The Distinctive Character of East Timorese Nationalism＜Special Theme : Nationalism in Timor-Leste＞

The Distinctive Character of East Timorese Nationalism

Michael Leach*

東ティモールのナショナリズムのきわだった特徴

マイケル・リーチ

This chapter examines some the evolving characteristics of East Timorese nationalism. It starts by examining the distinctive features of East Timorese nationalism, including its rapid transition from a conventional anti-colonialist narrative, mobilised against Portuguese colonialism, to one contesting Indonesia's looming forced integration of the decolonising territory in 1975; and the way in which the East Timorese resistance employed ideas of an inner 'spiritual domain' (Chatterjee 1993) of identity. It then focusses on more recent shifts in 'official' East Timorese nationalism, in the way government discourses have invoked the arrival of Catholicism as the 'affirmation of Timorese identity' (RDTL 2015a) and developed a modern nationalist narrative that partly reflects traditional 'origin stories'. In this vein, it discusses recent government attempts to transform a national identity focussed on the history of the resistance to one mobilised around the goals of national development. Finally, it speculates on the future of East Timorese nationalism, reflecting on the implications of the 'youth bulge' in East Timorese society.

　本稿は東ティモールのナショナリズムの現在発展中の特徴を考察する。最初に，現在の東ティモールのナショナリズムの焦点が，ポルトガル語の植民地主義に抵抗から生まれたよくある反植民地の語りから 1975 年に植民地からインドネシアによる強制的併合への語りへと遷移していること，さらには東ティモールのナショナリズムが内なる「精神的世界」を採用する仕方について述べる。さらに，公式の東ティモールナショナリズムにおける最近の変化，すなわち，政府がティモールのアイデンティティの証しとしてのカトリシズムの到来に言及し，伝統的な「起源神話」を部分的に反映している近代のナショナリス

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*Swinburne University of Technology

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トの語りを支持している点である。そして，政府の最近の試み，すなわちこれ
までの抵抗の歴史に焦点をあてたアイデンティティから開発というゴールをめ
ぐるアイデンティティへと焦点をシフトさせていることを指摘する。最後に未
来の東ティモールのナショナリズムについて述べたい。それには，東ティモー
ル社会における「ユースバルジ」（若者の人口過剰）が重要な意味を持つこと
になる。

1　Introduction

If Timor becomes master of its own destiny… then an ethnic-historical identity, a cultural and religious identity and eventually a political identity will develop irresistibly, like the torrential streams of the rivers of our nation.
(Xanana Gusmão 2000[1986])

In this perceptive metaphor, Xanana Gusmão signals his acute grasp of the challenges of East Timorese nationalism. Evoking Timor-Leste's[1] mountain streams that join in flood, Gusmão's metaphor places the development of a political identity at the end point of the process, following the accumulation of ethnic, historical, cultural, and religious factors. Written in the 1980s, it acknowledged that the nationbuilding experience would ultimately be a *political* one, with self-determination essential to the final phases of constructing a national community. The metaphor also captured the *plural* and *anti-colonial* character of East Timorese nationalism: nationalists were tasked with forging a nation from ethnically diverse populations that shared a commonly administered historical territory bequeathed by a departing European colonial power. In this process, the slow development of a shared cultural and religious identity in Timor-Leste was a critical milestone, but not the endpoint.

　　This chapter examines the evolving character of East Timorese nationalism. It starts with a historical overview of nation-building and national identity in Timor-Leste, examining how supra-local forms of political identity developed over the

long sweep of East Timorese history from 1515 to 2015. The final century saw successive attempts to define the East Timorese as colonial subjects of Portugal, as members of a 'pluri-racial' Portuguese empire, as citizens of the Republic of Indonesia, and finally as a nation under illegal occupation that demanded its right to self-determination. Though it was only in the very latter stages of this long era that self-conscious East Timorese nationalists joined this contest, this final step built upon the longer processes of producing 'identifying structures' in East Timorese society (de Sousa 2001: 92), developed over hundreds of years of trans-formation to the political societies of the eastern half of the island.

