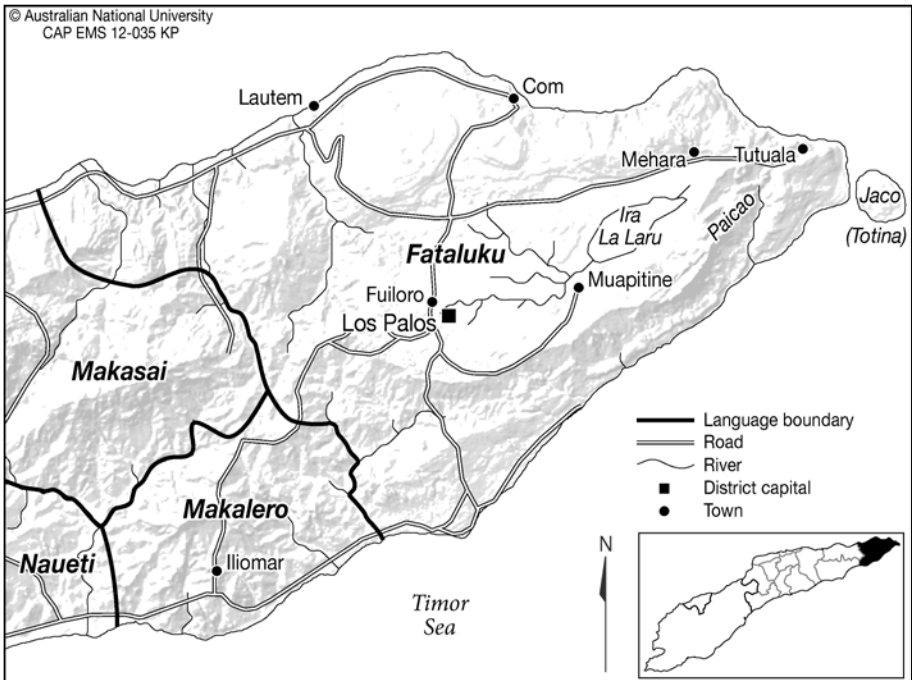


## New Fataluku diasporas and landscapes of remittance and return

Andrew McWilliam

### Introduction

Observers of post-independence cultural landscapes in Timor-Leste have highlighted the resurgence of customary practices and ceremonies, especially in settlements more distant from the moneyed resources of the capital, Dili.<sup>1</sup> The revival of customary practices often accompanies a considered return among displaced communities to their ancestral lands and settlements (*knua tuan*). There they work to re-establish food gardens and reclaim inherited entitlements to communal resources. The shift might be understood as a retreat from the state in some respects, certainly in terms of modern services and the administrative gaze, in favour of the familiar certainties of customary governance and sacrificial blessing.<sup>2</sup>



Map of Eastern region of Timor-Leste, including language boundaries

This 'return to custom' might also be seen as one of two strategies for livelihood restoration in Timor Leste following the destructive departure of Indonesia in 1999 and the subsequent challenges of nation-building that have accompanied independence. The revitalisation of custom and its expression via complex protocols of ritual exchange, traditional authority and renewed attention to origin houses (*uma lulik*)<sup>3</sup>, all confirm the continuing relevance of East Timorese traditions for much of its contemporary citizenry. In the absence of strong and effective government direction and services, thousands of rural communities have found comfort and sustenance in a re-engagement with tradition. The process confirms the counter-intuitive idea that the inventive practices of custom are really thoroughly contemporary and endure because they are able to engage and adapt to the changing requirements of contingent events.<sup>4</sup> The point is exemplified in Traube's fine analysis of Mambai traditional origin narratives and their explicit links to a popular sovereignty that ties the 'purchase of the nation through the blood and suffering of the people (*povu*)' with associated claims on the state for compensation.<sup>5</sup> This discourse of tradition she argues, is entirely consistent with, and expressive of a modern political sensibility.

