PERFORMING MODERNITIES:

Pedagogies and technologies in the making of contemporary Timor-Leste

ABA PUBLICAÇÕES

Kelly Silva
(editor)

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ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE ANTROPOLOGIA

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Kelly Silva
Brasilia, July 2020

Introduction
Performing modernities[1]

Kelly Silva[2]

"The civilizing mission was above all a pedagogic crusade."
(Camaroff and Camaroff 1997, 412)

This book is a collection of essays derived from research attempting to cast light on how projects of modern cosmologies, social arrangements and persons have been transposed, produced, enacted and subverted in Timor-Leste. The research began in 2002 when Daniel Simião and I first arrived in Dili to carry out fieldwork for our PhD theses, published approximately a decade later – Silva (2012) and Simião (2015). The research benefitted from a series of Brazilian government grants from 2007, including a program funded by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES, Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel), which supported academic exchanges between Universidade de Brasília and Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) between 2014 and 2018.[3] Through this program, eleven Brazilian graduate and undergraduate students undertook fieldwork in Timor-Leste and five undergraduate East Timorese students received training in social sciences research techniques at the University of Brasilia. This book brings some of the results of such efforts to a global audience.

The way we devised the research agenda was not a priori in the sanitised spaces of laboratories: negotiation took place in multiple arenas between diverse agents. In these processes my training as an anthropologist in Brazil, where classic monographies sit alongside a major interest in the Brazilian national society,[4] and our East Timorese interlocutors' concerns and anxieties for improving the lives of their fellow people (whatever it may mean) have played an important role. How our interlocutors managed and made sense of the multiple, complex and composited institutional settings in which they live – a characteristic of good ethnographies – is a generative fact in the resulting analyses.

The introduction shares the main categories, assumptions and methodologies framing our team's work, as well as some of our findings. By making explicit our understandings of categories, such as modernity, *kultura*, technologies and pedagogies, I also explore what the idea of performing modernities entails. The mutual feedback between methodology, research practices and theory – what we might say is a dialectical perspective – has inspired all our efforts. In short, we acknowledge that our and our interlocutors' categories, narratives and ways of acting in the world (their agency) are historical products of multiple conversations. In light of these considerations, I introduce the contents of the chapters that follow.

The Janus faces of modernity

Two ways of understanding modernity frame the research agenda developed in this book. The first is modernity as an analytical and ethical category, and the second, modernity as an emic and empirical idea. Regarding the first, Charles Taylor's definition of modernity aptly synthetizes the historical and moral references evoked by such a concept, which is immanent in the following chapters. He said modernity entails:

> A historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality), and

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4. For a discussion, see Silva and Simião 2012.

of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution) (2002).

Since Max Weber's work, literature of diverse origins and from different disciplines has highlighted the elective affinities between the development of the moral and functional configurations we now recognize as modernity, capitalism and market society. Despite my own criticism of making history by analogy (Mamdani 1998) or retrospective determinism (Bendix 1977), it seems to me undeniable that the quest for development in Timor-Leste today is, by and large, the quest for building a market society.[5] Notable is that only a few authors have adopted the same perspective (for instance, Bovensiepen and Yoder [2018] and Bovensiepen 2019).

To consider the mechanisms by which market societies have been built in different places and times may help us better understand what is happening in Timor-Leste today. Of course, this is a long-running process that dates from at least the end of the 19th century, when de facto colonial governance expanded across Portuguese Timor. Bearing this in mind, the various phenomena discussed in this book are but brief moments in continuing processes of longue durée development.

The replacement of interdependency networks via multiple governance procedures and the separation of labor from other activities of moral and material reproduction (utmost in importance was the commodification of land, human labor and money) are at the core of the rationale Polanyi (2000) described in relation to the making of a market economy in 17th- and 18th-century England. Framing such a replacement was a process of separation (Dumont 1977; 2000) and purification (Latour 2009), attempting to make the economy an autonomous and dominant realm of social action prioritized over politics, justice and religion, etc. In that context, the economy was cultivated as an alternate version of nature, with an

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5. The idea of modernity functions in this book more as an ideal type or a floating signifier than an empirical experience. Often modernity makes itself apparent in particular and unforeseen ways. For instance, for some time now in Timor-Leste there are attempts at modernization without industrialization or secularization. The following chapters discuss some of the configurations that emerge from these facts.

exclusive and independent set of rules, from which making profit for a few was to become the main aim of society.

As time went by, an illusion of independence and separation between economy and politics, public and domestic realms, nature and culture, individual and society, object and subject, fact and representation, tradition and modernity, for instance, came to be enforced and advertised as moral values which marked the supposedly superior position of western societies before others, be they glossed as non-civilized, eastern, indigenous, etc. The disenchantment of the world and the monopolization of the capacity to act over it (that is, the idea of agency only for humans) were also central in this project (Keane 2007).

In summary, the construction of dissociations has been the bedrock of market-society projects and economies, and underpins the phenomena we call modernity (Latour 2009). Unveiling the pedagogies and technologies by which such a worldview has been produced in Timor-Leste is fundamental to the chapters comprising this book. I return to that issue later.

Similar to other historical experiences, many institutions and agents have participated in making a modern and market society in Timor-Leste. The Catholic Church, the Portuguese State, the Indonesian State, the Timor-Leste State, the United Nations, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, Protestant missionaries and *kultura* (see below) are but a few of them. Through these institutions and organizations a number of new non-human agents were introduced to or enforced on the people of Timor-Leste: a Christian god, scientific epistemology, languages of western origin, writing, media, new technologies of production, new administrative techniques, etc. So, the building of modern institutions and subjectivities in Timor-Leste has been a multi-institutional and multi-ontological endeavor or, using Lattas' and Rio's (2011) terminology, an assemblage of powers and entities. In this book we try to make explicit some of these powers and entities as well as the way they have become entangled in certain dynamics particular to Timor-Leste.[6]

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6. An alternative way to make sense of the actions and effects of that assemblage of powers and entities in Timor-Leste is to present them as agents of globalization.

The search for the how, where and why involved in the transpositions of modernity in Timor-Leste leads us to discover its distinctive characteristic − *modernity* as a political mover to which people resort to produce difference, social stratification or even moral exclusion.[7] In this context, Webb Keane's work has been extremely useful in deepening the understanding of the social life of modernity. In particular, his proposition that we look at modernity as a moral narrative:

> 'an ideological formation in terms of which societies valorise their own practices by the contrast to the spectre of barbarism and other marks of negation.' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, 32) Modernity is as much a story people tell about their own past as about others … the narrative often has a normative, even moralist, thrust to it. … (I)t includes a moral narrative about human liberation (Keane 2007, 48, 51).

On the basis of such a perspective, discourses about and performances of modernity and modernization are the means by which people voice and build what they consider desirable and abject, good and bad, happy and sad, fair and unfair, reasonable and unreasonable, rational or irrational, etc. In these uses, modernity is a floating signifier whose meaning is negotiated in each particular context.

Attention to the social life of concepts related to and derived from modernity has been essential for us as anthropologists. Such a procedure allows us a glimpse of the main means by which people make comparisons and interpret changes in their lives, and produce themselves in dialogue with those they consider others. As in various scenarios belatedly colonized by European countries, we see in Timor-Leste an association of modernity with urban spaces standing against the idea of *kultura* and its perceived typical location, the *foho* (rural areas) (Silva 2011).

However, I consciously chose to frame the debate with reference to the idea of modernization or modernity, as it is a more precise analytical tool. We can think about globalization as an effect of modernization.

7. The fact that modernity (and modern/modernization) is also an empirical and political category points to how important scientific imaginaries and vocabularies have become in the construction of the world we live in.

Kultura and modernity in a post-abyssal moment?

In previous work I discussed the genealogy and social life of *kultura* and its synonyms – *adat* (Indonesian), tradition, *lisan* (Tetum) and *usos e costumes* (Portuguese) – in urban Timor-Leste today and in its colonial past (Silva 2012; 2018; Silva and Simião 2012; 2017). I highlight not only that *kultura* has a colonial origin, but that the related phenomena have been continuously reshaped in response to diverse interests. We are thus obliged to hold in suspension any ahistorical assumption we may have regarding the divide between *kultura* and modernity. In fact the way that *kultura* has been used for colonial and postcolonial governance is a recent invention. Keeping this in mind is useful to understand some developments in contemporary Timor-Leste's public spaces.

Using *kultura* for administrative purposes and its further internalization in common parlance have made it a tool to describe and govern heterogeneous people and their particular ways of life, vis-à-vis an idealized image of a Western or European world – one that is considered modern. In this process, a moral hierarchy between the forms of life predicated on each of these two categories was established to associate *kultura* and tradition with negative and inferior connotations, and modernity and civilization with positive and superior values. Additionally, *kultura* was associated with rural and highland (foho) landscapes whereas modernity was linked with urban places (Silva 2011), as referred to earlier.[8] As the following chapters suggest, the opposition between *kultura* and *modernity* is still central to the way different governance agents make sense of various social-change projects and of the efforts to turn projects into individual and collective realities. For instance, in terms of public policy, the issues of domestic violence and gender inequality are often taken as manifestations of *kultura*, as well as what is interpreted

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8. In Silva (2012a, 92) I proposed that such a divide is reinforced by the development industry and that it generates a misrecognition effect, that is, "sentiments of moral exclusion that emerge among populations targeted for development projects, as a result of the systematic assertion that one or several elements of their ways of life are inadequate when compared to narratives of good living conveyed by development agents and agencies" (and by many town dwellers).

as unfair methods of local conflict resolution. In many contexts, whatever is termed *kultura* is taken as a subject of governance to be domesticated in order to free people from poverty, injustice, backwardness and ignorance (Silva and Simião 2017a).

However, by changing the scale and context of analysis – moving out of modernity-driven governance institutions – another pattern of the *kultura*-and-modernity relationship emerges. For most East Timorese people, there are few ways to succeed in life today without paying respect to *kultura* institutions and obligations. Broadly speaking, *kultura* institutions entail responding to gift-giving obligations, taking part in a number of life-cycle rituals where ancestors and other mystical entities are honored, respecting precedence relations in terms of house membership, age, gender, among other phenomena. This trend is hardly a novelty in Timor-Leste studies. Works by Fidalgo Castro (2015), Bovensiepen (2015), Palmer (2015), Scambary (2019) and others have explored such facts in different contexts. In this book, a mutual cooperation between *kultura* and modern institutions is also present across the chapters.

What seems relatively new in Timor-Leste today is that some institutions promoting modernity as the target of social change are themselves explicitly resorting to *kultura* to reach their objectives, be it promoting the State judicial system, gender equality, economic empowerment, land registration, education or even the formation of the State. We are perhaps at a post-abyssal moment in Timor-Leste in which the divergence between what has been labelled, on one hand, as local, traditional, *kultura* or rural dwellers' practices and, on the another hand, as global, modern, urban and civilized, are no longer in strict opposition (Sousa Santos 2007). Many State- and Dili-based institutions now rely on the reduced duality to extend their modernity-driven governance projects.[9]

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9. My hypothesis that we may be at a post-abyssal moment regarding the relationship between *kultura* and modern institutions is inspired by Sousa Santos (2007). His writing analyzed the abyssal character of Western hegemonic epistemology, which claims for itself the monopoly on truth and disregards other systems of knowledge, and Bruno Latour's (2009) critique on modern scientific endeavors framed by anxieties of rupture and separation between what is considered nature and culture, justice and politics, knowledge and power, etc.

Most chapters in this book follow this newer understanding and give it ethnographic density. For instance, Rocha's chapter demonstrates how attempts to take the State justice system closer to the foho people by using mobile courts recognized local conflict-resolution moralities, technologies and agreements. In most of the cases Rocha documented the mobile court's decisions consisted of replicating outcomes already settled in traditional conflict-resolution institutions or the withdrawal of complaints closed the process, including in cases of public offenses (public crimes) when processes should not be suspended, according to the law.

Oviedo's work describes how the National Directorate of Land and Property office in Ermera also used local conflict-resolution institutions and moralities. In postcolonial Timor-Leste, the registration of land has mainly been conducted in cases free of dispute. Where conflict about land rights occurs, the State promotes mediation based on local moralities and authorities. In these procedures, gift-giving obligations between wife-takers and wife-givers are often mobilized, both as the reason triggering the conflict as well as a way to resolve it. Oviedo suggests that *kultura* somehow pacifies the land-registration process. In other words, it seems that the delivery of land title − a fundamental step in any State formation – has been marked by *kultura* institutions.

Efforts to diversify the Timor-Leste economy and enhance rural people's access to cash have led various governance institutions to explore certain dimensions of *kultura* as an asset for producing particular commodities. Such phenomena are the focus of two chapters which consider the ramifications of artifact production, circulation and consumption for the tourism market. Both analyses address the commodification of *kultura*. Whereas Silva and Oliveira focus on the pedagogical practices structuring NGO Empreza Di'ak's management of artifacts in Atauro, the chapter by Silva, Ferreira and Gosaves draws attention to the strategies and scenarios of fair-trade dynamics in Timor-Leste.

Most importantly, both chapters explore the impacts of Christianization on the way different people and institutions have rescued, managed or reshaped local knowledge. As such, the relations between *kultura* and Christianity are a focus. From fieldwork undertaken in different Atauro villages Silva and

Oliveira argue that the different governance practices applied to turn certain artifacts into commodities in Makili, on one hand, and Arlo, on the other, may be due to diverse trajectories of people's adherence to Christian churches. One hypothesis is that Makili people's adherence to Catholicism has somehow made it easier to involve people in market production. This is because Catholic Christianity in Makili did not insist on the relinquishing of local knowledge involved in carving statues and other objects, a practice which is accorded mystical value. The vitality of local knowledge facilitates the production of carvings as cultural commodities for tourist consumption. Conversely, the Arlo residents' stronger adherence to Pentecostal Christianity (Assemblies of God) brought about the loss of much local knowledge related to local institutions. This is because Protestant denominations used to be much less tolerant of the reproduction and co-existence of local intuitions and Christianity. As a consequence, reviving local knowledge for the production of cultural commodities in Arlo required much more investment from Empreza Di'ak.

Protestant intolerance towards local knowledge and supernatural entities seems to condition the profile of some commodities produced with their support. By observing differences in the way Timorese *kultura* was managed to help forge a fair-trade niche in Dili, the Silva, Ferreira and Gosaves' chapter points to the fact that, occasionally, cultural commodities produced under the governance of some Protestant projects gave a negative portrait of local ways of life and chose to make goods that had little connection with what was perceived as *kultura*. However, most of the tactics used by governance agents to increase the participation of East Timorese people in the monetized and market economy have turned *kultura* in an asset.

Kultura is also an asset to reproduce leadership in both local and state institutional and moral orders. Fernandes' chapter conducts a complex analysis of the mutual parasitism (Roque 2010) between *kultura* and State institutions in postcolonial Oecusse. By means of an ethnography of a school's activities in the Usitasae hamlet of Puni, Fernandes describes how elite houses – glossed as *estrutura kultura Usitasae* – took advantage of the school apparatus – high-ranking civil servant positions, waged labor, school festivities, the exam

calendar – to reproduce their leadership in the village and the classificatory system which granted them superior positions. At the same time, the author suggests that the State was dependent on local elites to reinforce its position. State ideologies and institutions reached local people by the mediations of local and regional elites who maintained their privileged position because they acted as mediators. The capacity to act as a mediator derived from the fact that the elites were well trained and empowered in dealing with both the State and the *kultura* institutions: to translate between these two moral orders was a fundamental part of their role as mediators. In Ingold's (2000) words, such people are elite because they master and combine assorted skills and social capital from different sources. However, if the mutual parasitism between *kultura* and the State institutions continues, Fernandes is skeptical about how long the relationship will last. The search for higher levels of schooling forces the young to leave their villages of origin, moving to larger towns with high schools where they are compelled to develop new relationships with distant kin or non-kin. Thus, they engage in new networks of solidarity which, sooner or later, may affect their commitments to their people and places of origin.

Santos Filho's chapter also offers thoughts on the dynamics of replacing solidarity networks and interdependency. His ethnography about the profile of services FOKUPERS (*Forum Komunikasaun ba Feto Timor Lorosa'e*) provided for domestic-violence survivors, especially those admitted to its shelters, points to the fact that these women accessed the services because they had become detached from the wider kinship networks supporting individuals in Timor-Leste. In other words, the women's kin relationships and the obligations they entail had broken before or at the very moment they asked for help in modernity-driven institutions. Such findings resonate with those proposed by Sardan (2005) and Ferguson (1994), and others about the profile of people who first become entangled in development projects and discourses. These are people who are in vulnerable positions in local prestige hierarchies.

It is clear that different kinds of co-habitation between *kultura* and modernity institutional and moral orders occur across Timor-Leste today (Viegas and Feijó 2017). But how the co-existence is

structured in particular contexts and how such categories are reshaped in this interplay require deeper discussions. It seems to me that what may be, in some cases, a mutual parasitism between *kultura* and modernity will be – or has already – turned into a predatory relationship at the expense of *kultura*. In Silva (2014) I indicated how colonial and postcolonial states use *kultura*, synonymous with local power institutions, to promote integration and monopolization of power by the State. Also, various agents have imposed and expanded modern practices and projects of social organization and subjectivation via *kultura* or in dialogue with it, mobilizing different technologies and pedagogies to that end.

Technologies and pedagogies of governance in the making of contemporary Timor-Leste

By searching for a new way to make sense of cultural differences, Ingold suggested that we think about it in terms of a difference of skills. His perspective of skills is wide and inclusive:

> the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body) situated in a richly structured environment. As properties of human organisms, skills are thus as much biological as cultural. Secondly, and stemming from the above, becoming skilled in the practice of a certain form of life is not a matter of furnishing a set of generalised capacities, given from the start as compartments of a universal human nature, with specific cultural content. Skills are not transmitted from generation to generation but are regrown in each, incorporated into the modus operandi of the developing human organism through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks. Hence, thirdly, the study of skills demands a perspective which situates the practitioner, right from the start, in the context of an active engagement with the constituents of his or her surroundings. I call this the 'dwelling perspective' (Ingold 2000, 4).

Capacity-building projects have been one of the hallmarks of development actions in postcolonial Timor-Leste. In various scenarios skills development is just another way to talk about modernization. Capacity-building initiatives have transferred enormous amounts of human, technological and financial resources to the country, generating endless controversies and effects (Silva 2012). As such, Ingold's epistemological framing

seems potent for anyone interested in understanding an array of diverse phenomena in the country.

Following Ingold's proposal, I assume that performing modernities is how global and local modernities have been made in Timor-Leste. In Silva (2012) I anticipated a similar rationale when demonstrating that, since 2002, State building in Timor-Leste has involved enacting tasks considered typical of contemporary States, such as data production, maps, planning and indicators on a national scale. All of these procedures have allowed people to imagine and manage the new nation, as similar past procedures allowed colonial empires to come into existence (Mitchell 2002) As researchers we are also included in this process. We are performing modernities by embracing epistemological projects whereby we search for how individual agency and structural frames act together in shaping the world we live in.

All of this entails bringing to life and making use of institutions, technologies and ways of acting and perceiving the self and the world classified as modern, as well as the moral narratives which valued them over those considered local. In such processes, in Timor-Leste and elsewhere, although in diverse intensities, proposals of rationalization overlap growing individualism, urbanization, which, in turn, intersect prospects of secularization, aspiration of material improvement, etc. Many of the chapters in this book cast light on the technologies and pedagogies whereby such modernities have been enacted, taught, learned, spread, in sum, performed in Timor-Leste.

Laws, public policies, systems of knowledge, moral orders, disciplinary mechanisms, security devices (Foucault 2008), roads (Elias 1972), writing (Goody 1986), linguistic homogenization, media (Anderson 1989), fantasies of development and the very category of *kultura* (Silva and Simião 2012) are some instances of governance technologies, the performance of which have played fundamental roles in shaping modernity, and Timor-Leste is no exception. As Sautchuk (2018) stated, "technologies are means which mold and allow interaction between humans with something that, to some extent, differs from themselves". In other words, technologies allow particular kinds of relationships which accord (or not) with certain political and cosmological ends.

Importantly, certain technologies produce the very subjects they pose in relation, a topic included in the chapters of the book.

In industrial societies some of these technologies are so prosaic that they risk going unnoticed by the analyst. However, the micro-analysis that characterizes ethnography prevents us from ignoring their effects in transforming collective life in Timor-Leste. As an example, Fernandes's chapter considers how a school-event calendar and the changes people make to daily life in order to allow children to go to school end up affecting the way students see and act in the world. Fernandes approaches rituals as technologies of communication which produce multiple effects, reflecting the teachings of Leach (1966) and Tambiah (1985).

Silva and Oliveira's chapter, in turn, explores the techniques Empreza Di'ak applies to transform artifacts into commodities in Atauro production groups. Selecting, classifying and codifying artefacts as well as the guaranteed purchase of local products are thus fundamental to turning certain objects into commodities. In conjunction with the Silva, Ferreira and Gosaves chapter, the analysis of fair trade labels, folders and stores shows they are technologies of mediation essential in the fabrication of fair-trade commodities by connecting the spheres of exchange and production, by predicating the purchase of commodities on the supply of gifts, by connecting global markets to local production, by inscribing the act of purchasing as a way of doing justice and politics. In fact, these chapters call attention to the role of material and immaterial mediations in performing modernities in Timor-Leste.

Santos Filho's and Rocha's respective chapters describe performance, in the sense of acting, as a technology used to create modernities in the country. Both of these chapters discuss strategies used by governmental and non-governmental institutions to familiarize people with the State justice apparatus. Santos Filho argues that drama is a key pedagogical procedure. By drama, he means individual rehearsals prior to magistrate hearings in which FOKUPERS staff instructed domestic-violence survivors they were supporting on how to behave in court and who is who in the process (prosecutor, public defender, etc.). In addition, the provision of transport, food, shelter, and other basic needs for domestic-violence survivors – all of them technologies – are

essential in the NGO's care and justice work. Inspired by the idea of economic pedagogy (Silva 2017), Santos Filho proposes the category of legal pedagogies to make sense of FOKUPERS's procedures for teaching basic legal knowledge and state justice modus operandi.

In his chapter analysing mobile courts, Rocha demonstrates that the performance of trials in villages is also a pedagogy and technology by which national and international institutions attempted to expand the State justice apparatus in the hinterlands, teaching people what a court is and how to behave when there, and who is who in it. During the hearings and trials, the presence of people not involved in the cases was not only welcome but encouraged. This is because presenting the trials is itself a pedagogical device to make people more familiar with State institutions

Nogueira da Silva's and Fidalgo Castro's chapters demonstrate how individuals mobilized the institutions of *kultura* as technologies to generate phenomena associated with modernity. Fidalgo Castro indicates how one of his female interlocutors in Faulara, Liquiça, applied a practice considered *lulik*[10] − placing packed clothes and personal things on the family veranda – to force one of her siblings to treat her properly. By doing so she communicated to her brother and other family members that her relationship with him was at risk and, as a consequence, her brother may have stopped receiving the obligatory gifts from her husband, as a wife/fertility taker. In other words, she mobilized *kultura* to empower herself within her family of origin.

Finally, Nogueira da Silva's analysis of visits university teachers made to their hamlets of origin, and the enactment of sacrifices which followed, indicates that these were acts to *open the way* as much as to allow them to succeed in life. They believed there was no other way of attaining a good life than to maintain communication with the ancestors. It entailed reporting their major life achievements as well as asking for their ancestors' help to be successful in other endeavors. It is important to note that Nogueira da Silva's discussion reminds us of the complementary roles

10. In the chapter's context, *lulik* refers to an extraordinary order of action which cannot be easily controlled by humans.

performed by institutions associated with *foho*, on one hand, and town, on the other, in contemporary Timor-Leste, from the point of view of Dili dwellers. For them a social division between *foho* and town appears to exist. Whereas foho provides mystical services, Dili provides material resources through which the flow of life continues.

Development and change

So much has been said about development in Timor-Leste and elsewhere that the word is becoming devoid of meaning. But, in one way or another, development stimulates change, for better or for worse. It goes without saying that any kind of change implies continuity, as Sahlins (1990) taught some decades ago. Given that, I conclude this introduction by summarizing some changes and accommodations in Timor-Leste's social dynamics suggested in the following chapters.

A number of chapters reveal changes in people's lives caused by modern (state-centered or otherwise) governance apparatus. For instance, Fernandes uncovers his interlocutors' resentment about *povo* houses – some members of which were merchants – winning positions in local Usitassai elections, as it implied the weakening of certain houses' power in the *suku*. The merchants' success was the result of their business enterprises, owning trucks and other means of transport, and the shops on which people grew dependent for everyday reproduction.

Santos Filho's and Rocha's chapters present transformations in negotiating life in Timor-Leste. The backlog of judicial cases in the courts – a reason to legitimate the need for mobile courts – and FOKUPERS' procedures to help domestic-violence survivors point to the fact that people were appealing to new modes of negotiation, new mediators for solving conflicts and defending their interests. As another research has identified, awareness surrounding the large numbers of domestic-violence cases in the country is also an indicator of change: it reveals a rising morality which considers domestic violence unacceptable (Simião 2015). Importantly, the weakening or rupture of kin relations and of the mutual-care obligations they entail are trends towards modernization in various places in the world, and Timor-Leste is no exception (Comaroff and

Comaroff 1997). Santos Filho shows us how such a fact marks the trajectory of women in FOKUPERS's shelters.

Nogueira da Silva's chapter approaches transformations in the social life of *kultura* by discussing the reasons why elite people resort to their ancestors and houses to succeed in modern life. The chapter depicts an enlargement in the nature of the house's functions, and its supernatural entities are summoned to help in academic labors. Here is an instance of accommodation and interaction between local and modernity-driven institutions, between supernatural and secular investments.

Last, but not least, I am not supporting any meta-narrative, either of change or continuity. Instead, I suggest that change and continuity exist in a dialectical interplay, as Sahlins proposed in 1990. If the role of social scientists researching in and about Timor-Leste is to unveil the complex ways diverse forms of life and agency are being conceived, reproduced and reinvented, we still have much to learn from resilient people in an amazing country.

Disclaimer

Although published in English, the articles comprising this book were written by professionals trained in Latin countries. Such a fact entails a particular way of conceiving an article which cannot be translated, or better, reduced to an Anglo-Saxon model without incurring epistemic violence.

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Estrutura Kultura Usitasae: Ethnographic notes on schools as sites of local elites' reproduction and communication in Oecusse, Timor-Leste[1]

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Formal school education has been a common means for integrating individuals into broader political communities in Timor-Leste and elsewhere. The state school system in Timor-Leste extends across much of the territory. It is one of the arenas through which multiple state agents have sought to discipline social sensibilities and conduct, which may pose an administrative challenge to their overall goal of monopolizing and integrating political power.[3]

Between November 2016 and October 2017 I carried out field research in Usitasae, a small suku (several hamlets under a local administrative unit) in the municipality of Oecusse, the western exclave in the Indonesian part of the island. During fieldwork I analyzed educational practices involving children and adolescents in public schools. My attention focused on the uses some subjects made of the school's apparatus and events within the administrative organization. I noted that part of the teaching and

learning activities included institutional practices which were considered *kultura*:4 multiple gift-like exchanges, dances, ritual speech and ancestor worship. Likewise, the houses of local elites, known as *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*, occupied a prominent position in the school's administrative organization.

This analysis of the political and educational dynamics of the school apparatus in Usitasae seeks to understand how schools have become significant means for state formation and nation building in Timor-Leste. It draws from a particular perspective considering the role of schools in the construction of national-based relations and sensibilities. By this I mean not only producing cultural capital in the form of scholarly knowledge and communicating a nationalist discourse to the students, but also integrating local governance complexes into the national state apparatus (Silva 2014). In this sense, I also understand the state's schools as a means by which local elites have sought to communicate and reproduce themselves.

The ethnographic account in this chapter identifies some of the reasons why Timor-Leste's agrarian populations have welcomed the school system and sent their children to learn in its institutions. Much of the literature on schooling in East Asia has suggested that school systems have enjoyed a fair degree of acceptance because they have afforded some family groups access to a monetized economy. Schooling is considered to be a means through which these groups acquire titles and a set of skills and knowledge necessary for entering capitalist economies (Fife 1994; 1997;

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4. In an article titled "Government of and through *kultura*", Kelly Silva discussed how *kultura* has been mobilized into processes of political centralization and monopolization. Government by *kultura* entails mobilizing local governance complexes, that is "heterogeneous apparatuses of regulation, control, exercise of agency and social reproduction of groups and individuals in the world, often appearing as multi-layered total social facts … Such complexes are made up of different agents and agencies: 1. Institutions structuring local modes of social organization, most notably the house; 2. Ritual knowledge and related techniques (sacrifice, mobilization of words with the purpose, for instance, of imposing ruling prohibitions, life cycle or conflict resolution rituals); 3. Positions of authority for mediating relations with state and church institutions, such as village chiefs or catechist teachers, as well as with spiritual forces or entities (ritual priests, witches, diviners), among others" (Silva 2014, 124–25).

Demerath 1999). Lynn Parker (2003) has also pointed out the same in her study of social changes in a small Balinese village in the context of the Bali Island's nationalization in Indonesia.

Like the political-administrative system, the distribution of schools during the Indonesian occupation and independent Timor-Leste was partly driven by their incorporation into local political structures. This becomes evident when one compares the Timorese experience with other colonial social contexts, such as Australia, whose school administration was not controlled by the communities. Ralph Folds (1987) noted that by the second half of the twentieth century schools in central Australia were largely rejected by aboriginal groups, even if there were plans to build bilingual schools, incorporate "aboriginal culture" into the school curricula, and place indigenous people in key positions at the school administration. For Folds, aboriginal groups' lack of control over schools at the local level has been a chief cause of school truancy and indigenous children's poor performance. Thus, in order to understand the formation and reproduction of schools and of the state in local contexts, a key aspect is the alliances between local groups mediated by bureaucracy, schools included.

This chapter is divided into three sections and final remarks. The first section presents an ethnographic account of my introduction to the field. This leads to a discussion of relations between houses in a suku and reflects on the importance of the house as a social institution fundamental for Timorese sociability. These points have been widely acknowledged by the anthropological literature on the area conventionally called eastern Indonesia. I then analyze relations between the houses in Usitasae, suggesting that a group formed by three of them enjoyed precedence over the others, thus making up a kind of local elite. The way the local elites incorporated me within the community indicated that they constantly sought to absorb and control multiple state-related artifacts and means of communication in order to bolster their own primacy in the local context.

The second section focuses on the school system as a technological complex whereby the local people incorporated state artifacts and techniques. I argue that schools granted local elites control over a range of elements: both non-human (calendars,

clothes, food, school yard) and human agents (teachers, parents and students, traditional authorities). I analyze in further detail one particular school celebration – the Arts and Culture Festival at suku Usitasae's central school – in order to underscore its ambiguous character. While officially the event was meant to build national sensibilities, extra-officially it also helped produce the precedence and significance of certain houses vis-à-vis the community at large. The latter goal was achieved mostly through preparation activities and the celebration's protocol: it involved animal sacrifice, mobilization of material resources from the students' parents, and speeches by spokespersons from traditional houses. In this sense, I claim that material and communication resources necessary for the effective operation of schools were often captured by local elites and pressed into the service of their own reproduction.

The third section's argument is that, in the long run, integrating houses within the state may lead to the weakening of their position. Wherever state-based means of production and communication are introduced, the tendency is for the strengthening of solidarity ties between staff and schoolmates, and weakening of kinship-based relations. As a consequence, the centrality of the house as the chief social institution guiding the conduct of community members is progressively undermined.

The concluding remarks underscore the materiality of government practices which provided local elites with a range of reproductive means (jobs in state bureaucracy, goods and money) and communication (school events, parent and teacher meetings). Control of such resources was shared between the state and the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*. Through the mediation of local elites, the state gained physical and moral presence in segments of the population otherwise outside its reach.

The search for the local elites' means of reproduction in Usitasae (or, how I entered the field)

Based on ethnographically defined areas, Timor-Leste is located in the part of the archipelago known as eastern Indonesia. One of its most salient ethnographic institutions is the house (or *ume*, in the area's Meto language). In anthropological literature,

houses are described as social groups based on ties between individuals understood in kinship terms. These groups are formed through relations of descent, common ancestors, and especially through practices of alliance and antagonism vis-à-vis other houses (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). Moreover, houses are minimal exogamous units, that is, marriage between members is restricted. Specifically in eastern Indonesia, relations between houses are asymmetric (Schefold and Domenig 2004).

The Atoni pah meto (henceforth, Atoni) is a Meto-speaking linguistic group to which most people in Oecusse belong. Even though some studies have identified the house as the most important social institution for understanding local sociabilities, anthropologists who worked with the Atoni have described the house in different ways. In the first major scholarly study on these populations, *The political system of Atoni of Timor* (Schulte Nordhoult 1971) , the author treated the ume as a genealogical group. He concluded that this kin-based institution corresponds to a primeval dimension of social relations among the Atoni. The genealogical group would therefore provide a fundamental idiom for understanding political action in the villages and elsewhere (idem, 434).

Cunningham (1962), in turn, argued that the house operates as *ume kanaf* (house-name) for establishing affine matrimonial exchanges (weddings). Instead of classifying it as a genealogical group, Cunningham considered *ume kanaf* to be a "descent group" (Cunningham 1966) which, together with matrimonial exchanges, comprises a total phenomenon influencing multiple dimensions of sociality among the Atoni: symbolism in the architecture of residences (Cunningham 1964), political organization, child care and group belonging (Cunningham 1967).

McWilliam (2002), who studied the Atoni in West Timor during the 1980s and 1990s, reduced the house to a metaphoric idiom for making sense of nominated groups, thus underscoring the notion that these are ensembles of people held together by a common name.[5] For this author, the house is a signifier through

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5. McWilliam argues that *kanaf* (name group) is a better term for making sense of such groupings. Compared with other ethno-linguistic groups in East Timor (Tétum, Ema or Bunak), building actual houses was not as significant and salient

which individuals recognize their social obligations and belonging, as well as an important source of rhetorical representations (McWilliam 2002, 225).

In this chapter, I understand the house as a social institution which assembles groups through different modalities of enlistment, in which I underscore descent and marriage alliances. In the village where I carried out research, there was a strong emphasis on individual attachment to the father's house, thus making the Atoni known for having a patrilineal bias.

During my time in the field, the house figured prominently as a social institution key for making sense of local sociabilities, a fact I quickly realized as I negotiated my own relations with field interlocutors. I was partly regarded as a useful tool for the education of children and adolescents belonging to the houses which I refer to as the suku's "elite". This became evident from the first time I set foot in Oecusse Town, the exclave's coastal capital city, in November 2016.[6] I went there to meet the family of Florindo, an unmarried, 29-year-old former novice at a Catholic religious order, who came from Usitasae.

Florindo encouraged me to move to the village where he was born to do my research, so I could help him get work done. Perhaps because he had first met me at the Resistance Museum in Dili, his interest was to build a museum in the region. He knew I was an anthropologist interested in *kultura* and he thought my expertise could support his project. I told him I could not commit to building a museum, as this would involve mobilizing a lot of time and money, but that I was interested in doing fieldwork there. Regardless of whether or not the project would materialize, he insisted on taking me to his village, as festivities involving rituals for the dead during All Souls' month were still under way.

Initially, I stayed in Nibin, Usitakeno as it was hard to find a truck to take us further upland to where Florindo wished to establish his museum. We were to take another truck the next day.

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for the Atoni: they were not as central a foundation for their individual and social identities.

6. Even though the official name of the city is Pante Makassar, my interlocutors referred to it as Oecusse Town. Here I follow their way of referring to this place.

In Nibin, although it was possible to spot thatched houses, most were made of bricks and cement with zinc roofs, located by the main road. In the backyards stood conical granaries made of wood and straw, where people stored grains, such as maize and rice, after harvest. They were all connected to the electrical grid, a gratuitous and tax-free service (at the time of my fieldwork) implemented in 2015. Caritas, a Catholic development aid agency, had dug a series of wells in the area to provide the community with water. Toilets were situated outside the main house.

Florindo's older brother, Júlio, lived in Nibin. He was a third grade teacher in a local primary school and lived with his maternal grandfather, who was senile and needing care. In the same house was his young sister, his wife and youngest son, who she was still breastfeeding. He welcomed me enthusiastically, perhaps due to the novelty of my presence – few *kais muti* (white mister) visit the region. During this time we accompanied celebrations at the local cemetery, where we ate pork and rice prepared for the ancestors. In the evenings, Júlio, who had some basic knowledge of Portuguese, told me mythic stories and explained kinship relations. It was an exciting time for me, as I came into contact with some of an anthropologist's most classic materials: genealogies and myths. We stayed there for two days.

