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GOVERNANCE, VIOLENCE AND CRISES IN TIMOR-LESTE: ESTADU SEIDAUK MAI

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Introduction

The image of a dead Alfredo Reinado, shot through the face, hands side by side and body still dressed in fatigues, is daunting to comprehend. Killed in February 2008, Reinado's life was shaped in key ways by both the war for Timor-Leste and the subsequent independence of the territory. He was orphaned and taken in as a porter with the Indonesian military during the occupation, was a refugee to Australia in the 1990s, then became a member of the new nation's military police after independence, receiving specialist training in Australia. With the advent of the 2006 crisis, Reinado rose to public attention as the leader of a group of renegade military personnel, and in this role he displayed a special talent for evading capture. Reinado often spoke in nationalist terms, but was also responsible for killing East Timorese soldiers and very nearly the president of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. If he was a product of the Indonesian occupation, then he was also in part an outcome of the complexities of the post-independence era. Standing at the edges of the arguments in this chapter, Reinado serves as a tragic yet extraordinary metaphor for all that has gone tragically wrong in Timor-Leste over the last two years: violence, political turmoil and manipulation, and the confusion of a country turning on itself.

It will be worth returning to this figure lying on the road on the outer edges of Dili in order to understand the current socio-political conditions of Timor-Leste, but in doing so it is vital that we steer away from detailing the particular personalities and individual feuds of different elites. Concentrating analysis on figures such as Reinado, and for that matter, José Ramos-Horta, Xanana Gusmão and Mari Alkatiri, would be to continue to pursue the focus upon individual egos that is a marker of contemporary forms of shallow journalism and scholarly description. In such accounts these men get assigned the status of hero or villain, as if they in themselves determine the contours of their society. However, in reality these are people made possible by the world around them, not the other way around. Hence in this chapter, rather than concentrating on the psychological status of Reinado or attempting to understand his various possible motives, he is used as a kind of segue into discussing the broader patterns of state-building since Timor-Leste's independence in 2002.

To understand the immediate moments of violence and blood in contemporary Timor-Leste, there is a need to look to larger social schemas. This chapter puts forward two principal points. First, it is argued that the modernising process of state-building—or to be more precise, the particular path that that modernisation and state-building has taken—has significantly contributed to the opportunity for

the kinds of violence that has been seen in Timor-Leste over recent years. Second, the chapter contends that to understand this relationship between state-building and violence we need to broaden the discussion so as to include social systems typically left by the wayside in political considerations. Concentrating singularly at the level of political leadership ends up telling us too little about the complex reality about violence in contemporary Timor-Leste. Rather, it is preferred to frame arguments in terms of the state and nation, as well as the overlaying formations of the 'tribal-traditional' and the 'modern'. By doing so I hope to be able to extend the parameters of current debates around state-formation and in turn shed some light upon the violence and conflict that has marked Timor-Leste in recent times.

Re-Thinking Governance In Timor-Leste

In a highly interesting and articulate article written in mid-2007, Mark Aarons moves almost seamlessly between speaking of the nation of Timor-Leste as a whole and its two most senior political leaders. In one part of the article Aarons gives an opportunity to the current prime minister, Xanana Gusmão, to speak about the limitations of the state in contemporary Timor-Leste in a way that resonates strongly with this article;

The state now is only a president, government, the flag, parliament, but nothing that links to the people's lives ... There is no state in an empty land, and this is a land of people who fought for this state. Our state was built on corpses, on bones, and that's why the state's obligation is to take care of the people. And we have to do this, because if we don't, the state doesn't mean anything. The country, independence, don't mean anything (Aarons 2007)

What is intriguing, however, is that while the article gives an opportunity for a figure like Gusmão to make a comment regarding the absence of the state, the article itself moves between the two figures and the nation, as if the state somehow in fact does serve as a 'link to the people'. The title of the piece, 'Timor's future: Xanana Gusmão and José Ramos-Horta', suggests an extremely strong, almost symbiotic relationship between the two heads of state and the country as a whole as mediated by the state. This sense is reinforced by a series of connections that are made through the article, from the change in mood following elections, to what are seen as the competing tensions between the modern and the traditional, through to the impact of the policy ideas of these two men, as if they could in reality be implemented. At each point, individuals within the state are used as a way into understanding Timor-Leste as a whole in a way that extends far beyond metaphor, even while one of them speaks of the limited relevance of the state in contemporary Timor-Leste.