But there is a second compelling and equally significant livelihood strategy that has developed during the early period of post-independence Timor-Leste and continued to the present. In contrast to the 'customary turn', this strategy is expressed through a sustained movement, migration and urban drift, especially among young people from the rural periphery and close knit settlements, to the bright lights, perceived freedoms and opportunities of the towns and cities. The migratory trend is a major factor in the recent population growth of centres such as Baucau and the capital Dili, but its influence is also felt in the shift of population from the more remote highland settlements to regional towns and sub-district centres.<sup>6</sup> Dili for example remains the fastest growing jurisdiction in the country. Since the 2004 Census the capital has increased its population by 33 per cent or 58,296 residents which represents fully 40.7 per cent of the growth in national population over the period, a population now topping the one million mark.<sup>7</sup> Key drivers for this mobility lie in the continuing poor economic circumstances and prospects for much of rural Timor-Leste, reliant as so many households are on seasonal, subsistence food cropping and modest irregular cash incomes; and while the destinations and destinies of the young people who make the move to town are widely diverse, with further education and employment high on the list of aspirations, arguably a key contrast between those who stay and those who leave the customary confines of home, is the youthful desire to engage and consume new expressions of modernity. As Webb Keane has expressed it '[I]n the modern world, the authority of ancestral mandates meets an alternative authority in the pervasive presence of money'.<sup>8</sup> This is not to underplay the significance of modernist aspirations among those residing in rural areas of Timor-Leste. Being '*moderen*' but intimately engaged with strong local tradition is a widely expressed view<sup>9</sup>, and the explosion in

mobile telephony ownership across rural Timor-Leste in recent years is surely confirmation of this sensibility. But arguably, migration trends towards urban centres point to a more thorough orientation away from ancestral practices and customary constraints, and towards new and socially negotiable futures and opportunities.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, familial ties in Timor-Leste and the complex customary expectations and values that accompany kin-based social relations are difficult to escape, and often continue to inform and shape the patterns of contemporary East Timorese outward mobility.

In the following paper, I seek in a preliminary way to explore one distinctive aspect or expression of that migration desire in Timor-Leste by drawing on the Fataluku ethnography of far eastern Timor-Leste. Young people from this region have been prominent participants in the new flow of migrants within Timor-Leste, most of them heading to Dili where resident familial connections smooth the transition to urban life. But more significantly, they have also pioneered new forms of trans-national migration that include neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia but also well beyond to destinations in Western Europe, such as the United Kingdom and Portugal. As a source of new capital, both social and financial, this opportunistic trans-national chain migration has unexpectedly become a key factor in the post-independence economic landscape of certain Fataluku settlements. Here I focus on the semi-rural administrative capital of Lautem District, Los Palos, and two of its constituent hamlets, Ira Ara and Lere Loho where these processes have flourished. They illustrate something of the complex intersections at work between local custom and nation building, mediated through relations of long distance migration.

### **Background connections**

Economic prosperity has proved elusive for most of the residents of Los Palos during the first decade of independence. Like many regional towns across Timor-Leste, it suffered its share of damage and destruction in the rampage of the departing Indonesian military and its pro-integration militia allies.<sup>11</sup> Only recently have signs of a re-emergent market economy and the restoration of government services been reflected in improving material conditions of social life in the township.<sup>12</sup> The opening of a bright new Telkom office in the centre of town, with its internet connections and telephony services is perhaps the most striking example of the long awaited economic benefits of the independence struggle; along with the much anticipated expansion of electrical power to the region and the slow reinstatement of government services.

For the neighbouring settlements (*aldeia*) of Ira Ara and Lere Loho, spread out on the north-eastern corner of Los Palos, however, economic changes have been rather more pronounced. From the dilapidated split bamboo and palm-clad houses with their rusting tin rooves, dirt floors and muddy surrounds, new and brightly painted, concrete and tile, hacienda style houses<sup>13</sup> are emerging. Their covered verandas and decorative gabled ceramic tiled rooves reflect at once the reclaiming of a Portuguese architectural heritage and the

aspirations of their owners to announce their own economic good fortunes. Accompanying these developments is a prevalence of new vehicles. Motor bikes and small sedans proliferate, as well as larger trucks and buses working the back roads and crumbling highway to Dili with passengers and freight. Start-up businesses can be seen in the prevalence of registered company logos with hopes for success in local construction tenders or logistics contracts along with new house-based kiosks selling a range of domestic essentials.