Gradually, some of the motivations behind Florindo's plan to build the museum became clearer. During conversations about *kultura*, Florindo and Júlio often talked about the house to which they belonged: Quefi. At first they asked me to register genealogic relations and alliances, and collect narratives justifying the centrality of the Quefi house, not just for that particular suku, but for the Oecusse region at large. Florindo suggested a few times that this material would enable them to seek resources from state agencies, thereby channeling income for himself and his house. He also recognized its potential for building ties with other Quefi houses scattered not just in Oecusse but also in the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, which makes up much of the island's western part. These houses were separated from each other over the long period of colonial conquest and occupation. I therefore realized that the house, as a social institution, lay at the center of all the information they conveyed to me.

Júlio and Florindo finally drove me by motorcycle to Puni, their native village in the neighboring suku of Usitasae. The houses and their layout were quite similar to the ones at Nibin: brick houses located on higher plateaus, as people grew vegetables in coastal areas. Most members of the Quefi house lived in Usitasae.

I met Angelo, Florindo and Júlio's father, who was a leader of the Quefi house as well as the *lia na'in* (traditional keeper of history and customs). While we smoke, drank coffee and ate sweet cookies, I recalled some of the stories his sons had told me. But Angelo, visibly upset, asked me to refrain from speaking about the group's narratives.[7] I then realized that I was not supposed to participate in discussions around *kultura*, probably because knowledge about the house's origins was part of a universe to which I should not have had access, or that his children should not have shared. Later Florindo apologized for the faux pas. After this embarrassing event, I felt I had to follow other avenues of gift-exchange in order to investigate that research site.

While the idea of constructing a *kultura* museum was left to one side, mainly as I did not feel comfortable with it, both Angelo and Florindo became excited about the assistance I could provide to Quefi house members to improve their Portuguese language skills. This did not necessarily involve formal Portuguese lessons: rather, it was about maintaining daily contact with a foreign language speaker, so that adults and children could practice. Therefore, the Portuguese language and its significance became the basis for my fieldwork more than documenting *kultura* per se. Portuguese was highly valued as an official state language. While I was in Dili, for instance, I heard from university students that exams for accessing civil-service jobs were all in Portuguese. Educational resources in schools were in both Portuguese and Tétum.

Florindo hoped that knowledge of Portuguese would empower members of his house. I therefore suggested that I could teach the language to the children and adolescents from the houses where the Quefi lived. Florindo liked the idea and often repeated that I should teach only those associated with the domestic units

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7. Angelo was 55 years old and had learned Portuguese in a mission school during Portuguese colonial times.

belonging to the Quefi house. This meant that my classes, which took place in a warehouse, excluded the rest of the villagers.

While I negotiated the terms of my research – about what and with whom I would do it – the exclusivity Florindo had imposed on the teaching soon became the subject of debates between the houses at Usitasae. When Florindo accompanied me to the Tassaibeno School, the suku's main public school, the director Anastasia Eno seemed very pleased with the idea of having a Brazilian teacher in the school.[8] At first I understood her excitement was because teachers had more opportunities to speak Portuguese, and so could increase their linguistic capacities. However, Anastasia, married to José Quelo, also a teacher and chief of the Sila house, also wanted me to teach children and adolescents from their house. As the universe of students expanded to include the Sila house, Florindo suggested that my classes also welcomed children from the Caunan house. It gradually dawned on me that the knowledge capital I had to offer, the Portuguese language, continued to be mobilized according to the houses' institutional logics.

The Usitasae *Kultura* Structure

I later learned that the Quefi, Sila and Caunan houses were part of a group that wished to bolster their own influence in the community. They called themselves *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* (Usitasae *Kultura* Structure). I asked the teachers to tell me more about the three houses.

In the Meto language, the Sila house was *Usif*, while the Quefi and Caunan were *Usif-Naif*. To explain these categories Florindo compared alliance relations between these houses to relations between a king – *usif* – and his guardians and soldiers, *Usif-Naif*. The Quefi house, a *Usif-Naif* house, was usually in charge of tasks involving political leadership and conflict resolution, the village's

8. Those living in Usitasae constantly asked me about my native language. My answer – Portuguese – was understood as a sign of quality. I believe they projected on Brazil a linguistic diversity similar to that of Timor-Leste and Indonesia, and were therefore surprised to know that most in Brazil spoke the national language as their native language.

public relations, including a major role in the performance of certain public sacrificial rituals. Some of these activities were shared with the Caunan house. The Sila house, in turn, was more removed from such worldly tasks, aside from its role in controlling the school. It was a higher authority, holding the position of women-giver to the Quefi house, while the Caunan house received women from the Quefi house. Anastasia told me this was a way of upholding what the literature refers to as the "flow of life" (Fox 1980). However, that was directly contested when I asked one of the Quefi about matrimonial exchanges between the houses in those terms. Angelo Quefi told me that Quefi women may marry whoever they wish. These controversies about who was a donor or recipient of women made me realize that though there were alliances between the houses, in practice they did not unfold without tension.

In spite of such controversies members agreed that the three houses enjoyed precedence over all other houses in the suku and had done since time immemorial. According to the houses' leaders, for instance, relations between the Sila and the Quefi houses had been a diarchy since colonial times and, to some extent, were so during the Indonesian occupation. The Quefi house in particular described the years of the Indonesian occupation as their moment of greatest political prosperity. Mateus, Angelo's late father, was released from prison by the Portuguese and later became the suku chief during that Indonesian period.[9]

The houses making up the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* stood in opposition to the houses of the *Estrutura Povo Usitasae* (Usitasae People Structure). In Meto this ensemble was called the *Tobe Nau* and was formed by four houses: *Liús, Lobo, Massin* and *Táun. Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* considered these houses to lack nobility and largely regarded them as latecomers to the Usitasae political community.

My introduction to political life in Usitasae was shaped by my interlocutors' search for capital to strengthen their houses, as well as

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9. The landscape of Puni, Usitasae's main village, was partly shaped by these houses. Public buildings (the suku's administrative headquarters, the market place, the Binibu Branch School and the health center) were all adjacent to these houses' domestic units, their territorial base.

for weaving affinity relations with houses they considered to be noble.[10] I was not a *kais muti* associated with my interlocutors by filiation or alliance relations, which would have involved offering gifts in money and animals in exchange for women. There were times, however, when they deployed an idiom of kinship in order to make sense of such relations: sometimes, they would treat me as a member of the Quefi house, and members would call me brother, big-father, or son. My relations with them were sui generis: in exchange for an area to do my research and a place to live, I gave them symbolic and material capital (at first, a museum and, subsequently, Portuguese lessons). These gifts were mobilized towards building alliances between the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* houses.

Moreover, this institutional logic prompted many in Usitasae to procure productive and communicative means for reasserting their precedence over other houses. According to McWilliam (2002, 20), the Atoni classification categories seek to establish precedence, that is, to construct social hierarchies encompassing multiple groups, ordering them according to their respective origins. One such expression of precedence is evident in marriage alliances, whereby houses are classified as wife-givers and wife-takers, so that donor houses come first. In this sense, it can be argued that oppositions, such as *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae / Estrutura Povo Usitasae* (synonymous with the opposition *Usif / Tobe Nau*) and *Usif / Usif-Naif*, express some of the distinctions that are proper to the Usitasae political community.

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10. My introduction to the field followed structural principles that, according to Schulter Nordhoult (1971), guided Atoni conduct and action. He surmised that the institutional logics by which these collectives acted was grounded in the following principles: i) a direct relation between territory and genealogical group (the house); ii) genealogical group exogamy and political community endogamy; iii) reciprocity marked by relations of subordination; iv) wife-giving houses are considered to be superior (*feto-mane* relations); v) senior brother superiority; vi) construction of affinity relations in order to sustain the house; vii) tendency to build multiple relations of affinity; viii) patrilineal bias; ix) hierarchical principle differentiating individuals according to precedence; x) existence of key power figures; xi) rituals specifically directed to these figures (Schulte Nordhoult 1971, 394–96).

Means of production derived from government of and through *kultura*

The anthropological literature on the Atoni has underscored a range of strategies through which the houses have sought to materially reproduce themselves. In Schulter Nordhoult's (1971) research during the 1940s in a context culturally similar to that in Oecusse, he found that these populations were essentially agricultural. The fundamental means by which they reproduced things and people in that context stemmed largely from material dimensions including domestic animals (pigs, roosters, goats, cows, buffalos) and vegetables (rice, maize, potato, yam, cassava, peanuts). These products formed the basis for exchanges within the community.[11] These were also exchanged as part of matrimonial alliances, whereby houses built ties with each other by means of total prestations. Cunningham (1962) added that marital ties were also incremented by the circulation of children. Schulter Nordhoult (1981, 50) suggested that during colonial times those populations' realities became mediated by commercial exchanges with mercantile ships, which traded metallic artifacts (knives, swords, coins) and cloth for sandalwood. By and large, the houses as social institutions drew on agricultural and pastoral activities as well as on matrimonial exchanges in order to reproduce goods and persons.

Colonial and postcolonial economic processes had deep transformational effects on people's lives. Materially, Usitasae and Oecusse have gone through substantial changes over the past eighty years: steep population growth; agriculture gained precedence over raising livestock; the market became a fundamental source of new foodstuffs, such as rice and industrialized products; time came to be organized according to the church and state calendars; and, last but not least, new artifacts became part of people's lives, such as motorcycles, trucks, electricity, cell phones, as well as bureaucratic apparatuses (schools, the suku administration).

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11. See Schulter Nordhoult (1971), "The Economic Life" (chapter 3), for a description of Meto-speaking communities' techniques, crafts, livestock management, plant gathering and agriculture (rituals of agricultural fertility).

Therefore the state became a major social actor after independence in 2002 and new institutions introduced into the region (and across the whole country) caused changes in the reproduction dynamics to what is today called *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*. When I asked Angelo about the changes since the country's independence was restored, he pointed to local political dynamics involving the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*. On the one hand, the Quefi house lost dominance over the suku leadership. After living through Portuguese colonialization and the Indonesian occupation, Mateus Quefi, Angelo´s father, died in 1999 of natural causes. During the aftermath of the violence surrounding 1999's independence vote, the position of suku chief remained officially vacant. Once the Timorese government reinstated local elections Angelo's intention to take up the post was frustrated by the fact that other houses in Usitasae prevailed in the elections, namely those involved in transporting and trading goods across the area. Angelo told me that the *Estrutura Povo* had taken over that position of power. His father's defeat in the elections was very humiliating for Florindo. Some Quefi told me on several occasions that this was the fault of "democracy", which introduced the free and secret vote.

State practices have posed multiple challenges for reproducing relations of precedence between these houses and the others. A pessimistic attitude, especially from the Quefi, seemed to stem from the state disrupting traditional ways of building relations of precedence. Yet, in terms of symbolic capital, they regarded being associated with me as a potential leverage for accessing certain goods (mastery over the Portuguese language, for instance) that could help uphold their position as *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* in the context of local social relations.

In contrast with the Quefi, the Sila house in particular seemed to have benefited politically from independence. José Quelo, speaker for the Sila house and liurai, and his wife, Anastasia, were already school teachers at the moment of Indonesian withdrawal in 1999. As most of the teachers at the schools were Indonesian and returned to their native provinces, this couple became the chief authority over basic education schools in Usitasae. Later, however, the Timorese Ministry of Education required that direction and coordination positions in Usitasae schools became temporary, therefore regularly

incorporating new staff. In 2016 Anastasia succeeded José Quelo after his four years as head teacher of the Fundamental Education Tassaibeno Central School. Domingos Caunan, from the Caunan house, took the position of adjunct director. In spite of the state-imposed regulation for staffing changeover, the Sila deployed strategies to maintain control of the school administration. José Quelo, for instance, managed to have his wife elected to his position. The Quefi also mobilized the means to maintain their prestige in relation to the suku administration. In order to overcome constraints imposed by 'democracy', the Quefi occupied certain, non-elected positions. Angelo, for instance, became a member of the suku council. Multiple times during my field research he played a mediating role in conflict resolution across the villages. In exchange for his services, he would receive material resources such as money, alcoholic drinks and pieces of meat.

It occurred to me that my interlocutors were aware of the damaging effects that certain state-based social practices were having on relations of precedence for the houses belonging to the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*. *Democrasia*, which imposed staff changeover and free elections, could easily be understood as a challenge to the distinction between *kultura* and povo houses. On the other hand, the notion of *kultura*, also promoted by the Timorese state's central agencies, emerged as an avenue through which these houses could sustain their relevance in the local context of Usitasae.

The school as a stage for *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae houses*

The chief means by which the school helped reproduce structural relations supporting relations of precedence for *Estrutura Kultura* houses was control over the local administration. This gave them administrative powers over a range of school buildings, events and persons. The ensemble of school facilities at Usitasae encompassed spaces and individuals which overlapped with the territory (and population) that the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae*

claimed to have under its control.[12] Usitasae only had public schools and there were five of them. These schools were hierarchically connected: one was the central school, and the other four were branches. The central school, called Tassaibeno, stood at the suku's geometric center. This school was located four kilometers from the central administration in Puni, and was the only one serving the so-called third cycle (that is, grades seven to nine). The branch schools offered only the first (grades one to four) and/or second cycle (grades five and six), and were located in villages farther from the center.

School branches were subordinate to the central school, which managed funds, distributed material resources, and played a leading role in pedagogic and disciplinary orientation. As a result, the entire teaching body at Usitasae reported to the central school's director. Another source of the director's influence (and consequently the Sila house, to which she belongs) was teacher recruitment. As most (temporary or permanent) teacher hiring involved volunteers, the school administration ended up appointing residents of suku Usitasae. Such recruitment tools were deployed to produce alliances with the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* houses: the school's adjunct director, for instance, was from the Caunan House.[13]

When students at branch schools completed the two first cycles of basic education, those who wished to continue their education usually moved to the central school. Therefore, the Tassaibeno School director had contact with most children and adolescents living in the suku, as they moved on to the third cycle. Adults

12. In Oecusse, as in other municipalities, the distribution of schools follows more or less the same rule: the more remote the region and the lower its population density, less likely it is to find schools serving higher levels of education. Secondary schools (technical training and regular education) are located in the municipality towns, and at the sub-municipality's head offices. Because Usitasae was not head of a sub-municipality, in 2017 it had no secondary school. The poor availability of higher-level schools in areas with low population density also concerns basic education schools (i.e., first to ninth grades). The public school system has the greatest network in the country, followed by private Catholic schools.
13. There was a debate about the permanent hiring of voluntary teachers under way in the Ministry of Education's policy-making arenas.

responsible for those students also interacted indirectly with the school, as most domestic unities in Usitasae included school-aged children and adolescents. Moreover, the control positions held by the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* houses in schools afforded them earnings that were above average in the suku, besides other benefits such as access to motorcycles and computers.[14]

Schools in Usitasae therefore operated as channels for communicating with virtually everyone in the suku. By controlling the school board, José Quelo and Anastasia Elo of the Sila House enjoyed significant articulation and mediation power. They also controlled the deployment and hiring of teachers, to a large extent. By borrowing the means of communication and production from the state, Sila House (and, to a lesser extent, its allies, Quefi and Caunan) was continuously mobilized for promoting the precedence of those houses in Usitasae.

The Arts and Culture festival

The way these groups mobilized schools for their own purposes became particularly evident during a series of events leading up to Timor-Leste's national exams. They were good examples of how these houses advanced their projects of power. The events included multiple communicative and material actions geared towards sustaining a distinction between the *Estrutura kultura Usitasae* and the *Estrutura Povo Usitasae*.

The events associated with the national exams began in August, after the 2017 parliamentary elections. The first relevant stage, which I followed closely, involved a parents-and-teachers meeting held at the start of the third trimester. On a Monday after the second trimester school examinations, at five o'clock in the afternoon, when the Tassaibeno Central School served the third cycle, the school director asked one of the teachers to ring the bell. Three strikes on the rim of a car wheel that hung from the school roof meant that students inside classrooms should go out in order

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14. The Sila also enjoyed greater stability than they would have had from controlling the suku's main administration: they had the possibility of holding a regular office and were not likely to be substituted after elections.

to hear an announcement. All the students stood under the shade of the school's main tree, which made the gathering more pleasant. Anastasia requested that ninth graders remained while the others were dismissed. Each ninth-grade cohort was made up of around 45 adolescents, boys and girls from fourteen to eighteen years old.

Speaking in Tétum, Anastasia announced that a fundamental step for the conclusion of basic education was approaching: preparing for the national exams. These exams were vital so they could graduate and possibly move on to the subsequent stages of secondary and higher education. The exams were also important for the Tassaibeno School to maintain its position of prominence among basic-education schools in Oecusse. Finally, Anastasia announced that the school would hold a meeting with their parents and/or tutors the following Saturday morning; they were supposed to pass on the message. She then dismissed them, sending them back to their homes.

Five days later, on a Saturday morning, those responsible for the adolescents showed up for the meeting. Fathers, mothers and other relatives gathered inside one of the school's classrooms. They sat on chairs and the teachers stood in front of the black board. While the students from the other grades received their second trimester marks, the relatives waited for the arrival of the teachers to lead the meeting.

Aze, teacher of arts and culture, was in charge of conducting the meeting and taking care of the "protocol", that is, the document containing the meeting's plan and list of matters to be discussed. After reading it, he invited those present to join him in a Catholic prayer, directed by Domingos Caunan, a former Catholic Church priest. His prayer was followed by another one, led by the director Anastasia, who also introduced the staff and noted the presence of her husband, José Quelo, Usitasae's *liurai*, who was treated differently to the other teachers. But it was teacher Pedro, not part of the *Estrutura Kultura* but an ally of José Quelo, who was in charge of the meeting's main topic.[15] With 28 years as a teacher, Pedro had

15. Pedro arrived in Oecusse in 1990. A native of Manufahi, Pedro was transferred to the Pinibu Branch School through the Indonesian policy of teacher circulation. He married a woman from Oecusse and decided to settle there.

built a very close relationship to José Quelo over the many years they had worked together. During José Quelo's first term as director of the Tassaibeno School, Pedro held the position of adjunct director. When I was there, he was the school's Portuguese language teacher.

Pedro talked about three issues. The first concerned the importance of national exams; the second, how contributing to *kultura* would help students perform well; and third, how parents should support their children so they could be fully dedicated to preparing for the national exams. Speaking in Tétum, Pedro elaborated further on the latter's importance. He explained that the exams took place in every school in the country, and it was vital that the suku Usitasae was successful in this enterprise. These standardized tests occurred over a week, and all Timorese schools would be ranked according to the scores obtained. Pedro proudly noted that, of the public schools, the Tassaibeno School came first in Oecusse in 2016. The good performance resulted in the school director, Anastasia, going to a conference in Mozambique. He insisted that it was fundamental for the school to maintain its leading position.

Pedro then explained that parents should also contribute to the school's performance. One recommendation was to locate students closer to schools, so they could focus on their studies. This meant that these adolescents should gather in houses where they could spend the night studying. Relatives should reduce the students' family commitments so they would have time to prepare for the exams, and provide them with food and relief from domestic chores. Families living close to the school should host other students and organize study groups at night. Later on, Pedro explained to me that the preference for holding study groups close to the school also aimed at enhancing class attendance, as students missed class due to long commuting.

The second point referred to contributions to the ceremonial activities that would be carried out before classes start. Pedro considered it important to perform rituals for the benefit of *kultura* and the ancestors, so that students would be in good health during the exams. He explained that ritual procedures for the ancestors were important to make sure that students would attend the exams.

Without such rituals, they may become sick and fail the test. Thus, parents should help their children by arranging traditional attire for the "Arts and Culture Festival", and by contributing financially to the animal sacrifices the school would perform on the eve of festivities.

After the meeting the dynamics and ninth graders' efforts at the Tassaibeno School were directed towards national exams. In the domestic unit where I lived, two boys moved to houses closer to the school: Augustinho Quefi and Moisés Tout. Agustinho was part of the Quefi house and moved in with Angelo Quefi, a parallel patrilateral cousin, because his original domestic unit was very poor. Angelo and Júlio became closer to Augustinho because he was quite outstanding in the school context. They understood that this relation could be beneficial for their family. Moisés Tout had distant kinship ties with the Quefi house. He was part of the Tout house, a wife-giver in relation to the Eno house. Maria Eno, Angelo's wife, belonged to the latter. As Moisés Tout came from a remote village, he lived at Angelo Quefi's house. It is important to highlight that Moisés kept himself at arm's length from the domestic unit and did not feel part of it. He slept on his own in a shed and was always the last one to eat during meals. While Augustinho went to live with a friend and his parents, Moisés Tout shared a place with three other boys in an empty hut next to the school. They shared domestic tasks, such as cooking, and studied at night. Apparently, choices guiding the formation of study groups belonged to the students, who ended up strengthening ties with some of their schoolmates.[16]

While study groups were under way, ninth graders began rehearsing traditional Oecusse dances for the *kultura* festivities. Aze, the arts and culture teacher, led the practice, which took place in the school courtyard and adjacent areas. The dance, called bso'ot, consisted of intensive leg movements, whereby dancers stomped their heels on the ground in order to extract sound from their main instrument, a rattle tied to each leg. These rattles were made up of small spherical bells.

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16. Being a man, I felt uncomfortable with (and had difficulties) gaining access to the female sororities.

One month before the national exams, held during the first week of September, students had to have a photograph taken. These black and white photos would be attached to their identification tags for the exams. They spent the entire Saturday morning waiting for the photographer, who was at suku Bobometo's central school. The following weekend there was another meeting of ninth graders concerning the national exams where teacher Pedro taught them how to fill in the exam answer sheets.

The Arts and Culture festival was held in early October, 2017. Originally scheduled on a Saturday, it was postponed because the leaders of the Quefi and Sila House, Angelo Quefi and José Quelo, were taking part in ritual festivities for celebrating matrimonial alliances between their two houses. The new time was on a Tuesday morning. First and second cycle students, who would normally be in class, were excused so they could watch the performances. Students from other third cycle grades also attended the ninth-grade presentations, with the community at large, especially those responsible for the performers.

Many stood awaiting the beginning of festivities, scheduled to start at 8 am, in the Tassaibeno School's central courtyard. Close to the trees that provided ample shade, women from the community began preparations for playing the metal gong and drums. The ninth-year students wore traditional attire with white shirts and traditional cloaks, string purses, swords and sheaths, and rattles tied to their legs. All the other students wore school uniforms, consisting of black shorts (for boys) and skirts (for girls), and shirts – yellow for first and second cycles, and white for the third cycle. They watched their schoolmates from less privileged spots in the shade.

An animal sacrifice ritual opened the celebration, belatedly, around eleven in the morning. Community leaders gathered around the pole to raise the Timorese flag: chiefs of villages and sukus, and heads of the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* houses. Teachers placed LA cigarettes, Bintang beer and a small basket with rice next to the pole. Squatting down with his eyes closed, Angelo Quefi voiced ritual words, seeking contact with the ancestors. At this moment, two parents brought him a pig and a rooster. After tossing some rice by the flagpole, Angelo sacrificed the two animals using a knife.

Photo 1: Ninth grader wearing traditional attire

Later, Angelo went over to the shadiest tree in the school grounds, followed by the leaders. Like the flagpole, the tree was also a site for offerings of cigarettes, beers and cooked rice. More people encircled this space than the sacrifice around the flagpole – students' parents and other teachers. I inquired about the reasons for two separate sacrifices, and Domingos Caunan, the adjunct director, explained: "the pig for the grandparents of the East Timorese flag is for the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* houses; the pig for the tree's grandparents is for the *Estrutura Povo*".

Soon after the second sacrifice the teacher responsible for the protocol introduced a Catholic prayer and a speech by director Anastasia. Using a microphone, Anastasia named all authorities present – the teachers, Angelo Quefi and, once again, her own husband – and turned to the adults and students. She noted the importance of developing Timor-Leste and of Timorese *kultura*. Anastasia then summoned the panel responsible for evaluating the

groups performing at the Arts and Culture Festival. The judges were both local teachers, and sat by the verandah of one of the school's two buildings.

Photo 2: Poster from October 4th, 2017− "Together, we will develop talents in Arts and Culture 'Bso'ot' E.B.C. Tassaibeno. Tassaibeno – 10-04-2017"

Then the presentations began. Overall, the ninth graders' bso'ot dance groups performed synchronized movements, accompanied by women playing instruments. Intermittently, following a usually male leader, they would stop and make gestures with the swords and sheaths. Afterwards, a boy and a girl approached the judges and offered them LA cigarettes, and areca and betel nuts. They reunited with the dance group and left, concluding the presentation. The judges evaluated the presentations by ranking the groups between zero and ten.

After the presentations, the authorities (suku chiefs and house representatives), teachers and the children of certain teachers ate the sacrificed animals for lunch. Everyone else returned to their homes as there was not enough to go round. Authorities from Dili came to invigilate the ninth graders' national exams several weeks later.

The impact of schools on nation building

Although this analysis focuses on the material and ideological reproduction of autochthonous social institutions, largely regarded as standing in opposition to nation- and state-building, it is possible to find in the ethnographic materials some of the effects that the houses' incorporation of bureaucratic means and school education have on the production of the Timorese nation-state. One of the most salient effects has been the role of schools as channels for communicating state ideas and values, such as development and democracy.

Other effects relate to the centralizing tendency that schools may gradually introduce in local communities. The lack of secondary and tertiary schools leads some houses to invest in the circulation of its members throughout networks formed by the nation-state: high school students go to the municipalities' capital cities, higher education students go to Dili. As this kind of expectation grows among students and their parents, the houses' human capital becomes increasingly oriented towards the state. Moreover, since the Indonesian occupation, paramount houses in Usitasae have employed the civil service – for teachers in particular – as means of material reproduction. This also leads to increasing reliance on the main administration, which becomes a source of regular income.[17]

One effect of nationalization – less obvious for those involved, especially houses belonging to the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* – concerns how schools are changing the previous dynamics of socialization. Schools have afforded and intensified new ways of building alliances between subjects. Friendship between José Quelo and Pedro, for instance, did not follow traditional descent or alliance relations. Their relationship developed over the long period of time they worked together, an experience that turned them into each other's confidants. In other words, they were close

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17. I have not discussed these points, but ethnographic data related to the distribution of school lunches and recruitment of teachers corroborate this centralizing tendency. The school directors used to purchase food for the school lunches, subsequently a task directly managed from Oecusse's capital. Similarly, bureaus of education took on an increasingly central role in teacher recruitment, by performing leveling exams and deploying staff from other regions.

not because they belong to allied houses or from women-exchange relations, but because they worked together. It seemed something similar took place with the students, who gathered in groups because they were classmates and spent more of the day together than they did with their own relatives. Such changes in the dynamics of sociability meant that relations between subjects were shaped less by the houses than by the state. When it came to trust and affection, it is possible to envisage how schools enabled colleagues to construct ties as important as those between siblings and siblings-in-law. Therefore, if the house indeed remains a central institution in the community, the state has taken on an increasingly relevant role.

Closing Remarks

The ethnographic notes presented an account of how I settled into my research and described how certain subjects in Usitasae sought to strengthen their houses. I noted the importance of the houses as social institutions shaping how my interlocutors understood my presence, and sought to press it into their own service. Originally, Florindo was drawn to me as someone who could build museum for his house, the Quefi. Even as there were disagreements about my access to their narratives, I became attractive for other reasons: Portuguese language practice for those belonging to Quefi house and mediating alliances with the Sila and Caunan houses.

I observed how people regarded me as an avenue for acquiring capital. Similarly, the Timorese states' school system also became a kind of capital for reinforcing the houses' reproduction dynamics. Those belonging to the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* mobilized the school's facilities to replicate the conditions underlying their precedence over the other houses. Schools encompassed and were themselves constituted of a set of communicative and material means that *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* engaged to reproduce their houses.

Through the school administration and the multiple instruments it provided (appointments, celebrations, meetings), the Sila house worked towards maintaining its distinct role, as well

as that of its allies, the Quefi and Caunan houses. The Arts and Culture festival was one of the means by which paramount houses sought to reaffirm that distinction. The enactment of two sacrifices (one for *kultura* and one for the *povo*) was a key means for communicating the distinction between the *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* and the *Estrutura Povo Usitasae*. I argue that schools were an important site for reproducing certain local political structures.

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Encounters with justices:
Transpositions and subversions of modernity in contemporary East Timorese legal practices[1]

Henrique Romanó Rocha[2]

This chapter analyses a form of legal administration mobilized by the East Timorese state in order to bring together local forms of conflict resolution and state justice. I discuss how this kind of state intervention has sought to enhance its own network in civil society. My empirical subject is the mobile-courts project, which I followed during ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Timor-Leste in 2014. The way in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) celebrated mobile courts as effectively promoting *formal justice* prompted my decision to take the project as my research focus (UNDP 2011; 2012; 2013), as did the narratives of multiple actors involved in the advancement of state justice in the country. Moreover, I thought it could be a window into the encounter between different legal sensibilities, and into how East Timorese legal actors have been dealing with these processes.[3]

The mobile-courts project's aim was to help consolidate modern state legal structures in Timor-Leste. It operated by organizing hearings and trials in areas far from three of the four district courts, located in Dili, Suai, Baucau and Oecusse.[4] The

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4. Timor-Leste comprises 12 municipalities and one special administrative region, Oecusse, but has only four district courts. The jurisdiction of Dili, Baucau and Suai

project's objective was to enhance the presence of legal institutions in remote areas; to inform villagers about their rights, duties and other elements of public administration; and to disseminate so-called *formal* (state) *justice* to the country's hinterlands.

This chapter claims that one of the mobile courts' effects was the reinforcement of relations and synergy between state justice and local forms of conflict resolution, so-called *traditional justice* (UNDP 2011).[5] In many cases, the mobile courts simply ratified conflict-resolution decisions already attained through local mechanisms. From a legal standpoint, this approximation involved an encounter between different forms of not only justice, but of the very conception of life. People carried their non-modern, non-individualistic notions of rights and expectations of conduct, such as decorum and hierarchy among women/fertility givers and receivers, to the mobile courts.

I also provide ethnographic density data to enhance the statistical studies that celebrate the mobile-courts project as a success story. I show that many of the cases the mobile courts claimed to have resolved actually involved the withdrawal of complaints, including in cases of public offenses where this was not supposed to have happened. Finally, my ethnographic account discusses the form and content of legal pedagogies the mobile courts mobilized.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to make sense of some of the tensions that have emerged from the delay in achieving expectations as local and state forms of conflict resolution meet. It discusses some of the dilemmas stemming from a project of legal modernization and implementation of rights in contexts where legal sensibilities are significantly different from the ones that gave rise to global models based on individual rights and the very notion of human rights.

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extends to three other municipalities. The district court in the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse is the only one limited to its own territory. Due to the court's smaller human and geographical area of coverage, those responsible for the mobile courts project decided not to include it.

5. Because these are local categories, I chose to italicize "traditional law", "traditional justice", "formal law", "formal justice", and their synonyms.

Data analyzed in this chapter were collected during fieldwork conducted in the second half of 2014. I participated in three mobile-court sessions, each of which involved a range of different cases. Two of these occurred in the municipality of Baucau (in the towns of Vemasse and Baguia), and the other in Aileu, the largest town in the homonymous municipality.

My arguments are organized into four sections. In the first I present a brief history of relations between state justice and local forms of conflict resolution in Timor-Leste in the past few decades. I seek to show that the mobile-courts project's inspiration came out of a learning process. This discussion also considers the post-independence efforts to create and develop a legal sector in the country.[6] The second section briefly outlines the creation of the mobile-courts project, and presents some figures and its general modus operandi. The following section analyses a case I heard during one of the project's hearings. I use the case to demonstrate the complex entanglement of issues involved in what I have called "encounters with modes of justice". In this encounter, modern and local sensibilities were in constant friction and negotiation. Section four introduces other kinds of considerations, based on the mobile-court sessions I observed. Finally, the concluding section discusses how the project, while aiming to bring citizens closer to the state, also entertained a direct dialogue with global movements defending the valorization of local traditions, a process which has potential effects for the future of legal administration in Timor-Leste.

Justice in postcolonial Timor-Leste

The land known now as Timor-Leste was divided into a series of princedoms at the time Portuguese colonial rule began. During World War II Japanese troops occupied the territory and, on their defeat, Portugal governed until 1975. After Portugal withdrew, the country declared its independence, cut short by the invasion of its neighbor, Indonesia, in 1975. In 1976 Indonesia annexed the territory to be its 27th province and up to 180,000 people were killed

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6. Here I take the category of 'development' as an ideology legitimizing modernization.

during its brutal occupation. In 1999 the United Nation-managed Popular Consultation saw the Timorese vote for self-determination, thus ending Indonesian rule, but only after orchestrated violence and bloodshed led to the intervention of international peacekeepers. The establishment of a transitional government headed by the United Nations finally enabled the resumption of independence in May, 2002.

As an independent country, Timor-Leste ushered in a fully-fledged modernization process. This process has included the formation, development and consolidation of institutional regimes directed to capitalist exploitation and the expansion of an individualistic ideology (Giddens 1991; Dumont 2000).

Of the multiple processes involved in the country's modernization, this chapter focuses on efforts to deal with challenges faced by state or *formal law* in its attempts at reaching out to East Timorese citizens, especially those living in the country's hinterlands.[7] The country's poor network of *formal justice* has been a cause for concern among those championing the country's development. The view is that it poses a risk to state sovereignty at large, especially for the omission of consideration for individuals in cases of offense against human rights supposedly common in the sphere of *traditional justice*. Overall, the praxis of many development projects and programs immediately after independence disparaged *traditional justice*. The perspective at the time was that local forms of conflict resolution did not respect constitutionally ratified international treaties; jeopardized respect for the rights of vulnerable subjects, such as women and children; and its high ritual costs involved economic loss to East Timorese (IRC 2003; JSMP 2002).

From the perspective of my interlocutors in Dili – most of whom were operators in state *formal justice* – the East Timorese preference for local forms of conflict resolution stemmed from the following: the state's legal process was ineffective and slow; local forms of conflict resolution were regarded as being more just, familiar, simple and inexpensive; local forms of conflict resolution

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7. According to the 2015 census, over 70% of the country's population lives in rural areas.

were considered to be immemorial and sacred, legitimated on cultural grounds; and, in these local practices, the contending parties were themselves in charge of jointly finding a solution to the conflict, thus re-establishing the regular flow of life (TAF 2013). Other possible reasons for the population's mistrust of state justice were that *formal law* is based on written norms and procedures in a context of high rates of illiteracy; that its procedures encourage the parties to see each other as adversaries; and that it is often conducted by international judges or inexperienced persons, who rarely make decisions considered by either party as fair (JSMP 2002; 2012). The fact that during the 24-year occupation these legal operators were Indonesian also contributed to discrediting this kind of justice.

Other factors may also explain such suspicion, particularly a fundamental difference in legal sensibilities (Geertz 1997) guiding formal state law and customary law, also known as *tradisaun* (in 'local' Portuguese) or *adat* (in Indonesian) and *lisan* (in Tetun). Geertz crafted the notion of legal sensibilities in order to approach justice not only as a way of pacifying conflicts, but also as a medium through which a given society may express its way of interpreting and assessing what happens in the universe that encompasses it, besides organizing and reproducing cosmologies (Simião 2011). For this author, the encounter of different legal sensibilities, especially in colonial and postcolonial situations, engenders multiple practical problems for the administration of justice. It may result in the poor penetration of state mechanisms and institutions, besides making evident how differently diverse population groups understand the very idea of 'justice'.

One example clarifies how different legal sensibilities may, in practice, draw many Timorese away from *formal justice*, even after centuries of foreign domination. It concerns a 'lesson' a Timorese prosecutor delivered to those attending a mobile-court hearing, part of the project under analysis:

> Let's take the case of a person driving a motorcycle, who runs over a pig on the road. For formal justice [referring to the state's way of resolving conflicts], responsibility lies with the pig's owner, who let it wander about unconstrained. The latter should therefore bear the accident's costs. For traditional justice [referring to local forms of conflict resolution], the driver

is the one to blame, because these things do not happen by chance (interview).

The distance between many Timorese and *formal justice* was identified during the influx of multiple agencies with international staff who came to work during the country's reconstruction after the devastation accompanying the withdrawal of the Indonesian forces in 1999. Different actors have proposed multiple solutions to the gap: from banning *traditional justice* altogether and replacing it entirely with *formal law*, to codifying and incorporating *traditional justice* into the country's constitution. These more radical suggestions did not last long. On the one hand, complete substitution would have overloaded the justice system, which already had a significant backlog of cases. On the other, incorporating *traditional justice* and its associated rites into the constitution turned out to be impossible for a system based on the active participation of agents from other spiritual spheres, whose wills are not homogeneous and details about which should not even be shared. Moreover, according to Simião (2013), the main purpose of traditional justice is to reassert positions within complex local hierarchical classifications, thus standing in opposition to the modern and constitutionally sanctioned notion of persons as equal individuals.

Given these and other complications, those involved in the development of Timor-Leste's justice system have, in the past few years, sought to research and develop projects encouraging communication between these two legal sensibilities. At the time when I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in 2014, there was a prevalence of discourses focused on the dialectical construction of bridges between *formal* and *traditional* justice, rather than forcibly imposing a substitution of one by the other. This option tried gradually shortening the distance between *formal law* and the average Timorese citizen.