This is not to draw undue attention to any one author, as in fact the discursive patterns that underpin Aaron's article are found in a great deal of commentary on Timor-Leste, not least from Western journalists and academics, as well as the assumptions that underpin the work of many development agencies. The state, it seems, is seen as one of the only legitimate ways of understanding Timor-Leste, and this trend has dominated recent political analysis on a range of fronts.

The presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007, for example, frequently saw commentary on the state as 'the' way for understanding the country as a

whole. The different moves of political parties, the choice of words of leaders and the different alliances forged were in fact part of an 'over-analysis' of a state that in large part is absent in people's day-to-day lives. Hence, the effect of such discourse is that the state, and only the state, is seen to determine the broader condition of society in Timor-Leste.

This kind of over-concentration has also framed various pieces of important political analysis, where, for example, a major United Nations report deduced that all of the complexity of the 2006 crisis could 'be explained largely by the frailty of State Institutions and the weakness of the rule of law' (United Nations 2006, 2). This chapter argues first, in a subtle, but important difference of emphasis, that the sovereign political structures of the state have yet to penetrate and reframe to any significant degree many communities in Timor-Leste. The phrase '*estadu seidak mai*', literally the 'state has yet to come', does well to encapsulate this common on-the-ground sense of state absence.² Secondly, in a significant shift in interpretation, the chapter argues that this cannot be explained in any conventional sense by the frailty or failure of the state. This is particularly the case when people are speaking as if the state was in a position to govern to a significant and meaningful degree, and then faltered, rather than from the position of discussing a weakly constituted state in the first instance. The notion of a state 'that is yet to come' clearly falls within the discursive parameters of weak state, albeit trying to do so by understanding the socio-political context that has meant that that is the case.

The arguments here are not an attempt to suggest that the state should be seen as irrelevant to political analysis, but that it is a mistake to think that it is generalised and integrated in Timor-Leste, and in turn representative of the political condition of the country as a whole. Such a 'centring' of the state can occur when commentators transfer onto Timor-Leste their own sense of what is considered as socio-politically legitimate and the norm from their own societies. In such cases, the state acts as a point of socio-political equivalence that allows Timor-Leste to become legible and open to interpretation and judgement, particularly by Western academics and commentators. In effect, the state provides an accessible point in which to begin analysis, but too often becomes the singular point for consideration.

Answering to this criticism that there is a disproportionate focus upon the state in analyses of Timor-Leste, some commentators may declare that they are simply reflecting endogenous political discourse. It is certainly true that there is a local elite in Timor-Leste that sees the state as it currently stands as being critically important. However, this chapter is arguing for consideration of those who are 'outside of the state' and are typically silent (often rendered so by an imbalance of social power), treated as un-political and beyond the scope of necessary interpretation. These marginalised domains need to be re-positioned and legitimised as critical to understanding the contours of contemporary Timor-Leste, rather than being treated as the mad edges of life, left to be taken care of by the inevitable march of civilisation or made sense of by the occasional anthropologist.

The reality of Timor-Leste is far more uneven than allowed for by straightforward state-centric analyses. In Dili, there is a discourse of laws, regulations and international treaties: a language of democracy and transparency, important people with white cars shuttled between imposing ministerial buildings, walls

lined with too many reports that are read by too few, sealed roads and traffic lights that attempt to bring order, and a vernacular dominance of one of the national languages, Tetun. Yet the further one steps from the centre, the more the state appears an artifice. It exists only in a limited sense, primarily through poorly funded schools and local administrations that lack power. The closer to the ground the clearer it becomes that the state's determinative power is frequently usurped by alternative social systems.