These signs of an emergent economic recovery reflect in part the sustained efforts of residents in the years since occupation to restore their livelihoods and build domestic reserves against adversity. Recent distributions of pension money to seniors and government compensation in recognition of the sacrifice for independence<sup>14</sup> are also contributing to a more bountiful community economy. But the most significant factor in this economic revival is directly related to the extraordinary flourishing of trans-national chain migration of young Fataluku men and women from Ira Ara and Lere Loho, to destinations in cities and towns of Portugal, England and Northern Ireland. With Portuguese passports in hand, facilitated by East Timorese sponsors in Portugal and England, these expatriates now generate comparatively high incomes in low skilled occupations, and send back a bounteous flow of remittances to families in Dili and Los Palos. The development has been unprecedented, life changing and transformative, both for those who depart as well as their extended families back home. Estimates of the number of young people from these two communities who have taken the global pathway now number around eighty-five from Ira Ara and up to seventy-two from neighbouring Lere Loho since the early 2000s.<sup>15</sup> This is from around 300 households in total and as a result the developments have had a range of profound and complex impacts on the community. What's more the present day movement of young people away from the settlements, following those now well-worn pathways to the capital Dili and beyond, shows little signs of abating. Younger siblings and cousins, taking the cue and financial support from their older relatives and neighbours in Europe, now follow in their footsteps or, alternatively, with the same financial assistance, pursue education opportunities in neighbouring Indonesia where language familiarity, lower costs and the knowledge of those who have preceded them make these life choices both possible and desirable. For many of these young residents of Ira Ara and Lere Loho, the post-independence nation-building project of Timor-Leste lies more in the exciting expanded horizons of a globalised marketplace than in the dull prospects of semi-subsistence farming or poorly paid under-employment in the city.

### **Negotiating foreign fields: colonial and customary ties**

Like so many aspects of contemporary East Timorese social life, the extended migration networks that have gained such momentum in recent years, have their origins in the politics and experiences of the independence struggle. Residents of Ira Ara and Lere Loho were staunch supporters of both the

long guerrilla war<sup>16</sup> in Lautem and the clandestine resistance against occupying Indonesia. For these reasons, they suffered both economic neglect and periodic heavy reprisals from military authorities over many years.<sup>17</sup> People point to these dark experiences as formative conditions for nurturing disaffection, activism and the determination among young people to find options beyond the settlements, which they found in the growing student resistance movement in Dili.

Patterns of student resistance broadened and intensified following the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991. Prominent student activists including many young, home grown Fataluku, extended the clandestine resistance into Indonesia proper via university networks (especially Udayana in Bali and Gaja Mada in Jogjakarta) and were prominent in organisations such as the Student and Youth Association of East Timor (IMPETTU: *Ikatan Mahasiswa, Pemuda dan Pelajar Timor Timur*) and the more radical, Students of Timor-Leste National Resistance (RENETIL: *Resistencia Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste*).<sup>18</sup> But subject to increasing surveillance by Indonesian security forces many student activists were deemed subversive agents against the Suharto New Order state and became targets for ruthless repression.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the 1990s with options rapidly diminishing, many sought political asylum from willing Embassies in Jakarta, including Portugal which accepted significant numbers and a sympathetic British government. Among the disparate groups to find refuge were a number of young Fataluku activists who subsequently established themselves in Lisbon, Liverpool, London and Oxford (UK).<sup>20</sup> It is from these unlikely beginnings that the seeds of the remarkable chain network of trans-national proportions were sown.