Those involved in the development of a local legal system came to see *traditional justice*, once considered to be an obstacle to progress, as an ally. Even though *traditional justice* continued to be regarded as being less 'evolved', in practice it could help settle many disputes and, therefore, maintain social peace, as well as avoid the accumulation of lawsuits or court rulings that both

parties would have considered as unfair. By 2014, debates in the country no longer focused on whether or not the approximation between *formal* and *traditional law* should happen, but rather on how it should occur in accordance with the needs of such a plural and disputed development domain. This effort has been advanced through multiple kinds of mediations, among which was the mobile-courts project.

The project's inception, achievements and modus operandi

The inspiration for the mobile-courts project came from a Portuguese magistrate working at the Suai District Court in 2008. He proposed the initiative after realizing how difficult it was for the parties to attend hearings and trials, due to the lack of funds, distance from courts, bad road conditions, and people's other commitments such as tending the land or taking part in cultural ceremonies (JSMP 2010; 2015). The magistrate then began carrying out some of his hearings and trials closer to where the parties lived, initially funded by the Suai District Court. Since this early experience turned out to be effective, he gained further support from the Appeals Court and the Ministry of Justice. This funding lasted until mid-2010, when the initiative began to receive support from the UNDP and the Australian overseas aid program (JSMP 2011).[8] That same year the mobile-courts project came into existence under the coordination of UNDP's Justice System Programme (JSP).

During its hearings and trials, the project allowed the presence of not only the parties directly involved in a given dispute, but also other residents in the region. Critics of the Timorese justice system considered that this level of public access would help gradually bridge the gap between *formal* and *traditional justice*. The project also promoted itself as improving the capacity of Timorese operating in different parts of the justice system, as they worked in coordination with actors of multiple hierarchies and functions. The project assembled prosecutors, defenders, court officials, police

8. UNDP was the only donor that continued its support for the project after 2012 (PNUD 2014a).

officers, magistrates and other agents of the justice system both for the planning and the implementation stages of mobile courts.

In 2013, in just three days, the mobile-court sessions resolved more cases than the Suai District Court did in two weeks (PNUD 2014b). In 2015, even after the Timorese government's controversial expulsion of international magistrates, mobile courts settled 455 cases in 12 districts. This accounted for 16.3% of all closed cases in the country's courts that year (90% of which were referred to as criminal cases) and over half of all the 870 cases heard by the mobile courts in 2015 (PNUD 2016). In 2014, while I was in the field, local justice system development reached an important milestone: for the first time Timor-Leste conducted hearings and trials in all its municipalities and in the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse (PNUD 2015). Mobile courts received the most credit for it: that year there were 62 sessions and over 360 cases were heard.

According to my interlocutors who worked for the justice system and UNDP in Dili, mobile courts began by selecting cases based on locations that are close to each other, but distant from the district court in charge of that jurisdiction. Priority was given to cases which had the same prosecutor and the defender, not unusual given that fewer than ten individuals occupy these positions in each district court. District court staff, composed of both court officials and magistrates, conducted the screening. The court's administrative judge, the highest ranking official in the district legal hierarchy, needed to review and approve the cases selected. The head of the court officials at Dili District Court, for instance, told me that in his jurisdiction, the administrative judge actually conducted the selection.

After the administrative judge approved the case, the district's head of the court officials had to find a date when the defender, magistrate and prosecutors were available. The court then sent a letter to the police officers in charge of the administrative seat where the hearings and/or trials would be held, notifying them of the plan and the expectation that they would collaborate with it. Cooperation with local agents included their presence during the hearings (for security reasons), and their finding a venue in which to hold the court. Usually, but not necessarily, sessions took place

at local police stations, also called esquadras, but they could also occur in buildings belonging to public administration.

The court also sent hearing/trial notifications to the parties involved. Confirmation by the parties was not a requirement for the courts to happen. Having set the dates and times, chosen the cases determined the venue and notified those involved, the head of the district court's officials sent a memo to UNDP communicating all of the relevant details. The information included the kinds of offenses involved, names of all those providing testimonies and the victims, judicial proceeding numbers, and so forth. UNDP then released the funds, most of which covered daily allowances and transportation costs for taking legal agents to the hinterlands. Each mobile-court session cost UNDP around U$2,750.00 (USAID 2014).

The following section is an in-depth analysis of a case I observed during a mobile court, which raises issues and points out complications that challenged the project's implementation and the very process of state formation in the country.

Angelmo x Leopoldo

I begin this analysis with a statement of complaint the Timorese prosecutor´s office presented concerning a neighbor dispute over a parcel of land,[9] which led to alleged death threats. This case was tried during a mobile-court session held in December 4, 2014 in Baguia, to where I traveled with UNDP personnel. The complaint stated that:

> On October 13, 2013, at around 08:30am, in the region of Nunudere, in the sub-district of Baguia, district of Baucau, the indicted Leopoldo Pinto, holding a katana (machete), went to the backyard of the complainant, Angelmo Maria Aparício, and they began to quarrel about that land parcel. The indicted approached the complainant and told him to stop working in that backyard. The indicted threatened him with the katana, saying "with

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9. Conflicts over land tenure in Timor-Leste are very common and varied. According to some reports, they are the second most common kind of civil dispute brought to *formal justice*, after those involving alimony payments (JSMP 2015). For an analysis of land-conflict management in contemporary Timor-Leste, see Oviedo's chapter in this volume.

this katana I will kill you, and there's no problem". After hearing this threat, the complainant left the place. The indicted acted voluntarily, freely and consciously, knowing that this conduct was liable to legal punishment. He therefore jeopardized the complainant's freedom of circulation, as the latter became afraid of the threats.

This was only the first hearing, but both parties did attend. Leopoldo, the defendant, was a 57-year-old advisor at the Ministry of Tourism. He had support from a public defender and two lawyers who accompanied him from Dili. He was from Baguia but lived in the capital, and his position afforded him an income that was far above the average in Timor-Leste – over ten times as much as the minimum wage. Angelmo was a 67-year-old local farmer, who lived in a village close to the police station and whose livelihood came entirely from whatever he could produce on the land.

The dispute between the two men was, however, much older and more complex that the proceedings could recognize. They were in fact relatives: Leopoldo was a nephew of Angelmo's father. Their relations involved over forty years of mutual hostility based on political differences, family conflicts and other problems involving land parcels that harked back to Portuguese colonial times. They were parties in another lawsuit that had not been resolved through formal justice, which was to decide ownership of the land parcel where Angelmo was working when he was allegedly threatened by Leopoldo. Leopoldo's defense stated he had just been warning his cousin that no one was supposed to work on that piece of land until the court ruled on its ownership. Angelmo said Leopoldo was not a good character and had taken part in the Indonesian campaign of terror in Baguia during the 1970s, which included burning houses and killing people. Faced with these statements and other information regarding older conflicts brought to light early on in the hearing, the magistrate pointed out that they were there to address only the death threat:

> Today we are here to discuss the threat: each day, one thing. That's how it works. We separate out the problems. That's what we are doing now. Some other day we will discuss the problem of the land, which will also be settled by the courts, as I have already explained to you. So, hold on. This has to be sorted out! Otherwise, when you die, your grandchildren will continue to struggle and the problem will never come to an end...

Despite the accusations, Leopoldo kept claiming his innocence. He said there had indeed been a quarrel, but not on the day mentioned in the complaint. In particular, he stressed that there had been no threat, much the less with a katana in his hand. Angelmo, in turn, kept reaffirming the details in the complaint. The judge called on a witness appointed by the defense, Mr. Inácio de Souza, a neighbor of Angelmo and therefore also of Leopoldo. The man said that he had known both parties for decades, but he could neither confirm what exactly happened that day nor even the date itself, and he had not been present during the quarrel. He only welcomed Angelmo into his house after the event – "the only thing I remember is that it was morning," he said. At this moment, the prosecutor and the defender exchanged a glance and smiled.

The judge became impatient with the lack of evidence. The prosecutor raised his tone and said that somebody was lying, which was itself an offense. The judge then asked both men to stand up, look into each other's eyes, without fighting, and talk about what had happened. Both maintained their versions of the event, but interesting information emerged from their statements. Although Leopoldo was an agent of modernity and resident in the capital, he told Angelmo that he should not have taken the case to formal justice, that he should have heard the police's, the family's and his own pleas that the matter be resolved through traditional justice. Angelmo declared he had not acceded to the request because he knew that Leopoldo wished to kill him. Visibly upset, he kept saying that Leopoldo was committing a sin by lying before the judge, because the judge stood right below God. Moreover, Angelmo said that by lying Leopoldo was also negating his ancestors, and concluded by exclaiming that "it was my father who arranged your mother's *barlake* [bridewealth]!"[10] Leopoldo became distressed and began to shout back, but was quickly silenced by the authorities.

10. For Silva (2014) "[...] bridewealth (as opposed to dowry) involves gift exchanges between women givers and takers, so as to establish alliance relations and rights over persons. These alliances imply a series of reciprocal obligations. The amount and type of goods that make up bridewealth vary according to the individual and collective subjects' social positions involved. In contemporary urban Timor-Leste, matrimonial prestations are referred to as *barlake*. There is no

At least three points stand out from this case. First, it is significant that both Angelmo and Leopoldo claimed lack of consideration for *kultura* as a category of accusation. Moreover, Angelmo's claim that only God stood above the judge evokes an element of inviolability that seems to echo an important trait of local conflict resolution: the sanction uttered by sacred entities that participate actively in *traditional law* is key for the agreement that occurs after rituals aimed at pacifying ongoing conflicts. It seems therefore that Angelmo's speech sought to draw a bridge between *formal* and *traditional justice*.

The kinship dimension present in their dialogue requires attention. In local practice, alliance relations establish attachments between family groups (the houses of origin of those to be married). These are rigorously regulated by ritual exchanges that are part of bridewealth (*barlake*), which define positions of women giver or receiver – or, in local parlance, *umane* and *manefoun,* respectively.[11] According to Simião (2013), the *umane-manefoun* relational language is fundamental for *traditional law*, especially when parties in conflict are linked through it. This is precisely the situation in focus here: it was probably Angelmo's house that provided Leopoldo's wife, as it was his father who negotiated Leopoldo's mother's *barlake*. If that is so, then Angelmo is Leopoldo's *umane*, and therefore stands in a hierarchically superior position according to local kinship. By declaring this kinship in front of everyone, Angelmo deployed the logic of traditional law to show that, besides being a victim, he enjoyed more cultural prestige than the established, well-dressed and modern Leopoldo. He also evoked an idiom of ingratitude and breach of ancestral duty in order to further delegitimize his adversary.

This case is therefore a good example of how encounters between *formal* and *traditional justice* have unfolded in local practice. While Angelmo was offended by the accusation that he

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consensus however as to what it is, nor what are its effects on sociability – in this sense, *barlake* is best understood as a floating signifier. In fact, it is by strategically mobilizing the multiple meanings attributed to *barlake* that certain individuals negotiate their place in the world" (8).

11. For more on the alliance between *manefoun* and *umane,* see Silva (2012).

had betrayed *kultura* by mobilizing state law, it was he who evoked the superiority of local networks and obligations as a tactic to achieve his own ends. The same can be seen in Leopoldo's attitude: even though he had become a modernizing agent in the country, he also evoked *kultura* even before the hearing, by pleading with Angelmo not to take the case to *formal justice*.

Moreover, Angelmo's anger when accused of betraying *kultura* is better understood if we consider that it was possibly Leopoldo who had not appropriately fulfilled the obligations implicated in the *umane-manefoun* relation that bound them. Although he held an important position in the Ministry of Tourism and enjoyed superior financial status, he was inferior to Angelmo by local standards, and therefore should neither have threatened him nor exacerbated a bad relationship over the decades. Finally, Leopoldo had achieved financial success due to material reproduction implicated in family networks that existed due to the involvement of Angelmo's father in negotiations for Leopoldo's parents' marriage. In that sense, even if the land parcel did not belong to Angelmo, he believed that Leopoldo was indebted to him and to his close kin.

Even though the lawsuit was shelved weeks later through lack of evidence, this, of all the cases that I observed, clearly shows the complexities involved in the encounter between the 'two forms of justice' present in Timor-Leste. Individuals in cases managed by *formal justice* bring with them the traditional language of conflict resolution, such as the *umane-manefoun* logic and a relation with the sacred. The following section brings to light other issues that emerged from my participation in the mobile courts.

Other remarks

According to current law in Timor-Leste, there are two kinds of criminal offenses − public or semi-public. The former are considered to be more serious: prosecution does not require the filing of a complaint and anyone, not just the victim, may report them to the police. The semi-public category concerns offenses that are considered to be less serious, and criminal proceedings can only begin after the victim (or, if the victim is minor, his or her

representative) exercises the right to complain up to six months after the event (RDTL 2009). But, different from public offenses, the law allows for renouncing and withdrawing complaints. According to Article 216 of the Timorese Code of Penal Procedure (RDTL 2006), the victim may withdraw a complaint of a semi-public offense before a final decision is made by the judge, therefore closing the case.

As multiple reports have noted, since Timor-Leste became independent, most offenses in the country have been committed against women, especially in the domestic sphere, and were classified as gender-based or domestic violence. In 2010, a law against domestic violence (N° 7/2010) came into force which turned it into a public offense (RDTL 2010; Santos Filho 2016). Yet, in the mobile courts that I attended, Timorese male and female magistrates consistently ignored the law and allowed for the withdrawal of complaints in these cases. Neither male nor female prosecutors ever questioned these decisions during hearings and trials. This behavior indicates that both local legal agents and the parties involved in formal justice proceedings in Timor-Leste were subverting its underlying legal logic. All the domestic-violence cases heard by the mobile courts I attended were closed after the original complaints were withdrawn.

In a mobile court in Vemasse, I noted another pattern of conduct that also subverted the logic of formal law. Without questioning, the judge accepted as damages an amount the parties' family had previously agreed upon, which relied on local forms of conflict resolution. Moreover, as some reports have indicated, magistrates frequently agreed that compensation was to be transferred to the victim's family rather than to the victim herself. This follows the standard of *traditional law*: locally, a person is not regarded as an individual separated from his or her family group. This form of compensation is however vehemently criticized from a human-rights perspective, since damages should go to victims and not their families (Hohe and Nixon 2003; Graydon 2005; Grenfell 2006).

Also noteworthy was the informal character of the sessions. As Timor-Leste is a small country with few legal staff, legal actors operating within the same jurisdiction were likely to know each

other. There were even relatives working together in the local justice system: in a mobile court I attended in Aileu, a prosecutor and defender were not only cousins but bore the same first and last names. As a result, at least in the sessions where I was present, magistrates, defenders and prosecutors seemed to act in concert for finding solutions, never acting as opposing parties.

During these sessions, I also noted how Timorese legal agents made an effort to mediate between the domains of local legal sensibilities and the assumptions of 'modern citizenship'. In the context of justice, these efforts may involve legal pedagogies aimed at shaping conceptions and meanings by reorienting conduct, similarly to the economic pedagogy suggested by Silva (2016), and in Santos Filho's terms (2017). Besides the prosecutor's in-court lesson about the pig casualty referred to earlier– who also sought to justify the state's efforts to draw people closer to *formal justice* – it was common to explain to the public at the mobile courts what would be discussed, and the functions of the magistrate, the public prosecutor and the defender during hearings and proceedings. They also instructed the parties to sit straight in front of the judge, to behave, to speak a language that s/he would understand, to listen and comply to the authorities, and so forth.

Therefore, when we speak of pedagogic projects aimed at agents and beneficiaries of Timorese justice, we are referring to projects that are not limited to teaching the population how to carry out their functions, how a modern nation-state works, what behavior is wrong before the law, or how to pursue their demands through formal justice. The legal-modernizing pedagogy they involve seeks to produce individuals in Dumont's terms (2000): a fundamental premise for relating with the legal system. Even more fundamentally, it teaches not just what types of behavior are unlawful, but also seeks to produce a locally shared feeling that they are really wrong, in other words, to establish a new morality.

Another finding highlights the complexities involved in conflict resolution in the country: the heterogeneity of languages deployed during hearings and trials. On one occasion, the case involved four different languages: the one that was locally prevalent, Tétum, Indonesian and Portuguese.

Last but not least, also remarkable was the extent to which the practice of mobile-court hearings and trials strayed from the project's explicit aims. Of the three courts I attended, the one held in Baguia was the only one of relevance with an audience. Half of the hearings planned did not take place because the parties involved did not show up. Moreover, the only cases that were actually closed were those where the complaint was withdrawn. These issues are virtually absent from the statistics included in the UNDP reports. The reports state that the mobile courts settled many cases, but do not mention that most of these cases were finalized not because the judge delivered a sentence, but because the complaint was withdrawn, therefore closing the case. In other words, it was not that the project itself settled many cases: instead taking the courts to the sites where the offenses happened made it easier for people to withdraw their complaints, and therefore extinguish the cases. This fact sheds a different light on the figures presented in UNDP's reports (UNDP 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014a; 2015; 2016).

Closing remarks

Once considered an obstacle to progress, local conflict resolution practices began to be valued by modernity in the twentieth century, especially after the tragedies of World War II. 'Cultural differences' became part of the modernizing ideology, and came to be regarded as a virtue to be valued and preserved. Modernity itself, influenced by an emerging ideology of universal human rights, secured to itself the right to 'dose' culture, that is, to choose which 'cultural' traits are virtuous and worth conserving – dances, chants, clothing, architecture, the arts – and which ones are not: 'wife purchase', animal sacrifice, child labor, hierarchies overlapping with constitutional dispositions, and so forth.

Therefore, both the cherishing of 'cultural differences' and the critique of certain aspects of what is understood as the 'culture' of a people have become, in Silva and Simião's terms, "two sides of the same modern coin" (2016, 201). This global phenomenon, which I call "cultural dosimetry" – or gardening, in Bauman's terms (1991) – is performed by governments moved by modern ideals, which have their own understanding of what

'local culture' should look like. It is part of what Silva and Simião refer to as "the invention of East Timorese culture", a process which takes *kultura* as a means towards modernization, and as "an administrative category deployed in governance policies for engendering an 'other' to be disciplined" (2016, 187).

After Timor-Leste gained independence, a movement emerged for replacing local conflict-resolution practices with *modern law*, guided by other, supposedly more humanitarian, paradigms (CRL 2017). This was followed by proposals defending the codification and formalization of *traditional law*, which turned out to be impossible, given the latter's characteristics as well as other difficulties (CRL 2017; Grenfell 2006; Miranda 2017). Gradually, those involved in the development of a local justice system realized that the best way of attaining the desired aims was to bring *formal* and *traditional* justice closer together, in order to shorten the gap between the average citizen and state justice. The need for approximating these different, and even opposing, forms of justice emerged in the early years of independence, and has turned out to be a solid and publicly legitimate path since then.

Hitherto regarded as an enemy of modernity and human rights, *traditional justice*, like other aspects of *kultura* in Timor-Leste (Silva 2014; 2016), has increasingly become a partner and a viable means for achieving development objectives. Rather than replacing it with *formal law*, as was previously defended, *traditional law* was subjected to 'cultural dosage' in order to adapt it to constitutionally ratified international human rights treaties. It also came to be regarded as a means for drawing the population closer to state justice which, although young, already has a huge number of cases to process.

Formal or state justice, as I have been calling it, was already born with a negative processual deficit. When Timor-Leste became independent, it inherited all the unsolved lawsuits from the two years of the UN transitional administration. This deficit has never been eliminated and remains to this day, with more cases being added than concluded every year (Rocha 2017).

The growing number of cases going to Timorese courts may be regarded as an achievement, because it means that the population has been increasingly accessing *formal justice* (JSMP 2016; 2017). However, on the other hand, the courts' slow

settlement of these conflicts may end up jeopardizing the progress made in the last few years. Reports have shown that the local importance and mobilization of *traditional justice* among the population has all but receded (TAF 2004; 2009; 2013). There is also a growth in local movements for valuing Timorese cultural identity, so these processes have converged, prompting a change in perception about the need to develop connections between *formal* and *traditional* justice.

In the absence of formal legislation regulating the relationship, initiatives to draw *formal* and *traditional justice* closer together have involved efforts towards mediating the universes of local legal sensibilities and premises of 'modern citizenship'. I sought to demonstrate, through an analysis of legal pedagogies, that both non-governmental organizations and Timorese legal actors have been enacting this kind of mediation with local populations, even if we acknowledge that the development sector's expectations are not monolithic, but rife with internal differences (Rocha 2017).

Against the background of attempts at mediating between sometimes opposing legal sensibilities, mobile courts gained importance as a project which, besides resolving cases (or finding out that many of these had already been settled), brought the average citizen closer to *formal law*. Timorese legal actors also showed openness to recognizing some of the decisions made by *traditional justice*, and themselves acted out mediation efforts. Precisely for being a locus of encounters between different legal sensibilities, the project's hearings and trials were a stage for interesting events. I sought to show how individuals took to this space a traditional conflict resolution language, such as the *umane-manefoun* logic and the sacred elements evoked during the mobile court in Baguia, as well as some disjunctions involving linguistic difficulties, attitudes, failure to attend, among others.

Moreover, even though UNDP, a non-governmental institution upholding modern values, such as human rights, funded this project, in practice, the Timorese legal actors implementing it brought different moralities, somewhat subverting the organization's 'original plan'. These subversions made room for the kinds of conduct that may challenge universal human rights, such as the authorization to withdraw complaints in

cases involving domestic violence. The latter took place within the scope of a project funded by one of the leading champions of human-rights ideology, the United Nations, and its core development program.

Finally, it may be argued that the project did bolster the proposal of legitimating *formal justice* in the actors' discourses. At the same time, it reinforced the hybrid character of local justice systems, where tradition and modernity are continuously negotiated. In other words, although the program included modernizing pedagogies, such as the abovementioned prosecutor's 'lesson', it also dealt with multiple 'institutions' stemming from local social or traditional structures. These "encounters with modes justice" inevitably led to interesting instances of cultural shock, and provide a window into the future dynamics of developing and implementing justice in Timor-Leste.

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Embracement and legal support for survivors of domestic violence:
the praxis of FOKUPERS in Timor-Leste[1]

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This chapter approaches the practices and discourses (praxis) of an East Timorese non-governmental organization (NGO) that provides support to women who experience intimate-partner violence, FOKUPERS (Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Lorosa'e, Communication Forum for Eastern Women). It discusses the profile of these women, the pedagogy underlying support practices and the effects they intend to produce. Based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2015 and 2016, I argue that the weakening or rupture of kin relations, manifested in the absence of practices of care, accountability and mutual obligation, has turned these women into the main targets for the efforts of state and civil society. I also bring to light the legal pedagogies such an institution resorts to in order to modify domestic-violence survivors' conceptions and attitudes towards themselves, their rights and even their understanding of what domestic violence is. [3]

The argument is developed in six steps. In the first section, I present the NGO and its main pedagogic practices. I then relate the

narratives of some of the women who sought shelter while providing brief comments on each case. The fourth section discusses the fundamental role of reciprocal relations in Timor-Leste and how these tend to be lacking in the narratives of sheltered women. In the fifth section, I seek to deepen the analysis of how the organization operates by re-elaborating the women's relations with their kin, partners and communities. The closing remarks articulate the multiple interpretive and empirical elements developed throughout the chapter.

FOKUPERS: practices, discourses and pedagogies

FOKUPERS is an East Timorese NGO founded in 1997, which advances gender equality and fights violence against women.[4] The NGO promotes public awareness campaigns on women's issues and rights, and assists women who suffer sexual or physical abuse by providing them with shelter and legal support. In the present discussion, I focus on the procedures the NGO adopts to support survivors of violence by helping them find their way through the legal system when pursuing domestic-violence cases.

FOKUPERS maintains a specific team for embracing women who experience violence, which helps them report ill-treatment and, later on, coaches them on how to behave during interactions with legal agencies (police, public prosecution, courts, and so forth). This team, linked to the legal support unit, includes lawyers who help mitras navigate the multiplicity of judicial spheres by means of strategies that I describe below. *Mitra* is an Indonesian word meaning 'partner', which FOKUPERS uses instead of the term 'victim' for referring to, and dealing with, the women to whom they provide support.

The organization seeks to ensure that women are able to report the perpetrators to the police and receive health care, and are assessed on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not each mitra needs shelter at the safe house (Portuguese, *casa abrigo*; Tetum, *uma*

4. FOKUPERS works in four areas: advocacy (working to improve women's lives/monitoring the government; victim support) community awareness (women's issues and rights/gender based violence); and childhood learning.

mahon). FOKUPERS provides support during the entire legal process, so women can navigate the state's legal system.

The legal support unit's efforts to ensure that the mitras are able to negotiate legal/institutional spaces consist of material and symbolic forms of mediation. Practically, the NGO provides transportation from the women's houses (or the shelter) to the courts, no matter where they live, as well as food and legal support. The team also monitors the legal process, delivers the court's notifications and makes sure the women respond to subpoena. But the most complex work is probably for the symbolic (or immaterial) mediations for introducing the mitras to technical terms, jargon, legislation and the reproductive logic of legal agencies managing conflict resolution. This kind of mediation is enacted through activities involving drama and socialization.

Drama activities are rehearsals for hearings with magistrates, who arbitrate cases of domestic violence. The legal support team conducts the role-play with each mitra, showing the women how to behave when a magistrate comes into the room, what and how to answer whenever questioned or in response to a prosecutor or public defender. The women learn body language and posture, and voice intonation. The team presents each of the agents involved and their respective roles in the legal process. The practice continues for as long as necessary, so that the women are ready for the court hearing.

Socialization activities consist of meetings held between the mitras and NGO team members. There, the team explains the criminal code, as well as the code of criminal procedure, the Law against Domestic Violence (Number 7/2010), and the functions of public attorneys, judges and defenders. For these events the FOKUPERS team assembles the mitras who live in the shelter and those who have already left but who continue to receive assistance. The purpose is to stress the need to report cases of domestic violence to the police and take them to the courts, rather than to local conflict management arenas. The team promotes the law in these moments and spaces as well as the women's role as complainants in cases of violence affecting themselves or others, so that their communities are encouraged to do the same. It is important to emphasize that FOKUPERS's defense of the legal system stems from the organization's view that it is only in this

sphere that women's rights as individuals can be fully taken into account. In contrast, local agents operating conflict mediation would be more concerned with maintaining relations between the partners and their respective families.

The organization's actions, practices and discourses, embodied in a series of material and symbolic mediations, are fundamental to reorient the experiences of women who receive legal support. The organization does so by making available new resources and instruments for occupying certain spaces in the legal conflict resolution sphere, and by making sure it happens in a qualified and comprehensive manner. Through pedagogic action aimed at specific legal dimensions (related to state justice and norms rather than village sociability), the organization seeks to assist the mitras in adapting to new spheres of action within state institutions. This process ends up also introducing the women to a new moral order.

In the following section, I outline the profiles of the women assisted by the NGO and show how the organization reaches out particularly to women with weaker bonds to their family groups. In other words, these are women onto whom kin-related obligations, such as practices of accountability and care, do not impose themselves as compellingly as in other cases.

The mitras: contemporary ordeals

Júlia[5], 18 years old, left her house in the township of Manatuto, which she shared with her aunts and a few cousins, in order to live with a young police officer she had recently met and started a relationship. During what was ostensibly a visit to his house in a Liquiçá village to meet his family, Júlia ended up moving there but not without tribulations. From that moment on they were living together, sharing a house with his mother, brothers, sister-in-law and sisters, without the due arrangement between their respective families regarding marriage prestations. No goods had been exchanged at that point, not even a promise between Júlia's family and her boyfriend's kin. Their relatives had never met.

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[5] All fictional names

During the first weeks of co-habitation conflict began between Júlia and the other women in the house, and between her and her partner. The issues with the other women were mostly practical: Júlia would not perform the same domestic tasks as her boyfriend's sisters and sister-in-law. According to her narrative, tasks, such as cooking food, tending animals and even cleaning the house, seemed too complicated for her. Her claim was that she was too young and inexperienced in household chores and, as the other women had no patience with her, communication between them became difficult and would escalate into quarrels. She said she did not feel welcome in the house and conflicts – especially with the sister-in-law and the mother-in-law – intensified to the point of affecting the relationship with her partner. Fights with him also increased, especially as Júlia found out that he was exchanging regular phone messages with other women. When asked about it as they engaged in heated argument, the man responded by physically and verbally attacking her.

While pregnant, Júlia's partner assaulted her inside the hospital. A person who witnessed the event reported him and from there Júlia went straight to the uma mahon for the first time. Embraced by FOKUPERS, she remained there for a few weeks, until she moved back to her aunt's house in Manatuto. Towards the end of her pregnancy, the boyfriend asked her to live with him again in Liquiçá. Júlia accepted, even in the absence of signs of commitment to marriage prestations, inter-family agreement or a promise of marriage.

When the child was born, Júlia suffered complications during the delivery and had to stay in hospital for a few days. While she was hospitalized the father took the newborn with him to Liquiçá, to be cared for by his mother and other female relatives. During Júlia's time in hospital, no one came to care for her – not her own kin or her boyfriend or his relatives.

After she left hospital and returned on her own to her boyfriend's house, Júlia received even worse treatment. She was abused, humiliated and physically assaulted by her partner and verbally attacked by the mother-in-law and brother-in-law. The latter announced that there was no room for her in the house and sent her away. She was kicked out without her son as they shouted

insults such as dog (*asu*). During the incident, she was not criticized with regards a personal trait – her very status as a human person was challenged. This event, in addition to the forced separation from her child and the ill treatment received from the boyfriend and his kin, led Júlia once again to the police to report her partner for domestic violence.

Júlia's story emphasizes her isolation at that point. With no mention of parents, uncles, brothers or older cousins, her narrative did not include relatives that could have represented her before her boyfriend's family. This was true in relation both to the mediations necessary to establish the parameters of her relationship, and to other spheres of extra-legal conflict management and mediation. From a local perspective, these were possible alternatives. Resorting to the police and to the legal system usually happens only after all procedures at the local level have been exhausted. The latter comprise mechanisms for mediating between local and 'traditional' authorities, and the domestic circle of families, villages, and the suku (village) (Silva and Simião 2013).

During her court hearing Júlia's isolation became even more evident.[6] Besides herself, there was me, a member of FOKUPERS, one of her younger cousins and the NGO employee who drove us there. Her former boyfriend was accompanied by his older brother, sister-in-law, one of his sisters, his mother and some of his colleagues from the police department.

Augusta's case is another telling instance of how dramatic predicaments may emerge or intensify, when there are no relations or persons to whom one could appeal. Augusta, a 32-year-old Indonesian woman, was born in Atambua, close to the land border separating Timor-Leste from Indonesia. She met and started a relationship with an East Timorese man whom I will call Alberto. He used to drive a truck back and forth to the neighboring country and, from their intermittent relationship, a child was born. Time passed, and while Augusta and their daughter lived at her parents' house in Indonesia, Alberto came to visit frequently.

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6. I refer to isolation in kinship terms, that is, detachment from members of her own kin – a kind of relationship which is highly valued in Timor-Leste.

On one such visit, Alberto asked to take their daughter to Timor-Leste so she could meet his parents. His commitment was to return the child to Atambua in two weeks, the next time he visited Augusta. But Alberto did not keep his word, and three weeks later he sent a message to Augusta saying that if she wanted the child back she would have to come and get her. So she went to his house in Timor-Leste and, as soon as she arrived, revelations began to emerge. Alberto was in fact poorer than she thought and lived in a two-room house surrounded by his relatives. The man was married and had eight children. Augusta did not know what to do about it so ended up staying for a while. Her relations with the first wife (fe'en or feto boot) were very conflictive, as neither woman desired the other's presence. His relatives did not approve of the idea of a second wife and kept their distance from Augusta. Given such complications, she decided it was best to leave and take her daughter with her. Her plan was however curtailed by Alberto and his aggressive behavior.

Augusta stayed with Alberto in Timor-Leste for over a year. Whenever there were quarrels he assaulted her and his family always stood at arm's length from their fights. Augusta's experience was similar to Júlia's: she had no one to appeal to, no kin networks, no friends or anyone who could go there and help her. When she finally succeeded in contacting the police, Augusta and her daughter were taken to the FOKUPERS shelter, where they stayed until papers were ready for their return to Indonesia.

The story of Fernanda, another young (20-year-old) woman from Timor-Leste, also shows parallels with those of Júlia and Augusta. Fernanda and her siblings were separated during the Indonesian occupation. She and her youngest sister were raised by an Indonesian couple who knew their parents, while their older sister remained in Baucau with another family. She had no idea of her other siblings' whereabouts. Her father did not resist the occupation and her mother was accused of abandoning the children. While growing up, Fernanda and her sister had no contact with their mother.

When Fernanda reached legal majority (17 years old), her foster parents advised her to marry a young man from Ermera. Marriage prestations were exchanged (Tetum, *barlake*) and she married Júlio, who worked in a construction company in Díli. After the wedding, Fernanda went to live with Júlio's family – parents, siblings and

sisters-in-law – in his native township. There, she had to work in the coffee fields, help care for the animals, cook food and take part in other household chores. She found the situation unfair, as her mother-in-law, besides doing nothing, retained all the family earnings – those derived from coffee sales, and even Júlio's and his brothers' wages. Fernanda did not agree with this arrangement and whenever she questioned Júlio about it, his reaction was often violent.

Her pregnancy was a difficult time. As it progressed, it became harder for her to perform household tasks and this became a reason for quarrels with her mother-in-law. After giving birth, Fernanda took the little money she was able to save from her work in the coffee farm, and left for Díli to live with her sister, rather than with Júlio. Stripped of family obligations, Fernanda began earning money doing laundry and cleaning foreigners' homes. That was enough for her to make a living.

Júlio and his mother followed Fernanda to Díli and at one point she was again physically assaulted. This event pushed her even farther away: Fernanda moved to the township of Baucau to live with her older sister and her husband. At this point, Júlio's family contacted Fernanda's foster parents in order to rescind the marriage prestations, something they had threatened to do unless she changed her behavior.

In Baucau, the three sisters lived together, along with the older sister's husband and their children. There, Fernanda took care of the kids and assisted in the construction of the family's new house. Things turned sour when her sister's husband began sexually harassing her and became worse when he tried to rape her younger sister. In the aftermath of this dreadful event, her older sister reported the husband and the three of them were referred to the FOKUPERS shelter.

Fernanda's situation was particularly complicated. She had been married to Júlio but had no interest in resuming that relationship, or returning to his family's house in Ermera. Her foster parents were not pleased with the idea of having her back after returning the *barlake*.[7] This significantly reduced her scope for action and at that moment she had very few options.

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7. I understand *barlake* as a set of goods (and/or money) offered by the groom's family to the bride's, according to practices of marriage prestations in Timor-Leste

It was common to hear FOKUPERS members share stories about East Timorese – especially women – living in isolation after separating from their families. One such story was about a woman who worked at an NGO, who had been sexually abused by the father as a teenager. She moved to the uma mahon and the team members reported the crime to the police. Later on, her relatives went there to plead with her to withdraw the accusation against her father, or else he would go to jail. At the hearing, however, she did not change her testimony and the father was sentenced to prison. As a result, the family did not accept her back after she left the shelter. From then on, relations with her kin group were broken and she became a permanent resident at the shelter.

Another time, as we were visiting former mitras – a routine procedure for checking the well-being of former FOKUPERS clients – I heard the story of another woman who was also ostracized after resorting to justice through public institutions. This woman, in her mid-forties, lived in a roadside hut in a village near Díli. With no children, she moved there after being abandoned by her husband, who was indicted for domestic violence based on her complaint. Background information about her was not precise, and those who told me the story knew only that she had no other relatives besides her husband. After he left, her only option was to make a living by selling miscellaneous products from the hut that was both her home and shop. Her isolation was characteristic of those who had been excluded from certain moral obligations (such as assistance in times of need) stemming from kinship relations. She had no one to appeal to, no one to lend her support. As my interlocutors at FOKUPERS put it, she was a lonely woman, a "poor wretch".

A few notes and observations

The cases discussed above make evident the dramatic situation of mitras detached from the wider social networks supporting individuals in Timor-Leste. The constraints they faced were

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(Silva 2010, 210). In this chapter, I use the term to refer to not just this set of goods, but to the broader scope of all possibilities involved in marriage prestations in the country.

intensified precisely due to the lack of family to whom they could appeal. Poor relations with kin groups seem to be the chief reason why they ended up in the FOKUPERS shelter in the first place.

Conflicts that emerged between these women, their partners and/or relatives can largely be explained by the latter's expectations about the household tasks that the new wives were to perform (especially in the case of Júlia and Fernanda). The fact that their behavior strayed from such expectations prevented their full incorporation and recognition as part of the family.

Some of the sources of distress in Fernanda's relations with her new family were the labor in the coffee fields and distribution of household chores, in addition to not having access to her own husband's earnings. Júlia and Fernanda constantly questioned age-related hierarchies – or at least showed discomfort about how these were practiced. Júlia and Augusta were not fully recognized as spouses, and sometimes had their very personhood denied, as shown by the abusive comments against Júlia when she was finally banished from her boyfriend's house.

