay, Cremorne and Mosman. The upper North Shore consists of mainly residential suburbs with relatively low

Back home in Dili, reggae has gained some currency among young Timorese in recent years. When I visited in 1998, a rather surprising number of Bob Marley cassettes could be found on the shelves of one or two small shops in the downbeat commercial centre of Colmera, alongside tapes of Latino pop idol Ricky Martin and a plethora of ‘Indo pop’ artists. On the streets, Marley himself was popularly celebrated as a symbol of youth resistance, his image graffitied on walls and reproduced on T-shirts and flags manufactured in various parts of Asia and imported by local Indonesian and Chinese entrepreneurs via Bali (Plate 14). In Indonesian-occupied East Timor after the fall of Suharto, these signalled a broadening cultural expressivity among young Timorese as they sought to tap into global cultural influences that meshed with their own specific circumstances. Through the wearing of a T-shirt; through the risky act of graffiti-ing public spaces, young Timorese in Dili engaged in the performance of everyday resistance in an attempt to define and carve space for themselves in the local arena. At the same time, they also demonstrated their awareness of global cultural resources available to them, as well perhaps as their intention to connect with global youth culture.



Plate 14. Bob Marley graffitied on a wall in Dili, 1998

As a symbol of resistance, Bob Marley’s appeal to young East Timorese both inside and outside of East Timor is easily explained. Legendary as a ‘Third-

density housing, occupied by wealthy middle class families. The North Shore area includes a large number of the most expensive and prestigious private schools in Australia.

World’ visionary and revolutionary poet, he is, as José, a young Sydney-based Timorese musician and nineties arrival, told me “like a freedom fighter but not with guns, with songs – songs that are very powerful”. Similarly for Gil Santos, Melbourne-based member of the Dili All Stars, Marley was an inspiration and influential in his decision to pursue music as a constructive means of political action:

These songs were about *us*. We’re living the same struggle. I realised...with music I can do something for East Timor.

The blurring of the identities of poet/warrior, and the romance that resides in that heroic and masculinised identity, made Marley ideal as a youth icon both inside and outside of East Timor. It is an identity that impacted profoundly on the East Timorese national psyche. Among the leadership of Timor’s nationalist movement, there have been a number of poet-revolutionaries and revolutionary-poets. They include Francisco da Costa Borja and Xanana Gusmão, both well-known in Timor for their poetic eloquence. As young men, they were part of the small elite class of Portuguese-speaking Timorese educated within the traditional hierarchy of the Catholic Church and groomed as *assimilados* by the Portuguese colonial regime. Yet the colonial policy of cultural assimilation ultimately led to their politicisation and equipped them with effective means for resistance. As poets and as revolutionaries, they were profoundly influenced by the writings of African nationalists from the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola and Guiné Bissau. Like the African poet activists, their songs and poems aimed to reach and politicise a largely illiterate rural population with a rich oral tradition, and were a fusion of traditional folkloric and modern nationalist themes. Using a language and imagery that would resonate with people whose lives were shaped by poverty and oppression, the songs valorised the *Maubere*, the indigenous people of Timor, and their struggle for liberty.

The potency of the themes and imagery articulated in the music of Bob Marley, and of reggae music in general, and the authority of the poet/warrior as revolutionary prophet and mobiliser of the oppressed, resonated with young diasporic Timorese and their quest to find an identity niche within a foreign and shifting social world. Marley and the Timorese poet warriors all satisfied

popular cultural myth-making requirements as archetypical self-sacrificing heroes and virtual Christ figures. In the case of Marley and Costa Borja, this quasi-religious identity was ultimately authenticated by their early and tragic deaths.⁶ Yet it is a status that was also once ascribed to the former resistance and CNRT leader Xanana Gusmão. As a freedom fighter and commander of Falintil, he was for years East Timor's most hunted man by the Indonesian state, living in, and orchestrating the resistance from Timor's difficult and sacred mountainous terrain. As such, he developed a folkloric mystique and charisma; elusive, yet deeply connected to the people and the land of East Timor. Falintil guerrillas are famously represented as having an atavistic relationship to the land (Domm 1998:139) and for their reliance upon and engagement in ritual practices of magic that they believed assisted them to elude capture and death.⁷ These practices refer back to an earlier animistic meaning system which inspired awe and deference among Timorese. These are beliefs which coexist with Catholicism and are taken seriously by the young, both inside and beyond Timor.⁸

Xanana's mythic stature was not diminished by his capture in 1992. Like Nelson Mandela, his subsequent incarceration, rather than death, had a profoundly enlarging effect - the Indonesian government apparently recognising too late its own role in his mythologising (Plate 15).⁹ The global media colluded in the exoticisation of Xanana's heroic image, as did key diasporic public figures:

Whenever I am compelled to appear before a distinguished audience as this one today I always wish that instead of me someone else be here today. It could be Xanana Gusmão, a gifted poet, writer and journalist. He is also the possible reincarnation of the romantic El Che who died 30 years ago in the jungles of Bolivia. (Ramos-Horta 1997)¹⁰

⁶ Borja da Costa was tortured and murdered by Indonesian soldiers on the day of invasion in 1975; he was 30-years-old. Marley was 36 years old when he died of cancer in a Miami hospital on May 11, 1981.

⁷ Gusmão claims that, following his clandestine interview with Australian human rights activist Robert Domm in 1990, he escaped near capture by Indonesian forces near Ainaro only "with the help of the *luliks*, the local spirits of the land" (Niner in Gusmão 2000:144). Prevailing myths include Xanana's ability to transform himself into a tree or into a white dog. The latter evidently played on a Javanese superstition, perpetuated by Timorese, and resulted in the killing of a number of white dogs by the military including one belonging to Xanana's sister (Sarah Niner, pers. comm.)

⁸ Many young Timorese I met in East Timor and in the diaspora spoke of the tattooing of bodies, the wearing of amulets, and the enunciation of sayings in archaic language for protection.

⁹ Xanana has inevitably been demythologised in the process of his transition from guerrilla fighter to national leader in the secular world of postcolonial politics.

¹⁰ Opening speech at the APEC People's Summit in Vancouver, 19 November 1997.



Plate 15. Xanana as Che Guevara.
Cartoon by Rui Pimentel in *Visão*, reproduced in
Sempre Fixe: Semaño Humorístico (1999:6)

The fusion of icons and symbols that merge in this cultural bricolage of reggae and blackness, struggle and resistance, poets and warriors, spiritual mystique and indigeneity, found a coherent expression in the cultural production of diasporic Timorese youth. It is no accident that young members of a Melbourne-based Timorese band, appropriately named *Rai Abut* (root of the land) collaborated with members of the indigenous Australian band Tiddas to celebrate Xanana's poem 'Timor Woman' and a dance track entitled 'Free Xanana' along the lines of the highly successful international hit 'Free Nelson Mandela'. In fact, intersecting cultural interests of young Aboriginal Australians and East Timorese frequently emerged through the fieldwork in surprising ways, complicating the migrant/non-migrant divide articulated within discourses of Australian multiculturalism. As both Hage (1998:24) and Perera (2000) have argued, the question of Aboriginal-ethnic relations remains a relatively unexplored field of research. So too, this dynamic was often dismissed or unrecognised by older generation Timorese. For example, when I asked one community leader if young Timorese were forging creative or political alliances with Aboriginal youth, he replied:

There is no relationship among the Timorese with any other. The active ones, the few Timorese who are [politically] active on a daily basis, yes, they develop a relationship with other groups but the community at large is very closed, like most other refugee groups and immigrants.

Yet, one of his young relatives was actively pursuing intercultural connections with indigenous Australians through the medium of radio. I met João in 1998. A second generation Timorese-Australian, then in his twenties, his immediate family was strongly affiliated with the UDT political party, although he himself expressed party political neutrality. João was the front man for ‘Freedom Chants’, a weekly radio program for young Timorese broadcast through Koori Radio’s Test Transmission, which ran out of Gadigal Information Services in Cleveland Street, central Sydney.¹¹ The program aimed to inform young Timorese about the resistance movement, promote cultural activities and provide an outlet for talented young Timorese musicians. Broadcast in English, its interviews and reports appealed mainly to second generation Timorese, although nineties Timorese often tuned in for the music. Gadigal prided itself on providing indigenous Australians with a voice lacking in the mainstream media and aimed to promote programs to educate the wider community on human rights and the struggles of fellow indigenous people. Gadigal thus explicitly linked the East Timorese struggle for independence to its own through the construct of “race” as an idiom of (black) resistance. In turn, ‘Freedom Chants’ elaborated an inclusive discourse of black youth culture. Its logo, for example, depicted a graffiti-style figure suggesting aggressive masculinity and communicating a self-conscious gesture of solidarity and reconciliation and recognition of shared histories of colonisation as the basis for alliance (see Plate 16).

Such expressions of youth resistance draw heavily from the aestheticisation of blackness and indigeneity in ways that exemplify the, always negotiated, tension between a specific cultural inheritance and the creation of new ethnicities. As Gilroy (1987:13) argues in his analysis of the political dimensions of musical cultures of black Britain:

culture does not develop along ethnically absolute lines but in complex, dynamic patterns of syncretism in which new definitions of what it means to be black emerge from raw materials provided by the black populations elsewhere in the diaspora.

¹¹ Gadigal had obtained its community radio licence from the Australian Broadcasting Association.



Plate 16. "Freedom Chants" logo¹²

The global orientation of black popular culture, as Gilroy suggests, derives from the elaborate cartographies of diaspora produced by the colonial histories and politics of the Caribbean, Africa and the Indian sub-continent. Mass migration and the globalisation of Western urban culture have encouraged the eclectic growth and symbolic exchange of elements of blackness and black subcultures that both collapse and thrive on notions of authenticity and essentialism. Paradoxically, processes of 'heterogenesis' (Guattari 1989) in contemporary metropolitan cultures have worked to homogenise black styles and music, enabling the articulation of a pan-black discourse that plays down difference among blacks from different countries and in which white youth may also participate as consumers and producers of, for example, reggae and hip hop. At the same time, emergent localised forms of creolised youth styles are inexorably

¹² "Freedom Chants" promotional notes state: "A topless individual stands above the Aboriginal flag facing away from the viewer. His wrists are bound by chains and shackles...effectively hampering his freedom (of expression). The hair is brown, the skin complexion is olive; baggy blue pants and sneakers symbolizes a youthful attitude which is made more prominent by the casual stance with hips pushed forward in a dignified, proud and rebellious posture. Within a yellow circle of the Koori flag is written the name "Freedom Chants". A single living flower (red petals, green leaves) stems from where the individual's feet meet with the flag. The flower symbolizes hope (for the future) and harmony (in the present) between Timorese and Kooris. The colours and the overall picture represent the major Timorese political parties and Australian aboriginals [sic] in one cohesive union looking towards a future of harmonious relations, goodwill and independence"

in motion, interleaving local and global socio-political specificities and repudiating any sense of uncomplicated origins.¹³

This, then, is no straightforward tale of 'local' youth culture and identity. Already in the space of a few pages we have covered ground from Sydney's West to East Timor and back to Sydney, via western Europe for some and Java or Bali for others, with diversions through the Caribbean and Latin America. Here, specific circuits of travel – the political flights of young Indonesian-speaking and educated 'nineties' Timorese arrivals and young Portuguese-speaking, Lisbon and Australian-educated 'seventies' refugees - meet in the cultural practice and consumption of reggae music and rasta style in Sydney's western suburbs. It is a cultural milieu that finds its bearings in transnational linkages and intercultural exchange. And it is only one example among many of the diverse ways in which young diasporic Timorese are involved in the construction and re-negotiation of their cultural identities.

Clearly, music, as a core ethnic and lifestyle marker for young people, draws on a host of references which are fused, reconfigured and played back in ways that make sense contextually to its young producers and consumers. As such, local youth cultures are a product of interaction which results in neither a closed, localised cultural form, nor an undifferentiatedly global one (Massey 1998:122). This meshing and replaying of cultural influences renders the notion of cultural authenticity decidedly suspect so that discussions of 'Timorese-ness' (like 'Englishness' or 'Australianness') raise, to use James Clifford's words (1992), the whole question of identity as politics rather than an inheritance.