The possibility of migration on any kind of scale, however, was dependent on a series of key enabling factors. Critical among these was the decision of the Portuguese government to continue to recognise East Timorese as Portuguese citizens. This decision allowed eligible applicants to obtain Portuguese passports and by association automatic access to the European Union common labour market. All that was required to obtain a Portuguese passport in the immediate post-occupation period was a baptismal certificate and later a proof of identity document, *Billete Identidade*. A second important element for migrant success was the overseas sponsor, initially usually based in Lisbon. Here the role of the successful asylum seekers (*suaka politiku*) proved highly influential along with a number of earlier migrants (from 1975) who retained connection to Timor-Leste and a sense of social obligation to family and friends left behind.<sup>21</sup>

The value of the sponsor lay in their capacity to provide a form of guarantee known as a *procuração* for the applicant, along with a range of other documents. Apart from financial assistance, the sponsor provided invaluable assistance shepherding the passage of documents through the laborious Portuguese bureaucracy. These days passports are now routinely issued from the Portuguese Embassy in Dili, which attracts daily queues

of aspiring young East Timorese awaiting news of their applications. But even so sponsorship remains a crucial asset for those seeking to leave and the opportunity for people to secure these links remains a critical factor influencing the possibility of global migration for different settlements.<sup>22</sup>

As the momentum for migration has gathered pace, spurred on by stories of success and material evidence of house improvement projects among neighbours, sponsorship links have also shifted towards more direct and sequential family support. Many extended families in Ira Ara and Lere Loho now have multiple children and relatives living and working in England and Northern Ireland; those who managed to leave earlier providing the means and support to facilitate siblings and friends along the same route and usually to the same destination. Many households can relate a similar set of experiences. Armando's<sup>23</sup> family is an example. Both his brothers and sister have long since travelled and settled in Manchester. Their economic migration began in 2002 and has continued via a process of sibling sponsorship when in 2010 his younger brother and nephew joined the diaspora having secured their passports and the cost of their air tickets from their well-established geographically distant relatives. Armando himself has acquired a Portuguese passport but has elected to remain in place for the time being fulfilling group responsibilities.

Another popular destination has been the industrial town of Dungannon in Northern Ireland with its meat packing factories supplying the domestic market across the UK. The town has attracted large numbers of young East Timorese workers, said to be as many as 1,000 during the boom times some years ago, when one of the companies transferred its operations from Portugal. Many young East Timorese are attracted to the factory work because of the minimal English language requirements. Rosa's children from Lere Loho are among this group. Both her sons have been working the meat packing shifts for over three years now and one has managed to secure a passport for his wife who has joined him in Dungannon. Recently Rosa's daughter has also received her passport and left to join them in residence and in the same meat packing factory work.

Renaldo's story exemplifies another iteration of the opportunities, challenges and benefits of trans-national employment. He demonstrates many of the qualities of those who take the overseas work option, especially the commitment and loyalty to home families. But unlike those who have stayed away or elected to return to Dili after years of absence, Renaldo has re-united with his family in Ira Ara where he has built a new house and invested remaining funds in a prospective local enterprise.

During the 1990s, Renaldo was active in the youth wing of the resistance in Lautem (*Juventude Ponta Leste*) and a supporter of the armed resistance fighters (FALINTIL). At the end of the Indonesia occupation, he returned to Los Palos with his young family to the impoverished economic conditions of early 2000. By 2002, as the opportunities for employment overseas expanded

among family groups in Ira Ara, Renaldo drew on his ties to former student activists who had secured asylum in Portugal. With borrowed funds for an air ticket wired to Dili via Western Union, he travelled initially to Lisbon under auspices of the United Nations with his temporary travel pass, the B.I. (*Billete Identidade*) that enabled him to obtain a Portuguese passport. By then many of his friends and relatives<sup>24</sup> from Ira Ara had shifted to the United Kingdom, in this case Oxford<sup>25</sup> where key student activists had found asylum and for some, scholarships in the university. They provided a room in a shared house and contacts to secure paid work initially at a car yard, washing and detailing the vehicles, but later shifting to longer term kitchen and porter work when he obtained a position working in a prominent private boarding school. At the end of his first year, Renaldo decided to try his luck in Dungannon, outside Belfast where other Fataluku contacts had found shift work in the large meat packing factories established there. With lodgings available in a group house, Renaldo worked in Dungannon as a machine cleaner on the midnight shift, but eventually tired of the constant cold weather and returned to Timor-Leste in 2004.