One reason for this lack of penetration into communities is the sheer level of destruction caused by the spite of defeat in 1999. It is not just that a great many buildings were destroyed, or that water, telecommunications and electricity systems were left in ruins, but also that the withdrawal of a whole layer of Indonesian state expertise—teachers, doctors, state-officials and police—meant the collapse of the health, justice and security systems as they existed during the Indonesian occupation. Coupled with the widespread violence and mass deportation that marked the Indonesian military departure, the attempts to build a generalised state system that has penetration into society from beyond the capital was always going to be difficult. The challenges of this have been further compounded by a subsequent centralisation of political power in Dili by both the United Nations and the sovereign national government.

One of the problems with the common argument that the crisis was caused by the fragility of the state is that it assumes that the state acts in a social void; that beyond the state there is nothing else that is of great significance. Singularly considering the state's role in shaping the crisis logically leads to the rationale that simply strengthening the state would be enough to resolve Timor-Leste's myriad problems. Contrary to these analyses, however, it is contended here that existing beyond the state is a system of governance that is very different in form, but remains very powerful in terms of the regulation of people's lives in a day-to-day sense. I will classify such a system of governance as 'tribal-traditional'. To further explicate what is meant by the tribal-traditional and to argue that this is critical to contemporary Timor-Leste requires a set of explanations that momentarily move away from the crisis and the state. Establishing this conceptual terrain allows us to return later in the chapter to more immediate questions of violence with greater clarity.

Uneven Forms Of Social Integration

While *adat* (custom including the laws that govern the spiritual) and *lulik* (sacred) are of relevance in Dili, it is in the areas beyond the semi-urbanised capital that tribal-traditional levels of social integration tend to regulate people's daily lives in a way that the state has yet to come close to achieving. For instance, people will not walk near their *uma lulik* (sacred house) because of a division in the family, believing that if they do they will die. Sickness will be caused by others casting spells, especially *buans* (witches), and may only be cured by drinking magic waters blessed by traditional healers. Humans and nature spirits will metamorphose into cats and herald bad luck; people will be struck by lightning for handling *lulik* items; others will fall dead for lying during *adat* ceremonies. The reading of animal entrails or eggs can give information about the human world, and are often used by *adat nain* (those that can interpret and at times intervene in the spiritual as well

as determine laws and customs), or *matan dook* (what might elsewhere be called a wizard or soothsayer), who are entrusted with more valid predictions of the future than those disseminated by the state media. Vitality, spirits of ancestors will often co-exist with the human world in dreams, and ceremonies will be marked by the killing of animals, the blood linking past to present. Myths, beliefs, and the comprehension of the life-world underpin a sophisticated and complex life-system which remains subsistence agricultural in form, with money used for only a small number of commodity exchanges.

One way into analysing this complexity is through understanding what might be called 'ontological categories', differentiated in terms of a number of categories of being: for example, knowing (epistemology), time (temporality), space (spatiality) and embodiment (corporeality) (James 1996; 2006). Ontology refers to 'ways of being in the world': the framing categories that are constitutive of how people live, see and interpret the world around them. Changes across these categories in turn can indicate shifts from one ontological frame to another, albeit the shift being one in terms of dominance rather than as an absolute transformation. The four ontological frames that Paul James identifies, which I am adapting to discuss Timor-Leste, are tribalism, traditionalism, modernism and post-modernism. This chapter concentrates on the first three ontological formations (tribalism, traditionalism and modernism), and as will be explained combines the first two as a conjunction.

