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BRANCHING FROM THE TRUNK:

East Timorese Perceptions
of Nationalism in Transition

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PART ONE

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROOTS AND FORMATION OF THE TRUNK: INTERPRETING THE EVOLUTION OF NACIONALISMO
Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Opening Remarks: The Setting

This thesis is based on research carried out in East Timor primarily between 21 December 1999 and 8 December 2000. It focuses on political developments in that country during the period leading up to the first election of the local Constituent Assembly (CA) on 30 August 2001, and the handover of power from the United Nations (UN) to the elected government of East Timor on 20 May 2002. This was the period in which the East Timorese made the transition to independence, marking the end of the territory’s long colonial history.

During this period, the UN established itself through the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNTAET), with a mandate unprecedented in its fifty-three year history, to set up a nation.¹ The UN was present to assist the country to independence after its people decided to separate from Indonesia in a referendum held on 30 August 1999.² Thus, political developments during the period of this study were represented by the presence of various political entities. On one side, was the international United Nations administration led by UNTAET, and on the other, a number of local ‘political entities’ representing the East Timorese political community. This study concentrates on the political dynamics within the East Timorese political community.

² On 7 December 1975, the Indonesian military invaded East Timor and annexed the country six months later in what it described as ‘integration’. Nevertheless, internal resistance against the occupation and foreign pressure led Indonesia to propose a referendum which was held on 30 August 1999. After the referendum, dissatisfied pro-Indonesian militias destroyed almost all cities and towns and forcibly evacuated people from their homes throughout the territory.
By local political entities, I refer to a variety of institutions with interests, perspectives, ideologies and objectives that together characterise political development within the East Timorese political community. Included in this grouping are both political groups and individuals who lived in East Timor; not included are those who remained in West Timor as refugees during the period of my fieldwork, and those who favoured integration with Indonesia.

This study begins by acknowledging the fact that East Timorese political society appeared to posses a sense of communion and solidarity and, above all, appeared as a community bound by the spirit of unity or _nacionalismo_ (lit., Portuguese for nationalism). The years of war against Indonesia and the results of the ballot on 30 August 1999 justified this sense of unity. However, the post 1999 referendum period posed many questions for the East Timorese. Would this sense of _nacionalismo_ and unity that had bound them as a people during the years of war remain intact? How did the East Timorese perceive the changes they were going through? These are two of the main questions which are addressed throughout this thesis.

Anticipating the discussion in this thesis, it is worth mentioning that these questions arose during my fieldwork and are addressed on the basis of local people's perceptions about the changing patterns in the political landscape of East Timor. By locals, I mean politicians and political activists as well as ordinary people who were involved in the struggle for independence and continued to remain politically active during the time this study was conducted. This study is thus an articulation of people's perceptions about their political history and the situation in which they lived. While research for this study was carried out mainly in Dili, the capital of East Timor where most of the political activists reside, the population under study also included some outlying areas in which I had the chance to travel during fieldwork.
This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part examines East Timorese perceptions of *nacionalismo* and the second part examines changes in these perceptions and the forms of conflict and division within the East Timorese political community. The two parts are interconnected; they reflect the changing pattern of political behaviour which came about as a result of the transformation from colonialism to political independence and its aftermath. These two periods, (1) colonialism and (2) independence and its aftermath, are seen, in Timorese terms, as two ends – *hun* (lit., source, roots) and *rohan* (lit., end, tip) – of a single process.

II. Anxiety upon Arrival in the Field

On the afternoon of 20 December 1999, my wife Angela and myself, along with a number of Timorese refugees and politicians who had fled to Australia following the September 1999 violence, boarded the Australian Navy vessel HMAS Jervis Bay in Darwin harbour, with the next destination Dili, East Timor. It had been three months since the Australian led International Force (INTERFET) was sent to maintain peace in East Timor after the violence of September 1999. Travelling with us in a journey that would take 8 – 10 hours were fully equipped Australian army men and women heading for a tour of duty. As registered returning refugees, Angela and I were lucky to have free passage on the modern military vessel…..Going back to Dili was a thrilling experience after spending two years at the Australian National University. Nevertheless, a sense of uncertainty came to mind as I wondered how Dili would appear to my eyes after the September 1999 violence that had wrecked the entire country. The fact that I had received only unclear news about the situation of my parents and the rest of my family, who had been displaced since the troubles, only added to this uncertainty. As the ship sailed into the open Timor Sea and towards a completely different political atmosphere –

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3 For further information on the ship visit JERVIS CLASS, L. S. <http://www.geocities.com/ph_amstrong/Ships/landingShips/AKR.htm>.
from the Indonesian ‘integration’ period to UN reign - I tried to contemplate what I would confront in that completely ‘new’ space, the would-be first nation of the millennium.

Plate 1.1: Graffiti welcoming INTERFET in East Timor (Photo: James J. Fox)

Thinking of the new mission I had embarked upon, I began to ponder where I would start my work since, while waiting to depart from Darwin, I was told that East Timor and Dili in particular had been reduced to ashes by the Indonesian army and its militias following their humiliating ‘defeat’ in the August 1999 referendum. I began to recall the uncertainties encountered by forbears in my discipline, some in much more difficult circumstances, when they arrived in completely unknown societies to do fieldwork. Among these were Malinowski among the Trobianders (1969), and, more recently, Lewis’ fascinating experiences before ‘discovering’ the little known population of Tana Wai Brama (1988), Caulfield’s acknowledgement of her “rather small failure” in conducting fieldwork (1979: 314), and Elisabeth Traube’s (1986) uncertainty among the Galole before settling with the Mambai in East Timor.4 Likewise, my recollection of stories from my anthropology friends in

4 I would like to express my appreciation for the reading sessions I had with Prof. James Fox and Dr Patrick Guinness when I first arrived in Canberra before being formally accepted into the Department of Anthropology. Their patience and guidance provided me with useful insights, not only about general approaches in the field of study but also about the lives and experiences of particular anthropologists from different schools of thought.
Canberra about their pre-fieldwork experience, including Taylor’s (1998) preoccupation before arriving in Vietnam to study social change and people’s perceptions in post-war Southern Vietnam, provided a sense of relief. Being an East Timorese, I did not have to spend time thinking about familiarising myself with the people and worrying about my communication skills. Nevertheless, I had qualms, though these were overcome by my belief that these forbears had been successful in their endeavours to reveal previously unrecorded situations.

My involvement with this project started when I first knocked on the door of the Anthropology Department at the Australian National University. Travelling to Australia on an Indonesian passport in early 1998, my initial plan was to study the social organisation of a Tetum society in East Timor, a people whom I had known and familiarised myself with prior to my departure to Canberra. However, this initial dream was put on hold due to the ongoing political developments in East Timor at the time. I remember Prof James Fox, my supervisor, cautiously warning me in late 1998 of the risk involved should I insist on proceeding with my earlier plan, which would have meant leaving for East Timor in January 1999. The political crisis in Indonesia which led to the leadership change in the late 1990s allowed the new president, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, to change the long-standing Indonesian policy on East Timor. Habibie, unlike Suharto, his predecessor, agreed on 27 January 1999 to allow the East Timorese to decide their own future through a referendum, which would be organised and supervised by the United Nations.5

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5 For an overview of Indonesian policy on the East Timor referendum, see the PhD thesis by Kumiko Mizuno, Department of Social and Political Change, RSPAS, ANU, 2003. This dissertation is concerned with Indonesia’s rule over East Timor, the process of self-determination in East Timor, and Indonesia’s approach to the new nation thereafter. It examines how the Indonesian government responded to domestic and international concerns over its approach to East Timor. It also observes how a state behaves facing pressure over a contentious issue.
Between this decision in January 1999 and the period after the August 1999 referendum results were announced, violence broke out in many different parts of East Timor. This escalated after the referendum, in which the East Timorese voted to separate from Indonesia, and violence and arson enmeshed the country.\textsuperscript{6} Pro-Indonesian militias, guided and abetted by the Indonesian army, carried out a rampage throughout the territory, destroying almost all the country’s infrastructure (Dupont 2000). From my flat in Canberra, I could only glimpse through the lens of the television cameramen on the ground the sad developments I would have been caught up in had I persisted with my earlier plan of study. To add further doubt to this idea, the displacement of people inside East Timor and the forced movement of refugees into West Timor after the referendum made a proper ethnographic study of a particular social group essentially impossible. UN figures showed that in only two weeks (4-19 September 1999) as many as 250,000 people took refuge in West Timor, whereas most others left their homes for various periods of time and went to the mountains to escape the violence (\textit{Diario de Noticias}, September 2000; see also Ahmad 2000).

After the international outrage and pressure exerted on the Indonesian government over the behaviour of its military and pro-Indonesian militias, the Australian led INTERFET arrived in the territory on 20 September 1999. This arrival saw the departure of the Indonesian army and its associate militias to West Timor. After INTERFET took control of East Timor, the population who had fled the previous onslaught began to return slowly to their villages; many deplored the outcome of the earlier political process in silence, their voices only to be heard through the efforts of activists and foreign journalists.

\textsuperscript{6} For an overview on developments in the lead up to the consultation or referendum in 1999, see Babo Soares (2000).
As our vessel sailed northwards into the Timor Sea, I began to get a glimpse of the chaos left by the September 1999 mayhem. I heard a woman sitting right behind me, in the theatre-like seats of the military Catamaran, speaking to her friends about the arson and violence which had destroyed everything. More appallingly, she professed, it inflicted a deep psychological impact on the East Timorese.7

Three months after the arrival of INTERFET and the departure of the Indonesian army, there was little sign of social, economic and political recovery. The returning and demoralised refugees were left with nothing. Amid hunger and frustration, they would not hesitate to loot whatever they could find in order to eat and survive. In many instances, properties were also burned by these returnees. In some areas in Viqueque, an area which I had planned earlier to be the site of my field research, properties including some traditional houses (uma lulik), were burnt by returning refugees: cattle (balada) were taken away, rice and corn fields were burnt and there were a number of deaths.8 So widespread was this second wave of destruction that the East Timorese labelled this specific event as the time of milisia kedua (lit., the second militia period), equating this group and their looting to the previous paramilitary groups which, as argued by Dupont (2000), operated under the supervision of the Indonesian army. The majority of the population of Dili and East Timor, if asked who burnt their houses or looted their properties, would answer either the real militia or the second militia.

As dawn emerged on 21 December 1999, our vessel moved close to shore and subsequently laid anchor in Dili’s main port. With mixed feelings about meeting new people, experiencing a new political atmosphere and not

8 I was not able to obtain the exact number of deaths during the September 1999 event for this area, or for East Timor as a whole. Unofficial figures provided by various media and activists estimated the number at around 500-1000 people.
knowing what to do, we disembarked in Ponte Cais (Portuguese for Port) of Dili, my former hometown and a place that became the base for this fieldwork.

III. The Unexpected Scene: Negotiating the Topic

We arrived to find Dili, the centre of political dynamics in the country, a destroyed and burnt city covered with the remnants of ash and dust. By then, East Timor had become a country on its own but under the care of UNTAET. A prevailing sense of euphoria about the recently attained freedom was evident in the faces of its residents. This did not mean, however, that the post freedom period was a smooth one. Unexpected events coloured that period. Illegal occupation of houses and of the property of those who had fled the September 1999 mayhem by people from outlying districts was common in Dili. After a few weeks the ill feeling became clear. One began to see discontentment and sadness among a people still trying to recover from war (fungi). I noted that it was the loss of property and lives that had inflicted further anguish on the East Timorese. Conflicts about land and property, together with the presence of street gangs and other crimes were common around East Timor.

In the absence of effective law and order, Dili was the centre of chaos and uncertainty.\(^9\) False claims over property and accusations among members of the society occurred everywhere in the capital. General suspicion amongst the population was routine. The psychological impact of Indonesian military policies during 24 years of occupation could still be felt at the time. Strangers in particular were treated with suspicion as if they were military ‘spies’, a

\(^9\) I encountered people whom I had not known before. Indeed, many newcomers flooded into Dili soon after INTERFET arrived. These were the people who had hidden in the nearby forest during the September mayhem and came down as soon as INTERFET arrived. They occupied most of the houses abandoned by the Indonesians and East Timorese refugees in West Timor.
once common phenomenon. Clearly, locals were not easily receptive to outsiders, with feelings of distrust intense.\textsuperscript{10} As such, conversations with locals did not always reveal the truth, let alone reveal the \textit{hulic} (lit., sacred, forbidden) aspects of things associated with the 'sacred words' of the ancestors. This would have been a problem for me as an anthropologist had I persisted with my earlier intention, to explore the kinship relations in one local area.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Destruction of a house in Dili, caused by post-1999 Violence (Photo: B. Preston).}
\end{figure}

Beleaguered by events in September 1999, political developments during that period dominated conversations among family members, friends and people in the streets. Recounting personal stories about \textit{funu} (war)\textsuperscript{12} was more appealing than discussing other topics. As a friend told me, "they would talk

\textsuperscript{10} I conducted research in nine \textit{aldeias} (hamlets) in twelve districts in East Timor during June-August 2000. In some areas, I was accepted because of my frequent visits during the time of my fieldwork. However, a significant feeling of suspicion was still evident in most of the people whom I talked to, a suspicion that in my opinion, resulted from their experience during the Indonesian occupation and the 1999 mayhem.

\textsuperscript{11} I would like to thank Mr Mateus Soares, the \textit{hurai} (lit., king, ruler) of Uma-Wain Kraik, an old Kingdom of Viqueque (see Hicks 1971) for his ideas about my intentions when I first arrived for my fieldwork in late 1999. I recall that while a study of this kind would normally be encouraged by this \textit{hurai}, he advised me against it because, in his words, \textit{enae e sei terus hela} (lit., the people are still suffering) as a result of the recent mayhem.

\textsuperscript{12} Most East Timorese refer to the September 1999 pandemonium as 'war'.

\textsuperscript{11} Chapter One 9
about nothing but politics in their daily conversations" (Pers. Comm. Aderito de Jesus Soares, 10 January 2000).

Amid chaos and uncertainty, local political groups that had existed prior to the arrival of the UN and operated clandestinely during the Indonesian occupation began to re-establish themselves. Initially, the principal resistance body, Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense, The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), was the only resistance organisation recognised as the legitimate body representing the East Timorese. The CNRT was a political organ set up in Peniche, Portugal, on 29 April 1998. It stood as the umbrella organisation for all factions resisting Indonesian 'integration' and was the body which represented East Timor in the referendum in 1999. However, as political developments unfolded, this coalition of forces proved to be unsustainable. Disagreement among factions within CNRT surfaced and the sharp exchange of words among its leaders began to colour the atmosphere of the political transition. Fragmentation seemed unavoidable, with each faction trying to claim political leverage and legitimacy in the political process. As a result, conflict and division came to the fore.

I began to develop tentative but acceptable relations with various political groups and individuals as well as with activists who claimed to have been involved with the resistance during the years of struggle. Indeed, I visited the headquarters of different political parties and talked to individuals of various political groups in order to grasp their understanding of freedom. I had no doubt that people were extremely happy in the first few months of freedom despite the devastating effect of the September 1999 destruction. I began to follow political developments and learn how Timorese understood these developments. It was in the course of this investigation that I began to comprehend the crisis that gripped the country and the impact it had on people's lives.
Unlike the first few weeks after my arrival, where the sense of euphoria could be seen in the expression of every person I met, I began to sense a feeling of frustration among the population as early as February 2000. The sense of euphoria brought about by the newly obtained \textit{ukun a'an} (lit., to rule one self) or independence began to change. My involvement with various political activists and regular contact with political actors as well as other individuals, some of whom would become my informants,\textsuperscript{13} provided me with an understanding of the transformations of perception about the existing political developments. What I found was widespread disappointment and disenchantment with the existing political situation. Political uncertainty, the increasing rate of crime and renewed political friction among previously cooperative associates were the factors contributing to this disillusionment.

In early December 1999, local political parties and groups quickly organised themselves and broke ranks with the resistance body (CNRT). Apart from the traditional political parties, new political groups also emerged and were advocating defiant policies compared to those of the coalition of forces which had led the resistance for years. Political differences stemming from individual frictions of the past, ideological differences, differences of interest, as well as culturally based divisions were widespread, reminding people of the early days of civil war in 1974-1975 and of the September 1999 turmoil. Political groups and parties that fought for independence and had initially pledged to remain united until the country declared its formal independence decided to go their own ways.

\textsuperscript{13} While this term is vague, every East Timorese claims to have, directly or not, contributed to the struggle for independence. Following the protocol in this thesis, I continue to use words such as ‘political actors, activists, passive activists and guerrillas’ in order to maintain the visibility of my population.

Chapter One 11
In June-August 2000, while undertaking my fieldwork, I toured 12 aldeias (hamlets) in nine different districts examining the situation and trying to compare conditions in these areas to the experience I encountered in Dili. I also visited some of these places thereafter and found, as expected, deep (psychological) frustration as a result of war and ensuing internal conflict. Claims over property and land further complicated the situation (see Fitzpatrick 2002: 6-17). While the incoming UNTAET promulgated its first law on administration on 25 October 1999, the absence of proper government institutions to maintain law and order during that period only worsened the situation.

The climax came soon after the first Congress of the CNRT in August 2000, in which the two traditional parties, Frente Revolutionaria de Timor Leste Independente or the Revolutionary Front for East Timor Independence (FRETILIN) and União Democrática Timorense or Democratic Union of Timor (UDT), distanced themselves from the body they had helped to found in 1998 (see Chapter 4). Having been firmly united in the pursuit of independence and the fight against Indonesia, was no guarantee of continuing political unity among these entities. Each group advanced its own political agenda and a few individuals became prominent players in such developments. Central to these political developments were political groups, including politicians, and their ‘non-political’ counterparts (activists and NGOs), who emotionally identified with these political parties. It was a complex development.\(^\text{14}\) For ordinary East Timorese, as will be explained in Chapter 5, all this was perceived as a process in which different interests, perspectives, ideologies and objectives were employed by opposing groups and individuals to compete for political recognition. While at the UNTAET level,

\(^{14}\) The clearest example of individual division and conflict was between the incumbent President Xanana Gusmão, then leader of CNRT, and the leader of FRETILIN, now Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri. Their disagreements and conflicts naturally involved the institutions they represented. Other forms of conflict among political leaders, which then also implicated the political organisation they represented, will be detailed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
this political development was tolerated under the banner of democracy, it created disappointment and despair among the East Timorese. For one thing, the East Timorese did not seem to trust the *malae* (lit., foreigners)\(^{15}\) who were there to help build the country. The East Timorese believed that the *malae* came to their country only in times of peace. If there were a war, instead of helping the ordinary East Timorese, they would flee and leave them behind. This rather popular view is not without its basis. Memories of the trauma of Portuguese abandonment in 1974, which then led to a brief civil war among East Timor political factions and subsequent Indonesian invasion, were still fresh. Furthermore, when the United Nations (UNAMET) held the referendum for independence in August 1999, the same *malae* abandoned East Timor and left the East Timorese to become the prey of the militia and the Indonesian army. As such, the political developments within the East Timorese political community received wide attention since it was believed that if there was conflict or fighting among the factions, the *malae* would leave the country and no peace could be expected.

I began to understand the significance of these political developments among the East Timorese. Through conversations and discussions, I had no doubt that, while different, these political developments and people’s perceptions of them were interrelated and formed an integral part of the complexity that the East Timorese of the time had to confront. The ongoing local political dynamics were so significant for them that they shaped people’s perception of everyday life. In other words, the East Timorese perception of their country’s past and future was shaped very much by the political events of the time.

\(^{15}\) The word *malae* has its roots in the word ‘malay’, a reference to traders and merchants, including the outsiders who were believed to have come from the Malaya Peninsula. This word has been adapted and used in East Timor to refer to foreigners.
What was interesting about these developments was the quick spread of conflict, social tension and street battles. Fighting in the streets between gangs allegedly affiliated with certain political groups occurred regularly for months. One example was a wave of street battles in areia branca (lit, the White Sand area), Dili, which began on 31 December 1999 and went on for months. Interestingly, what began as street fighting resulted in a series of encounters which involved not only members of gangs but also some former guerrilla members who were divided over the issue of firaku and kaladi. Firaku is a stereotype commonly applied to people of the eastern part of East Timor and kaladi is applied to people who come from the west (see Chapter 8). The residents of Dili who had just begun to recover from the September 1999 mayhem complained about this instability (Pers. Comm. José Antonio Lorenço da Costa, 12 December 2000). This chaos in the streets added to the prominence of claims over property and personal accusations among individuals. Likewise, political conflict was also heightened, particularly between political groups and their leaders. This development – within the Timorese political community – continued for several months.
My interest in this pattern of change, particularly people’s perceptions of it, owed much to the situation I encountered on my arrival. My first days in Dili were an early exploration period. I visited the CNRT office almost daily to make contacts with potential informants. In the months leading up to the referendum in 1999, the office of the CNRT was in a house which belonged first to the former leader of ASDT, then of FRETILIN and then the president of the short lived *Republica Democrática de Timor Leste* (RDTL) in 1975 (see Map 1.2). It was located next to the old Indonesian Central Bank office (now the office of the World Bank) in Dili (2). After the referendum, an old-styled Chinese building (3) on the waterfront\(^{16}\) was designated as the office of CNRT. The office later shifted to the previous compound of the United Nations office in Vila Verde in Dili (4).

![Map 1.2](image)

Map 1.2. (1) Dili’s Bishop house; (2) Office of CNRT before the 1999 referendum; (3) Office of CNRT after the 1999 referendum; and (4) Office of CNRT since mid 2000 (Map: Courtesy of UNTAET Public Information Office).

To my surprise, I was confronted with stories, questions and offers from my potential contacts. People would tell me ‘stories’, ranging from their personal experiences during the 24 years living under Indonesia and the period

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\(^{16}\) Prior to 1975, it was the consulate of the Republic of China Taiwan (formerly Formosa) and in the period after that it was made the headquarters of the Indonesian navy (*Kopasgat – Komando Pasukan Gerak Cepat* and later *Marinir*) until 1999.
leading to the August 1999 ballot to their experience in the aftermath of the ballot. I would be addressed with 'questions', varying from international responses to the Indonesian ordeal in East Timor and the issue of an international tribunal to try Indonesian army generals implicated in the 1999 violence, to my own personal life in Australia as a student. Also, I was presented with 'offers', ranging from invitations to join political parties to taking a leadership post in political groups. Such offers presented me with a dilemma. Accepting a political position would place me in a difficult situation as an anthropologist. On the one hand, the nature of my work as a researcher prevented me from becoming directly involved or collaborating with any particular element of my 'target population'. Leach (1992) made this clear when criticising native anthropologists for being too subjective when working in their original communities as researchers. I was aware of this situation and wanted to avoid what might have led me to commit a double mistake – being too subjective as Leach suggests, and further being directly involved as an actor in the game. While I was tempted to engage as an actor in this sense, I felt it could only compromise my work as an anthropological researcher. However, continuous refusal of such 'offers' led some to be suspicious of me, for my role as a researcher was little understood. Some people who I tried to approach refrained from talking openly to me because, as I found out later, I was thought to belong to rival political parties. Some of my old acquaintances did not even want to know whether I was still a student or not, since for these people, their political preferences had to come first. In such a situation, changing field sites might have been normal to earlier anthropologists, for example Lewis (1982) and Traube (1986) in their studies among the Tana Ata 'Ai and the Mambai. Since this was not an option for me, I had to convince 'my people' to accept my anthropologist status during that period (1999-2000), which was not an easy task.