Within the context of East Timorese nationalism, this chapter then examines how competing 'nations of intent' have ideologically contested the political values and identity of the nation from the 1970s' decolonisation era onwards. It discusses the distinctive features of East Timorese nationalism, including its rapid transition from a conventional anti-colonialist narrative, mobilised against Portuguese colonialism, to one contesting Indonesia's looming forced integration of the decolonising territory in 1975; and the way in which the East Timorese resistance employed ideas of an inner 'spiritual domain' (Chatterjee 1993) of identity. Focussing on more recent shifts in 'official' East Timorese nationalism, it examines how recent government discourses have invoked the arrival of Catholicism as the 'affirmation of Timorese identity' (RDTL 2015a) and developed a modern national-ist narrative that partly reflects traditional 'origin stories'. These discourses were accompanied by unsuccessful government attempts to transform a national identity focussed on the history of the resistance to one mobilised around the goals of national development. Finally, the chapter speculates on the future of East Timorese nationalism, reflecting on the implications of the 'youth bulge' in East Timorese society.

2   Types of Nationalisms: The Asian Context

Though they disagree over the processes of forming national communities, scholars of nationalism broadly agree that there are three major types of modern nations. Discussing Asian nationalisms, Tønnesson and Antlöv (1996: 20) summarise these models:

> If an ethnic group forms its own state, you get ethno-nationalism; if a state uses its bureaucracy to mobilise a single national culture, you get official nationalism; … if the inhabitants of a certain territory secede from a larger state or colonial power, and form a new multi-ethnic state with a joint national ideology, you get plural nationalism.

With an ethno-linguistically diverse population in a territory demarcated by competitive European colonialism, Timor-Leste might be seen as a paradigmatic case of anti-colonial nationalism in 1974–75. Yet, by the 1980s, the processes of creating

an 'ethnic-historical' community 'were well on their way'. New forms of ethnic commonality buttressed the secular anti-colonial nationalism of the 1970s, as East Timorese society evolved to become a predominantly Catholic society of Tetun speakers by the 1990s. These features built on the historical predominance of Tetun language as the colonial *lingua franca* and missionary language, the diverse traditions of *lisan*, and the multiple legacies of centuries of interaction with Portuguese colonialism to distinguish Timor-Leste from surrounding societies. Some of these features, most notably Catholicism, expanded dramatically under the Indonesian occupation, in patterns of active and passive resistance to neo-colonial power. In combination with a new 'nation-of-intent' emphasising national unity over the competing ideological visions of 1970s' nationalism, the nation of Timor-Leste emerged through processes of nationalist agitation and communal transformation in resistance to consecutive colonial occupations.

3　Historical Overview: The Slow Emergence of a Collective Identity

The border separating East and West Timor was a classic product of competitive colonialism, the legacy of an earlier Tetun-speaking elite that had left relatively common features in traditional authority structures and political-ritual systems across the island (Hagerdal 2012: 65). At the time of European contact, the west Timorese kingdom of Wehale represented the legacies of that dominance, providing ritual legitimation to localised kingdoms, which were politically independent but formed larger tributary realms (Hagerdal 2012: 60–61). These realms became the basis of Eurocentric perception of two provinces on the island, identified as Belu and Servião. These imagined collectivities broadly corresponded with evolving Portuguese ambitions on the island, as the Dutch established themselves in the west. The original indigenous meaning of these divisions was therefore transformed by the colonial powers in the processes of managing their colonial possessions, but they remained in Timorese understandings of wider tributary realms on the island. These eighteenth-century colonial perceptions to some degree prefigured the future territorial boundaries of East and West Timor.

Despite their consistent rejection of Portuguese secular authority, the early *mestico* group, the Topasses, ultimately reinforced the Portuguese presence as they continued to maintain the sovereign claims of the Portuguese Crown against the Dutch. Integrating themselves over time into the Timorese elites, the Topasses were in some respects forerunners of particular East Timorese attitudes to the Portuguese presence: embracing aspects of the language and religion as part of their own identity while firmly rejecting Portuguese interference in their internal affairs (Leach 2016: 26).

The long era of Portuguese indirect rule of the half-island saw widely replicated patterns of accommodation and resistance among the Timorese *reinos*,

marked by the payment of *fintas* (tributes), oaths of loyalty, periodic rebellions, and, later, the acculturation of indigenous elites into Portuguese language and the Catholic religion. Over time, aspects of traditional society were reconfigured in ways favourable to the colonial power, with the incorporation of Portuguese flags as *lulik* objects, the award of consistent military ranks to traditional leaders, and the creation of troops of the second line. At each phase of increased Portuguese authority, regular patterns of Timorese resistance were evident, meeting new incursions upon traditional governance with active or passive resistance. Over time, this provided different ethnolinguistic groups in Timor with similar experiences of external power, whether in collaboration with or in resistance against the Portuguese.

