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Consuming Youth: Timorese in the Resistance Against Indonesian Occupation

Angie Bexley and Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro

This article explores the role played by risk-seeking Timorese youth, known as the New Generation (Geração Foun), in the resistance movement against Indonesian occupation (1975–1999). It discusses the capture, regimentation and marginalisation of youthful radicalism by the national resistance movement. The paper looks at these processes of youth revolutionary involvement sympathetically though the memories of former participants in the clandestine struggle and is representative of a new reflexive phase in young Timorese' post-colonial self-realisation. This phase is decidedly non-triumphalist, one which dwells on the inability to be 'recompensed' for the dreams that were captured and lives that were side-tracked in a conflict that consumed youth.

Keywords: Timor Leste; Youth; Resistance; Agency; Postcolonial Memory

Introduction

Generational dynamics are a critical element of Timor-Leste's modern history. Since the Portuguese-educated youth referred to themselves as the Generation of '75 (*Geração '75*) for their role in the anti-colonial movement against the Portuguese, the impetus to define generational experience within the cast of nationalism has remained: as Nora (1992, 511) remarked, 'belonging to a generation is not simply a way to be free, it is also the only way not to be alone'. During the Indonesian occupation (1975–1999), a younger generation of Indonesian-educated Timorese referred to themselves as the New Generation (*Geração Foun*) and played a central role in Timor's Independence from Indonesia. After Timor's Independence in 2002, tensions between these two generations played out in debates concerning language, belonging and national identity (Bexley 2007a, 2007b, 2009). A decade later, a

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minority of *Geração Foun* has moved into politics and senior government positions, joining the *Geração '75* political leaders (McWilliam and Bexley 2007). The majority of the *Geração Foun*, however, remains unsatisfied with Independence and feels marginalised from its political processes. Debates among this group have turned to the past, the role of youth and the nature of the resistance movement in order to reposition themselves in post-colonial Timor-Leste.

The forums for such expressions of disillusionment are both private and public. Discussions among former clandestine leaders and ordinary members are being put into print, the most well known is Naldo Rei's (2007) autobiography, *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor*, and a range of local publications such as *Klaak* (see Bexley 2009 for a complete description of the origins of the magazine and Nygaard-Christensen 2010). This article draws on these public reflections, as well as those of Nuno Rodrigues (a member of the student movement) and those he has recorded with members of the clandestine movement¹ and is also substantiated by my own ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2009. These post-Independence reflections by former clandestine members represent a post-colonial reflexive turn unique to this period of time.² As a part of this process, *Geração Foun* members are creating alternative versions of history that do not align with the national narrative of unity pertinent to the nation-building project and instead focus on the coercive, conflicting and often violent nature of the resistance movement.

Motivations for reassessing the past among members of the *Geração Foun* are a part of a larger narrative of redistributive justice that became a national trope since Independence. In her work among the ethno-linguistic group of the Mambai, anthropologist Elizabeth Traube found a vision that centres around the idea that the nation was won through suffering and sacrifice; it was 'purchased', the saying goes, 'not with silver or gold, but with the blood of the people'. As Traube (2007, 21) explains, 'the formula is simple: those who pursued their own selfish interests and prospered under the occupation should be made to pay, while those who suffered and sacrificed for independence should be recompensed'. While this sense of retribution is strong among the *Geração Foun*, youth is a currency that can never be redeemed.

Memory, however, and the contestation of memory, is one way that Timorese are shaping the post-colonial nation-building project. Here, I draw on the work of Zurbuchen (2005) about contesting history through memory and the different aspects of individual and social processes in shaping representations of past and present. Das and Kleinman (2001, 6) in their discussion of social suffering and recovery also discuss 'agentive moments' where:

finding one's voice in the making of one's history, the remaking of a world, though, is also a matter of being able to recontextualise the narratives of devastation and generate new contexts through which everyday life may become possible... communities in suffering do not always succeed in this.

In the case of Timor-Leste, this could refer to the ways in which many Timorese are reflecting on and making meaning out of their involvement in the clandestine

movement during their most influential years in their teens and early twenties. However, the success in which they can create new contexts is limited.

In Timor-Leste, 'youth' was constructed as a powerful symbolic and productive category called upon during the resistance against Indonesian occupation as 'hope for the nation' (Naafs and White 2012). Post-Independence,³ Timorese government discourse on young Timorese is typified by 'youth defectology' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005), highlighting young people as a violent problem (World Bank Report 2007; Scambary, Gama Da, and Barreto 2006) that needs to be resolved by their incorporation into neoliberalism by working in low-paid jobs (ILO 2009). However, these discourses discount the historical evolution of the concept of youth in Timor-Leste and the ways in which the resistance movement produced the notion of 'danger-seeking' youth. This paper seeks to understand how the category of youth has been constituted in relation to forms of power, and to what extent young Timorese can now forge an understanding of themselves outside the tropes of either 'hero' or 'villain' in the nation-building project.