17 This is something that I experienced until the last days of my fieldwork in Dili.
18 This situation must be distinguished from that of 'journalists' who have always been accepted and seen as ema tatoli lia (lit., courier of news) to the outside world.
Further obstacles existed that any researcher might have to deal with in such a situation. On the one hand, the painful years of political conflict might have been an obstacle to a comprehensive understanding of tolerance, unity and democracy despite East Timorese leaders often preaching the same words. On the other hand, there seemed to be very little room for different ideas within the political circles at the time. Pointing the finger at each other – as a means of avoiding capture and evading torture, which had been practiced by many East Timorese during the Indonesian period – was still evident. Becoming closer to certain individuals with affiliations to a particular group meant you were the enemy of the others. It would be seen as siding with one political party. In such circumstances, the decision to take a neutral stance was a wise one: a position that could be accepted by all sides of politics. Conscious of my forbears’ notes from their ‘early contact’, I wasted no time and seized any opportunity that presented itself as long as it did not jeopardise my status as a researcher. After all, it is, to borrow Fox’s words, “the ability to respond to and, indeed, to seize upon new opportunities [that] is thus basic to the whole process of doing fieldwork” (Fox in Foreword in Lewis, 1988: xi).

At the height of division and uncertainty, various workshops and seminars were held in Dili, all discussing issues of nationalism, national unity and political fragmentation. These changes in the political process can be summarised in a question often asked by local East Timorese. “Why has the sense of togetherness, solidarity and national unity – interpreted in this thesis as the sense of East Timorese nacionalismo – begun to disappear and be replaced by conflict and division?” Certainly, this question invited various

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19 For an interesting discussion on the pros and cons of Anthropological research in this sense see Caulfield (1979: 311-316)
20 For this specific issue of nationalism see editions of bulletins such as Lalenok and Talitakum between December 1999 and December 2001. Another recent seminar on Nationalism was held by the Sahe Institute of Liberation (SIL) and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of East Timor; its proceedings have been published in Jurnal Libertasau, Edition I, June 2001 by Sahe Institute for Liberation.
interpretations of the kind of ‘sense of nation’ with which the East Timor nation is identified, and the importance this same sense of unity has in the lives of its diverse population. Likewise, it also invited questions as to the degree of impact this change has had on the East Timorese, as far as their sense of nationalism or national unity is concerned.

When I began this research, I spent the bulk of my time identifying what made up the context of the social and political developments in East Timor. I was aware of the fact that the population of my study was experiencing a social and political transformation, from colonialism to self-rule. Thus, not surprisingly, new dynamics and constant turbulence would colour the existing social and political discourse. It was on the basis of this consideration that I attempted, throughout the course of my fieldwork, to observe “what makes for an integration and equilibrium...” of the subject under study (Evans-Pritchard 1969: 41).

Certainly, such an exercise is not alien to the literature of social and political change. Descriptions of societies undergoing social and political change have been the subject of various studies in the field of anthropology and other related disciplines (see Geertz 1963; Warry 1987). Countless writers, including Warry (1987) on Chuava politics, Rhyne (1943) on social change and Dutch politics in Java, White and Munger (1976) on social change in Japan’s urban politics, and Likhit Dhiravégins (1984) on social change in Thai politics, confirm just how prominent social and political transformations have been in the interest of anthropologists, sociologists and historians. For example, the anthropologist Warry (1987) specifically examined the changing patterns of politics in the Papua New Guinea highlands in the context of different historical regimes and how the latter influenced local leadership roles during his fieldwork. His attention to the role of leadership in particular is similar and comparable to the experience of East Timor. His constant interaction with the people and observation of events, both through historiography and
contemporary events, provided him with resources to see how changes shaped the popular view of local social and political development among the Chuava. Most importantly, his observation about the changing role of local bigmen (leaders) which came as a result of social and political change over different periods, presented a more or less similar approach to that of this study. This study is an extension of an existing tradition of this kind. Although it may differ in some aspects from its predecessors due to the uniqueness of the situation and the context of my fieldwork, it should be seen in the context of the foundations laid down by forerunners of the discipline.

IV. Nationalism and Division in the Local Context

- Local Definitions of Nacionalismo and Unidade Nacional

Recalling the doubts about the ‘strength of nationalism or national unity’, allow me first of all to clarify various points. It is not my intention to present a debate on the definition of East Timorese nacionalismo. Nor is it my intention to examine the European origins of nationalism, which date back at least to the sixteenth century. My aim is merely to document the anxieties and confusion that characterised a people who had long been united and bound by the inspirit of nacionalismo, and how these perceptions changed along with the political landscape of the post 1999 referendum period.

The word, nacionalismo was adapted from the Portuguese and used by young nationalists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, on the eve of the ‘revolution’ in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, notably Mozambique and Angola. The term was then popularised in East Timor during resistance to Indonesia to mean, in a generic sense, unity. Not surprisingly, East Timorese perceive nationalism in a way their history and their perceptions of history account for it. The most common and simplest argument is that East Timorese nationalism involves a sense of self-reliance and togetherness in order to chase invaders out of their land.
Listening to political actors and activists, it is clear that the word *nacionalismo* is used interchangeably in both public and private spheres to mean nationalism, national unity, identity, solidarity and togetherness. It is generally thought of as the fundamental sense of strength that allowed the East Timorese, unlike before, to maintain unity; to join forces as one people. This conceptual form of argument seemed to be equally prevalent among political activists and politicians alike.

There are two points of reference that people draw attention to when making observations about nationalism. The first is the history of resistance against the colonial governments. In this sense, although lacking information as to the pre-1912 colonial history in East Timor, political actors and activists' references to their ancestors' glorious victories in 'wars' against both the crown and the colonial administration were often cited as a 'foundation'. Citing the great wars, without mentioning specifically 'which war', was common. The second common reference is to notions of ethnicity, myth and destiny, a topic addressed already by Smith (1986). Often such references are expressed in the form of *ai-knanoik* (*ai*, 'tree' and *knanoik*), from *knananuk* 'stories', 'folk song'), oral narratives or personal stories. There is a belief that the East Timorese were once warriors. Indeed, the notion of internal – inter-tribal – political rivalry, as argued by Fox (1996), is a characteristic of both the pre-colonial and colonial periods of East Timor societies. *Funu* (war) against the colonial governments was part of the rich culture of East Timorese myths and folk stories passed on from generation to generation. This can be seen in various myths which recount the heroism of the ancestors. Relying on their interpretations of myth, oral narratives and experience in history, the East Timorese endeavoured to construct ideas of sovereignty and national identity.

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21 This was a key year for consolidation of Portuguese colonialism in East Timor. See Chapters 2 and 3 for further discussion (see also Gunn 1999).
There is a widely held belief that all East Timorese adhere to one hun (lit., source, origin, trunk, derivation). Interpretations, however, vary from one ethnic group to another. The Mambai ethnic group, for example, refers to the highest mountain Tatamailau (lit., tata, ‘grand father’ ‘ancestor’; mai, ‘big’ ‘great’ and lau, ‘highest’ ‘summit’ ‘top’) as their great ancestor (see also Traube, 1986). It is believed that he (Ego=male) stands high and can communicate with the ancestors. Geographically, the Mambai believe that the mountain of Tatamailau is a dwelling place of ancestors’ spirits. The Tetum refer to the earth as the mother of the East Timorese (Hicks 1978). Reference to myths and folk stories can also be seen in accounts of the Cailaco war, which lasted for 50 years (1719-1769). The resistance in Cailaco relied on its people’s veneration of Pedras Negras or Fatuk Metan (lit., Black Rock), which was considered lulic (lit., sacred, forbidden) (Gunn 1999), the domain of their ancestors. Any outside control of their territory would be deemed an infringement on the perceived realm of the ancestors. The war occurred because the reino (lit., people or kingdom) of that area refused to allow outsiders (Portuguese and Dutch) to be present around their sacred sites. The belief that the mountain Kablaki was a place where the Mambai of Manufahi used to venerate the spirits of their ancestors is another example of adherence to myths. The Manufahi people courageously confronted the Portuguese in the late 1890s and early 1900s and used the mountain as their last resort in a war (Gunn 1999) that, in contemporary historiography, marked the end of the second nationalist war against outsiders. This understanding of the past, which is based largely on belief, stories and narratives, constitutes both a sense of pride and the sense of belonging (see Chapter 3).

Conclusions are often drawn on the basis of people’s feelings which, in turn, incite reactions that correspond to the given situation. This provides room for the injection of nationalistic feeling, especially, as implied in Smith (1986), when myths and stories of colonial oppression surface in public debate. The East Timorese perceive their history as one of oppression and subordination.

Chapter One  21
For example, current East Timorese believe that collective wars against the crown and colonial governments (see Chapters 2 and 3) were the hun (lit., origins) of Timorese nacionalismo. Notions such as that of having the ‘same fate’ therefore remain central to the construction of national identity and indeed their definition of nacionalismo.

- Early Literature

Little has been written about the East Timorese sense of nation. Only after 1975 did writers become attracted to the topic. Among these are Jollife (1978a), Hill (2000), Budiarjo and Liem (1984), Aditjondro (1994), Traube (1995) and Dunn (1996), most of whose interest was awakened by the stiff resistance of the East Timorese against Indonesia. Nevertheless, among these writers, the definition of nationalism was presented vaguely as the sense of ‘resistance to foreign power’, ‘local political survival’ or ‘inspiration for independence’. Not even the latest books have specifically addressed East Timorese ideas of nation, let alone the division and differences that exist within that society. Accounts of differences among political parties in 1974 are almost non-existent, with only a small number of articles highlighting the difference and conflicts during that period (for example, Niner 2000). Most of these writings, however, have focused their discussion on the historical evolution of the East Timorese struggle rather than on nationalism per se, let alone the sense of nation.23

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23 The writings of Jollife (1978a); Hill (2000); Cox & Carey (1995); Aditjondro (2000), have hinted – only reluctantly endorsing – the notion that East Timorese nationalism was based largely on resistance or local reaction to colonialism. Little is mentioned about the differences – ethnicity, language and the concepts of origin – that characterise the society known as East Timor today.
Another perspective on East Timorese identity is explained in the works of East Timorese writers such as Gusmão (1997) and Martins [Undated] who cite myth, religion and cultural experience as the seeds of the idea of East Timorese identity. Some recent writers on East Timorese nationalism, such as Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, and Anderson, an American political scientist, have focused on East Timorese political developments subsequent to the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre. Anderson acknowledges in his paper, 'Imagining East Timor' (1993), that although most of his writings about nationalism have concentrated on the importance of the spread of mechanical printing and its relationship to capitalism, in East Timor "there has been very little print capitalism, and illiteracy [is] widespread" (Anderson 1993: 2). Thus, his focus on East Timor has for the most part relied on the Indonesian 'mishandling' of East Timor as the source of Timorese (youth) nationalism.

In general therefore, Anderson (1993) believes that the rise of nationalism during the 24 years of Indonesian occupation of East Timor was a result of three aspects of political behaviour by the Indonesian government. The first was its overwhelming political repression, the second was its lack of tolerance towards local languages, and the third was the repression of traditional forms of thinking of the people during the occupation. These factors, he has argued, led to the radicalisation of the Church, the emergence of new groups during Indonesia's occupation and popular insurrections around the territory (see Jolliffe 1978a; Lutz 1991). These arguments have some validity. For example, since 1985, many East Timorese have furthered their studies in Indonesian universities. This has led to a growing intellectual group who through higher education, learned about the Indonesian nationalist struggle against the Dutch, and had the ability to judge their own struggle against Indonesia. Most of this generation of East Timorese was either not born or were in their childhood years in 1975. They grew up experiencing the occupation and oppression in their country, and naturally became involved in the political resistance. Not surprisingly, by 1987 East Timorese students helped establish
the clandestine movement throughout Indonesia and in East Timor, and played a very important role in its activities in later years. Anthropologists' accounts of local identity have varied. Traube (1986; 1995) has concentrated on ritual and cosmology, whereas other writers such as Hicks (1976) and Renard-Clamagirand (1982) have concentrated on local social organisations, and Boxer (1985) has paid more attention to colonial history in Timor.

A recent honours thesis, The Lorikeet Warriors, has attempted to see the sense of nationalism from the perspective of East Timorese youth, with an emphasis on their role as clandestine activists and their experience in the months leading to the referendum (see Nicholson 2001). However, while acknowledging the factors contributing to this formation of the idea of nation among the East Timorese youth, this thesis, as other writings on East Timor, has ignored how the East Timorese perceive the idea of nation and the political dynamics within their country.

The similarity between all these writers is that the East Timorese ideal of nation was built through an evolutionary process in which a combination of myth, cultural belief and resistance to colonialism was employed. It is agreed, even among local mainstream politicians, that East Timorese nationalism finds its basis in the myths, history and past experiences of their people (Pers. Comm. Juvêncio Martins, 22 September 2000). Thus, extracting memories and knowledge about the past reveals their perceptions of nationalism. In a way, the sense of a common fate, the struggle to be free and the reaction to colonialism were the causes that gave rise to the formation of East Timorese national identity.

- Post-Referendum Division

Doubts about the strength of this East Timorese sense of unity began to emerge in the changing political landscape of the post-1999 period. This
resulted in a new atmosphere of political division, a manifestation of public
discontent toward leaders, competition for political recognition, the exchange
of verbal insults among political leaders and political opponents, and an
apparent breakdown of unidade nacional. The social chaos that resulted from
the September 1999 violence added to this social disequilibrium.

In regard to this type of mood change, Shafer warned in his book, *Faces of
Nationalism* (1972), that the main problem with nationalism occurs when
loyalty to the state ceases or when sentiment towards the nation changes
(Shafer 1972: 7-8). Nationalism, in this instance, may be used as a pretext to
justify a certain group’s vision of the nation, claims of rights to political office,
or acquisition of land and other social positions. This eventually turns into a
destructive force (Shafer 1972).

Post-1999 East Timor is a case in point. After a brief euphoria of
independence, conflict among and between politicians and activists began to
make daily headlines. Accusations that individuals or groups had sided with
the Indonesian military in the past were often made. Claims that one group of
people had fought more than another during the war caused deep disquiet.
Generational confrontation and differences on the basis of geographical
origin, as well as conflicts between returnees from the diaspora and those
who felt that only home-stayers had continued to fight colonial occupation
were common in those days. Whenever differences occurred, each individual
or group would always refer to the sacrifices they had made in the past for
justification, and maintain that those who had contributed most to the
struggle should be rewarded accordingly, including, among other things,
with the right to occupy political positions in the new government.24

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24 Even after the official hand over of power from UNTAET to the East Timor government,
the incumbent Prime Minister argued on local radio that “only FRETILIN can govern East
Timor”, prompting criticism from opposition groups such as the Social Democratic Party and
Popular rumours circulated in Dili that preference should be given to veterans of the resistance when it came to positions and jobs with the government. While the parameters for being included in the 'veteran' classification were unclear, it should not be a surprise that everyone claimed to have contributed to the war in their own way. 25 Classification of war veterans was divided into three levels. The armed combatants occupied the first level, followed by former clandestine members (couriers), and then members of the diplomatic front. Often members of the diplomatic front received little recognition, indicating a lack of acceptance. There were also groups of students and others who organised protests in cities throughout Indonesia, and other individuals who claimed to have contributed in their own ways to the struggle who now felt alienated due to their exclusion from posting in the new government.

Politically motivated social conflict was another example of post-referendum divisions. For example, the exploitation of existing geographical stereotypes such as firaku (easterners) and kaladi (westerners) for political purposes was so evident that street fighting between people associated with the two groups was unavoidable. Claims that "only this or that group were involved in the fighting for independence" were also common phenomena in the streets of Dili. Political and social divisions emerged because of the dissatisfaction and disappointment of those who felt marginalized. Divisions between elite and non-elite, older generation versus new generation also described as conservative elders versus new-mind youth, and home-stayers and returnees were characteristics of the existing political fragmentation. Indeed, this is a symptom in post-conflict societies: when new preoccupations begin to develop, loyalties to the nation change and the pursuit of political interest predominates (Shafer, 1972). New conflicts tend to surface and generate divergence in that community, especially when individuals or groups begin

to pursue their own interests (Gailey 1985; Gailey and Patterson 1985: 78-80; Gailey 1987). Having presented the general overview of the situation on the ground, I will now discuss the conceptual framework under which this thesis is organised.

V. Reconstructing Ideas in Metaphors: Conceptual Framework

Throughout my fieldwork, I had the chance to have discussions with various politicians and political activists. Although the names of some of these actors are not mentioned in this thesis, their expressions of euphoria and later frustration about the events, as well as their appreciation of the situation and the political dynamics during that period, are reflected and examined in this thesis.\(^{26}\)

In interpreting the unfolding political developments in East Timor, this thesis will rely on the way the East Timorese portray events. One of the common characteristics in this respect is the application of metaphor in dualistic form. Anthropologists often refer to this method of portraying social phenomena as part of an East Timorese ‘way’ of thinking.\(^{27}\) This is a form of reflection that is represented through metaphors, often in dual or binary categories, a notion common already to the field of anthropology and the anthropology of Timor in particular.

\(^{26}\) While acknowledging that it is difficult to distinguish between who is highly politicised and who is not, it is certain that almost every East Timorese is aware of their political circumstances. Every East Timorese claims to have, directly or not, contributed to the struggle for Independence. Nevertheless, following protocol in this thesis, I continue to use words such as ‘political actors, activists, women activists and guerrillas’ in order to maintain the visibility of ‘my population’. This does not mean that the whole population of East Timor is politically conscious. The core of what I term the ‘politcised community’ are the political parties, and central to political parties are groups and individuals.

\(^{27}\) Apart from my own observations, I am indebted to various academics who have written extensively on metaphorical representation of social phenomena in Timor for discussion on the issue. Among these include Prof. James J. Fox, Assoc. Prof. Elisabeth Traube and Dr Andrew McWilliam.
The East Timorese portray national unity or nationalism as the ‘trunk’ of a tree. The tree represents the nation. If the ‘trunk’ of the tree collapses, then the nation will also collapse. Being the ‘trunk’, nationalism is the main pillar of the ‘tree’ of the nation. In this sense, for the trunk to come into being and mature, it should have gone through a series of biological and ecological changes that make it, both vulnerable and resistant. Likewise, East Timorese nationalism is built through years of, and resistance against, colonial oppression and has experienced many changes during the process. Locals believe that resistance against Portuguese colonialism by their ancestors only ‘found its shape’ (culminated) at the time of the struggle against Indonesia, the time when all East Timorese united to fight for a common cause, the liberation of their country as a whole. Indeed, the East Timorese construct their history as beginning from one point (hun) and ending at another (rohan), establishing parallel binaries, which make up the continuity from ‘origin’/‘roots’ to ‘end’/‘tip’.

Independence can be seen as the ‘fruit’ of this nationalism ‘trunk’, the latter being a commitment that grows through years of struggle, adapting to the changes in the political scene until the nation is formed. However, independence is not the end of the process of nation building. Independence is seen as an avenue where interests, perspectives, ideologies and objectives come into play, allowing groups and individuals within the nation to exercise their political goals. The new divisions that begin to emerge and the resulting political confrontations are nevertheless precarious and can threaten the country’s stability. In a botanical metaphor, this is compared with the sprouting of new branches of a tree, which grow uncontrollably, stretching their own ways, and constantly shaken by the passing winds. The continuity from colonialism to independence and from nationalism or national unity to fragmentation constitutes – in a botanical idiom – the process from roots to tips. To understand this in more detail, the following
sections underline the way the East Timorese interpret and polarise national unity and its divisions as two connected events.

- Reconstructing Events through Remembering the Past and Present

Symbols and metaphors are significant for the East Timorese when reconstructing events, including the development of their nationalist history (see also Hicks 1971; Traube 1986). It is common for the East Timorese to use symbols such as the house, botanical idioms, or journeys to portray their views of the world, including their appreciation of the existing situation. The following view provides an example:

In a house, there are bedrooms, guestrooms, kitchen and other rooms. The house itself resembles a country and the people inside the house resemble its citizens. Both father and mother are the leaders of the house; the children resemble the ordinary people. Children or siblings should obey their parents. Similarly, in a country, the people should listen to their leaders (Pers. Comm. António Aitahan Matak, Dili 29 December 1999).

This line of thinking, not surprisingly, influences the way national unity and its subsequent divisions are portrayed. People find it more convenient to explain things by using *ai-knanoik* (lit., tree-song) 'folk stories' or traditional expressions, 'metaphors and symbols' (see Fox 1973) rather that spending time recounting something that, in their words, requires a long narrative.\(^{28}\)

In reconstructing East Timorese perceptions of national unity and its subsequent division through metaphor, I am mindful of two general points. First, one must take account of the situation in which those feelings are recounted. I am conscious that at least two – for example my parents’ and my – generations of East Timorese have experienced two different political

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\(^{28}\) The use of botanical metaphor to interpret perceptions of nationalism and division parallels the way people use metaphors and other configurations to symbolise social phenomena in Eastern Indonesia (Fox 1973; Therik 1995; McWilliam 1989) and in East Timorese societies (Traube 1986; Hicks 1976 and 1978).
uprisings, one in 1974-1975 and another in 1999, in which thousands of lives were lost, as well as material assets. Since my fieldwork took place at a time when political chaos was widespread within the East Timorese political community, perceptions of political events were shaped and interpreted in the way members of this generation perceive events –be they in the past or in the contemporary context. In other words, in interpreting political developments, East Timorese relied both on memories of what they have been told about the past, and their own experiences.