Tribalism is taken here as a 'social frame in which communities are bound socially beyond immediate birth ties by the dominance of various modalities of face-to-face and object integration, for example, genealogical placement, embodied reciprocity and mythological enquiry' (James 2006, 325-326). In terms of Timor-Leste, many of these modalities are found daily in people's lives. Genealogical placement, by which I mean the importance placed on the blood and familial ties between people, is perhaps the singularly most important ordering system in East Timorese society. As a mode of exchange, embodied reciprocity means far more than the act of gifting. Rather it is taken to mean the transfer of commodities between people 'that require some form of ritual recognition of social return' (James 2006, 105). *Barlake*, namely, the 'bride price', is one example of this where families come to be integrated by the ceremonial exchange of goods (from buffalo to jewellery, to straightforward cash payments) for the right to marry.

In terms of the modes of enquiry, knowledge under the tribal system is interpreted through what James refers to as analogical and mythological enquiry where the social and the natural world are integrated into an intermeshing domain. Hence in Timor-Leste rocks and trees regularly take on *lulik* value, and the presence of fauna life, as various as birds nesting in a roof through to particular kinds of bugs entering a house, can indicate different fates, particularly illness or the death of people. Tribal knowledge that is formed through the analogical mode of enquiry always 'returns to places, things and bodies' (James 2006, 123). Put another way, tribal knowledge is never treated as if it belongs only to the human world or as if it is a reified set of external datum. People may have access to it—at times mediated through ritual and gendered practices—but its domain is both here and beyond, inside and outside the human world.

How is this relevant to Alfredo Reinado, to the crisis, or to the state in Timor-Leste? What I am trying to do here is fill a gap by detailing a space that is beyond

the state and yet is so dominant in terms of the regulation and governance of people's day-to-day lives in Timor-Leste. Such a social system has implications for how a modern state is built, and in turn, gives a sense of how figures like Reinado can rise to public prominence. But it is not enough to speak of the tribal alone. In Timor-Leste it is necessary to combine the term with 'traditional', in that East Timorese society tends to not only move between these two ontological frames, but also hold them together in a complex intersection.

For James, traditionalism abstracts the analogical and the mythological inquiry located in the tribal by reframing them in more abstract cosmological terms. The clearest relevance of this reframing in terms of Timor-Leste is the importance of Catholicism. Under the Catholic faith, for instance, 'God' becomes the transcendental context for understanding the relation between nature and people. The singularly applicable origin myths of different groups are drawn together into generalised origins relevant to all people. Equally, we see a different form of authority from the *adat nain* where the priest is institutionally appointed and typically from outside of a community. Placing the two terms in tandem, the concept of the tribal-traditional then allows for a discussion of the role of the church in East Timorese society without folding it and tribal beliefs into a singular system (often the case with conventional uses of either the term 'customary' or 'traditional').

The argument being advanced here is that in general terms the tribal-traditional are the dominant ontological forms in Timor-Leste, with modern relations being much more uneven across the country. The 'modern' can be understood in terms of an increasingly abstracted norm underpinning social relations and ways of being in the world. At the dominant level of practice and meaning, knowledge is generalised and becomes increasingly scientific rather than theocratic, and authority structures are based on generalised rules of merit, laws and procedures. Hence bureaucratic and technocratic administration of society comes into dominance. Certainly, the modern is relevant in Timor-Leste, and not just in terms of the formation of the state in Dili. Given that children participate in systematised educational processes, learn from a nationally-prescribed curriculum, or use money to purchase mass-produced items from Indonesia in their local kiosks, then on a day-to-day basis the modern cuts across and into the tribal-traditional on a regular basis.

However, despite its dominance at times and in particular places, the modern is not the dominant ontology when we consider Timor-Leste as a territorial whole. The major problem then is that the state, as a modern institutional form of governance, is being built in a society where very often the dominant ontology is that of the tribal-traditional, which as will be discussed towards the conclusion of this chapter has various significant impacts. To further lay the foundations for these arguments some additional comments need to be made on the use of the phrase 'tribal-traditional'.