The poor integration of these women into their partners' homes is probably the most remarkable recurrence in these stories. In the cases of Júlia and Augusta, this extends further to the absence of relations between their own families and those of their partners. If, for some of them, there was no concrete commitment formally recognizing them as part of the new families, for others it was difficult to establish relations according to local norms (based on expectations, provision of services to the husband's family, compliance to age-related hierarchies). In such cases, reciprocity relations that would qualify socialities involved as appropriate and acceptable were lacking (Silva and Simião 2017).

Gift and reciprocity: on creating and cultivating relations in Timor-Leste

Debates on sociality in Timor-Leste have underscored the gift as a key mobilizer of relations. Gift relations are built through debt between individuals and groups, and ultimately aim at (re)producing persons and things. Silva and Simião claimed that "coercion through debt is fundamental for constituting gift

partners as such, as well as for constructing the value of the donor through the other's moral capture" (2017, 108). To be captured in such relations, to make such commitment, is regarded as positive from the point of view of those involved.

Marriage prestations, *barlake* in Tetum, are a form of local sociality that displays most clearly the logic of reciprocity and its aggregating effects. It is through gifts exchanged between the bride's and groom's families, which consolidate a woman's transfer from her original house to her husband's, that marriage and alliance between families are established. Through *barlake*, the symbolic commitment and alliance relations between the two groups are consolidated and expressed in the gifts exchanged in recognition of the bride's value. In virilocal communities, for instance, upon the conclusion of *barlake* the couple may begin living with the man's group (Simião 2015, 136).

Unions through *barlake* are deeply meaningful as they produce long-lasting relationships between families and groups, and these remain connected through the circulation of goods and people, thus incorporating value to the latter (Silva and Simião 2017). Although fundamental, the husband and wife are not the only subject positions constructed through marriage and associated exchanges. The spouses' kin groups also acquire roles and names that reverberate across social life at large. The kind of relationship linking families that celebrate marriages between their sons and daughters bears the name *fetosaa-umame* (literally, wife-giving clan−wife-taking clan). These attachments between groups make up a system of relations based on mutual obligations and responsibilities (Brandão et al 2011). Through marriage, families sustain long-lasting relations (Silva 2010, 210) that bind their members to account for their own conduct, to respond socially for their behavior and attitudes.

One perspective is that *barlake* unites families, transforming them into allies while at the same time functioning as a symbol of their mutual agreement about a wedding. Through it, the 'value' of a bride is recognized in the presence of the family and the community at large (FOKUPERS 2012). Unions mediated by *barlake* are publicly acknowledged, and may prevent conflict by bringing families together in a common moral and social code binding both

couples and families (Brandão et al 2011). Finally, it is expected that *barlake* will make families more attentive to the couple, enforcing accountability for their conduct towards others and helping curb violent or arbitrary behavior (Simião 2015). This would promote a sort of behavioral decorum, according to which spouses would respond to their respective families about how they treat each other.

In contrast, in the cases discussed here, obligatory reciprocal ties binding women to their families were, if not completely broken, at least significantly weakened. As a result, they occupied a kind of marginal position. The importance of constantly referring to the family groups to which they belonged (or not) stems from the fact that, in the construction of personhood in Timor-Leste, to be someone is to be able to count on someone. An individual only becomes a person through relations of kinship, debt, or prospects of engaging with them. These are vital for constituting oneself as a subject, as a fully-fledged person (Silva and Simião 2017).

I am not suggesting that all women experiencing domestic violence in Timor-Leste have no relatives to whom they may appeal, or are 'left out' of kin and/or gift relations. But the fact that many mitras are in such marginal positions suggests that modern support networks, such as the ones promoted by the state and civil society organizations, such as FOKUPERS, tend to reach primarily those women who are already somewhat disconnected from local webs of reciprocity and, therefore, in a sensitive position of vulnerability. Thus, in this particular situation, response to domestic violence is more effectively manageable by means of modern organizations' discourse and practices.

Complexities and controversies: further analysis

A case that sparked commotion within the FOKUPERS team in November, 2015 stands out from the multiple dramatic situations taking place during the organization's routine work. A soldier from Timor-Leste's Defense Force (Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste, F-FDTL) in Díli assaulted his pregnant wife and was reported. The woman was sent to hospital and was receiving primary care when another national NGO called PRADET (Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) summoned FOKUPERS. In the

meantime, she was transferred to a private clinic. While the FOKUPERS team contacted its network of institutional partners to prepare to assist the woman after she left hospital and checked into the clinic, the husband went to the FOKUPERS headquarters to look for his wife and demand an explanation.

Another officer accompanied him and both sat silently in uniform, while waiting for the shelter's director, J. The conversation was very stern and dry, led by J.'s firm position, who recalled several times during the discussion the severity of the husband's assault on his wife. J. remained unmoved by his attempts to justify his acts: he would have to respond to that in court, to take those explanations to the judge. The officer then demanded to know where his wife was so he could see her. The director's reply was as negative as it was assertive: "your wife is now under our care". As there was nothing else he could do, the husband left knowing only that, after leaving the clinic, his wife would go straight to the uma mahon.

Also significant was the case of two men who arrived at the FOKUPERS office looking for one of the mitra the NGO had embraced. These were her husband and his father, who wished to take the spouse/daughter-in-law back home. Two team members advised the men to return home and wait until they consulted with the woman about the possibility of meeting the men some other time. They tried to explain to the men that they could not see or take the woman back whenever they wished, unless a series of procedures were concluded first. The husband insisted that he had the right to take his wife, and accused FOKUPERS of disrupting his family and causing him problems. Tension rose and one of the team members, L., had to remind them of the violence the husband had committed, and how the trauma had driven his wife to the shelter. She reasserted that he had no option but to wait, as he had assaulted his wife and now the issue would have to be resolved in court, before the judge.

Whenever husbands or relatives wished to visit, it was necessary for them to request a meeting with the team, so staff could first assess the mitras' emotional state and safety, and comply with her wishes. Relatives could not just go to the NGO office and see them immediately. The procedure for booking visits was

mandatory and meetings always took place in the organization's headquarters rather than in the shelter. Moreover, the meeting did not grant the relatives the right to take the woman back home.

One case where such booking protocols had been fully followed may help explain other aspects of the NGO's embracement dynamics. The mother, uncle (father's brother) and two cousins of a girl victim of sexual abuse perpetrated by her father arrived at the FOKUPERS office demanding to see her. Their intention was to convince her to rethink the complaint against her father and withdraw it. The uncle and mother wanted to ask her to stop the father from being incarcerated long term. The man was already awaiting trial in jail, and it is widely known in Timor-Leste that sexual abuse is among the gender-based offenses that most often result in a jail terms. The family's concern was that the girl's father would receive the ultimate conviction.

The uncle and mother believed that she could change this outcome by withdrawing what she had said, by changing her testimony to refute that the father had done what she had accused him of. They were there to plead with her to think especially about her mother, the rest of the family, and the difficulties they would go through if the father was absent for many years. They were not there in any way to support the girl or recognize her individual need for reparations and justice, as FOKUPERS understood it. Rather, it was a demand for recognition of the father's importance, for him to avoid jail. This was however beyond the girl's scope of action as victims of domestic and sexual abuse cannot withdraw their complaints.

The team advised the girl to keep to her testimony, to follow through with the legal process and tell the truth before the judge, because this was the right thing to do. The dilemma at stake was significant: to proceed with the case, the accusation and her own testimony meant having to deal with all sorts of negative reactions from her family upon her return home, if, indeed, she could. From the FOKUPERS perspective, the father, regardless of his position, was an offender who had to face justice. The girl's family however did not share this view. In any case, she could have ended up being exposed as the one who 'caused trouble' and who would have to bear the burden of 'disagreeing' with her family.

This case helps us grasp the complexities involved in the liminal position occupied by the mitras. They found themselves in-between two fields that demand exclusive adherence: one centered on individuality, the other around family (holistic/collective) values; one was based on individual interests and rights, the other on obligations and expectations placed on them by others. Even in the case of women who do have attachments with persons who embrace them as members of a collective group, the NGO positions itself as a mediator or a screen for interactions between them.

The NGO's protective role imposes, from the start, certain limitations on the partners' access to the women in order to defend or safeguard the latter's individual rights, privacy and dignity. The husbands' access to, and contact with, women in the organization's care are reconfigured, screened or constrained. This reinforces the assumption that these women are, above all, individuals who, as such, do not have the obligation to make themselves available to others whenever they wish – no matter which relations and ties are involved.

By negotiating/mediating the mitras' agency towards to their relatives, FOKUPERS seems to reify the individual as a full, exclusive bearer of rights. Whenever necessary, the organization reasserts the importance of summoning and trusting the state's legal apparatus – as was shown in the section on pedagogic practices and the case of the girl advised to keep to her testimony and confirm the abuse committed by her father. FOKUPERS seems therefore to operate by producing new values and providing instruments capable of reshaping some of the mitras' social experiences, especially those marked by gender bias.

Closing remarks

Once embraced by FOKUPERS, the mitras go through a series of cohesive strategic procedures aimed at providing them with legal support, guiding them through the legal process and securing their autonomy for addressing conflicts involving domestic violence. Such autonomy essentially refers to spheres of non-legal mediation (traditional/*kultura*), where women require a network of kin to represent them before the offenders' relatives (Simião 2005; 2007; 2015).

As discussed, the supportive discourses and practices the NGO provides show significant potential for change, both by mediating contacts and relations between the women and their families, and by guiding their conduct regarding the resolution of cases involving domestic violence and the recognition of their rights as individuals. Much of FOKUPERS's work involves reconfiguring relations, even where women are encompassed by consistent networks of belonging. The organization offers an apparatus that produces new forms of agency and consciousness, new ways of being and perceiving the world, based on the struggle for legal rights and guarantees. These new tools take the form of legal knowledge and understanding of the state's norms and legal institutions, which are made available through the kind of education that I have called legal pedagogies[8] (Santos Filho 2017; 2019). The ways in which legal experiences are rationalized and lived are always guided by perspectives and logics that make sense for a given collectivity and its interests. FOKUPERS has promoted a defense of legal institutions and produced "ordered relations" between people (Rosen 2006, 198), and between people and spaces of conflict-resolution, basically through educational procedures.

In this sense, the mitras are exposed to a series of activities aimed at re/orienting them towards how to act in a modern world. This is shown by the efforts of FOKUPERS in resetting mitras' actions and interactions with their partners, communities, local institutions such as 'traditional' or 'customary' justice, and government spheres of activity.

From the NGO's modern point of view, ultimate value lies in individual rights and guarantees, rather than in relationalities and sociabilities constructed through gift−debt kinds of relations and in how well integrated into the houses those women are. Therefore, even though they does not exclusively embrace women detached from extended kinship groups – as we have seen from the

8. My deployment of this category is inspired by the work of Kelly Silva on consumption, circulation, and governance of certain economic resources fundamental for the (re)production of things and people in Timor-Leste. Silva (2016) shows how educational campaigns and public policy have attempted to reorient the assumptions and behavior of local actors in order to stimulate them into channeling resources for the market.

narratives presented throughout this chapter – FOKUPERS care services guarantee the needs of women with that particular profile or those having difficulty reintegrating into their families, for various reasons.

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Managing artifacts: Empreza Di'ak's commodity production practices in Atauro, Timor-Leste[1]

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Pedagogic practices domesticating the production, circulation and consumption of goods and artifacts in order to turn them into commodities have been a leading avenue of political action for strengthening the economy of and for the market in Timor-Leste. National and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions, foreign cooperation agencies, and state agents have acted in concert – intentionally or otherwise – towards channeling and managing multiple resources into local production groups. Empreza Di'ak (ED, Good Enterprise), a national NGO operating in Atauro and elsewhere in Timor-Leste, has been a leading agent in this field of political action.[4]

This chapter approaches ED's work with groups from the Makili *suku*,[5] which carve Atauro statues, and from the village of

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5. *Suku* is a state administrative unit consisting of several hamlets or *aldeia*.

Arlo, which make *sanan rai* or pottery.[6] Our discussion of how ED has related to certain sections of the population in each of these localities is driven by the following questions: how are locally produced artifacts introduced into the market? What does it mean to grant these artifacts 'market access' in each case? Have these objects changed in the process, and how? What is the historical and cultural locus of these objects in each community? Inspired by these core questions, we seek to demonstrate how noneconomic variables function as key mediators in the process whereby certain artifacts are turned into commodities.

Moreover, we take a comparative look at some of the devices, conditionings, foundations and expectations that support the NGO's pedagogic dynamics as it interacts with crafters and their artifacts. We argue that the local conditions in which such objects are produced, and their history and social location in each community (stemming, in part, from their differential adherence to Christianity), impose constraints on how ED has managed the artifacts and therefore organized its own interventions, in each of these places. We also suggest that managerial practices, such as NGO community visits, the selection, classification and codification of objects, the guaranteed purchase of local products, and work with production groups, are all fundamental technologies of governance for turning certain objects into commodities.[7] According to Silva (2017, 203), these technologies seem to involve an economic pedagogy, "a device for the diffusion and domestication of resource production, circulation and consumption practices intended for market production and exchange."

In this chapter we understand commodity in Marx's terms (1982), that is, as an artifact containing both use and exchange values. The artifact's market destination and, therefore, alienability are key biographic landmarks.[8] Both Kopytoff (2008, 94) and Tsing (2013)

6. This Tetum term means earth (*rai*) pot/pan (*sanan*).
7. Incentive for commodity production is one of the ways of inducing community participation in an economy of and for the market. This point is considered in our final remarks.
8. Surplus value – in Marxist economics is when those who own the means of production pay the workers less than the value their labor has contributed to the commodity, appropriating the difference or profit – is an essential feature of

have shown, however, that many artifacts are not born as commodities, but incorporate such an identity through a series of mediations. For Kopytoff (2008), the commodity is "... a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, classified and reclassified in terms of culturally constructed categories." Using this perspective, the discussion approaches one chapter in the biography of certain artifacts, that which underscores some of the mediations through which they become commodities. As Tsing (2013) showed in her analysis of the commodification of mushrooms, such mediations are repeatedly deployed for different objects all over the world, despite the legal and moral apparatuses which sustain a society of and for the market.

This discussion is also inspired by the epistemology put forth by Gibson and Graham (1996) in their analysis of economic complexes exposed to the expansion of capitalism. They propose a counter-ontological perspective for approaching the growth of market societies and capitalism itself (Silva 2018). It is based on the assumption that the entanglement of populations and territories in market societies is conditioned by economic arrangements that were in place before the latter's arrival. This means that we are always dealing with markets in the plural, which are differently configured according to context and respond to particular historical conditions.

Moreover, Gibson and Graham (1996) draw attention to the case of collectives that are nominally industrialized and modern, where social reproduction involves assembling multiple regimes of production, distribution and consumption which cannot be fully reduced to the unified picture of an all-embracing capitalist system. Against this background, this chapter reveals some of the mediations and differences through which market-oriented production is expanding in contemporary Timor-Leste.

There are two sets of data analyzed in this chapter. The first is from fieldwork in the administrative post of Atauro, between August and November of 2017, focusing on ED's organization and work with local artisans, as well as its relations with other market

capitalism as a production system, as well as of market societies. It is possible however to have market societies without generalized capitalist production.

actors and spaces operating on the island. The second is the literature review on the expansion and diffusion of projects for building a market society, and of capitalist assumptions and foundations. Our primary focus was on studies that regard the economic dimension as embedded (Polanyi 2000) in social organization and the reproduction of persons, in biological and social terms.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first presents Empreza Di'ak's portfolio that prioritizes directing certain artifacts to the market. The discussion views these practices from a broader perspective which includes other actors. The second section describes part of the NGO's structure in Atauro, and some of the managerial devices it deploys to manage objects in Makili and Arlo. We then discuss specific aspects of its practice in each case. The fourth section seeks to understand the factors underlying different negotiation strategies with each collective. This section also considers some sociological particularities framing the adherence of Maliki residents to Catholic Christianity and of Arlo residents to Pentecostal Christianity. The final remarks draw together the analytical threads dispersed throughout the chapter, bringing them to bear on a wider understanding of how market expansion has occurred in Atauro, Timor-Leste.

First, some preliminary information about Atauro is in order. The island has around nine thousand inhabitants, distributed across five sukus: Beloi, Bikeli, Makadade, Makili and Villa Maumeta. In contrast with the rest of the country, the Protestant denomination, Assemblies of God, is highly popular among the islanders, while the Catholic faith has prevailed only in Makili, Makadade and Villa Maumeta. According to Bicca (2011), adherence to Catholicism is higher in Makili, where 81% of its residents declare themselves Catholics. Beloi, where the ED headquarters are located, and Villa Maumeta have the best infrastructure, ease of access and highest prevalence of tourism. Atauro is one of the country's main tourist destinations,[9] and is part of the Social Market Economy Special Zone (Zona Especial de

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9. Further information on the government's development plan is available at http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?cat=39 . Last accessed July 15, 2018.

Economia Social de Mercado, ZEESM).[10] Launched in 2015, the tenth Master Plan for the Territory of Atauro Island (Plano de Ordenamento do Território da Ilha de Ataúro, POT) accords tourism a special place.

Empowerment comes with the market

One of ED's goals is to transform what it calls 'traditional' or 'tradition' – that is, knowledge involved in the production of *kultura* goods and artifacts – into a livelihood, by exchanging them for money through specific market channels.[11]

In general, these artifacts' local production histories hark back to the "time of the grandparents",[12] and their uses have been multiple.[13] The objects are primarily directed to the NGO's shops in Atauro and Dili, whose clients are mostly tourists. The ED director stated "we do not buy from the community because we have the shop. We have the shop because we buy from the community".[14]

Incentives for circulating these artifacts in the market are part of ED's strategy for economically empowering communities. ED argues that by exchanging locally produced commodities for money in the market, communities – especially women – can boost their autonomy and power. From the organization's perspective, the supposed vulnerability of East Timorese, especially women, is the outcome of an "underdeveloped" market economy. This is the

10. ZEESM's goal is to "establish special, socially-oriented trading zones in order to foster the growth of a social market economy, which may become a model for Timor-Leste". Available at https://www.zeesm.tl/pt/visao-e-missao/ Last accessed July 15, 2018.

11. In this chapter, *kultura* denotes a heterogeneous set of practices and representations based on local knowledge in Timor-Leste. It is an emic, native category, mobilized by multiple actors in order to justify governance interventions or to demarcate local specificities from Euro-American ways of organizing and thinking experience. For an analysis of the genealogy and political uses of the category in postcolonial Timor-Leste, see Silva, 2014.

12. Our interlocutors used expressions such as 'time of the grandparents', *tempu uluk* (Tetun for long ago) to stress that knowledge involved in the production of certain artifacts is immemorial/ancestral and developed outside the school system.

13. A sentence on the NGO's website is representative of its *modus operandi*: "Help turn traditions into livelihoods and empower lives". http://empreza-diak.com

14. Field diary entry, from an interview with Maria Amado in November 2017.

rationale behind the pedagogic practices targeting the communities' productive organization.

ED's strategy is by no means exceptional. It is part of broader governance practices that have been fostered by multiple actors with the aim of building a national economy. An example of this trend was a speech by the country's then prime minister, Mari Alkatiri, addressing local groups, NGOs and women's collectives, among which was Empreza Di'ak. At the event "Hasae Vizibilidade no Konsensia Publika Konaba Kontrobuisaun Feto iha Produsaun Agri*kultura*, Nutrisaun no Asesu ba Merkadu" (Increase the Visibility and Public Consensus for Women's Contribution in Agricultural Production, Nutrition and Market Access), held on December 15, 2017, Alkatiri suggested a direct correlation between nation-building and the "switch to a market-oriented mentality". He presented the market as the chief locomotive for the country's development, which would require the rearrangement of local production practices. In these and other discourses, the so-called *subsistence economy*[15] was pictured as non-productive and its replacement with a market economy was presented as the only way to improve the people's well-being.[16]

15. This chapter speaks of *subsistence economy* as an emic category, despite anthropology's conceptual critique of how Western perspectives commonly understand it (Sahlins 1972; Gibson et al. 2018).

16. For Polanyi (2000), the chief driver of a market economy is the search for profit. Turning land, labor and money into commodities was a fundamental precondition for the formation and expansion of market societies in Western Europe. The transformation of profit as the main purpose of economic activities led to 'disembedding' the economy from earlier modes of social reproduction, constructing it as a supposedly autonomous sphere of social action.

Photo 1: Entrance of Sentru Atauro Di'ak

To buy is to negotiate: Empreza Di'ak with production groups

This section discusses common features underlying the ED practices in both Arlo and Makili. Founded in 2010 by a Portuguese couple, Ariana and Filipe, the NGO operates across Timor-Leste; however, its presence in Atauro is unique. ED has a special office on this island, called *Sentru Ataúro Di'ak* (Ataúro's Good Centre).[17] It coordinates the organization's activities on the island and enjoys some level of decision-making autonomy. It also promotes free English lessons, computer training and other courses; manages a community vegetable garden and a duck incubator; and provides accommodation for the NGO members and volunteers, who come to work on the island.

A pillar of ED's pedagogic practices involves working with production groups. It is a tactic of governance also employed by many other organizations and is justified, firstly, so that resources are more efficiently allocated; and secondly, so that communities can learn to work together and deal with internal differences. From

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17. Locally, the place is called only as *Sentru*.

our perspective, to take production groups as the object of political and pedagogic action is also a way of furthering the latter's quantitative scope. Moreover, to involve a larger sample of actors may help achieve a collective restructuring of multiple modes of relation and practice.

Each suku within ED's scope has a focal point, a member of the group responsible for mediating communication and exchanges between the collective and the NGO. Every Saturday, these individuals go to ED's Sentru in Beloi to report on the work done and on possible needs and/or difficulties. The focal person maintains the flow of communication between production groups and ED, making sure that information is relayed to all the local groups without the need for NGO staff to travel back and forth. In exchange, the organization offers these focal points one 23 kg bag of rice, coffee, sugar, cash for purchasing cell phone credits and travel expenses. Altogether, these resources add up to around 48 US dollars for each focal point monthly.

One of the Sentru's main lines of action is to purchase objects from production groups in order to sell them in stores in Beloi and Díli. The team visits the collectives once a month, on specific days of the week. Depending on travel conditions, the ED team may arrive on foot, by boat, tuk-tuk[18] or in a truck. Access is undermined by the poor road infrastructure leading to the villages. Examples of the artifacts the NGO purchases are statues, ceramics, baskets and other objects woven from *akadiro* (lontar palm) leaves, wooden handicrafts, soap, jewelry, coffee and books. Moreover, the NGO also provides training and tutoring for communities in order to help develop their handicrafts.

In each place the visit to the community happens on a different week day. In Makili, it takes place on Thursday, market day, when families from different Atauro sukus go to the village of Fatulela. The NGO meets with each group in their own production and selling space. In Arlo, the ED visits occur on Tuesday, not coinciding with market day, because the market takes place in another village.

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18. Local transport consists of a three-wheeled motor vehicle for carrying passengers.

Every month the NGO spends around 500 US dollars purchasing artifacts produced in Atauro. This amount does not include staff transportation and food costs. Considering that World Bank statistics in 2014 found 30.3% of Timorese lived on less than $1.90 per capita, and that the circulation of cash in Atauro is very restricted, the injection of 500 US dollars into the local economy is likely to have a significant impact on the dynamics of production and reproduction of persons and things on the island.

The selection of objects ED purchases and sells in its shops is an important part of pedagogic practices for local production groups. This selection follows four main criteria: 1) The objects' esthetic appearance, that is, how close they are to potential consumers' standards of beauty (usually foreigners, tourists and members of the country's urban elites); 2) The quality of the final product, taking into account the shop customers' expectations; 3) The number of each commodity required, based on how quickly they are sold in the Beloi shop; and 4) The budget available during each visit to production groups for purchasing items.

Most items are manufactured with the intention of becoming commodities. However, this outcome is only possible if ED selects them for the shops. Once these objects are selected, taken from the villages and exchanged for money, artisans relinquish ownership over them: they become alienable.

The artifacts' ontological transition towards becoming commodities is mediated by the agency of an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet is based on a system for classifying the artifacts, coding them according to type, size, origin, model and price. For each variable, specific coding standards generate a composite code whose function is to indicate the price paid to producers. Below are two instances of how this classificatory system is applied to statues and ceramics:

Figure 1 – Examples of commodity classification

MKL.06.051
MKL: Makili origin
06: category statue
05: double statue model (alligator, an imitation of Christ the King, a couple, etc.)
1: size (small, medium, large, etc.)

ARL.10.010
ARL: Arlo origin
10: category sanan rai
01: model sanan rai

Two values are associated with each code: their purchase price in the village and their sale price in the store. The spreadsheet also informs NGO members how many of each item are still available in the stores. Thus, for instance, if the shops have a significant quantity of one item in stock, the purchase of similar objects has to wait until the next visit.

The price paid for the artifacts is based on previous negotiations between ED and the producers. When the producer group introduces innovations ED negotiates new prices.

These codes identify the artifacts during their trajectory through Empreza Di'ak. The NGO also provides receipts and written accounts of all its purchases to individuals or producer groups. These receipts describe each product according to the codes included in the spreadsheet. The NGO's stores in Beloi and Dili make use of the same codes for keeping track of the artifacts as they come in and go out.

Photo 2: Codified commodity at Empreza Di'ak's shop

In her ethnography of the biography of matsutake mushrooms, Tsing (2013) identifies critical events demarcating their ontological transition from gift (shaped by the commons)[19] to commodity, and then from commodity back to gift.[20] The author argues that the successive procedures for selecting and classifying matsutake are essential for their transformation into commodities. Procedures carried out by individuals who have no appreciation or affective attachment to the mushrooms, and their extraction from the original context, enable the circulation of these goods exclusively as commodities during a specific and short period of

19. By commons we mean resources and knowledge produced and owed collectively.

20. Roughly speaking, the gift-like character of certain objects and services may relate to the following: 1. celebrating the object's attachment to whoever produced it or put it into circulation (be it individual or collective subjects); 2. exchanging such objects and services in order to support the construction or reproduction of relations outside the domain of exchange. Traffic in objects and services across different exchange regimes affect their ontological condition, enabling the transformation of gifts into commodities and vice versa. The limits of this chapter do not allow a thorough discussion of the vast anthropological literature dealing with the gift-like character of certain objects and services. For this discussion, see Silva (2017).

their biographies. Inspired by Bruno Latour, Tsing suggests that the selections and classifications to which matsutake are subjected operate as a kind of purification, which extracts from them any information attaching it to particular persons, places or histories.

The Empreza Di'ak's managerial procedures based on classification and subsequent codification of artifacts also have the effect of detaching the latter from those involved in their production, even if reference to their geographical origins is maintained as they are taken to the stores. Once ED selects, codifies and purchases the objects, their potential deployment as gifts is suspended, even if it remains possible for them to be subsequently appropriated for producing and reproducing obligations and relationships, including of a ritual kind. In any case, these codification procedures introduce anonymity and circumscribe the objects' existence exclusively as commodities, at least for a period of time. For ED, they exist as a code made up of letters and numbers.

The following sections address particular pedagogic practices employed by ED in Makili and Arlo. The data were collected through participation in the NGO's visits to local production groups. In all such visits, we were accompanied by ED staff members Eduarda, Martiniana and Sherry, to whom we are deeply grateful.[21]

Making commodities in Makili

Makili is primarily a Catholic community, locally recognized as populated mostly by fishers and sculptors. Forced displacement by the Indonesian state during the occupation drove the population to coastal areas, where the soil is not appropriate for agriculture and fresh water is scarce (Bicca 2011). People still keep gardens in the mountains and agricultural production is almost entirely directed to domestic consumption. Fishing, handicrafts, pension for those over 60 and work with the civil service are the main avenues for accessing money.

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21. The first two were paid Timorese staff, while the latter was a Peace Corps volunteer and had been working with the NGO for two years. The kind of involvement these interlocutors had with production groups was quite similar.

Community organization for producing commodities has been championed by two priests, Fathers Pierlugi Fornasie and Francesco Moser,[22] respectively known by locals as Fathers Luis and Chico. Since 2005, they have been encouraging and supporting the creation of production groups for enabling local access to financial resources. An example of this effort is the cooperative Bonecas de Ataúro (Atauro Dolls), which has around 60 women who make dolls, bags and other accessories. The international recognition gained by this cooperative and its products led others in the community to view commodity production optimistically.[23]

In Makili, ED works with two production groups: *Estatua Manukokorek* (Crowing Rooster Statue), consisting of men who carve artifacts at home; and *Haburas Homan* (Prosperous Weaving), mostly women who produce items woven from akadiro (lontar palm) leaves.[24] ED promoted the formation of the first group, and offered it training on business creation and management. The second group existed before the NGO arrived in Makili and, according to their leader Virginia Soares, had been originally encouraged by Timorese civil servants beginning in 2014.

Haburas Homan runs a production workshop located next to the group leader's house. There, group members get together to weave artifacts and sell them to ED. For this reason, the space is also known as the shop. When ED visits the community, the sculptors take their statues to the shop to sell them to the NGO. Although at the time we did fieldwork there were other production groups operating in Makili, ED worked only with those two.

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22. By the time we wrote this article, Father Chico had left Atauro. He passed away on December 25, 2018.
23. Turnover rates remained high and women constantly missed working days in the cooperative. Some of our field interlocutors suggested that these absences were mostly due to two reasons: an overload of household chores and, in some cases, domestic violence.
24. At the time, this group comprised four women and two of their husbands. Male involvement was considered very important for the group. Mário, husband of the group's leader and focal point in Makili, claimed the group was only able to maintain itself because the women did not have to pay for the akadiro leaves. He and Manuel, the second husband, climbed the tall palms to cut the leaves. During fieldwork we noticed that this was indeed a male activity.

We accompanied a typical visit to Makili and observed the ED staff select, classify and pay for the products. Tetum was the language of transaction between the groups and the NGO staff, while the producers talked among themselves in their native language, *Hresuk.* The visit began with questions about labor practices and difficulties encountered during the production process. There was also time for questions from members of the production groups.

The focus of the visit was the selection of products for purchase, a slow process, given the large number of objects displayed for the ED staff. Purchasing happened on an individual basis, thus involving individual and nominal receipts. For members of the Estatua Manukokorek group, the cash gained through sales went directly to each artisan, with no mediation of collective management. For the Haburas Homan, payment involved only one receipt, and the group's leader was in charge of managing the allocation of cash exchanged for the products.[25]

Relations between ED and the production group, Estatua Manukokorek, had an important peculiarity: in the case of new artifacts, it is not ED that established the price. Sculptors presented their products to the NGO with prices already set. Staff decided whether the price requested matched the price set for a similar kind of artifact in their spreadsheet, and whether there were sufficient resources for purchasing all the objects necessary for replenishing their stocks. Whenever there was a significant gap between the price a craftsman's price and the price the NGO was willing to pay, negotiation may ensue. On other occasions, staff did not question the price set for the artifact, recognizing its worth even if the value was beyond the NGO's purchasing capacity for that particular visit.

Although in the past the NGO promoted actions for developing and adapting the products to their intended market, during our time in the field, innovations in the artifacts were introduced by the producers themselves. Our observations of such work in this suku indicated that the governance technologies ED

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25. We asked NGO staff about the dynamics of individual payments, as they claimed to work only with groups. They said although they paid each craftsman individually, they were still part of a group.

applied to artifacts and their producers were limited to selection and insertion of data into spreadsheets, and other managerial documentation, as well as to the production of receipts and attendance registers.

ED staff label and price the commodities directly in the store, with no a posteriori selection. The final consumer price is set by adding between 7 and 83% of value to the price originally paid to the producer.

Last, but not least, the fact that Makili residents have direct access to the sea implies that they are able to journey regularly to the country's capital city, Dili, and therefore be involved in market exchange regime often.

Photo 3: Women weave while ED staff assess the products

The making of commodities in Arlo

In Arlo ED's work with the *Hakusara Group* (Increase ceramic production knowledge) is very different to its relations with the Makili production groups. The group operating in this village was itself a result of the NGO's work. In 2014, ED met two women who knew how to produce sanan rai, a pottery craft that had supposedly died out in the community. The organization then began an intensive effort towards rescuing and reviving this local knowledge. The ED reports include multiple initiatives carried out in order to salvage and value local pottery knowledge, as well as recommendations for modifying products, the production process and cost accounting.

Other key mediators in this process were archaeologists and social scientists working in the region, funded by the French organization *Institut du Recherche pour le Devéloppement* (IRD, Institute of Research for Development) with support from the Timorese state. In 2014 the archaeologist Jean-Christophe Galipaud published a study of sanan rai production across Timor-Leste with the then Secretariat of Arts and Culture. Titled, *Sanan Rai: Um patrimônio em extinção em Timor-Leste* (Sanan rai: A vanishing heritage in Timor-Leste), the book researched the history of such artifacts in several Timorese municipalities. In the case of Arlo, it remarked on the need for the revitalization and sharing of this knowledge, which was then concentrated in the hands of two elderly women, Katharina and Joana.

The Hakusara production group is exclusively women, usually married with children. Sanan rai production occurs in groups, every Tuesday, on a land parcel belonging to the group leader, Lita. During the rainy season, the pottery production declines, as the process requires a lot of sun, as well as dry leaves and wood for the final clay firing.

During all of our visits to Arlo with ED staff, significant time was spent observing the production process, drinking coffee and interacting not just with the artifacts but with the women themselves. The women provided us with breakfast, lunch (usually fish caught by one of the group members) and coconuts collected by their husbands. In order to increase the circulation of cash in the

village, the NGO paid ten US dollars for the food provided to its members, regardless of the amount of individuals participating in the visit. During these moments of sociality that preceded the task of classifying, coding and purchasing, some ED members occasionally acted as apprentices in pottery production.[26]

On these occasions, the team took the opportunity to follow up on other community projects. Besides sanan rai, they also purchased artifacts woven from akadiro leaves similar to those acquired in Makili, as well as individually produced bamboo handicrafts such as straws and cups. The bamboo artifacts, in contrast to the sanan rai, were made mostly by the husbands of some of the group's women and required the use of machines for the finishing polish. The transformation of woven items and bamboo handicraft into commodities was also an effect of the NGO's presence in the village.[27]

Although some of the objects ED classified and purchased in Arlo were made by men, the women negotiated the sales and receipts also had their names on them.

The ED staff conducted the Arlo meeting differently to that in Makili. Before purchasing the artifacts, team members talked extensively, meticulously and carefully to members of the Hakusara production group about the process. Given that salvaging the production of sanan rai and other artifacts was a recent effort, there seemed to be a need for further explanation about why certain pots would draw more interest from customers than others.

ED staff extended the spreadsheet guiding the classification, coding and pricing of artifacts based on negotiations between the NGO and production groups. However in Arlo, the ED also purchased, for a lower price, items that were not the usual quality

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26. Since the ED team spoke *Rasua*, the language prevalent in Beloi, the group meetings were primarily in this language. Tetum was spoken only occasionally and by a few women.

27. Sherry recounted that early in the project they asked women whether they had other kinds of artifacts to sell during the rainy season, when sanan rai production was difficult. The NGO suggested that the akadiro woven objects the women used in everyday chores could be sold. Since then, these artifacts have also been commoditized.

required for the tourism market.[28] In this case, the value was not based on the spreadsheet, but was established by ED staff during the visit.

During their interactions with production groups in Arlo, ED members shared knowledge about the tastes and preferences of potential consumers to justify the cash value offered for each product and to prompt improvements in production standards. The visits also identified problems stemming from molding and burning processes which had negative impacts on the commodities' final aesthetics and, as a consequence, on sales to consumers. In Arlo, in contrast with Makili, ED staff felt it was necessary to encourage the continuation of production, regardless of whether or not all the objects were of sufficient standard for sale, and that the NGO would not stop purchasing sanan rai to enable further development in commodity quality.

Based on analyses of reports and discussions with ED members, it became clear that, besides monthly meetings, guaranteed purchase of products, including those which did not show sufficient quality, was a key strategy for salvaging and maintaining local pottery knowledge: "Even if we lose money, we continue to buy so that they will continue to learn and improve", said the Sentru coordinator, José Marques.

During our time in the field, we also found that Empreza Di'ak would interfere more intensively in the management of artifact design in Arlo than in Makili. In Arlo, team members consistently suggested new pottery models to the women, such as candle holders and ashtrays, while also respecting the dynamics of local knowledge reproduction.

Finally, it should be remarked that Arlo residents are significantly more isolated from Dili and the national market than those in Makili. In Arlo, even cell phone reception was often difficult.

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28. The NGO does not purchase all items during its visits. Sherry mentioned that women questioned them about what to do with the unsold pots, as they had no use locally.

Photo 4: Sanan rai on display at Empreza Di'ak's shop

If it is for the market, why does it have to be different?