Second, I observed that the East Timorese prefer to deal with what they believe to be part of their struggle and their own experience, and then use these as a basis to present their feelings in metaphorical terms. For instance, expressions of frustration and disillusionment over political friction in the post-1999 period were presented in the following terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ema-Boot sira</th>
<th>The leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baku malu</td>
<td>Fighting one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hirus malu, talin la kotu</td>
<td>Upsetting each other, never ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadau deit boot</td>
<td>Competing to be great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ka hadau deit fatin</td>
<td>or fighting for a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maromak mak hatene</td>
<td>Only God knows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sira hanesan ai-sanak</td>
<td>They behave like branches of a tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanak sira fahe malu</td>
<td>The branches separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haketak mos dikan</td>
<td>(They) also isolate the tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haketak povu nafatin</td>
<td>The people continue to be divided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With this in mind, I begin this section with the story of Paulino Monteiro, a young clandestine activist in Ermera who, like many others, enthusiastically presented his views about the past. He remembered that during the Indonesian occupation, since the Indonesian army allowed no talk or action

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29 Pereira was a young activist with the Legal NGO, Yayasan HAK during the Indonesian period. He completed his University Degree in Salatiga, Indonesia and after 1999 he was sworn in as a judge with the Dili District Court on 22 April 2000. António Aitahan Matak, Juvêncio Martins, Vícória dos Santos and Oscar da Silva of Yayasan Hak also echoed similar arguments.
about political independence, activists in the clandestine movement would use any forum they could find to discuss issues and draw up plans about political strategies (Pers. Comm. Paulino Monteiro, Ermera 23 October 2000). During those years, discussions were conducted carefully and activists would avoid anyone who was unknown to them or suspected of working with the army. One never discussed such issues publicly during the Indonesian period. Indeed, stories like Monteiro’s were common at the height of post-1999 independence euphoria. Individual stories about each person’s role in the past were proudly recounted in conversations – be they in the streets, at private parties or at public venues. Monteiro remembered that, as a clandestine activist, he would meet regularly with his friends to discuss and plan their activities, including ‘recruiting’ new people into their group. After discussions, people made their own assessments, drew their own conclusions and transmitted the results of such conclusions to those with the same interests. I was told that it was these discussions that – particularly during the Indonesian period – generated ‘sentiment’ and slowly shaped communal opinion, popularising the sense of unity and of resistance to the enemy (Pers. Comm. Cirilo José Cristovão, 12 May 2000). Deutsch’s argument about the means of communication or transmission of the ‘sentiment’ of what a society is imagining in order to strengthen solidarity among members of a group (cited in Snyder 1982) fits well in this context. In East Timor, personal stories during the funu were often used as the source of such interpretations. After independence, connecting the past and the future – in this context – was essential to situate and highlight the role each individual played in the struggle.

Juvêncio, a young activist, was fourteen years of age at the time of the Indonesian invasion. He was imprisoned for more than six years in Semarang, Central Java, following the Santa Cruz Massacre on 12 November

30 Monteiro was a young activist who was imprisoned several times for his political activities during the integration years with Indonesia.
1991. Juvêncio was one of the new generation who helped set up clandestine activities in Dili which culminated in the Santa Cruz demonstration and subsequent massacre. He offered this narrative of his experience:

In the late 1970s, after we surrendered, the Indonesian army detained us. Then, we were taken to Dili. We lived in the suburb of Fatuhada. We had to find jobs to survive. We worked in a garden during the day and went fishing in the evening. We sold the fish at the local market for cash ... In the early 1980s we heard from friends that the *maun-alin* [lit., older/younger siblings] the ‘brothers’ in the bush were still waging the war ... This information woke us up from the long sleep and we started talking to people whom we knew and trusted about this new development. All our conversations were very informal ... We transmitted the topic to other people. We used all means to pass on our messages. Well, the beginning is always like that, right? ... We then sought support from other friends ... In 1991, in Marabia there was an attack by the FALINTIL ... I met Marito Reis and Eurico whose *nom de guerre* is *Lalorau* [lit., sea wave] and a former commander in Centro Sul [lit., Central South]. The three of us, together with Mr Duarte [who was captured, taken to Kupang -West Timor and later killed by the Indonesians], started activities. We did small things such as sending and receiving letters to and from the bush [communication with the guerrillas], issuing identification cards, drawing the flag of Republica Democratica de Timor Leste. Then we *lao tun-lao sae* [lit., walked down and up] ‘went everywhere’ to meet people whom we trusted and told each of them that “we must support those guys in the bush”. We sent our moral support to the guerrillas signalling that we were ready to support them. At the time, our support was given on the basis of [the guerrillas’] necessity ... The Indonesian intelligence was very active ... It started as a casual activity. The spirit of nationalism and the willingness to help our [Timorese] brothers in the bush helped us to regain our courage and reorganize the struggle from the city. Then we came to know people like Constancio Pinto, Zé Manuel, and Adano who had also started some activities before (Translation from discussion with Juvêncio Martins, September, 2000).

Building on this initial explanation, Juvêncio explained that each of their actions could be considered to have different significance and objectives. Recounting the history of struggle to other people in those days was difficult given the strong military pressure. However, it was worth recalling memories and reminding each other of the sacrifices made by their countrymen and
women. Such stories present tangible evidence of the vivid narratives that people were afraid to hear for fear of being detained by the army.

Likewise, Juvêncio and his friends printed identity cards and handed them out to friends whom they could trust to work together, in his words, 'to help identify our friends'. This was understandable because in those times activists such as Juvêncio, if found to be involved in actions against the state, would be detained and faced possible torture or worse at the hands of their captors. To Juvêncio, printing identity cards and giving them to those whom his group could count on for solidarity and comradeship served as a means to communicate their feelings and gave support to each other. He also recalled that when drawing the flag of resistance, he and his friends aimed to strengthen the sense of belonging and identity as East Timorese. Indeed in those days, Juvêncio recalled, most East Timorese were demoralised and preferred to remain passive about the struggle, fearing repercussions from the Indonesian army. So one of Juvêncio’s aims was to help people to recall past heroism in order to revive their courage and commitment towards the struggle.

In Juvêncio’s account, his narrative projected a process which started simply by building contacts with friends, until they were able to form a much wider group which would then serve as the pillar of their underground organisation. Nevertheless, to him and other activists with whom I had the chance to talk, their efforts constituted only a small element of the much broader political process of national resistance, which represented the main pillar of the struggle for freedom. Drawing together experiences in the past and then presenting them through symbolic representations is indeed one of the common characteristics of what the Timorese call cultura (culture) and

31 I am indebted to young political activists at the Yayasan Hak, SIL and other former activists such as Cirilo José Cristovão, Rui Ferreira, Jenito Carne (Dili) and José Aparicio (Darwin) for our frequent and valuable discussions during my fieldwork.
tradisaun (tradition). In this context, ‘words’ and ‘terminologies’ are essential tools in the social reconstruction of context.

Recognising the past (uluk) and connecting it to the present (ohin), apart from acknowledging the influence of the notion of ‘continuity’ and ‘dual binaries’, is also essential in reconstructing the idea of nation. Combining the action of remembering and presenting messages about the past through symbols and signs helps convey the sense of nationhood among the people. It is through this way of thinking that the reconstruction of national unity in East Timor was achieved.

- The Influence of Dual Thinking

When starting to compile my data, I recalled that East Timor, like other eastern Indonesian societies, has been characterised by what anthropologists might call a “society whose thought is commonly expressed in the form of dualistic mode”.32 ‘Dualistic mode’ refers to the custom of either categorising or simplifying different forms of social and cultural icons into dyadic expressions. The ‘dual category’ is commonly found in forms of poetry or simple narratives. Writers on dual categories (Needham 1973; Traube 1986; Fox 1989) also refer to the concept as ‘dualism’, ‘dyadic concept’, and ‘expression in pairs’ or as Hertz (1960) mentioned earlier, ‘polarisation’ of the structure of social institution. Fox, in his work in Eastern Indonesian societies, including West Timor, recognises such expressions as attempts to codify living social phenomena in dualistic forms (Fox 1989).

In the anthropology of eastern Indonesia, the notion of dual categories has, so far, focused on the analysis of kinship and oral tradition. Fox points to a

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32 For further reading see Fox’s (1989) ‘Category and Complement: Binary Ideologies and The Organisation of Dualism in Eastern Indonesia’. In this article, Fox analysed the concept of dual categories studied earlier in Timor by himself and a number of students namely, McWilliam (1989), Traube (1977) and Therik (1995).
number of social and 'cultural icons' which have been the object of the analysis of dual classification (Fox in Lewis 1988: xii). These include: personal and social identity, categories of gender, symbolic space and relative relation, identification of life processes, the composition of blood and flesh (see also Lévi-Strauss and Needham 1969), delegation or usurpation of authority, social organisation of house, marriage alliance and the cyclical translation of life in ritual ceremonies (see van Wouden 1968). While implying that the analysis of 'cultural categories' is applicable only to certain cultural characteristics, Fox acknowledges that such a formula varies from one society to another (see Fox in Lewis 1988: xii-xiii). Implied in this argument too, is that political expression might also be expressed in 'dual forms'. Indeed, in societies identified as 'thinking in the dual mode', social or political jargon expressed in pairs is used widely to identify events which affect people's everyday life (see Durkheim 1976). Likewise, it is a common phenomenon for people to use dual expressions to categorise living things. Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1976) implied broadly that 'dual concepts', apart from being basic to society's thought and life are, indeed, universal in character; they do not necessarily represent cultural – and political – categories but find expression in these terms. In East Timor, one might argue that traditional thinking regarding dual cultural categories might have some influence on the way the political forms of expression and explanation of life processes among the East Timorese are formulated.

Thus, the forms of expression analysed in this thesis take the forms used in the analysis of dualism and should be seen as part of a broader study of social and political categories studied by earlier anthropologists both outside and in the region (Fox and Adams 1980: 330; see also Therik 1995). By dual political categories in the context of this thesis, I mean the forms of everyday expressions which were coined to identify and distinguish different political groups and people, including events of a political history, depending on the side of politics with which they are identified.
One example of this is the way the interpretation of either an individual’s or a group’s experience is presented. There is a strong preference for a dual representation – past and present/future – when portraying the history of struggle. Both constitute an opposing and complementary concept of dual thinking. Indeed, East Timorese political activists and politicians find it hard to resist the influence of such a concept when constructing their views of events. For example, colonialists like the Indonesians and the Portuguese were categorised as outsiders, wanderers, invaders, ema a’at (lit., bad people), destroyers or funu-maluk (lit., war-partner) ‘enemy’. These terms were used in contrast to the Timorese who were categorised as insiders, landowners, home-stayers, ema diak (good people), peacemakers, countrymen/women and so on. Likewise, in terms of time and space, the term rai funu (lit., land of war) refers to the Indonesian period, whereas the time before that (pre-1975) was categorised as rai diak (lit., good soil) or good times. This separation makes no distinction between Portugal and Indonesia as colonialists. The difference is, however, emphasised in the symbolic perception that pre-1975 was a time of peace because there was no war, although East Timor was colonised by the Portuguese, or in the words of Abílio Araújo, the Guerra pacífica, a reference to ‘silent resistance’ during the Portuguese period. By contrast, post-1975 was referred to as the time of war by virtue of Timorese armed resistance against Indonesia.33

In conversations among East Timorese, dual categories were used, often unconsciously, to represent categories such as, ‘insider’ against ‘outsider’, ‘land-owner’ versus ‘adventurer’ and ‘we’ versus ‘they’. These kinds of political expression provide a mode of communication of nationalist ideals not only for the ‘illiterate’ (beik) ‘maubere’ but also for the educated (matenek)

33 The dual categories, it can be argued, encompass both symbolic space (time) and relative relation (different but linked) since these distinctions emphasise periods and their relevance, although not absolutely, to each other in the context of our discussion.
to understand with whom they should side in political terms.\textsuperscript{34} People often used dual categories when retelling the Indonesian invasion and the proud resistance put up by their countrymen and women. As the following quotation shows:

When the military invasion unfolded on Sunday, 7 December 1975 with subsequent stiff resistance from the East Timorese, many people questioned whether it was possible for a ‘small’, ‘weak’ and ‘inferior’ eastern half of an island such as East Timor to overcome the ‘mighty’, ‘strong’ and ‘superior’ Indonesian army (Pers. Comm. Cirilo José Cristovão, 12 March 2000).

To ordinary East Timorese, the fact that their country was perceived as ‘small’, ‘weak’ and ‘inferior’ compared to the ‘mighty’, ‘strong’ and ‘superior’ Indonesian army might not have been a matter of concern back in the 1970s since most East Timorese were preoccupied with how to save their own lives. At the outset of the Indonesian invasion, dichotomous expressions such as ‘small/mighty’ ‘weak/strong’ and ‘inferior/superior’ were uttered merely to mark the beginning of a much broader concept, ‘coloniser and colonised’. However, anthropologists such as Fox (1989), Traube (1986) and Therik, (1995) have sensed that the reflection of society’s expressions goes beyond the semantic meaning of the words themselves. By this, I mean that such expressions are categories which are encoded in a specific formation, functioning as symbolic operators (Fox 1989) and carrying various interpretations about life in that society. In the case of East Timor, the use of hun and rohan to categorise and reconstruct perceptions about unity and division might be taken as an example.

\textsuperscript{34} Although some anthropologists have, consciously or not, agreed that ‘dual categories’ are expressions of everyday life and can only be found in the way local people express themselves, they do not claim that any classification of this kind is applicable only in the analysis of cultural studies (see, Fox 1980; Traube 1986; Therik 1995).
- Origins and End - *Hun* and *Rohan*?

In interpreting *nacionalismo* the East Timorese always refer to the past. This heroic stance can be traced back to a generation of ‘long ago’ who were believed to have helped initiate a sense of nationhood. Relying on the past was indeed part of the grand inspiration during the resistance against Indonesia.

For the East Timorese, history is seen as a ‘source’ and is used to predict or classify events of today and possibly future events. The present is seen as a continuation of the past, as having some roots in the past. The future might ‘not happen as it is supposed to (la la’o tuir lolos) should one disregard the past. The sequence of events in life is part of tradition. A society without *hun* ‘roots’, ‘origins’ ‘past’ ‘history’, and without *rohan*, ‘future’, ‘end’, ‘tips’, does not have an identity and therefore, may be said to “live an animal life” (*mouri sui balada-fui*). It is considered to be *fuik*, ‘wild’ ‘foreign’, and is not the subject of discussion and carries no weight in social life. Thus, the Timorese say:

> We, human beings should know our house and our siblings. Those who do not know these do not know their roots. If people do not know their roots, they do not know their future; people of this kind live as an animal, no origins – no future.  

Similarly, a society without *rohan*, possesses no *hun* (see Figure 1.1). There is a balance and equivalent quality between *hun* and *rohan*, without which one cannot exist.  

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35 Field notes from a discussion with Moises, a *lia nain* (lit., owner of words) a customary law expert in the Village of Makadiki, Watolari, June 2000.  
36 For this point, I am indebted to discussion with João Nunes and António Aitahan Matek (a member of CPD-RDTL). See also Martins (Undated), *Kunci Pembangunan Manusia* Timorese.
Traditionally, both sides represent origins and ends, showing society’s life-span. A society, an individual, or a community is required to recognise its *hun*, – ‘roots’ (norms/tradition/culture), its ancestors, its lineage and its clan’s origin – because these elements represent the ‘source’, the origins of life. Only by recognising ‘origins’ does an individual or a community know its *rohan* ‘end’. It is a concept that embraces *maun-alin* (lit., brothers), lineage, clan, kin; *rai*, the land one stands on; *uma*, the house one lives in; *m ruins* (lit., life), the future one seeks to achieve; and *rate*, the graveyard of one’s kin. Timorese exegeses depict the sequence of events in life in a configuration of a *ai-hun* (lit., tree-trunk), which, in their minds, can only be called *ai* ‘tree’ if it has *abut*, ‘roots’ (origin) and *tutun*, ‘tip’ (end), all of which serve as the conditions for the tree’s existence. *Hun* is linked to its *abut* (lit., roots) and *rohan* as *dikin* (lit., tip) (see Figure 1.2).

In sequential configuration, life is seen as a conception of a whole based on origins and ends. Life is seen as a sequence of events that span from the days of the *abon*, ‘forbears’ (*hun*) and finish when someone is dead (buried in a graveyard) (*rohan*). So someone’s life does not start when one is born, but before one’s birth – from the days of the ancestors37 – and ends in the graveyard. The Timorese say, “if it were not for the forbears, one would not exist or have even be born”. It is traditionally believed that because of the existence of the past, the future can be established.

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37 The Timorese say ‘*ran ida be mai housi hun*’ (lit., the blood inherited from the source), a reference to someone’s origin; that someone is identified with a certain clan due to the blood he/she inherited from his/her lineage.
In his unpublished paper ‘Kunci Pembangunan Manusia Timorese’ (Key to the Development of the East Timorese) Joao Martins, a member of the royal family in Turiscai, wrote that East Timorese share the idea of ‘origins and ends’. The fact that the East Timorese tend to explain their experience in the context of two different ends – starting from one point and ending in another – shows how significant the notion of hun and rohan is in shaping people’s lives (Pers. Comm. Domingos Maia, 22 March 2000). As argued by Martins ([Undated]: ii), Nai Maromak (lit, the shining one) ‘the great ancestor’ (i.e. God) reveals knowledge to His (Ego=male) people (the East Timorese) in order for these people to understand the meaning of life. Martins ([Undated]: ii) states that:

Maromak natun  God reveals
Neon badaen    Mind (and) Cleverness
Suku siduk be tada Provides knowledge
Baban be tada  Body and knowledge

God bestows (maromak natun) His blessings on the human mind and gives his children knowledge and cleverness (and skills) (neon badaen). Blessings come in various ways with knowledge. One needs to struggle to understand (suku siduk be tada), for this is the real knowledge, the knowledge of body (baban be tada). This elucidates the intellectual capacity, the clever mind provided by the great ancestor (Maromak) to his people (the East Timorese) in order to overcome challenges during their lifetime (Martins [Undated]:iii). This intellectual capacity allows the East Timorese to trace their past and plan for their future. The ability to trace and plan during the lifetime of an individual

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38 Martins was educated in the Dili seminary and was a primary school teacher during the Portuguese colonial period. He was a founder of APODETI, a political party that favoured integration with Indonesia and was the head of the Education and Culture Department and then the Social Department during the Indonesian occupation. He wrote this paper when appointed Head of Education and Culture of the province of East Timor. He was also known for his critical views towards Indonesian policy in East Timor. He died mysteriously in the late 1980s.

39 Maia is originally from Lefetofo, Ermera, and worked as a teacher during the Indonesian period, a job he continues to this day. His knowledge of local culture is so well known that conversation with this personality helped to clarify how local people portray their culture and tradition (Pers. Comm. Domingos Maia, 22 February 2000).
or a community rests on the belief that life is regulated by culture, consisting of rules and norms.\textsuperscript{40} Martins argues that, since it is the great ancestor (\textit{Nai Maromak}= the Shining One) who creates culture or tradition, it does not change with time. Culture thus transcends time and knowledge because it is given or exists as it is. As contended by Martins:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Buat hotu muda an & Everything changes \\
Ukun la muda & Law (culture) does not change \\
Ukun adat lei adat & Authority adat is law adat \\
Muda lae bele & Cannot change \\
Lei ema halo & Law made by men \\
Bele sei muda & May be changed \\
Lei adat Maromak & Law adat (installed by) God \\
No rai otas & Is as old as the Earth.
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

In a way, stories and past experiences are preconceived because they derive from the predecessors of that society. Attempts to change tradition or \textit{adat/lei} or \textit{lisan}, could lead to turmoil, for life without tradition (the past) is considered meaningless. \textit{Lisan} in Tetum stands for tradition.\textsuperscript{41} If one attempts to replace or destroy \textit{lisan} and forget the past, it is said, one is trying to ‘reverse the flow of the river’ (\textit{halo mota suli sae fali}).

Based on this same way of thinking, East Timorese describe their view of the course of their political history. The sequence of events that began with the days of colonialism – resistance – independence – and later internal division was seen as a process – continuity – that runs from one end to another. In this view, the sentiment, which started to take shape in the time of the ancestors (resistance, oppressed people), matured over time and eventuated in political independence. Seen from this point of view, the whole period of the


\textsuperscript{41} This is slightly different from Traube’s explanation of \textit{fada-lisa} (cult house) among the Mambai of Aileu. \textit{Fada-lisa} in Traube’s account is a reference to a place, which emphasises not only the centre but the origins from which the whole clan originated (Traube, 1986: 66-80).

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development of the sense of nationhood, which eventuated in political
division, can be explained through two aspects. First, the construction of
nacionalismo is conceived as a process which involves the transformation of
sentiment, hun, into the sense of nation which then gives rise to nationhood,
rohan. This sentiment is built on the understanding that the society’s forbears
were divided into small groups (linguistically). This sentiment grew and
became strong during a colonial history when the ancestors were suppressed.
They were therefore believed to have shared the same experience of
oppression and suffering. Not surprisingly, common resistance as illustrated
by the Manufahi war (see Chapters 2 and 3) in which various reinos (people,
domains) came together and fought both the crown and the colonial powers
with a common aim, as the East Timorese believe, finally materialised.

Second, the sense of nacionalismo, which finally brought East Timorese to the
threshold of independence developed as later generations came onto the
scene. The struggle, being part of the process from hun to rohan, was coloured
by turbulence, much of which was highlighted in renewed division in the
post-1999 period. Division is thus not at all an inconceivable element as far as
the process is concerned. It is seen as part of a process which must take place
because it categorically belongs to rohan (end).

The East Timorese also refer to the past (hun) as uluk (lit., once, ahead) ‘once
upon a time’ ‘time of long ago’ and pair it with ikus (lit., later, to follow) ‘tail’
‘end’. Uluk was a time when all things were set according to the will of the
ancestors. Since all things were already set, it was expected that life would be
much easier for future generations (oan sira ikus ne’o). As João Nunes said, “in
the past, our ancestors set the rules, they established the foundation; the
children today should just follow what has been set in the past”. In other
words, the past determines the present/future.
This symmetrical sequence of thinking is illustrated well in the connection of life phenomenon. Thus, past events (uluk) are seen as preceding – and indeed interconnected with – future (ikus) events. One example of this is the reliance on natural signs for interpretation. In this sense, coincidental natural phenomena with similar signs provide the basis for interpreting incidental events as interconnected. The interpretations are then translated into specific configurations through, for example, a network of related events, all centred on the specific objects or signals.

An illustration of this is the reaction of a friend to an astronomical phenomenon. One evening, during the course of my fieldwork, I was standing with Jenito, a friend from my school years, in front of my parents’ house. People were walking from one end of the road to the other while both of us were standing and chatting. I noticed a flash in the air and looked up to see what was going on. To my surprise, I saw a yellow ring-like circle around the moon. It was indeed an unusual experience to see something of that kind. Lacking astronomical terms for this specific event, I turned to Jenito who was still talking about his experiences working in a nearby harbour. Suddenly, Jenito stopped our conversation, stared up at the moon and with a pale face said, that is scary. Anxious to know his strange reaction, I asked why he was afraid. He went on:

The ring-like thing which circles the moon is not a good sign; in 1975 it preceded the civil war. Recently, before the referendum, the same thing appeared again, again another war, today it appears again. What is going to happen next? Only God knows. Probably, things will get worse than in the past.42

This was a spontaneous reaction which took Jenito to the past (uluk) and prompted him to predict what would happen in the future (ikus). In his view, that event paralleled a similar occurrence in the past which indicated that he

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42 This was uttered to me by José Celestino (Jenito) da Graça do Carmoin early March 2000, when political uncertainty was at its height.

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could see the future from the same perspective. Jenito's reference to the ring-like circle told me of what had happened in the past and the ensuing reaction. The same phenomenon had taken place sometime earlier and, in his experience, preceded the 1975 civil war and the September 1999 mayhem. While Jenito did not know what might happen in the future he was sure that – given past experience – something similar or worse would happen. Regardless of what would happen, Jenito's account draws attention to the sequence of events and portrays them as stages of unavoidable events in life. The timing of the occurrence of natural phenomena presents, in Jenito's observation, a logical sequence of events that are interconnected, thus underlining the essence of uluk (past) and ohin/ikus (present/future). Uluk (past) and ikus (end, future) are two common binaries which are opposed but complementary and constitute continuity from one end to another.

