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

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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).

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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

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.

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

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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