In the Beginning: Young Timorese in the Resistance Against Indonesian Occupation

At the end of 1978, the Indonesian military had destroyed the Timorese armed resistance front in the jungle. Civilians, military cadets and FRETILIN⁴ supporters had either surrendered or been arrested. This forced the resistance movement to adopt a new strategy.

Clandestine activities had been undertaken since the beginning of the Indonesian invasion. The families that did not seek refuge in the mountains undertook activities such as communication and logistics for those family members fighting in the mountains (CAVR 2005). Usually, these clandestine activities were undertaken in a spontaneous manner, however, in a number of villages, such as Mehara and the surrounding villages in the islands of far eastern district of Lautem, the people became more organised in their clandestine activities from 1976 onwards (interview with Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro, Dili, February 20, 2012).

News of the organisation of Mehara and surrounding villages travelled to Xanana Gusmão and he left his hideout in the Matebian ranges in the east to go to Los Palos, the main centre of the most easterly Lautem district. While in hiding, Xanana Gusmão had also been in communication with local citizens and youth organisations. In December 1978, Gusmão began to enlist the help of Timorese who had been recruited to the Indonesian military. In 1980, Gusmão made further contact by organising a door-to-door campaign and from there he began to understand how to conduct a guerrilla campaign with the assistance of those who had surrendered and were living on the edges of the main city centres (interview with Rodrigues Tchailoro 2012). From that point onwards, young Timorese were targeted to become involved in the clandestine movement.

In the two years of survival in the mountains after the Indonesian invasion, young people had been educated about revolutionary emancipation from colonialism by FRETILIN (Braithwaite, Charlesworth, and Soares 2012, 56). In the cities, however, youth were frustrated at their lack of control over the situation upon Indonesian invasion. Many formed small, incoherent vigilante-type groups. Young Timorese were incredibly vulnerable due to war and displacement. They experienced a radical disjuncture between their childhood and the brutality of occupation as they came of age. One of these groups was FITUN, organised around a suburb in Dili. Its explicit focus was retaliation against Indonesian occupation. One of the founders of FITUN, Elisario Ferreira, recalls: 'In its beginnings, FITUN was just a gang with the objective of bashing and getting rid of new transmigrant arrivals from Indonesia' (interview with Rodrigues Tchailoro 2012). The leaders of the armed resistance realised that the energy of young people could be diverted into more purposeful pursuits assisting the armed forces. A number of youth organisations were established in rapid succession including *Sagrada Familia* and *OPJLATIL*. These had the explicit function of carrying out logistical and tactical commands from *FALINTIL*. A senior member of *Sagrada Familia*, Andre da Costa Belo L4, noted (interview with Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro, Dili, January 19, 2012) that this youth organisation (and others) explicitly targeted youths who were known to drink alcohol and become involved in fights.

This recruitment strategy coalesces with the experiences of youth in Indonesia during the revolution (1945–1949).⁵ It was common for recruitment tactics to focus on the fringes of urban society where disempowered youth were most likely to be found.⁶ Indeed, Cribb (1991) underscored the importance of the Jakarta underworld in challenging Dutch authority and this linked them with the revolutionary alliance of young nationalists in 1945.

Scholarly analyses (Honwana 2006) of why young people were, and continue to be, involved in armed conflicts illustrate that young people make good soldiers because they are especially susceptible to ideological conditioning and because of their brashness and sense of invulnerability. It is in this way that young Timorese born from 1970s onwards came to experience youth. The conditions of the Indonesian occupation and their involvement in the resistance movement significantly narrowed the ways in which they experienced their transition to adulthood and the autonomy they had in their own roles as members of the clandestine movement.

In Schools: A Time of Growth and Autonomy for the Youth Movement

Former student activist Nuno Rodrigues recalls that young Timorese started to group together in high schools and realised they shared experiences as young children in the bush, fleeing the bombings and raids of the Indonesian military, having family members in the forest and then later the shared experiences of bravery and discipline that came with working in the clandestine movement. Over time their organising abilities became increasingly constrained by the wider structures of the resistance movement.

At the same time, the Indonesian government was focused on building the administration in Timor-Leste. One of the main priorities was education. The motivation for this was to stamp out radicalism and dissent towards the Indonesian occupation by inculcating them with the moral values of the Indonesian New Order state, known as Pancasila. However, young Timorese seized the opportunity of being back on school grounds to regroup and refocus their clandestine activities. Schools, and particularly Catholic schools, such as Salesian Fatumaka in Baucau, were a breeding ground for activities. For Rodrigues Tchailoro and many others of his generation, it was this school in particular that provided critical exposure to other students who told stories of their time in the forest fighting the Indonesian military. This was the turning point for Rodrigues's own consciousness, as he himself came from an apolitical family who did not seek refuge in the jungle after the 1975 invasion and thus did not know the extent of the resistance movement or its objectives. At the Salesian Fatumaka, Rodrigues Tchailoro was first exposed to the ideas and concepts of nationalism.