Certainly, a careful observation of how events are interpreted shows that this categorisation of past and future is clearly influenced by the dualistic thinking that is common to Timorese society (see also Needham 1973; Fox 1989; McWilliam 1989). The origins of the sense of nacionalismo and its later divisions are also perceived, unconsciously or not, within the framework of this thinking. The most vivid representation of dual thinking in this symmetrical sequence of time (hun/uluk – rohan/ikus) can be depicted as a tree metaphor.

- Hun/Uluk/Abut and Rohan/Ikus/Dikin: Framing Nacionalismo in Botanical Metaphor

The past not only serves as an impetus to predict the future, but also provides an understanding of how events in life explain what may unfold in the future. In a way, it is a process that is recounted and re-interpreted. Through such a medium, the East Timorese draw conclusions and make known their perceptions in the form of symbols and expressions. Most often, such
configurations come in schematic forms and are arranged symbolically to represent social and political phenomena.

Realising the complex nature of local interpretations of nationalism, during my fieldwork I spent time with various political groups discussing such issues. Conversations with political actors substantiated my understanding about this nationalism. I realised that the time of my fieldwork was considered critical. It was a time when people had just recovered or were recovering from the September 1999 mayhem in which the Indonesian military and its sponsored militia had devastated the country (Babo Soares 2000a: 56-62). While the euphoria of freedom might be one thing, the ensuing political conflict and social division, both in Dili and in other districts during that period, disillusioned the East Timorese.

Witnessing political uncertainty, people reverted to the past for comparison, if not consolation. Reference to the past was made to highlight how valiant and united the ancestors were, how they had united to fight the colonial governments, and how a sense of cohesiveness had once prevailed. However, such a sense of nationhood – represented by the Cailaco and Manufahi wars, and the commonly perceived nationalist war against Indonesia – was perceived to have reached a turning point after independence. Ikus, the present/future is therefore associated with friction and division evidenced by the events in the post-September 1999 period. It was not surprising that during my fieldwork, discussions were held by NGOs, student groups and former political activists discussing the peculiar idiosyncrasies of national unity and how this nacionalismo was being shaped by the present circumstances. In a discussion held by a local NGO in January 2000, a participant said:

Nationalism exists but now you see, it is collapsing. It is like a tree, you plant it, it grows, it produces fruit, but as it reaches maturity, the branches spread out, some decay and the new ones sprout forth. It can also be a house, you design, you build, you live under it, but in the
end, the wood decays and the house needs to be repaired. After all, it is a journey – you start from one end and hope for the best at the other end. However, what is happening at the moment is completely different, it is worse (Comment by Aniceto Neves, Dili 27 May 2000).

Thus, perceptions of this current situation were closely linked to, or positioned in the context of, the notion of ‘continuity’, a process from one end to another. In local dialectical discourse, the notion of continuity is closely linked to the concept of ‘origin and end’. Using botanical images and metaphors of houses or journeys, people try to depict the existing state of political development as departing from one end and arrive at another. In a botanical idiom, for example, the evolution of the ‘sense of nationhood’ is paralleled with the development of a tree, from its roots, to trunk and its widespread branches.

Indeed, the use of botanical metaphor to describe both social and natural phenomena, memories of the past and religious traits is not new to the literature of social sciences. Bosch (1960) notes that in Hinduism, the Veda depicts the cosmic notion of plant or tree as bearing enigmatical verses of continuity in the religion (Bosch 1960: 65-67). Through tree symbolism, relations between the Gods, humans and environment are described as linked and inseparable elements of life. The same characteristics are fully inherent in ancient Hindu-Javanese and similar belief system in Bali, which describes the relationship between celestial and worldly beings as indissoluble. Anthropological understanding of tree symbolism recognises the importance of the tree as symbol of ‘transgenerational continuity’, implying the conceptualisation of both natural and social categories in human lives as emerging and ending in two different points (Rival 1998). This concept of thinking is closely related to the concept of dualism, as previous studies of tree symbolism (‘roots’ and ‘tips’) in Eastern Indonesian and Timor have demonstrated (Hicks 1978; Fox 1989; Howel 1998). The desire to “translate things into matter” (Rival 1998) is also a characteristic of East Timorese
society today. Asked why tree is important to illustrate the evolution of *nacionalismo* in East Timor, Domingos Maia offers the following exegeses:

Our ancestors use rock and wood [tree] as symbols to narrate everything about life. Big Rocks or Trees personify altars where prayers [offering] to the forbears were held. Likewise, in life, the ancestors used stones to establish hearths [fireplace] where food is cooked. Also, it is from trees [plants] that we obtain food and because of trees that we have wood to cook ... In our culture, a tree is a sign which we use to explain life – this is an old tradition, and now we also use tree as a shadow [metaphor] to explain things about life and our country’s history (Pers. Comm. March 2000).

Recounting the evolution of history from the perspective of a tree, the East Timorese argue that while nationalism is perceived as a uniting force that holds a nation together (tree) at a time of nationalist struggle, it is unable to control the spread of the branches (political parties, groups, ideologies) when the tree grows to maturity (independent). As a result, the branches spread and stretch out uncontrollably, crisscrossing, preventing each other from growing, and eventually dry out. Thus, the point here is that while the three grows and mature, in Timorese interpretation, later branches are not necessarily uniform, and thus continue to maintain their differences and peculiarities. It is in this context that division is illustrated. Thus, national unity flourishes only when a nation is resisting a common enemy. Once the main purpose of nationalism has been attained, as the common enemy has gone, the sense of nationalism may be disregarded and political groups will pursue their own interests. Forces within the once strong nationalist alliance may renew old fights and feuds, and this can serve to fracture a society that has long been united resisting colonial rule.

The divisions in the post-1999 period are explained as new branches (new differences) sprouting out of the ‘trunk’ (a national sense of unity). Instead of strengthening unity, these new branches (new political groups and new differences) stretch their own tips (opinions, ideology) far away from the
trunk.\textsuperscript{43} While this process is inevitable and seen by some as part of the new democracy, it is the translation of these differences into action that really matters.\textsuperscript{44}

![Diagram of a tree with labels: Dikin (tip), Abut (roots), Trunk, (nationalism)](image)

Figure 1.2: \textit{Abut} (roots) and \textit{Dikin} (tips). The whole tree is perceived as the nation.

A detailed examination of the tree metaphor will better illustrate how East Timorese portray their political history in both the context of \textit{hun/rohan} – \textit{uluk/ikus} and the context of the symmetrical sequence, from ‘roots’ to ‘tips’.

The following verses reveal this metaphor.

Our history resembles a tree, the roots represent our origins, together we build the country. The trunk represents unity, the branches represent differences, the leaves represent the people. The branches may scatter, but they continue to be attached to the trunk. You may go

\textsuperscript{43} The image of a tree to depict Timorese perception of their history is not a coincidence. In local exegeses, the botanical idiom has been used widely to explicate kinship relations, clan and lineage genealogy and so on.

\textsuperscript{44} Verbal insults and fights among groups, exchange of harsh words among politicians, street battles and killings between eastern and western East Timorese have come to characterise the post referendum period. All these added to the trauma that the people had lived with for years as a consequence of previous ‘wars’; these include the 1974-1975 civil war, the Indonesian military occupation (1975-1999) and the 1999 terror of the same army and its created militia.
far, could behave differently [from others], yet, if you do not have the roots, you might have no end as well.45

The importance of roots is emphasised in this passage. The phrase “you might go far” denotes the fact that despite the differences, everyone should recognise their roots, lest they have no end or no future. While differences emerged following the vote for freedom and when the Indonesian army had gone, all remained conscious of their common sentiment and the sense of national unity. Should the common sentiment of being Ena Timor (Timorese) and the sense of Timorese nationalism be ignored, the country might fall apart.

VI. Unity and Division: Closing Remarks

After delving into the conceptual framework, I will now describe the structure of the thesis. Initially, I will focus on nationalist sentiment, in which the ancestors’ role, myths and stories of past resistance constitute the foundation. The time of these predecessors goes back far beyond European colonisation, although the preconditions for nationalism to emerge in East Timor might be dated to the colonial administration when the once independent, but rival domains (see Fox 1996) became entangled in the common enterprise of colonisation, resisting subordination to a common, more powerful enemy. This is to say that sentiment about unity may have begun to develop as far back as the 1600s,46 but has only begun to take shape recently in the aftermath of World War II (Jolliffe 1978a; Ramos-Horta 1987; Hill 2000), and became entrenched during the 24-year struggle against Indonesia (Gusmão 2000a).

45 Conversation with Oscar da Silva, an activist with the Yayasan Hak, 27 August 2000 on the eve of the CNRT Congress which saw much friction and division among erstwhile nationalist forces.
46 Independent but isolated rebellions against the Portuguese colonial government began taking place around that period (Rocha 1994).
Reference to the past also points to the fact that the East Timorese believe what they call the myth of the past, which Martins claims is a common feature of *Manusia Timorense* (Indonesian for ‘East Timorese’). The reliance on the traditional belief that East Timorese come from one great ancestor, that East Timor was once a free society, and that Timoreses were the sons of fighting warriors is a state of mind that produces the sense of nationalism (Martins [Undated]: i-iii; also, Babo Soares 2004)). Indeed, one of the preconditions of a nation and the belief in nationalism is that people share the same myth (Smith 1986: 192).\(^47\) Such beliefs, arguably, constitute what Shafer (1972), Gelner (1983), Anderson (1991), and others see as part of the evolution of the sense of nationalism or the sense of imagining. They represent – as the Timorese put it – *abut, ‘roots’ or ‘source’* from which nationalism (trunk) is constructed. They form the consciousness or sentiment that ferments the rise of Timorese identity; that ‘we’, ‘insiders’ are different from ‘they’, ‘outsiders’. It is also a feeling that gives rise to the notion of social cohesion, resulting in the unification of the ethnically diverse East Timorese societies, *Timor-oan* (Sons of Timor).

The second part of the thesis discusses the divisions that took place later in the post-1999 period and perceptions about this change in the political landscape. While the UN in East Timor (UNTAET) and some local political leaders played down the frictions and divisions as part of the democratic process, this view was not shared at all by local East Timorese. This section also highlights the differences between several prominent figures, and confrontation among, and the rebirth of other, political organisations that had been previously forgotten. To substantiate this discussion further, this section also underlines the forms of social conflict which have been politicised for

\(^{47}\) East Timorese share myths of origin and space: that the *East Timorese affiliate to one country* (*rai-Timor*). They share the myth of common ancestry: that the *East Timorese derive from only one ancestor* (*Avá [abon]Ida*); the myth of the Golden Age: that *Hourí Otas Hourí Wain, Oan Timor Ass’wain* (Once we were warriors); and we might add: the myth of preconceived fate: that the *East Timorese were destined to live together, to suffer together and eventually, to liberate themselves together* (Pers. Comm. João Nunes, September 2000).
certain interest. Confrontation among political actors has been used to embrace the division on the basis of generational difference. These differences have led to the creation of other forms of sub-divisions, which include diasporic East Timorese, geographically based divisions and conflict over the choice of language, which influence the East Timorese perception towards the previously much venerated notion, national unity and nacionalismo.

To understand these developments – from unity to division – one needs to follow how the East Timorese conceptualise the development of nacionalismo in the context of their political history.
The detection of early agriculture dating back 3,000 years ago enabled historians, anthropologists and linguists to identify groups on the basis of language characteristics. The seafaring Austronesians came from the north; originating in Taiwan, and spread as far west as Madagascar. The non-Austronesians came from the northeast. Their language belongs to the Trans-New Guinea group (see Fox, Tyron et al. 1995). Although the Austronesians are thought to have arrived first on the island, communication between the two ethno-linguistic groups over a long period of time, allowed for an assimilation of different populations to take place in that half-island country.

- Language Variations

These characteristics are reflected in the languages that exist in East Timor. In the 1930s, Portuguese writers found approximately 31 different languages with a number of dialects evident. Among these were:


It should be noted that Almeida (1994) failed to acknowledge that some of the languages mentioned above are dialects of much larger groups. For example, Maráí and Becáis are possibly dialects of Quêmaque or Kemak. Questions remain as to other languages which have not been identified to date. In general, anthropologists and linguists categorise the languages in East Timor into two broad language groups, Austronesian and non-Austronesian.

The Austronesian language group consists of: Tetun, which is spoken in Dili, Suaí, Viqueque, Soibada and on the border with western Timor; (2) Galoli, spoken east of Dili, in Manatuto, Vemasae and Laleia; (3) Mambai, spoken south of Dili and in Aileu, Ermera, Ainaro, and Same; (4) Tokodede, spoken in Liquica; (5) Kemak, spoken in the western regions, particularly Bobonaro; (6) Idate, spoken in the central hinterlands; (7) Kairui, spoken in Kairui; (8) Mediki, spoken in the south central lands; and (9) Baikenu or Dawan, spoken in Ambenu.

Chapter Two  54
Chapter 2
Perspectives on Political History

I. Introduction

This chapter outlines the ethnography of East Timorese history, particularly its people's resistance to outsiders. The overview of past colonial history is important for an understanding of the country and its people's history, as well as comprehending the contemporary East Timorese perception of nacionalismo or the sense of nationhood, a notion which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Most of the description in this chapter is drawn from Timorese historiography, from both Portuguese and English sources.¹

I will begin by briefly describing the situation in Timor in general. Then outline the Portuguese and Dutch arrival on the island and the political dynamics thereafter. I will then discuss a number of major local funu (lit., wars) raised by the East Timorese against both the Portuguese and the Dutch up until the first half of the 20th century.

II. The Setting: Nationalism in Historical Perspective

- Introduction

East Timorese nationalism cannot be understood without tracing perceptions of the struggle against colonialism. To provide a comprehensive – although not detailed – account of how the East Timorese value their past, this chapter explores resistance history from, as the East Timorese call it, the days of the

¹ It is not my intention to write a detailed historiography of Timor Leste in this chapter, for this has been dealt with by historians and former colonial writers in different academic texts. My intention is only to highlight the historical events which shape the history of this nation, to support the arguments presented in this thesis.
ancestors (lit., beiala sina nia tempo) or the days of long ago (lit., tempo iluk). It is in this context that nationalism is defined, and later conflict and division can be understood.

- Pre European Account

Little has been recorded about the first inhabitants of what is currently East Timor. The latest archaeological findings reveal that human occupation of East Timor began approximately 35,000 years ago, although a large invasion of migrants to the island may have begun around 11,500 BC (Glover 1971).

The evidence of early farming cultivation can be dated back to 3,000 years ago (Glover 1971). This evidence serves, "as an indication of the initial arrival of early seafaring Austronesian populations into the region" (Fox, Tyron et al. 1995; Fox 2000: 3), who then inhabited and settled the island permanently.

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2 A team of ANU scholars excavated a site located in the cave of Leme Hara in Lospalos, at the eastern end of Timor Island in 2001 and found that the first humans occupied this place about 35,000 years ago. See ANU-Reporter (2000).
The non-Austronesian category is composed of: (10) Bunak, spoken in Bobonaro and on the border with western Timor; (11) Makassae, spoken in Baucau and east Viqueque; (12) Naueti, spoken in Wutuari and (13) Dagada and Macalero, both spoken in Lautem (Lutz 1991; Fox 1997; Hull 2000).

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the number of languages was no doubt larger than the number presented by Almeida (1994). There is still a great diversity of languages in East Timor and linguists are still studying whether some of these have all but disappeared or have been assimilated and integrated into bigger languages. The truth is the absence of some languages in Lutz’s (1991) and Hull’s (1999) research suggests that the population of these unidentified languages has simply declined in later years.

Map 2.2: Old Map of Language Divisions in Timor (Source: Courtesy of Linguistic Division, RSPAS-ANU).

This language diversity and ethnic complexity points to the existence of ethnic variation in East Timor. The question is what was the mechanism used to administer those local linguistic groups or, in other words, what was the system used to define local structures in the past?

Although writings ranging from early Chinese accounts to the most recent research have been unable to account for how local entities came to be formed and whether a form of unitary state in the political sense, as mentioned by
Nordholt, ever existed in East Timor, the truth is that well organised ideas of social and political organisation existed prior to the arrival or Europeans (Nordholt 1971).³

One study which provides an account, without specification, of the number of major reinos (lit., people) or kingdoms is Helio A. E. Felgas’s monograph (1956), *Timor Português (Monografia dos Territórios No Ultramar)*. In this book, Felgas identifies 47 regulós (lit., kingdoms) in East Timor but provides no further details about them. Likewise, no studies of physical anthropology or history have suggested that there had ever been domination by one or two groups over independent kingdoms or reinos in East Timor, in the past. The exclusiveness of each ethnic reino – or, to borrow Fox’s words ‘petty kingdoms’ (cited in Gunn 1999:34) or ‘petty domains’ (Pers. Comm. 22 November 2002) – as independent political entities continued until the third century of Portuguese hegemony.

- Social and Political Organisation

In terms of socio-political organisation, East Timor was divided into territories referred to by the Portuguese as reino. João Martins argued that generally the territory of each reino was limited by the boundaries of other neighbouring reino (Martins [Undated]). Each reino was directed by a strictly autonomous traditional administration or autokon, structured on the basis of each group’s necessities and headed by a leader called liurai. Thus, each reino was divided into sucos and the latter was bifurcated further into uma-fukun. A suco was headed by dato which during the Portuguese period was known as chefe do suco (lit., leader of suco). Uma-fukun was controlled by a makair-fukun (lit., holder of law). This individual, who was an aid to the liurai, also acted as a judge whenever conflict occurred among members of his group. The Uma-

³ For an account on the literature of Timor see Kevin Sherlock (1980) and Geoffrey Gunn (1999).
fukun consisted of a number of uma-kain (lit., households), a reference to houses or a cluster of houses of a lineage group which were headed by the most senior male in the lineage or aman-boot (lit., great father). He controlled a cluster of houses comprising his sons, brothers and their descendants. Table 2.1 shows a generic Tetum structure as outlined in Martins (undated) paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Structure</th>
<th>Ruler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autocon (Reino)</td>
<td>Liurai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suco</td>
<td>Dato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uma-Fukun</td>
<td>Makair-Fukun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uma-Kain</td>
<td>Aman Boot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: The Ideal Traditional Tetum Political Organisation (Source: Martins [Undated]).

In other words, liurai was the overall leader of a kingdom or reino. The Portuguese also called him regulo. Dato(s) were aids to the liurai. They controlled each suco (a number of villages) and retained specific responsibilities in their camps. Different datos were in charge of different tasks. One might be in charge of agriculture, another in charge of the uma-lisan (lit., cult house) and others in charge of ritual celebrations and so on, depending on the division of work. Most functions were given or performed by each dato on the basis of the legacy from their predecessors. Makair-fukun (lit., holder of law), together with the datos, were very influential when, for example, electing a liurai.

While historians argue that in the past, the kingdoms in the east were aligned to Wehale Wewico, the kingdom of Belo in West Timor, anthropologists’ reference to Wehale Wewico has been understood in a ritual, not political sense (Therik 1995: 45-63). Thus, internal political dynamics and relations remained unaccounted for as far as domination and subordination is concerned (see, for example Nordholt 1971; Therik 1995: 45-63; Gunn 1999: 33-37).
- Early Relations With the Outside World

Prior to the European arrival, East Timorese kingdoms traded regularly with both traditional Javanese kingdoms and some Chinese dynasties. Chinese accounts reported that trade involving sandalwood (*Santalum album* L.) had taken place before the arrival of Europeans. This also suggests that structured political systems were evident in Timor at the time. In the Chinese manuscript *Shun Feng Hsiang Sung* or ‘Fair Winds for Escort’ circa 1430 and 1571, Timor (*Ch’ih-Wên*) was identified as located at the end of the 100 islands that connected it back to the South China Sea (Gunn 1999: 52). By the 14th century, for example, Chinese and Javanese referred to Timor as follows:

The island has no other rare product but sandalwood which is abundant and which is bartered for with silver, iron, cups [of porcelain], *his-yang ssu pu* [a kind of cloth], and coloured taffetas (Rockhill 1915: 257-258).

While contact between Timorese kingdoms and outsiders has been documented to a certain extent by historians and anthropologists (Rockhill 1915; Therik 1995), internal social and political relations in Timor have not been studied. The lack of accounts of internal political dynamics among the traditional *reinos* in Timor, even by the early contacts, leaves the topic open to interpretation. Likewise, although some anthropologists (van Wouden 1968; Traube 1986; Therik 1995) have tried to reconstruct the structure of traditional organisation on the basis of the customary practices and local narratives, the question of internal political dynamics – inter and intra-kingdom wars and political relations – in the pre-European period have yet to be documented. Very few written records about the pre-European period are available. Likewise, although the history of Portuguese colonisation is documented, such documentation was written in colonial government terms and presented differently from the viewpoints of later East Timorese.
III. The Portuguese Period: 1500s – 1912

- Early Accounts

While the exact time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Timor is debateable, the name ‘Timor’ first appeared in Portuguese documentation dated 6 January 1514 sent by Rui de Brito Patalim – who toured the Maluka islands, Timor and Solor during that period – to King Manuel in Portugal (see Matos 1974; Gunn 1999: 54-55). This suggests that the first Portuguese acquaintance with the island could have been much earlier than 1514 or between the time the same vessel set out from Malacca in mid November 1511 and the time it arrived at Solor, one or two years later. The 3 vessels were The Santa Catarina and nau Sabaia both under the command of Francisco Serrão, and a caravel (Caravella Latina) commanded by Simão Afonso Bisagudo (Matos 1974). Tomé Pires, in his article in Suma Oriental in 1515 noted that all ships en route to the Lesser Sunda Islands at the time harboured in Timor for Sandalwood. Duarte Barbosa supported this statement in his book Livro em que da relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente in which he associated Timor with the place of sandalwood (Gunn 1999: 55) where,

... axes, hatches, knives, swords, Cambaya and Paleacate cloths, porcelain, coloured beads, tin quick-silver and other wares are exchanged for saders-wood, honey, wax, slaves and also a certain amount of silver (Dames 1921: 195-196).

Nevertheless, it took almost 50 years for the Portuguese to begin asserting effective control over this trade. The Dominicans who also arrived in Timor at that time, became known only after their first palisade of lontar palms on Solor was burnt down by Buginese Muslim raiders in around 1561-1562 (Boxer 1985). Four years later, in 1566, the Dominicans re-constructed another church on that island. The Portuguese also built a fort. The establishment of forts characterised the initial relationship between the Portuguese and the locals, although they were confined largely to Solor and Flores. Citing Boxer
(1947), Fox wrote that 20 years after the erection of the new fort in Solor, “there developed a mixed, part-Portuguese population of local Christians, many of whom were themselves involved in the sandalwood trade with Timor” (Fox 2000: 7).

One century later, another European power – the Dutch East India Company (VOC) – which had established itself on Java, sent vessels eastwards towards Solor and Timor. Dutch involvement in Timor came about when the vessels of the Company took over the Portuguese fort on Solor in 1613. The company sought to control the lucrative sandalwood (*Santalum album L.*) trade in that part of the archipelago (Gunn 1999: 60). This involvement triggered the first open confrontation between the Portuguese and the Dutch and added further to the already tense situation between the Portuguese and the locals. When the Portuguese lost their Solor fort to the Dutch in 1613, most of the population around the fort was transferred to Larantuka and then to Lifau on the Northwest coast of Timor, now the enclave of Oe-cussi. It was in Lifau that the first Portuguese settlement and first capital was established on mainland Timor.

- **The rise of the Topasse or Mestiço**

In the early 1600s, this mixed-blood population from Larantuka who had established itself in the sandalwood trade posed the main threat to both the Portuguese and the Dutch. As recorded in most Dutch documents, these *Swarte Portugeezen* (lit., Black Portuguese) from Larantuka who regarded themselves as *Gente de Chapeo* (lit., People with Hat) and whom were also known as the *topasse* revolted against the Dutch and the Portuguese (Boxer 1947). Between 1630 and 1636, the Dutch commander Jan de Hornay deserted his battalion and settled in Larantuka. He married a local girl and converted to Catholicism. Two of his sons, Antonio and Francisco later “gave rise to [one of the] the dynasties that provided leadership to the Black Portuguese
community on Timor” (Fox 2000: 9). Another founder of a *mestiço* dynasty was Mateus da Costa, a Portuguese who married a princess of Timor and whose son, Domingos da Costa and his offspring provided further leadership among the black Portuguese in Central Timor. In 1642, responding to pressure by the Dutch and the Portuguese in the sandalwood trade, the *topasse* captain Francisco Fernandes led his men to crush the kingdom of Sonba’i in the interior of Timor and then the kingdom of Wehali on the South cost of Timor. This success left the *topasse* the only group in control of the sandalwood production and trade in both the hinterland and on the South Coast of Timor.

Portuguese and Dutch rivalry over the control of the sandalwood trade, especially in coastal areas, continued at least until 1660. On 6 August 1661, the Portuguese and Dutch governments signed a Treaty of Peace at the Hague. Although the Treaty did not necessarily mention both countries’ expansion in the Netherland Indies, it affected cooperation between the two. Nevertheless, although the Dutch and Portuguese cooperated against the *topasse*, rivalry between them continued until a century later, when the Portuguese decided to shift their capital to Dili in 1769.

The power of the *topasse* became apparent when the first Portuguese governor who set foot on Timor in Lifau, António de Mesquita, was deposed in 1697 by the *topasse* leader, Domingos da Costa, the son of Mateus da Costa. His successor, André Coelho Vieira was sent back to Goa by the same person (Gunn 1999: 79) which strengthened *topasse* power as the sole controller, both politically and economically, in the central part of Timor, save the Dutch in the far west. Facing less attention from Macau and increasing challenge from the *topasse* who had formed alliances with several indigenous kingdoms, the representative of the Portuguese crown had no option but to leave Lifau.
In general, throughout that period (1630-1769) the mixed-blood *topasse* played a very important role in the politics of Timor. At times, they served as both intermediaries and power brokers between the indigenous people and the two European countries. There were times when they joined the Portuguese in war against the indigenous kingdoms, but there were also times when they would join the indigenous kingdoms to fight against the Portuguese when their interests were threatened (Gunn 1999: 86-87).

- Indigenous Rebellions

Competition between the colonial powers and the *topasse* for sandalwood also brought about changes in the political context. Indigenous kingdoms often had no other choice but to defend their interests. From a nationalistic perspective, the significance of indigenous rebellion is encapsulated in epic stories of the ‘glorious past’ which are still narrated from generation to generation in the form of *ai-knanoik* (folk stories) and *lia tuan* (lit., old words). The existence of these narratives – as will be detailed in Chapter 3 – is important because they influence the way current East Timorese perceive their history. They also served as an inspiration during the years of resistance against Indonesia (Pers. Comm. Juvêncio Martins, 22 September 2000).

The first and major rebellion –*funu*– ever recorded was the Cailaco revolt in 1719 which ended effectively in 1769. The 50-year ‘stand off’ between Cailaco and its allies, on the one side and both the Dutch and the Portuguese on the other, inspired resistance throughout the island. This war saw the assassination of two missionaries, P. P. Manuel Roiz and Manuel Vieira, and the destruction of churches in that area. Bound by a *hemu ran* (lit., the drinking of blood) or ‘Blood Pact’ brotherhood according to ritual rites and initiated by the lord (lit., Portuguese for *régulo*) of Cailaco, a dozen *reinos*

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4 Prior to that, as argued already, records of indigenous rebellion and resistance took place mostly in Western Timor. See for example Nordholt (1971) and Gunn (1999).
joined the war against the Portuguese (Matos 1974). This war was the first major challenge against the Portuguese by indigenous kingdoms that currently form part of East Timor. At that time, the major Portuguese port was still in Lifau (see Figure 2.1).

In 1725, the ruler of Comnacce (often pronounced Camanasse) also revolted and this was followed by similar revolts in the central and western part of Timor. The ruler of Comnacce successfully convinced the reinos of Lemac Huto, Cailaco, Leu-Huto, Sanir, Atsabe, Lei-Mean, Ai-Funaro, Diribate, Hermera and a number of other reinos to attack the Portuguese in Lifau. A number of leading régules from Servião and Belo in western Timor also joined the revolt against the Portuguese (Gunn 1999).

Four years later, another rebellion took place when the reinos of Dili and Manatuto openly challenged the advance of Governor Pedro de Mello who aimed to pacify the coastal littoral in 1729. De Mello’s exploration made him the first high-ranking Portuguese official to ever come to Dili and Manatuto.
and paved the way for future relations between his successors and these
reinos. Nevertheless, resistance against the Portuguese continued.

At the end of 1703, Governor Coelho Guerreiro, introduced to the vice-rei (vice-king)
in Índia the following list:

Reinos allied with the government include: Sarao, Matarrufa, Hum, Lavai, Laga, Sama,
Futuro, Futuleti-luli, Viqueque, Samoro, Claco, Manatuto, Luca, Boilo, Vimasse,
Mauta, Tutuluru, Lacluta, Alas, Camanassa, Matanião, Amanato, Amanes, Amarrasse e Bibiluto.

Reinos which were rebels: Servião, Amabeno, Amanbão, Boro, Açao, Mena, Maubara,
Mutael, Liquisá and other names which could not be identified.

In 1777, according to the report of Conde de Sarzedas, to the vice-Rei in Índia, the
reinos were divided into.

In the province of Belo include: Sarão, Matarupa, Futuro, Bibiluto, Uimassa, Vigue,
Dalca Manatuto, Laculuta, Laiba, Luca Lacló, Lacuri, Aifai, Tamuro, Calaco,
Lacloodo, Alai, Fitulur Muves, Mutael, Bigruça Manufai, Litiluli, Tarini, Cailaco,
Maubara, Lanqueró, Fatubara, Baibao, Nassudili, Girivate, Cutubaba, Balibó,
Lamacana, Maqueri, Boramica, Aratassava, Lamão, Fialara, Couvoa, Suai, Lamanaca,
Tului, Fatumão, Daduló, Luques, Safagai e Juvalinio.

In the province of Servião, there were: Drima, Ainame, Ascambilo, Vaale (Wehali),
Amanato, Mena, Amanci, Vaibico (Wewiko), Ocani, Serviao Mossique, Amabeno –
where the ‘praça de Lifau’ located - Viome, Sacanava, Amanobão, Amarassa and
Amassião.

Afonso de Castro, who was the governor of Timor from 1859 to 1863, argued that in
Portuguese territory there existed the following reinos:

In Belo - Alas, Atsabe, Bibiluto, Bibico (Wewiko), Barique, Balibó, Boibau, Bibissuco,
Cairuhi, Caimau, Cailaco Cová, Cutubaba, Diribate, Daílor, Dóte, Funar, Failacor,
Faturo, Fatumarto, Foulão, Hara, Hermera, Lacló, Laíca, Laicor, Lacluta, Limian,
Liquica, Laclubar, Luca, Manatuto, Motahel, Manufai, Mahubó, Maubara, Raimean,
Sarau, Suai, Samoro, Saniri, Turiscá, Tutuluro, Ulmera, Venilale, Viqueque e
Vemasse.

In Servião - Ambeno and Oecussi.

Table 2.2: Different versions of reinos in Timor from 1703 to 1863 compiled from
various sources. For further information see Matos’ account of East Timor
between 1515 and 1769 (Matos 1974).

In 1732, a topasse rebel, Francisco Fernandes Vaerella, assisted by the reino of
Vemasse, confronted another group of Portuguese who were on their littoral
exploration towards the east. However, Varella was captured and forced to
swear loyalty to the crown in a public display witnessed by church clerics on

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16 March 1732 (Matos 1974). This joint effort between the topasse and indigenous domains suggest that alliances between the two were on the rise and provided a serious challenge to the colonial governors.

In Lifau, now the enclave of Oecussi, after pacifying the only Portuguese fort there, the topasse took control of the then capital of Timor. The control of the topasse along with some indigenous rulers weakened the Portuguese position in that region of Timor and made the former the only group with power, in both politics and trade. Evidently, with the help of several indigenous rulers, Francisco d’Hornay, António da Costa, de Quintiliano da Conceição and Lourenço de Mello, all topasse leaders, fatally poisoned the serving Governor (1760-1766) Dionísio Galvão Rebello in 1766 (Gunn 1999: 100) indicating that non-Portuguese forces were increasingly in control of the situation. This also compelled the incoming governor, who was to succeed Rebello, to return to Portugal.

Overall, the Cailaco rebellion, which began in 1719, inspired indigenous rebellions throughout the island and became the precursor of a long and continuous resistance against the Portuguese, not only politically but also against the latter’s attempt to impose a system of tax or fintas (tax in kind) on the indigenous rulers. Contemporary nationalists see the Cailaco war as the pedigree for later wars against the Portuguese.

- Colonial Establishment in the East and Later Implications

The Portuguese, following the arrival of the new Governor, de Mello, and in the face of total loss of control of the port of Lifau, decided to move to Dili on the night of 11 August 1769. Dom Alexandre of Motael, a former enemy, provided the plains area of Dili for the Portuguese to establish their administration and fort. His Christianised name suggests the role of the Church in linking this ruler with the Portuguese. After their arrival in Dili,
while fortifying their defences, the Portuguese sought to strengthen the existing relations and also to establish new alliances with local *liurais* or *régulos*. With the help of the Christianised *liurais* of Motael, Dom Alexandre, and Dom Filipe de Freitas Soares of Vemasse, the Portuguese formed alliances with around 42 other *reis* (*liurai*). The influence of these two Christianised rulers and other rulers was so significant to the Portuguese that Gunn argues:

> The survival of the Portuguese in this distant part of the archipelago rested at least as much upon their ability to strike alliances with the local tributaries, the *liurais* or *régulos* in (East) Timor, as upon their military prowess (Gunn 1999: 108).

In later years, after the foundation of Dili, the Portuguese were able to secure key allies such as Motael, Dailor, Atsabe, Maubisse, Ermera, Liquisa, Laemean, Hera, Vemasse, Cova[lima], Balibo, Samoro Lacluta and Viqueque. The role of the Church became increasingly important in these years and was seen as an inseparable part of Portuguese expansion. The role of the Dominicans in baptising some of the *liurais* should not be underestimated, as without this practice the Portuguese would have found it hard to establish security. Despite opposition from some indigenous rulers, the Portuguese established additional Churches in East Timor. The missionaries built churches in Lifau and Manatuto, in Animata (Cailaco), Tulicão (Servião), Vemasse, Laleia and Cagguium, Laclo and Lalora before the arrival of the colonial government (Gunn 1999: 108).5

Nevertheless, this new alliance between the Portuguese and the indigenous kingdoms was unsustainable. During the term of Governor António Joaquim Garcia in 1869, from 44 *sucos* which were supposed to contribute taxes, only 23 *sucos* did so (Rocha 1994: 213). Whether this was a show of opposition to the imposed taxes or the inability of the Portuguese to compel them to pay

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5 See also Pastoral do Bispo de Malacca D. Fr. Geraldo de São Joseph, 24 Julho 1752, BGEI, No 25, 31 Março, 1865 (cited in Gunn, 1999)
tax, it is almost certain that opposition to colonial policies remained significant, despite their formal allegiance. Although the Church had been asked to help and despite assurance from secured allies, successive rebellions took place in different parts of East Timor between 1769 and the early 1780s. Between 1782 and 1785, the *reino* of Luca revolted for the second time and successfully halted the advance of the Portuguese.\(^6\) In 1778 the *reino* of Belo (now in West Timor) and Manatuto also revolted and two years later, in 1790, Maubara and Sonba’i in West Timor also revolted against the Portuguese. In 1811, the *reino* of Motael rejected its allegiance with the Crown and decided to run its own affairs. In Freycinet’s account, quoted by Gunn (1999: 110), between 1769 and 1818, the Portuguese relied upon only 23 *reinos*. Around 42 of them failed to comply with the taxation system despite continuing to honour the king of Portugal (Freycinet 1827).

Other notable wars occurred between 1848 and 1852. In 1848, the *reino* of Ermera drove the Portuguese out of their territory. It was not until three years later, and only with reinforcements from Dili and Manatuto, that the Portuguese were able to reduce Ermera to ashes. This action included the killing of Ermera’s *liurai* by the then Governor, Olavio Monteiro Torres (1848-1851). Between 1851 and 1852, Dom Mateus, *liurai* of Sarau conspired with the Bugis and revolted against the Portuguese in an attempt at opposition, which was crushed. In later years (1852-1859), two rebellions occurred, first by the *reino* of Lamaquito and later by the *reino* of Manumera. In 1859, the *liurai* of Vemasse, Dom Domingos de Freitas Soares, son of a former key ally of the Portuguese, Dom Filipe de Freitas, revolted, but he was captured and deported to Lisbon. From 1859 onwards, District Military commands were established in each of the existing eleven districts (Gunn 1999: 160-161). From then on, isolated rebellions occurred throughout East Timor but these rebels

\(^6\) The war lasted for several months and prevented the Portuguese from marching towards the East Coast. The stiff resistance put up by the local *reino* led the Portuguese to dub it *guerra de loucas or doidas* (war of the crazy people) (Gunn 1999).
were unable to resist the Portuguese as key indigenous allies continued to support the colonial army in attacking its opponents.

After a period of internal ‘peace’, rivalries between the Dutch and Portuguese over the jurisdiction of trade territories continued. Under pressure from the Dutch and in an attempt to ease tension, the Portuguese governor Lopes de Lima agreed to discuss the division of their areas of control on Timor with his rival in 1848. Two years later in 1850, he agreed to cede the eastern part of Flores to the Dutch for 200 000 florin (80 000 florin payable immediately and 120 000 florin to be made later) (Boxer 1947; Fox 2000: 15). Governor Lopes de Lima was later recalled in disgrace to Portugal for his unrestrained action (Stapel 1955). Unable to rescind the Treaty, the Portuguese colonial government ratified it on 20 April 1859. This treaty drew up a geographical demarcation of respective sovereignties, dividing the island of Timor into two. The treaty was ratified by the Portuguese Chamber of Deputies in 1869 and executed in 1861. The ratification signalled the end of almost 200 years of rivalry between the two colonial governments over ‘their’ possessions in Timor.

Now concentrated on the eastern part of the island, the Portuguese continued to try to pacify the territory and interfered regularly in the internal affairs of key allies. In a number of cases, they also pitted indigenous reinos against each other. In 1863, the Portuguese government in Portugal, after a number of delays and changes, declared East Timor an Overseas Province with affiliation to Macau (Acto de 17 Setembro or Decree of 17 September). A seat was granted to East Timor in the Portuguese parliament in Macau on 18 March 1869, six years later.

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7 For an account on doubts on the agreement see Fox (2000: 12-18).
The overwhelming interference in indigenous kingdoms' internal affairs and the renewed imposition of tax had put a heavy burden on the reinos. Consequently, a number of major rebellions occurred again in 1861, during the time of Governor de Castro. Using a system similar to the cultur-stelsel implemented in Java by a VOC Governor Van Den Bosch, Governor Affonso de Castro tried to force the cultivation of coffee in the central and the western part of East Timor. It was expected that this cultivation would yield 20 per cent of total production to the Portuguese authorities between 1867 and 1894. This forced cultivation was characterised by a dozen revolts and the assassination of a governor, Alfredo de Lacerda e Maia (1885-1887) by the local moradores (recruits) on 3 March 1887 in Dili (Gunn 1999: 160-168). The small kingdoms of Laclo and Ulmera continued to resist but were crushed. In 1861 coffee was introduced into East Timor by de Castro (Gunn 1999: 163), and reinos in Liquisa, Ermera and Maubisse were forced to plant this new crop. As a result of the imposition of fintas, in 1867 another rebellion took place, this time by the kingdoms of Vemasse and Laga against Laleia, a key Portuguese ally. The Portuguese were able to quell the rebellion only after key indigenous allies such as Motael, Hera, Laculo and Manatuto provided assistance. Still, in 1867 another anti-tax rebellion took place in Lerman, which was still part of Maubara, but was also crushed.

A year later, in 1868, the kingdom of Covalima (now Suai), was joined by its neighbouring kingdoms which were loyal to the Dutch, and struck a blow against the Portuguese. The rebellion lasted a month before it was put down by the Crown with reinforcements from other indigenous allies in the east. The assassination of Governor Lacerda e Maia by the moradores on 3 March 1887 in Dili also highlighted renewed rebellion against the Portuguese. In 1893, Lacerda de Maia's successor, apart from trying to assert his command through tough military measures, sought to introduce more effective tax collection. However, as a result of this action, he had to face the revolt of the reino of Maubara in 1893. In this war, Maubara even seized Dare (on the

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outskirts of Dili) and Fatuboro before reinforcements were channelled from Macau to quell the rebellion. Another revolt by the règulo of Atabai in the same year was also crushed.

While colonial literature portrays this resistance as 'rebellions', local East Timorese see them as the fighting for survival. Local narratives about these 'wars' can still be found among contemporary East Timorese in the form of aiknanoik (lit., folk stories) or lia tuan (lit., old words). Although not detailing comprehensive stories about the past, such narratives certainly infuse ideas of a heroic struggle by their ancestors on contemporary East Timorese. It is important to note that political leaders, notably Xanana Gusmão, have since the 1980s, emphasised the heroism of the past, using phrases such as “in the past our ancestors fought wars” (ulu k ita ni a bo na si r a f um) in their speeches (see Gusmão 1998; Ojetil 2000; Ruak 2000; Gusmão 2000a; Gusmão 2000b). The East Timorese associate and interpret their history vis-à-vis the colonial experience as the basis of their nationalism although the widely recognised history of local nationalism only began with the war of 1912.

IV. Portuguese period: 1912 – 1975

- First Nationalist Rebellion and Its Impact

The first well organised rebellion that, in the eyes of nationalists today, represents modern anti-colonial sentiment and saw the involvement of almost all reinos in East Timor against the Portuguese, occurred at the time of Governor Celestino da Silva (1894-1908). This war was organised and

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8 From my various conversations and discussions with East Timorese, both political activists and ordinary, the Guerra de Manufahi (The Manufahi War, the name refers to the place where it was organised) is seen as the most vivid example for today's East Timorese in their fight for independence. It was seen as a nationwide revolt and as if carried out under the banner, and indeed the spirit of, East Timorese nationalism (field notes, 2000).
commanded by Dom Duarte,\(^9\) régulo of Manufahi and a former key ally of the Portuguese in 1894. A number of other kingdoms were also involved in the rebellion under the direct command of Dom Duarte, Lamaquitos, Agassa, Volguno, Luro-Bote, Fatumane, Fohorem, Lalaba, Cassabau, Cailaco, Obulo, Marobo and others. This ‘national’ rebellion proved to be costly to the Portuguese and until 1896, more than 20,000 patacas, the then currency of Macau and Timor, was used to buy ammunition, food and other equipment for the army. In 1900, facing the defection of allies, a lack of medicine on the eve of a cholera endemic, and imminent massacre from the Portuguese forces, the kingdom of Manufahi surrendered (Gunn 1999: 171).

In 1902, the kingdoms of Aileu and Letefoho renewed their rebellion and provided the impetus for other kingdoms to revolt, namely Quelicai in 1904 and Manufahi in 1907. What is important is that the post-1894 wars did not aim to crush the Portuguese colonial government, the *malae-mutin* (lit., foreign-white) alone, but with the help of the *malae-metan* (lit., foreign-black), a reference to the colonial subjects, the men from Africa, India and the *moradores*, a group of indigenous recruits who were often used as paramilitaries and tax collectors by the Portuguese.

In 1911 Dom Boaventura, the son of Dom Duarte led another rebellion continuing his father’s six-year legacy. A number of *reinos* and kingdoms including Cailaco, Atsabe, Balibo, Raimean, Bisibusso, Alas and Turisciai were involved. Inso (1939), as quoted in Gunn (1991: 181), states:

> Eventually, on the 27 May, the rebels mounted an heroic stand in the mountains of Cablac [known locally as Cablaki – 2362 m.], a place of plunging ravines and high rocky crags or *pedras*. Here, the rebels constructed a *tranqueira* of wood and stonework as a way of reinforcing their “natural fortress”, all in all suggesting sophisticated organisation and military skills (Inso 1939: 49).

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\(^9\) The name “Dom Duarte” implies that he had been baptised as Catholic, hence his previous allegiance to the Portuguese Crown.
But several weeks later, after receiving reinforcements from Macau – with two ships including Pátria, – and from Mozambican troops, the Portuguese were able to march on Cablaki, massacring more than 3,000 and capturing around 4,000 people. Dom Boaventura, despite escaping unharmed, later surrendered to the malae. Gunn notes:

Where the Timorese rebels were effective was undoubtedly as a running guerrilla force. The siege on 11 June-21 July 1912 of Cablac, the sacred mountain redoubt of the Manufaistas, conjures up the battle of Camenasse hundreds of years earlier; a doomed but mythically heroic stand (Gunn 1999: 182).

Following this success, throughout 1912, under the incoming Governor Filomeno de Câmar, the colonial authorities moved to crush other rebellions that, although operating independently, were still seen as a ‘thread’ of the Manufahi war. These were the reino of Betano and the kingdom of Oecussi, Baucau and Quelicai. The revolts of the 1894-1912 period devastated the regions of Timor and cost approximately 90,000 lives.

Thus, in a conversation I had with Vasco da Gama, the leader of OPJLATIL (Organização Popular Juventude Lorico Asswain Timor Leste) he said:

I only respect Dom Boaventura. He was the one who brought all Timorese – from east to west – to fight colonialism. After him, I also show my respect to Nicolau Lobato, Xanana Gusmão, Konis Santana and David Alex who fought on behalf of East Timor, not on their respective groups (Pers. Comm 27 August 2002).10

East Timor politicians who I conversed with during my fieldwork, saw the Manufahi War as the revival of the East Timorese nationalist movement in modern times. Indeed, during the resistance against Indonesia, the heroic saga of the Manufahi wars – and others – was often cited in letters from

10 Vasco recognised the fact that despite their different ethno-linguistic background; people like Boaventura (Manufahi, Mambrai), Nicolau Lobato (Bazarute, Mambrai), Xanana (Laleia, Galole), Konis Santana (Lospalos, Fataluku) and David Alex (Baucau, Makassae) fought with the spirit of Timor nationalism and had not only defended their respective groups’ interests.
guerrillas to students in the cities to set the spirit of struggle in motion for the new generation.

Plate 2.1: Dom Boaventura (Source: Unknown)

In my own assessment, the fall of Boaventura marked the initial period of the decline of moral power for the liurai, prior to the devastating effect of the Portuguese in post-1912 and the effect of the Indonesian administration between 1975 and 1999. In those periods, the Portuguese replaced a number of liurai but recognised the ranking system within an existing political organisation, whereas Indonesia dismantled the existing traditional system and replaced it with a completely new administrative system. The decline of the power of the liurais coincided with establishment of education for their children, a phenomenon which then provided room for some of those ought-to-be elite to assume new roles when anti-colonial sentiment came to the fore in the 1960s and 1970s.
The Impact of Change in Portugal on Education and Nationalism

The revolutionary change of government in Portugal in 1910 where the republicans ousted the monarchy, moved the Portuguese government to discourage former 'coercive' policies in its colonies, including East Timor. However, in 1926, another military coup successfully overthrew the republican government and in 1928, a former economics professor and finance minister, António de Oliveira Salazar, was appointed President of Portugal. His regime, which remained in power until 1974, was known as Estado Novo or the New Order government. Throughout the Estado Novo period, in which Salazar acted like a dictator, the pacification of Portuguese colonies continued and a high level military presence in the colonies was maintained.

This pacification also saw the restoration of Catholic missions throughout the territory. The work of these missionaries had been put on hold due to the impact of the political turmoil between 1894 and 1912 (The Manufahi war). Among these were the mission in Lahane in Dili which was responsible for the north of East Timor, and another in Soibada on the south coast, run by the Jesuits. Catholic schools that were opened as far back as 1877 and closed due to various rebellions, reopened (Matos 1974). One school that was opened for the sons of régulos in 1864 but later closed due to war, was also reopened.

On 19 February 1942, the Japanese Royal army attacked and occupied Dili in the pursuit of its Great Asian war. Around 400 Australian commandos with the help of the East Timorese fought against the Japanese. In only thirteen months of occupation, the Japanese lost around 1,500 personnel and some 40,000 East Timorese perished. Portugal, which opted to remain neutral during WW II, suffered economically (Singh 1995: 7). With this neutral stance, the Portuguese government was able to carry on its work uninterrupted until
the end of the war. After WW II, Portugal tried unsuccessfully to recover its territories lost in the 1898 Treaty (Matos 1974).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>1738</td>
<td>Dominicans</td>
<td>Oecússi</td>
<td>Priesthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Dominicans</td>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>Priesthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Dili– Manatuto</td>
<td>Son of Rególos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community School</td>
<td>1877-79</td>
<td>Diocese</td>
<td>Bidau – Hera</td>
<td>Catechists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Community School</td>
<td>1877-79</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Community School</td>
<td>1877-79</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Luca, Alas &amp;</td>
<td>Children/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southcoast</td>
<td>Sons of rególos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jesuit College</td>
<td>1877-79</td>
<td>Jesuit</td>
<td>Soibada</td>
<td>Sons of rególos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Colegio Lahane</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>B. Medeiros</td>
<td>Lahane-Dili</td>
<td>Boys School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Casa Beneficência)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Colegio Instituto Canossiana</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>B. Medeiros</td>
<td>Balide-Dili</td>
<td>Girls School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Escola Canossiana</td>
<td>1877-79</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Bidau</td>
<td>Girls School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Escola de Motael</td>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Motael</td>
<td>Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Escola de Baucau</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Baucau</td>
<td>Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Escola de Manatuto</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Manatuto</td>
<td>Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Primary and Community schools before 1900s in East Timor (Compiled by the author from various sources).

Interestingly, the educated elite, apart from beginning to be involved in the administration, also initiated covert anti-colonial activities. Some of them began to openly challenge the colonial power and question its policies. This resulted in widespread crackdowns and tight security control by Policía Internacional de Defesa do Estado (International Police for the Defense of the State: PIDE), in those years (Hill 2000). One of the outcomes of this challenge was the 1959 revolt in Watolari, a sub-district of Viqueque.

- The 1959 Rebellion and Post-Modern Nationalism

In 1959, a rebellion broke out in Watolari, a sub-district of Viqueque. The rebellion began on 7 June 1959. Some writers claim that the rebellion was allegedly influenced by the Indonesian communists who crossed over to East Timor several years before, after being chased out by the Soekarno government (Hill 2000: 62). Other versions see the rebellion as one aimed at
protesting against the colonial government's policy which did little to improve the living standards of the East Timorese, such as providing access to education, jobs and equal rights before the law (Pers. Comm. Julio Alfaro, March 2000).\textsuperscript{11} However, the crux of this rebellion is that it took a different form. Unlike the previous ethnically mobilised revolts, this rebellion embraced the notion of a nationalist war because the participants included young intellectuals, some civil servants and traditional rulers, suggesting a combination of a much broader concept for those involved. In the words of the last Portuguese governor in East Timor, Lemos Pirés, it was a combination of 'anti-colonial, anti Portuguese and tribal elements' (Gunn 1999: 260). After successfully crushing this revolt, in which more that 200 people were reportedly shot dead (Pers. Comm. Julio Alfaro, March 2000), many East Timorese were sent into exile in the former Portuguese colonies such as Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau. The revolt served, however, as the basis for new nationalist groups to emerge in East Timor particularly in the 1960s and the 1970s.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1961, an isolated and almost unknown movement was declared in Batugade on the north coast of Timor. A Timorese, known only as Mau Klau, a common indigenous Mambai name, led the movement. On 9 April 1961, Mau Klau hoisted a national flag in Batugade and declared Timor a republic. While the details and background of this event are little known, Mau Klau made no reference to either east or west Timor. The uprising was defeated by the Portuguese, leaving Mau Klau and his supporters in tatters, and he fled to West Timor. In 1963, Mau Klau declared his government in West Timor, a government which became known as the United Republic of Timor. As a consequence, Mau Klau faced expulsion by the Indonesian government and disappeared from the political scene (Martins 2002).

\textsuperscript{11} Julio Alfaro's father, who was also involved in the 'rebellion', was captured, sent into exile, and died in Angola.

Mau Klau’s movement went almost unnoticed in the modern historiography of Timor. Given the unclear circumstances surrounding the birth of this ‘nationalist’ movement, many Timorese remained unaware as to whether it had really been his intention to free East Timor. Nevertheless, the movement shows that resistance against the colonial government with a nationalist perspective was on the rise during that period.

In the wake of Revolução das Flores or the ‘Carnation Revolution’ on 25 April 1974 in Portugal a new military junta overthrew the dictatorship of António de Spinola (1968-1974), the successor to Dr António de Oliveira Salazar who ruled Portugal for forty years (1928-1968). A policy of decolonization was initiated through the Portuguese Governor in East Timor at the time, Mário Lemos Pires. In early April 1974, a centre right party Uniao Democrática Timorense (UDT) emerged and advocated a period of autonomy with Portugal before independence. Only on 5 May 1974, did the Portuguese governor formally announce a new political platform allowing for the establishment of political parties, thus initiating the first stage of the decolonization process in
East Timor. Subsequently, on 20 May the same year, a number of underground nationalists – most of whom were from the educated elite and were children of liurais (local rulers) – formed a more radical movement, *Associação Social Democrática Timorense* (ASDT). ASDT opposed any kind of autonomy and called for outright independence.\(^{13}\) ASDT changed its name to *Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente* (FRETILIN) on 11 September 1974. In July 1974, another smaller political party (*Associação Popular Democrática Timorense e Indonésia*, APODETI) which called for an association with Indonesia for a period of ten years or so before deciding on a self-rule direction, was also created. By November 1974, three other political parties had emerged: *Trabalhista* (the Labour party), KOTA (*Klibur Oan Timor Ass’wain*) and ADITA (*Associação Democrática Integração Timor-Leste a Australia*). Few political parties’ activities were well known to the public (Babo Soares 2000a: 58) during these pre-1975 events. One of the founders of APODETI, said in Dili on 14 August 2000 that APODETI had not had a chance to start its political activities due to the Indonesian invasion and subsequent annexation (Pers. Comm. Frederico de Almeida, 2000).\(^{14}\) ADITA, which was headed by Henrique Perreira, aimed to integrate East Timor into Australia. However, the party received very little support from the public, never carried forward its platform, and thus, disappeared soon after its establishment. Interestingly, among these political parties, FRETILIN was able to attract the support of most of the East Timorese military cadets within the Portuguese army. In 1974, although FRETILIN and UDT formed a coalition, it was short-lived. Fearing further outbreak and control by FRETILIN, UDT, under the command of João Carrascalão and Francisco

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\(^{13}\) Among these were Francisco Xavier do Amaral (a prince from Turiscai), the Lobato brothers (son of liurais of Bazartete), Mari Alkatiri, José Ramos Horta and others. Visit also *Radio Netherlands* [http://www.rsi.com.sg/en/programmes/wire%20stories/South%20East%20Asia/2002/05/05_20_01.htm](http://www.rsi.com.sg/en/programmes/wire%20stories/South%20East%20Asia/2002/05/05_20_01.htm)

\(^{14}\) On 14 August 2000, some former Apodeti members also added the term ‘pro-referendum’ to APODETI making it APODETI Pro-Referendum. In his speech, the leader, Frederico de Almeida stated that APODETI strongly advocated integration with Indonesia only after the self-determination process has been carried out. However, the process was interrupted by the invasion by Indonesia in 1975. Now that the people had voted for independence, APODETI called for the recognition of the wishes of the people.
Lopes da Cruz (Subroto 1997: 10-79), who later became Indonesian ambassador at large and then ambassador to Greece, launched a coup on 11 August 1975 aimed at taking control from FRETILIN (Dunn 1996: 151). With army reinforcements from East Timorese sympathisers in the Portuguese army FRETILIN regained control from UDT without any major confrontation. The leaders of UDT, including Francisco Lopes da Cruz, the Carrascalão brothers (Manuel, Mário and João) fled to Indonesian West Timor. Likewise, the leaders of KOTA and Trabalhista also fled to West Timor raising allegations that both groups were the liman ho ain (lit., hands and feet) of UDT. Subroto (1997) argues that these two small parties also part of the anti-FRETILIN coalition who in subsequent months declared allegiance to Indonesia. Around 40,000 people accompanied them and later remained as refugees. Francisco Lopes da Cruz then involved heavily in the negotiations, which led to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor on 7 December 1975. After overthrowing UDT, FRETILIN remained in sole control of East Timor. It was able to mobilise the population and with armed personnel on its side, the party was able to carry out its ‘grassroots’ development program between August and December 1975.

Other political groups, which were then defeated by this political party including UDT,̊ APODETI, KOTA and Trabalhista, fled to West Timor. On 28 November 1975 FRETILIN unilaterally declared the Independence of East

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15 There is a dispute as to who was the ‘war commander’ of UDT in 1974 and 1975. Writers including James Dunn (1996: 147-146) argued that João Carrascalão was the man in charge of UDT army during 1974-1975 civil war, whereas Subroto (1997), a key witness and journalist, argued that Francisco Lopes da Cruz, was also involved directly as UDT commander in the field during that period. He went further to say that when retreating to West Timor after being cornered by Fretilin in Dili, da Cruz headed the forces in Ermera, Maliana and Balibo including Batugade and João commanded another group, which covered Liquiça and Maubara (1997: 38).
16 With the exception of myself, all my parents, brothers and a sister took refugee in West Timor for eleven months. They came back to East Timor after Indonesia invaded and took control of East Timor.
17 In a televised debate (TVTL) just days before the election on 30 August 2001, UDT defended its action stating that as an Anti-Communist movement it had a moral duty to fight the rogue Communist elements that had penetrated FRETILIN at the time. The speaker pointed to two names, Major Jonatas and Major Mota, both of whom were members of Portuguese Communist political party (Fieldnotes, August, 2001).
Timor. It then set up a government with a cabinet of eleven ministers with seven secretaries of state. Although the appointment of the head of the government and the ministers was done entirely by the Comite Central da FRETILIN or FRETILIN Central Committee (CCF), the government had a semi-presidential system (see Table 2.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name/Person</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Francisco Xavier do Amaral</td>
<td>President of RDTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Nicolau dos Reis Lobato</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III Ministers/Name</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mari Alkatiri</td>
<td>State and Political Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Abílio de Araújo</td>
<td>Economic and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 José Gonçalves</td>
<td>Economic Co-ordination and Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Rogério Tiago Lobato</td>
<td>Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Alarico Fernandes</td>
<td>Home Affairs and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 José Ramos Horta</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs and External Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hamis Bassarewan</td>
<td>Education and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Juvenal Inácio</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Mau-Lear (António Carvarino)</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Sa’he (Vicente Reis)</td>
<td>Labour and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Eduardo Carlos dos Anjos</td>
<td>Communications and Transport</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>IV Secretary of State/Name</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Hélio Pina</td>
<td>Economic Co-ordination and Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mau-Kruma</td>
<td>National Defence (First vice-secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hermenigildo Alvês</td>
<td>National Defence (Second vice-secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Guido Soares</td>
<td>Labour and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Guido Valadares</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Domingos Ribeiro</td>
<td>Internal Administration and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Fernando Carmo</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Composition of the cabinet of RDTL proclaimed on 28 November 1975 (Source: Compiled by the Author).

Facing the imminent invasion of Indonesia, three days after independence was declared, the CCF sent a number of ministers abroad to lobby the international community for recognition of the new country. Among these were José Ramos Horta (Foreign Affairs), Rogerio Lobato (Defence Minister), and Mari Alkatiri (State and Political Affairs). Abílio Araújo (Economic and Social Affairs) was in Portugal at the time (Ramos-Horta 1987: 100). On 7 December 1975, the Indonesian army invaded East Timor.
FRETILIN led the war against Indonesia for the next 12 years (1975-1988). The war was carried on by an expanded nationalist group from 1987 onwards (CNRM and CNRT, see Chapters 4 & 6), a war which contemporary East Timorese refer to as the last stage of their nationalist struggle, the funu for national Independence.

These 24 years constitute the war for liberation (Guerra da libertação) and this is proudly referred to as the culmination of previous wars against colonialism. The two previous wars – Cailaco and Manufahi – served as the stages in which the sense of nationalism evolved.

V. Local Understanding of History: Closing Remarks

Throughout this chapter, the historical stages which served as the foundation of Timorese nacionalismo are characterised both by outsiders’ intervention in the territory and internal political dynamics. While internal dynamics were seen as a normal process, the intervention of foreign forces is understood, as will be detailed in Chapter 3, to have contributed to the formation of the sense of nationhood. Starting with the war or rebellion led by the liurai or règulo of Cailaco and a number of other indigenous kingdoms or reinos, the history of the East Timorese struggle reached a turning point with the rebellion of Manufahi in 1910-1912. Apart from compelling the Portuguese to soften its ‘coercive approach’, the Manufahi revolt and death of more than 3,000 people have been a source of inspiration for later nationalist movements.

While between 1769 and 1912, indigenous domains remained largely divided and independent from the one another, their continuing resistance to the colonial government and its apparatus was perceived as part of the ‘building up’ of later nationalism. A sense of understanding and good relations was evident, mostly in eastern Timor when Portugal moved its capital from Lifau.
to Dili. Local resistance and revolts were commonplace throughout the history of the colonial period. There were times when local rulers (liurai) opted to become allies of the Portuguese but there are also times when they jointly rejected political domination or the imposition of tax. The best example of this is the Manufahi war, which contemporary East Timorese refer to as the precursor of modern East Timorese nationalism in particular because it was led by a ruler with 'national vision'.

Between 1912 and 1970, Portugal pacified the whole country. However, from a nationalist perspective, this control did not prevent the East Timorese from fighting for their rights. Indeed, unlike the previous open challenges to the Portuguese, this period saw the emergence of a pacified (non-violent) resistance with a more nationalist character than the previously ethnically oriented rebellions. In 1970, for example, a small-educated elite with nationalist ideas including people like Xavier do Amaral, Nicolau Lobato, Jose Ramos Horta and Mari Alkatiri established an independence underground group in Dili (see Radio Singapore International 2002). They began to openly challenge the Portuguese government by demonstrating in the streets of Dili. After the political change in Portugal in 1974, these nationalist activists came to prominence and for a short time realised their dreams.

These developments have contributed a great deal to the accumulation of the sense of belonging, as well as shaping the views about past heroism among later generation East Timorese. While most of the history of the nation, known today as East Timor, was shaped very much by colonial hegemony, local resistance in the past continued to be told verbally from one generation to another. Folk stories (ai-knanoik) and local narratives continue to emphasise

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18 Beginning with the failed protest and rebellion of 1959, later nationalist activists – most of whom belonged to the educated elite – were able to develop much better co-ordinated underground activities, although little known uprisings such as the failed attempt by Mau Klau in 1961 continued.
the history of societies' forbears as successful experiences. Not surprisingly, reference to the Cailaco and Manufahi wars create a sense of pride among contemporary East Timorese. The next chapter details East Timorese interpretation of their history and their perception of the proud past.
Chapter 3

Recovering the Time of Long Ago: Perceiving Nationalism through the Past

I. Introduction

History, including perceptions of the past, occupies a central position in debates about nationalism (Gellner 1983; Smith 1983; Anderson 1991). Thus, the East Timorese refer to history, and in particular the history of resistance against outsiders, as the roots of their nacionalismo. By resistance history, I mean the struggle against colonialism in the past by the beiala (lit., ancestors, forbears, predecessor), or as the East Timorese also put it, the asswain (lit., the warriors). In a way, when referring to nationalism, one is taking the East Timorese back to the achievements in tempo uluk (lit., the time of long ago), the ‘glorious past’, and endeavouring to understand its relevance to the present. This is because the current sense of nation is perceived to emanate from, and to have been stimulated by, the achievements of the past. By ‘glorious past’, I mean all ideas about the history of resistance, a history that is proudly recited from one generation to another. Understandings of the glorious past can also be gained from the historiography detailing the resistance against the Portuguese.¹

Building on the history presented in Chapter 2, this chapter discusses East Timorese interpretations of the past and their role in the shaping of the idea of nation. Like Anderson’s (1991) elaboration of the evolution of nationalism, which highlights the role of history in the imagining of the nation, the discussion in this chapter encompasses the East Timorese view of nationalism in the context of their history.

¹ The word resistance used here is opposed to the word rebellion as found widely in Portuguese literature about the history of East Timor.
Today's East Timorese see their struggle against Indonesia as the zenith of the evolution of the idea of nation, which began with the early wars against the colonial government in the 1700s and was accentuated further by the war of Manufahi in the 1900s. In this context, traditional oral histories and local historiographies are taken as the crux of their interpretation. Timorese political leaders have often invoked such histories in their speeches, and Xanana Gusmão, the leader of Timorese liberation struggle, is the most vivid example.

The patriotic engagement of thousands of freedom fighters and anonymous citizens in this glorious struggle for the independence of our country is the expression of our ancestors' fighting spirit over centuries. The blood of the Timorese Nation is made of heroic deeds and the abnegation of all those who have given their lives in the name of Freedom. It has been a difficult process, a source of mourning, destruction of families that marked generations (Gusmão 1999).

Thus, the intention of this chapter is to describe the way East Timorese politicians and other political actors perceive the past and how nationalism is constructed through phases of the past. Both oral and written histories are used as the bases for their interpretations, and are regarded as important in the creation of contemporary East Timor nationalism, the notion that underlies the concept of East Timor unity. Most of these political actors live in Dili, the capital, but unlike their village compatriots they do not possess a rich knowledge of the ai-knanoik or oral history of the past. Rather their perception and interpretation of the past is based on the limited knowledge they have gained from partial histories and narratives.

II. The Setting: Perceptions of the Past

In preference to the previous Chapters, both political actors and activists perceive nacionalismo as a process inspired by, and developed along, the course of history.²

²It developed into maturity through the struggle for freedom. To these groups, nationalism is the trunk (unification) of various reinos (lit., people, princedoms, kingdoms) or ethnic groups or scattered roots, the latter also representing differences within society. The resistance against colonialism is believed to
Most of these political actors and activists were of my age and older (25-40), but all referred proudly to past resistance struggles particularly during the Portuguese colonial period as inspiration for later struggles against Indonesia. Nationalism was thus interpreted as a process which evolved through different phases of resistance against outsiders.\(^3\)

From another perspective, the past, *uluk*, or *beiala nia tempo* (lit., time of the ancestors) is distinguished from the time of struggle. For a much older generation, *beiala nia tempo* refers to the period before the arrival of the Europeans. Interpretation of the European period varies from one place to another in East Timor since the occupation and settlement began gradually at different periods in different places. The assumption among the older generation of East Timorese is directed to the presence and influence of Europeans in the period when their forbears had lived. It was a time when traditional social and political structures were intact and untouched by outside influences.\(^4\) In September 2000, I had the chance to discuss this issue at length with one of my informants, the late João Nunes, who was also known in Dili as *mestre* (lit., professor) for his broad knowledge about local culture and, as locals put it, ‘the East Timorese way of thinking’.\(^5\) At the time, East Timor was still recovering from the September 1999 violence and conflict, stealing and street gangs were prevalent, despite the presence

have successfully unified these roots and given shape to the *imagining* of the nation (trunk), the basis of a much later concept of unity.

\(^3\) In a botanical idiom, it starts from the roots, sprouts to become a trunk and eventually branches out to present the image of a tree (nation). I will deal with this issue in the latter part of this chapter.

\(^4\) This thesis is popularly known as *uluk beiala sira nia tempo* (lit., at the time of ancestors). Proponents of this view – most of whom derived their interpretation from narratives and myths – dismiss the historical influence of the Chinese, Islam and others. Perhaps, the presence of the latter left little impact on the lives of the locals thus, unlike in Belo, West Timor (Therik, 1995), no narratives or local folk-stories ever mentioned the presence, let alone influence, of these groups in the pre-Portuguese period. See for example the works of David Hicks (1971; 1976) and Elizabeth Traube (1986), neither of which made any specific reference to Chinese or Islamic influence although acknowledging that in the cosmology of the East Timorese, the latter trace their origins to outsiders from other parts of the island.

\(^5\) João Nunes passed away in Dili, November 2002, when I was writing this chapter. He was the son of a *liurai* or radja of Manutasi in Ainaro, and was a teacher during both the Portuguese and Indonesian administrations. His opinion reflected the fact that he spent much of his childhood and youth in his village, Manutasi, a kingdom in what is now part of the district of Ainaro.
of International Civilian Police. João Nunes, then in his 70s, was disgusted by the situation the country faced and blamed it on the Indonesian government, which had destroyed almost 70 per cent of the country. In reflecting on this life, he paused again and again to complain that his country was experiencing a kind of life unlike any it had experienced in the past, the time of the ancestors. It is from this point in the conversation that the story of the past begins, a story about the experience of life in the past, which, João Nunes explained, is absent in present life.