The characteristics and limitations of pedagogical interventions discussed here are best understood in light of how locals relate to the artifacts they produce, and the use value they attribute to them. This section suggests that the chapter in the biography of certain statues from Makili and the sanan rai from Arlo considered here has been conditioned by a long-term, complex historical process. In this process, objects were incorporated into differential trajectories involving conversion to Christianity and particular dynamics of contact with the market regime, among other factors. The elements that make up this longstanding historical plot may help make sense of how ED has managed artifacts in response to local agency.

During fieldwork with sculptors in Makili, ED staff emphasized the 'original' method for finishing statues as something positive, in contrast to modern painting techniques. The

so-called smoking process,[29] especially for making a style of statue called the couple, was frequently applied to justify a higher price for these items when compared with painted ones. The smoking technique was considered to be ancestral knowledge and heritage, whose reproduction ensures that statues and their producers continue to exist to this day. People consider statues as artifacts bestowed by the ancestors, therefore promoting the mystical connection and protection with fundamental impacts on the reproduction of community life.

In this context, the Catholic Church's presence in the community helps explain the continuity of this craft, and the statues' religious and mystical value. As Keane (2007) has suggested – and, for Portuguese Timor, Fernandes (2014) and others – some conversion practices championed by the Catholic Church in the region in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council beginning in 1962 followed a strategy of designating local institutions as mediators for introducing Christian ideas. Thus, the Church's conversion technologies and devices were not premised on abandoning local knowledge and practices, even if we recognize disjunctions between discourse and practices, as well as variations in space and time (Rosa 2017).

The higher prevalence of Catholic Christianity in Makili, when compared with other regions of Atauro, may help us understand how traditional knowledge and the statues' mystical value were maintained. This background played a role in modulating specific interventions by governance agents, such as ED, which have sought to promote commodity production in the country.

The knowledge on which statue carving is based was considered to be sacred and immemorial. Its reproduction was therefore highly valued and changes in the production process were regarded as a source of risk. At the same time, valuing the continuity of original forms has allowed for the reproduction of eccentric esthetical forms, understood as typical of local *kultura* and, therefore, distinctive and authentic. These aspects of the local

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29. In this case, color comes not from paint but from burning and smoking statues in the kitchen. This technique adds three extra days to the production process but is justified based on its authenticity.

context facilitate the transformation of statues into commodities, so it was not necessary for Empreza Di'ak to intervene more extensively in the production dynamics in Makili.

Another important factor bolstering the meaning and value of statues in the tourism market was their increasing popularity due to the intervention of researchers from Charles Darwin University (CDU), Timor-Leste's Secretariat of Arts and Culture, and the NGO.[30] In 2017, several such statues were exhibited in the CDU's art gallery in Darwin, Australia.[31] Although this specific discussion is outside the considerations of this chapter, it must be noted that these actors have been central to the commodification of such artifacts.[32]

In contrast, the contemporary production of sanan rai in Arlo stems from a very different historical background. Galipaud and Assis (2014), and some of our interlocutors' reports, indicate that most women in the community used to produce pottery, and it was highly valued for domestic use and exchange in barter networks. People traded pottery for tools produced in other villages, objects for marriage exchanges, funerals and even for land.

As time went by, however, multiple processes intervened in changing pottery production. The arrival of iron, aluminum and plastic items for cooking and storing food reduced the use value of pottery and, as a consequence, its exchange value. According to Empreza Di'ak, pottery production has also been devalued by the younger generation of Arlo women, who see no prestige in the craft. This process has accompanied the diffusion and formalization of public education in Timor-Leste. School attendance became more important than acquiring practical pottery-making knowledge.

Perhaps the conversion of Arlo residents to Protestantism also had some impact on local knowledge of sanan rai production. In his discussion of the modus operandi of Protestant conversion in

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30. Available at https://cdu.edu.au/artcollection-gallery/sculptures-atauro-island-public-programs Last accessed June 18, 2018.
31. A catalogue by Joanna Barrkman entitled, *The Scupltures of Atauro Island*, was also published for the exhibition in 2017.
32. For an analysis of the processes involved in the transformation of certain artifacts into art and/or national symbols, see Silva and Sousa (2015), and Silva and Ferreira (2016).

the region, Keane (2007) reveals that Protestant denominations were significantly less tolerant than the Catholic Church to the persistence of local cults, knowledge and rites among those who declared they had converted to Christianity. Protestant practice required followers to abandon local knowledge and their underlying cosmologies. A fundamental issue for many Protestant denominations has been the suppression of material and human mediations between men and God.

Galipaud and Assis (2014) suggests that pottery, like weaving in other contexts, was generally classified as female knowledge, and associated with fertility and the reproduction of life among many Timorese groups. In this context, we may suppose that knowledge involved in its elaboration was also considered to be sacred and bequeathed by the ancestors, similar to the narratives on statue smoking techniques in Makili. People may also have experienced pottery production as a way of connecting with mystical forces, and a means for securing fertility and reproduction of the world.

The disenchantment of material mediators connecting people to the mystical world has structured Protestant missionary practices in eastern Indonesia. This raises the following questions: did local adherence to Protestant Christianity have an impact on the devaluation and virtual extinction of certain kinds of local knowledge? How has the disenchantment that comes with conversion to Christianity conditioned their management during nation-building processes?

Finally, it is important to underscore the differential contact between the Makili and the Arlo village with Dili, and with the market exchange regime that is hegemonic in the capital. As Makili residents have had direct access to the sea and practice artisanal fishing for commerce, their contact with Dili and its associated market-mediated exchanges has been quite frequent. By contrast, Arlo villagers' contact with Dili seems much less frequent, also an effect of its geographical location. This is an important reason why the ED pedagogic practices in Arlo have been more intensive and extensive than in Makili.

Closing Remarks

This chapter offered an analysis of some of the procedures involved in commodity production in the suku Makili and in the village of Arlo in Atauro, as a response to practices of governance implemented by ED. Inspired by Kopytoff (2008) and Tsing (2013), we assume that commodity production is a material and symbolic process, whereby recognizing an artifact as a commodity involves its submission to particular managerial practices.

Empreza Di'ak and other institutions have encouraged the formation of production groups as a key governance tactic aimed at strengthening their pedagogic work with local communities. Through production groups, specific ways of relating people and things are collectively disseminated. This may bolster the collective restructuring of multiple kinds of practices.

Another important ED strategy for inducing the production of artifacts as potential commodities has been guaranteed purchasing. The transfer of cash to production groups or artisans in exchange for baskets, statues and other objects has been a critical event for stabilizing their identities as commodities. In these exchanges, there is an implicit rule − once the object is sold to ED, artisans relinquish any property rights over them. However, purchasing in itself does not seem to be enough for consolidating their status as commodities. Processes for classifying, selecting and coding the artifacts are also essential, as Tsing (2013) remarked in reference to the matsutake mushroom.

Tables in Excel spreadsheets orienting the identification and attribution of monetary value to the artifacts operate as fundamental mediators in the process of selection, classification and codification of objects. Tables thus become matrices generative of classificatory systems for managing the objects as commodities. The commodities thus exist for ED exclusively as the codes that are attributed to them.

There are, however, significant differences in how ED interacts with production groups in Arlo and in Makili. As discussed, in Makili the interaction between ED staff and members of local production groups seemed to be quicker. The visits consisted largely of identifying, classifying, purchasing the objects and

recording them in spreadsheets. In Makili, there were other production groups besides those working with ED, which existed before the organization began its work in the suku. The members of Makili production groups seemed familiar with the creation of artifacts to be distributed as commodities. They also introduced innovations in form more spontaneously, to diversify the objects and boost sales.

We suggest that these particularities result from a combination of different factors: 1. The vitality of local knowledge related to the production of religiously valued artifacts, among which are the statues; 2. From a long-term perspective, such vitality may be an effect of missionary practices particular to the Catholic Church in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, which recommended respect towards local cultures and their strategic deployment for introducing Christian cosmologies (Silva 2018a). In other words, we are suggesting that conversion tactics adopted by Catholic Church agents in Makili may have led to the valuing of local institutions and artifacts, such as the statues, which are today exploited and coveted as commodities by multiple actors; 3. More intense connections between Makili and the capital city of Dili, where a market regime prevails.

In Arlo, on the other hand, Empreza Di'ak itself has played a leading role in commodity production, particularly when compared with its scope of action in Makili. Firstly, there is the recognition and salvaging of local pottery knowledge first promoted by the organization itself, along with the Secretariat of Arts and Culture, and IRD. The Hakusara production group was itself a product of the organization's work in the community. Before the NGO's arrival, there were no production groups in Arlo that made artifacts for external consumption. These effects have been predicated on intensive work by ED staff with sections of the Arlo population: meetings with these production groups take longer, pedagogic practices targeting quality control are more detailed, and so forth. ED's purchasing of pottery that is not wholly suitable for consumers is further evidence of the centrality of its operations in Arlo. What we call the market presents itself to Arlo potters through Empreza Di'ak.

From another perspective, one could argue that ED's leading role in Arlo results, at least in part, from the trajectory of local pottery knowledge. If, in order to produce such pottery, it was first necessary to rescue the underlying knowledge that made it possible, we must ask why the skills almost became extinct. As suggested in the fourth section, its gradual disappearance had many drivers. The introduction of iron, aluminum and plastic objects was one of them. Analyses of Christian conversion tactics in eastern Indonesia (Keane 2007) offer other elements for rendering the picture more complex. In comparison with conversion strategies adopted by Catholic missionaries in the region, requirements imposed by Protestant denominations on local populations for recognizing them as Christians were many and very rigid. People had to abandon all local practices and knowledge resembling pre-Christian cosmologies. As was remarked, pottery as well as weaving evoked the management of fertility and of the continuity of life. Ultimately, people believed fertility was a gift bestowed by the ancestors on the living. Against this background, it is possible that pottery may have been somehow subjected to control and attack by Protestant missionaries operating in Atauro. This may have contributed to the virtual extinction of this kind of knowledge in Arlo and elsewhere.

Moreover, we are not dealing here with processes whereby these populations have been entangled in the capitalist mode of production. Our focus was narrowly placed on the creation of commodities, and this may happen either outside or beyond capitalism as a means of production. It was impossible to avoid, however, a reflection on the possible implications of governance practices discussed here.

Guaranteed purchase of artifacts from production groups in Atauro (and elsewhere) by ED (and other actors) may encourage locals to invest more time in their elaboration. As a consequence, they may channel less energy into the production of food and practices of reciprocal care. With time, a synergy between these processes may arise and, together with other processes, such as alienation from land, they will certainly contribute to intensifying these populations' dependence on monetized resources (money) and on the market for their social reproduction. Therefore, the ED

practices analyzed here may be understood as part of a broader historical plot where the networks of interdependence through which people reproduce themselves are being displaced.

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Commerce as 'total social fact':
Fair trade practices in Dili[1]

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This chapter considers strategies for commercializing artifacts aimed at empowering vulnerable populations in Timor-Leste by analyzing the narratives accompanying such practices. We discuss the form and content of shops, product-information folders and labels in order to understand the moralities, meanings and effects that are attributed to buying and selling in particular contexts. We argue that these marketing strategies can potentially turn acts of buying into explicit 'total social facts' (Mauss 2003),[5] by articulating the effects of justice, power, identification, and so on. Moreover, we suggest that narratives introducing artifacts are apparatuses for ascribing their purchase in at least two simultaneous exchange regimes: one based on the market, the other on the gift. The chapter describes the mediations through which such effects are produced.[6]

In the case discussed here, marketing devices, such as folders, labels and the shops themselves, can be regarded as part of an apparatus of mediation and production of heterogeneous effects. Such apparatuses connect the sphere of exchange with the sphere of commodity production – the reverse of orthodox market transactions that render invisible the sphere of production at the moment of circulation. These apparatuses associate the act of purchasing a commodity with providing a gift to the artisan who made the object, they connect global markets to local production, and they define the act of purchasing as a way of effecting justice and politics. These effects are generated through a synergy in the narratives about Timor-Leste and its so-called underdeveloped populations, stories which are reproduced globally through multiple media.

Shops, information folders and labels mediate practices of distribution in a particular market niche, one that is focused on the commercialization of handcrafted products made locally on a small scale, and based on the deployment of local resources, knowledge and aesthetic patterns. Even though not all the objects we discuss were officially certified as fair trade,[7] their production, circulation and consumption were strongly inspired by the modus operandi and moralities underlying this market niche.[8] It has involved the articulation of networks of artisans, brokers and consumers with a common purpose: to bring about social and economic justice, and

7. The main elements in fair trade's moral economy are: "a price premium, a guaranteed price floor, long-term trading contracts, easier access to credit, and shorter supply chains. In turn, the cooperatives growing these products must be democratically organized and utilize the fair trade premium for the benefit of members. Also, producers commit themselves to improving the environmental conditions of production by reducing or avoiding pesticide use. For many small farmers, they are often organic by default because of their historically marginal position and levels of poverty" (Goodman 2004, 897).

8. For an analysis of the criteria and modus operandi of fair-trade certification, see for instance the website of Fairtrade International on https://www.fairtrade.net/about-fairtrade/fairtrade-system.html.

mitigate negative effects on the environment and human health, through commerce. In this context, consumption is understood as a consciously ethical action.

Historically, this market niche emerged as an alternative form of international cooperation, and in opposition to free trade. Pioneer institutions promoting fair trade first appeared in Western Europe, North America and Australia (Lyon 2006, 454). Despite this genealogy, a number of critical analysts have suggested that the politicization of consumption cannot be a solution to problems of global inequality. They affirm, on the contrary, that fair trade is itself a neoliberal response or solution, and therefore premised on the reproduction of inequalities between producers in the South and consumers in the North (Khamis 2015, 494, and others).

The arguments put forth in this chapter stem from a long-standing research trajectory aimed at making sense of the processes of invention, transposition and subversion of modernity in Timor-Leste (cf. this book's Introduction). They were also developed as part of the research project that led to Andreza Ferreira's honours dissertation titled 'Transformation of and for *tais*: Traditional textile, East Timorese women and conversations with Ofélia' (2015). The dissertation was an early effort to analyze the moral and discursive potential of labels. The recurrent presence of labels on objects made from *tais* (a textile woven by Timorese women) called for deeper analysis, which we seek to develop here. Thus, the empirical data that we bring to bear on this discussion have multiple origins. Some data were collected during fieldwork Ferreira carried out in 2014 while Silva's trips to Timor-Leste between 2014 and 2018, and Lucivania Gonsaves's stay in Díli between September 2018 and January 2019, were sources for the rest.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first presents the moral context in which narratives accompanying the artifacts in multiple publicity media are produced. These narratives attach the objects to notions of underdevelopment to justify the intervention of international cooperation. Based on Silva (2012), we analyze how a gift regime has imposed itself in international cooperation practices. The second section focuses on the material mediations that underlie the presentation of certain objects in Díli. The third approaches how projects of economic empowerment have

(re)articulated gender, development and *kultura* in Timor-Leste. We then move on to an analysis of two shops in Dili where fair-trade principles have been foregrounded: the *Alola* Shop and Things and Stories. Against this background, we interpret some of the marketing content printed in information folders and on labels in order to show how these devices have helped cultivate commercial practices as total social facts in an explicit and conscious manner.[9]

International cooperation as gift

Appropriately understanding the advertising of products whose commercialization is inspired by fair-trade principles must take into account the broader narratives and contexts in which it operates. Assuming that discourses construct realities, the underdevelopment narrative may be regarded as the first great story, the first broad mediation, from which the kinds of advertisements addressed here stem. As is widely known, the trope of underdevelopment has played a major political part in mobilizing multiple actions and moralities around a defense of development.[10]

Narratives of multiple origins, produced by numerous agents, such as activists, development institutions and Timorese elites, both within and outside the country, have long cultivated the notion that Timor-Leste is underdeveloped. Images broadcasting the violation of political, social and cultural rights during the Indonesian occupation and, later on, the construction and diffusion of technical knowledge and indicators (such as UNDP's Human

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9. For the anthropologist, many facts of collective life are total in Mauss's sense. Modern practices tend, however, to obscure this fact, due to anxieties about purification (Latour 1994). In this context, the fair-trade market niche may appear as an exception to modern ideology. It seeks to articulate that which narratives hegemonic in the Euro-American world seek to separate.

10. In this chapter, we understand development and underdevelopment as floating signifiers, whose genealogy harks back to the praxis of transnational governance that emerged in the aftermath of World War II. Both evoke multiple practices of governance aimed at expanding economies of and for the market, combined with institutions securing political, social and cultural rights.

Development Index), audiovisual narratives and other kinds of media, have converged towards turning material precarity, inequality and violence into the country's chief predicates. As a result, Timor-Leste's people have been consistently represented as demanding or in need of international aid and intervention (Silva 2012; 2012a). Responses to such narratives have initially resulted in the formation of a wide institutional assemblage geared towards humanitarian aid. Since 2002, this assemblage has progressively given way to institutions aimed at promoting development – a term which may be highly polysemic.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork with international cooperation agents working in the reconstruction of Timorese public administration between 2002 and 2003, Silva (2012) showed how the individual and institutional behavior of those involved in development programs and projects has been oriented by a gift exchange regime (Mauss 2003). In this regime, the circulation of persons, objects, practices of recognition and other aspects has been guided by an obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate freely. Here the nature of the thing given relates to the identity of the giver, generating multiple effects. More recently, Silva has characterized this regime as follows:

> Through the exchange of goods, words and gestures, a gift regime engages people in relationships that fall beyond the act of transaction (Strathern 1992). Persons and things are treated as persons and the valued objects lend support to produce and reproduce long-term relationships. To a certain extent, there is unity, consubstantiality between the circulating object and the persons who make it circulate. This fact renders these objects animated and inalienable things, as they contain some sort of agency. Their value is gauged by their rank rather than by their price. Parties engaged in exchange are mutually dependent and stand asymmetrically to each other (Gregory 1982). The gift is often regarded as mandatory (Silva 2017, 195).

Silva (2012) claims that the international cooperation involved in Timorese state-formation is a total social fact. It conditions and encompasses the multiple government arenas where the state exercises its power, and structures governance practices of both secular and religious non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most NGOs operating in Timor-Leste receive foreign resources,

and act as privileged mediators for modernizing and developing local populations.

A great deal of the financial, technological and human resources that support development projects in Timor-Leste and elsewhere comprise donations from civil society from so-called developed countries. These donations may be direct or indirect, voluntary or not. One may, for instance, make a direct and voluntary deposit into the account of an NGO operating in developing countries; or, one may contribute indirectly to development projects overseas through the compulsory payment of taxes that are allocated by the state to international cooperation; or, one may collaborate with this kind of activity through voluntary consumption choices, privileging, for instance, the acquisition of fair-trade products. It is therefore important to emphasize that development-oriented actions are gifts that circulate all over the world, and are present in the daily lives of people in both the global North and South.

Since at least 2007, governance practices aimed at restoring and intensifying a market economy in Timor-Leste have received growing support through investments. In this country and elsewhere, development has been increasingly associated with the expansion of markets, and effective participation in them is considered to be a key index of empowerment and civic inclusion.

Different narratives have approached gender inequality as one of the main causes of underdevelopment in Timor-Leste and elsewhere. They claim that women are always the poorest citizens due to the cultural constraints to which they are subjected, and that material scarcity compromises or even precludes their active social participation in the communities to which they belong. Based on this diagnosis, projects aimed at 'developing' women economically have proliferated across the country, promoting a re-articulation between gender and *kultura* by privileging the commercialization of artifacts handcrafted by women.

Women and *kultura*[11]

Around 2007, new ways of associating *kultura*, women and gender began to emerge in Timor-Leste. In contrast with the hitherto hegemonic discourse put forth by national and transnational elites, which saw themselves as being in charge of the mission to champion the country's development – where *kultura* (in all is semantic hues) figured as the chief cause of gender inequality and domestic violence – efforts have emerged aimed at exploring the esthetic manifestations of *kultura* as drivers of women's economic and domestic empowerment (Silva and Simião 2017).

Different governance institutions have encouraged the commodification of certain artifacts manufactured by women so that, through their sale, they would be able to amass their own resources. The motto, "help turn traditions into livelihoods and empower lives!", displayed prominently on the NGO *Empreza Di'ak*'s website, encapsulates the spirit of this kind of praxis.[12]

As a result of these efforts to commodify, local knowledge involved in the manufacturing of textiles, bags, basketry and jewelry – traditionally female activities – have been encouraged and reformulated. In tandem with the reconstruction of the artifacts' production dynamics, knowledge techniques and moralities concerning the management of people and things with high potential impact on these populations were disseminated.

Against this background, certain artifacts have become commodities (Appadurai 1986) and were sold in specific spaces. Access to these products has been mediated by specific narratives characteristic of the environment where they circulate – they exist

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11. In this chapter, *kultura* denotes a heterogeneous set of practices and representations associated with Timorese local knowledge. It is a native, emic category, which has been mobilized by multiple actors in order to justify governance practices, or to demarcate local particularities vis-à-vis forms of organizing and thinking experienced in the Euro-American world. For a broader discussion of the genealogy and political uses of this category in postcolonial Timor-Leste, see Silva (2014).

12. Empreza Di´ak is an NGO in Timor-Leste that aims to improve commodity production stemming from local knowledge in order to empower vulnerable people in the country. See Silva and Oliveira's chapter in this book for a discussion about Empreza Di´ak's governance practices.

in order to promote development – and of the materialities that make their purchase meaningful. As Rocha (2011, 88) put it, these mediations operate like marketing strategies, attributing content, representations, names and meanings to the objects in order to render them unique.

One enlightening example of how commodities are produced to enhance gender equality is the economic empowerment program implemented by the Alola Foundation since 2011, an institution established by the then first lady of Timor-Leste Kirsty Sword Gusmão. The economic empowerment of women has been at the center of this organization's self-ascribed objective from the very beginning. In many ways, the Alola Foundation has been a reference for other efforts to promote female economic empowerment in the country. In particular, it is worth remarking on the part this NGO has played in creating and popularizing a market for tais-made products in Díli. Given the organization's pioneering role in developing female economic empowerment projects in Timor-Leste, we discuss certain elements in its shop. We approach it as an exemplary space where the production, distribution and consumption networks guided by fair-trade principles have been articulated in the country.[13]

The Alola Shop

For analytic purposes, our discussion is based on aspects of the Alola Shop as it operated in 2014 when Ferreira did her fieldwork. The Alola Shop adjoined the foundation's headquarters in the Mascarenhas neighborhood of Dili. It sold numerous kinds of tais and tais-made objects, besides movies and other products featuring Timor-Leste and its *kultura*. Most artifacts in the shop were produced within the scope of the Alola Foundation from the *Sentru Suku Taibese* (Taibese Sewing Center), a workshop run by the NGO,

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13. In 2014 Andreza Ferreira carried out an informal survey of shops in Dili that claimed to be guided (even if partially) by fair-trade principles: ARMT Shop, Things and Stories. Alola Shop, Joia Gallery, Arte Cultura, Loja Arte Vida and Kor Timor. These sites sold objects produced by the following organizations and groups: Alola, Bonecas de Ataúro, Jeitu, Rui Collection, Arte da Montanha, Arte Vida, Women's Woven Art and Kor Timor.

where the tais and tais-based artifacts were made (Ferreira 2015). Many of the objects were bags of multiple styles.

When a consumer entered the Alola Shop in 2014, s/he encountered a table covered by a tais, probably from the municipality of Lautém, judging by its brownish hues. On this table, there were folders containing information advertising the organization's economic empowerment project, and an invitation for consumers to write down their impressions of the shop.

The sales assistants in the shop were ready to answer questions about the commodities' biographies: who made them, which project they were part of, and so forth. As the shop's customers mostly consisted of foreigners, one of the assistants was expected to speak Portuguese, and the other English. If the consumer showed interest in going beyond the shop, the assistants suggested the possibility of visiting the Sentru Suku Taibese, to see how the artifacts were made.

Several posters on the shop's walls contained messages directed to consumers, such as the following:

> Dear Customer!
>
> All profits from Alola Esperansa [the shop's name] sales contribute to our weavers from the districts, supporting women and children throughout Timor-Leste.
> Your purchase will help provide education for children, support mothers' health and promote gender equality.
> We kindly ask that you not request discounts from our shop.
>
> Thank you! (Partial transcription of a poster in the Alola Shop, 2014)

Note above that the poster advised clients not to ask for discounts. This was justified on the grounds that sales did not accrue to the shop's profits but to supporting the weavers and their children. The poster also displayed a kind of commercial pedagogy aimed at producing two different effects: a) to introduce consumers to the principles of fair-trade practices; and b) to confine their commercial practices to a sensu stricto market economy, rather than a "bazaar economy" (Geertz 1978). In a market economy, objects have a fixed value; their prices are not supposed to be negotiated at each transaction, as they are in a bazaar economy.

The poster also informed the consumer that the shop and its products were part of a broader project run by the organization on multiple fronts, such as mother-child health, education and other areas. The Alola Shop narrated the foundation's own history and that of the artifacts available for sale. Directly below the poster, another one presented the tais-weaving process in the enclave of Oecusse.[14]

Another folder in the shop illustrated the multiple steps involved in making tais, the role the commercialization of tais played in Alola's political projects, and general fair-trade principles. Written in both English and Indonesian the folder's esthetic quality was appealing to potential readers: the cover image was of hands touching cotton in a basket set against the background of an Oecusse tais. The photo signified that women produced not just the tais but also the threads from which they were made. Photographs illustrated the different stages of tais production, such as collecting and spinning cotton, dying threads using local vegetable pigments, and weaving the tais on a loom. All the images depicted the leading role of women and the folder showed women working in the Sentru Suku Taibesse, sewing bags and other products decorated with tais. Therefore, it was possible to identify the NGO's significant narrative investment for rendering visible the conditions for producing the artifacts it sold in order to add value to them.

The folder illustrated several areas of Alola's work with local partners. It claimed that the Alola Shop was the latest business in Timor-Leste to be accredited as fair trade at the time, and informed the consumer of its ten chief principles, as listed below in the Alola Shop pamphlet:

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14. The store also had movies on sale about tais weaving and other dimensions of *kultura* in Timor-Leste, and sold materials, such as books and films, produced by another national NGO, Timor Aid.

Photo 1: page 3 of the folder

provides a space to appreciate the diversity, quality and beauty of the woven art of Timorese women

Taibessi Sewing Centre
Providing a safe, model workplace for women sewing products from hand-made fabric.

The Alola Sewing Centre at Taibessi employs 30 women to sew our quality items. These items are exclusive to Alola, designed by our team, and made of high quality woven fabric, selected by Alola from amongst producer groups in all the weaving districts of Timor-Leste.

The sewing centre serves as a model for craft-based small enterprise, and is a leading example of Fair Trade based sustainable business

Empowering Women
By commissioning textiles directly from weavers. Directly supporting weavers maximizes women's income, making cash available for family health and educational needs. Supporting the use of natural dyes and handspun thread increases weaver's independence. Facilitating the exchange of skills and knowledge between weavers across Timor-Lese increases women's understanding of their art.

The 10 Principles of Fair Trade
• Creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers
• Transparency and accountability
• Capacity building
• Promoting Fair Trade
• Payment of a fair price.
• Gender Equity
• Working conditions: Fair Trade means a safe and healthy working environment for producers.
• Child Labour: ensure that the participation of children in production processes of fairly traded articles does not adversely affect their well-being, security, educational requirements & need for play.
• The environment: Fair Trade actively encourages better environmental practices and the application of responsible methods of production.
• Trade Relations: Fair Trade Organizations trade with concern for the social, economic and environmental well-being of marginalized small producers

Alola Shop@Airport · Alola goods are also sold at the Dili International Airport and at other outlets around Dili.

Feto Forte – Nasaun Forte
Strong Women – Strong Nation

The folder presented the trade in tais and tais-made products as a means of culturally and financially empowering the women who made them. The narrative underscored the profit -free character of this commercial enterprise, depicting it as a means of generating resources and income for vulnerable women, and for funding other Alola Foundation projects.

Following a global marketing trend for products labeled as fair trade, the Alola folder represented its products as expressions of local cultures and identities (Goodman 2004, 905). It pictured the tais as typical and exclusive of Timor-Leste, even though similar techniques for weaving this kind of textile are found all over eastern Indonesia. The folder also illustrated the regional traits of tais

produced in different parts of the country: different esthetic patterns are associated with particular clan identities. The tais was thus raised to the paramount symbol of the *kultura* of Timorese peoples.[15]

The Alola Shop's interior in 2014 comprised messages in different media. Its products were accompanied by discrete labels, sewn to each item, displaying the foundation's logo. Given that the shop's multiple media already narrated the organization and its products' trajectories, the Alola image on the labels required no narrative translation.

The Alola label and brand synthesized what was displayed in the shop, as well as the political aims orienting the organization's practices and projects. They conveyed the organization's commitment to the ten fair-trade principles included in the folder, binding potential clients as collaborators in their efforts. The shop circulated messages inducing consumers to apply specific meanings to their acts of purchase: buying something there meant to act politically towards promoting economic justice, gender equality, etc.: thus, turning the act into an explicitly cultivated total social fact.

At least twice a year, Alola organizes an open market, where buyers can purchase artifacts directly from the women who make them. These markets are usually held close to religious holidays such as Easter or Christmas. Alola then buys any items the women have remaining after the market. This seems to be part of a governance tactic for keeping women engaged in market production (Ferreira 2015), similar to what Empreza Di'ak does in Arlo/Ataúro (see Silva and Oliveira, this volume).

The Alola Shop is therefore a scenario where stories of action and transformation are narrated. The narratives produced and shared in the store call for the engagement of clients in an agenda of equal opportunities for women and children: the act of buying becomes a way of supporting Timorese women and children. Moreover, to purchase a manufactured product encourages fairer labor relations.

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15. For a discussion of how tais has been constructed as a national symbol in Timor-Leste, see Silva and Ferreira (2016).

Things and Stories

In contrast to the Alola Shop, the Things and Stories (TS) stores are part of a private, profit-driven business enterprise. In 2018, there were four such shops in Dili located in Hotel Timor (the first), the airport, Timor Plaza and the Timorese Resistance Museum and Archive (AMRT). This chapter analyzes the configuration of the TS shop located in Hotel Timor between 2014 and 2018.

Hotel Timor is one of Dili's more established hotels. Centrally located, it services mostly foreigners and members of local elites. The TS shop sells artifacts of multiple origins and types, produced in various places by different artisans, using diverse raw materials. In 2014 it was possible to purchase miniature versions of wooden doors from sacred houses; silver earrings, necklaces and other jewelry inspired by local esthetical forms; tais from different regions and from individual or collective weavers; and pottery, musical instruments, bags, dolls, stationery, among other local artifacts. The shop thus distributed artifacts produced by artisan cooperatives or individual workers, and claimed to provide assistance for innovating the design of local handmade products. It received funds from organizations seeking to expand and strengthen a market economy in Timor-Leste, channeling Australian overseas aid.[16]

The shop displayed the objects on multiple shelves and counters, or elegantly arranged them on the floor. The shop's door was surrounded by larger statues and artifacts. At its center lay a fishing boat, on which numerous other objects were presented. Besides artisanal artifacts, the shop also sold books and videos addressing the local knowledge involved in their production.

In contrast to the Alola Shop, there were no notices directed at consumers about the company's commercial practices. Information about products was written on their labels, and placed in a folder describing some of the activities involved in the creation and production of artifacts.

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16. On this point, see for instance http://marketdevelopmentfacility.org/content /where-we-work/timor-leste/greenfield-industries/things-stories/

The store's product folder, featuring the slogan "100% made in Timor-Leste", highlighted the objectives of quality and selectivity.[17] It comprised thirteen photographs; seven of which foregrounded women, and five depicted artifacts. There was only one picture, showing jewelry-making, in which it was not possible to discern the artisan's gender. The folder stated:

> Our control policy has witnessed the growth of a new dynamic of product selectivity and quality control.'
> …
> We believe that a sustainable future for East Timorese handicraft involves investing heavily in the artisanal products' **quality**, **creativity**, and **added value**. In this process, not just the ethical norms associated with fair trade are essential: the artisan's story and age are an integral part of the product's identity and marketing. (Partial transcription of the folder in the TS shop in 2017)

Although the folder mentioned fair trade in reference to the company's practices, it did not list the ethical norms. It presented the company's distinctive trait of promoting collective and collaborative production practices, attention to family and community conditionings involved in artifact production, and sustainability and market expansion for handicrafts from Timor-Leste. Although the literature on fair trade suggests that the association of products thus labeled with expressions of identity is part of a common promotional strategy in this market niche (Goodman 2004), the TS folder presented this association as a distinctive characteristic of its products: "the artisan's story and age are an integral part of the product's identity and marketing". This association was further reinforced by narratives printed on its 2018 labels:

> Behind each product there is someone's stay and identity. At Things and Stories, recognizing and promoting this identity is part of growing side by side with the artisan, the weaver, the artist, the designer. Each creator, each community has a story to share. (Sic, Partial transcription of a product label in the TS store)

It is also notable that the TS narratives portrayed artifacts manufactured in Timor-Leste as products of cultural encounters

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17. This folder was viewed in 2017.

between the West and the East, as "a story for you to be part of". In Alola's narratives, by contrast, local knowledge is understood exclusively as Timorese local practices.

Each label included a biographical narrative about the object sold in TS. The artifacts had at least two labels: one addressing the object's group/place of origin, and the other about the store itself. Both were in harmony with the store's visual identity. The labels, echoing the folder, reasserted claims about the objects' high quality. As the shop comprised products made by a range of individuals or production groups, these labels varied. Let us now focus on some variations.

Labels

At this point, we finally get to the aspect that triggered the analytical anxiety which gave rise to this chapter − the labels presenting commodities aimed at empowering so-called vulnerable populations. As remarked above, TS sold merchandise produced by various organizations, one of which was *Jeitu*. The label accompanying Jeitu products in 2014 presented the potential consumer with the following narrative, both in English and Portuguese:

> Producer Jeitu
>
> The Tetum translations of Jeitu – beautiful and 'skill' − say it all. The varied range of high-quality and innovate products produced by Jeitu's young team are inspired by genuine, locally woven Tais and natural materials.
> Creative designs, attention to the market and on-going skills training is part of a community enterprise with a positive future.
>
> Your purchase contributes to developing economic opportunities for artisans in Timor-Leste. By using traditional skills and techniques, Timorese artisans participate in the preservation of their culture. (Partial transcription of label attached to a tais-covered notebook bought at TS AMRT [Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum] Shop in 2014)

These statements conveyed multiple messages. First, they explained the meaning of the Tétum word 'Jeitu', thus associating

the brand itself with a fragment of local life. The label then emphasized the commodity's high quality, drawing attention to its local production, based on traditional knowledge and raw materials. However, these products were not presented as the mere replication of whatever existed locally. The label claimed that these were authentic creations, developed through designer and marketing knowledge, the outcome of investment in capacity building for sustainable business. The label informed the potential buyer that his/her purchase would mean more than a simple market transaction. The consumer would be contributing towards developing economic opportunities for the artisans while supporting the preservation of local culture. The act of buying was thus portrayed as something broader than an economic phenomenon. The transaction was approached as a political act for empowering local communities, a way of contributing towards maintaining and accessing local *kultura*.

The mobilization of *kultura* as a differential in fair-trade-inspired commodities was also present on the labels attached to products from the *Bonecas de Ataúro* (Atauro Dolls) cooperative. One such label affirmed that the vibrant colors of Timorese culture inspired the development of the cooperative's products. Curiously, it did not highlight the fact that this was a female cooperative. Rather, it stated that the products were developed in partnership with the Swiss designer Piera Zürcher. In all cases, the labels attached to Bonecas de Ataúro, and other objects sold at TS, were accompanied by a second label presenting the store and the production practices it encouraged.[18]

The TS label claimed the products were unique, exclusive to Timor-Leste, and collectively manufactured with joy and fulfillment. Such an attribution of exclusiveness may be interpreted as a strategy for conveying a sense that, by acquiring the object, the client would be engaging in some kind of relationship with local people. Labels therefore presented the purchase as much more than a market transaction: it was a way of relating to phenomena regarded as authentic expressions of local *kultura*.

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18. As Bonecas de Atauro has had its own shop in Dili since 2017, TS no longer sells their products.

One label attached to a tais acquired in 2014 at Things and Stories referred to *Liman* (Tetum for hand) Selected Products, an associated branch of TS, and it included the phrase "From TL to the world". This statement implies that the product was expected to have a global biography: it was destined to circulate in the wider world while maintaining its connection to its origins. It was from Timor-Leste.