Schooling as a breeding ground for nationalist thought is not unique to Timor-Leste. In neighbouring Indonesia, young Indonesians in Dutch schools also found them to be places of nascent nationalism. Anderson (1972, 18) observed that:

Nationalism was the only explanation that could be given for each student's having made the journey from whatever home he had left to enter one classroom with the others. Only nationalism made sense of the new life on which they were collectively embarked.

As already stated, recruitment of youth into the clandestine movement became critical for Timor's national resistance movement against Indonesia. This was conducted through a cellular structure where one person would recruit a further seven people and so on. As a general rule, new recruits were identified through family connections. McWilliam (2005) notes these were referred to as *selcom*: coordinated hamlet-level networks. However, the schools and university campuses increasingly became hotbeds of recruitment, extending well beyond the family unit, particularly in the late 1980s and 1990s (see Bexley 2009 for the ways in which the clandestine movement undermined, rather than strengthened, family relationships). The new recruit would undergo a training process which involved the clandestine member following their every move for a couple of months in order to be certain they were not a member of 'intel', or an Indonesian police 'spy'.

After the training process, the new recruit would receive information only through cassettes from the leaders, flyers or meeting directly with FALINTIL members or at demonstrations. However, cell members had little knowledge of who or what was happening beyond their immediate cell contact, ostensibly so they were not in a position to give up comrades under torture.

For many young Timorese, the Santa Cruz massacre became the catalyst for their involvement in the clandestine movement. On 12 November 1991, thousands of young Timorese met in Dili to mourn the death of Sebastião Gomes Rangel, killed inside the Motael Church two weeks earlier by the Indonesian military. By the time

the procession reached the cemetery, the crowd had swelled to 4000–5000, including uniformed children from a nearby school. About 1000 mainly young Timorese remained in front of the cemetery entrance and others, including the Gomes family, entered the cemetery to pray and lay flowers. As truckloads of Indonesian military carrying automatic weapons surrounded them, the peaceful funeral procession of respect turned into an arena of violence and death. Without any warning, the military opened fire on the crowd who fled over tombstones and high walls. The death toll is estimated at approximately 200. Naldo Rei (2007, 51) describes the harrowing experience:

There was total chaos. With automatic gunfire all around me, I became very afraid. In front of my eyes there were bodies falling everywhere, sprawled at all angles and smeared with blood. People began running towards the gates to escape, but this was right into the line of fire. Most were not killed outright so soldiers quickly ran between the graves bayoneting people to death. I witnessed this as I dodged this way and that, to find an escape route the opposite way. I jumped over the brick wall, the only one without soldiers, of the houses on the other side, normally far too high to be scaled by my small, skinny, sixteen-year-old self. But fear gave me wings and I was able to escape from the slaughter yard.

The Santa Cruz massacre, as the incident became known most acutely through the video footage of journalist Max Stahl, and stills taken by British photographer Steve Cox, caught the attention of the international community. Most significantly, the images of martyred youth marked the imaginations of young Timorese and acted as a catalyst for young people to join the clandestine resistance movement.

Although the activities of the youth groups and FALINTIL provided a framework through which young people could channel their frustrations and energies into the pursuit of freedom from Indonesian occupation, it also narrowed the possibility of ways youth were able to organise themselves. As a consequence, the activities of the independent youth ‘nationalist’ groups that were rallying inside the schools began to be curtailed. Under the FALINTIL hierarchy, their ability to make decisions or strategise their future actions was curtailed, as all plans had to be approved by the chief, Xanana Gusmão. The effect of this new structure was that all organisations became subordinate to FALINTIL.

Youth Resistance: A Controlled Agency

By the 1990s, youth incorporation into the clandestine movement was growing. The Timorese governor, Mário Carrascalão, was responsible for forging the path for Timorese to enter higher education in Indonesia. While the Indonesian military wanted to ‘shut-off’ Timor from the rest of the world in order to quell the resistance, Carrascalão saw an opportunity to ‘win the hearts and minds’ (Anderson, Djati, and Kamme 2003) of the Timorese through non-violent means. Around 15,000 scholarships were available to any student provided they swore an oath of allegiance to the Indonesian New Order Pancasila ideology. Although this education was meant as a

tool of social control, the exposure to the Indonesian pro-democracy front solidified their resistance to Indonesian New Order control.

During the 1990s, Indonesian university campuses underwent a significant period of control. However, the attempts by the New Order regime to remove the political activity within the university setting encouraged their politicisation further (see Aspinall 2005). With this, young Timorese were exposed to other ideas about democracy and how youth could contribute. Timorese students participated in discussions on campus and off campus with Indonesian activists and became involved in pro-democracy underground media such as *Kabar dari Pijar*. This underground media highlighted not only the human rights abuses in Timor but held within it the realisation that both the Timorese and Indonesians were victims of the same regime. They began to use their agency to discuss the ways that young Timorese could contribute to Timor's nationhood after Independence.