João Nunes began his narrative with life during the Portuguese colonial period and made reference to stories he had heard from his paternal grandfather when he was only a child. Emphasising only the positive side of the past, these stories covered not only the chronological stories of past life, but also the rules of social behaviour and certain compulsory social arrangements designed to ensure stability of society. While these references are located in the Portuguese colonial period, state influence remained remote to most reinos in East Timor, at least until 1970s. Also, such references were made in comparison with the post-independence period and attributed the disappointment to the 'outsiders intervention'.

In the literature, João Nunes’ account is not foreign to societies in this region. In many Southeast Asian societies, perceptions of the past are used to reconstruct societies’ histories, their social structures, and their relations with the past. While perceptions are the result of thought and reflection, they are also the result of an interpretation of both oral and written history. Recalling the past can also serve as a tool to revive memories and to remind people, not only of the life of the ancestors but also of the facts of social life in the past. Undeniably, such perceptions reconstruct society’s consciousness of the past and help it to understand the past’s relevance to the present (Fox 1979). Both historiography and oral history present a

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6 Antony Reid and David Marr discuss a great range of issues related to perceptions of the past in their book entitled Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia (Reid and Marr (eds), 1979).
7 ibid.
moral validation for contemporary institutions and political interests and can serve as a basis for the creation of new values (Marr and Reid 1979).

For a community like East Timor, plagued by so many destructive historical events, the perception of history is an important element in the search for identity. The struggle against Indonesia is commonly said to have revived this identity and is viewed widely as the culmination of the idea of nation. The process of imagining the nation commenced in the time of beiala, developed over the course of history and continues to mark its relevance to present circumstances. The East Timorese used to say:

Hourulul, houri wa’in
Oan Timor Ass’ wain
From long ago, from time immemorial
The children of Timor were warriors/heroes.8

This often-quoted verse explains the importance of history in East Timorese life. Remembering the ‘glorious past’, the East Timorese believe, can strengthen the spirit of nationalism and patriotism. The time of my fieldwork coincided with the time referred to as the culmination of East Timorese nationalism, the end of war and the end of fighting against colonialism. One could not ignore the period’s general sense of euphoria. Conversations regarding the situation were characterised by references to the past. It is not surprising that even one and a half years after my fieldwork, the independence leader Xanana Gusmão still refers to the past as the foundation of his nation’s future (Gusmão 2002). References to the past remind people about and also accentuate society’s current condition. Juvêncio Martins uttered the following:

In the ‘past’, our ancestors were true warriors. But, we must not forget that our forbears were ‘ignorant’ and it was because of this that the colonialists defeated our ancestors. ‘Now’, we ‘know’ who we are and we are ‘aware’ of our importance as human beings, we should find our way to govern ourselves. We are still warriors ourselves (Pers. Comm. Juvencio Martins, September 2000).

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8 This verse is often used in chants, war dances and symbols representing East Timor. During Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975-1999), it featured in the emblem of the province.
Among political activists and actors, recounting the past is a way to reclaim history. Local exegeses explain that history is worth remembering in order to establish a future. Contemporary East Timorese usually seek to compare today's phenomena with what happened in the past, regardless of the kind of evidence the past presents. Thus, the East Timorese say, if our ancestors were warriors (asswain), so are we. Recounting and interpreting the past and also determining its relevance to the present is common in conversation, discussion and public speeches by politicians. Juvêncio explains:

Understanding *tempo-uluk* [history] is a must in order to understand the present. Understanding history provides an impetus to understand history and to defend it. Through history, we find our identity and how our nationalism came into being (Pers. Comm. Juvêncio Martins, September 2000).

Contemporary East Timorese see the history of resistance as the most important element in the formation of Timorese nationalism, for it is the root of their identity, their liberation and the foundation of their country. To explain in detail, let me now delve into the classification of history and the identification of nationalism in history.

III. Interpretation of Past Political History: The Foundations of *Nacionalismo*

- The *Beiala* Outlook

In preference to literary accounts of East Timorese nationalism (Jolliffe 1978a; Lutz 1978a; Anderson 1993), contemporary East Timorese embrace a different way of looking at history. While they are conscious of the sequence of events in history, their classification is made to correspond with and distinguish between those people present in the territory. By people, I refer to both East Timorese and foreigners. Thus, when referring to the past, contemporary East Timorese point to two different periods. The first is the pre-European period and the second is, as referred to by Ramos-Horta, *funu*, or the colonial period (Ramos-Horta 1987).
In local exegeses, life in the beiala period is portrayed as peaceful, calm and governed by the ukun (lit., rule, regulate) and bandu (lit., forbidden) or customary law (Martins [Undated]). Emphasis is placed on the point in the time of the ancestors’ life that was peaceful and bountiful. There was no shortage of food and the people lived a good life. This is the kind of life later interrupted by the invasion of outsiders (Pers. Comm. João Nunes, September 2000). In public conversations, people refer back to the period of beiala as the time of rai dlak (lit., earth/soil good) or peaceful times without making a reference to the opposite period, rai a’at (lit., bad earth/soil) or bad times. The colonial period is generally referred to as the time of war, famine and so on (see also Bsbo Soares 2004).

Plate 3.1: Uma lulik of Lautem, tangible evidence of the past times (Photo: James J. Fox).

The past is remembered through the power of lia lulik (lit., sacred words) in the form of ritual chants, narratives or ai-knanoik (lit., ai tree, wood and knanoik, songs), and through tangible evidence such as local political organisation, traditional authority and structure in general, all of which offer glimpses of the ‘glorious past’. In other
words, the past is understood through the power of words, such as those used in poetry, and tangible evidence provided by the existing traditional social structure.

The structure of an uma-lulik (lit., sacred house), for example, symbolises not only a dwelling place of the past but also a place that provides various explanations about the past. An uma-lulik could have been a ritual place, such as a meeting place where lia moris- lia mate (words life-words dead) or the matters of life and death were discussed. An uma-lulik thus recalls the life in the past time of the ancestors.

Such perceptions are also reflected in the way political actors interpret their cause. Their readings of political phenomena are made in such a way that they correspond to the ‘power’ of the past, as recited in narratives and folk-stories. They argue that there were times during the struggle when they thought the struggle against Indonesia was in vain, especially when the international community gave no help to them between 1975 and the 1990s. The fact that East Timor was sealed off by Indonesia from the rest of the world, and the fact that most leaders were killed during that period exacerbated this frustration. In such moments, relying on vision, experience and history was the only way to sustain one’s courage and determination.9 The commander of FALINTIL, now Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak of FDTL, was shown on Portuguese television after his platoon mounted an assault on an Indonesian military convoy saying that ‘Timor nia lulik maka’as duni’ (lit., the lulik of the East Timorese is stronger than the enemies’).10 In other words, by relying on lulik the East Timorese guerrillas would be ‘safe’ from any hazard in their endeavour since, according to Taur Matan Ruak, the East Timorese are

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9 Falur Rate Lack, a commander of FALINTIL uttered this comment in a discussion held by Yayasan HAK in March 2000.

10 When Taur Matan Ruak and the late David Alex led an attack on an Indonesia convoy in 20 August 1991, the attack was captured in the footage of western cameramen. Taur Matan Ruak used this very phrase, a phrase interpreted locally as the Ghosts and Ancestors of the East Timorese will never allow the enemy to rest until their children have achieved independence. This footage was shown by Portuguese television, RTP International on the day Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta were awarded the 1996 Nobel Prize.
protected by their ancestors’ spirits. References to the souls of ancestors do not only
help construct the worldly/cosmos relationship but are an acknowledgment of the
past, the ancestors, who are believed to guard their children even today, and
particularly in times of need.

Likewise, city-based political actors and politicians are inclined to relate the past to
current political developments. To them, had there not been wars against the
colonialists, contemporary East Timorese would not have the mata-dalan (lit., eye
path/ way), ‘guidance’ to carry on the struggle to the end. The interesting point here
is that these political actors – and the subjects of this thesis – live mostly in Dili.
However, this does not mean that their links with the traditional ways of life have
been severed. Nor does it mean that they have failed to respect kinship ties, their
uma-lulik, rate (lit., graveyard) of their ancestors and their clans’ ritual ceremonies. In
spite of their ‘modern’ lives in the capital, political actors and activists continue to
observe customary practices, a fact evident from their regular visits to uma-lulik, and
their attendance at koremetan (lit., kore untie and metan black), a symbolic release of
black cloth to mark the end of the mourning period of a dead relative within the
clan.11 Likewise, reverence to the rate of the ancestors and observance of the rules of
marriage (fetosá-umane) are part of the relationship between individuals and their
ahi-matan (lit., ahi fire and matan eye), hearth or fire place, a reference to one’s place
of origin.12

It is not surprising that such relics vividly bring to mind the histories of the
ancestors. Yearly visits, for example, show respect towards ahi-matan and uma-lulik.
Regular trips allow city politicians to communicate with the elders in the village and

11 Releasing the black cloth usually takes place after a one-year period of mourning. While it is not
clear whether this is a result of Portuguese or Chinese influence, the practice of ending the mourning
period is found commonly among the East Timorese societies.
12 This reference is made to East Timorese political actors who live mostly in Dili collectively. There
are political actors with little connection to local customary ways of life but their recognition of adat
is what matters here. Political leaders with ‘foreign ancestry’ often marry locals and conform with
their spouses’ custom such as paying visit to the graveyards of the ancestors and so on.

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hear recitation of folk stories and local narratives detailing the histories of their respective ancestors. Oral histories often, João Nunes explained, call to mind the kind of life in the past, the time of peace and the time of ‘good life’. Indeed, the time of *beiala* continues to feature in narratives and other oral histories. João Nunes (Pers. Comm. September 2000) referred to the past and its relation to the future, as he narrated to me verbally, in the following passage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Our ancestors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ita nia abon</td>
<td>Our forbears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ita nia beiala sira</td>
<td>Lived a good life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moris diak tiha ona</td>
<td>(They) were independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukun a’an tiha ona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II</th>
<th>They lived a peaceful life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sira moris dame</td>
<td>Lived according to their laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moris tuir sira nia lisan</td>
<td>Lived on their own capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moris tuir sira nia bele</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malae mak halo a’at</td>
<td>(It was) the foreigners who destroyed (that life)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When referring to the days of the ancestors, locals proudly portray *uluk*, the past, as ‘heavenly’ times, for then there was supposed to be no war, no stealing and no wrongdoing. What was evident were peace, tranquillity and obedience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III</th>
<th>Either on land or in the sea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iha rai ka tasi</td>
<td>(We would) Come in or depart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ita tama ka sai</td>
<td>No one would forbid (us)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida la bandu</td>
<td>No one would frighten (us)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida la tau halo tauk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>(If) we were to go, we could do so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ita ba, ba ona</td>
<td>(If) we were to come, we could do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ita mai, mai ona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalan e loron</td>
<td>(During) Night or day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailoron e Rai-udan</td>
<td>(During) dry or wet seasons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V</th>
<th>Our forbears lived a good life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beiala sira moris diak</td>
<td>Everything was available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saida mak laiha</td>
<td>Food was plentiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai-han iha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balada maús mos barak</td>
<td>(Cattle were abundant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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VI
Ai-han la susar Food was plentiful
Hemu la susar Drinks were profuse
Moris ho ukun Governed by Ukun (law)
Moris tuir bandu Governed by Bandu (rules)

VII
Hafoin, malae mai tiha Then, the foreigners came
Ikus, Indonesia mai tan Later, Indonesia followed
Ita susar We suffered
Ita terus We endured suffering

When making references to the uluk, the past, these would usually end with wishes and hopes. Responsibility for the future is often surrendered to the future generations, it thus become their duty to restore to social life the peace that was lost in the time of beiala. João Nunes then pointed to me and recited the last part of his passage:

VIII
Oan sira You, the children
Klosan sira You, the youth
Moris ne fo ba imi This life is yours
Moris ne’e imi mak hatutan This life is up to you to carry forward (Pers Comm. João Nunes September 2000).

These verses (III-VII) describe the beauty and bounty of life in the past, the next (VIII) describes the passion for and expectation of future life. It also serves as a reminder that the interrupted peace should be brought back and reinstated, emphasising the belief that the past is relevant to present circumstances. Central to this perception is that in the past, the ancestors (domains and dynasties) had developed ‘our’ tradition in an officially sanctioned and relatively stable way leaving no room for any sort of conflict. Local exegeses explain that uluk ne’e ita moris dame – in the past we lived peacefully – but ikus ne’e it moris susar – now we live in poor conditions. Such phrases can often be heard in daily conversations. The
East Timorese believe that colonialism or foreign occupation interrupted the *beiala* period and that they should be allowed to live the way their ancestors lived. Consequently, it is not surprising that colonialism is seen as a devastating force which interrupted and destroyed the peaceful life of Timorese society. Narratives often encourage youths to fight and get rid of this devastating force. Then, when it has been eliminated, *foin-sae* (lit., just rise), the 'youth', and *labarik aban-nian*, the 'children of tomorrow', are expected to improve society's life, for the future is theirs or they are the future (refer to passage above). It is in this context that current nationalism becomes our focus. Thus, contemporary nationalism is not only an achievement of the past, but also a 'turning point', from which the current generation is expected to keep going forward, dealing with all time's changes. Political activists and political actors argue – from a nationalist perspective – that it is important to *duni sai* (lit., pursue) or get rid of the enemy from the territory, for 'outsiders' (often referred to as *malae* 'foreigners') are the cause of internal troubles.\(^{13}\)

If the outsiders [colonisers] had not come to destroy our lives, we could have lived peacefully and perhaps we would have become an independent nation for some time. The Portuguese came, then the Japanese came, the Australians and later the Javanese [Indonesia]. What have they brought unto us? Nothing but destruction. We should allow no more outsiders to come and interfere in our lives again.\(^{14}\)

Reference to colonial masters, in particular, both the Portuguese and the Indonesians, was made to highlight their roles in the 'destruction' of peace and harmony in Timorese society. A sense of pride is also a characteristic of this interpretation. The East Timorese believe that they should be allowed to live in peace, for peace and tranquillity are essential elements in their tradition. Demands that the state of the past be reinstated or recovered are common, particularly among the older generation. Even contemporary political parties and leaders insist that

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\(^{13}\) Note that this perception is an interpretation of life in the past and its relation to colonialism. At the time of my fieldwork, people tended to have different ideas about the United Nations, which came to help and not destroy.

\(^{14}\) This view was uttered to me by Luis Soares, a farmer in Gurtei – Punilala, Ermera, August 26, 2001, several days before the first Constituent Assembly election.
history should be remembered and retold to the younger generations so that they too know about and understand about the past. Political leaders, in their speeches, refer insistently to both the seventeenth and eighteenth century wars against the Portuguese (Gusmão 2000a) and the struggle against Indonesia from 1975 to 1999 (Alkatiri 2000) as inspiration for the current striving towards freedom. A deeper understanding about references to the historiography of East Timor, which consists mainly of colonial-period textbooks, can be gained by delving into East Timorese resistance historiography.

- Classification of Nationalist War

In the literature, it is widely depicted that East Timorese 'nationalist wars' evolved through three periods, the third being the culmination of the previous two. First, as pointed out by Abilio Araújo, during the period between 1512 and 1912 indigenous kingdoms fought independent and isolated wars against the colonial government. It was during this period that the war of Cailaco was waged, from 1719 until 1769 (Gunn 1999), a war that was conducted at the height of the sandalwood trade and is revered today as the first nationalist war. This period concluded with the end of the Manufahi War in 1912, in which a number of indigenous kingdoms united to fight in protest against the colonial government's occupation of their land and imposition of taxes.

Whereas there were attempts to forge links among these kingdoms in the past to fight together, the situation was not permissible given that rajas or reinos are often found to fight the Dutch and Portuguese, but at the same time, others remained loyal and continued to help the Crown forces with men and provisions (Gunn 1991: 101. Since, between 1512 and 1912, each kingdom fought individually to protect its own interests, Araújo calls this period the guerra independentistas (independent/isolated wars).
During the second period, between 1912 and 1975, the Portuguese pacified the territory completely. This period was broken up by the Japanese occupation in WW II, an occupation that created the conditions for the emergence in the early 1950s of urban-based clandestine nationalist movements, which continued to flourish until the early 1970s. Araújo calls this period the *guerra pacífica*, a period of passive denunciation of colonialism through non-violent means (Gunn 1999). It was a time when the nationalist consciousness came into being, a time coloured by frequent protests, including the local revolt in Watolari in 1959, and the unsuccessful push for Portuguese decolonisation in 1974.

![Plate 3.2: Replica of the Alliance of Timorese Kingdoms in the 1700s (Reprinted from Kota Manual Handbook).](image)

The third period is what Xanana Gusmão calls the *guerra da libertação* (the liberation war/struggle). It is characterised, uniquely, by a war for independence in which most East Timorese fought for a common cause, liberation. This period (1975-1999), recalling Chapter 2, saw the invasion by Indonesia and the subsequent 24-year-long popular resistance struggle, which culminated in a referendum on 30 August 1999 in which the majority of the East Timorese decided to become independent from...
Indonesia. Present generations interpret the guerra da libertação as the culmination of a process that had begun in the early days of colonial domination and was strengthened by centuries of continuous resistance. In a way, the idea of nacionalismo that helped liberate East Timor from Indonesia is based on common knowledge or shared perceptions of the past, as it was suggested to have been experienced in the days of the abon, the ancestors. Indeed, it was the two previous nationalist wars and the passive resistance in the second period that inspired many East Timorese to resist Indonesia (Pers. Comm. Juvêncio Martins, September 2000). Underlining all of this, reference to the past, close observance of tradition and attention to cultural artefacts are common means of showing respect to the ancestors.

IV. Understanding Indigenous Rebellions

In accordance with this intense awareness of the past, the fighting against Indonesia was also seen as a legacy of the past. Among politicians it is understood that as long as East Timor is not free, this legacy continues and will never cease (Gusmão 2000a). Being interlinked with the past, the East Timorese are called to complete the chain of struggle that will eventually bring back the memories, if not the peace and bountifulness of the past. In other words, peace can be recovered once the coloniser has been defeated.

- Interpretation of the Cailaco War

The first major indigenous rebellion (funu) recorded was the Cailaco revolt of 1719-1769, which saw the assassination of two missionaries and the destruction of Churches in that area. It was the first major challenge to the Portuguese by the

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16 In his book, Timor Lorosae 500 Years, Geoffrey Gunn (1999) lists almost all major rebellions carried out by the indigenous kingdoms in East Timor against the Portuguese.
indigenous kingdoms of what is now East Timor and part of West Timor. The war coincided with another major war against the Portuguese, waged by the reino of Luca on the central south coast of Timor. Began in protest against Governor António d’Albuquerque’s imposition of fintas, a kind of tax (Gunn 1999), this rebellion proved quite successful. At one point the march of locally recruited militia (moradores) led by Captain-Major Joaquim de Matos, on its way to Cailaco to collect fintas, was halted.17

Plate 3.3: An old Warrior in the 1900s (Photo: Unknown).

17 This tax system, which included sandalwood and all other exportable commodities (Gunn 1999:76), was imposed under the governorship of António d’Albuquerque Coelho.
However, it was the ruler of Cailaco who gained most momentum. Having continuously rejected Portuguese domination and fought his own war alone from 1719 he finally convinced the reinos of Lemac Huto, Comnace, Leo-Huto, Sanir, Atsabe, Lei-Mean, Ai-Funaro, Diribate, Hermera and a number of other reinos in West Timor to attack the Portuguese in 1752. A number of leading régulos from Servião and Belo also joined the revolt against the Portuguese.\(^{18}\) This rebellion concluded only after the Portuguese sought the help of the topasse from Larantuka, 4000 loyal tribe people, and additional reinforcements from Macau.

While conducting fieldwork, I met a guerrilla commander, known by his nom de guerre, comandante (commander) Rocke Kolir (nom de guerre) or Jacinto Viegas Vicente. Being from Cailaco, he claimed to have defeated the Indonesian army in various encounters that they had in the past. This reference was made to explain that it was in Cailaco that the real war against the Portuguese started and being from the area, he wanted to uphold that reputation. In his own words, “the war against the malae (foreigners), a reference to the Portuguese began originally in the western part of East Timor (Loromonu) and it was from there that it spread to the east (Lorosae)” (Pers. Comm. Palapaso, March 2000). While commander Rocke’s intention was directed to the war against the European forces, both the Dutch and Portuguese, his accounts also implied that the first war started from that area before the other wars in East Timor. In other words, while in the historiography of East Timor the Cailaco war was remembered only as another ordinary rebellion against the foreigners, Commander Rocke thought the source, the initiation and the roots (hun) of all wars against outsiders in East Timor, as he said, mai housi neba (lit., originated from there), a reference to Cailaco. Indeed the Cailaco rebellion inspired indigenous rebellions throughout the island and led the way for a long and

\(^{18}\) According to Portuguese historian and ethnographer Basilio Sá, the rebellion of Cailaco persisted for two main reasons. First, the belief that other neighbouring reinos would continue to provide support; second, ‘the myth of the impregnable Pedras de Cailaco (lit., rocks of Cailaco) or the natural rock fortress ... [of] Cailaco rising to 2000 metres altitude’ (Gunn 1999:97), as provider of protection for Cailaco.
continuous resistance against the Portuguese in following years (Gunn 1999). Later revolts against the colonial government were not only politically driven but also economically motivated, by rejection of the attempt to impose the *fintas* ‘tax’ on indigenous rulers. Thus, the war of Cailaco was driven by the need to defend the related kingdoms’ interests and material and cultural property, an important point to make in a discussion about the evolution of East Timorese nationalism.

While little known by today’s generation, local narratives provide vivid representations of the Cailaco war. First is the reference to *Pedras Negras* (lit., The Black Rock). While seeming to have a limited understanding of the past, Commander Rocke proudly recited the determination of the ancestors as the foundation of and motivation for his own struggle (Pers. Comm Comandante Rocke, March 2000).

That place is *lulik*. Since in the past the ancestors were also buried there. It was the rock that provides shelter [protection] hence the foreigners could not come. When they [foreigners] went in [to the *reino*] they did not see our ancestors because the rock hid them. They are all dead, but they continued to give their protection to their children. Therefore we shouldn’t be afraid. We have to protect our ancestors’ *lisân* [tradition] everyone have to give our blood, in exchange.¹⁹

Quoting Portuguese archives, Gunn explains that ancient East Timorese in the area saw the rock as a symbol of *lulik* (lit., sacred) and a place of the ancestors (Gunn 1999). Commander Rocke’s interpretation of the *Pedras Negras* was that it provided protection and sanctuary for his ancestors to resist, for it was known as the burial place of many previous ancestors. Secondly, given the fact that the war was conducted to protect the site, locals believe that it would, in exchange, reciprocate by providing protection to the children of its protectors. Local exegeses and narratives highlight the bravery of the old warriors as symbols of determination and

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¹⁹ Like many new generation East Timorese who have little knowledge of their past, Commander Rocke believed that the site of his guerrilla home base was secure from external threat. He mentioned that the elders had told him not to be afraid; as long as he could look after himself, the ancestors would continue to support his cause (Pers. Comm. Rocke, Palapaso, March 2000).