The second TS label on the same tais carried a handwritten classification to "certify" it. The tais was categorized in terms of its regional origin and of the group responsible for its production. It was also classified according to the weaving technique, the thread colors used and the choice of raw materials, including the yarn. The range of classificatory options suggested the imposition of a potential hierarchy, with some artifacts considered to be more or less authentic, more or less cultural than others. Thus, there were tais produced with hand-spun local cotton or industrial cotton, as well as three techniques for dying the cotton – "hand-dyed natural color", "hand-dyed synthetic color" or industrially produced and colored cotton, for instance. Besides a technical description of the product, another kind of narrative on the label thus described the tais:

> Traditional textiles woven in Timor-Leste are called Tais. They are an integral part of Timorese culture and carry great meaning and value for Timorese people. Tais are still worn today or exchanged during traditional and official ceremonies. Every line, color, design is unique in its significance and tells a story. (Partial transcription of a tais label, at TS in 2014)

Here, Tais is presented as an artifact pregnant with meaning in all its details, with an active social life among contemporary Timorese peoples. Our previous analysis discussed how the tais was raised to the status of national symbol in Timor-Leste (Silva and Ferreira 2016). As a consequence of such a symbolic biography, we would like to stress how access to tais may be resignified through the mediation of narratives conveyed by labels – a way of establishing a relationship, of making one feel like s/he is actually contacting with local *kultura*. In these contexts, culture is objectified for the consumer in the form of tais-making techniques.

Finally, we get to the labels attached to commodities produced by Protestant mission projects, also sold in Things and Stories.

These included artifacts from *Projeto Montanha* (Project Mountain) and *Casa Vida* (Life House). There are two chief traits shared by these labels: 1) the eclipsing of religious proselytism supporting these initiatives' social assistance practices. The consumer was not informed that by purchasing these products, s/he was also funding missionary practices aimed at promoting Christianity; 2) local *kultura* was not celebrated as a way of adding value to the products.

One hypothesis is that these two characteristics are interrelated. As is well known, Protestant conversion practices in the region have generally required that local peoples abandon their engagement with local knowledge and institutions (Keane 2007). It is no coincidence then that labels accompanying products from these two projects lacked the celebration or valorization of local knowledge narrated as *kultura*. The latter typically evokes mystical forces that compete with the monotheism championed by Christianity.[19]

The Project Mountain label for a product purchased in 2018, bearing a picture of an anonymous Timorese child, had the following narrative:

> Project Mountain. For hundreds of boys and girls who wander around the villages of Timor-Leste with nothing to do, no dreams nor hope! For those who end up caught by drugs, violence, abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Project Mountain works by opening DOORS so that young East Timorese have a chance to develop themselves fully and with dignity, thus becoming channels of blessings for their families, communities, and the nation.
> ...
> Thank you for taking part in the challenge of giving these kids hope and a bright future. (Partial transcription of label attached to a necklace at TS in 2018)
> ...
> Inspiring products from an inspiring project! Casa Vida is one of the most successful social intervention projects in Timor-Leste. Casa Vida provides shelter, support and a range of new skills to women and children victims of abuse, while preparing their return to full health, families and communities. These products' signature is hope, for better lives, for a better future. (Partial transcription of a label attached to a cow horn at TS shop)

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19. Further analysis of the kinds of artifacts promoted by these projects is needed. Our hypothesis is that there may be more investment in the production of artifacts with no connection to esthetic patterns evoking local mystical forces in projects premised on conversion to Christianity. The chapter by Silva and Oliveira (in this volume) includes similar questions for the context of Ataúro.

Photo 2: A Projeto Montanha´s label attached to a pair of earrings.

Ethnocentrism and authoritarianism mark the narrative through which Project Mountain presented itself to the public. Its discourse eclipsed all positivity from local life and suggested that those who live it have no activities, hopes or dreams. It claimed instead that by acquiring that product, the customer would be fostering hope and better lives for those involved with the project. Similarly, the labels that accompanied the Casa Vida artifacts suggested that their purchase was a way of securing a future for the women involved in its projects. According to these labels, to buy is to pass on hope and a future to those assisted by these projects. What was not told, however,

is that in these future plans there is little or no room for reproducing local knowledge and cosmologies.

Closing Remarks

In this chapter, we discussed some of the mediations through which acts of buying and selling certain artifacts in Dili become polythetic, implicating political action in favor of greater economic justice, gender equality, valorization of local knowledge, and so forth. We sought to underscore the narrative devices that have, at different scales and in a conscious and explicit manner, enabled sellers and consumers to experience trade as total social fact.

Of such mediations, we underscored the discourses that have circulated across the global South and North representing certain countries and populations as underdeveloped, and, therefore, in need of international aid. Another common element in these narratives involves the expansion of markets and participation of women. This kind of rationality has, more recently, nourished a positive association between women, *kultura* and the market in Timor-Leste, and oriented many governance actors. If, at other historical moments, *kultura* was regarded as the chief cause of gender inequality in the country (Silva and Simião 2017), today it is seen as a shortcut to achieving gender equality.

We analyzed some of the marketing devices involved in the production of fair-trade practices in Dili. We discussed certain features of the Alola Foundation and Things and Stories shops, as well as the folders and labels that accompanied products sold in these spaces. Affirming the authenticity of products sold as typical of Timor-Leste, and that their purchase is a way of acting politically for developing local peoples, are common traits to all devices mediating the distribution of artifacts classified as fair trade, whether or not they are internationally certified as such.

Another shared characteristic of such narratives is the attachment of products to elements of Timorese *kultura*. The production group's name, an esthetic trait, the kind of product all seem to be ways of prompting a consumer fantasy that by acquiring such products s/he is engaging in a form of contact with Timorese peoples and *kultura*. In this sense, the place of cultural difference in

fair-trade production in Timor-Leste seems to follow a wider global trend Goodman identified as the fetishization of culture:

> Cultural difference also plays a role in the functioning of this moral economy. This is precisely where the re-worked fetish and the sale of cultural and social difference, the Otherness of indigenous producers and tropical nature vis-a-vis the North, is used to the benefit of the networks. (Goodman 2004, 905).

On the other hand, our analysis of labels for objects made by production groups organized by Christian missionary projects introduced an interesting disjunction. These projects seem to have avoided involvement in the production of artifacts evoking knowledge bequeathed by ancestors, related to local spiritual forces. Rather, investment is placed in the creation of products that do not concern local knowledge, such as bookmarks, key ring, and dolls. Finally, we also stress the fact that labels for these products do not refer to the religious proselytism involved in the organizations' relations with producers.

But beyond these differences, the diverse narratives and devices discussed here converge to make consumption an ethical fact, a means to act in other people's lives, producing effects of fairer economics, justice and political relations. In these contexts, commerce is a total social fact.

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Uses of *kultura* in land registration
in Timor-Leste:
Reflections from the municipality of Ermera[1]

Carlos Andrés Oviedo[2]

Implementing a system of land registration has become one of the greatest challenges for state-building in Timor-Leste. This agenda has also included the construction of a national cadastral database. Following Silva and Simião (2012), I assume that in such projects, which bring together multiple agencies (international cooperation, state institutions, private parties), new objects of government are evinced from a plurality of phenomena and social domains. This chapter analyzes how procedures for building a new cadastral system have contributed to the production of land as an object, according to a hegemonic Western, disenchanted ontology (Silva and Ferreira 2016, 45).[3]

This analysis does not assume, however, that cadastral surveying implies a direct transition from a hypothetical model of common ownership to a private-property model. The East Timorese relationship to land has been shaped by long-term processes encompassing multiple government dynamics, historically advanced by both the Portuguese and the Indonesian

administrations. My analysis focuses on one specific segment of this general process of land 'objectification': the construction of a cadastral system as part of postcolonial Timor-Leste's government technologies.

During my field research on the procedures and dynamics involved in cadastral surveying in Timor-Leste's rural areas, I noted that the category of *kultura* was sometimes mobilized for designating certain social practices. Based on this finding, my first purpose in this chapter is to show the importance of such practices and how they challenge an understanding of land as an inanimate, autonomous object. To this end, I begin by reviewing the anthropological literature on so-called 'customary systems' governing land use in rural Timor-Leste. Secondly, I underline the mobilization of *kultura* in specific senses: (1) as a category for addressing practices that produce tension during cadastral surveying processes, which should ideally be excluded or limited to the private sphere; and (2) as a mechanism for resolving disputes over land ownership and reconciliation between the parties.

This analysis is based on field research carried out in Timor-Leste between June, 2016 and October, 2017. Data were collected through interviews with civil servants, political actors, and Timorese citizens involved in land disputes in Dili and elsewhere in the country. I accompanied field staff in charge of cadastral surveys in the municipality of Ermera, and conducted interviews with staff who mediate disputes for the National Directorate of Land, Property and Cadastral Services (Direção Nacional de Terras e Propriedades e Serviços Cadastrais, DNTPSC) and the National Cadastral System (Sistema Nacional de Cadastro, SNC). Fieldwork also involved multiple informal interactions with staff during their daily activities, as well as with residents of communities in Gleno and the *sukus*[4] of Poetete, Punilala, Estado and Fatubesi.

Land administration in Timor-Leste

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4. A *suku* is a state administrative unit, consisting of two or more a*deia*s or hamlets (the smallest administrative unit).

Although the formulation of policies for addressing the agrarian question everywhere is complicated by the sheer complexity of interests involved, in Timor-Leste this difficulty is further compounded by the country's particularly conflictive colonial and postcolonial history (Fitzpatrick 2002; 2008). Historical facts confounding the land registration process include: (1) unequal access to formal land rights during the Portuguese colonial period; (2) widespread forced displacement of communities by the Indonesian army; (3) illegal occupation of property abandoned in the aftermath of the 1999 independence referendum; (4) lack of clarity and contested recognition of land titles issued during the Portuguese and Indonesian administrations (Fitzpatrick 2002; Silva and Furusawa 2014; Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). Against this background, the development and implementation of legislation for securing justice and providing access to land is a much needed step towards healing the wounds of Timor-Leste's colonial past, and paving the way towards reconciliation in a society still undergoing nation- and state-building processes.

In March, 2002, during the final months of the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor's (UNTAET) mandate, the country's Constituent Assembly approved its constitution. Article 54 recognized the right to private property. Nonetheless, developing a legal framework for legalizing land ownership in disputed cases has been one of the country's foremost political challenges since its independence on 20 May 2002. In 2017, after several attempts at passing bills proposed by the government, the National Parliament approved a Special Regime for the Ownership of Immovable Property, also known as Lei das Terras, which established broad parameters for defining ownership in disputed cases, recognized "informal" property rights (Article 2), and created the Commission of Land and Property (Article 55) – a special court for assessing disputes and attributing ownership rights according to the law.[5]

In parallel to enacting legislation to clarify the legal status of land ownership, cadastral data have been collected throughout the

5. Law 13/2017, June 5.

territory. Collection began in 2008, through a project for registering land called *Ita Nia Rai* (INR, Our Land), funded by the United Stated International Development Agency (USAID). By 2012, this project had registered over 50,000 land parcels in the central towns of the country's thirteen municipalities. After 2014, a national land registry was established by the SNC, an agency linked to the DNTPSC and managed by two private companies – one Timorese and one Portuguese – hired to design and implement the cadastral system.[6]

The SNC platform developed for real estate data incorporated the INR land records, and SNC continued the process of land surveying the country's rural areas. In those cases where land ownership was not documented, the registration process may issue titles based on "informal rights", defined as "rights on real estate originated in customary law, based on long-term possession".[7] This is an important shift, through which post-independence legislation[8] sought to "redress injustices due to lack of formal rights before the independence of Timor-Leste".[9]

People and land

In much of Timor-Leste's territory, relations around land are constructed on ritualized norms and the authority of origins, as well as on narratives through which migrant groups defend their

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6. GMN-H (Grupo Média Nacional-Holdings, National Media Group-Holdings) is Timorese and ARM-APPRIZE is Portuguese.
7. Law 13/2017, June 5, Article 2, paragraph G.
8. Law 13/2017, June 5.
9. The SNC's cadastral survey conducted in rural areas was questioned by Rede ba Rai (Timor-Leste Land Network), a collective of 20 organizations which played an important political role during the development of the Land Law. Rede ba Rai highlighted, for instance, the persistence of ambiguities and gaps in norms guiding the survey, especially those related to parameters for identifying and registering lands in common use, defined by law as "communal protection zones" (Law 13/2017, June 5: Article 23). Moreover, it questioned, in both mainstream and social media, the enterprise's lack of transparency when publishing statistical data for monitoring the country's land survey. As cadastral surveying advanced rapidly across the country's territory and particularly for so-called "customary land", Rede ba Rai (2019) denounced it as a threat to the recognition of vulnerable communities' rights.

rights to land based on marriage alliances established with original groups (Forman 1980; Traube 1986; McWilliam 2005; Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). These narratives seek to legitimize the occupation and use of land by evoking geographic landmarks and migratory trajectories. According to Andrew McWilliam, members of these groups:

> are located and identified within a particular cultural landscape in terms of their common relationship to founding ancestors of the group and, by extension, the land to which they claim and assert historico-mythic connection. Affiliation to these 'agnatic houses of origin' and the varying cultural prescriptions and proscriptions of practice to which their members adhere is variously constituted through systems of matrifilial or patrifilial reckoning. (McWilliam 2005, 32)

Patterns of settlement and land use have varied historically, according to the economic dynamics and government practices of the Portuguese colony and the Indonesian regime. In the case of Ermera, the introduction of coffee plantations in the late nineteenth century profoundly transformed previous ways of inhabiting the territory.[10]

In the sukus of Punilala and Fatubesi, before the establishment of coffee plantations, families (in this case, agnate groups consisting of men married to women from another group, their children and single sisters) followed migratory cycles across the territory – as described by my interlocutors. Tenure accompanied agricultural cycles, climatic variation and nature's 'response' at a certain site. According to these narratives, nature could manifest itself as times of scarcity, illness or accidents. Whenever that happened, the group would move somewhere else, after consulting with the *lia na'in* (traditional keeper of history and customs). Specialized rituals and techniques were performed to identify another, more appropriate site for building their homes and sowing the land again. The group took with it the names of its ancestors and sacred objects, which were then stored in the *uma lulik* (sacred or totemic clan house) in order to protect present and future group members. The new

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10. The municipality of Ermera is 746 km² with a population of 130,445 inhabitants (Census, 2015). With the exception of Atsabe, where Kemak is spoken, in the sub-districts of Railaco, Ermera, Hatolia, Letefoho the mother tongue is Mambai.

settlement may or may not be a site previously occupied by the same group.

This settlement pattern and way of inhabiting the territory began to change in two ways with the introduction of coffee. First, property titles were issued to Portuguese investors, such as the Sociedade Agrícola Patria e Trabalho (SAPT, Society of Homeland Agriculture and Labor). This allowed for the establishment of large plantations, often forcing the displacement of those who inhabited and lived off the land in the manner described above. Second, the Portuguese administration distributed coffee seedlings and seeds from trees that provided shade, such as those known locally as madre cacau or santucu. Timorese also maintained their production units. Antonio,[11] from suku Punilala, who, with his father and uncles, has reflected on the history of local groups and the population settlement patterns before the arrival of the Portuguese, referred to this transformation:

> My grandfather had different land plots for different things. They grew maize, cassava, potatoes: things that grow fast. Then they harvested these crops and decided whether or not to plant them again; if not, the land remained empty. Coffee is a bit different. When the Portuguese introduced coffee here before the Second World War, the people began to claim the land, because now there was an enduring crop: coffee is permanent.
> With coffee, everyone claimed his right to the land and whatever grew on it. As coffee yields every year, so every year it comes back, and the family has a right to claim that space. With the other crops it is not like that, because the other plants do not produce all the time, only temporarily throughout the year. You have to stay there if you want to produce something, tend to it, because if you don't take care of it, it does not thrive. If you move to another site, you stay at that site and the previous one is abandoned. It was with coffee that things changed, because there was an effort to assert ownership of the land. This included permanent ownership because when you settle in one place in order to grow coffee, there is room for growing other things, like maize, potatoes, fruit, so it requires that the person stays at the same place for longer or even permanently.

During the Indonesian occupation, between 1975 and 1999, the displacement and resettling of communities was part of "a sustained policy to reorganize Timorese society" and promote

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11. All the names of people referred to in this chapter have been altered.

obedience to the Indonesian regime (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 9). According to Indonesian data from 1978, a total of 372,971 individuals were resettled to areas where they could be better controlled (Fitzpatrick 2002, 135) and dissident groups were broken up. McWilliam and Traube (2011) suggested that, ironically, massive relocation often reinforced the cultural value of the original land. People called on the guardian spirits associated with ancestral villages to protect the lives of those who fled to the mountains during the occupation. The authors also proposed that when, in 1978, the armed wing of the Timorese resistance formed guerrilla groups:

> resistance fighters continued to solicit help from the 'hidden world,' by way of its recognised human representatives; ... many people regard the ultimate victory of the resistance as at least in part made possible by an alliance between the human and non-human realms. In short, under extraordinary political circumstances, many people might have come to feel an intensified connection to the sacred powers of the land and their human guardians (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 11).

On the other hand, in contexts marked by the dynamics of forced displacement during the occupation, like in suku Babulo and the municipality of Viqueque, Fitzpatrick and Barnes (2010) underscored the resilience of local land tenure systems. The authors highlighted the importance of the principles of origin and alliance as procedures for incorporating migrant groups in times of conflict and forced displacement. Thanks to such resilience, customary systems for managing land have been reconstituted in most of the territory, in the aftermath of Portuguese colonization and Indonesian occupation (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010).

In the current, post-independence context, so-called "customary systems" through which land is managed encompass several types of tenure. Some plots are understood as private land with clearly defined boundaries. They may include houses, gardens or yards associated with coffee or rice fields. Access to right over these plots is secured by belonging to a certain descent group: people referred to these as *lisan* (origin) groups.

Although these land parcels were held under individual forms of tenure, these are not equivalent to legal notions of ownership

(Fitzpatrick et al. 2008). Restrictions on land use and transfer indicate relational patterns that cannot be reduced to land as property. According to DNTPSC's local director at Ermera, it is impossible to assess how people sell land because there are no unified records on land sales in the municipality. In most cases, suku administrators validate and archive purchasing agreements. According to local authorities consulted in the sukus of Estado and Poetete, only members of a same suku are authorized to sell land and it is subject to approval by local authorities and the *lia na'in* council. Selling land to individuals outside local descent groups is likely to be contested. It is important to remark, however, that such constraints are not universal in rural areas, especially where "customary systems" are less influential.

Besides "individual" rights to land parcels by members of local descent groups, other modalities of communal ownership address water sources, forest and pasture for grazing animals or collecting wood. Within these areas there are no individual demarcations for the rights of use (Metzner 1977; Forman 1980; Babo Soares 2003). As they are sacred, some of these areas have restrictions on their use and access. They are generally used to perform rituals in which connections with entities of the spiritual world are renewed.

Kinship relations and land rights

Social lives in villages and settlements scattered across Timor-Leste follow agriculture's seasonal rhythms and of exchange rites demarcating life-cycle ceremonies and rural sociability (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 1). The range of social events, whereby alliances between kin groups are renewed, includes mourning ceremonies, funerals, weddings, reconstruction of sacred houses and reconciliation customs. These groups are united by marriage or by the relation locally known as *uname-manefoun* (or *fetosan-umane*, depending on the region). These relations guide the circulation of people and objects around different sukus and villages, or between the capital, Dili, and places of origin in the mountains (Silva 2011).

Debt relations established through *umane-manefoun* are permanent and feed a gift-giving circuit that encompasses the

entire territory (Simião 2017, 250). The *manefoun* is obliged to recognize his debt towards the *umane*, through regular gift-giving in multiple rituals. The nature of such exchanges depends on the position occupied by each party: *umane* must give pigs and *tais* (traditional weaving), and *manefoun*, buffalos and goats. These goods are exchanged and, if both parties agree, may in certain contexts be replaced with money (Simião 2017, 250).

One of the field officers explained what seemed to be a set of rules with apparently clear terms and obligations, while we were driving in an SNC vehicle to the Gleno headquarters. Our work day in the administrative post of Letefoho, suku Era-ulo, had been particularly tense. There was a discussion between several men in both Tetum and Mambai, which, according to my interlocutor, concerned *kultura*.

Responding to my interest in some of the discussion's arguments, the officer talked about what he considered to be the "ABC" for making sense of "Ermera's *kultura*". The system he described consisted of a set of obligations that a husband acquires towards his wife's relatives. Once the union is formalized by paying *barlake* (bridewealth), the husband is recognized as *manefoun* by his wife's descent group. From then on, he is obliged to participate in and contribute to *kultura* ceremonies with money or animals, as outlined above.

Other conversations with the same field officer, and with members of Ermera's DNTPSC, made it clear that, according to "Ermera's *kultura*", once a marriage union is formalized, the wife settles on her husband's *lisan* land. Also following tradition, the husband, as member of the local descent group, receives a parcel of land for building his house and a yard, often comprising coffee fields.

However, accompanying the collection of cadastral data in the field made it possible to verify that the aforementioned virilocality was frequently broken. According to a *lia na'in* in the suku Estado and the village chief of Tatoli, to say the *manefoun* "respects" his wife's uncles means that he fulfills the rules underlying *umane-manefoun* relations: "there is no reason for trouble". There are many potential variables when it comes to "breaching" what was announced as a rule governing the *manefoun* locality. Factors, such as the availability of *umane* land, the possibility of settling closer to

the town of Gleno (the municipality's administrative center), or the proximity to the road, may all be taken into consideration when settling on the wife's family land. Indeed, on another occasion, the village chief mentioned that, besides the land parcel he had inherited in the village of Taloli, he also had a coffee field in the village where his wife was born, that is, from his *umane* relatives. I asked him whether the authorization to use the land included the right to declare it was his and his answer was positive, "if you maintain excellent relations with them and never fail to respect them".

Photo 1: Members of the *Lisan* Mau Suma record money and goats given to their *manefoun* relatives during the inauguration of a sacred house – a *kultura* celebration − village of Samatrae, Ermera.

People described potentially tense situations where the *manefoun* failed to respect the conditions upon which he had been authorized to occupy the land. An example was to build a "permanent" house, when the agreement allowed for a "provisional" one. Other tensions may relate to the exclusion of certain *umane* relatives from negotiations that settled the terms on which the *manefoun* could use the land.

Local authorities may play a role in this kind of agreement. One of the field officers stressed the importance of notifying the

village chief about the arrival and establishment of a *manefoun*: it involved the land parcel to be occupied, the terms and conditions and, overall, the state of relations with the *umane*. The function of local authorities includes providing a record of, or at least to identify, those occupying the land, especially in the case of foreigners to the village or to the suku's *lisan*.

While I was in the field, DNTPSC and SNC representatives (a DNTPSC mediator and SNC-trained technicians) organized a local meeting to explain the procedure for registering the land parcels. It was also an opportunity to inform villagers about the importance of declaring their properties even when they were disputed. In addition, the representatives described the mediation process. At the meeting held in April 2017 in the village of Tatoli (suku Estado), representatives of the two institutions alluded to the difficulties stemming from relations between groups as "*kultura*-related problems".

Based on his experience collecting data in other regions of Ermera and Railaco, the SNC so-called "socialization technician" warned that "problems between *umane-manefoun* were common during cadastral surveying and may create confusion". These discussions, he continued, should not be included in the data-gathering context, "nor taken to the SNC workshop". He remarked, moreover, that this was "a difficult and serious problem which must be discussed internally", that is, within descent groups or *lisan*. During his presentation he returned to this issue without going into further detail, only affirming that "problems with the *karau* (buffalo)" or "problems with *umane-manefoun* must be solved through *kultura*".

Kultura as a technology of government

In common parlance, *kultura* (with a "k" in Tétum)[12] refers to a series of obligations and entitlements derived from belonging to a descent group. From research with the people of Nauti, in the municipality of Viqueque, Susana Barnes remarked that:

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12. In Timor-Leste, this is also referred to as *adat* in Indonesian or *usos e costumes* in Portuguese.

Obligations include participation in house-based rituals, contribution to the maintenance and/or reconstruction of the physical house structure and provision of goods and services associated with exchanges between houses during significant life and death events. Entitlements include the spiritual protection of the house ancestors, access to house land and other forms of house wealth, as well as the opportunity to draw support from house members in times of need or in the context of ceremonial exchanges. (2016, 124–25)

In this sense, I understand the category of *kultura* as a repertoire of socially constructed practices and representations, which are instrumentalized as part of projects for social change (Silva and Simião 2017). Its deployment by government apparatuses harks back to Portuguese colonization, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ricardo Roque (2011), for instance, analyzed how the colonial state's officials administered justice by incorporating and copying what they considered to be Timorese law and its liturgies according to local arrangements. It was a project of government based on "maximal mimicry and minimal modification of local political-legal traditions" (Roque 2011, 157). In this respect, Kelly Silva (2014) argued that the colonial state, "in an effort to monopolize and homogenize the instruments of government, claimed the function and power to define what was tradition, custom, and customary law" (Silva 2014, 127–28).

After independence, *kultura* became an explanatory device in projects aimed at transforming multiple aspects of social life in Timor-Leste. Projects sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for instance, asserted the need to overcome *kultura* in order to develop sectors, such as public administration, HIV/AIDS policies and modern educational practices, and to improve agricultural production, advance gender equality and in the struggle against domestic violence (Zhiming 2013, 104–7).

Silva (2014) analyzed the mobilization of *kultura* as a means for producing bodies and other resources geared to production and labor (126). In her study of *tara bandu*, a set of rules and prohibitions concerning certain ritual practices of social reproduction (initially conducted in the municipality of Ermera, and since extended to other areas), the author warned about projects and processes of objectivation and objectification for making *kultura* tangible, in order

to engender political effects (146). Silva also underscored the role of the state, church and non-governmental organizations that played a part in what she called "local government complexes" aimed at transposing modern projects of social organization and subjectivation.

Emerging inter-group conflicts during data gathering often evoked the notion of *kultura*, making evident how the term has become a socially shared category for addressing specific ritual practices. At an early stage of data collection, the mobilization of *kultura* as part of land-governing technologies aimed at settling "domestic" disputes related to *umane-manefoun* obligations within the family itself, or mediated by the *lia na'in* or by village chiefs or suku administrators, before the arrival of field officers. It must be remarked that survey procedures at large generally involved staff from the abovementioned institutions, local authorities, community police and other influential figures at the village level. From my perspective, these parties have contributed to formalizing a pedagogy for detecting those disputes that are supposed to be settled domestically, "within the family" or "through *kultura*", and which should not, ideally, become public and therefore run the risk of disturbing the flow of cadastral surveying.

During fieldwork, I witnessed discussions during data gathering involving, among other allegations, complaints about the failure to fulfill alliance-related obligations and prestations. It became clear that the field officers and the SNC's mediating technicians paid variable attention to such a situation, depending on their work flow, on precedents (for instance, previous mediation efforts from other authorities), and on the legitimacy that other villagers bestow on that particular demand. In order for a statement of property to be issued, several residents of the village must sign the registration documents as "witnesses", "neighbors" and "local authorities". This underlines the importance of the claimant's capacity to organize other village residents, influential individuals in the community and/or local authorities.

Land cadaster: "Seeing like a State"

DNTPSC and SNC were in charge of technologies for managing land. The DNTPSC was responsible for opening new areas for cadastral surveying and the SNC, for collecting and systematizing data. Both were required to socialize information, to respond to local concerns and questions about the surveying process, and to provide mediation whenever disputes emerge, carried out by staff trained for this task.

The cadaster under construction included maps based on aerial photographs, on which data derived from field surveying were inserted. The daily routine of SNC data "collectors" on the ground consisted of a series of repetitive procedures involving personal identification technologies regularly used by the modern state in order to guarantee population "legibility", to use James Scott's theory (1998). People were photographed and needed to provide their complete names, identification documentation, signatures and fingerprints, all of which were the basis for the forms identifying land parcels as belonging to a "claimant".

The information the claimant and his or her neighbors provided was used to locate the object: the claimed land parcel. This was done by plotting geographical boundaries in high-definition orthophotos, or aerial photographs to geometrical scale. These were, in turn, processed by ARMGeo software, installed in the electronic tablets carried by the SNC technical staff.[13] The tablets' technological mediation and ARMGeo's information management system were key agents in the surveying process. This dimension unveils trajectories sustained by the social processes of globalization and exponential development of digital and technological resources characteristic of the so-called information society (Castells 1998). It resonates with what Foucault (2003, 249) called "surveillance technologies", by which he meant technologies of government for controlling populations.

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13. The GIS application, ARMGeo, comprised the geographic database and the management system, with facial recognition technology: http://arm-apprize.com/services/armgeo/

Photo 2: Field officer making adjustments to the geometric configuration of a land parcel
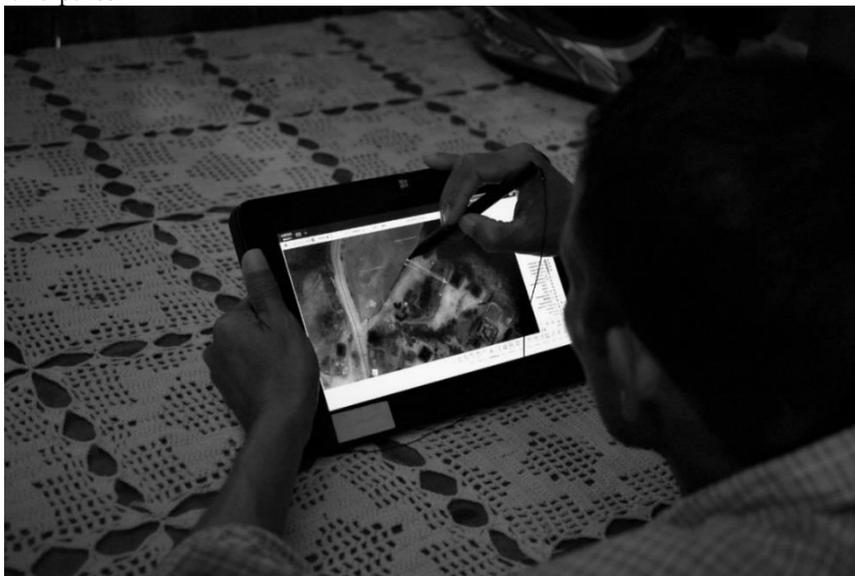
The cadaster is premised on graphic aesthetics and speed when accessing information about personal and geographic identification. By clicking on the purple geometric shape superposed onto the orthophoto on the officer's tablet, information was instantly relayed to the local SNC coordinator's computer, as well as to engineers and geographers in Dili. This data may refer, for instance, to the individual declaring ownership of the land, from whom it was inherited (or bought), and whether or not it was subject to dispute. It also includes the land's legal status, especially if it was abandoned land or previously belonged to the Indonesian state – these land parcels became property of the Timorese state.

The law requires that these maps be published within 90 days. Claimants may then verify the information recorded by field officers, by confirming personal data as well as the land's location and boundaries. If necessary, they may request adjustments. After this stage, claimants whose land is not subject to dispute receive a document called "Certificate of Property Registration", which implies the right to the future legal title for their land.

I understand the development of the cadaster as an enterprise aimed at constructing the "state's vision" of and for land. This expression is a reference to the simplification necessary for rendering "legible" the objects of government intervention (Scott 1998). In this case, the formation of a modern system for managing land (its uses, imposing taxes and creating a market) requires the production of information bounded by fixed and quantifiable variables − who owns the land? Where is it located? What is the size of the area? – subverting the interdependent complexities of local values attached to land. Land insertion into the symtem as real state depends on purification, to apply Latour's (2009) use of the term, carried out by the officials by means of technical mediation. Similarly to the multiple processes by which culture has been objectified in Timor-Leste (Silva and Borges 2018), the sequence of procedures underlying the production of instrumental knowledge for land administration is designed so that:

> phenomena emerge as autonomous objects after being subtracted from all relations and mediations that supported their existence. Upon dissociation from these relations, they become disenchanted and alienable in a broad sense, coming to figure as passive repositories of human agency. In these contexts, there is a tendency to see the object as something in and of itself, as if it were not a product of actions and relations bringing together both humans and non-humans (including the environment) (Silva and Borges 2018, 4).

My daily observations of teams in charge of surveying land in the villages, as well as archival research on DNTPSC mediation, underscored the centrality of exchange regimes regulating social life for the models of land use and ownership. The repertoire of resources used by members of descent groups in some disputes brought to light the importance of ritual obligations, and how serious it is to default on debts contracted as part of matrimonial alliances.[14]

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14. This is far from a 'representative' dispute in rural areas. Given the complex historical scenario involving displacements, withdrawal and occupation of property in the municipality of Ermera, the range of possible disputes is much wider than those supported by *kultura*.

Resolving disputes through *kultura*: a case study

Since independence, local adjudication mechanisms have played a fundamental role in resolving disputes over land (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010; Babo Soares 2004). Reviving such mechanisms, along with the reconstruction of sacred houses across the country, has contributed to strengthening local governance, collective identities and reconciliation among Timorese (Babo Soares 2004). Moreover, difficulties accessing formal justice and the very nature of such conflicts have drawn people to local conflict-resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms aim at agreement and reconciliation between the parties, which, more than individuals, implicate families or groups (Simião 2017).

In 2000, UNTAET introduced a mediation model for solving conflicts, including those related to land (Fitzpatrick 2008, 178). DNTPSC staff managed the same model, as did the SNC's so-called "mediation technicians", some of whom the Ita Nia Rai project had trained. However, as the SNC socialization activities explained, all other options must have been exhausted before resorting to local authorities (that is, the village chiefs and suku administrators).

In the following case, submitted to mediation by a DNTPSC mediator, the *manefoun's* failure to fulfill alliance prestations was an argument for disputing land ownership. This particular case involved the brothers Feliciano, Adilson and Julião. They said during the Japanese invasion in World War Two their grandfather, Dionisio da Costa, married Fatima Soares. Dionisio's father and uncles gave a buffalo as *barlake* to Fatima's uncles, who, in return, granted Dionisio the right to work on nine and a half hectares of land in suku Poetete. That land parcel had been abandoned, and Dionisio prepared it for growing rice. His grandchildren then inherited the land.

On the other side of the dispute the brothers, Álvaro, Antonio and Saturnino, confirmed that the *barlake* had been paid, and that their grandfather, Roberto Martins, had given the land to the *manefoun*, Dionisio da Costa, who had married his daughter. What they resented however was the fact that, upon Roberto Martins' death in 1969, the *manefoun* had not provided proper mourning prestations which, according to *kultura*, consisted of a buffalo and

a *belak* (a metal, disk-shaped, traditional chest ornament). Messages were sent to the *manefoun* communicating Roberto's death, but the responding contribution was limited to a few candles. The tension produced by the failure to comply with the duties and gifts implicated in *umane-manefoun* relations simmered over the years. Their declaration also noted that in 1987, during the Indonesian occupation, they requested that the suku administrator mediate between the two parties on the occasion of a heated argument, but the other party failed to appear.

The arguments Feliciano, Adilson and Julião presented to support their land claim included respecting their grandfather's agreement, which was accomplished by paying their grandmother, Fatima's, *barlake*. Based on this, they refused to recognize the legitimacy of Roberto's descendants' claim; they were, according to Dionisio's grandsons, putting their own word above that of the ancestors. After a round of mediation, the parties agreed to take the case to court, so that a judge would decide who was entitled to the land parcel. They also committed to refrain from working on the land, and from resorting to threats or violence during the process.

A month and a half later, the parties requested new mediation from the local DNTPSC office in Gleno. They had given up taking the case to court and wished to reach an agreement through *kultura*. After the parties discussed the situation, reaffirmed the arguments from the previous mediation and raised new ones, they reached an agreement that the *manefoun* would pay the *umane* two buffalos and USD 2,000, and the latter would give the former one pig and one tais. After closing the deal, both parties vowed not to raise future claims on the disputed land parcel, and declared they were aware that "Whoever fails to comply with the agreement will answer before the law of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste".

As some researchers have shown, the rules, rights and duties underlying the *umane-manefoun* relationship are the "foundation" for solving many disputes involving members of extended families, or *lisan* (Meneses et al 2017, 50). In the case of disputes manifested during the cadastral surveying process, the expression *umane-manefoun* appeared as a typology, or as a language for helping make sense of a dispute. In this kind of situation, to reason based on *kultura* may help a mediator pave the way towards an

agreement. To take *umane-manefoun* relations as a "foundation" for making sense of tensions in a village or suku in Timor-Leste is manifested in chronologies established by mediators after listening to each party. These chronologies comprise multiple facts or events that help account for many disputes. They may refer to past agreements, to unmet obligations or "alliance prestations", or to specific historical moments such as "Portuguese time", "during the Second World War", "Indonesian time" or, more recently, "the arrival of *ekipas sukat rai* (the land-survey teams)".[15]

The *umane-manefoun* factor is frequently present in agreements, such as the one described above, which must be considered further. It refers to a construction of honor, glossed locally as *dignity*, based on upholding obligations gained upon entering an exchange circuit. According to this logic, those who are able to fulfill obligations towards many debtors have their *dignity* strengthened (Silva and Simião 2016). As part of social dynamics, allusions to *dignity* were frequently made in reference to sustained alliance prestations, and access to land by individuals identified as *manefoun*. A dispute over land therefore involves multiple effects, which may compromise one's personal integrity as a group member. In this sense and, as mediators themselves recognize, to resolve a dispute through *kultura* prioritizes reconciliation between the parties whenever the agreement allows for recognizing and re-establishing their dignity. For the DNTPSC staff, the public demonstration of feelings (for instance, weeping during mediation), the agreement itself and the ceremony for delivering what was agreed upon by each of the parties acts as unquestionable evidence of the commitment assumed. As a consequence, harmony and good relations are sustained for longer.[16]

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15. Literally, the teams that measure land, an expression referring to the SNC technical staff.