The students recruiting other young Timorese into the urban front were organised through RENETIL (Resistencia Nacional dos Estudiantes de Timor-Leste, National Resistance of Timorese students) whose networks included Timorese students in Indonesia as well as Indonesian activists, journalists, intellectuals and human rights advocates. The clandestine front, of which RENETIL became a central pillar, took on a more meaningful role alongside the diplomatic and armed FALINTIL front within the independence struggle; particularly, as it became clearer that the struggle would not be won through armed combat.⁷ RENETIL was formed in Bali in 1989 and continued organising students in Indonesia until the popular consultation in 1999.⁸ The principal strategies they used included demonstrations and occupation of foreign embassies known as 'fence jumping' (Ind.: *lompat pagar*).

RENETIL members were strongly encouraged to run for IMPPETTU elections (Timorese students in Java and Bali were obliged to join the official student organisation, The East Timorese Student and Youth Association (Ikatan Mahasiswa, Pemuda dan Pelajar Timor Timur—IMPPETTU)). The two organisations, RENETIL and IMPPETTU, overlapped since the Chair of IMPPETTU's national board, Mariano Sabino Lopes, was also the deputy secretary of RENETIL.⁹ By 1995, nearly all IMPPETTU chapters were led, or at least dominated, by RENETIL members.¹⁰ Based on this strategy, RENETIL, which at the time had only around 1300 members, also had access to the 5000 students in Indonesia who were all required by the Indonesian authorities to join IMPPETTU chapters. This gave the political organisation of RENETIL access to a larger support network.

After 1990, the agency that Timorese youth had cultivated, in terms of strategising about the resistance to Indonesian occupation, particularly on Java, was curtailed. Nuno Rodrigues recalls:

Before I became involved in RENETIL, I was involved in student organisations at university where issues and plans were openly discussed. However, after I became involved in RENETIL, this all changed and because it was operating as a semi-clandestine organisation, it prioritised secrecy above all else. The result of this is that a huge gap became apparent between the knowledge of the leaders of RENETIL

and the 'militants'/activists. When I was in RENETIL, I knew that all planned demonstrations must await the direction and instruction from above. The Commander in chief of the resistance movement (Xanana Gusmão) would instruct the leaders of RENETIL and from there the messages would filter down on a need-to-know basis in order to carry out the demonstration.

Youth organisations, from the early 1990s onwards, experienced independence in that they were able to form alliances with the Indonesian pro-democracy front. After RENETIL became included under the hierarchical structure of FALINTIL, their independence was curtailed and they could only exercise a degree of autonomy with regard to their resistance activities. Their activities were limited to recruiting new clandestine movement members, organising logistics in the public campaign for the fight for Independence and taking part in the demonstrations against occupation. The prominent feature of Timorese youth organisations during this time, however, was the regimentation and hierarchical nature of their organisational structure and activities. It is significant that the only youth groups that were permitted to operate under the resistance struggle were those authorised by Xanana Gusmão. During this time, it was generally accepted that the loss of autonomy was necessary for the greater objective of obtaining Independence from Indonesian occupation. However, upon reflection, many clandestine members have pointed to the degree in which the process of control by the Commander in Chief Xanana Gusmão, resulted in the youth organisations having no independent programs or autonomy to decide on the direction of the resistance movement, or indeed, what role they might play after Independence.

A military logic pervaded all youth organisations in their focus and activities which narrowed to concentrate on fighting Indonesian occupation, rather than preparing themselves for Independence. In this process, the clandestine operation became completely subordinate to the military hierarchy of FALINTIL. The ways in which youth behaviour was expected to conform to military hierarchies became a part of the military logic and regimentation that was central to the discourse of national unity. The directives for this change in behaviour came mostly from the leader of the resistance movement, Xanana Gusmão.

Leader's Discourse: Youth as Heroes

In the mid-1980s, Xanana Gusmão began writing to the Timorese youth individually and collectively in order to foster a sense of unity and to encourage their ongoing participation in the clandestine movement. These communiqués involved commands to organise demonstrations and deliver messages to other leaders, particularly throughout the 1990s. Most of all, these letters inspired notions of self-sacrifice and patriotism within young Timorese which became key markers of youth identity. Coinciding with this were the ways in which Xanana Gusmão was able to establish himself as a father figure and thus elicit a child-like obedience from the youth. Naldo

Rei (2007, 37–38) reflects in his autobiography how young Timorese were in awe of their leader:

To me, at sixteen, Xanana seemed a kind of God. He was so warm, interested in each person in the struggle, smiled frequently and all his body language indicated that he was relaxed. He had twinkling eyes, pale skin and was taller than most of us which added to his mystique.

Young Timorese were greatly impressed by their leader and were prepared to do anything he asked of them. A letter written to Rei, a young man at the time, demonstrates the profound authority of Gusmão in an order to risk his life to organise a demonstration at the Dutch embassy in 1995. Gusmão's letter (cited in Rei 2007, 148) read:

That's why now I'm ordering you all! Have the spirit of responsibility and sacrifice. You must stand mosquitoes, stand being hungry, thirsty, stand the coldness, stand dirty clothes and smelling bad, and stand repression from the embassy. Putu [the code name given to Naldo Rei by Gusmão] must tell our friends that the guerrilla movement has endured this for the last twenty years and their sacrifice is why the struggle still continues.

