

## Introduction : A Nationalism of Absence

著者 (英)	Satoshi Nakagawa
journal or publication title	Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology
volume	43
number	3
page range	275-282
year	2019-01-25
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15021/00009340">http://doi.org/10.15021/00009340</a>

## Special Theme: Nationalism in Timor-Leste

### Introduction: A Nationalism of Absence

Satoshi Nakagawa\*

序論, あるいは欠如のナショナリズム

中 川 敏

In this issue, our theme is nationalism in Timor-Leste (East Timor) from an anthropological perspective. Timor-Leste is a nascent micronation that is composed of many ethnic groups and has a complex history. In the sixteen years since its independence, the nation as well as its nationalism has been rapidly changing. Each chapter analyses this changing nationalism from a different viewpoint. This chapter serves as an introduction and provides a general summary of the distinctive features of nationalism in Timor-Leste.

Casting Timor-Leste against the background of Indonesia provides two perspectives of nationalism in Timor-Leste. The first examines how Timor-Leste has been affected causally by Indonesia. In this vein, I build upon the work of B. Anderson to show the parallel between the Netherlands and Indonesia on the one hand and Indonesia and Timor-Leste on the other. Second, I ignore the time lag and compare the two pairs, examining Timor-Leste against Indonesia as a mirror image of Indonesia against the Netherlands. From this perspective, distinctive features are clarified: in Timor-Leste, nationalism discourse has no ‘past glory’ (like Majapahit in Indonesian nationalism discourse), nor does Timor-Leste have enemies against whom it must struggle to regain its ‘past glory’. As a result, nationalism in Timor-Leste can be called a ‘nationalism of absence’.

---

\*Osaka University

**Key Words** : nationalism, metaphor, metonymy, East Timor, Indonesia

キーワード : ナショナリズム, 隠喩, 換喩, 東ティモール, インドネシア

この特集の目的は東ティモールのナショナリズムを人類学的に考察することにある。東ティモール共和国は独立後 16 年を経て、大きく変化している。この序論では読者に東ティモールのナショナリズムの全体のイメージを掴んでもらうために、民族誌的な視点からではなく、より鳥瞰的な視点からの分析を試みた。

わたしが採用した戦略は東ティモールをインドネシアという背景に置くことから始まる。そのように配置した東ティモールを見る視点を二つ用意した。ひとつはインドネシアとの関係という歴史的な視点である。結論は、(アンダーソンによるのだが) 東ティモールとインドネシアの関係は、そのままインドネシアとオランダとの関係にそのまま重ね合わせることができる、というものだ。つづいてこの二つのペア(すなわちインドネシアに抗する東ティモール、そしてオランダに抗するインドネシア)とを、ナショナリズムの文脈で比較した。これが第二の視点である。その比較の中に現れる東ティモールのナショナリズムは「欠如のナショナリズム」と名付けうる特異なナショナリズムであった。

1 Introduction	3.2 Holland, Indonesia, and TL
2 Timor-Leste and Indonesia	3.3 1970s, 1990s, and 2010s
2.1 Metonym and Metaphor	4 Indonesia as Metaphor — Tetun
2.2 Church and Tetun	4.1 If Wehale Had Been Destroyed
2.3 Epochalism and Essentialism	4.2 If Wehale Were Inside TL
3 Indonesia as Metonym — Church	4.3 A Structuralist Perspective
3.1 Goa, Dili, and Jakarta	

## 1 Introduction

This Bulletin issue is the result of an International Conference held in November 2017, ‘Nationalism in Timor-Leste: Seen from Anthropological Viewpoints’. The conference itself was a result of the project ‘Anthropological Study of Timor-Leste: Imagined Language and Imagined Nation’ (JSPS Grant-in-Aids 25300046), which was carried out from 2013 to 2017. S. Fukutake, Y. Morita, T. Ueda, and W. Okuda were members of the project; M. Leach and A. McWilliam were invited to the conference as guest speakers.

In this introductory section, I provide readers with basic background knowledge about Timor-Leste as a basis for understanding the following chapters.

Timor-Leste was the first country to gain its independence in the twenty-first century (in 2002). It is a microstate — it occupies the eastern part of the island of Timor, the western part of which belongs to Indonesia. The population of Timor-

Leste is slightly greater than one million. There are many local languages spoken in the area; while most are Austronesian, some are non-Austronesian (Trans New Guinean), such as Fataluku (see McWilliam's chapter). Portuguese (see Okuda's chapter) and Tetun (see Nakagawa's chapter) are the country's national languages. Ninety percent of the population is said to be Roman Catholic.