By the end of the 19th century, most traditional *reinos* remained intact, although their power structures had been modified over time by features of hybrid commonality in relation to external powers, including these tributary relationships, elite Catholic conversions, and periodically violent contact with Portuguese colonial authorities. The exceptions were areas such as Dili, Oecussi, and Manatuto, where the Portuguese presence was most consistent and where forms of common creolised culture had already emerged from the long interaction with colonialism.

With inter-colonial borders essentially in place by the late nineteenth century, the territorial dimension of the future nation was emerging. Still, regular patterns of Timorese resistance remained the most striking features of the early colonial era, meeting new incursions upon their sovereignty with forms of resistance. While these regular rebellions to preserve *liurai* authority over traditional realms did little to form supra-local unities between ethno-linguistic groups, they provided the basis of common experiences and 'shared memories' (e.g., Jannisa 1997: 183) for later nationalists to draw upon, highlighting the common experiences of the different kingdoms in relation to the European outsiders. The frequent rebellions of the Timorese *reinos* therefore may be seen as cases of 'pre-nationalist' sentiment in the form of campaigns for the preservation of *liurai* authority over local kingdoms.

Rebellion of a more distinctively supra-local character emerged with the Manufahi war from 1908 to 1912. Where indirect rule had reinforced the internal *liurai* power, new colonial interventions imposed obligations on Timorese subjects owed directly to the colonial state. The expansion of colonial power reached a new peak in the 1908 under the following governor José Maria Marques, with the imposition of a head tax (*Capitação*) on males aged 18–60. This required the payment of an annual tax to the colonial government, or annual periods of forced labour for those in default. The head tax was a revolution in colonial affairs, representing a direct intervention in the authority of the *liurai*. Where the *fintas* were collected by the *liurai*, leaving their internal authority essentially intact, the *liurai* would now receive part of the head taxes collected by colonial authorities. This arrangement created direct financial and forced labour obligations between colonial authority and adult males in the *reinos*, leaving the *liurai* dependent upon Portuguese power

to extract the tax (see e.g., Gun 1999: 7).

In combination with attempts to regulate the traditional domains of land and livestock use and the fall of the Portuguese monarchy, to which many *liurais* believed they had pledged their loyalty, the intensification of colonial power saw widespread rebellion across Portuguese Timor. The sheer scale of the Boaventura uprising involving multiple kingdoms, and the anti-colonial character of the *liurais*' pact against the *malae mutin* (white foreigners) seems the clearest indication of a 'proto-nationalist' rebellion, even if it was in collective defence of the actors' traditional rights to govern their own *reinos*. In concert with other rebellions of 1912, the Manufahi war suggested the emergence of new 'variants of feelings of collective belonging' (Hobsbawm 1990) capable of future expansion. Whether seen as an emerging form of anti-colonial consciousness or a collective last stand of *liurai* authority, the defeat of the Manufahi and other rebellions of 1912 marked the final phase of independent kingdoms.

The military reconfiguration of the territory that followed the rebellions created the framework for the future development of an East Timorese identity. Now exercising direct rule over most of the territory, the Portuguese no longer governed through autonomous intermediaries swearing fealty to the Crown. Breaking the traditional *reinos* into smaller *sucos*, the reconfiguration of East Timorese societies created a territory-wide system of governance for the first time, imposing uniform laws, administrative features, and improved communications across the territory. In creating a common territorial administration, the colonial state also created the conditions for identifying with – or against – the one clear authority in the territory. These developments led to the refinement of two colonial strategies: isolation of the Timorese populace in their *postos* (sub districts) and new forms of co-optation of the indigenous elites.

With limited investment, and pass laws that prevented ordinary Timorese from leaving their *postos*, Portuguese colonialism failed to promote the sort of economic development creates new solidarities across linguistic groups. Nonetheless, the reconfiguration of traditional elites saw the rise of a small *letrado* class who were capable of new frames of reference beyond the traditional *reinos*, and dissatisfied with their place in the colonial order. It is instructive in this respect that the 1959 Viqueque rebellion was dominated by lower-level Timorese colonial functionaries. This group was the precursor of a later and larger *assimilado* class, which would have increasing social weight with the relative expansion of education in the early 1970s. A rough measure of this expansion is evident in voting figures for the 1957 and 1973 elections: though the Caetano-era reforms devolved few real powers to the colonies, the number of voters in Legislative Council elections expanded from 2,000 in 1957 to 11,000 in 1973 (Jannisa 1997: 103). This expansion of education in Portuguese Timor was marked by two inherently contradictory objectives: to stabilise the colony by advancing a larger indigenous elite into the administration,

while also maintaining political control (Hill 2002). By the 1960s, the influence of the Second Vatican Council saw the Church increasingly distance itself from colonial systems, including the uncritical support for Portuguese colonialism evident in the *Concordat* signed with the Salazar regime in 1940. The Catholic college at Soibada and the seminary of Dare, for example, were particularly important institutions for the formation of the future nationalist elite.