The primacy of the 'foot soldier' role that young Timorese played throughout the resistance movement has been noted by members of the clandestine movement (see de Araujo 2000; Mok 1996). Rei (2007, 149) reflects on the gravitas of being issued such a responsibility and the conforming nature of youth:

But in my heart I was questioning why I had been chosen as the leader, and why I had to take part in the action at all. Previously Xanana had forbidden me to take part in embassy actions because it was too public; my job was underground, as in East Timor. I was only twenty, young to be a leader, and most of my comrades were older than me... I knew it was an important action or Xanana would not have asked to change my role and, I reminded myself, a good freedom fighter does not ask too many questions and works hard. It was this that pushed me to accept his order.

This is just one example of the ways in which Xanana Gusmão established the father role and the parent-child obedience that was expected of young Timorese in the clandestine movement. While many members accepted that this was a way of instilling discipline into the resistance movement, it is also clear that the idea of 'youth' was utilised as a key symbol and heroic image which became fundamental propaganda directed towards the youth to sustain hope and commitment to the struggle.

In one of the more public letters from Xanana Gusmão (written in Portuguese and Tetum and photocopied, passed around and read out at public gatherings), he clearly highlighted the importance of the youth in the interests of the nation. The rhetoric in his public letters demonstrated the powerful and emotive pull of the construction of youth as (masculine and militarised) heroes and their constructed

agency of being involved in the national struggle. One letter (cited in Gusmão and Niner 2000) read:

On behalf of the CRRN [Council of National Resistance] 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.

The words of first Indonesian President, Sukarno, in his rallying calls to the youth on the eve of independence in Indonesia, offer pertinent comparisons with the above construction of youth as socio-political subjects with limited agency. Importantly, the allure of danger and courage was at the forefront of this construction. As a compelling orator, Sukarno went to great lengths to promote youth and youthful attributes—in particular, activism, dynamism and reckless courage. These symbols were evoked in order to create and maintain certain attitudes and states of mind (see Feith 1963). The politics of these political manifestations have been termed ‘the politics of rejuvenation’ (McIntyre 2005, 64). Throughout his presidency, Sukarno advocated the youthful attribute of reckless courage, much in the same way as Gusmão did among young Timorese.

Living dangerously was particularly appealing for young Timorese. Xanana Gusmão points out that as young children, many Timorese were already living dangerously. Through his carefully placed language, Xanana Gusmão weaves their disjointed and painful lives into a narrative focused on heroism and unity. He connects their disjointed lives with that of their families, whom many did not meet for years, and positions the clandestine movement as a surrogate family and himself as the surrogate father.

Gusmão, like the leader of Indonesian Independence Sukarno, was a ‘symbol wielder’ (Feith 1963) and his discourse on youth-as-heroes closely linked the youth’s fate with that of the nation. The symbol of youth was created as courageous, patriotic, masculine and militarised with the higher pursuit of obtaining Independence from Indonesian occupation. Parallel to the formation of youth-as-heroes came a change in the attitudes and behaviour of the youth to match the powerful symbol of youth which also suited the purpose of the resistance movement.

Characteristics of New Recruits

After the 1990s as the focus on youth recruitment became more intense, the clandestine movement placed an emphasis on the types of personal attributes and characteristics that new recruits were expected to portray. While this applied to both male and female recruits, it seemed to particularly target young males. It also

appealed to their sense of masculinity. The attributes took the form of bodily transformations, attitude adjustments through a series of rituals and indoctrination that highlighted the militant and the masculine. Within this process, the sense of self-sacrifice, allegiance and loyalty were made a priority. The four main characteristics (Rodrigues personal communication, 2009) were:

Bravery, discipline, secrecy and willingness to receive commands (subordination)
An oath of secrecy was required and involved kissing the FRETILIN and RDTL flag and drinking the blood of other clandestine members.
Bravery was considered a characteristic that could be attained or bravery ('bravery plus') through the use of black magic, referred to as *jimad* or *lulic*. This black magic was capable of providing the clandestine movement member with immunity against bullets, or the ability to escape from the military if caught.
An ideological stance on the resistance movement. Clandestine movement members were required to advance national unity by interpreting the struggle for freedom as the struggle against the Indonesian military. Discussion about how society should run after Independence was not permitted. Resistance leaders made promises about dealing with social issues such as poverty and employment opportunities 'after obtaining independence'.

The regimentation of youth organisations also changed the sorts of activities in which youth were involved. The focus on the personal attribute of 'bravery' saw many turn their attention to magic and recruit the assistance of village elders believed to be 'experts' in this sort of magic. The youth organisations most involved in these activities included Sinco Sinco (55), Sete Sete (77) and Sagrada Familia (for more on these groups see Scambary, Gama Da, and Barreto 2006; Myrtinnen 2012). These groups existed only in order for young (mainly) men to acquire magical potency so they could carry out their tasks within the clandestine movement.