Islanders, not-Asians

When some of my [non-Timorese] friends ask me, I say I'm from an island. I think it's like a traditional thing, it's similar, like islanders gathering together. In Liverpool, islanders came to our place, and we hung out with Tongan, Samoan, Fijian. They all doing the same thing,

¹³ The vibrancy of 'translocal' street art was recently illustrated in a creative collaboration between three young artists' collectives from Indonesia, East Timor and Australia, (*Taring Padi, Gembel and Culture Kitchen*). The project, entitled 'We Refuse to Become Victims', explores the interconnectedness of contemporary social and political conflicts and asymmetries of power within and across the three nations through the medium of thematic 'maps' focusing on human rights; resources; environment and peace (in 'Thresholds of Tolerance', ANU School of Art Gallery, 9 May – 5 June 2007; see also Bexley 2007a).

food's the same, they respect their elders. We use certain names to call our elders, our brothers and sisters. All the similarities we see...like reggae music, all islanders like reggae music.

Natalina (18) Sydney

In this part of the chapter, I consider 'strategic islanderness' as an aspect of Timorese youth identification which is also linked, for young Timorese, to a positive ascription of blackness. It is an identity most conspicuously, although not exclusively, as Natalina's comment above suggests, deployed and consumed by young Timorese men and which trades heavily in expressive cultures of 'blackness'. Islanderness as a social identity has been unexplored within the literature on diasporic East Timorese, although Wise refers to the latent racism inherent in exoticised "images of peaceful islanders which permeate Australian representations of Pacific peoples" (2002:183). This reference to the tyranny of positive stereotypes is entirely valid, yet the ascription of essentialised authenticity is always subject to the "perpetual dialectic of subordinate reply and reaction to power and hegemony" (Chambers 1994:38). Among the cultural repertoires of young Timorese, islanderness may be viewed as part of a continual fabulation and reinterpretation of existing cultural referents and practices through which East Timoresehood has been produced and reinscribed. In enacting islanderness, young Timorese men, in particular, buy into stereotypical images of laid back, exotic islanders, but as an identity strategy it has a far broader set of meanings for young diasporic Timorese as this chapter shows.

I suggest that the ways in which young nineties Timorese deliberately positioned themselves as 'islanders' rather than 'Asians' in the early part of 1999, formed a counter-narrative to ambivalent constructions of 'Asianness', produced both within the diasporic Timorese community and at the national level in Australia during a period in which Australia's geopolitical positioning as part of Asia and the so-called 'Asianisation' of Australia were, coincidentally, the focus of shrill and emotive public debate. Monoculturalist political visions of the Australian nation, advanced by key public figures during the period of fieldwork, antagonised popular anxieties that focused specifically on the saturising spectre

of Asian immigration and anticipated the loss of social cohesion.¹⁴ These themes are not new in Australian politics: indeed, the sense of danger and menace attached to ‘Asianisation’ in Australia has a long history that is ineluctably linked to fear of the ‘other’ as well as drug-related Asian crime and amorality (Collins et al, 2000:56).¹⁵

As asylum seekers, young nineties Timorese were peripherally positioned, even absent, within these debates on national belonging but the national scale of moral and media panics fuelled by anti-Asian political rhetoric inevitably impinged on the local living environments and experiences of non-European minority youth, especially among young men in lower class, urban neighbourhoods. Young Timorese in Sydney were aware of, and discomfited by, the racism underlying these debates which they mainly viewed as being primarily directed at Chinese people, whom they identified as archetypally Asian.¹⁶ At the same time, they negotiated their own ambivalent location within the host nation by engaging in cultural strategies aimed at finding a niche and achieving a sense of belonging and acceptance within this exclusionary political environment. Importantly, none of the research participants self-identified as Timorese-Chinese, despite the fact that some claimed Chineseness as an element of their mixed cultural heritage. This is significant in the sense that while most of the young research participants incorporated elements of blackness and islanderness into their cultural repertoires and aesthetic styles, those aspects were rarely, if ever, equated with Asianness.

¹⁴ During the period of fieldwork, both the Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson (One Nation Party) and the Prime Minister John Howard blatantly traded in the discourse of race, invoking a pejorative ‘Asianness’. Both articulated a deeply parochial vision of a basically Anglo-Australian, pre-multicultural unity. In her now legendary maiden speech to the House of Representatives (10 September 1996), Hanson stated: “To survive in peace and harmony, united and strong, we must have one nation, one people, one flag...A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united” (Rundle 2001:26). The notion of unity deployed by John Howard is, as Rundle (2001:17) argues, a paradoxical and effortless one, requiring no dialogue or mutual understanding. It is taken for granted and is therefore pre-political.

¹⁵ Historically, Chinese in Australia have been negatively and melodramatically constituted as Australia’s archetypal migrant “other”, stereotypically cast “as shrewd but mean, as destroyers of morals and purveyors of opium, seducers of white women and carriers of disease” (Giese 1997:17).

¹⁶ The elision of Asianness and Chineseness is unsurprising given the historical positioning of Chinese as within colonial social hierarchies and orientalist discourse and the, not unrelated, fact that “in Australia the key referent for Asianness is arguably East Asian, perhaps more specifically Chinese” (Ang 2000:xviii).

The assertion of a ‘small island’ identity among young nineties Timorese may thus be viewed both as a form of political resistance against Indonesia’s political and cultural hegemony in East Timor and as an identity strategy deployed at the micro level of everyday life in Sydney’s west. It is an identity in which young Timorese expressed cultural pride. In the East Timorese imaginary home existed as a small island. It was commonly depicted in graffiti scrawled on apartment walls and doors and portrayed in tattoos as such, cut off from its West Timorese Indonesian neighbour and the bloc of islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago (see Plate 17). If the vast majority of nineties Timorese had never envisaged themselves as Indonesian, neither did they recognise themselves as categorically Asian. This dis-identification was reinforced by East Timor’s geopolitical isolation under Indonesian occupation making an ‘Asian’ identity politically untenable for the majority of East Timorese, as seventies-arrival Manuel explained:

During the years of oppression and struggle for independence, it was small countries in the Pacific like Vanuatu and Tonga that had the courage to publicly support East Timor. Not a single country in Asia, and especially Southeast Asia, supported the East Timorese struggle against Indonesian oppression. Had they done so, the East Timorese would have thought differently and might have identified themselves as ‘Asian’.

Email correspondence, 2001



Plate 17. Graffitied map of East Timor as an island, East Hills army barracks, December 1999

Geographies of exclusion are thus produced through hierarchically structured space out of which complex, strategic alliances and cultural politics emerge. In this sense, Indonesianness is conflated with Asianness in opposition to small islander nations that aligned themselves strategically with the East Timorese independence struggle.¹⁷

Here in Sydney's western suburbs, their 'small island' identity had a distinct bearing on the social relationships young Timorese formed. In Liverpool, Sebastião and his friends Paulo and Felipe knew, but were less familiar or predisposed to form friendships with, Vietnamese and Chinese youth in their neighbourhood. Instead the boys mixed with "other islanders", for example, Tongan, Samoan and Maori friends. They hung out in each others' homes, on the streets, at Liverpool's Westfield Shoppingtown, at the EPI pool hall, the Liverpool RSL, or The Tivoli, a local Pacific Islander club where they mostly played reggae, ska and hip hop. This affiliation brought a sense of belonging as well as an element of security, perhaps, in a locality where ethnic rivalries were not uncommon. Vietnamese gangs characteristically clashed with local Chinese and there had been some casualties at the pool hall and in their neighbourhood. In general, the boys claimed they kept out of the conflicts, although they had occasionally been picked on by Serbian and Lebanese youth. Besides, Timorese are mostly physically small and slender; hanging out with more powerfully built Pacific Islanders also made good practical sense. Islander gangs such as *Samoan Power* and *Tongan Blood* operated in the neighbourhood from Campbelltown to Liverpool. Within these milieux, tough streetwise masculinity was accepted and celebrated. The Timorese boys themselves claimed a loose affiliation with *Black Power* which included both Tongans and Samoans. While their association with islander gangs and urban street culture was peripheral, their nominal membership clearly offered them a sense of camaraderie, as well as protection in

¹⁷ 'Indonesianness', for East Timorese, was further conflated with 'Javanese-ness': The ambivalent politics of ethnicity that prevailed under Suharto's New Order government upheld Javanese culture as an idealised model of order, stability and control, against which unrestrained expressions of *sukuisme* (ethnicity) were constructed as *belum diatur* (archaic and disordered). In the political iconography of 'modern' Indonesia, the nation's capital thus represented the epicentre of Indonesian state power with ethnic minorities from the Outer Islands asymmetrically placed in relation to this core identity (Tsing 1993). In a further anti-Asian twist, Turner (1992:x) notes that older generation East Timorese who remembered the Japanese occupation in WW2 frequently confused 'Javanese' with 'Japanese'. She attributed this slippage to the "sadly repetitive" nature of Timorese experiences of trauma and torture at the hands of the Japanese.

negotiating the unpredictable frontiers of youth territory. They insisted they felt safe in Liverpool despite the reputation the neighbourhood had for mostly drug-related crime. In a different locality they reckoned they might get harassed by the police but here in Liverpool, they were usually ok because they “knew people” and they tended to move around in groups. There were some Timorese drug dealers in their apartment block, they said, but they were older ‘seventies’ Timorese, aged in their thirties, and not recent arrivals like themselves.

While most of the nineties boys smoked marijuana and consumed alcohol recreationally with their friends, they were not, by their own account, involved in dealing. In contrast, the seventies guys were well known in the neighbourhood for their more serious engagement in the local drug economy. They were members of a family whose reputation for trouble routinely registered disapproval in community gossip. As one young nineties Timorese woman remarked, “because they came in ‘75 they think they’re something in this country”. Their braggadocio and aggressive assertion of familial honour was justified by a lusophone-oriented community leader in terms of a “typically hot-headed” oceanic cultural disposition:

These animosities change from one day to the next. Today someone is a friend of mine – a week from now, because a cousin, or an in-law, an aunt or brother did something wrong, then they all get upset with each other. It’s very typical of the Melanesian society. East Timor, PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji, they all have the same level of cultural development and it’s a bit immature...

While the nineties boys remained on the periphery of the underground economy of illicit drugs, possibilities for more serious engagement were readily available through their links to islander gangs and their broader social networks, and were not without appeal. Aside from the lucrative possibilities on offer, a certain anti-hero status, respect and sense of adventure were attached to such activities. The precariousness of their own legal status in Australia, however, made more determined forays into that social world risky and self-defeating.¹⁸

¹⁸ Their vulnerability did not prevent them from engaging in acts of petty crime. Two of the boys in Paulo’s friendship group were banned from a local mall after being caught shoplifting. As a first offence, they were cautioned and required to undertake community service.

The mutual recognition of young East Timorese men and “other islanders” in western Sydney marked a space of connectivity produced through a pan-ethnic, ‘open-ended kinship’ akin to that described by Teiawa and Mallon (2005:223) among young Pacific people in New Zealand. While East Timorese are not phenotypically Polynesian, the term ‘kinship’ may be, as Teiawa and Mallon suggest for the diverse cultures of the Pacific, applied metaphorically in terms of shared histories of colonial oppression, migration and as structurally marginal constituents within the national space of host nation. Such negotiation of experiences of marginality, open up possibilities for “rethinking difference through connection” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:8), and in which “the space in-between, some state of liminality, can be an anchoring point or productive site for addressing the instabilities of social and cultural life” (Teiawa & Mallon 2005:225).