The role of the Portuguese military was also significant, as the late colonial era saw many Timorese men perform compulsory military service in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This provided many Timorese with their first experiences of spending time with Timorese from other linguistic groups. The late colonial army was perhaps also an important influence on strategy, being the first to use the term *apartidismo* in 1974–5. As de Sousa notes (2001: 91), Timor proved different from the rest of the Portuguese colonial empire in that the Church and the army became 'factors of both local cultural identity and the development of national claims'.

4   Competing 'Nations of Intent'

Originally developed in studies of African nationalisms (Rotberg 1966), this concept focusses on the way in which competing ideas of the nation are invoked in ideological contests between different nationalist groupings. Shamsul (1996: 324) defines a 'nation of intent' as a particular ideological vision of the nation:

> A nation-of-intent is a more or less precisely defined idea of the form of a nation, i.e. its territory, population, language, culture, symbols and institutions…shared by a number of people who perceive themselves as members of that nation, and who feel that it unites them. … [It] may imply a radical transformation of a given state, and the exclusion or inclusion of certain groups of people. …It may be an inclusive construct, open to others, and which is employed as the basis for a political platform voicing dissent or a challenge to the established notion of nation.

In this conception, nationalism is seen as a discursive contest between particular ideological projects over the values, form, and boundaries of a nation.

Following the 1974 Carnation Revolution, Portuguese Timor's small, educated *assimilado* elite developed new parties, each bearing a distinct 'nation of intent', or ideological vision of nationalism (Leach 2016: 55–60). Against the ASDT- (Associação Social-Democrata Timorense, Timorese Social Democratic Association) FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente, The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)'s modernising secular and social democratic nationalism, represented by the unifying image of the 'Maubere' people, the UDT (União Democrática Timorense, Timorese Democratic Union) promoted continuing visions of a Lusitanian *assimilado* identity and a hierarchical Catholic society in continuing association with Portugal. Advocating integration

valid act of self-determination.

Levelling charges of 'cultural genocide' against the occupier in the 1980s, the Church became a pan-territorial religious-cultural institution, increasingly perceived as an alternative national community. Authorised by Indonesian state policy, but reinforcing a separate identity, conversions saw the Catholic population rise from 180,000 in 1970 to half a million by 1990 (Hill 2002: xv), making up 90 percent of the population by the time of independence. Catholic identification overlapped with nationalist identification in ways that were sanctioned by the Indonesian regime, yet potentially subversive. The 'nationalising effects' of a shared religious affinity reinforced by the Tetun liturgy and an independent clergy were profound and irreversible. In the 1990s, the emergence of a clandestine movement – dominated by younger Indonesian speakers – was a strategic setback of the highest order for the project of integration, from which it would never recover. Despite the formal secularism of the resistance, clandestine strategy used growing popular affiliations to the Church to destabilise Indonesian rule, strategically mobilising religious affinity as an ethnic component of national identity in the lead up to the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991.

5   'Nations of Intent' and Multi-party Democracy

Following the CNRT (Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor, National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction) victory in the 1999 referendum, the UNTAET era (UN Transitional Administration in East Timor) was initially seen as a state-building success but was later regarded as a lost opportunity for inclusive nation-building. The constitution-making process was tied to a rushed UN timetable, driven by local elite pressure to 'Timorise' the administration, with a party-dominated assembly and relatively token popular participation. With the independence movement ultimately having eschewed the more ideological manifestations of early nationalism to keep competing political tendencies in step, competitive multi-party elections in the immediate wake of the united front era encouraged the re-emergence of distinct ideological 'nations of intent'. The Constitutional Assembly would make some pragmatic compromises on earlier controversial positions on official languages and national days, but many of the symbolic values and affinities of the constitution reflected those of the dominant nationalist grouping: of an older generation of Portuguese-speaking CNRT nationalists in general, and of FRETILIN in particular (Leach 2002).