As the leader of the resistance movement, Xanana Gusmão placed a deeper significance on *lulic* (Tet.: Sacred, magical) powers which have been variously described as being dangerous and sacred (McWilliam 2001). Young Timorese men would mark a wound on their upper arm and insert magical dust leaving a tattoo-like mark. The practice was known as *isin knanek* (Tet.: Magical dust). This *isin knanek* was meant to act as a sort of immunity against harm but was also a distinguishing identity marker of belonging to the different clandestine groups.

The leader of Sete Sete, Carlito da Silva Sana Mea, stated that *jimad* had always been used amongst its members, but increased from 1979. One of the reasons given for its increase was the destruction of the liberated zones and the end of FRETILIN's political programs of emancipation. The use of magic became a permanent preoccupation of young Timorese men, to the point where it framed the ways in which they thought about the struggle and aligned themselves within the FALINTIL hierarchy. The founder of the OPJLATIL organisation, Vasco da Gama Criado, said of the use of magic (interview with Nuno Rodrigues, Dili, June 10, 2009): 'For me, *jimad* was like a weapon used by FALINTIL in the jungle to protect themselves (from the Indonesian military)'. During the resistance movement, young Timorese drew

upon existing beliefs about their connection to the land and *lulic* beliefs, such as the power of the invisible, in the creation of their own distinct rituals in the formulation of a militarised youth culture, as Rei (2007, 17) makes explicit in his autobiography:

I crouched down carefully in the undergrowth and, focusing my energy and will, called upon my ancestors, the land and rocks to protect me . . . The land, the rocks and the spirits of my ancestors responded. The enemy walked all around me. My heart was beating fast and I held my breath but stayed focused on the power of the land. I could see the soldiers' boots and the tips of their guns, but they could not see me.

Secrecy was the most important characteristic of clandestine members. Rei (2007, 31) reflects further on his experiences of being recruited and the level of secrecy, which for many became a way of life:

One day he [Naldo's brother] took me to a friend's house in Dili and introduced me to the young people there who were from different regions of East Timor. From then on, my brother would ask me to take a letter or others things to them and my courier work began. I did not ask what was inside the letters but I suspected what was going on. He had started to link people together in one of the clandestine networks in Dili as part of the struggle . . . My brother Alarico became very withdrawn and never divulged where he was going which worried me a lot and, although I did ask him about these people, he only told me that they were good.

Within this process of self-renewal, a particular type of recruit was moulded where the characteristics of self-sacrifice, allegiance and secrecy were made a priority. Rather than youthful energies being channelled into discussion about what role they would play after Independence, many young Timorese men directed their energies into obtaining the militarised characteristics so desired by the resistance movement.

Playing Both Sides

One of the effects of the militarisation of young people was that they found themselves involved in the war on both sides. While Rei's narrative is common among *Geração Foun* members, an equally common experience less openly or publicly discussed, is the involvement of young Timorese in Indonesian military operations. Civilians were forcibly recruited to act as military operational support personnel (Ind.: Tenaga Bantuan Operasi, TBO). Officially, The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) recruited civilian males aged between twelve and thirty-five years. However, in reality boys much younger and men much older were involved, as well as women. Groups of these people were attached to a particular military unit for the operation. The total number of civilians involved was very large. A 1982 military document states that the operation included '60,000 civilians in addition to the WANRA and RATIH' (CAVR 2005, 91). Other sources indicate even more were involved, mentioning eight battalions and 120,000 guided militia (Ind.: *milisi binaan*) moving east to west (CAVR 2005, 91). In mid-1981, the TBOs were recruited into an operation known as Operasi Kikis (Operation Eliminate). They formed a human fence to encircle FALINTIL on Mount

Matebian from Tutuala and Viqueque but did not succeed in capturing any significant figures (CAVR 2005, 91).

The Timorese resistance movement and the Indonesian military shared key tactics in using young Timorese. This deeply saddening reality resulted in the loss of childhood innocence. Indeed, this is one of the main points of Rei's autobiography. Reflecting on the legacies of his childhood in the movement, he says (Rei 2007, 278): 'I feel I missed out on childhood and can never get it back'. This feeling of forgoing childhood is amplified in the general sentiment from other ex-clandestine members who refer to their participation in the clandestine as being 'tricked'. They were young and impressionable and did not know the consequences of being in a liminal position—neither child nor adult, but a utility of war.

The effects of their liminal position was expressed by Nino (interview in Los Palos, October 2005) from Los Palos, now in his thirties, who explains how children played roles on both sides of the war:

Yeah, I worked for FALINTIL. We had to. But most kids from my village were also an Operations Assistant [TBO]. We didn't really have a choice. It didn't mean that you were pro-Indonesia. It was just another way the military could oppress us. If we didn't we would be killed... although some did it for the money, we were young and they forced us [to do it] (Ind.: *memaksa kami*).