First, it must be understood that violence and conflict are not the inevitable results of the existence of different ontological frames. Violence and conflict can occur within ontological levels as well as due to friction between them, just as much as peace may be maintained or even established through the interactions between different ontological frames. Secondly, to speak about the tribal-traditional is not

to valorise or romanticise anything, nor is it to place it on any civilisational line of linear temporal progress—people do not move from the tribal to the traditional to the modern in some historically determined fashion. The reality is far more roughly knotted than this with the layering of ontologies as well as an unevenness within them (for instance, across the categories of knowing, time, space and embodiment).

One of the difficulties faced in making this argument is that the nature of social integration is so uneven in Timor-Leste, and hence contrary arguments can be made to show that the modern is in certain settings the dominant ontology. After all, Fretilin's slogan for the 2007 parliamentary elections was '*vota Fretilin atu hametin estadu*'—'vote Fretilin to strengthen the state'. But it is not just those founders of Fretilin who for more than thirty years wished to see the state fully realised as part of a wholesale transformation of Timor-Leste. In recent decades, those educated under the Indonesian regime and those who have entered the circuits of power in Dili today—highly literate, educated, trained, workshopped, capacity-built, networked, multi-lingual and mobile—have formed a new elite whose modernist views tend to overlap significantly with those of the international commentators and analysts. Very often it is the views of these people which tend to be accepted as a 'sensible' (that is rationally-framed, educated, and translated to English) interpretation of the country as a whole and yet possibly only represent a partial portion of the population.

The other difficulty in trying to bring the tribal-traditional in Timor-Leste into discussion is that it runs the risk of resonating with the deep-seated colonial mindset that, yes, these people are savages and undeserving of independence. On the other hand, the ever-ready-to-pounce brigades of the politically correct are equally likely to regard such a conversation as a surrogate way of suggesting that the East Timorese are backward or uncivilised. Neo-colonial and politically correct views seem oddly linked to each other and to a nationalist view held by some East Timorese that seem to take the stance that other-than-modern forms of living are negative and anachronistic and at times need to be overcome or denied. However, the argument here is that in fact such social systems need to be read into political analysis rather than left by the wayside, and moreover, in doing so we find that the tribal-traditional has very important implications for the sustainability of the nation over the longer term.

The Nation And Conflict

At the time of writing in April 2008 many details remain sketchy of the death of Alfredo Reinado and the attempted assassination of President Ramos-Horta the February before. The train of events that led to Reinado's death can be traced back to early 2006 when tensions within the East Timorese armed forces resulted in nearly 600 soldiers—around one-third of the military—abandoning their barracks over accusations of discrimination. They claimed that the military was dominated by the *lorosa'e*, a term describing those from the three eastern-most districts of Timor-Leste, who were said to be discriminating against *loromonu*, namely those from the ten western districts³ (Trindade and Castro 2007).

The government responded by dismissing the protesting soldiers. Protests against the government involving the petitioners turned violent at the end

of April. From there, the state's security apparatus largely disintegrated into competing factions. Over the following weeks and months, violence occurred between the two factions of the military, soldiers massacred police, military police ambushed soldiers, civilian groups armed by members of parliament attacked both the military headquarters and the homes of military leaders, and the houses of parliamentarians were burnt and members of their families killed.

In the vacuum created by the collapse of the security apparatus, the intra-state conflict was accompanied by widespread gang violence across Dili. To a significant degree gang violence at first mirrored the ethno-territorial dimensions of the *lorosa'e* and *loromonu* division in the military, but it was also shaped by the interests of political parties and the control of local urban territories by the gangs themselves. By mid-year the state was largely paralysed, many tens-of-thousands of people were living in refugee camps, a large number of houses had been destroyed, and an international military and police force were required to stabilise the security environment.

Feeding into this mayhem was Alfredo Reinado who quit as the head of the military police during the April violence. With heavy arms and a group of supporters, he moved out of the capital and demanded that the Fretilin government resign. Following a fire-fight with East Timorese soldiers the following May, which led to various members' deaths, Reinado was imprisoned, but after a short period managed to escape, re-arm, and seemingly roam freely. After 'stealing' guns from a border police post, the International Stabilisation Force managed to cordon Reinado in the central town of Same in March 2007. Five of his group were killed, but extraordinarily he managed to flee yet again.