This era was also defined by major intergenerational tensions over the political settlement of 2001, in which two visions of the East Timorese nation associated with different eras of the resistance clashed. For an older generation, the history of Portuguese colonialism and international Lusophone solidarity was a defining measure for East Timorese nationalism, historically separating Timor-Leste from the

cognate cultures of west Timor. Regardless of their level of affiliation with Portuguese culture and language, these affinities had a strategic political dimension as well as symbolic-historical context. They reinforced the central claim made by the resistance: that East Timor's right to self-determination was historically and legally separate to that of Indonesia as a result of Portuguese colonial rule. For a younger generation more connected with the CNRT era and with the Indonesian *reformasi* movement, and who instead saw a Tetun-speaking Catholic Church as the bastion of national sentiment from the late 1980s onwards, these Lusophone affinities no longer held great weight.

In the wake of the restoration of independence in 2002, these partly suppressed 'nations of intent' would clash again in the era of multi-party democracy, as FRETILIN secularism encountered new realities in a Catholicised society that was accustomed to a non-ideological emphasis on national unity. The distinct experiences and educational backgrounds of the two generations of nationalists, respectively encountering Portuguese and Indonesian colonialism, would complicate the task of articulating a simple, unifying post-colonial national identity. The official language debate was a particularly fierce element of this contest in the early years after 2002. Combined with this issue was a level of popular resentment over the returning diaspora, perceived to be benefitting disproportionately from the fruits of independence. The FRETILIN government's clash with the Church over the issue of religious education, and its subsequent recognition of the Church's now central role in East Timorese society, would be a defining one for post-independence nationalism. It is not surprising that the AMP and BGK governments that followed reached a closer accommodation with the Church, despite being led by the secular figure of Xanana Gusmão. Over the life of the first constitutional government from 2002 to 2006, the nation-building process would be greatly complicated by a suite of inter-related national 'fault lines' (Leach 2016: 149–164). These were each associated with different 'constituencies' seeking recognition of their contribution to the achievement of independence or justice for their suffering during the occupation. These included the Catholic Church, youth, dissident FALINTIL veterans, military petitioners, the clandestine resistance, women active in the resistance, and victim groups. Making serial claims against the East Timorese state, these actors argued that they had been side-lined in the emerging 'official' landscape of national identity. Debates over the national history would come to reflect these widening fault lines.

The 2006 political-military crisis represented the dramatic culmination of these nation-building tensions, issuing in a violent confluence of 'dualisms' dividing the political community, between FRETILIN and CNRT nations-of-intent; local and diaspora East Timorese; younger and older nationalists; the army and the police; modern and traditional authority; and those seeking reconciliation, over victims seeking justice. Distinctively, the crisis saw old colonial stereotypes of *Firaku*

(easterners) and *Kaladi* (westerners) reprised in response to perceived disrespect from elements of the FDTL leadership, who had questioned the contribution of westerners to national liberation. The crisis was perceived locally as the correction of a series of imbalances in society, stemming from the failure to recognise those who had suffered most during the occupation. For some, the crisis reflected a 'clash of paradigms' between traditional and liberal democratic ideas of legitimacy (Trindade and Castro 2007), with more traditional Timorese seeing the nation-state as an 'external' entity imposed from Dili, which failed to acknowledge the traditions still governing rural communities. This highlighted continuing challenges for the new state in balancing the strengths of tradition against the egalitarian requirements of a modern liberal polity. It was significant that the 2006 conflict took place in the urban centre of Dili, where new proximities between different language groups were being negotiated and an emerging modern 'national' culture was being contested, away from the established traditions governing local communities.

The 2007 and 2012 election campaigns were centrally defined by the politics of recognition of contributions to the resistance, a focus that was itself implicitly linked to political stability in the wake of the crisis. The new government was more inclusive of smaller parties, representing a partial return to an earlier CNRT 'nation of intent', though divisions between Fretilin and non-Fretilin parties hardened. These divisions were supported by new, regionalised voter affiliations that represented a potential threat to national unity. The extent of the regionalisation was stark. FRETILIN's national parliamentary vote of 29 percent comprised a vote share of 57.5 percent in the three 'eastern' districts, but just 18.9 percent from the ten 'western' districts.