During the course of the New Order, the category of youth became depoliticised by having their agency limited and became increasingly linked to the state through incorporation into the military command structure: as Nino remarks, 'it was just another way the military could oppress us'. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Indonesian police fostered an expansion of the Indonesian scout movement (Ind.: *pramuka*) to instil national discipline among both young Indonesians and young Timorese (CAVR 2005, 27). By May 1978 in Timor, there were 10,000 *pramuka* members and by 1981 there were 22,455 members (CAVR 2005, 27). The military also played a part in these national discipline activities and it sponsored martial arts groups, such as *pencak silat*. In these groups young Timorese became intensely militarised subjects. Both of these organisations demanded training such as marching, drilling and wearing uniforms, mimicking Indonesian soldiers.

The rise of the group Pemuda Pancasila is an example of the way in which both Indonesian and Timorese youth increasingly came to play the role of Indonesian state auxiliaries, *par excellence*. It brought together two evocative tropes of Indonesian nationalism: *pemuda*, literally, the youth, who had become the driving force of Indonesian nationalism; and Pancasila, the five ideological pillars of the state which was first mobilised by Sukarno and became an inviolable mantra under Suharto. Since being accused of transgressing or intending to undermine Pancasila was enough to convict anyone of subversion, the group's name already implied a certain extra-judicial authority. As the group expanded into a powerful national organisation from its more humble local roots in Northern Sumatra beginning in the early 1980s, it secured a presence in nearly every village throughout Indonesia (see Ryter 2002).¹¹

In addition to being particularly targeted by New Order state ideology, Timorese tertiary students were also targeted by the Indonesian armed forces. By 1990, Timor had one university and one polytechnic college, and a student regiment (known in Indonesian as *Resimen Mahasiswa*, or by its acronym *MENWA*) was established on these campuses. Similar to student regiments in Indonesia, this was an additional avenue for ABRI to indoctrinate students. In Timor, ABRI used the regiment to infiltrate student organisations and clandestine groups on campus such as the *IMPETTU* organisation outlined in the previous section.

In its attempts to control the constitution and orientation of social organisations, ABRI attempted to establish a sort of patron–client relationship. ABRI would provide *IMPETTU* with assistance such as money for protection. I was told a story that exemplifies these relations (interview with Tito, Dili, June 15, 2007). A fight broke out between Timorese students and some local youths in a pool parlour in Malang, East Java. When the military arrived to intervene, they sided with the Timorese students. Some of the Timorese, the storyteller recounted, developed an intimidating reputation and other students were scared of them.

The tactics used by the clandestine operation also became militaristic in nature. Clandestine members used guerrilla politics to break the trust of the military group's infiltration to obtain information (Soares 2010, 114). Violence was often evoked as a necessary part of a struggle that was constructed as a largely non-violent 'civilian' struggle. The sometimes organised and directed violent outbursts of young Timorese contradicted the rhetoric of peace and a move away from armed conflict to an urban-based civilian movement. Vasco da Gama 'Criado' (interview with Nuno Rodrigues, Dili, June 10, 2009) stated that, acting upon the instruction of Xanana Gusmão in 1997, his organisation attacked the *BRIMOB* headquarters in Dili with only a few knives. Four *OPJATIL* youth group members died and three members were injured.

The line between working for the resistance movement and working for the Indonesian military became blurred; both operations made use of clandestine activities involving violence as the case of the Indonesian military operations assistant illustrates. Many young *TBO* affiliates launched careers in low-level thuggery and became auxiliaries of the New Order state and remain important figures in post-New Order Indonesia.¹²

The incorporation of young Timorese into the clandestine was a way of reigniting their youthful energy and giving voice to their frustrations. However, this incorporation was complicated by the ways in which young people were also forced to work for the Indonesian military. This perhaps goes some way in explaining why the narrative of the youth and their heroism was discounted as important in the reality of Independence.

Young Timorese' incorporation into military structures required a re-categorisation and reformulation of thinking about themselves, which was dictated primarily by regimentation and subordination. Rather than engaging critically (and non-violently) in the Independence struggle through discussions on university campuses,

the resistance movement focused on creating militant and narrow spaces within which youth could serve the purposes of the movement.

Conclusion

During the period of Indonesian occupation, young Timorese, known as the *Geração Foun*, were constructed in Timor-Leste as a socio-political category that served to fulfil certain requirements of the resistance movement. Through persuasive and emotive discourse by the leaders, most notably Xanana Gusmão, the call for young people to take on certain attitudes and characteristics was central to their involvement in the resistance movement.

The *Geração Foun* became the backbone of the resistance as the clandestine movement. They also became regimented and subordinate to the armed forces in the types of activities and organisational structures in which they were involved, and in the roles they were permitted to play. The new hierarchical structure guided the sorts of characteristics and behaviours deemed necessary for such an operation. At the same time as providing young Timorese with a way to channel their frustrations, the clandestine movement structure was also disempowering in that it limited young people's agency. This regimentation also put them in a position to be manipulated by the Indonesian military for its own purposes.