Reinado's activities over this time are highly instructive in terms of the broader process of nation-formation in Timor-Leste. As an individual, Reinado managed to move with considerable ease for a 'wanted man'. He travelled across many of Timor-Leste's western districts, not just in Ermera, which was a key focal point for support and organisation, but also through to Covalima and as far west as Manatuto, and infamously managed to get himself into West Timor and to Jakarta to participate in a television interview. His embodied presence was important - he managed to meet many people, build his support base, and participate in public events such as meetings, church masses and ceremonies.

But equally, Reinado knew how to utilise disembodied means of communication in order to mobilise support. With the limitations in mass media in Timor-Leste, especially extremely limited broadcast television and newspaper circulation, Reinado built a support base through the making of digital video discs (DVDs) that were either sold or circulated in Dili through youth networks, particularly through universities. These carried various items, film footage of Reinado in the jungle with his cohort, songs, and Reinado moving amongst 'the people'. Most importantly, the DVDs carried interviews with Reinado in which he set out his various justifications for his actions and his accusations against those in power, including naming Xanana Gusmão in early 2008 as the author of the 2006 crisis.⁴

Reinado's ability to build solidarity through both embodied and disembodied means provides an interesting parallel, and comparison, to the pattern of state-building and nation-formation in Timor-Leste. Typically, a nation is seen as a contradictory phenomenon lived subjectively by a group of people bound by

particular commonalities (with blood, soil and ancestors being commonly used metaphors). Yet objectively the nation is a community that is overwhelmingly constituted by never-to-meet strangers (Anderson 1991; James 1996). To put it another way, the nation is subjectively experienced as an embodied community, but is lived objectively through 'disembodied' relations, whereby highly abstract patterns of social integration enable people to feel bound into a common community (James 1996).

Yet this model does not quite fit the process of nation-formation in Timor-Leste. For all the emphasis given to disembodied relations in nationalism studies (with talk of mass, industrial, uneven development, imagined and abstract, dominating the modernists) in Timor-Leste, the nation has been formed through high levels of what I have called elsewhere 'embodied interchange' (Grenfell 2008). This refers to a process whereby the nation is carried literally across the landscape in ways that writers on Western expressions of nationalism often miss. This in turn has meant that the nation has come into being at a point where it is constituted at the embodied level very strongly, but fairly weakly, or at least ambiguously, at the disembodied level.

While states typically play a very strong role in the process of integrating people into abstract-disembodied communities such as the nation, this is far less clearly the case in Timor-Leste. The absence of mass communications systems and the kind of socio-political infrastructure which would carry the state into communities remains significantly absent other than those momentary incursions where massive resources are utilised to undertake censuses or elections. One effect of this is that while there is a generalised sense of the nation, its existence is often re-read into the narratives of local communities (Traube 2007; also see Molnar 2004). While this can be destabilising, of interest in the next section is the impact this has in exaggerating the importance of once fairly residual identity forms.

Reinado provides an interesting comparison in that, even if he could only execute it in a minute way, he seemed to understand something that many in the state have largely failed to grasp (the exception here is Xanana Gusmão who very atypically is driven through Dili with his car window down; so that his face can be seen, one assumes). Reinado was on the one hand able to maintain high levels of 'embodied interchange' and, as will be discussed below, adeptly utilised ritual in his interactions with those East Timorese for whom the tribal-traditional is of critical importance. Yet at the same time he found a way to by-pass the infrastructural limitations of Timor-Leste so as to mobilise support through forms of disembodied communication (it is possible, for instance, to view him on YouTube, a free video sharing website).⁵ This way he could both be 'seen' outside of Dili as he travelled across the landscape and be seen by urban-based youths and political elites, to the point that his last DVD triggered substantial debate in the parliament.