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commitment. Folk stories underline the importance of defending what is ‘ours’ even if it has to be ‘bought’ with blood.

During the resistance against Indonesia, Cailaco continued to symbolise the defiance of the people in this part of the island, and the presence of the guerrillas in the area is well known. A compagnha of FALINTIL (the resistance army) mainly comprising local fighters was stationed there. Cailaco is located in the district of Bobonaro, which shares a border with Indonesian West Timor. The reason behind this cantonnement, as explained by Commander Rocke (nom de guerre), is:

| Ne’e ami hanoim tamba          | We thought that          |
| Hori uluk kedas               | Since the time of long ago |
| Hori ita nia beiala           | Since our ancestors      |
| Funu fatin iha neba           | The place of battle there |
| Reinu seluk mos mai           | Other reinos came        |
| Hamutuk iha neba              | Joined together there    |
| Hamutuk ho liurai Cailaco     | Alongside the liurai of Cailaco |
| Hamutuk ‘hemu ran’            | Together in ‘Oath of Blood’ |
| Halo maun-alin                | Turning (themselves into) brothers |
| Hodi hasouru colonialista     | To face the colonialists.20 |

The heroic name Cailaco suggests the reason for the choice of the location for a resistance headquarters in the area. In local belief, the place is the abut (lit., root,) and hun of an ancestral kingdom, since an oath of blood was taken there, the war was conducted from the area and many lives were forfeited there. It is considered rai-lulik or sacred land. The souls of the ancestors are believed to be present there at all times and provide sanctuary to those who seek protection, particularly children who have decided to follow the path of the ancestors, that is, in fighting the outsiders (Pers. Comm. Comandante Rocke, March 2000).

20This poetic-like narrative was recited to me by Comandante (Commander) Rocke when discussing his life as a jungle fighter in Palapaso, Dili, March 2000.
Interpretation of the Manufahi War

Another well-known resistance struggle, recognised by many of today's East Timorese as the second nationalist war, was that led by the king of Manufahi, Dom Boaventura. The king's father, Dom Duarte, formerly a key ally régulo of the Portuguese, had led an uprising in 1894 during the time of Governor Celestino da Silva (1894-1908). A number of other kingdoms also joined the fight alongside Dom Duarte. This 'national' rebellion proved very costly to the Portuguese. In 1900, facing the defection of allies, a lack of medicine on the eve of a cholera endemic and an imminent massacre by the Portuguese, Dom Duarte surrendered to the Portuguese and his son, Dom Boaventura, renewed his dreams some years later (Gusmão 1999).  \(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) In my discussion with some students from Manufahi, I was told that 'he was not killed by the Portuguese but evaded enemy capture and went underground to continue the resistance' (Pers. Comm. Napoleão da Silva, September 2000).
When Boaventura took over the war against the Portuguese, continuing his father’s six-year legacy, he obtained allies from various reinos in East Timor. In 1911, a number of reinos, including Cailaco, Atsabe, Balibo, Raimane, Bibisusso, Alas and Turiscai, joined in. This war was so successful; it prompted the Portuguese to call for help from their allies because of their inability to put a stop to the resistance for three years. For one thing, sophisticated military skill, something most East Timorese today refer to with pride, contributed heavily to the success of the resistance in its early phase.

After receiving reinforcements from two ships from Macau and Mozambican troops, the Portuguese staged a siege around Mount Cablaki for several months. The colonial army and its allies successfully prevented the population from acquiring, food, water and proper sanitation. Several months later, the colonial army captured

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22 From my various discussions with different East Timorese, both political activists and ordinary citizens, the Guerra de Manufahi (or the Manufahi War – the name refers to the place where it was organised) is generally seen as the most vivid example for today’s East Timorese in their fight for independence. It is held to have been a nationwide revolt, as if carried out under the banner and indeed in the spirit of East Timorese nationalism (field notes, 2000).
Cablaki and killed thousands of its enemies (Gunn 1999). Dom Boaventura, despite escaping unharmed, later surrendered to the malaes (lit., foreigners). Following Manufahi’s defeat and the Portuguese pacification of almost all territories, Governor Celestino da Silva and his successor Governor Filomeno de Câmara undertook policy reform. This included the replacement of former rebel liurais with ‘hand picked’ liurais or régulos. The new liurais were rewarded with new rank and were structurally placed under the colonial Governor. The first rank was major, the second lieutenant colonel, and the third captain for new and loyal liurai and their dato (aids to the liurai). As a result of the 1911-1912 revolt, many liurais were replaced by related or unrelated kin of the former liurais, so long as they pledged loyalty to the Crown. In many areas the kingdoms were dismantled and power was placed in the hands of datos. As a result, the power of new liurais was contestable. Many datos distanced themselves from the hand picked liurais and proclaimed themselves liurais in their respective communities.

The second ‘nationalist war’ (1910-1912), apart from aiming to get rid of the Portuguese from the Central Coast, was also a continuation of the Cailaco legacy of one and a half centuries before. “For good reason, the name of Boaventura invokes awe and pride among Timorese” (Gunn 1999), and he is seen as the hero of modern nationalist resistance against the colonialists. East Timorese politicians see the Manufahi War as the revival of the nationalist movement in modern times.23 During the Indonesian occupation, the area remained the location of a headquarters of the resistance. Companhia Number 3 (the third company) of FALINTIL was established in the area. Among the best-known attacks on the Indonesian forces was one carried out in 1998, one year prior to the 30 August 1999 referendum. Guerrillas seized the sub-district of Alas from the Indonesians, killing several soldiers and seizing

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23 In my own assessment, the fall of Boaventura marked the initial period of the decline of the moral power of the liurai, apart from the devastating effects of Portuguese rule post-1912 and Indonesian administration from 1975 to 1999. In the former period the Portuguese replaced a number of liurais, whereas in the latter Indonesia dismantled the existing system and replaced it with a new one. The anti-Portuguese groups that began to emerge went underground and the liurais became powerless.
weapons (Conflict Studies 2000). Guerra de Manufahi remains a source and symbol of pride to later East Timorese generations. Imbaraj wrote that, for the local people, Mount Cablaki has a special meaning:

Dom Boaventura, who managed to unite the island’s tribes against the Portuguese in a bloody 16-year campaign, had his base in Mount Kabulaki. He was finally subdued by Mozambique troops drafted into the Portuguese army in August 1912. In the ensuing battle, thousands died and 3,000 rebel troops taken prisoner. "The spirit of Dom Boaventura is still very much alive. He will protect our people in Kabulaki," said Lorenzo da Costa, who is in his early seventies. He had seen the Japanese land in East Timor during World War II and helped Australian troops sent to fight them (Inbaraj 1999).

The educated elite of both the 1950s-1970s and later generations under Indonesian occupation cite this war as symbol of modern nationalism. The leader of OPJLATIL (Organização Popular Juventude Lourico Asswain Timor Lorosae), a clandestine group comprising much of my generation, told me that he sees Dom Boaventura as the inspiration for contemporary nationalism, and he has great respect for this Timorese hero. It was Dom Boaventura who dared to fight the Portuguese and called upon many reinos who had fought alone previously to unite and fight together (Pers. Comm. Vasco da Gama, Dili 26 August 2002).24 The pride derives from the perception that the war successfully united the ethnically diverse reinos in spite of the Portuguese colonialists’ policy of divide and rule (de vide et impera).

This perception, and indeed great respect, for the ancestors and the previous warriors has been expressed in various linguistic forms, including the revolutionary poems of struggle of the 1960s. Good examples of such poems are to be found in the work of Francisco Borja da Costa, who was often cited during the Indonesian occupation and still is today. Da Costa’s poems emphasised paying tribute to the

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24 Vasco da Gama himself is originally from Baucau, a Makassae ethno-linguist group and spent most of his time during the Indonesian period working for the clandestine of the Resistance. I knew him personally as a student at the Universitas Timor Timur (UNTIM) while doing his agriculture degree. He spoke highly of Dom Boaventura who is of Mambai ethno-linguistic group as a hero who had dared to start the war to get rid of the outsiders and listed Xanana Gusmão (a Galolin speaker belong to Dadi Language group) in the list of names, he said, who deserved to be remembered in the history as the true warriors of East Timor.
country's predecessors in a national context. Although a native Tetum speaker, Borja da Costa, as did many of his time, referred to himself as *Timor Oan* (Children of Timor) and not on the basis of ethno linguistic background. Posters and T-shirts carrying revolutionary words from poems were printed to refer to the ancestors, including later nationalists, and to express profound pride in their struggle (Borja da Costa’s Poem in Table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONE MINUTE SILENCE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By: Borja da Costa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be silent  
mountains  
valleys and springs  
rivers and streams  
stony ways  
and grassy reaches,  
be silent.  
Be silent  
canes and bamboos  
bushes and eucalypts  
palms and grasses  
endless verdure  
of tiny Timor  
be silent.  
Be silent  
your silence, our silence  
FOR ONE MINUTE  
It is a time for silence  
for the silenced time  
for the life times lost  
the lives given.  
FOR THE HOMELAND  
FOR THE NATION  
FOR THE PEOPLE  
FOR OUR LIBERATION  

BE SILENT – ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

Table 3.1: A revolutionary poem by Borja da Costa

The East Timorese refer to *funu* against the colonial governments with pride, regardless of their (usually limited) knowledge of places, times and details of events from such wars. Just like the Afghans who refer proudly to their resistance against the outsiders
in the past, contemporary East Timorese refer to their predecessors’ resistance against the colonial powers as rewarding. Funu against both the Portuguese and the Indonesians was regarded as ita nian (lit., we own) or ‘our’ funu. Ita Timor nia funu refers to the war as the East Timor war. It signifies that everyone fights, resists and strives together for something that the East Timorese have assumed together since the days of beiala. The term lori hamutuk (lit., carry/lift/bear together) symbolises a bond among the people, reflecting cohesion of the people despite their different ethnic backgrounds. The Timorese refer to a common proverb:

Matak idak-idak nian  What is uncooked, belongs to the individual
Tasak ita hotu nian  What is cooked belongs to us all.

While this saying is interpreted differently by different ethnic groups, it is generally held to suggest that people’s common interest should be their collective responsibility in spite of their differences. Thus, at the political level, ita nia funu (lit., our war) is a collective responsibility and not the duty of certain individuals. Any deed that brings ethnic interests to the fore is always deemed un-nationalist, and the issue of complacency often comes up in discussions about the history of colonialism. As retold to me by João Nunes:

Once, our ancestors fought the colonialists. They had only katana [parang] and stick. The wars in Cailaco, Liquica, Luca, Atabai and others, show that, since long ago, we have refused to be ruled by other people. The ancestors’ bravery has made East Timorese renowned warriors, and we will continue to be warriors. (Pers. Comm. João Nunes, September 2000).

In daily conversations, such references are highlighted and reiterated. During the Indonesian army occupation of East Timor, recitation of funu in the uluk (lit., past) was especially common. I recall my student days in the early 1980s, when we read letters sent from the guerrillas to students in Dili. References to the heroic struggle of various wars against the Portuguese were emphasised to justify the sacrifice of the lives of East Timorese (guerrillas) – Timor Oan (lit., Children of Timor) or Ass’wain (Warriors) – for the liberation of the country. The strong emphasis on Timor-oan ass’wain (lit., Timor Sons are warriors), Timor Oan Futu-nain (lit., Timor Children are Warriors), mate-fatim

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25 The Afghans look at their ancestors’ resistance against outsiders as a source of inspiration to stand together as a people. The notion of having never been conquered among these people is similar to what can be seen in East Timor today (Time Magazine, source: www.time.com/time/covers/1101020909/index.html or http://www.time.com/time/magazine/archives.

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(lit., death places), when one stands one’s ground to the death, *funu oan* (lit., generations of resistance) is, according to Juvêncio Martins, meant to confirm the immortal character of the spirit that runs in the blood of the East Timorese (Pers. Comm. 15 September 2000). The generation who were exposed to war and resistance against Indonesia and had access to more ‘nationalistic’ ideas, posses rich perceptions of the past and their relation to the circumstances in which they live. Therefore, this generation was keen to adopt more nationalistic ideas and put them into practice.

V. In Search of Nationalism and Nation

Thus, with reference to their history, the East Timorese argue that nationalism gains strength when there is a common enemy to face. Various groups, even former enemies, unite to wage war against outsiders. The Cailaco, Manufahi and later resistance struggles against Indonesia are good examples, while shared experience of the years of living under colonial administration contributed to the formation of nationalistic feelings in East Timor (Anderson 1993). It is significant, but perhaps not surprising, that when referring to resistance against the colonial governments, East Timorese emphasise only the positive side of such struggles, rather than failures and drawbacks. Previous divisions and indigenous kingdoms’ rivalries during the colonial period are ignored when retelling struggles of the past. One oft-quoted phrase in conversations and public speeches of political leaders is *uluk nia abon sira funu la halimar* (in the past, our ancestors waged serious wars) *ikus ne’e ita tenki lori rai ne’e ba diak* (now we have to lead this country to its best). Most elders expect the younger generation to learn from history, although not even they (the elders) have clear memories of, or ideas about, past ‘struggles’. Indeed, not every one in East Timor understands the history of their ancestors’ resistance, particularly those that occurred in the early years of Portuguese settlement. Primary school teachers do not have the knowledge or the expertise to inform their pupils in detail about the history of colonisation. Most colonial textbooks recounted the colonialists’ version of history and their involvement in East Timor.26

26 The writer’s own father, Saturnino de Jesus Soares, was a primary school teacher during the Portuguese period. He acknowledged that teachers were not told the details of history, and that the difficulty they faced in gaining access to library and other old archives served to deepened their ignorance (Pers. Comm, 2000).
Stories ‘about the past’ were passed verbally from one generation to another, from grandfather to father to son and so on.\(^{27}\)

The achievements, successes and sacrifices made by ‘our’ forbears in resisting enemies are referred to again and again (Gusmão 2001). In public spheres and messages sent by the guerrillas to the towns during the struggle, references to past resistance were often presented proudly, with stress on the brave and valiant acts of the ancestors. Achievements in the struggle against Indonesia were equated with achievements in fighting the Portuguese. As an informant told me, “If the ancestors could resist the Portuguese, there is no reason for the current generation not to repeat the same success.” (Pers. Comm. Paulino Monteiro, March 2000). Jokes circulated among the people during the ‘integration’ period about the persistent failure in years past of various forces to establish themselves in Timor. Thus, if the Indonesian kingdoms were defeated in the ancient times, if the Japanese were ousted in 1945, if the Portuguese were forced to leave in 1974, then there was no reason the East Timorese could not repeat history, by ousting the Indonesian army. Such jokes naturally encouraged and provided impetus for resistance against the Indonesian occupiers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iha malae nia tempo</th>
<th>In the days of the foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iha colonialista nia tempo</td>
<td>In the days of the colonialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ita nia beiala sira la fo ulun</td>
<td>Our ancestors did not give up their heads (resist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sira la hakru’uk arbiru</td>
<td>They did not kneel (before others) for no reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maski sira kiik</td>
<td>Despite their being undersized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maski sira forsfa laiha</td>
<td>Despite their weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sira funu-hasouru</td>
<td>They fought back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiala la monu arbiru</td>
<td>The ancestors did not submit for any reason.(^{28})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The history of local resistance (the Cailaco, Manufahi and other wars) is interpreted in various ways. However, to contemporary East Timorese, the sense of pride is always

\(^{27}\) Throughout my field work, I attended seminars and meetings with young people and politicians and I often brought up matters of history in order to grasp their understanding of East Timorese struggle, particularly on issues they often referred to, say, the war in Luca, the war in Ermera and others. I was aware that not even I, with my university education, knew the full extent of these wars. However, in daily discussions and public debate, references to the ‘great wars’ and past successes in evading the enemies have long been the ‘main ingredients’ of nationalistic slogans.

\(^{28}\) Monteiro was an underground activist who was captured, beaten and detained for months by the Indonesian military (Pers. Comm. Paulino Monteiro, March 2000).
placed highly when recounting such glorious days of the past and interpretations are always characterised by patriotism, self-importance, pride and, above all, nationalism. Xanana Gusmão argues that his people’s history can be identified with their ancestors’ resistance against outside domination, and that this history of resistance has become part of the political identity of ‘our’ people (Gusmão 1998). He rejects the claim that the war against Indonesia was a product of political change in Portugal, for instance a result of the overthrow of the Salazar and Caetano regimes in Portugal in 1974. Gusmão argues that funu (resistance) is part of his people’s political identity and that, therefore, wherever there is suppression in East Timor, there will be resistance (Gusmão 1998). Likewise, East Timorese political actors argue that resistance against Indonesia owed much to the tempo-uluk or beiala nia nian, the ‘glorious past’. In 1999, when talking to José Luis Guteres, an East Timorese freedom fighter, the son of the late ruler of Luca, who spent most of his life in Portugal and South Africa, I asked him why he had devoted his life to the fight for independence. He replied, “I am only implementing the words of [the abon (read, avô)] the ancestors. If it had not been for them, had they not shown the courage and determination to resist foreign domination, I could have given up this struggle” (Pers. Comm. Canberra, May 1999). East Timorese politicians and political actors’ understandings of the past came from their social contacts and their reading of written versions of history. They then drew their own conclusions. Interpretation of the past was often made to maintain and boost one’s patriotic feeling and spirit of struggle, and local songs were composed to retell the heroic stories of the ancestors and thus express and encourage sentiments of resistance.

In the last years of Indonesian occupation, the desire to distinguish East Timorese from outsiders (Indonesians) was given public expression. The term Timor Oan (lit., Children of Timor) was popularised and used to refer to East Timorese as distinct from non-Timor Oan, especially Indonesians. The pride of being East Timorese, of being a Timor Oan for 24 years of resistance against Indonesia, expressly underlined the great difference and divide between the East Timorese and the Indonesians. While conscious of the fact that West Timorese (Indonesia) were also part of greater Timor by virtue of their existence in the island, when referring to Timor Oan, allusion was made within the
boundary of that which is East Timor. The following verses were common in the streets of Dili:

Ne’e Timor Oan
Ne’e ita nia maluk
Ne’e la’os Timor Oan
Ne’e la’os ita nia maluk

These are the children of Timor
They are our relatives
These are not the children of Timor
They are not our relatives

Plate 3.6: Remembering the Past: Naming a Street in Dili after a modern independence hero, Nicolau Lobato. (Photo: Author)

The emphasis on ‘us’ here is strong. The international demarcation of what marks East Timor from Indonesia today is seen by the contemporary generation as a border that not only defines geographical frontiers but also defines identity. If one is part of ‘our’ group, one shares our skin colour, political beliefs and language. One may be a friend, a relative or a true brother or sister. If one is not East Timorese, then one is not one of ‘us’. This difference is emphasised by the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and ‘insiders’ versus ‘outsiders’ distinctions. That is, ‘we’ are different from them because we have been different since the beginning and our ancestors manifested these differences when they decided to wage war against ‘them’.

VI. Culture of Shared experience

Apart from relevance to the present circumstances, perceptions of the past are also evidence of a shared way of thinking, as nurtured in the tradition of shared belief.
There is a shared way of thinking when it comes to comparing past, present and possible futures. Most political actors and activists lived in Dili, the centre of political life during the Indonesian period. While Dili is actually quite a ‘multicultural’ town, the years of struggling, fighting and suffering together produced strong and special bonds among its political activists and actors. Although they were from many different backgrounds, many of them participated in the clandestine resistance movement, sat in prisons, hid in the bush and suffered intimidation and terror together, and now their perceptions about politics are very similar.

Since the beginning of the struggle we, the East Timorese, have always fought together as one people. We never distinguished each other on the basis of ethnic background, language or cultural differences. This is because of the fact that we all have found a common ground that we are one people and indeed we are. East Timor, the name given to our country is not a mere name but it is also our identity. Our fighters fought in the name of East Timor, they did not fight in the name of their ethnic origins. The issue of firaku [east] and kaladi [west] is remote as far as out political objectives are concerned and our identity as Timor Oan remains.29

Even now that independence has been achieved and most of these people affiliate themselves with different political parties and groups, their mutual respect is still strong and seriously upheld. There is, therefore, a strong emotional bond that unites them. For example, all believe that their ancestors (beiala) were warriors who fought various wars and defeated the colonialists, notwithstanding their different origins. Such perceptions also embrace the belief that Timorese forbears once lived a good life, but this good life was interrupted by the arrival of outsiders. Such statements offer a different understanding of nationalism to Anderson’s (1991) concept of imagining. For a society like East Timor in which print capitalism (print media) is absent or very limited, the nation is constructed entirely through similarities within the society, without outside pressures. Thus, East Timorese nationalism has little to do with print capitalism, since, apart from the absence of the latter and the high illiteracy rate (Anderson 1993), as Fox explains, it is a society of various cultural backgrounds (Fox 2000).

29 This view was uttered to me by Gregorio Saldanha, the leader of Organisação Juventude Católica de Timor Leste (Dili March 2000). He was imprisoned by an Indonesian court for life and was held in Semarang, Indonesia for almost nine years. I met Gregorio in several occasions during my fieldwork and had interesting discussions with him.
It is my conviction, after exploring East Timorese perceptions of history, that there is a bond constructed by way of collective experiences, particularly among those sharing their past. These include myths of the glorious past and years of repression, suffering and colonial subordination. Since the community possesses similar perceptions of East Timor's political history, political actors and activists seem to accept interpretations of their past struggles so long as they are in their (political) interests. Indeed, for societies that continue to struggle for identity, history and past lives present a moral validation of contemporary institutions and political interests as well as present grounds for advancing their present positions (Reid and Marr 1979).

Anderson (1993) himself offers some examples in his paper *Imagining East Timor* of the bond that was created during the Indonesian period. For example, he says, although the name ‘East Timor’ comes from a ‘Mercatorian map’, which separates East Timor and West Timor (Indonesia), this ‘aerial demarcation’ seems nonetheless to have strong connotation for the young East Timorese in Dili who identify East Timor by distinguishing it from Indonesia. The fact that young political demonstrators often held placards with slogans like “Viva Timorleste” (all one word) is just one piece of evidence of the popular belief in the sameness or common identity of all East Timorese people in their subjugation to and struggle against the Indonesian occupiers. While Indonesians were unable to see East Timor as part of Indonesia, at the same time military repression over the years made it ‘possible’ for East Timorese to imagine East Timor as different from Indonesia (Anderson, 1993: 2). This came to be especially so over the years as the Indonesian government and people committed all sorts of wrongdoing against East Timorese which caused great disappointment and distrust among East Timorese, and made their feelings of disenfranchisement even more acute. But shared experiences like these also created strong emotional bonds among East Timorese, and made them ever more aware of what really separated them from the Indonesians.