16. While accompanying the data collection I talked to people with unfavorable opinions of *kultura*, usually those who had traveled from Dili to declare land ownership (some of whom had also resided outside the country). From their perspective, the ceremonial obligations and expenses were a sign of "backwardness" or they considered *kultura* a mechanism of manipulation and exploitation fueled by the population's ignorance. Regarding the use of *kultura* in conflict resolution, there are different perspectives. Fitzpatrick (2008) analyzed a

Another important factor for making sense of the multiple agencies that come into play during an agreement "through *kultura*" refers to the ancestors' participation in restoring relations between those involved. Local conflict resolution mechanisms are directed to reconciliation. Re-establishing family and community harmony implies appeasing the ancestors by renovating ritual and ceremonial cycles (Babo Soares 2004). In other words, the actualization of exchanges between families supposes a reconciliation process of which non-human entities inhabiting the groups' cosmological universe are also part. To breach an agreement reached through *kultura*, to which the ancestors had been "invoked" by exchanging goods, may have undesirable consequences for one's descendants, such as infertility, disease and other kinds of misfortune.

Closing remarks

This chapter analyzed the construction of a cadastral system in Timor-Leste as part of a longer history of population and land governance, conducted by previous administrations in the territory. To regard the production of knowledge for managing land as a process of objectification implies inquiring into how its agents operate on the ground.

Firstly, the premise of an inherent relationship between people and land makes evident that any enterprise for managing land entails an intervention of expert knowledge and the play of multiple actors and agencies belonging to the immaterial universe recognized by local ontology. Secondly, the way the category *kultura* was mobilized during land-governing practices – one of which is the "collection" of cadastral data – pointed at possible ambiguities.[17] Sometimes, the term refers to a domain or set of

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case in Maliana in which one of the parties opposed the conclusion based on "customary relations" (*umane-manefoun*) and requested that the case be resolved by the court.

17. Some authors (Silva and Simião 2013) remarked on ambiguities that may be involved in Timor-Leste's development sector. On one hand, there is simple opposition between 'culture' and 'modernity'. On the another hand, there is a more subtle strategy of assigning new meanings to signs and values deemed to be

practices, which poses obstacles to the process of collecting and systematizing data. At other times, it denotes a technique or mechanism for resolving disputes and maintaining peaceful coexistence in the villages.

Finally, I highlighted the mediation work carried out jointly by SNC and DNTPSC staff, local authorities and other important local figures for enabling data collection on the ground. Such mediation efforts refer not only to specific disputes (for which both SNC and DNTPSC have specialized staff) but, overall, to an "encounter" between, on the one hand, the Western logic implicit in how cadastral surveying frames land and, on the other, the logic underlying ancestral relationships between people and land. Given the heterogeneity of agencies enacting this "encounter", mediation can also be regarded as an ongoing pedagogy for discerning what belongs "to the state" and what belongs "to *kultura*" − identifying their respective domains, authoritative figures, temporalities and performances.

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proper to 'culture,' so that they serve one or more modernization projects. These two trends generate ambiguities in public policy concerning 'culture': sometimes the 'culture' is praised, sometimes it is condemned (Silva and Simião 2013, 4)

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Tamba sá sa'e foho?[1] **The extension of** *uma lulik* **social life in Timor-Leste**[2]

Renata Nogueira da Silva[3]

This chapter considers how the social life of sacred houses in Timor-Leste has expanded beyond its traditional role. It is based on field research carried out between September, 2016 and December, 2017. During this period I traveled multiple times between the capital city of Dili and the 'mountains', (in Tetum, *foho*)[4] accompanied by interlocutors living in the city who had conserved ties with their sacred houses in rural areas. During these trips I sought to understand what made them visit their sacred houses. The extension of meanings involved in the experiences that take place in, or are due to, the sacred house is one of the key findings of my ongoing PhD research.[5]

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1. Why climb the mountain?

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4. In Timor-Leste, 'mountain' (or rural areas) refers as much to an empirical landscape as to a kind of morality. In this chapter, I detail events experienced in the villages of Lena (Baguia, Baucau), and Lir and Osso-Liro (Quelicai, Baucau).

This chapter is an attempt to make sense of a series of events experienced during fieldwork and puts forth an argument that I have refined in my PhD dissertation. A review of the literature on houses and sacred houses in Timor-Leste (Sousa 2007; Gárate Castro 2010; Correia 2013, Hicks 2004; Fidalgo Castro 2015) indicated elective relations between architectural models of *uma lulik* (sacred or totem clan house),[6] social organization and collective performances such as harvest and ancestor ceremonies.[7] These practices are part of the sacred houses' regular calendar, which is centered on collective activities carried out at relatively fixed times. In addition to these, I have accompanied different kinds of visits to sacred houses, which followed a more intimistic dynamic. Rather than put forth a polarized analysis, I seek to identify the emphases (collective or intimist) placed on the reasons why people climb the mountain (*sa´e foho*) to visit their sacred houses and connect with their 'grandparents' (*abo/avo*).[8] I hope my findings are helpful in making more explicit the diverse conditions and modus operandi whereby people living in Dili resort to local institutions in the mountains. I argue that there are at least three different ritual activity scales involving people relations with mystical entities placed in the foho: those that entail affine sacred houses, those involving only an origin group organized around a sacred house and, finally, personal relations between an individual and his/her ancestors.

I develop the different ritual scales by analyzing two cases: both involved the individuals living in Dili going to the mountains outside the collective, programmatic ritual calendar. These people sought their sacred houses to present to the ancestors (*fo satisfasaum*

6. I alternate between the terms *uma lulik* and sacred house: 'house' represents both the physical structure and the group of orign to which people pertain. Ceremonial houses are referred to as *uma lulik* (sacred or totem clan house). *Lulik* is a Tetum word, literally "forbidden" or "sacred" (Bovensiepen 2014; Traube 1986).
7. In this chapter, the terms "ceremony" and "ritual" are deployed interchangeably. They are both native categories mobilized by my field interlocutors in order to refer to the practices through which they produce their worlds by acting and being acted upon.
8. In Timor-Leste, *abo/avo* means grandparent or can be a title for a much older person − it also refers to an ancestor. It is a double gender, common noun that is not exclusive to kinship terminology.

ba bei-ala) motivated by questions prompted by such events as an adolescent's first communion, and developments in academic and professional life. In both cases the visits related to achieving 'success' in the realm of material reproduction and livelihood. From the motivations expressed during these ceremonies and travels, I sought to make sense of the multiple ways in which the sacred house and narratives related to it were mobilized to support and legitimize choices made in different spheres of life.

My claim is that people's relations with their sacred houses span collective and intimate, ordinary and extraordinary dimensions that coexist, overlap and blur into each other. I discuss the contexts that prompted my interlocutors to visit their sacred houses, thus weaving complementary relations between urban and rural spaces. The main characters in these accounts reorganized the references through which they were socialized by activating new combinations and relations of complementarity between the city and the mountains. The resort to local mystical forces happens exclusively in the mountains. In non-mystical domains of social action, these same interlocutors show a different attitude towards the practices that prevail in the mountains. In these contexts, they may act as civilizing agents of relatives who live in the mountains, or cultivate nostalgic and romantic feelings towards that way of life.

This chapter has three parts. In the first section, I present two cases, and indicate overlappings, coexistences and blurring across the collective, intimate, ordinary and extraordinary dimensions involved in relations between individuals and their sacred houses. The second section discusses the contexts that led my interlocutors to their sacred houses. In the third and final section, I bring the empirical data into dialogue with part of the literature on sacred houses, focusing on the motivations that impelled my interlocutors to visit them.

***Tamba sá sa'e foho*? Presenting to the ancestors**

First case: Januário Soares visits his sacred house in Quelicai (Baucau district)

This case concerns the visit that one of my interlocutors, Januário Soares, paid to his sacred house in Quelicai (Baucau) to consult with (and thank) his ancestors on issues concerning his PhD studies in Indonesia. We left Dili for Baucau around nine in the morning. It was a long journey, beset with setbacks and unforeseen events. Such a trip, which lasted between eight and ten hours, afforded a lot of conversation. Fueled by coffee, cigarettes and beer, Januário and I talked about many things.

I was gradually able to figure out some of the motivations behind the trip: all of them were directed towards the successful conclusion of one step in his doctorate. Januário said he needed to clear his mind before he could move on with his studies − it was why the trip was so important. He was also concerned about describing beforehand the village infrastructure and planned activities. "We'll go to my little father's house,[9] get some rest, take a shower, have dinner (the food is simple, because life in the mountains is different from the city), talk a bit more, and go to sleep. Tomorrow we'll visit my sacred house."[10]

Januário, an interlocutor and fellow researcher, well informed about my academic interests, organized a schedule of activities that took into account the presence of a Portuguese speaker, and accommodation that would enable our interactions throughout the village. He explained that many of his relatives could have hosted us, but we would stay with his little father (uncle), Pedro. He said Pedro was very knowledgeable about the *kultura* of Timor-Leste and could tell me a lot of things, especially about his experience in the forest during the Indonesian invasion and occupation. Moreover, as a primary school Portuguese teacher, Pedro could also be of help

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9. In this context the term refers to the father's youngest brother, his uncle.
10. My interaction with the two interlocutors unfolded basically in Portuguese. Our dialogue was transcribed in this language, although we occasionally spoke Tetum under certain circumstances.

during our conversations with the elders, as some of them could only speak Makasae (the language of Baucau district).

We arrived in Quelicai around five o'clock in the afternoon. We followed the schedule Januário laid out during the trip. From the verandah, we had a privileged view of the village, surrounded by the sound of the wind blowing through the trees. In the darkness small spots of light came and went, as if fireflies were coming towards us. Those were the lanterns that illuminated the path of the elders who were on their way to talk to us. As the elders (or in Portuguese, velhos) continued to walk towards us, Januário explained that as my research was about sasan lulik (sacred things), it was necessary to invite and inform the elders.

Around seven, as the elders assembled on the verandah, Januário introduced me to them as a researcher from Brazil and asked me to explain my research purposes. Everyone listened attentively and then Pedro said: "now you may rest. The *katuas sira* are going to have some coffee and then they'll go home to think. Tomorrow, with refreshed minds, we'll go up and talk about these things in the sacred house." That part was not in the script: I had no idea what was going on!

The following day we left right after lunch. I was told the hike would take around half an hour. All along the way there were many houses: residences, granaries for storing food and sacred houses. As I was inexperienced at mountaineering, my steps were slow and faltering, holding back the entire group. Noticing my lack of skill, Pedro began explaining how to climb a rocky mountain with no clear trails such as Matebian. He said it was easier to do it barefoot, patiently placing one foot at a time on the rock, feeling its form and manner, stepping gently, and only then moving the body forward. I took my shoes off and let myself be affected by the texture of the rocks and the smell of the mountains, internally asking permission to penetrate those sacred places.

When we got to the Uma Lulik Lir Matebian (Lir and Osso-Liro villages) of Januário's paternal family, we sat by the lower part of the house and his uncles told us stories about its construction. They explained that the pillars represented the grandfather and grandmother, the mother and the children. Access to the upper floor was restricted to those who were considered to be house

members. The house's relics, kept within this secluded space, could only be touched by descendants of the founding ancestors. Januário and two elders went up and came back with a sword wrapped in red cloth. They placed the sword on top of a stone and explained that only a few individuals could touch it. Januário was one of them because he descended from one of the founding ancestors of that particular house.

On the way back, the elders explained that even the weather had changed since the Indonesian invasion. In the old days the rains would start in October and last until May. Now, they began in November and lasted no longer than February. Drops of rain began to fall on the dry land as we walked. The elders looked at me and said that those were the first rains of the year. It was a sign coming from the mountain – the Matebian mountain was greeting and welcoming me. We continued our descent, and this story was repeated several times to the neighbors and relatives we encountered.

The following day Januário left early to meet a healer who had been taking care of him for many years.[11] It rained heavily the entire day and, as it was not possible to go by car, everyone was worried because he had to walk around forty kilometers. Pedro explained that Januário went to meet the *matan-dook*[12] because he was having troubling dreams: they prevented his mind from being quiet enough to write and finish up his studies. He said Januário had to visit the sacred house and see the matan-dook in order to heal his mind, so he could continue his studies in Indonesia. Night had already fallen when Januário returned, thoroughly wet and exhausted. Without saying much about the event, he took a shower, ate dinner and went straight to bed.

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11. Long after the visit Januário mentioned that the leader was not really a *matan-dook*, and that he did not like to be called that. "That man is the son of my father's sister (my cousin). We have a blood connection, but he cannot be part of my father's sacred house. He is able to channel gratitude to my grandfathers. He has the sacred power to speak with the dead." From an analytical point of view, the fact that people refer to that spiritual mediator by resorting to different categories deserves itself attention.

12. For lack of a better term, I reproduce here the way people at Pedro's place referred to the spiritual leader.

Early the following day a child announced that the *matan-dook* had arrived. Januário then told to me we would go up to his sister's house and stay there for the morning because he had to "fulfill the *kultura*". On Januário's sister's verandah, there were two roosters: one red, the other white and black. The matan-dook was sitting by a table on which Januário put a few coins. The matan-dook received the roosters and held them up, uttering a few words in the local language. He immediately gave them to two boys, who sacrificed the birds off the verandah, holding the roosters by the neck as per the matan-dook's instructions. Once dead, they took them to the kitchen and there the matan-dook rubbed his hands on Januário's arms. Then they left the kitchen, opened up the roosters and read their intestines. Meanwhile, his sister, Antônia, prepared rice. According to the leader's reading, Januário had 'success' coming his way and would be able to complete his PhD.

Questions crowded my mind – many were rhetorical ones and will probably never be answered. Was the reason why the ceremony wasn't performed at the sacred house because the leader, as Januario's cousin through his father's sister, could not be part of the *uma lulik*? If that was the case, was it that he had no relationship at all with Januario's sacred house? What drove Januário to the mountains? What is the mountains' semantic universe?

I would find out that to visit and hold a ceremony in a sacred house involves much more than my expectations and assumptions. It was also a way of connecting with the mountains and with the part of the family that remained in the village.

Second case: Januário Correia visits his sacred house in Baguia (Baucau district)

This section presents a visit by my interlocutor Januário Correia and his son Jesuano Januário Trindade Correia (Lolito) to their sacred house at Lena village in Baguia, Baucau. They said the reason for the visit was Lolito's first communion, as well as presenting to the ancestors about Januário's professional life.

During the trip, Januário mentioned that his visits to the village usually involved bringing news regarding multiple aspects of his life, especially his professional life. After deciding that we

would go to the village, he received a phone call from the Korean Embassy confirming a technical visit to formalize an agreement between UNTL and a Korean university in the community development sector, where he was a professor. For Januário, there was a connection between his visits to the village and good news: what for some may be just a coincidence, for him was the ancestors acting in his life.

The trip to Baguia unfolded on a long, winding road and part of the route is the same to Quelicai – also good for telling stories. And thus was our journey. Rocked by the rough sound of the engine as it went up the hills and appreciating the multicolored, multishaped landscape, Januário said with bright eyes: "sometimes it is enough just to go to the sacred house, have a smoke with the ancestors. There's no need for ceremony, no nothing. Ah! It's wonderful! That's how it is in Timor, you know! We believe that our ancestors are up there in the mountains, in the sacred house!"

According to Januário, his brother André, the sacred house's *lia na'in* (traditional keeper of history and customs), would officiate a short ceremony celebrating Lolito's first communion, and giving thanks for the good moment in his professional life.

It rained during our visit. The rainy season in the region is hot with high precipitation, frequently causing floods that make journeys last even longer. During this period many small cars are not able to drive all the way up to the mountainous parts, which was the case for Lena village where the Lutugia sacred house was located. Januário decided to leave the car on a flatter area, next to a relative's house. Children, teenagers and some of Januário's uncles joined to help us on the way up.

It was already dark and it had rained a lot: a child from Dili (Lolito) and a *malae* (foreigner) needed assistance along the way. The locals who accompanied us estimated the walk was about half an hour. Perhaps because of Lolito and me, it took us almost two hours to get there. We arrived at the house Januário and his brother André were building around nine in the evening. The house did not have permanent residents. Some neighbors left the houses around it in order to welcome us, and helped prepare the beds and meals. The weather and vegetation in the mountains are very different from Dili: it was very cold and windy in Baguia. At some

point during the day, the clouds descended, forming a dense fog that compromised our vision and movement.

In the morning a group of around twelve, mostly children, gathered together and we all set off to the sacred house. Along the path we saw other sacred houses. Some were built with materials considered 'modern', some 'traditional', and others combined both. As we moved up, there were fewer and fewer houses, and the trail became harder.

After about forty minutes we spotted the Lutugia sacred house. The children began to remove the tall weeds that had grown around it and we entered the house's ground floor. As with other sacred houses in the region, this one had four wooden pillars to support the upper floor. The lower part was used for ceremonial preparation tasks, socialization and some rituals. In the front yard lay the grandparents' remains under a landmark made of stones. The *lia na'in* André made them what is usually the first offering of *bua malus* (ingredients for chewing betel nut) and cigarettes. Then they waited for the ancestors to help them.

After a few minutes André sat on the sacred house's ground floor and invited Lolito to take part in the procedures, saying: "come here, *lia na'in*, so you can learn how to do it!" Lolito was being trained to be the house's next *lia na'in.* Januário had two children, one girl and one boy, and André had two girls but his son was already deceased. Januário said multiple times: "we are two brothers, a small family, with only a few males, a small sacred house, Lolito is our heir. He will take our house forward!" Lolito's name was a reference to number three in Makasae language. He was the only male in the third generation of a family that until that time had only three men.

The *lia na'in* asked Januário and Lolito to come forward. André explained that two roosters would be offered to the ancestors: one as thanks for Januário's professional life, and the other for Lolito's first communion. But as one of them had escaped during our way up, they would use only one rooster. This sacrifice was similar to others I had witnessed in other localities: the animal is held up by the neck and then immolated. André asked his nephew to hold the cock while he cut open part of the animal's intestine in order to read

the oracle. He then suggested that the absence of blood was a sign of good luck.

The brothers chewed the bua malus. Januário held Lolito and spat the red mixed fluid derived from masticated bua malus on several parts of the boy's body: hands, arms, forehead and feet. According to Januário, it was important to present Lolito to the sacred house before his first church communion.

There is an association in certain East Timorese communities between the *bua malus* and Christ's body−blood. Thus, to take an adolescent to his sacred house before the first communion ritual in order to present him with bua malus indicates a coexistence between local practices and Catholic religiosities. Lolito's visit to his sacred house before his first communion reminded me of reports about matrimonial exchanges happening before wedding rituals in the Catholic Church. Mutatis mutandis, both instances are about relations of precedence and complementarity between local and Catholic mystical agencies.

The visit to the sacred house involved few people: Januário, Lolito, and André. Ceremonies held during this visit did not follow a regular calendar, but Januário asserted that the visit should happen before his son's first communion and his own visit to Korea. The negotiations with André took these plans into account.

Motivations for the visit to Baguia emphasized personal and family projects. The sacred house and ancestor cults were mobilized not to satisfy demands, but to open the way for a Catholic ritual and acknowledge gratitude. The expression "present to the grandparents" may be fully understood in these extended terms. One seeks the sacred house for several reasons: one is for making pleas; others include strengthening ties with the ancestors, recounting events in life, showing gratitude, and so forth. Thus, "grandparents", "present to the ancestors" and "success" address a semantic matrix closely related to kinship, ancestorship, thankfulness, appeals, offerings, commitments, debt, life expectations, harmony and balance.

A visit to the sacred house is part of a broader enterprise that includes taking the ancestors into account and acknowledging a set of obligation towards them. The ceremony was carried out on the house's ground floor, but the route from Dili to Baucau and Baguia

itself plays a role in nurturing relations between the living and the dead. Along the way, we met Januário's uncles, aunts and cousins; we drank water at one of his aunts' houses and left the car in an uncle's backyard. We visited the burial place of deceased relatives, including his father, an uncle and a nephew. To visit and/or carry out a ceremony in a sacred house may involve a different set of obligations from those connecting people by marriage, for instance.

Several ethnographies have concentrated on the sacred houses' demands on their members. Here I consider the other tip of the exchange and reciprocity network: it is not the sacred house that solicits an obligation from one of its children, but the child who requests the sacred house's support.

More about the two Januários

But who were the characters in the events I describe? Where did they come from and what did they do?

Coincidentally, these were two Januários. Januário Correia was married, under forty and, at the time, coordinated a community development course at UNTL. He had a Master in Sociology from Minho University in Portugal. He was born in Baguia, Baucau, and lived in Dili. Januário was a political party activist, actively involved in Catholic movements. He had been conducting research on community tourism, sacred houses and educational inclusion.

Januário Soares was a forty-year-old, married professor in the community development course. He was once a member of parliament but was no longer actively involved in politics. Januário was doing PhD at the Christian University Satya Wacana in Central Java and studied the teaching of Portuguese at multiple educational levels.

Soares and Correia were both university professors, researchers, and spoke Portuguese, Indonesian and English, besides Tetum and Makasae. They constantly moved back and forth between the cities, the mountains and abroad, and enjoyed a heterogeneous kind of cultural capital, allowing them to mobilize multiple strategies in order to achieve and justify their personal objectives. During my time with them in Dili I noticed how they used to associate professional

performance with the fulfillment of individual or collective rituals performed in the mountains. Professional and academic development, and a Catholic rite of passage, had to be validated by the ancestors there. The mountains are regarded as encompassing at once spatial, temporal and moral references.

My interlocutors voiced their interpretations of the mountains and the semantic systems related to them in multiple ways. Yet, the mountains always figured in their comments as the site where life finds its balance. There, in the mountains, fruit is tasty, the weather is fresh, rain is more frequent. It is where the ancestors live, where the sacred houses are located, where life unfolds in a manner closer to the one the ancestors once lived.

The city–mountain opposition has been evoked by the literature in order to make sense of manifold processes currently taking place in Timor-Leste (Roque 2011; Silva 2011; Fidalgo Castro 2015). The mountains are often associated with custom,[13] in contrast with the cities, which are frequently considered to be the privileged space of "modernity". According to Silva (2011), the topographic opposition produced by the bifurcated former Portuguese colonial state in East Timor (and in other late colonization regions) has structured social organization and nation-building processes. In other words, the invention of the city and the mountains as specific sites in the East Timorese moral landscape stems from discursive and administrative technologies put forth during Portuguese colonization.

The bifurcated state is a construction of European colonial administrations in Africa and Asia, whose long-lasting effects have persisted into postcolonial times. According to Mamdani (1998), colonial states were bifurcated because they included different and exclusive bureaucratic apparatuses for managing the rurally located indigenous population and the white, expatriated population in urban areas. Wherever this kind of state was present the urban space was the site of direct rule and of the individual as normative subject, whereas rural areas were the space of indirect

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13. This category was crafted during Portuguese colonization in East Timor in order to classify the premises, ways of life and representations that structured multiple dimensions of sociability among indigenous peoples abroad (Silva 2011).

rule and tradition (in the case of East Timor, the mountains). For Mamdani, colonial rule had different strategies for urban and rural areas. These strategies bolstered a system where traditional law was enacted by local chiefs in the countryside, while civil law typical of modern institutions ruled over urban areas.

Moralities associated with the city and the country persisted well into the postcolonial period, and they are currently evoked by East Timorese to produce multiple effects. The way people combine, mobilize and play with these representations may reinstate or change systems of prestige. The effects of the bifurcated state, both in territorial ordering and subjectification processes, are multiple. Moralities associated with the mountains and the cities may be opposed or complementary to each other, depending on the contexts, subjects and effects one expects to produce.

Silva's research on representations of the mountains by urban elites in contemporary Dili in the context of marriage prestations may help illuminate the cases discussed here (Silva 2011). The author proposed classifying these representations via two poles. One is a positive perspective, which regards marriage prestations as a way of defining social rules for individuals and groups where the state is absent. This understanding inspires sympathetic attitudes towards the mountains and their moralities, whereby marriage prestations are understood in terms of respect and deference, thus enabling the strengthening of kinship ties between houses/families and nourishing attachments with the sacred houses and ancestor cults. A more negative view understands marriage exchanges as trade in people, and decries the practice as a strategy to preserve access to married daughters and safeguard individual rights to free movement by their original families. This view is based on representations of the mountains as the site of irrational practices, where the excess of rituals causes deprivation.

With regards the two Januários, how are moralities associated with the mountains and cities related? What leads university professors with professional and financial stability (in Dili) to travel to their native villages outside the regular schedule of collective obligations? What representations of the mountains are evoked in order to make sense of these movements?

I suggest that the Januários' visits to Quelicai and Baguia are part of a wider acknowledgement of the mystical forces that inhabit the mountains, and of the ancestors' and the sacred houses' actions upon their lives. In these cases, moralities associated with the mountain and with the city complement each other and, together, they bolster the attainment of one's objectives. Representations of the mountains, as the ancestors' home, and the importance of respecting them in order to guarantee a good life flow, were prevalent among my interlocutors. At least in these instances, the two opposing poles complemented each other.

From a discursive perspective, it is as if ritual performance carried out in the mountains around the sacred houses and the ancestors had precedence in relation to certain activities that take place in the city, and this helped secure the latter's success (Fox 1993; Acciaioli 2009; McWilliam 2009).

According to McWilliam (2009), the botanic idiom articulated through the metaphor stem−tip conveys an archetype of precedence in Timor-Leste. From this perspective, the founding ancestor/origin is considered to be the stem, and the descendants are the branches and flowers. When Januário Correia and Januário Soares went to the mountains to enact rituals in advance of activities that would take place in the city, they were reasserting the complementarity of town and mountain.

When the notion of precedence's scope is enlarged, representations projected on cities and mountains may express other kinds of precedence, of a temporal, moral and territorial kind. Quelicai and Baguia, for instance, appear as the stems and, by migrating to Dili, the Januários distanced themselves from those responsible for managing the rituals and related moralities.

My interlocutors lived in Dili, but they saw themselves as part of Baguia and Quelicai. They felt they belonged to their villages and were compelled to be accountable to the ancestors in relation to certain events in their lives. The villages and mountains are references of origin, around which a series of multipurpose rituals is performed.

When I asked my interlocutors about the reasons for their travels, they both used the expressions "*dar satisfação aos avôs*" (Portuguese, present to the grandparents) or "*fo satisfas ba bei-ala*

sira e halo avoo sira laran-ksolok" (Tetum − present to the ancestors and make them happy). The first, especially, was mentioned perhaps because I was a Portuguese speaker. This phrase and others similar to it were used to make sense of a series of overlapping practices: appreciation/professional guidance, presenting an adolescent to his sacred house, visits/offerings to the tombs of dead grandparents, among others. In this context, grandparents may relate both to consanguinity and to ancestorship, that is, individuals acknowledged as founders of the group to which one belongs. Could "dar satisfação aos avôs" be a way of translating to a foreigner the complex ways by which one relates to the ancestors and the mountains? I think so. And yet, this expression was deployed in Portuguese during conversations held in Tetum, even when I was not involved.

The ancestors have to be informed about professional and academic deeds through the grammar of the mountains, and within the space recognized as their house. A Catholic ceremony, such as first communion, also has to be communicated beforehand. It is as if a combination of moralities guarantees the reproduction of life in its multiple aspects.

In contrast with the city, the mountain is considered to be the site of *lulik* (sacred) things. When my interlocutors asserted the particular status of the mountains and the importance of going up there to meet the relatives and visit the ancestors, they compared them with the urban areas. Similarly, when they identified stones, trees, houses and tombs as worship sites, they took into consideration two markers: one closer, the mountain, and one farther away, the city.

The way my interlocutors referred to their villages frames them as part of a morality closer to local custom when compared to the city. "We´ve got be patient! Things in the mountains are different from in the city", "the timeframe of the elders is different from young people's", "one has to ask permission from the grandfathers", "just to be in the mountains takes us closer to the grandfathers". These and other remarks my two friends uttered during our trips make evident how some representations of the mountain are embodied in discourse.

As Fidalgo Castro and Alonso Población (2017) pointed out, the notion of *lulik* encompasses practices and beliefs related to local religiosities, and their uses and meanings are not exclusive to religious experts. I add to this perspective what I have been calling the specter of lulik things and their sphere of influence. Villages, sacred houses and their objects are inviolable to my interlocutors and their relatives. The lower part of the sacred house, certain rocks, river springs and tombs are sacred to members in a group of related families. Thus, the geographic scope of whatever is lulik relates to how people form attachments with their native regions and cultivate them by means of multiple rituals.

The fulfillment of ritual prestations reverberates in other spheres of life. The narrative Januário Correia wove between going up the mountain and receiving good news in the professional realm prompts us to reflect on the effects of rituals carried out in the mountain or other domains of life in Dili. It is a continuous feedback loop: the mountains offer gifts in return for the performance of certain activities; to receive these gifts prompts feelings and desire for new acts of gratitude, and so forth. It is a back and forth movement of gratefulness, accountability, acceptance and retribution on collective and individual scales.

These findings lead me to propose that there has been an extension of the social life of the sacred houses in Timor-Leste. The sacred house, considered a resilient local institution capable of subverting adverse conditions, may by mobilized in order to provide gifts pertaining to multiple domains of human experience. In the instances discussed here, visits to the sacred houses were motivated by the first communion of an adolescent and the professional lives of two university professors. These are the kinds of motives that make people visit their sacred houses outside the regular ritual schedule. What are the convergences and divergences between these motivations and those related to the sacred houses' collective ritual calendar?

Closing remarks

My fieldwork in Timor-Leste and the specialized literature indicate that practices involved in constructing or reconstructing

sacred houses, weddings, births and harvest rituals are moments of intense collective celebration. Through them relations with the ancestors are renewed, as are the intra- and inter-family reciprocal commitments and responsibilities. Such practices bring to the fore compelling narratives about the affine sacred houses.

When asked about the regular activities they carry out in their respective sacred houses, persons belonging to different houses in different areas have mentioned the houses' inauguration ceremonies, sau batar (the corn harvest ceremony), and day of the dead (*loron matebian*) as the ones prompting collective travel to the villages. These movements involve the kind of "free obligation" to participate, to use Mauss's (2003) terms. Events, such as the inauguration of a sacred house, activate alliances between sacred houses, which are established through different modalities of affinity. Practices, such as *sau batar*, for instance, mostly galvanize relations between different generations of the same sacred house. These are concentric feedback circuits that integrate multiple relational levels across individuals, generations, ancestors and sacred houses.

Some ceremonies involve different sacred houses and take into account the alliances established along a house's trajectory. In this case long-lasting attachments, initiated by marriage or geographic commonality, are further nourished. Other ceremonies involve only the descendants of founders from an origin group organized around a particular sacred house. This kind of celebration nurtures relations between descendants of an origin group. The individuals incorporated into that origin group take part in the ceremonies in the role of spouse of the house's sons. Additionally, there are more intimate ceremonies, such as the ones presented here for the two Januários. In these instances, the practices did not take place inside the house itself and involved fewer people. These rituals address more directly and importantly the relations between an individual and his ancestors. Therefore, I suggest there are at least three different scales of ritual activity involving people's relations with mystical entities placed in the *foho*: those entailing affine sacred houses, those involving only an origin group and, finally, personal relations between an individual and his/her ancestors. Accordingly, at least three kinds of ceremonies operate to secure the social reproduction of the sacred houses, origin groups or persons.

More individualized visits to the sacred houses, such as the ones described in this chapter, are relatively unexplored in the ethnographic literature. Cosmologies and reports from the *lia na'in* (lords of words, ritual specialists) help us understand certain aspects of the individuals' relations with their sacred houses, the ancestors and the mountains. More particular ways of connecting with the ancestors allow us to make sense of other dynamics. In the ceremonies involving more people I learned to recognize performance. In the more intimate ceremonies, I approached the content of relations.

This chapter suggests that the sacred house has had its social function of securing a "successful" flow of life updated and that the mountains are still being mobilized as a site of mystical forces. While there, one meets relatives, friends and ancestors. There, past attachments are remembered, relived and re-elaborated in the present. These meetings, which may happen in the dry or wet season, during rough or good times, inside/below/around the sacred house, incite sensations and effects. They are encounters with others as much as moments of internal introspection, through which one learns "a little bit of everything" – to live with the stream, the earth, life's struggles, objects, stones, ancestors, and so forth.

It is from *uma lulik* that people reap a good share of their imaginary repertoire. From it, in it, and with it, people think about and act in regard to the future, making sense of both the present and the past. The sacred house is a source of important identitary references, as the two Januários and their endeavors have shown. The sacred houses and mountains operate discursively to produce moralities.

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Using *kultura* in self-defense:
A case study of female empowerment at the household level in a Liquiçá hamlet[1]

Alberto Fidalgo Castro[2]

This chapter considers the use of mechanisms in an extended family in Faulara, a small *aldeia* (hamlet) in Liquiçá, to gain and redistribute power at the household level. I demonstrate the concept through a case study in which I analyze the events that occurred during a family gathering for a Catholic ritual (All Souls' Day) in December, 2010.

After a brief presentation of Faulara's ethnographic context, I examine how a female family member creates an empowerment strategy. She does this by including non-human entities as well as the implicit rights and duties that go along with social relations, in order to reverse the impacts of an emotive situation.

The main objective of the chapter is to demonstrate how particular social actors empower themselves through the use of whichever appropriate cultural and social means they can access. This serves as a partial response to certain observers' knowledge that places the blame for gender inequality on *kultura* – local beliefs or traditions – and that it is unable to manage these types of social problems. Some of those discourses propose that introducing modern institutions, practices and mind-sets into the lives of Timorese people would serve as a better means to solve problems.

The ethnographic setting

Faulara is the name used by the inhabitants of the municipality of Liquiçá to refer to the aldeia of Lepa. It is located on an alluvial

plain formed by the downstream area of the Laueli River (a tributary of the Loes River), in the only non-mountainous part of the *suku* (village) of Leotelá in Liquiçá, north-west Timor-Leste.

The inhabitants of Faulara are mainly farmers, with only a few formal remunerated jobs, consisting of primary school teachers and agricultural extension workers. The settlement is in an important area for agricultural production. It is one of the few places in the municipality where wet-rice production occurs, due to the permanent source of water from the Laueli River. Corn and cassava are the other two staple foods grown in the village. Fruits are mostly grown as cash crops which, along with some timber production, provide a source of income for the households. Livestock rearing (cattle, poultry, pigs and goats) also takes place. Animals can be used as a source of income when a household faces financial or food supply problems, but they are mainly kept for special occasions and important ritual events during the life cycle of the household (marriages, deaths and other rituals).

Faulara has experienced a number of migration processes under different state regimes. Since independence in 2002, the outflow of people seems to be directed towards Dili, the capital city, as is the case in many other rural areas of the country (GDS and UNFPA 2011). The remaining dwellers are a mixture of native inhabitants and migrants who settled during different times and from various origins, both socially and geographically. Almost all of them were resettled (many by force) as laborers for the agricultural industry. However, some of them, pertaining to families well-positioned in the Portuguese administration, were resettled by the colonial rulers as political administrators.

Most of the hamlet's 824 inhabitants, distributed across 128 households (GDS and UNFPA 2011), arrived in Faulara between 1996 and 1997, with the official opening of a transmigration settlement created the final years of the Indonesian regime (CAVR 2005, 116-17). Most were 'local transmigrants' from the Liquiçá municipality.[3] The second most important group are the descendants of the Búnak-speaking people from the Bobonaro

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3. *Alokasi Penempatan Penduduk Daerah Transmigrasi* (APPDT, Population Placement Allocation of Transmigration Districts) in Indonesian (Otten 1986).

municipality, who claim to have come to Liquiçá long ago for a different set of reasons: as traders around the Portuguese colonial military post of Boebau, established in 1896, having been forcibly moved by the Japanese during World War II, and to work as laborers in the fields of the Portuguese company SAPT (*Sociedade Agrícola Pátria e Trabalho*, Society of Homeland Agriculture and Labor) in the late 1960s. A small minority of settlers claim to be originally from a handful of the country's other municipalities. Due to this heterogeneous population, the language spoken in Faulara is normally Tetun (one of two national languages), but other local languages, such as Tokodede (the native language of the area), Mambai or even Búnak are used. Indonesian is widely known, and Portuguese is understood by social elites but only fluently spoken by a handful of people.