With the state either irrelevant or not actually 'seen', and very much existing only in the margins of people's expectations, historical circumstances have meant that there is a kind of dual development which could be described in terms of a relatively non-embedded state presiding over a fragile nation-in-formation. As evidenced by the violence over 2006 and 2007, I will argue in the following concluding section of this chapter that this can in turn lead to a de-stabilising

violence when the modern nation is re-read into tribal-traditional social formations.

Violence And The Crisis

In early 2006 a small note on an email list mentioned that Alfredo Reinado had participated in a ceremony where the ghost of Dom Boaventura, a legendary resistance figure who fought Portuguese colonialism, had been invoked. Traditional elders were said to have overseen the ceremony in which Reinado was granted extraordinary powers. Such a ceremony is not untypical in Timor-Leste of people going into battle; older FALANTIL (National Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor) footage, for instance, shows pro-independence guerrillas using potions to render themselves invisible and impervious to bullets before ambushing Indonesian soldiers.

It is hard to know whether Reinado himself believed in the ceremony, or whether he used the opportunity to further develop myths around him that would further consolidate his support base. Either way, what is important here is that in mobilising support against the state he drew authority from the tribal-traditional rather than from modern claims to legitimacy.

When concepts of the 'tribal-traditional' and 'modern' are applied more generally to work through the implications of uneven social integration across ontological levels, it is possible to redraw lines of the conflict in ways that posit them more abstractly. Drawing in an understanding of the ways that tribal-traditional systems play an important regulatory role in Timor-Leste, it becomes possible to understand other social processes—such as urban drift—in terms of their political consequences. In this context, the movement of people from agricultural communities in Timor-Leste, where they are far more likely to be held in place by land ownership, *adat* and genealogical-familial structures, breaks down in the urbanised space of the capital or in the institutional domains of the state itself. This is especially the case as the state has not been able to fill the void with a new form of authority that people feel necessarily ready to identify with.

In a similar sense this is what occurred in regard to the initial breakdown in the military in early 2006 when claims of discrimination led the 'petitioners' to walk out. It was not unsurprising that one of their complaints related to being stationed far from 'home' (for strategic reasons the military has largely been concentrated in Metinaro, Baucau and Lautem, all on the eastern side of Dili). Generally, unlike in the making of guerrilla armies, modern military soldiers are lifted out of their local communities and into an institution formed ostensibly around formal hierarchies, clear ranks and merit-based structures. If the petitioners were true in their accusations, then it would appear that a modern authority structure was not able to dislodge a previous hierarchy formed through the war for independence and tied significantly to the place of birth.

In circumstances where modern and tribal-traditional social systems live in fluid relation to one another—rather than where one formation tends to dominate the other—it is extremely difficult to locate a systematic and peaceful conflict resolution mechanism should problems arise. Hence stand-offs, walk-outs and violence become distinct possibilities, not least when disputes arise in the security apparatus of the state.

In a different way, the presence of a limited state and the continuing potency of the tribal-traditional help us understand why the two identity forms of *lorosa'e* and *loromonu* gained traction so quickly. As a conflict that began in the military, but spread quickly within the community, especially Dili, many people were taken aback by simply how fast what had otherwise been a fairly residual identity form in Timor-Leste came to dominate so quickly. References to *kaladi* (an alternate word for a person said to be *loromonu*) and *firaku* (those said to be *lorosa'e*) were sought out in different anthropological works, and understandably some took it on as important to look to history so as to understand why such a conflict seemed to suddenly appear.

History will, however, only provide clues, but not answers because the re-articulation of residual identity forms was in a broad sense fuelled by a disjuncture created in the process of nation-formation. In other words, this was a conflict born out of modernising processes where the relatively non-embedded nature of the state in Timor-Leste has meant a significant absence in one of the major ways in which people can be 'lifted out' of more localised communities. When put into play with other abstracting processes, such as modern forms of production, exchange and communications, the acknowledgement of the nation's existence tends to be made via the existing dominant forms of community. Extending the kind of ideas of Traube and others, at times attempts to make sense of the nation in Timor-Leste are drawn back through different and more localised 'ethno-linguistic' communities which remain ontologically tribal-traditional in dominance.