The island has become known to the outside world as a source of sandalwood. The Portuguese came to the island in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (see Leach's chapter) at Lifao in Oecusse (see Morita's chapter),

A new era began in Timor-Leste in 1974 when the 'Carnation Revolution' occurred in Portugal. Portugal withdrew from Timor-Leste and independence movements began. In 1975, the Indonesian military invaded the territory and had destroyed the armed resistance by 1979, when Timor-Leste was annexed as an Indonesian province.

After several violent incidents (such as the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991), a referendum was held in 1999 and an overwhelming majority voted for independence. After a period of turmoil, Timor-Leste became an independent nation in 2002. Even after achieving independence, Timor-Leste experiences violence, such as the 'Crisis' in 2006, the aftermath of which is discussed in Ueda's chapter.

More than fifteen years have passed since the nation's independence, and nationalism in Timor-Leste has changed over this time. Our project focusses on the birth and changes of nationalism, based primarily on anthropological fieldwork.

## **2 Timor-Leste and Indonesia**

As summarised in Michael Leach's chapter in this volume, nationalism in Timor-Leste has a few distinctive features, some of which will be made more intelligible when viewed from an Indonesianist's perspective. My intention in this introductory chapter is to show this perspective, from which nationalism in Timor-Lest can be seen as a 'nationalism of absence'.

### **2.1 Metonym and Metaphor**

I would like to highlight two points regarding the relationship between Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

First, Indonesia is important to Timor-Leste, of course, in that it is a neighbouring country as well as the country against which the people of Timor-Leste fought for their independence. This relationship requires a causal, sociological analysis. Second, I contend that Indonesia is additionally important in that its nationalism is similar to that of Timor-Leste. This relationship requires a symbolic, anthropological analysis. The people of Timor-Leste may not be aware of this similarity. It can be said that Indonesia is a metonym — in that it is contiguous with Timor-Leste and is a part of the Timorese history — as well as a metaphor (its

nationalism is similar to that of Timor-Leste).

## 2.2 Church and Tetun

There are two types of nationalism discernible in the Timor-Leste of today: (1) Church-oriented nationalism and (2) Tetun-oriented nationalism.

In the next chapter, Leach discusses Timor-Leste nationalism in general and is followed by five ethnographical chapters. Ueda and Okuda examine the first type of nationalism (Church-oriented), while McWilliam, Morita, and Fukutake deal with the second kind (Tetun-oriented).

There is consensus among Timor-Leste researchers that the Roman Catholic Church and the Tetun language have been the most important elements of the nation-building process in Timor-Leste. At the same time, they may seem rather out-of-context as elements of nationalism in the country.

More than ninety percent of the Timor-Leste population are Roman Catholic and most people in the country can now speak Tetun; the spread of Tetun as a 'national language' has been remarkably rapid.

Still, questions remain. To begin, Christianity is not an autochthonous religion. It was brought by the Portuguese, the colonial power, and the number of Christians in Timor-Leste drastically increased only at the time of the Indonesian occupation.

Second, the form of Tetun that has been adopted as a national language, Tetun Praça, is not a native language in Timor-Leste. While Tetun Therik *is* a native language, Tetun Praça is a creole language (derived from Tetun Therik and Portuguese) that was spoken only in the town of Dili and its surrounding areas. Dili, the nation's capital, was established by the Portuguese in 1769 when they fled from their former headquarters at Lifao in Oecusse in the western part of the island. However, Hajek (Hajek 2002) reported that by the nation's independence in 2002, sixty to eighty percent of the population used Tetun (Tetun Praça), indicating that the language had spread during the Indonesian occupation (1975–1999). Tetun, therefore, is a language that was fabricated by the Portuguese and then developed during the Indonesian occupation.

Thus, the two factors that play central roles in the present-day nationalism of Timor-Leste, the Church and Tetun, were introduced by one colonial power (Portugal) and strengthened by the presence of another colonial power (Indonesia). The aim of this chapter is to make sense of this seemingly strange combination of colonialism and nationalism.

## 2.3 Epochalism and Essentialism

One might argue that the pair (Church-oriented nationalism and Tetun-oriented nationalism) is yet another variant of the opposition between Epochalism and Essentialism that Geertz argues can be found in the nationalism of almost any nascent nation-state (Geertz 1973).