The era from 2007 to 2012 was marked by a bitter division within Timor-Leste's political elite, linked with longstanding personal feuds among the senior leadership as the government used new windfall gains from oil and gas revenues to address the legacies of the crisis, and developing new pensions for veterans. The CNRT victory in the 2012 elections saw the tone slowly shift to a new era of 'consensus' politics defined by cooperation between the two major forces in East Timorese politics: Xanana Gusmão and FRETILIN. This was given material form by unprecedented opposition support for national budgets from 2013, and the appointment of Mari Alkatiri as the head of a major project to develop Oecussi as a Special Economic Zone (*Zonas Especiais de Economia Social de Mercado* – ZEESM). The long-anticipated departure of Gusmão from the Prime Minister's office in early 2015 saw a more substantial return to the politics of national unity, with a handover to a FRETILIN Prime Minister, Rui de Araujo. This remarkable transition solidified the elite rapprochement and saw a partial transition of power to a new generation and a renewed focus on Timor-Leste's unresolved maritime boundaries.

6　Attempts to Reformulate East Timorese Resistance Identity

A new consensus on 'official' nationalism saw partially reformulated ideas of East Timorese identity advanced by the newly united elite, seeking to transform a national identity of resistance to one mobilised around national development. One of the more notable announcements of 2015 declared an 'end of national mourning' (*Desluto Nacional*) period from 4 September until 31 December (RDTL 2015b). The opening date marked the announcement of the referendum result in 1999, with the closing date – declared the 'Day of the Heroes' – marking the death of Nicolau Lobato, and the end of the first phase of the military resistance in 1978. The same announcement declared the unveiling of the foundation stone for a new 'National Monument to the War-Sacrificed', to be known as the Eternal Flame Monument (*Chama Eterna*).

The meanings of this government-declared 'mourning-end' were much debated among Dili intellectuals, with aspects of the symbolism suggesting different readings. On the one hand, the 'mourning-end' reflected the simple culmination of the year of commemorations and 40 years since the 1975 invasion. On the other hand, the naming of the period also evoked parallels with traditional *Kore Metan* ceremonies, the end of the one-year mourning period after the death of loved ones. This suggested to many that the period was intended to mark a point of 'moving on' from the legacies of the past, with government encouragement to focus instead on development, and harnessing public energies for the tasks ahead. This view was given credence by subsequent government statements on the *Desluto Nacional*, which declared that 4 September would mark:

> a new chapter in the story of Timor-Leste […] to look back on the past, recognizing the struggle, and then to look forward, to embrace the future with unity, committed to the journey of nation-building and development […]. Our ancestors are watching. In this time we mourn the past and acknowledge our loss. Then we honour the struggle by moving forward, faces uplifted, unified as we develop our nation (RDTL 2015b).

This reading proved highly controversial for some in Timor-Leste, and despite its intentions, sat awkwardly with established notions of valorising the resistance. President Ruak, for example, argued that the 'mourning-end' was not acceptable to many whose relatives had not been found and were yet to be buried (Suara Timor Lorosa'e 2015). The *Desluto* was subsequently de-emphasised by the government as the year drew to a close.

Taken together, the *Desluto* and other government positions of the time represented a clear attempt at a partial reformulation of East Timorese resistance identity. The need to reorient a national identity of resistance to one mobilised around the goals of national development had been openly emphasised by outgoing Prime Minister Gusmão in a speech in January 2015, arguing that the people of

Timor-Leste needed to unite around development, 'as their parents and grandparents […] united around the cause of national liberation'. Linking the task with the sacrifices of older generations, Gusmão argued that this was the only way youth could 'honour their memories and our collective history'.

> It is vital that we restore the pride in being Timorese. Not as before, in the sense of being an 'identity of resistance', but rather in accordance with the current need for national development and international affirmation, building a peaceful, tolerant and pluralistic Nation-State (Gusmão 2015).

7   The Distinctive Character of East Timorese Nationalism

In examining the history of nationalism and national identity in Timor-Leste, it is instructive to consider the ways in which East Timorese nationalism has diverged from Eurocentric models that dominate nationalism studies, and to highlight 'elements of local difference' (Tønnesson and Antlöv 1996: 30) in discourses of East Timorese national identity. Though it shares much in common with other 'postcolonial' nationalisms seeking to unite diverse populations with a common colonial history and territory, several features of East Timorese nationalism are distinctive.