In order to carry out their specific militarised tasks, a change in behaviour was required in which certain characteristics were prioritised and others, such as critical thinking about Independence, were demoted. The development of a culture focusing on secrecy meant that suspicions were easily aroused and issues were often resolved through violence because young people lacked the ability to mediate conflict—they could only draw on the abilities they had developed during the clandestine movement. Since Independence, a number of younger generation public figures have spoken out about the impact of the incorporation of youth into the resistance movement. Aderito Soares, the anti-corruption Commissioner, spoke about the need to change the 'culture of command' that was developed through the imperative to follow orders in the clandestine movement (Braithwaite, Charlesworth, and Soares 2012, 120).

As members of the *Geração Foun* struggle to redefine themselves in post-colonial Timor-Leste, their sentiments of the past in how they were 'tricked' into participating in the resistance movement challenges the unitary discourse of nationalism and the current dominant discourse of young people as either 'hero' or 'villain'. While narratives continue to operate within a framework or national trope of being 'recompensed', they no longer expect recompense. The tone of the *Geração Foun's* newly reflexive approach to their involvement in the resistance movement is tragic and markedly non-heroic. Instead of demanding a share of the fruits of the resistance, their accounts express the sadness and nostalgia felt by ex-clandestine members for the loss of youthful lives and dreams that were captured, utilised instrumentally and

truncated in the service of a liberation struggle that considered them, ironically, the promise of the future of their homeland.

Notes

- [1] With the support of the Commission for Research on the Timorese Women's Resistance Movement.
- [2] This article focuses on the discourses of male members of the clandestine movement as the clandestine overtly relied upon the work of males. It also reveals how the category of youth with its socio-political overtones was deeply gendered. However, this is not to erase the active role played by women involved in the clandestine movement or to recreate the masculine archetype of youth-hero (see the ongoing work of the Commission for Research on the Timorese Women's Resistance Movement, Dili and Bexley (2009) for a discussion on the resistance discourse of women as keepers of the moral code and the striking lack of support within the resistance movement to critically discuss the treatment of women).
- [3] The youth as 'defectology' discourse promulgated by government and international organisations intensified after the 2006 socio-political crisis where violence occurred on a daily basis.
- [4] The Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente) was the political party established in 1974 that gained Timor's short Independence from Portugal before being invaded by Indonesia nine days later.
- [5] Reference to comparative historical literature about the role of youth in the revolution in Indonesia in 1945 (Anderson 1972; Ryter 2002; Siegel 1998; Cribb 1991), is useful in exploring the ways both young Indonesians and young Timorese were incorporated into their respective resistance movements and the consequences when they were no longer deemed a critical constituent in the national agenda.
- [6] The difference between Java and Timor Leste is that youth was already an essential category of Javanese society, to which Javanese culture 'assigned a style and meaning of its own' (Anderson 1972). Customarily, the transition to adulthood for Timorese was marked by tooth filing and the chewing of the first beetle nut in preparation for marriage. The Tetum term, *lao lemorai* (to travel outside of one's village) came about during Portuguese colonisation and expanded the meaning of youth beyond the narrow defined roles and responsibilities of village life, as (mostly males) left for schooling in seminaries and created an awareness of their own differences as a distinct cohort in parallel with the rise of nationalism.
- [7] By 1979, 79 per cent of the Supreme Command had been killed, including the Fretilin Vice President Nicolau Lobato, and 80 per cent of the 4000 FALINTIL troops had been lost, their support bases destroyed and internal and external lines of communication severed (Taylor 1991, 6–7).
- [8] Other youth organisations included: Frente da Libertação Estudantil Cladestina de Timor-Leste (FECLETIL); Liga dos Estudantes Patriotas (LEP); and Organização da Juventude Católica de Timor-Leste (OJECTIL), which later changed its name to Organização dos Jovens e Estudantes de Timor-Leste (OJETIL).
- [9] Mariano Sabino Lopes was one of the founders of the Timorese political party, Democrat Party (PD). He had previously led the IMPPETTU Chapter in Malang, East Java, while studying for his agronomy degree. He was appointed the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries under the AMP government.
- [10] In order to reach the general public about the resistance, the clandestine movement conducted a 'socialisation' program whereby organisations were paired with other organisations that had undergone a formal 'legalisation' process and were acknowledged

by the Indonesian New Order state. These organisations included OJETIL and the scouts, RENETIL with IMPETTU, HPPMAI, Raculima with DSMPTL (Dewan Solidaritas Mahasiswa dan Pelajar Timor-Leste).

- [11] Ahmad Alkatiri, the brother of former Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, was the head of Pemuda Pancasila during the Indonesian occupation.
- [12] One of the most well-known thugs (*preman*) is Hercules Rozario Marcal who rose to notoriety in the Jakarta gangster underworld after starting his career as a TBO. He became known for his involvement in protection, extortion, gambling and prostitution rackets in Indonesia and has recently returned to Timor-Leste to engage in a range of business dealings such as the building of the mini-park (*taman mini*) opposite Hotel Timor, Dili. Hercules recently received legal protection from Wiranto's political party, GERINDRA (Karyono 2013).

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