From this perspective, the two types of nationalism are expected to face in opposite directions: the former towards the outside and the latter towards the inside. Instead, they seem to go hand in hand; for example, the Church supported the spread of the Tetun language.

Therefore, it is not sufficient to assume that the two orientations of nationalism in Timor-Leste are variants of Epochalism and Essentialism. An additional framework is necessary to properly understand nationalism in Timor-Leste. I intend to shed some light upon these ‘mysteries’ concerning Timorese nationalism by comparing it with that of Indonesia.

### **3 Indonesia as Metonym — Church**

In this section, I use Indonesia as a metonym of Timor-Leste to discuss Church-oriented nationalism.

#### **3.1 Goa, Dili, and Jakarta**

In his short paper ‘Imagining East Timor’ published in 1993 (that is, prior to the 1999 referendum), Benedict Anderson mentions a contemporary discussion among the Portuguese regarding the memoir of General Costa Gomes:

He [Costa Gomes] was one of the key players in the Portuguese governments of 1974–76, at the time of the collapse of the Portuguese empire, and one of those most responsible for decision making with regard to East Timor. In his memoir, he said that he and his friends thought East Timor would be like Goa — that it would be peacefully and easily absorbed into big Indonesia, just as little Goa was absorbed into big India. (Anderson 1993)

Of course, Gomes’ expectations were not executed – Timor-Leste was not absorbed ‘peacefully and easily’ into big Indonesia. At the time of his memoir’s publication in 1992, the ‘East Timor problem’ was present. Gomes argued that ‘if only Jakarta hadn’t been so brutal, if the Indonesian Army hadn’t been so oppressive and exploitative, there would be no East Timor problem today (Anderson 1993)’.

#### **3.2 Holland, Indonesia, and TL**

Anderson contends that the Indonesian attitude towards Timor-Leste was so brutal because people in Jakarta did not regard the people of Timor-Leste as ‘brothers’. He writes that they were unable to imagine Timor-Leste as a part of Indonesia. This attitude is striking, he continues, when we compare it with the Indonesian attitude towards Irian, where there have also been independence movements like those in Timor-Leste. Unlike Timor-Leste, Irian has always been imagined as a ‘part’ of

Indonesia. He concludes that ‘no matter how badly treated Irianese may actually be in Irian itself, for Indonesians as a whole they are part of “us” (Anderson 1993)’.

The attitude of Indonesians towards the Timorese people was, Anderson argues, just like that of the Dutch colonial officers towards the Indonesian people:

... “ingratitude” was a typical accusation by Dutch colonial officials against “native” nationalism: “Look at all we have done for you, down there, in terms of security, education, economic development, civilisation”. The language is that of the superior and civilised towards the inferior and barbarous (Anderson 1993).

Ironically, just as the Dutch stimulated nationalism in Indonesia, Indonesia stimulated nationalism in Timor-Leste.

### 3.3 1970s, 1990s, and 2010s

Anderson’s paper discusses Timor-Leste nationalism in the 1990s, at the time of the Indonesian occupation. The nationalism of this period is quite different from the nationalism of the 1970s, when the presence of the Portuguese was palpable and when FRETILIN propaganda argued against the brutal Portuguese colonial regime. The nationalism of the 1970s was characterised by the presence of Portugal, while that of the 1990s was characterised by the presence of Indonesia. What, then, characterises present-day nationalism in Timor-Leste?

The year 2015 is an interesting period to examine modern Timorese nationalism; in 2015, the government of Timor-Leste celebrated ‘the 500<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the arrival of the Church’. If the spirit of the 1990s had remained in 2015, I would argue, the celebration might have centred on the anniversary of the Portuguese arrival in order to eradicate the influence of Indonesia. However, after almost fifteen years of independence, Timor-Leste no longer needs to eradicate Portugal or Indonesia from the nation’s imagination. Without any traces of the two colonial powers, the Church has now become a symbol of nationalism and is no longer perceived as problematic.

The absence of Portugal characterises the Timorese nationalism of the 2010s. In summary, we can say that (1) in the 1970s nationalism was characterised by the presence of Portugal, (2) in the 1990s it was the presence of Indonesia, and finally (3) in the 2010s it is the absence of Portugal, with the Church filling this absence.