One characteristic feature of East Timorese nationalism was born of necessity from late 1975 onward. The looming Indonesian invasion necessitated a rapid transition from a conventional anti-colonialist narrative, mobilised against Portuguese colonialism, to one contesting Indonesia's forced integration of the decolonising territory. This required a more complex narrative of the differential impact of Portuguese colonialism on the eastern half of Timor, and its role in creating a distinct political community over 450 years. This turn of events gave East Timorese nationalism a distinct character in ways that discursively reinforced Portugal's ongoing responsibility for the territory under international law awaiting a valid act of self-determination to contest Indonesia's forced integration. It would also lead to another distinctive feature of contemporary East Timorese nationalism: its accommodation of two generations of nationalists with different linguistic and cultural affiliations – the product of the successive colonial regimes. How these two generations of nationalist experience are reconciled, as different visions of national identity are brought to a compromise (Shamsul 1996: 346), remains a central part of the story of East Timorese nationalism.

Chatterjee sees a 'fundamental feature' of Asian nationalisms in the notion of an inner spiritual domain that was 'always sovereign' (1993) despite the political dominance of colonial power. Xanana Gusmão's communiques of the 1980s, discussed in chapter five, exemplify these same themes in East Timorese nationalist thought, and were encapsulated in his letter to the Australian Senator Gordon McIntosh (1988: 3):

Despite admitting the influence of the Portuguese presence for many years, I must say that Maubere People never moved away from what they consider to be the roots of their identity, in all aspects that form the social essence of their personality, their way of thinking and acting. During the Portuguese colonial period, only a small group experienced the Portuguese influence in the fields of thought and culture, as a result of the situation itself; even so, most of that small group continues to hold strongly to what they feel to be inherent to their culture

In Timor-Leste's case, the notion of an inner spiritual domain of nationalism may also be seen in an emerging national 'origin story', with parallels to those of many indigenous Timorese societies. Notably, certain features of Timorese societies allowed for the symbolic incorporation of new external authorities. By ceding political authority to a powerful outsider, or 'stranger king' (Sahlins 2009), the primacy of the inner domain of indigenous spiritual authority was taken to be preserved (Traube 1986). Associated with a dyadic conception of power, these encounters were transformative of the original polity, but preserved the ritual authority of the older community. As Fox argues, traditional accounts of this intervention involve 'the arrival of an outsider who alters the structure of the society, often introducing a new political or religious dimension' (Fox 2008: 202). This idea, for example, structured the Mambai understandings of their relationship with Portuguese colonial power, seen as the returning 'younger brother' (Traube 1986), incorporating a new external ruler whose 'foreignness puts [them] in a position to mediate and keep the various competitive elements of the polity in check' (Hagerdal 2012: 6). This feature of Timorese societies, evident even in *liurai* rule itself, allowed for the symbolic incorporation of a foreign political ruler so long as the original lords of the land were honoured and maintained (Hagerdal 2006: 76). Patterns of resistance regularly attended breaches of this social contract. Echoes of this traditional idea can be found in the UDT argument that Portuguese colonialism had represented a 'contract' or 'pact' between two sovereign nations (FRETILIN/ UDT 1986: 4).

　　Distinctively, nationalist imaginings would replicate aspects of these traditional origin stories over time. The 2015 celebration of the '500-year' arrival of Catholicism as the 'affirmation of Timorese identity' (RDTL 2015a) suggested dimensions of the same narrative in contemporary East Timorese nationalism. In these events, the Church, and to some degree the Portuguese, are depicted as outsiders whose arrival marks the beginning of a new political society, emerging from the preceding societies of Timorese *reinos* and ultimately 'affirming' a new national identity. Though seen by some domestic critics as a contradictory, or inadequately 'post-colonial' discourse, Catholicism and Portugal are cast into the symbolic role of the 'outsider' that reconstitutes the political community, thereby producing an 'origin story' for the nation in ways that symbolically replicate parallel accounts in

traditional societies. In 2015, the predominant focus on the Church, rather than the Portuguese arrival, helped frame this message to a younger generation of nationalists. The state's accommodation with the Church reached a new peak in the same year with the signing of a new Concordat with the Vatican, which firmly entrenched a distinctly Catholicised nation-of-intent in post-independence Timor-Leste.