If we put this tendency in the context of the crisis, one possibility is that in the absence of a single dominant ethnic grouping in the country (such as the Bunak, Kemak, Mambai, Fataluku and Makassae peoples), relatively residual identity categories in the form of *lorosa'e* and *loromonu* gained traction so quickly as they provided a way of making sense of the nation that resonated with the existing dominant tribal-traditional ontology. These categories, in effect, gave a way for people to read the nation into the still dominant tribal-traditional ontology which are *subjectively* and *objectively* lived with a far greater emphasis on embodied community than, for instance, the abstracted state.

Such a shift makes sense in the formation of identity categories when many within the nation were dissatisfied with their sense of inclusion within the new republic and who have yet to see benefits of independence in a way that is meaningful for them. The categories of *lorosa'e* and *loromonu* allowed for a positioning within the nation of different groups to argue and compete over, and potentially feel secure within, the nation in a way that could not be made via particular ethno-linguistic groupings. However, this division did not result in the destruction of Timor-Leste and discourses of an alternative national form—such as a further division of Timor-Leste along *lorosa'e* and *loromonu* lines or a re-connection with Indonesia—did not surface during the crisis. Instead, these tribal-traditionally framed identity formations were used to justify the rights of groups of people—for instance, through the claim that it was *lorosa'e* who won the war for independence—claims that remained located within the national form. For how long this can last, however, is open to question as the basis for more serious challenges to the national form may have been laid.

Conclusion

A week before President Ramos-Horta's return to Dili in April 2008 after hospitalisation in Darwin, members of his family held a ceremony at the site of his shooting two months before. A chicken was killed as part of a process that took place to ensure that the spirit of Alfredo Reinado was able to leave the site in peace. The attempted assassinations of both the president and the prime minister of Timor-Leste in February 2008, along with the death of Alfredo Reinado, were the most recent examples of violence either against or within a state that is still very much in the process of formation. Such dramatic violence will rightfully be subjected to a great deal of comment and inquiry so as to understand the motives and personalities of those involved, but it is important to try to understand such acts in terms of broader social pressures and lines of conflict. However, as has been argued here, if instances of violence, and the process of state-formation, are not drawn into broader social schemas of understanding, and if the dominant ways in which people's lives are regulated and managed through tribal-traditional forms of social integration are left beyond the realm of consideration, then we not only risk just ongoing miscomprehension, but also continuing with patterns of state and nation formation that could result in further substantial social turmoil.

Endnotes

- ¹ My thanks to Anna Trembath and Paul James for their assistance with the development of ideas in this article, which draws from an earlier publication; see Grenfell 2007.
- ² My thanks to a colleague for this phrase, who at that time was speaking only of Oecusse, which may seem to have an exaggerated claim on such a sentiment due to geographic isolation, but this has been expressed in a wide range of places during our research in Timor-Leste over the last years. For the purposes of this chapter the 'state' is taken to mean those institutionalised systems of modern governance that extend authority across a given territory, typically through administration, law and regulation, and also coercion.
- ³ *Lorosa'e* and *loromonu* are Tetun words, with *loro* a shortening of *loron*, meaning day or sun, and *sa'e* meaning to rise up and *monu* to fall, respectively, indicating what elsewhere is called east and west.
- ⁴ Not only did this phenomenon of DVDs carry his oft-repeated message of truth, justice and leadership voiced by the man himself, but it fed the 'cult of personality' surrounding Reinado, conveying his charisma, humour and masculinity that seemed to contrast sharply with a sense of state lethargy and formality.
- ⁵ In effect this was a form of hybrid disembodied integration, in that the DVDs were still carried hand-to-hand and through networks of exchange based on solidarity, but nevertheless meant that broad numbers of people could see Reinado's face without ever meeting him in person.

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