The forms of association young Timorese sought with other islanders tend to suggest a more positive multi-ethnic group comradeship than gang membership in the ‘deviant’ sense of the word. As Collins et al (2000:137) have argued, ‘gang’ is a highly imprecise and contested term complicated by media-induced moral panics that link youth, criminality, class and ethnicity. Furthermore, it is a profoundly gendered term. Despite the fact that girls and young women do participate in gang activity, gang paranoia is often linked explicitly to the demonology of young men and increasingly, to non-Anglo males (Davis 1990; Lucas 1998). Yet being a member of a designated gang for nineties Timorese had distinctly political, historical and gendered connotations.¹⁹ Some of the young male participants in this study had been involved in clandestine pro-independence *kakalok* (magical or mystical) or *Isin Kanek* (wound) groups in Timor, such as *Sete Sete* (77) and *Cinco Cinco* (55). These groups, or gangs, were shrouded in masculine mystique and arcane codes of conduct. Members of

¹⁹ In East Timor, communal or gang violence was historically sanctioned and formalized under successive Portuguese and Indonesian colonial regimes. Portuguese *moradores* were locally recruited militia drawn from the *Topasse* class, as well as indigenous Timorese from *reinos* loyal to the Portuguese Crown (Gunn 1999:96,167). Under Indonesian occupation, militia groups were among the repressive apparatuses deployed against the Timorese people. As well, a number of hierarchically structured, Indonesian-imported martial arts groups prevailed, such as ‘SH’ or *Setia Hati* meaning ‘Faithful Heart’.¹⁹ Groups like *Setia Hati*, which included mostly young men, encouraged its members to learn self-defence and to undergo a series of tough, physical tests under the instruction of a *warga* (lit. ‘citizen’ but here meaning ‘martial arts master’). When I visited Timor in 1998, these self-defence groups were widely apprehended by Timorese as a political instrument for the coercive disciplining of young men’s bodies ultimately for the purpose of Indonesianisation.

Sete Sete and *Cinco Cinco* were ritually tattooed with a coloured powder as a means of immunity against enemy attack, death and injury and as a mark of political maturity and commitment. In Dili, I encountered many young men tattooed with the distinctive marks of ‘77’ who insisted their invincibility had been proven through their near-death escape from terrifying events like the massacre at Santa Cruz in 1991. In Sydney, such insignias and emblematic bodies commanded respect and awe among peers:

When I raise the subject of 77 Felipe is instantly animated: “This guy [pointing to Paulo] he was in that gang!” Paulo looks bashful. He shows me a small, blurry blue-black tattoo between his thumb and forefinger. The others are giggling and carrying on but he continues with the story. The tattoo was performed by a Master, in this case his uncle, who has magical powers and prophetic dreams. An incision is made by a special knife and a powder obtained from the roots of a tree is inserted under the skin. I ask about the special rules or conditions 77 members have to agree to. Paulo hesitates: “Well, the thing, you know, we treat girls with respect... you can’t play around. You have to follow the rules otherwise you get it”. I ask if the power of the tattoo is effective in Australia or only in East Timor. He tells me no, “it can’t cross over...but you wanna see a good tattoo?” Laughing, he points to his friend César, “he gotta real good tattoo”.

César takes off his shirt to reveal a tattooed image of a traditional Timorese *Uma Lulik* (sacred house) and a palm tree beneath a shining sun, surrounded by sea. The image also includes a set of compass points which “shows my orientation, my direction”. He tells me the tatt was done by a member of the Gypsy Jokers²⁰ and I nod approvingly. Then he tells me the guy’s dead, shot in some biker war. César grew up in Australia and has residency here. He has mixed Portuguese/Timorese heritage and his accent is broadly Australian but he identifies as Timorese. His tattoo, he says, is an explicit statement of his Timorese-ness “No shit, if I went back there I’d be fighting for the resistance, man”.

Field journal, January 1999

These expressions of masculinist bravado and toughness – Paulo’s links to 77 and its secret rituals and Cesar’s claims to association with hard core Australian bikers – were not only intended to impress outsiders like me, but each other. Through such symbols of identity and resistance, constructed from the margins, young men like Paulo and Cesar accumulated cultural capital among their peers in western Sydney. They were embodied points of reference to ‘authentic’

²⁰ The Gypsy Jokers are one of a number of Australian outlaw motorcycle gangs. Others include: the Coffin Cheaters, God’s Garbage and the Club Deros.

Timoreseanness that affirmed their eligibility for membership of Samoan/Tongan *Black Power*, however loosely defined.

Fitting in: familiarity and difference in the western suburbs

Fitting in is a complex business for those who are suddenly faced with, not simply the radical alterity of complex new urban space, but with the spectre of their own difference. In discovering how the structuring aspects of identity – gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, social status – are differently perceived and accommodated, migrants can be abruptly confronted with the limits of their own integration. El-Zein (2002:230) describes the relationality of foreignness and familiarity and the ambiguity of migrant belonging thus:

If faces and buildings and streets are unfamiliar, it is not only because we cannot recognize them, do not understand their stories and cannot readily incorporate them into our consciousness. It is also because we cannot get them to recognize us and cannot tell them our stories. The migrant loses the concise language of familiarity and shared memory, the ability to evoke worlds of association with a few hints and words. Given time, we do overcome the foreignness of a place: we recognize it, one way or another; it becomes part of our memory by force of habit. It is a matter of living there, of seeing and hearing and understanding. It is much harder, however, to overcome our own strangeness to the place, our own foreignness, because it is a matter of creating a new language. Eyes and ears, after all, are much more adaptable than tongues. Familiarity is a two-way process, going much faster in one direction compared to the other.

According to Thomas (1998:86), the spatiality of social being may be understood in terms of political struggle for migrants displaced into new urban hierarchies. Preconceived notions and expectations of life in Western cities can involve assumptions that the public space of the city is freely open to all, yet the reality is that control is exercised over who may occupy space and how and when public space may be used (Breitbart 1998). This control and surveillance is especially acute in the case of young ethnic males. Moreover, the fact that physical spaces in the modern city offer more ‘fleeting’ than ‘meeting’ places can intensify a sense of anonymity and alienation and delimit young people’s geographies (Malbon 1998).

The density and speed of city life, as well as the confronting presence of so many strangers, can intensify the sense of apprehension city dwellers feel, as

well as nostalgia for a simpler, mythical, order of things. Sensationalist media reporting reinforces social fears of radical alterity within city spaces. Media panics in Australia have increasingly targeted young ethnic males as especially undesirable occupants of public space with cultural practices and personal characteristics that diverge from those of 'normal' youth. The highly racialised and gendered modes of representation used in the media have very real and negative consequences for young ethnic males, particularly young Arab/Lebanese men, in terms of the structuring of their relations with police and government (Collins et al, 2000:56). Devoid of structural and historical context, such accounts simply confirm racist stereotypes and fetishise the propensity of young ethnic males for crime and violence.

Crime in western Sydney was inevitably an important concern for Timorese, as it was for most residents. For older generation Timorese, anxieties revolved around the safety of the elderly as well as young people, especially girls and young women, and drug-related crime. To an extent their concerns echoed media panics that routinely dichotomised the impulses and spatial practices and preferences of young men and women. Yet while young people themselves expressed some concern about travelling alone on public transport and being in unfamiliar public spaces at night, most expressed a sense of feeling at home in their neighbourhoods.

While home-spaces were not always conflict-free, they provided some control over the definition and identity of space. Many of the nineties Timorese lived in close proximity to each other, clustered in key western suburbs like Fairfield and Liverpool. Paulo and his two teenage sisters shared a small apartment with their uncle Rui, also a nineties arrival and asylum seeker, aged in his thirties. Their place was always full of teenage traffic, providing a refuge mostly for the neighbourhood's cohort of young nineties Timorese asylum seekers and their friends:

In Liverpool there's always young people coming and going, I love that. It's like at my mum and dad's place in Dili, young people always gathering...so it feels like home.

Natalina (18) Sydney

As a joke, Rui had placed a “*Refugee Centre*” sign outside his front door but it had upset the (non-Timorese) neighbours and he had reluctantly removed it. Yet the graffittied map of East Timor in the stairwell had remained as an imprint of ethno-national identity and Rui’s apartment continued to perform an important function as a ‘drop-in’ centre for his nephew and nieces’ circle of friends, where they could cook, eat, talk, argue and play music together. Like other Timorese homes, familiar iconic images adorned the living room walls; small *tais* (weavings), *uma lulik* (sacred house) and Catholic paraphernalia. These were touchstones of Timoresehood which, as Bexley points out (2007b), intimately and viscerally communicate and represent a sense of place and emotional attachment linking bodily and social space through cultural memory.²¹

The intrusion of public opinion and articulation of a defensive concept of their refugeehood, conveyed via the neighbours’ protest over the ‘Refugee Centre’ sign, reinforced the value-ladenness of the term for members of Rui’s household. It was their status as asylum seekers, they felt, that primarily structured their ‘difference’ and sense of ‘un-belonging’ rather than other key determinants of identity or appearance. For example, Paulo and Sebastião’s circle of friends were convinced that they slipped under the radar of racism and racial stereotyping because they looked neither typically ‘Asian’, nor ‘Arab’ and because, they argued, “there is no Timorese look”. This uncategorical physical quality, the consequence of East Timor’s already creolised origins gave them a certain strategic manoeuvrability according to Paulo: “People don’t know what is a Timorese, they never guess where we from”. His remark suggests that, on some level, a ‘non-specific’ hybrid appearance worked for them. Yet the reality of structural inequality and the inescapable fact of colour contributed both to their visibility and their invisibility in the social spaces of the city. Marginality, while potentially liberating, is a double-edged sword, as seventies arrival Manuel observed:

My physical identity is Timorese identity (mistaken sometimes as Indian, Pakistani, native Mexican). It is quite fixed and unchangeable unless having plastic surgery like Michael Jackson, which is very ugly. My cultural identity is the problem. It cannot be put into one box. It is not single and fixed. Rather, it is multiple, fluid, open-ended and

²¹ See Bexley’s (2007b) explanation of the notion of *rasa* (*Bahasa Indonesia*: ‘taste, touch, feel’) as “the essence of emotions, feeling and meaning, fundamental to the embodied state of being in the world”.

unique (*einmalig*). Mind, imagination and openness reach beyond the narrowness of cultural, religious and ideological space and liberate me from suffocation by this narrowness. More important than the travel of the body is the travel of the mind and imagination through literature. Finding my self being marginalized (a minority) everywhere, including Timor, fitting nowhere and everywhere.

Email correspondence (2001)

For young nineties Timorese, 'passing' as Indian, African, Jamaican or European (and therefore potentially fitting everywhere as 'global citizens') compensated for the liminality of being asylum seekers (fitting nowhere). Rather than transcending their social marginality through the medium of literature, like the older and more academically oriented Manuel, the young nineties Timorese men in Liverpool sought imaginative and practical resolution through the public pursuit of leisure.

A key characteristic shared by young nineties Timorese and their islander friends is that their communities had high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency. In 1999, young Timorese asylum seekers relied heavily on Red Cross benefits as well as the low wages those in paid work received as casual and unskilled workers. Yet, the pursuit of leisure is no less important for young people on the margins of labour markets (Sansone 1995). In fact, it is frequently more intense among youth who experience extreme material difficulty and whose dreams and aspirations are unfulfilled. Hanging out and pursuing adventure and/or trouble in community centres, clubs and local malls may be the only way in which young people can actively participate in the social spaces of the city. The leisure arena thus provides possibilities for escape from the strictures of oppressive cultural uniformity and obligation, social marginality and boredom.

Young Timorese men's public visibility was related to the latitude they had to be 'streetwise' and socialise in public spaces, relative to that of young women. Their more obvious street presence was inextricably bound up with popularly held notions of what constituted acceptable masculine and feminine behaviours within the Timorese community. The image they sought to project moved, like

so many youth styles, between stylish panache and a slightly anarchic quality.²² To this extent, style and appearance for young Timorese had as much to do with aesthetics as with cultural politics. Street cred in Sydney's West meant shedding 'Indo-style', a look that one young Australian-born Timorese woman pointedly referred to as 'homemade' (basically unfashionable, as in T-shirts worn tucked into jeans with ironed-in creases). Instead, young Timorese guys in Liverpool, like Sebastião and Paulo and their friends, wore urban street wear (low-slung baggy jeans and hooded sweat shirts), tattoos and dreads. Reggae style combined with military surplus clothes even mimicked to some extent the eclectic look of guerilla armies, thus reproducing a 'look' of resistance. This style also involved a distinct movement of the body; a way of walking (a kind of practised 'loping', communicating blasé indifference) and greeting a "brother" in public. This citification of the body, its adornment and gestures, were far from the measured movements necessary for everyday survival under military occupation in East Timor. They signalled the kind of embodied difference that would get you noticed in Timor, and mark you out as *malae* (foreign). In Sydney, they were an embodied statement of urban cool, bearing the creative stamp of personal autonomy and self-determining style.