Another distinctive feature of East Timorese nationalism relates to this point. The failure of successive colonial regimes to recognise the importance of ritual leadership to East Timorese societies – focussing instead on co-opted or resistant political leadership – helped preserve traditional societies through consecutive colonial eras. The 'inner domain' of *adat* was a sustaining force in East Timorese identity and remains so today, particularly in rural Timor-Leste. Importantly, however, these indigenous societies were multiple and diverse. This posed a classic problem for anti-colonial nationalists in ethnically diverse societies, confronting the relative absence of pre-colonial ethnic unities, in what is now designated the 'national' territory. In the 1970s, early FRETILIN nationalists addressed this problem through the generic nationalist figure of the *Maubere*, which called upon traditional identity in a trans-communal manner, generically evoking the strengths of the indigenous societies, as nationalists sought to draw out a collective identity. Similarly, in the 1980s, Xanana Gusmão (2000[1986]: 102) would refer to the multiple traditions of *adat* 'guarded under the protection of the people's *luliks* and constantly relived through oral tradition' as the basis of a historical identity. Xavier do Amaral addressed the same issue in his 2001 election campaign when depicting national unity as equivalent to blood and marriage ties between different groups. With new ideas of a national *juramento* (oath) and a national *uma lulik* (sacred house), contemporary East Timorese thinkers on nationalism, such as Trindade and Castro (2007), have meditated on exactly this same problem: how to make the traditional core of East Timorese societies a collective, national, and nationalist object. By 2015, official nationalist discourses were instead arguing that the unifying presence of Catholicism fulfilled this role, arguing that it found in traditional societies 'a people with the sense of God (Maromak) and the sense of Sacred (Lulik)' (de Araújo 2015).

8   The Future of East Timorese Nationalism

By 2015, political transitions saw a partial return to the politics of national unity. The new consensus politics nonetheless raised concerns over the absence of political opposition, as lone voices in civil society questioned official interpretations of the '500-year anniversary' celebrations. Aspects of these new 'official' positions on national identity attracted criticism for 'closing off' debate, as did attempts to declare a 'national mourning end' (*desluto*) in the interests of refocussing national

identity around development goals. This raised the question of how new entrants into Timor-Leste's politics would address debates over nationalism and national identity. In late 2015, the rise of a new political party, the PLP, registered by former anti-Corruption Commissioner Aderito Soares and led by President Ruak, suggested that the new consensus politics would soon meet challengers. Early statements from the PLP and President Ruak suggested strong criticisms of development policy, clientelism, and corruption, but also a critique of the nation-building consensus, arguing for a renewed emphasis on teaching Indonesian and English in schools alongside Tetun and Portuguese (Cleary 2016). A new generation of East Timorese leaders would likely bring new ideas and debates with them as the contestation of Timor-Leste's national identity continued.

Indeed, the era of 'consensus democracy' would prove short-lived, deteriorating rapidly in the 2017 election cycle. The breakdown of political unity following the 2017 elections demonstrated the fragility of the power-sharing era and its short-lived attempts to reframe contemporary East Timorese nationalism from a narrative of historical resistance to a forward-looking one mobilised around themes of national development. While it is likely that the emphasis on the arrival of Catholicism as the 'affirmation of Timorese identity' resonated more strongly in some sectors of East Timorese society, it was not clear that these discourses had entered the national consciousness in the same way as the narrative history of resistance to foreign occupation.

Notably, behind the 'Geração Foun' (new generation) still transitioning to power, a much larger generation born after 1999 followed. Indeed, with some 20% of the electorate voting for the first time, the 2017 elections saw the emergence of two new parties in parliament, the PLP and a youth-based party, KHUNTO (*Kmanek Haburas Unidade Nasional Timor Oan*). Both were returned to power in the 2018 'early' parliamentary elections in a pre-election coalition with the CNRT. In a country with a median age of just under 19 years, and some 40 percent of the population under 15, this demographically dominant group will soon come of age with their own ideas about the past and future of East Timorese nationalism. Fluent in the national language Tetun, conversant in Indonesian (but with declining proficiency in its written form), and increasingly educated in Portuguese (with the usual interest of young people in the global language of English), this group will bring its own perspectives to debates over national identity. It will likely replicate neither of the perspectives of its predecessors, nor the competing 'nations-of-intent' of the past. As they are too young to have been protagonists in the independence struggle, the 'history wars' that continue to vex older generations will likely prove less 'hot to handle' for the next generation, opening the prospect for an evolution in post-colonial ideas of national identity and history more removed from the divisions of the past.

Note

1) The name of the nation of Timor-Leste is sometimes a vexing issue in English language scholarship, as the long-established use of 'East Timor' conflicts with the nation's official name. This article uses the official name 'Timor-Leste' except where organisations have used 'East Timor', e.g., the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

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