## 4 Indonesia as Metaphor — Tetun

In this section, I discuss Tetun-oriented nationalism in Timor-Leste using Indonesia as a metaphor for Timor-Leste.

First, it is important to establish that Indonesia exists in its geographical form because it was a single territory under the Dutch government; Timor-Leste takes its

shape because it was one single territory governed by the Portuguese. Although early Indonesian nationalists were well aware of this fact, they desperately needed something else to legitimize their nation-state. Thus, they struggled to find a ‘lost homeland’ so that independence could be told as a story of regaining the ‘lost homeland’ after the reign of the brutal colonisers.

#### 4.1 If Wehale Had Been Destructed

In his article entitled ‘The Image of Majapahit in Later Javanese and Indonesian Writing’ (Supomo 1979), Supomo brilliantly describes how Indonesian nationalists discovered Majapahit as their ‘homeland’ – it covered most of present-day Indonesia. This ‘discovery’ allowed the Indonesian people to tell the following story of the fight for independence: (1) we once were big and glorious; (2) then came the bad guys; (3) we fought them and struggled and (4) regained what is legitimately ours.

In the case of Timor-Leste, a natural substitute for Majapahit would be the Wehale kingdom as the lost ‘homeland’. As Fukutake relates in his chapter in this volume, Wehale was a strong Tetun kingdom that once covered most of the eastern part of the island.

If Wehale had been destructed (say, in 1642 by the black Portuguese) and had been discovered later by nationalist historians, it might have followed the same path as Majapahit in Indonesia, becoming the ‘lost homeland’.

However, Wehale remains as a weak yet surviving local kingdom (see, for example, Francillon 1980). Worse still, it is located in the Indonesian part of the island. This makes it unthinkable for the prior *assimilados* (elites) and the Dili people nowadays to employ Wehale as a symbol of the lost homeland – it is *not* lost.

While the absence of Majapahit (and its discovery) contributed much to the nascent nationalism in Indonesia, Wehale is unable to serve the nationalism of Timor-Leste because of its presence.

#### 4.2 If Wehale Were Inside TL

Contrasting my emphasis on the presence of Wehale in the previous sub-section, one might also argue that Wehale *is* absent in the sense that Wehale is outside Timor-Leste. Therefore, Wehale *is* absent from the country, and this absence has greatly contributed to nationalism in Timor-Leste, especially Tetun-oriented nationalism.

Returning to the Indonesian situation, early Indonesian nationalists faced the difficult task of suppressing the Java-ness or the Java imperialism from the newly born nation-state (Indonesia), so strong was the influence of Java at that time. In an arena (later called ‘Polemik Kebudayaan’, ‘Culture Debate’), pro-Java protagonists insisted that Java language be chosen as the national language. In the long run, anti-Java protagonists won the battle and declared Melayu (the *lingua franca* of the

area) as the national language of Indonesia.

Rephrasing my point, if Wehale had remained an influential kingdom located inside Timor-Leste (like Java was in Indonesia), Tetun would not have been adopted as the national language (as Javanese was not adopted as the national language of Indonesia).

#### 4.3 A Structuralist Perspective

To conclude, Indonesian nationalism revolves around two axes: (1) the presence of the Dutch and (2) the presence of Java. Nationalism in Timor-Leste also revolves around two axes: (1) the absence of Portugal and (2) the absence of Wehale.

These two types of nationalism in Timor-Leste can be traced back to two absences: (1) in Church-oriented nationalism, religion replaces the absent coloniser, while (2) in Tetun-oriented nationalism, language replaces an absent kingdom.

#### References

- Anderson, B. and R. O’Gorman  
 1993 Imagining East Timor. *Arena Magazine*, no. 4 (Apr-May): 233–239.
- Francillon, G.  
 1980 Incursions upon Wehali: A Modern History of an Ancient Empire. In J. J. Fox (ed.) *Flow of Life: Essays on Eastern Indonesia*, pp. 248–265. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Geertz, C.  
 1973 The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States, chapter 10. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, pp. 255–310. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Hajek, J.  
 2002 Language Maintenance and Survival in East Timor: All Change Now? Winners and Losers. In D. Bradley and M. Bradley (eds.) *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: An Active Approach*, pp. 182–202. London and New York: Routledge.
- Supomo, S.  
 1979 The Image of Majapahit in Later Javanese and Indonesian Writing. In A. Reid and D. Marr (eds.) *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, pp. 171–185. Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd.