

Afterword¹

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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—*peessoas 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-epistemology, 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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