Salustião's and Losita's household in Faulara

Figure 1: Salustião's and Losita's descendants
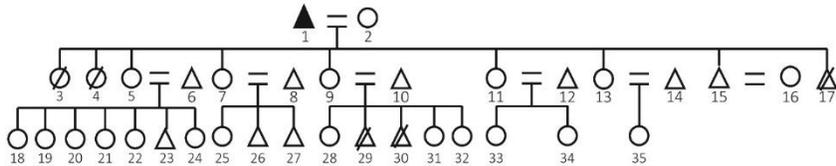
1. Salustião da Silva Martins. Ego
2. Losita da Silva (W)
3. Fernanda (D)
4. Filomena (D)
5. Sebastiana da Silva (D)
6. Emilio Pereira (DH)
7. Aida da Silva (D)
8. Angelino dos Santos da Costa (DH)
9. Ricardina da Silva (D)
10. Armindo Freitas (DH)
11. Celsia da Silva (D)
12. Carlito de Deus (DH)
13. Lisonia da Silva (D)
14. Antonio dos Santos Freitas (DH)
15. Sonifansio da Silva (S)

19. Alotu (DD)
20. María (DD)
21. Misi (DD)
22. Koemali (DD)
23. Anó (DS)
24. Nona (DD)
25. Anoi (DD)
26. Nuno (DS)
27. Ameta (DS)
28. Celia da Silva Freitas (DD)
29. Longuinos Freitas (DS)
30. Anó (DS)
31. Leticia da Silva Freitas (DD)
32. Odete (DD)
33. María da Silva de Deus (DD)

16. Elisa de Jesús Ximenes (SW)   34. Celsia da Silva de Deus (DD)
17. Loudinos da Silva (S)   35. Milena da Silva Freitas (DD)
18. Ali (DD)

Salustião (number 1 in Figure 1) is the son of Bunak-speaking people from Bobonaro who established themselves in Liquiçá (*posto* Boebau) to work as laborers for SAPT. Before the 1975 Indonesian invasion, he married and had two children with Losita (number 2 in Figure 1, also the daughter of Bunak people settled in Liquiçá). The first two daughters died (numbers 3 and 4) during the time the couple took refuge in the forest (*ai laran*) of Liquiçá at the beginning of the invasion (they stayed there until 1979). After their capture, they settled in Liquiçá village, where he earned his living in construction from 1979 until 1985. In 1985 Salustião arrived in Faulara with an Indonesian agricultural project funded by USAID,[4] which planned to clear and prepare the land near the Loes River to grow rice (Indonesia. Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Liquica 1997; Martin-Schiller, Hale and Wilson 1987). He was one of the workers who helped clear the land, and construct the road and irrigation channels. After that, he received four water buffalo and one hectare of leased land to use for cultivation, on which he constructed a temporary house (*uma baraka*). During that time, his family kept going back and forth between Faulara and Liquiçá village until they finally settled there in 1999.

None of Salustião's and Losita's sons and daughters was born in Faulara. Daughter numbers 3, 4, 5 and 7 were born when the couple still lived in Boebau. The rest of their children were born in Liquiçá village between 1979 and1992. By the time I moved into their house in September 2010, the people they considered to be permanent residents of the household were 1, 2, 15 and 16. The latter two had married in April that year and were expecting a child.

The residence, although conceptualized as only one household, was composed of three separate structures: two houses and an outside kitchen. The first house was built at the time of their arrival in Faulara and was a typical transmigration house. The second house was still under construction, though already in use,

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4. East Timor Agricultural Development Project (ETADEP).

with a dirt floor and, at the time, it was without doors or windows − cloths covered the spaces. Salustião and Losita slept in the old house while 15 and 16 used the new one (where I also lived during my stay). Number 15 was, after the premature death of number 17 at age three, the couple's only son and was considered the heir to the house, as well as most of the land they owned.

The couples formed by numbers 5 and 6, on the one hand, and 9 and 10, on the other, both established their residences outside of Faulara, and both the husbands had formal paid jobs. Number 6 was an extension worker for the Ministry of Agriculture in the nearby suku Gugleur (see Photo 1), and in the Loes River area, where he lived with number 5 and their children. Number 10 worked as a truck driver for a Chinese-Timorese owner of several businesses in Liquiçá village.

Number 8 also had a formal job: he was a teacher at the Faulara primary school. At the beginning of my research, he was living with number 9 and their children in a state-owned house used for government employees. At the time, however, they were constructing a bigger and better house of their own in Faulara, on a piece of land they had purchased from Salustião, located just beside his garden. They wanted to finish building before they moved, but heavy flooding occurred in November of that year, resulting in the destruction of the state house. Thus, they had to hasten their relocation (see Photo 2).

Photo 1: Distribution of Salustião's and Losita's children's residences (Source: Google Earth)
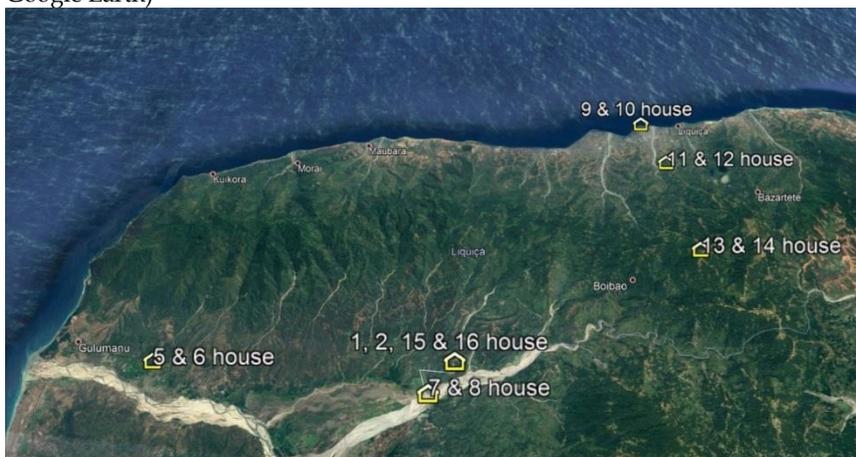
Couple 11 and 12 had an insecure life. They had neither a house nor formal jobs. They helped in agriculture-related tasks both for 12's origin house (see Picture 1), where they settled, and Salustião's and Losita's household in Faulara. Before marrying number 12 drove a mikrolet (a privately owned minibus) along the Liquiçá−Dili route and 11 began her studies to become a nun. After that, they opened a small restaurant (*warung*, Indonesian) in Faulara's marketplace, where they worked on Saturdays. They had to give up the business because their profits dropped drastically from 60 to 70 US dollars each Saturday to less than 10. Their two daughters live with 12's mother. At the time of the events referred to in this case, they were both in Faulara, living with 1 and 2 in the old house.

Numbers 13 and 14 resided virilocally for four years in the suku of Darulete (see Picture 1) and then decided to move to Faulara. Their intention was to build a house on a small piece of land they had bought from 1 and 2.[5] While they waited for their house construction to begin, they settled temporarily in one of the rooms of the new house, where they lived with their daughter. Like 16, 13 was also pregnant at the time of this case study.

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5. They paid 100 USD and a cow for it.

Photo 2: Buildings on 1's and 2's land (Source: Google Earth)[6]

The 2010 *loron matebian* celebrations

About *loron matebian*

November 2 is a holy day in Timor-Leste, known as *loron matebian* (All Souls' Day), when people commemorate their dead relatives. It is one of the most important events of the Catholic cycle of annual rituals, for which the members of a particular origin group (*uma-lisan*) gather together to honor their ancestors and the spirits of their dead relatives. Although it is a Catholic ceremony, many practices and beliefs of Timorese cosmology have been integrated into it.[7]

People in Faulara believe that during *loron matebian* the spirits of their ancestors "walk" (*la'o*) "to visit the living" (*mai vizita*). They must be treated appropriately and the same etiquette should be observed as when a living guest arrives. Thus, the visitor should be offered *bua-*

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6. Although irrelevant for the purpose of this chapter, there was another building located near the house of 1 and 2. It belonged to Salustião's WZS (see Photo 2), a man called Rafael, who lived there with his wife and children. Rafael had lived with Losita and Salustião when he was young (he was older than most of their children), while they were still living in Boebau. When he got married, he bought land from them in Faulara to settle there with his wife.

7. I have shown elsewhere (Fidalgo Castro 2012) how Timorese have appropriated foreign religious beliefs and practices by incorporating them into the their worldview structures.

malus (betel nut and areca leaves), some kind of drink (wine, beer, liquor, coffee, tea, etc.), a snack (biscuits, cake) and tobacco.

In Faulara, as in other parts of the country, this celebration entails making some offerings to the dead, followed by Catholic prayers, and both of these take place at the burial sites. The *rai-na'in kaer bua-malus*[8] also prays for the *avó jentiu* (pre-Christian 'grandparent'), those ancestors who weren't Catholic at the time of their death, using ritual language (Fox 1988). In the case of Faulara, most of those non-Catholic ancestors are members of the two family groups (*uma lisan*) considered to be the original inhabitants of the place, arriving there before transmigration occurred. Many of the people who live in Faulara participate in the offerings made to those ancestors in recognition of the precedence that those houses have in relation to their own. The prayers to the original ancestors take place first, serving as a general introduction to the prayers and offerings, and then each house moves to their respective burial places to honor their own relatives' spirits and their ancestors.

Photo 3: Offerings made at a grave during *loron matebian*

8. A type of ritual authority: see Alonso Población and Fidalgo Castro (2014) for an account of what *rai-na'in kaer bua-malus* means in the hamlet of Faulara.

People dress in their best clothes and walk in procession to the graves, where they prepare the offerings and ornaments.[9] After placing the ornaments on the graves, normally flowers and candles, they present the offerings to the dead following the Catholic prayer. It is the local catechist who normally conducts the prayers − there are no other religious authorities established in the hamlet − and he conducts the prayers for many different houses in return for a contribution either in money or in kind.[10] Once the offerings and prayers to the dead are finished, people consider that "the ancestors have eaten". It is then time for the people (the living) to eat, smoke, chew betel and areca and chat until the day's events end.

Salustião's and Losita's family celebrate *loron matebian*

Salustião's and Losita's family started the preparations for *loron matebian* in advance, cleaning the graves of their dead. Salustião himself wasn't present that day.[11] The family members who were living there at that time, according to the numbers detailed in Figure 1 (Salustião's and Losita's descendants), were as follows: 2, 7,[12] 25, 26, 27, 11, 12, 13, 14, 35, 15 and 16.

Close to midday on All Souls' Day, the daughters of Salustião and Losita who resided outside Faulara started to arrive at the house, along with their own nuclear family members. They arrived in a truck driven by number 10, borrowed from his *patraun* (boss) in exchange for bringing it back loaded with wood.[13] The family members who attended the celebration from elsewhere were the

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9. Some days before the celebration of *loron matebian*, families start cleaning around the graves, removing the dirt, rubbish and weeds that accumulate during the year. It is normally women, particularly young ones, who do that work.

10. In some families, it is a religious member, or one in religious training, who is responsible for the prayers, if s/he comes to visit on All Souls' Day. In the case of families without economic resources, they normally carry out the prayers themselves.

11. He went to Bobonaro, where he stayed for a month and a half, after receiving a call from a member of his house of origin to help with the construction of a house.

12. Her husband (number 8) went to his origin house in a *suku* elsewhere in Liquiçá, to celebrate *loron matebian*.

13. They loaded the truck with wood from the Laueli river. The river flow drops dramatically during the dry season, exposing the tree trunks and branches swept along by flood waters and deposited there during the rainy season.

following (according to Figure 1): numbers 5,[14] 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24; 9, 10, 28, 31 and 32.

Number 10 left his spouse in the house and, without delay, proceeded to load wood from the dry riverbed. The daughter living in Liquiçá village (9) brought a frozen industrial-raised chicken (*ayam potong*, Indonesian) to cook at lunch time. All of them stayed for lunch and, when finished, numbers 9, 10, 28, 31 and 32 had to return to their house because they had "left the house empty" and "closed the door" (*uma mamuk, odamatan taka*), which was being watched only by a neighbor.[15] Numbers 5, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 stayed overnight and attended the ceremony, only returning to their house the next day.

The problem

Loron matebian was a busy day for me. I was trying to take notes about everything that was happening around me. I went back and forth between the kitchen, where the women were chatting and preparing food, and the veranda, where the men talked, smoked and drank coffee. Children ran around everywhere playing. It was difficult for me to follow everything that was going on. Some of the family members didn't know me yet and were curious about my presence there, so they asked many questions about what had brought me to stay in such a distant place. I was asked if I ate the same food as they did or if I had become used to living in the same conditions as they did. Fortunately, the people of the house replied on my behalf, saying things such as, "he eats the same as we do" (*nia han hanesan ita*), and he had "adapted" (*toman*) to the living conditions. Laughter and telling humorous anecdotes about my experience living with them were a constant part of my

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14. Her husband, number 6, stayed at home with their daughters (18 and 19) because they didn't want to leave the house empty (*uma mamuk*).
15. It is rare for Timorese families to leave their houses completely empty without a member of the family watching over it. In this fashion, the expression *odamatan taka hela* (the door stays closed) is used, among other things, to point out that nobody leaves the house, that nobody is there at the moment, or to state that the people who live there have an unsocial attitude.

conversations with them. A mood of joyful celebration was constant during the morning.

At lunch time, the men and I were served our food first – and separate from the women – inside the house. Pork, goat and chicken were served as side dishes on a bed of rice with a small plate of chili and salt for seasoning. We ate and talked for a while and, when finished, some of them went back to the veranda and some went to the kitchen. I was with those who went to the kitchen where the women were having lunch, in order to participate in the conversations taking place there.

Shortly after I entered the kitchen, I noticed that number 13 was upset. She was eating and then, suddenly, started to shout at number 15 (one of the men who went to the kitchen after lunch). Both of them then engaged in a verbal fight, shouting things at each other that I didn't understand. After a moment, number 13 abruptly left her plate – she was eating lunch – and went to her room inside the house while shouting and crying. She then started to pack up her clothes and other items, putting them into plastic and cardboard containers, and placing them on the veranda (see Photo 4).

Photo 4: Packed clothes and personal items that 13 placed on the veranda

I didn't understand anything that was going on. The rest of the people in the kitchen kept silent while they finished their lunch, and both 13 and 15 left the kitchen to go to their respective rooms. After a while, I discretely asked number 11 – she was seated beside me – what had just happened, and she told me that number 15 had "chased them" (*duni sira*).[16] With "them," as she told me afterwards, she was referring to 13 and 16. She then added that what number 13 did, meaning placing her clothes on the veranda, was something *lulik*.[17] This added to my confusion even more. But, as I felt that it was not the time to keep asking questions, I let it go at that moment and initiated some small talk to try to reduce the tension.

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16. The expression *duni* means "to throw out, to chase somebody or something out of a place". It is used to refer to clashes between people in a figurative way, even if nobody is literally thrown or chased out of a place.

17. The Tetun word *lulik* can work as a verb, a noun or an adjective and has been defined as sacred, taboo or spiritual potency (Bovensiepen 2014).

Shortly after a post-lunch nap, number 2 decided to attend the *loron matebian* prayers at the grave of the *avó rai-na'in* from Laueli's and Asumanu's houses (the ancestor of the original houses in Faulara). She prepared a handful of flowers and small candles, and asked 15 to join her. I also joined them and attended the prayers, conducted by one of the ritual authorities (*rai-na'in kaer bua-malus*). While at the original ancestors' graves, with mostly women and some of their children, I spoke to the wife of one of my interlocutors. She asked me what had happened in the house I was living in, because she had seen the containers placed on the veranda. She told me that she had intended to visit the house and walk together in a group to the graves of the *avó rai-na'in* but, after seeing the containers, she decided to go straight to the graves by herself.

Photo 5: 13 (left) and 11 (right) prepare flower ornaments.

When we got back, I went into the house through the front veranda. The containers 13 had packed were still sitting there and she, with number 11, was preparing flower ornaments for the graves of the family's relatives (see Photo 5). I took some photos of them working and then I sat with them, where we were joined by 16, 15's wife. I started to ask about what had happened earlier at

lunch time, in order to make sense of it, and asked permission to record our conversation. Part of it was as follows.[18]

11: It started this way: 9 brought 13's frozen chicken [into the kitchen] and she gave it to 16.

13: She didn't give it to me at all!

11: She gave it to 16 and then 16 said that she hadn't eaten goat meat. So… she hadn't eaten goat but then she went to get some goat… because 13 asked her to bring her some. As 15 saw that his wife had some goat meat, he also wanted some… He and 14 are *mane-foun* and *umane* [14 being fertility taker and 15 fertility giver]. 15 served himself his wife-taker meat and then 13 got angry with him. At the same time, 15 got angry with his wife and made her cry. Her tears dropped over her plate of rice, just like water…

Me: So… 15 got angry with 16 and 16 with 15? Now I understand it even less. Why did 13 get angry at 15 then? [11 laughs]. This is what I do not understand.

11: Because 15 got angry… [13 interrupts her]

13: Because 15 doesn't like that we [she, her husband and daughter] are living in this house… We are going to wait for our father to get back [from Bobonaro] and then we will leave.

Me: Why wouldn't he like that? …

13: He doesn't like it… We are going to wait for 1 and then we will take off.

Me: Why? …

13: He doesn't like us living here because… more plates have to be filled …

11: It is like this, mister… 15… what he has within… is a hole inside. Both his heart and his liver are like stones. … He is not prepared, he thinks like a child, he doesn't think like a married man…He must see that she [16] eats like everybody else, dresses like everybody else. …

Me: So then… why did 13 place her clothes outside on the veranda? [13 laughs]

11: Because 13 is a very nervous person… she is like a child when you mess with her and gets mad… That's why she took her clothes and suddenly placed them outside.

Me: But you did say that it was *lulik* to do that!

11: That is *lulik*, mister!

Me: So?

11: When the child is born…

Me: Is she not afraid? …

11: She is not… when the child is born… mister… [13 laughs]

18. Only some parts of the conversation's English translation are included. The whole conversation in Tetum is in Fidalgo Castro (2015, 340–44)

13: He [15] would lose his wine and goat … Wouldn't he? … Whenever a funeral inevitably occurs … the wife-takers… should give wine and a goat to somebody [referring to 15]. But when that happens, when 15 may have to attend a funeral, he will not be able to call for us to attend the *lia*[19] … If he wants to call us, he needs to give something first.

15: [Shouting from the veranda] She took her clothes out to wash them! [13 and 11 laughs] …

11: He is the one who loses! This [taking out the clothes] means the death of a male [wife-taker] … but he is the one who loses the bottle of wine and a goat!

13: When 15 takes care of his sister in his house… and gives her to this man… to marry her… That's when he can go and inform them of *lia*; when you have to attend *lia*, then you can go and inform them. … The relationship won't be cut off! When people do not support them, then there's nothing else to do… they would have to stop… He won't be able to continue with the *lia*. …

11: Mister… Taking her clothes out as she did today is *lulik*. Eventually, during childbirth, when the baby starts to provoke labor contractions, she will be suffering. Only when 15 does the *huu* … brings *bua-malus* and does the *huu* and *kuta*… to her, the baby will be able to live. Then the baby will live normally. …

Me: So then… [addressing 13] Your baby will get sick because of what you did today? When you take your clothes out, the baby can get sick?

11: Yes.

Me: And… For him not to get sick, 15 has to do the *huu* to you?

11: He has to do the *huu* to her …

Me: But… then… If they are angry at each other… what if he doesn't want to do the *huu* to her?

11: When you see that your sister is dying… she is dying inside… You have to help her!

Me: And what if he doesn't want to?

11: Ah! Who wouldn't want to? You have to… It is yours [13, being part of the family]! [13 laughs] If she dies, you lose a bottle of wine… a goat… money… You lose plenty! If he [14] then marries another woman… patience… That child of yours who was raised thanks to your efforts (kolen)… it is another person who takes advantage of the child, not you.

Me: Then… I want to ask 13. …

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19. The concept of *lia* is extremely polysemic and complex, but in the case discussed in this chapter it could be translated as a ceremony or ritual. I have explored this concept in more depth elsewhere (Fidalgo Castro 2017, 185−87).

Me: So… if 15 treats you badly… you… can also… he also loses… you can complain to the wife-takers over there on the mountain… and they won't come here at all. Is that so?

11: Of course!

Me: You can do that?

11: This means that he has to give a pig… a pig and a tais. … When the woman… when she won't come… 15 has to prepare a pig and a tais…, do the *huu* to him… he has to pay a fine (*fó-sala*) and only then will she prepare the goat and the wine and give them to him.

Me: But it is unlikely that he will do that… Or will he do it indeed?

11: I do not know mister… What happened today was only an outburst of anger. When mister Salustião gets back home he will say: "It's not like that, it is not, it is not… Yes… Drums!" [Meaning, 'he will fix this'] [13 and 16 laugh]

16: Today… was only a joke… it won't affect the *lia*.

Me: So… he won't be paying the fine… Or will he? …

13: He has to! He has to give me a pig and a tais if he wants to ask me when he has to attend *lia*. [She laughs] … If you don't pay… we… the wife-takers… we only take care of our own business … If you pay… we receive them… we will attend the *lia*, we will get involved.

Discussion

The married couples who were living in Faulara at the time of *loron matebian* were as follows: the parents (Salustião and Losita – numbers 1 and 2); their only son and his wife (15 and 16), and two of 1's and 2's daughters and their husbands; numbers 11 and 12 from suku Dato, and 13 and 14 from Darulete. The problem started as a misunderstanding over the share and kind of food allocated to each person at lunch time. Number 15 wanted to have some goat when he saw his wife had some, without knowing that it wasn't for her but for 13.[20]

The conflict arose between 13 and 15, which – according to 13 – had only one solution. He had to solve it by paying a fine and

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20. Those ritual exchanges where animals are given and received prescribe that the group of wife-takers offer their wife-givers cows / buffaloes and / or goats and receive pigs from them. Furthermore, they cannot eat the same kind of meat they provide during the ritual. Nonetheless, in this case, 13 ate goat, even though she was 15's wife-taker. I couldn't ascertain why she was eating this meat during this ritual. As a hypothesis, it may have been as *loron matebian* is not a ritual in which meat and animals are exchanged in the same way as for marriages or funerals and, thus, those kinds of food taboos do not apply here.

performing a ritual on 13, after which everything could go on as usual. *Huu* and *kuta* are the names of two processes of a ritual that are performed with the objective of repairing any imbalance occurred when failing to uphold the proper relationship (an orthodox and social sanctioned one) between two entities (human and/or non-human, individual and/or collective ones). In the case study presented, we witness a break in the observance of this balance between two people who shared a fertility-taker/fertility-giver relationship (*fetosaa/umane*), resulting in the endangerment of an unborn child and the mother's life (13). The consequence of this event meant the loss of 15's capacity to mobilize human and material resources from his sister's husband group by virtue of being their wife-giver.

In order to repair this imbalance, 15 must pay a fine (*fó-sala*) in the form of betel and areca (*bua-malus*), money (*osan*), a pig (*fahi*) and one handwoven textile (tais) to 13. He also has to carry out the *huu*: chewing betel and areca, and blowing part of the red mixture over the palms of the person receiving it. After that, he needs to conduct the *kuta*: this is anointing the person's forehead with the same mixture (normally making the sign of the cross). Once this process is over and the fine is paid, the imbalance is considered as repaired and normal relations can resume. The importance of *huu* and *kuta* when taking place between fertility-givers and fertility-takers is significant because it points out the direction in which the flow of life circulates (Fox 1980). Fertility is seen as a gift granted to the *fetosaa* (fertility/wife-takers) by their *umane* (fertility/wife-givers), which is sometimes conceptualized as *fó matak-malirin* (giving the raw/unripe and the cool).

The informal conversation transcribed above is relevant because it helps to exemplify the mutual dependence between fertility/wife-givers and fertility/wife-takers, discussing both their everyday lives and their ritual activities. The anthropology of the eastern archipelago has registered that, ever since Van Wouden's pioneering work ([1935] 1968), these affinal relations (*fetosaa-umane* in this case) create relationships of asymmetry in which the givers are considered to be superior to the takers. In this case study, I have tried to show that the people of Faulara are no different, in relation to the importance of affinal relations, from

many of the other neighboring societies. This structural relation, however, is an abstraction: it is a normative framework that only exists and makes sense when particular social agents put it into practice (Bourdieu 1991). It is precisely when this framework is put into practice in people's day-to-day lives that the analysis of these situations becomes more complex.

In the case presented, I demonstrate how 15 was indeed considered hierarchically superior to 13. So much so that when she had a problem with him, she didn't challenge him directly. Instead, she put herself and her unborn child in danger by mobilizing the actant (Latour 1996, 7) "clothes on the veranda" – a *lulik* act. This was done in such a way that only the ritual (*kuta* and *huu*) intervention of 15 could avoid a possibly fatal ending (see Figure 2). Why did she put herself in danger? What was her potential gain in doing so?

Figure 2: Relation between 13 and clothes as the translation of a goal[21]
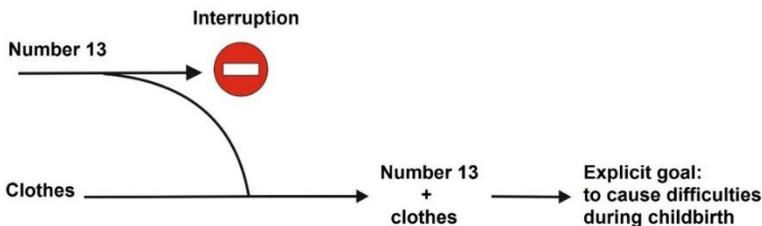
Number 13's intention was to deal with what she understood as unfair behavior from 15, her brother. She discursively framed it by saying that he accused her, her husband and daughter of aumenta bikan (more dishes), which implies an accusation of being unproductive members of the domestic unit, consuming more than they contribute. In order to defend herself, she reminded everybody that she was the linking connection with their fertility / wife-takers group, portraying herself as the "obligatory passage point" (Callon 1984, 205–6) without whom one of their wife-taker

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21. Figure adapted from Latour (2001: 213).

groups wouldn't exist. The sister–brother relationship, as Weiner (1992) has pointed out, is the key connection that allows for establishing a hierarchical connection between people and groups.

It is through the institution of exogamous marriage, and the exchanges that it entails, that 15 obtains resources from other social groups (Weiner 1992, 16). In mistreating his sister, breaking the necessary intimacy between them, 15 could end up without the support of the key person who allows that situation to happen: his sister. As her brother verbally mistreated her, she warned that he could lose his goat (*bibi*) and wine (*tua*) – literally, some of the goods that the wife-takers provide on ritual occasions to their wife-givers – because the ordinary affinal relationship is put on hold until the damage is repaired. This means that 15 can lose the ability to call upon them when he is in need of support for both ritual and day-to-day activities. By placing her clothes on the veranda, she put herself at risk, but she also withdrew the contingent economic contributions that are mobilized through affinal relationships in favor of her brother.

Nonetheless, she didn't give this warning to her brother directly because that would be inappropriate behavior due to the precedence that he, as a member of her wife-giver's group, has over her. She instead tried to put 15 in a position he could only extract himself from by paying her (and her husband's group) a fine (*fó-sala*). This would be the same as an explicit recognition of having misbehaved and accepting a punishment for that reason. Additionally, 13 reminded 15 that if he used his privileges over her in an abusive manner, he could lose the help that she provided when an important ritual (*lia*) takes place in the future (such as a funeral for 15's wife's parents). Furthermore, the clothes and personal items boxed up and placed on the veranda constituted a symbol meaning "problems within the household," which is widely recognized in Faulara. When people passing the house – located on a busy road – saw those items, visible for all to see, they were instantly aware of some internal problems. This added a public layer to a situation deemed private, creating a shameful event for the household made worse because it happened on All Souls' Day.

Another interesting aspect of this case study lies in the placement of personal items on the veranda as *lulik.* Here, *lulik*

neither implies distance or avoidance (Traube 1986, 142–43) nor is it related to "a potency specifically connected with the ancestral realm" (Bovensiepen 2014, 127). People do not need to avoid their clothes and personal belongings, and these items are not connected in any way to the ancestral realm or believed to have any intrinsic potency (Anderson 1972). What this case seems to imply is that *lulik* is a codification of the appropriate way (by calling on the inappropriate ways) in which the relationship between entities with agency (in this case people and clothes) should take place based on a convention established before by someone else (Rappaport 1999, 124–31). Claiming that a relationship between two entities is *lulik*, in a practical situation, is a rhetorical activation of an orthopraxis (Couceiro Domínguez 2005); that is, a way of calling upon a canonical practice that is used to regulate behavior. Clothes here are *lulik*, in the same way that a house, an heirloom, or a piece of land can be *lulik*. Not because of the participation of a reified essence or substance (Descola 2012, 64), but because the relation of the people with them is oriented by a pre-established cannon or convention.[22]

Closing remarks

The general idea of *kultura* or tradition as an element that keeps Timor-Leste from addressing some of its social issues, such as gender equality (Alves et al. 2009) or national economic development (Brandao et al. 2011),[23] has been mobilized through the discourse and writings of observers both within and outside the country for more than a decade (RDTL 2007).

One suggested cause of women's disempowerment is their perceived role as dependent individuals who see their capacity to make decisions for themselves being undermined. To solve this, some authors have seen the need for women to have access to modern-like mechanisms that may enable their empowerment in contrast to local regimes that do not allow for this. Thus, proposals, such as ensuring

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22. We've written about how this *lulik* relationship between entities is activated in day-to-day contexts elsewhere (Fidalgo Castro and Alonso Población 2018).

23. We have shown elsewhere how the notion of *kultura* as a burden can be seen as tensions between principles of power acquisition, both between social groups and regimes (Alonso Población, Fidalgo Castro and Pena Castro 2018).

women have access to state justice (Madden 2013), their taking up roles in the workforce to receive salaries and/or providing financial opportunities for entrepreneurship (Mohideen, Tornieri and Baxter 2005), have been identified as possibly enabling women.

Silva and Simião (2017) have written about some programs that endorse the idea of providing women with financial opportunities through microcredit as a possible path to empowerment. For the authors, these programs suppose that women entrenched in family networks see their decision-making processes and personal or individual development and empowerment undermined as free and autonomous people (2017, 105). They highlight that considering indebtedness to financial institutions as a way of empowering women versus engaging with the exchange regimes as a cause of disempowerment seems like a paradox when conceptualizing both of these as ways of investing.

I have presented a case study in which I explore how several members of a household in Faulara constructed their own ontology through their discourses and practice in their daily lives by defining entities and attributing agency to them. I suggest that exploring the way they did this is a necessary step in analyzing the mechanism of acquisition and distribution of power in Timor-Leste. Contrary to the studies that see *kultura* − local beliefs and practices − as a structural cause of disempowerment, I have shown how a particular woman activated appropriate cultural and social mechanisms, and institutions − ritual and everyday activities, kinship, taboos (*lulik*) − that allowed her to empower herself within the local regimes and networks of relations that she was involved in. By "arranging" (Callon 1984) her clothes in a specific and transgressive way, she created a strategy that reversed, at least temporarily, a situation that was structurally disadvantageous to her: that of the asymmetric affinal relationship. She did so in a unexpected way because a direct clash was out of the question (and was taboo; a *lulik* thing to do) from her disempowered wife-taker position (Scott 1985).

Facing the widespread idea among observers who see *kultura* as a source of gender inequality, I have shown that it is necessary to see how Timorese women mobilize their own resources and strategies − this is, take their agency into account − in order to

establish the causes of the problem. A structuralist-rooted vision of exchange, that deems women to be objects of the exchange instead of active agents of the process (Weiner 1992, 14–15), doesn't allow us to get a more nuanced vision of what the roots of gender inequality are. By simply believing that modern-like institutions and practices offer women an alternative obscures the fact that recognizing the mutual economic dependency of people and groups (houses, fertility / wife-givers and fertility / wife-takers) through *kultura* can also serve as a means to empower women.

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Afterword[1]

Antero Benedito da Silva[2]

To each of the authors – Prof Kelly Silva, Alexandre J. M. Fernandes, Henrique Romanó Rocha, Miguel A. dos Santos Filho, Ana Carolina R. Oliveira, Andreza Ferreira, Lucivânia Gozaves, Dr Carlos Oviedo, Dr Renata Nogueira da Silva and Dr Alberto Fidalgo Castro – I would like to extend my profound appreciation and congratulations! Their works, through systematic ethnographic research and analysis, looking at different aspects of Timorese society, culture, economy, education, human rights and justice, have found contradictions and mediation, co-existence and persistent antagonism characterizing contemporary Timor-Leste.

The collection's chapters reveal numerous dichotomies, including *Kultura* versus modernity; Christianity and animism; state power and customary power; *Estrutura Kultura Usitasae* (elite villagers) and *Estrutura Povu Usitasae* (common people) in Usitasae village in Oecusse; formal and traditional justice (customary law); symbolic artifacts and market-oriented commodities; market-capitalist economy and subsistence economy; local knowledge versus economic knowledge and; fair trade versus conventional unfair trading. All of these are found co-existing and in contradiction, forming a complex Timorese identity, with a globally imposed market society.

Two particular findings deserve further research. One is that local elites, as the guardians of the nobility, seem to have been at war through local politics against the rival group in Usitasae village in Oecusse. This finding may reflect a recent phenomenon in other villages around Timor-Leste: the reappearance of the feudal mentality due to the re-introduction of the old Portuguese administrative structure in Timor-Leste post-occupation, the Suco

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election and the Conselho de Suco. If indeed this is true, it would also mean that the so-called Maubere Revolution is an unfinished saga for the subaltern. However, in some cases, the reproduction of a quasi-feudal mentality at the grassroots is part of the legacy of war: heroes and the local categories of common people. Martyrdom (heroism) and mystical sources of invented local dynasties, in effect, could oppress ordinary people in Timorese villages. However, this may not be uniform: there may be areas where people have learnt that these kinds of practices belong to the past.

Another finding demonstrated in the book is the existence of the culturally radical tendencies of the Christian Church Assembleia de Deus, in Atauro. The Assembleia de Deus's attack on animism is prominent in Atauro. It also happened years ago in my home village in Uato-Carbau. Members of the same church removed trees that local people preserved to protect the region's biggest fresh-water spring, Irabere, and it caused local resentment. Their activities have since been limited.

The book shows the authors have reached the conclusion that a neo-liberalist capitalist state is in the making in Timor-Leste. Their arguments provide evidence that it is a social reality, which is indeed provocative, and I imagine this shall generate debate beyond academic circles, reaching into the spheres of politics and activism. The essence, I think, is the question regarding the origin of the so-called modern state of Timor-Leste. Is it a political project of the United Nations and international financial institutions, or a Timorese-owned re-invention of the European nation-state, a blue print of postcolonial reconstruction, to address the diverse regional tendencies and dynamics within?

The book is open, in the classic sense of Lenin's 'State and Revolution', on whether or not the state is an externally imposed morality, or the result of social contradiction within Timor-Leste, and against colonialism.

I see the struggle of emerging young Brazilian scholars – in their attempts to grow organically within the distant context they are immersing themselves – needs perseverance and constant reality checks. Marx (1976), in his theses on Feuerbach, provides an exciting citation: "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it." Such a call touches a complex

concern, the relationship between ecology and humanity which appears to be the missing pillar in articulating the so-called 'modernity project.' Its tragic absence is generating the climate crisis.

We can see this negligence is a phenomenon attached to land registration in Timor-Leste, where modernity sidelines some of the cultural aspects of land and property. Michael Rose (2016) developed an initial criticism of ZEESM (Zona Especial Economia Social Mercado – the Special Social Economic Market Zone) project in the enclave of Oecusse. Rose reveals that in their language, Uab Meto, the farmers of Oecusse refer to themselves as "Atoin Pahan" (people of the land—*pessoas da terra*). Rose explains:

> this title evokes their close relationship with the land, where forests and gardens provide both nutrition and a locus for spiritual practice. Though the cash economy is now important, access to land is still the basis of economic and emotional security for many, and even those with paid jobs raise maize, vegetables and livestock for consumption and sale.

The authors Kelly Silva, Andreza Ferreira and Lucivânia Gozaves, in the chapter on fair trade practices touched on a prominent and central topic, the question of the ethical grounds for an ideal future alternative society. Trade should care for ecology as an ethical base.

Leonardo Boff (1999) has long advanced our thinking that the world needs a new society in which social justice combines with ecological justice because the most threatened by the destruction of the planet are the poor. Many would argue that we need new regimes of knowledge, perhaps we can call it an eco-epistomology, produced out of a fundamental change in the relationship between ecology and humanity.

Pedagogies and technologies, both symbolic and real, that serve to mediate between the collective, the dominant neo-liberal state model, and market-capitalism, should be transformed.

Dili, 29 May 2020

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PERFORMING MODERNITIES: pedagogies and technologies in the making of contemporary Timor-Leste, Kelly Silva (ed)

As the transformative processes and technologies of globalisation are being embraced across the world, their influential and disruptive possibilities for change are challenging many comfortable and established orthodoxies. In this new analysis of contemporary ethnographic realities in Timor-Leste, Kelly Silva (University of Brasilia) and her contributing authors, frame these processes as a productive and mutually reinforcing tension between institutions of kultura (culture) and those of modernity. The *Performing Modernities* collection, offers a range of vital and engaging ethnographic perspectives on contemporary social realities in the fledgling nation of Timor-Leste. Published as an English language book, to facilitate a global readership, the collection's origins and inspiration derive from the careful investigations of its Brazilian researchers, who bring new questions and comparative ideas to fine-grained ethnographic meditations on local worlds in transition.

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