Naturally, the price of style had to be negotiated. For example, African hairdressers could charge anything from two or three hundred dollars for 'authentic' dreads, but the Timorese boys knew a guy in Cabra [matta], "a gay guy from Laos", who would do it for fifty. They were nice to him so they got their dreads but that's as far as it went. They had some discomfort around discussing gendered difference and alternative masculinities and my efforts to engage them on the subject only resulted in self-conscious giggling and embarrassed eye rolling. They would attempt to bring these discussions swiftly to a close with remarks such as, "well, it's ok for them, it's their choice, but it's

²² The potentially anarchic public presence and relative mobility of young men was evident during the period of fieldwork in Dili in 1998. Clusters of young men lingered after curfew on the city's waterfront and tested the military's patience by calling out and throwing rocks. The anarchy of young men was particularly pronounced at the city's only cinema. Here, young adolescent boys consumed poor quality American or Asian movies in hot, noisy and uncomfortable, often chaotic, conditions where they took full opportunity to assert their masculinity, unconstrained by regulatory controls. More recently, in post-occupation East Timor, the emergence of large, organised street gangs of young unemployed, marginalised men has resulted in widespread violence which is disturbingly linked to regional and 'ethnic' polarisation (Trinidade and Castro 2007).

not really natural, is it?” They claimed not to know any gay Timorese and they assured me that their acquaintance with the Laotian hairdresser was purely in the interests of acquiring affordable dreads.

Their reticence was entirely understandable. There was substantial denial around the issue of homosexuality among Timorese in Sydney. Many of the older, seventies-generation Timorese I spoke to insisted there were no gay Timorese in the community, except for a well-known male Timorese Chinese couple (a disclaimer that distanced homosexual practice culturally and resorted to the stereotypical orientalist conflation of Asian/exotic/feminine). Timorese cultural ambivalence and stigmatisation of homosexuality is reflected in the fact that terms used in Tetun – *panleiro (m)/bermanek (f)* – are distinctly derogatory. The conservatism of the Catholic Church on issues of sexuality contributed to the framing of homosexuality in terms of shame and sinfulness. Yet, despite their self-consciousness, young nineties Timorese demonstrated a broad acceptance of others’ personal gendered and sexual orientations. At the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade in 1999, for example, after the recording session at Surry Hills, the young members of the choir *Hananu Kore A’an* cheered wildly as a non-Timorese friend passed by on a gay youth float from western Sydney.²³ Indeed, although it was only ever referred to in the most oblique terms, the Liverpool boys’ immediate friendship circle included a gay friend, Mario. At the time, Mario was the only one of the boys who had a car, a full-time job in a factory and a reasonable income. Among the group he was highly regarded for his cooking skills which were better than any of their sisters (an assessment with which the young women concurred). He was also a sharp dresser, favouring suits and shirts and regular haircuts unlike the rest of the guys. The other boys remarked on his singularly stylish appearance, which they identified as “classic”.

²³ The Mardi Gras is a major gay pride event that attracts thousands of visitors, both gay and straight, to Sydney each year. It was Sydney’s contribution to the international Gay Solidarity Celebrations, an event that had grown up as a result of the Stonewall riots in New York. Interestingly, the Mardi Gras in 2000 included for the first time a Miss East Timor entrant; a diminutive beauty among the towering divas and exemplars of muscular hypermasculinity. Furthermore, there is evidence of a limited but growing public acceptance of expressions of alternative masculinities and femininities both in Dili (cosmopolitanised through the occupation of *malae* since the end of 1999) and in the diaspora since independence.

The self-consciousness and insecurity concerning gender issues expressed by young Timorese men is consistent with the broader experience of young men in their late teens and early twenties within Australian society. In spite of the interventions of feminism and gay political activism, dominant patriarchal models of white, Anglo masculinity and pressure from other men contribute to young men's social fears around discussions of sexuality/ies. Contemporary constructions of Timorese masculinity are informed by complex webs of interrelated socio-political, cultural, and religious ideologies including traditional patriarchal codes and practices; colonial constructions of gender difference; Catholicised doctrine and dogma; and gendered discourses of East Timorese nationalism, as well as prevailing hegemonic and alternative notions of gender and sexuality in the West. How norms of masculinity and femininity entwine with ideologies of ethnicity and race cross culturally and how they are persuasively policed and enforced publicly and privately are issues of critical importance in constructions of Timorese youth identities. Clearly, symbols of identity and networks of relationality among young Timorese women and men in the diaspora are profoundly gendered.

Contesting the unity of gendered archetypes

The exemplary resistance figure in contemporary narratives of East Timorese popular nationalism is the heroic, indigenous, masculinised *Maubere* warrior. The enduring spirit of this iconic figure has been recurrently invoked and celebrated in Timorese cultural practices as well as the media, and continues to find expression in the creation of postcolonial Timorese youth cultures within East Timor (Bexley 2007c). As we have seen in this chapter, the image of the heroic freedom fighter is heavily imbricated in the youth styles of young diasporic Timorese and finds legitimacy in broader forms of global popular culture. The female *Maubere* counterpart, *companeira da luta* and penumbral figure in resistance culture and mythology is the quintessential *Buibere*, poetically invoked in Xanana Gusmão's elegy to 'Timor Woman' as the embodiment of suffering and sacrifice:

Manacled by your misery
Timor Woman
Your spirit bound in servitude
Timor woman
Forced to bear invaders children

Timor woman
Raped, abandoned in the camp
Timor woman
Your feeble honesty your strength
Your bloodless voice a weapon of war
Your fragile chant the hymn of freedom
Timor woman
Companeira, imprisoned
Your song a cry for justice
Your soul anticipating death
Timor woman
You weep warm tears of blood
Your blood, our blood
Your face the record of our struggle
Your determination the story of our resistance ²⁴

The bleak representation of immobilised victimhood (“manacled”, “bound in servitude”, “imprisoned”) and defiled (“raped”, “abandoned”) femininity and maternal forbearance contrasts with the romance of the *Maubere* warrior who can enact heroic forms of masculinity from a space of unambiguous resistance. While both *Maubere* and *Buibere* images are figures that valorise suffering, oppression and poverty, the masculinist *Maubere* image inevitably lends itself more readily to heroic fantasies of the exotic outlaw. In resistance narratives, the *Maubere* freedom fighter is imaginatively mapped into Timor’s pure, untamed mountainous landscape as symbolic protector of its inviolable core. Women are elided from that territory in nationalist discourse, even though they substantially participated in the clandestine front and the armed resistance. The imaginative setting for the *Buibere*’s travails is the space of confined domesticity; the encampment, the village, the household. The containment and domesticity of women is inextricably enmeshed with traditional familial values and religious beliefs and practices in which values of marriage and motherhood are paramount. While the war and occupation imposed multiple burdens upon women, including principle responsibility as breadwinners in the absence of men, hegemonic ideals of female roles and conduct have reductively positioned women as nurturers of household and kinship structures and keepers of the moral code of familial virtue and duty:

²⁴ Translation by Agio Pereira & Rob Wesley-Smith.

The most important Timorese values are family, especially women, they want to make their family, their friends happy, and show respect for Timorese elders, older sister (*mana*) and older brother (*maun*)...

Emilia (30) Sydney

The gendered experience of war, however, including the forced maternity and marriage inflicted upon Timorese women during the occupation through rape, prostitution and sexual slavery, have rendered certain forms of motherhood and familial belonging, as well as women's contributions to independence, deeply problematic (Harris Rimmer 2007). According to the *Chega!* report (CAVR 2005:100), the extent of sexual violence by Indonesian military and militia against women has been vastly under-reported in Timor due to women's fear of social rejection and familial humiliation. Both children born of rape and their mothers have been subjected to extreme communal stigmatisation and impoverishment. Yet low rates of abandonment of such children may result from the fact that women's status, however unequal, derives substantially from their roles as mothers.

In the diaspora, young Timorese women have argued that they have a poverty of expression within these gendered constructions of geography and identity and their circumscribed and stoically downtrodden referents of femininity:

Women are always second. Women are always trusted only to have children and to feed them. (19-year-old refugee, in Sissens, 1997: 8)

It's like, soon as you get married they're like "Oh hi how are you? *Where's the kids?*" It's so wog [conservative]. I say, "I'll put an ad in Channel 10 when I get pregnant!"

Anabela (25) Sydney

Yet, as the experience of political activist Bella Galhos (cited in Chapter Four) showed, raising gender issues in the public domain and contesting the struggle as an unevenly gendered space could be viewed as a betrayal of national unity:

To speak about women's issues for me as a woman, and in particular as an East Timorese woman, is a big challenge. It's not an easy issue for me to talk about cos [when I do] I'm either a trouble maker or I'm completely out of my mind.

Bella (26) Sydney

Young women have nevertheless attempted to retrieve and re-map the authority of the *Buibere* figure. For example, in her poem “Me and My Tradition”,²⁵ Nony Piedade challenges the discursive authority of patriarchal “tradition” and “culture” in the construction of gender. As a political activist, she is concerned with writing women into the struggle as political beings in their own right. While recognising the importance of the nurturing work of women, discourses that naturalise women’s roles overshadow the nuanced contributions and active political participation of women in the struggle:

On this crocodile
Were born tradition and culture
On this crocodile
Was born nature

Tradition and culture dominated the world
My life was running by my nature
I had no rights to choose my own way
Because it was against the crocodile

When I was a baby
I was chosen
When I became a woman
I was decided

Five of my fingers became wife
It was my nature

Five of my fingers became mother
It was my nature

Using my brain
It was against nature
Using my voice
It would bring misery

Using my energy
It was normal
Although it was beyond my nature’s limit...

...In the end
Crocodile realizes
I am not just nature

I am a student
I am a worker
I am a fighter

²⁵ The full text is published in the catalogue of “Leaving the Crocodile: the story of the East Timorese community in Sydney”, an exhibition hosted at the Liverpool Regional Museum in 2001 (Wise 2001:11).

I am a nation liberator

While both Timorese men and women have defended Timorese nationalism as progressive (see Chapter Four), the political contiguity of men and women has been assumed rather than literal. In the diaspora, a deep ambivalence remains concerning women's public presence in political life. Women who are active and vocal within the diasporic public sphere are also subject to forms of gender discrimination, intense public scrutiny and communal gossip:

Young women have a hard time to play a role here [in Australia]. I have so much respect for [women who speak out publicly] because this society's watching everything you do... Even my relatives criticise me, I heard them talk about me behind my back... In this community, you have to ignore the criticism. When you do a lot, you make mistakes but there's no recognition for what you do right. They just waiting for you to put your foot wrong.

Milena (25) Sydney

Key female public figures in the diaspora have nevertheless been influential in the re-negotiation of gendered identities and have represented role models for many young women, not only for those who were interested or actively engaged in politics. In the remaining part of this chapter, I elaborate on the capacity of young Timorese women to create new geographies of identity that resist restrictive gender roles and practices at a series of scales, including the body, home and the city. At the same time, the cultural strategies they deploy draw from the aesthetics of hyperfemininity, as well as more conventional codes of femininity and protective behaviours.

Girl power: the politics of appearance

Anabela and her younger sister Rosa are originally from Baucau in the eastern (*Lorosa'e*) part of East Timor. Anabela was one year-old at the time of the Indonesian invasion when she and three older siblings were taken by her parents into the mountains near Viqueque. They remained there, surviving on roots and vegetables, until 1978 when they surrendered to the Indonesian military. The family was re-settled in Manatuto but, as teenagers, Anabela and Rosa were sent to high school in Dili where Anabela became involved in organising political protests against the Indonesian regime. Anabela and Rosa left East Timor in 1994, assisted financially by relatives already living in Australia. Anabela's

application for asylum in Australia details her involvement in the demonstration at Santa Cruz cemetery on 12th November 1991, which led to the Dili Massacre. When I first met Anabela and Rosa, they were living in an un-prepossessing, cream brick, three-storey apartment block in a suburb on the south-west fringe of the city. The building was run-down and poorly maintained and the broken security door and window locks on their apartment intensified their sense of vulnerability, especially at night when they had occasionally received unwanted visitors. The block was also prone to domestic disputes often involving residents' excessive consumption of drugs and alcohol and other antisocial behaviours, such as clothes and car stealing. Anabela and Rosa were frequently called on by neighbours' young children asking for money for milk or sugar, requests they felt unable to refuse: "We didn't have enough for ourselves, but they just little kids with blond hair and blue eyes - so cute - and they so hungry. How can we say no?" For all that, it was affordable and it was their first home as autonomous young women and they felt a sense of independence, and the relief of not being a guest or a burden in someone else's home.

As they got to know the neighbourhood, they settled into a familiar routine to-ing and fro-ing by train to attend English classes in the inner city, funded by the Mary McKillop sisters and later at a TAFE college in Parramatta. The English classes were a focal point of sociality where they met with a core group of other nineties Timorese girls, as well as Spanish, Thai, Cambodian and Anglo Australian girl friends studying for Year 12. The Timorese girls always sat together in class and hung out during lunch breaks in a local park, bringing home-cooked food to share with each other. On weekends, they would make the trip to Liverpool to cruise the public mall and try on clothes they couldn't afford, or sit in the food court and check out the boys. They would sometimes meet up for a picnic in the park, laughing and calling out to boys who caught their eye:

If guys look at us, we'd make fun of them, not bad, you know, just having fun. And sometimes we'd pretend to be tourists and speak Portuguese... We just try to get their attention.

Octavia (24) Sydney

These friendships were intimate and rewarding, especially given the girls' status as autonomous refugees without the support of close family in Australia. Money was a scarce and much worried over resource and they were necessarily frugal,

but generous with and supportive toward each other. Food and clothes sharing constituted an important means of resource management. Other economy measures often ended in tears, such as buying cheap pensioner tickets on the trains and getting caught and publicly reprimanded by the police or railway staff. While shopping sprees sometimes felt depressing because of the mismatch between the need for thrift and impulsive desire, they nevertheless always managed to look stylish and became highly skilled shoppers, adept at finding good quality, cheap outfits and accessories. As their English improved, they helped each other to find casual employment at nights or on weekends (typically in the hospitality, child and aged care industries) which involved telling lies, or at least omitting the truth, about their non-permanent refugee status, a necessary practice which they nevertheless felt uneasy about. The extra income, however, allowed them to indulge in commodities such as cosmetics, manicures, hair styling paraphernalia and music cassettes but expectations of remittances and the ever present awareness of familial needs at home in Timor placed limits on their consumption. The degree of social autonomy these young women attained and aspired to was unsettling for older relatives who, either bound by promises made to relatives back home or as self-appointed guardians, felt obligated to look out for, and on occasions chastise, them for overly assertive or neglectful (insufficiently attentive to kin) behaviours. Over time, attempts at coercion and guilt-tripping lost their resonance as Octavia explained: “You get judged but I couldn’t care less. In this country you’re free”.

While young Timorese women took a less visible role than young men in the re-creation of Timorese ethnicities in the public domain, their experimentation with youth styles and consumption of aspects of blackness, was by no means confined to private spaces. Young Timorese women were prominent and enthusiastic participants at Timorese soccer and community parties, as well as seeking adventure in public malls and other civic spaces, and clubbing²⁶ in bars across Sydney. The girls’ consumption of youth styles and fashion was intensely experienced and expressed through their bodies. Looking good was important to them and they invested a good deal of time and effort in the cultivation of a

²⁶ Practices of ‘clubbing’ according to Malbon (1998:266), are rooted in the social life of the modern city: “As the site of a multitude of ‘social spaces’ of varying levels of sociality the city intensely stimulates our emotions and senses, at times to the point of sensory overload, but also offers sites and spaces of relief from this intensity”.

'hyperfeminine' style of appearance. They collaborated in the construction of one another's public appearance, helping each other to apply make-up, pluck eyebrows, plait hair and so forth. They clearly derived bodily pleasure from these elaborately intimate preparations and took pride in the results of their hard work, with much mutual admiration and anticipation of the impact of their appearance on boys. Their preference for tight fitting tops, short skirts and high heels, jewelry and cosmetics, including immaculately varnished and manicured nails, caused a commotion among the more conservatively minded Timorese aunties who raised their hands in protest and invoked the Blessed Virgin. Their fashion choices occasionally earned them sharp rebukes, even among the more feminist minded Timorese women, for attire deemed too risqué and inappropriate. Yet their choices represented for them a kind of girl power symbolic of what they saw as their liberated, cosmopolitan status. The capacity to experiment with their sexuality through the consumption of fashion and hyperfeminine style was a freedom unavailable to them back home in Dili, where the perilous territory of military surveillance (as much as communal conservatism) made them think carefully about the impact of their appearance.

Unlike the symbolically 'black' styles pursued by the Timorese boys in Liverpool, the girls did not classify the clothes they wore according to a specific ethnic type or colour. By contrast certain hairstyles were designated black, such as African plaits (considered to be a feminine version of dreadlocks), and certain hairstyles considered white, including hair straightening and bleaching: the girls experimented with both. Musical tastes were also distinguished by colour: preferred black music included reggae, soul and R&B and they also consumed the 'Anglo' style music of artists from Australia and the US, such as Celine Dion, Alanis Morissette, Natalie Imbruglia and Vanessa Amorosi. Music and dancing were named as important and meaningful leisure pursuits for young Timorese women. For Anabela and her friends, these interests cohered in the practice of clubbing. Clubbing is both intensely social and intensely embodied. It is a practice in which pleasure is acutely experienced through the senses rather than the intellect, but it also constitutes a social performance creating a sense of togetherness. For Anabela, the experiential and embodied intensity derived from clubbing produced a sense of transcendence accentuated by, but not necessarily requiring, the consumption of alcohol:

I love dancing. Me and my friends went clubbing, drinking, meeting boys in Fairfield, Liverpool. Not with Timorese friends, other friends. They play R&B, techno, house music, sometimes heavy metal. It's like very free, when you dancing you just lose yourself & forget everything. Some people take drugs too, not me. I just like to dance and have fun.

The combination of socialising (chatting with friends, meeting boys) and creating your own individual space (losing yourself, escapism) is central to the appeal of clubbing. So too, the frisson of danger and sense of 'resistance' inherent in mixing with strangers in darkened, music-filled spaces adds to its particular allure. As Malbon suggests (1998:280) clubbing provides gratification on a variety of levels:

In clubbing, [young people] find a unique blend of pleasures (musical, tactile, sensual, emotional, sexual, chemical, bodily), a potential for illicit activities, the stimulation experienced through proximity to difference (and in particular of being so close to what in other contexts they would regard as 'strangers' and thus potentially a 'danger') and an escape route (albeit an ephemeral one) from the rigours and stresses of an ever quicker society which offers no guarantees and provides few opportunities for the release of deep seated emotions and desires in close proximity to others.

For the Timorese girls, clubbing resulted in both fleeting social connections and enduring personal relationships. Flirting with boys was part of the excitement and mystery of clubbing. The act of flirting involved the imaginative constitution and performance of identities, deployed partly as a means to increase one's personal mystique and partly as a self protective strategy in the negotiation of trust and mistrust, safety and danger. Anabela met her boyfriend and future husband, Marco, a second-generation Lebanese–Australian, in a night club in Sydney:

He said, 'My name's Ahmed, I'm from Lebanon', so I'm thinking he's Muslim. He thought I'm Spanish or Mexican or something, but I told him, I'm from India. The first date, you know, I'm very skeptical. I'm still living in [southwestern Sydney] but I never say I live by myself, I say I live with my sister and she's very old fashion, very strict, I gotta be home early [Anabela did in fact live with her sister who is two years younger than Anabela, very easy going, very much a party girl and a total *fashionista*]. I never tell my real name when I meet a guy, I tell my sister too, don't give your real name. You gotta protect yourself in this country, you know, one night I'm Nina, and next night I'm Sonya [laughs]. We don't say where we live neither. First night I told ['Ahmed'] my name's Michelle and he said 'if we meant to be together, you have

to change to be Fatima'! I didn't tell him I'm from East Timor for two months! You know, most people didn't know about Timor. When I worked in a hotel at The Rocks [in central Sydney] they say 'Where's Timor?' They think it's somewhere in Africa. He ['Ahmed'] knew about it from the TV, he saw it...about the [Dili] massacre in 91. Turn out his name's really Marco and he's Catholic and his dad's Lebanese and his mum's Aussie, but he didn't tell me straight away.

Like Anabela, most of the young women who participated in this study had at some time engaged in intimate relationships with non-Timorese partners, many of whom were themselves diasporans with hyphenated identities (Greek-Australian, Lebanese-Australian). The young women themselves saw this hybrid reality as an expression of their own cosmopolitanness, in contrast with the more narrow-minded and often prejudicial attitudes of older generation Timorese:

Timorese are really racist. They call (white) foreigners *malae* instead of use their names and same with black people, they call them *metan*. Like, my cousin's married to a Mozambiquan and the Timorese call him *metan* to his face. And my aunties and uncles do it to Marco [her Australian-Lebanese boyfriend]. They call him *malae* in front of him when they could use his name. He really hates that, like "get the *malae* something to eat"; "does the *malae* want something to drink?" You know, we got some Sudanese people living around here and even my mum when she came here from Timor, we're walking down the road and she goes "Oh my God, look at those black people". And I say, "Mum, hello, [holds up her arm and pinches her own skin], we're black too you know!"

Anabela (25) Sydney

Clearly, the negotiation of personal relationships for these young nineties Timorese women took place in a context of contested values. It is worth noting here too that the sexual and reproductive transitions of young nineties Timorese were subject to more complex forces than their parents' generation. Aside from the relative freedoms they experienced in diaspora, the uncertainty of their legal fate meant that many delayed marriage until their applications for asylum were resolved. They were therefore exposed to longer periods of pre-marital relationship experimentation and break ups, and often multiple partners with different cultural, linguistic and national affinities. Relationships were thus conditioned by the conflicting forces of more conservative, Catholicised Timorese values and more permissive western values and expectations. Yet,

while the girls' outward appearance, their often explicitly sexualised femininity and apparent confidence, contravened conventional cultural expectations of female behaviour and demeanour, they often expressed their commitment to religious and familial values and codes of respectful and respectable conduct. The prolonged ritual wearing of black clothing as a mark of bereavement, for example, is still widely upheld by young nineties Timorese women, as is abstinence from social events (parties, clubs, barbecues and so on) during this time. Such values often translate to self-respect in the realm of personal relationships. One young woman experienced an acrimonious relationship break up with a Greek-Australian boyfriend because of her refusal to have pre-marital sex. They had been together for three years and were planning their engagement when she discovered he was cheating on her:

He went with an older divorced woman from Chile. She's a slut woman. I told him I want to be a virgin when I get married. I cry and cry and didn't eat for a month and my tissues on the table nearly finished. I start to think, like, maybe I should (have had sex). But God showed me the right way.

Kristina (26) Sydney

Ultimately, most of the young female research participants aspired to marriage and motherhood but on their own terms. As Anabela, now married to Australian-Lebanese Marco and planning a family, puts it:

I'm proud to be here. Without this country I'd have ten kids and struggling in East Timor! We work really hard to save for our own place now. In my country you don't have opportunity so you have to work when you can. Then we can start to have a family.

The new family configurations arising from inter-ethnic relationships between young Timorese and partners with hyphenated Australian identities may yet be crucial sites for the articulation of new Australian alterities which, as Luke and Luke suggest (2000:42-67) complicate essentialist notions of 'authentic' culture and cultural identity formation.

Discussion

By examining the everyday cultural strategies of young Timorese, faced with the cultural flux and radical alterity of life in the diaspora, I have demonstrated how their displacement inevitably confronts them with the limits of inheritance

(Chambers 1991:115). In negotiating the nuanced complexity of social life in the ethnically diverse environs of western Sydney, young nineties Timorese could not simply redeploy the cultural strategies and resources of previous generations. By necessity, they were compelled to move beyond the limits of 'where they're from' in order to deal with the multilayered and shifting constellations of meaning and globally defined fields of possibility, or 'scapes', that structure the contemporary world (Appadurai 1996). The change management strategies deployed by young nineties Timorese substantially involve the consumption and production of global youth culture, unsettling the ties that hold them to a specific 'centre' and source of identity. At the same time, their cultural strategies reveal that inherited cultural resources and meanings are in constant articulation with new and often temporary coordinates of identification. The everyday identity narratives elaborated in this chapter demonstrate how old and new meanings converge and are remixed and redeployed through localised forms of creolised youth styles and cultures. Importantly, their stories show that young Timorese actively exploit the politics of 'misrecognition' in the hybridised construction and performance of their identities in diaspora.

In understanding the temporal and spatial dialectics of cultural production and signification, it has been important to recognise that young people are always engaged in symbolic creativity through their ordinary, everyday social practices and immediate life spaces. The necessary 'symbolic work' of youth is neither trivial nor inconsequential but "crucial to the creation and sustenance of individual and group identities, even to the cultural survival of identity itself" (Willis 1990:2). For the young participants of this study, a good deal of this work was concerned primarily with the exploration and performance of youthful masculinity and femininity, as well as the pragmatic and imaginative manipulation of 'being Timorese' in a new social context.

Through an exploration of the consumption and production of reggae music and rasta style among young East Timorese men, I have shown how global politics, histories and places intermesh with the local through the aestheticisation of blackness and indigeneity. This is a cultural practice and milieu in which the "complex, dynamic patterns of syncretism" are at play involving both inherited and new cultural resources practices and languages (Gilroy 1987:13). In

particular, the creation and consumption of blackness as a political entity in the contemporary world draws heavily from East Timorese mythologies and symbols of heroic and masculinised, *Maubere* resistance.

The interleaving of blackness and masculinity is also at play in the assertion of a 'small island' identity among Timorese youth in Sydney's western suburbs. Importantly, 'islanderness' represents a strategic location of affiliation, forged out of historical and contemporary hierarchies of power and experiences of marginality and resistance (cf Tsing 1993). Islanderness, for Timorese youth, thus constitutes a locus around which action and identity are made from below. It is an identification that articulates both Timorese opposition to Indonesian hegemonic practices and resistance to forms of exclusion and marginality experienced by young migrants displaced into new urban hierarchies. In their cultivation of islanderness young Timorese men, in particular, found a space of connectivity and 'open-ended kinship' with their islander 'brothers' that partially helped to redress the structural and gender-specific inequalities of daily life and sources of disempowerment.

The complex engagement of young Timorese with sites of marginality is expressed through practices of ethnic experimentation and subterfuge. Such practices are frequently represented by both young Timorese men and women themselves in terms of teasing and fun. Yet, as their narratives show, the imaginative constitution and performance of different identities also has practical and political underpinnings. They thus position themselves strategically within a network of marginal zones and temporary spaces and points of identification that evade the authentic and prefigured, and court the imaginatively hybrid. What is clear, however, is that the symbolic work and networks of relationality among young Timorese women and men are profoundly gendered. I have attempted to show how the creation and manipulation of hybridised strategies of identity enabled young Timorese women to create spaces of identification within the wider, multi-ethnic environs of western Sydney which balanced their desire for a sense of personal autonomy with the need for social acceptance.

For young nineties Timorese women, exile opened up new cultural frames and social possibilities through which they sought to contest restrictive gendered representations circulating within East Timorese resistance narratives and within the diasporic community. They variously asserted their autonomy through independent living arrangements; through hyperfeminine aesthetics; through leisure pursuits and through personal relationships. Like young nineties diasporic Timorese men, young women's sense of self drew from various commodities, popular icons, and practices of global culture but, in general, their musical and fashion preferences were less grounded in the consumption of 'blackness' than their male counterparts. Where the archetypal masculine *Maubere* figure positively informed the aestheticisation of blackness for young men, the *Buibere* archetype did not evoke the same affective investment among young women. On the contrary, there was little cultural capital to be derived from the emulation of an endlessly self-sacrificing, downtrodden, victimised Madonna image. The hyperfeminine style many young women adopted may thus be understood partly as a response to the strictures of a highly politicised and masculinist resistance culture in which gendered difference was subsumed by the struggle, and in which women's sexuality became a site of contest between coloniser and colonised (cf McClintock 1998; Adijondro 2000). While their own narratives are largely framed in terms of resisting the surveillance and unreasonable expectations of older generation Timorese, it is important to understand that, as young migrant women and asylum seekers, multiple matrices of power and structural constraints inevitably impacted on their choices. These include intersecting and overlapping discourses and practices of Catholicism, patriarchy and resistance culture; the production and consumption of global beauty standards, fashion and desire; and systematic inequalities within the sphere of work. Yet, in exercising their cultural agency, young nineties Timorese women did not simply jettison traditional and conservative standards of evaluation but strategically negotiated the borders within and between the old and the new.

The youth styles created and consumed by young Timorese men and women in western Sydney made sense given their lived and formed relations based on gender and ethnicity, as well as age, social status and locality, and their experiences of social and political marginality and expressions of everyday

resistance. In this chapter, I have highlighted the cultural agency of young diasporic East Timorese and their key role in creating new and evolving definitions of what it means to be Timorese. In so doing, I have not sought to overstate their social autonomy and creative freedom to experiment with the globalised mass culture on offer in western cities. To be sure, this is no argument for a limitless ‘happy hybridity’ (Lo 2000). Rather, I have deployed a more critical and empirically applied notion of relational hybridisation that involves “dual processes of self-positioning and identification by others” (Noble & Tabar 2002:134).

Conclusion

*Reconciling Worlds:
The Cultural Repositioning of East Timorese Youth in the Diaspora*

This thesis has explored the struggles of young nineties Timorese to find their bearings in a complex new social environment and to negotiate the turbulent terrain of intracommunal difference during a period of intense personal and political transformation. From the outset of the research, I was interested in investigating how a sense of being and identity is experienced and extrapolated through space and time in an era increasingly characterised by “homelessness” (Heidegger 1977; Chambers 1994) and mapped by “travelling cultures” (Clifford 1997, 1992). The study of East Timorese diasporic identities illuminates the central problem of the nation as ‘lived form’ in which meanings of location and home are transmitted through co-implicated communities within and across the nation state, and which are thoroughly complicated by questions of loyalty, belonging and betrayal. Viewing these questions from the vantage point of nineties Timorese youth offered a unique lens through which to reflect on how cultural identity is maintained, re-evaluated and remade ‘on the move’.

Following Hall (1990:44) the study is founded on the notion that identity is never quite resolved and always in process, “formed at the unstable point where the “unspeakable” stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture”. Clearly, locations of identity (nationality, ethnicity, gender, class, age, generation and so on) do not constitute natural states of being but are discursively produced through interpretive framings of power and context-specific cultural meanings. Individual subjects both situate themselves and are situated within available points and places of identification and such identifications are internalised in an effort to stabilise a sense of place and being in the world. Just as the narrative of the nation, as an ‘imaginary community’ is a work of social invention (Anderson 1983), so too the construction of the self is also “a labour of the imagination, a fiction, a particular story that makes sense” (Chambers 1991:25). Both personal and public narratives are always in dialogue and in process, yet they inevitably rely upon the fiction of authenticity and imaginary closure.

This project has examined the processes through which an overarching and highly politicised East Timorese identity has been imagined and constituted through a history of opposition struggles, and elaborated in the diaspora through the dynamics of long distance nationalism. In this respect, the research

fundamentally constitutes a study of shifting centre-periphery relations. In the first chapter, I traced the processes through which a self-conscious Timorese-ness was formed through the uneasy and unresolved dialectic with Portuguese colonialism and through the radical deterritorialising effects of Indonesian invasion and occupation. East Timorese-ness as an idiom of resistance thus emerged out of the ambivalent politics of domination and the exclusivist and exclusionary ‘othering’ practices of both the Portuguese colonial and Indonesian neo-colonial states. The project of anti-colonial nationalism involved the retrieval of the peasant *Maubere* figure from the metaphorical and material margins of Portuguese colonial society and its reconstitution as a unifying motif for the imagined nation. This archetypal identity became a rallying point of East Timorese resistance under Indonesian occupation.

In the second chapter, I documented the processes and forces through which the *Gerasaun Foun* (the youth generation socialised under Indonesian occupation) came to occupy the centre of the theatre of resistance. I argued that the *Gerasaun Foun* was incorporated into regimes of valuation that combined discourses of politicisation and sacralisation to produce a totalising representation of *Maubere* youth as patriots, moral agents and martyrs. Yet the performance of their political agency also depended upon the cultural dexterity of youth as ‘Indonesian citizens’ and their capacity to strategically shift between centres and peripheries of power in the service of the nation. The biographies of young research participants in this study reveal the extent to which formative experiences of state sponsored violence and institutionalised discrimination conditioned their political mobilisation in occupied East Timor. At the same time, their experiences in exile show that political agency is situational and that radical spatial reconfigurations inevitably impact upon the performance of identities (cf Feldman 1991).

In the third chapter, I elaborated on the ways in which the exiled East Timorese refugee community in Australia sought to recover meaning and negotiate the fluctuations of an unpredictable present and future through the construction of a mythologised past and through the privileging of an authenticised *Maubere* culture. Through the enactment of social relations and strategic practices, I have indicated how concepts of home and homeland were refracted through

experiences of displacement, marginality, loss and the ongoing political crisis in East Timor (1975-1999). For East Timorese as impelled refugees, the radical loss of the familiar induced a longing for an idealised homeland derived from the landscape of memory. Under threat of radical effacement, notions of home were conflated with the besieged, violated, highly feminised and sacralised space of 'homeland'. Psychosocially, Timorese lives and identities in exile were inextricably and existentially enmeshed through time and space with the social reality of people and places left behind. The diasporic sense of co-responsibility for the fate of the embattled nation was profoundly expressed through the moral imperative to bear witness to the tyranny of Indonesian occupation, and to become the medium ('the voice of the voiceless') through which those who were silenced could speak.

To understand the dynamics through which a highly reified representation of East Timoresehood has been constructed and reproduced in exile, I have drawn upon theorisations of the "diasporic public sphere" as a highly symbolic discursive field which simultaneously constitutes a site of ethno-nationalist mobilisation, as well as intense localised struggles for power and legitimacy (Werbner 1998; Appadurai 1996). I have highlighted the pioneering role played by community leaders from the lusophone oriented generation (the educated elite and youth cohort of 1975) in rebuilding a sense of communal Timorese identity in exile and in mobilising a critical community of solidarity. As protagonists of communal affairs, their high level activism, skilful public oratory and organisational capacity defined their status as exemplary figures in transnational cultures of the global ecumene (Hannerz 1990). Yet their command of the diasporic public sphere, and the moral and masculinist discourses circulating through it, had implications for the visibility, political agency and/or marginality of young nineties Timorese.

Acknowledging that the discursive formation of a unitary Timoresehood within the diasporic public sphere has occurred across and through frictions and perspectival visions, the second half of the research focused on the contested complexity of East Timorese identities. By this, I mean the intense dynamics at play in the constitution of East Timoresehood within the diasporic community that reveal the strangeness of the familiar, cultural discontinuities and difference

(Clifford 1988; Bhabha 1989; Tsing 2007). Here, I have deployed the notion of hybridity as an organising principle to explore the interstitiality of diasporic subjectivity (Ang 1993:3). I have used the concept of hybridity as a dialectical model of cultural interaction that allows for the co-presence of both adaptation (hybridity-as-fusion) and resistance ('critical' hybridity) (Bhabha 1989; Werbner 1997c; Ang 2000; Bakhtin 1981). It is through intersubjective relations of cultural difference ("ourselves-as-others, others-as-ourselves", Bhabha 1989:72) that I have explored the 'borderlands' of East Timorese youth identities.

The transplanting of young nineties Timorese lives into the generalised chaos of multicultural urban Sydney, some twenty years after the original wave of lusophone oriented refugees in 1975, intensified the dynamics of intracommunal cultural heterogeneity. In Chapter Four, I outlined how their embodied difference as Indonesian-speaking and educated Timorese and their articulation as young migrant bodies within the 'scapes' (Appadurai 1996) that structure contemporary cities, were subject to moral judgements framed within discourses of East Timorese authenticity. Within such discursive formations, both 'Australianisation' and 'Indonesianisation' were variously marked as signifiers of inauthenticity and conceptualised as a corrupting force. I argued that the intensity of moral discourses that insisted on an exemplary Timorese and condemned the spectre of hybridity produced conflicted responses among the young.

As youth, as asylum seekers and as part of the *Gerasaun Foun*, young nineties Timorese often saw themselves as uncomfortably occupying ambivalent spaces of "in between" in diaspora. As such they were continually negotiating borders of continuity and difference; tradition and modernity; connection and disconnection. Yet such borders are never solid but always shifting in relation to cultural meanings reproduced and recirculated within ever changing social and historical contexts. The identities of young Timorese as *Gerasaun Foun* in East Timor were primarily formed in conversation and conflict with an Indonesian 'other'. In the everyday flow of life in the diaspora, youth was no longer the locus of popular dissent and their identities were less intensely framed by an Indonesian/East Timorese oppositional divide. Their emplacement in the complex terrain of multicultural Australia necessarily reconfigured their

identities as well as their political practice. These spatio-temporal reconfigurations illuminate the contingency and fluidity of identities. What is taken for granted and primary in one context may be relativised and compartmentalised in a different space and time.

Within the context of western Sydney, there was no predetermined path for the negotiation of complex and shifting constellations of ‘multi’cultural difference and ethnic intermixture. Young nineties Timorese could not solely look to the identity struggles of previous generations as prescriptive frameworks for living. Yet, what is inherited – a prior sense of culture, history, language, tradition, identity – is not cancelled out but opened up to transformation and re-routing (Chambers 1994:24). In their negotiation of multiple and shifting social and physical landscapes, young nineties Timorese have variously transgressed, reinscribed and pushed at the notional borders between ‘where they’re from’ and ‘where they’re at’ (Gilroy 1991). The cultural strategies they deployed in exile involved both the strategic enactment of an emblematic, authenticised Timoresehood and practices of hybridised ethnicity.

In Chapter Five, I described how young Timorese, at times, self-consciously sought stability and refuge in the practice and articulation of a politicised nationalist identity. I have drawn upon various examples of political protest, poetry, theatrical and musical testimony to show how they sought to implicate themselves within the social reality of East Timor and the struggle for independence. Through the performance of forms of public testimony and ‘ritual noise’, they deployed ‘strategies of affective intensification’ that symbolically collapsed the temporal dimensions of past, present and future, enabling them to share in the *illusio* of affective connection across time and space. Yet I contend that, even here, identities are subject to renegotiation: young people’s performances were not simply reiterations of the ‘culturally authentic’ but displays of culture in the making.

In the final chapter, I have attempted to foreground the mobility of youth and their emerging cultural capacities, evident in the creation of new forms of Timoresehood. I have shown how East Timorese youth identities in western Sydney rotate around multiple axes of identity and belonging. Their everyday identity narratives reveal the extent to which their individual identities are

shaped by the consumption and production of global youth culture, as well as their interactions within multiple social networks. I have indicated how global flows are localised through the practice of reggae music and rasta style, particularly among young Timorese men. Moreover, the aestheticisation of blackness exposes patterns of syncretism and creolisation through which notions of blackness mesh with indigenous icons and discourses of heroic and masculinised *Maubere* culture. The interleaving of blackness and masculinity is further expressed and enacted through an affective affiliation with islanders and 'islanderness'. This strategic identification is predicated upon a conjunctural alignment of needs and claims among young minority youth in Sydney, underpinned by histories of colonial domination and experiences of marginality and resistance. The creation of identities from the margins has been a recurrent theme throughout this research and its importance cannot be overstated. As Hall has argued (1997:183), in the creation of new subjects and new ethnicities "marginality has become a powerful space. It is a space of weak power but it is a space of power nevertheless".

Like young Timorese men, young women engage in everyday acts of resistance and accommodation as they grapple with the multiple sources of power and disadvantage that define their situation as asylum seekers and minority migrant youth in Australia. They too have sought and found spaces of connection and points of affiliation through new social networks in the ethnically diverse environs of western Sydney. To an extent, the influence of feminism filtrates their thinking as they strive to carve their identities as modern independent young women and contest restrictive gendered stereotypes and communal expectations of feminine duty and submission. Yet, at the same time as their consumption of hyperfeminine aesthetics proclaims their modernity, familial and religious values and codes of conduct also prevail as anchors of identity.

What is clear from my findings is that movement and migration involve complex transformations and that youth identities are syncretically influenced by multiple cultural referents and resources. In this sense youth may be viewed and valued as cultural producers engaged in everyday "symbolic creativity" (Willis 1990). The critical point is that while young people in multi-ethnic, urban contexts are always at the vanguard of producing and improvising new

ethnicities, they are continually synchronising old and new meanings with coordinates of identity (Wulff 1995; Ang 2000). In telling their stories young Timorese, at times, represented themselves as multiply inscribed diasporic subjects for whom the category 'Timorese youth' seems too narrowly confining. At other times, it is also an identity they have used to represent themselves, entirely appropriately, as a collective. The identity narratives of young diasporic East Timorese in Sydney's West and beyond, suggest a complex interplay between strategic self-essentialism and notions of fusion and hybridisation which inform their understandings of their own cultural positioning.

Postscript 1999

It is Saturday 13 November 1999, a world away from Dili, as East Timorese in Sydney gather to commemorate the eighth anniversary of the Dili Massacre. As usual, St Mary's Cathedral in the city's centre provides the focal point for the public mourning of the scores of young Timorese who were massacred at Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 1991. For Sydney's East Timorese community, St Mary's has become a familiar landmark, part of the diasporic landscape upon which they have faithfully reinscribed their collective trauma and memory over their years in exile. And yet, this year's commemoration of martyred youth has a remarkably different feel. For the first time in twenty-four years, Timorese here join their compatriots at home to celebrate a fragile peace and an unfamiliar freedom. Inside the cathedral, the congregation even looks different. Many familiar faces are missing. As East Timor transforms from a context of war to one of 'reconstruction' and 'reconciliation', some long-term exiles have already returned, as they always said they would, to help rebuild their shattered country. In their place are a large number of Timor's most recent refugees, air-lifted out of the post-referendum tumult and chaos by Australian *Interfet* troops. They look bewildered, still in shock, as if they have not grasped the suddenness of their uprooting.

Outside, on the cathedral's forecourt, the atmosphere is convivial. Everywhere there is talk of return – who's gone, who's going, confessions of nervousness and apprehension. And then, a moment of irony as young Timorese asylum seekers are presented with a mock 'Certificate of Citizenship' on behalf of Australia's Aboriginal community (Plate 18). The gesture of solidarity aimed at unsettling the authority of the Australian state, also anticipates the Australian government's withdrawal, on 19 November, of an appeal against the earlier Federal Court decision in favour of the asylum-seekers. Far from signifying a victory for the asylum-seekers, the withdrawal may be seen as a stalling strategy while the government secures legislative changes to immigration. The new legislation - primarily aimed at stemming the flow of 'boat people' to Australia – will impact upon Timorese applications for refugee status, some of which have been pending for almost ten years. Most of the applicants are young. They are concerned that their applications will be rejected given that East Timor is now free and they no longer have grounds for claiming refugee status. In the meantime, they must continue to wait, living their lives in a permanent state of temporariness.

Field Journal, 13 November 1999

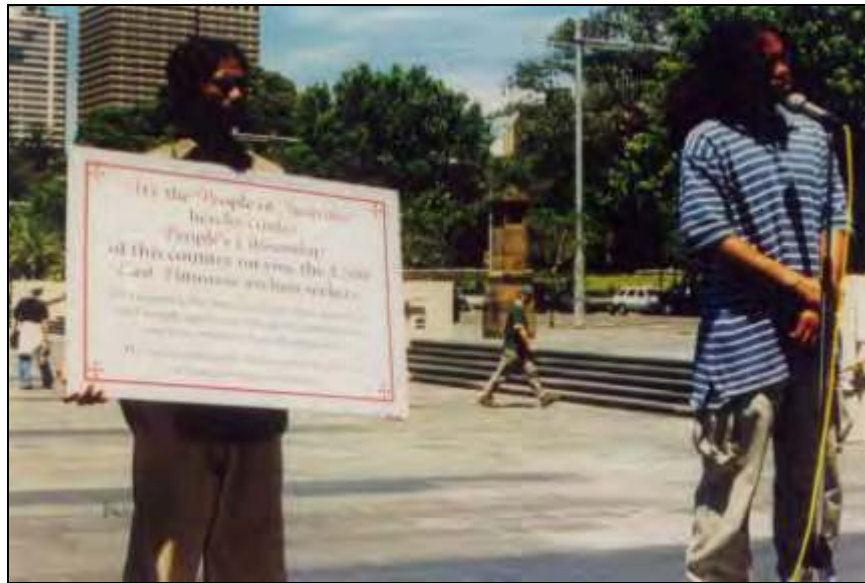


Plate 18. The Citizenship Certificate presented to young Timorese asylum seekers on behalf of Australia's Indigenous community, acknowledging "the historical debt we owe to your courageous nation", Sydney, November 1999.

The dramatic events of late 1999, in which East Timor achieved de facto independence, had profound implications for the identities and futures of East Timorese diasporans. Along with the euphoria of national liberation, personal and political dilemmas surfaced as diasporic Timorese were faced with the very real possibility of an imminent return home; with the difficulties of having to reconcile the different worlds of 'home' and 'away'; with the pressures and responsibilities involved in negotiating the expectations of Timorese families and communities, both at home and in exile, that they would, indeed that they should, return and help rebuild an independent East Timor. For the young East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia, who still awaited the outcome of convoluted political and legal judgements that would determine their fate, these issues were especially potent, but they were provocative issues too for second-generation Timorese youth who felt more established in their hyphenated identities as 'Timorese-Australians'.

The collective identities Timorese had constructed in exile, underscored by mythologies of home and return, were profoundly unsettled during this period of nascent independence and instability within East Timor itself. Bereft of the very thing that had given Timorese exile its meaning and coherence – the struggle for independence – notions of home and belonging were again in flux, as complex and conflicting emotional attachments and ambivalences emerged to destabilise

pre-ordained itineraries that insisted on 'return'. The struggle for independence gave Timorese identities in exile, however impermanent and tenuous, definition. That struggle was one thing. The struggle for survival as a new nation now suddenly loomed as a different reality altogether. Young Timorese in Australia privately expressed their anguish at the difficult question of shared responsibility for it; at the prospect of 'starting over'. *Now we can go home, but do we really want to? Now we can return, but to what? Normality?* In the madness of post-occupation East Timor, as aid agencies and carpet-baggers scabbled for opportunity and scarce resources, what place would there be for latecomers, even those who were supposed to belong?

As young Timorese pondered these questions, there was, for some, a sense of resignation, but this masked an even deeper trepidation since the questions themselves were almost too confronting, almost unspeakable in their contravention of familial and communal expectations. Refusing the rhetoric of 'return' might be interpreted within the wider Timorese community as unpatriotic, the ultimate betrayal, and might in fact confirm the corruption of Timorese youth by an impoverished and self-centred Australian culture. For young second-generation Timorese, born and educated in diaspora, notions of home and return might now appear less simple than they once did but, as permanent residents in Australia, they had some measure of control over how, when and if they chose to return. For young Timorese asylum seekers, however, as return loomed more imminently on the horizon, home was no less simple as a concept and as a reality and their choices seemed far more circumscribed. While many spoke of their longing to be reunited with family and with the land, there was much to reconcile. There was the disjuncture between the physical homes they remember and those they would return to. There was the estrangement of experiences of home and diaspora; the disentangling of lives lived in exile and the reassembling of lives as 'returnees'.

When asked how they felt about returning most would say that of course they *wanted* to go home but they talked of deferral in order to finish, or to get, an education. Indeed, among young nineties Timorese youth, this was repeated like a mantra throughout the diaspora, from Dublin to London, to Lisbon, to Sydney:

There is no doubt...that [we] have the commitment to go back. There's a reason that some of us stay longer because [we] want to study and [we] want to get experience... We're all concerned to return. The main concern is what we bring to East Timor. The people there need help. What kind of help are we going to give them? I can go there and build houses – this is the easy answer. But in ten years time, people [will] need people who have skills to transfer, to develop East Timor... There's nothing to avoid – you have to go back.

Arsenio (mid-twenties) London

We want to go back, but we want to go back *with* something...

Ligia (26) Sydney

I have to finish my diploma... I want to bring something to my mother's grave [at Santa Cruz cemetery].

Doli (27) Sydney

I haven't got any specific skills at the moment. I'm concerned about what *is* my profession. Because people will say 'you left the country and what have you done there?' And I'm not going to say that I have been campaigning, because everybody's fighting for their country, not only me... I would say most people who want to go back to Timor are people who left after 1990, or late 1980s. But from 1975... I think that the younger[sic], they will go to Timor to visit, not to stay. They can say 'I'm Timorese' but they don't have to go back... I think that this will be the work of the independent government of East Timor, how to convince these people to go back. You have to create possibilities. It is also the problem of reconciliation. The problem of re-encountering people again, Timorese in Portugal, in Australia, with Timorese who are in East Timor...

Boaventura (late twenties) London

As the last respondent suggests, after years of learning to survive as Timorese inside and outside of East Timor, and of coping with the different kinds of suffering those experiences entailed, there is the additional problem of reconciling the different experiences and cultures of home and exile; of war and peace.

In the immediate post-occupation period, new layers of intracommunal complexity were at play as the arrival of the post-referendum refugees at the East Hills army barracks revealed. For young nineties Timorese in Sydney, employed as interpreters by immigration and health services, borders of self and

other shifted as the newcomers involuntarily displaced them as the most recent arrivals, inevitably evoking comparisons:

We Timorese, they Timorese; but we so different! But I feel good to help the refugees. I feel good about myself also. I realise I am strong and I can survive by myself now.

Maria (25) Sydney

A sense of displacement was also being expressed on the other side of the Timor Gap:

Suddenly all these *paraquedistas* (parachutists) from the diaspora surround Xanana like angels from the sky! They're like gatekeepers for Xanana. He was more accessible to us in jail! They [diasporans] say: We're just learning because we've been outside. We say: If you're here to learn you shouldn't be here!

Alfredo (early thirties) Dili

Underpinning these tensions and contradictions of experiential diversity are fundamental questions of identity. The challenge for a truly democratic leadership in an independent East Timor will be how to affirm and encourage a collective sense of East Timorese identity, while acknowledging the validity of the multiple dimensions of 'Timoreneseness'.

Postscript 2007

Since 2003, all of the young nineties Timorese who participated in this study have been granted residency in Australia and some now have citizenship. Most have chosen to stay in this country, although there is now considerable two-way traffic, with diasporans returning to visit families in Timor and family members being brought to Australia for holidays. New translocal connections are continually being embellished and new regimes of norm-making are in process as goods, information and attitudes flow back and forth. An emergent transnational public is producing intriguing new subjectivities that destabilise and relativise rigid insider/outsider subject positions and representations of diasporan privilege and mobility created during the years of national captivity. For example, one of the research participants in this study is about to return to Timor for the first time in fifteen years. She is excited and nervous, for she has barely travelled beyond Sydney during that time. She is frantically shopping for

clothing, toys and luxury goods to squeeze into already over-stuffed suitcases. Yet, in Dili, she will be reunited with family members who are now more cosmopolitan than herself: a brother recently returned from a three-month trip to the UK; a sister-in-law just back from New York. Of course, these are not experiences available to the vast majority of East Timor's population but substantial numbers of Timorese *are* on the move, including new diasporans working in factories in northern Europe, who are contributing more than simply remittances to the rebuilding of a new nation. This changing landscape of new horizons and social networks suggest possibilities for future research concerning how emerging global-local entanglements are impacting on the ground in East Timor itself. Such analysis would further our understanding of processes of creolisation and hybridity, helping perhaps to avoid the entrenching of monolithic and often dangerously essentialised categories of difference.

APPENDIX

I AM THE ONE SINGING IN THE MULTITUDE *The litany of the oppressed*

Abé Barreto Soares (1996:34-38)

*The heart is a trunk of a tree.
If one of its branches is cut,
five twigs will grow
The heart of man will never be vanished
the more it is broken
the more it becomes victory*
R. PIUS BUDIWAJAYA

I am the one you forced to sign the declaration of Bali (you say it was the Declaration of Balibo) on 30 November 1975

I am the one witnessing your bloody action (you say it was a volunteer one) in Dili on 7 December 1975

I am the officer you asked to support the day of 'Integration' on 17 July 1976

I am the guerrilla/woman whom you hunted down in towns and the jungle

I am the guerrilla/woman whom you executed when s/he surrendered

I am Nicolau Lobato whom you assassinated in December 1978

I am the little girl whose parents you massacred with joy

I am the little boy whose village you burnt

I am the old man whose cattle you destroyed

I am the old woman whom you told to shut her mouth when she cried out as you came to raid her house in the middle of the night

I am the woman whom you raped; she was helpless; numb, and she could not even protest

I am the woman who was forced to become your companion for fulfilling your sexual desire while her husband was in action in the jungle in the guerilla war

I am the student whom you teach how to recite your ideology – Pancasila¹

I am the student inspired by the history of the tremendous spirit of your fight for independence, then s/he tries to fight for freedom for his/her country from the chains

¹ *Pancasila* is the ideological basis of the Indonesian state encapsulated in five principles: Faith in one god; humanity; nationalism; representative government and social justice.

of colonization

- I am the governor who has to be a shadow puppet
controlled from the Cendana² palace
- I am the member of the DPRD³ whose right to speak as the
representative of the people you limit
- I am the Bupati⁴ whom you accuse as being a two-headed
officer, collaborating with “Ass’wain Maubere”⁵
- I am the Camat⁶ whom you invite to take part in the action
of corruption
- I am the local government employee whom you ask to learn
by heart Sapta Prasetya Korpri⁷
- I am the soldier whom you instruct to obey what is written
in Sapta Marga⁸
- I am the businessman/woman whom you order to obtain
SIUP⁹ before s/he opens up his/her small business
- I am the taxi driver who has to be your secret agent,
keeping an eye on the activities of his compatriots
closely
- I am the teacher who has to teach the school children that
the people of Timor-Lorosae¹⁰ have firmly decided their
destiny to get back to the lap of Sang Bunda Pertiwi¹¹
- I am the nurse who has to teach the villagers how to apply
the system of KB12¹²
- I am the field worker for the Information Office who has to
be busy - wandering around the villages to inform the
people about the Pemilu¹³ (you say it has the
characteristic of LUBER)¹⁴
- I am the field worker of the Agriculture Office who has to
show the farmers the way to cultivate the rice fields with
the agricultural intensification method
- I am the old Bishop who was disappointed with the policy of
the Vatican but who did not lose his hope for better
times for his country to come
- I am the young Bishop writing to Mr Perez de Cuellar in
New York, saying, ...*meanwhile our people and nation
are dying*...
- I am the priest delivering the sermon in a mass, saying *Sarani
maluk sira, keta halakon emi nia esperança...*¹⁵

² ‘Cendana’ (lit. sandalwood) is the name of the presidential palace in Jakarta, Indonesia.

³ DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah) is an Indonesian acronym for the House of Representatives.

⁴ Bupati is the Indonesian term for a government officer in charge of a regency.

⁵ Ass’wain Maubere is a Tetum phrase referring to the glorious fighters or ‘warriors’ of the East Timorese people.

⁶ Camat is the Indonesian term for a sub-district head.

⁷ An Indonesian phrase referring to the seven principles government employees must follow.

⁸ Sapta Marga refers to the seven principles the military must obey.

⁹ SIUP (Surat Izin Usaha Perdagangan) is an Indonesian acronym for the letter of permission required to open a business.

¹⁰ Lorosae is a Tetum word meaning ‘east’ and ‘sunrise’.

¹¹ The term used by Indonesians to refer to the Motherland.

¹² KB (Keluarga Berencana) is the Indonesian acronym for Family Planning.

¹³ Pemilu (Pemilihan Umum) is the Indonesian acronym for general election.

¹⁴ LUBER (langsung, umum, bebas dan rahasia) is an Indonesian acronym for “direct, general, free and secret”

I am the nun teaching the teaching of love pioneered by the
man from Nazareth called Jesus to the little children in
an orphanage

I am the diplomat traveling around the world, telling people
that something is profoundly wrong in his/her country

I am the one living in Australia and Portugal, burning your
flag, *Sangsaka Merah-Putih*,¹⁶ as a gesture to show
his/her anger and anguish over your inhuman action
since 1975

I am the one whom you killed in Motael Church on 28
on October 1991

I am the one whose life you took away with M16s (you got
from Uncle Sam) in Santa Cruz cemetery on 12
November 1991

I am the one asking for political asylum in a western country
after the bloody event in Santa Cruz cemetery

I am the one whom you put in your political gaol after he
and his compatriots were in an action of protest against
the invasion and occupation of their beloved homeland
and against your cruel action in Santa Cruz cemetery

I am Jose Alexandre “Kay Rala Xanana” Gusmao whom you
didn’t allow to finish reading his defence plea in your
kangaroo court

I am the one jumping into the compound of the embassy of a
western country in Jakarta

And I am the *Loriku*¹⁷ singing with its broken wings

I am the sky no longer blue

I am the brook

I am the river

I am the sea

I am the air you polluted with the acid rain

I am the tree you cut down with the saw

I am the grass you burnt with the rocket

I am the rock you fired with the mortar and cannon

I am the soil you bombed with the napalm

Last but not least, I am the young man of letters whose veins
contain the blood of *Maubere*, singing in the multitude,

*MATE KA MORIS UKUN RASIK AN
NEE HAU NIA RAIN, RAI TIMOR-LOROSAE*

HAU NIA BEI SIRA, FO HELA ONA MAI HAU

¹⁵ *Sarani maluk sira, keta halakon emi nia esperanca* in Tetum means ‘My fellow Christians don’t lose your hope’.

¹⁶ *Sansaka Merah Putih* (the sacred Red and White) is the term used by Indonesians to refer to their red and white striped national flag.

¹⁷ *Loriku* is the name of a bird in East Timor.

RAI ROHAN NEE, NUDAR RIKO SOI IDA

*HAU MUSTI HAKILAR, HAU MUSTI HAKLALAK
BAINHIRA EMA HADAU HAU NIA RAIN*

*HAU HAKARAK FO RIKO MAKA HAU HETAN
BA HAU NIA OAN SIRA MAKA MORIS IKUS¹⁸*

¹⁸ The lyric of a song by Abe ho Aloz, inspired by the cry of resistance by the courageous young East Timorese at the Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 1991: “Life or Death!! Indendence/This is my Land – The Land of East Timor/My Ancestors have given me/This piece of Land as an inheritance/I have to shout, I have to cry out/When people take my Land/I would like to offer the inheritance I have/To my children who will be born later “

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