This experience in the UK became the first of two further long periods away between 2005 and 2010, both times retracing his steps to England and through contacts, working in the supermarket chain, Tesco for £800 a month. Although reluctant to spend such a long time away from his family, he was committed to saving enough of his wages to fund the construction of his house and support his family. He was able to do so by living frugally in England with Fataluku relatives from Lorehe, south of Los Palos, while sending home as much as £500 a month via the reliable Western Union telegraph transfers to Dili. In the hinterland villages of Lautem where local wages and the remuneration from diverse farming barely generate more than one or two dollars a day, these kinds of sums are hugely attractive and, despite the distances involved, well within reach. As Renaldo comments, 'there was nothing really difficult about the work in England, it was just watching the clock that was hard'.

Reflecting on the future of this long distance Fataluku migratory travel, it is worth highlighting the recent ironic development that, for all the young East Timorese hopefuls who crowd the doorway of the Portuguese embassy in Dili seeking passports to work opportunities in the UK and Europe, the debilitating forces of economic recession on the other side of the world threaten to undermine these self-same opportunities. As of mid 2012, the rolling financial crisis in Europe has not had any appreciable impact on this youthful East Timorese migration. In part this is due to their willingness to participate in low status and relatively low pay occupations like the meat packing factories of Northern Ireland, basic cleaning services or kitchen work, all of which continue to employ despite economic weakness. There are also well established pathways of sponsorship that facilitate access to employment opportunities. But the spectre of unemployment in Western European countries may yet make its mark. Youth unemployment in key destination

countries has grown considerably in recent years, the United Kingdom 20 per cent, Portugal 27.8 per cent and Ireland 31.5 per cent respectively.<sup>26</sup> In Ireland for example, the lack of local work opportunities is fostering its own forms of youthful emigration jumping 45 per cent in 2011, and has seen up to 40,000 mostly young men and women leaving Ireland in search of work, mainly in England.<sup>27</sup> Under these circumstances, the prospects for new East Timorese entrants to the field of trans-national work look rather bleaker, at least in the immediate future. In a globalized world with open labour markets, and 'flexible' work practices, the unique political circumstances that led young East Timorese independence activists to settle in the UK and foster a remarkable network of sponsored migration from their home communities, may yet deny them the prosperity and good fortune they seek.

### **Remittance landscapes and social dynamics**

For the resident communities of Ira Ara and Lere Loho the primary experience of the new Fataluku diaspora is one of absence and a sense of loss of sons and daughters for indeterminate periods of time. Their absence in distant, barely imagined cultural contexts is viewed with a considerable degree of ambivalence; the prospect of benefits at the cost of absent brothers and fathers.<sup>28</sup> Migrants tend to be away for years and apart from occasional visits to family, rarely return to settle again in the community. The attractions of the customary life-worlds of ritual exchange – life cycle celebrations of social alliance that feature so heavily in contemporary East Timorese settlements – are no match it would seem for the lucrative economic opportunities available elsewhere and the kinds of negotiated cosmopolitan identities possible in pluralist social settings. The consolation of course, and the aspect of migration that binds diasporic children to their home communities, is the material manifestation of migration success in the form of remittance flows and the connections of care and belonging that they demonstrate.<sup>29</sup> Estimates of the scale of funding telegraphed back to family members waiting in Dili or Los Palos are difficult to sum with any precision, but all agree that they now form a major contribution to the local economy.

In these revitalised contexts of regular payments, the contrast between those who succeed and those who manifestly fail to secure their financial futures through mobility and migration, tends to be made publically evident. In the absence of lucrative remittance flows, domestic life is much harder and for the most part remains oriented to seasonal agriculture and animal husbandry as well as foraging in the forests and fallowed fields of ancestral lands an hour's walk to the east. Indeed in the years since 2002 up to forty householders from the two communities have elected to move out of the hamlets in Los Palos and relocate to their former settlement sites closer to the sphere of ancestral entitlement and sacrificial sites of spiritual blessing.<sup>30</sup> Fine new housing in such circumstances is rarely possible without external assistance. In these emerging disparities of benefit between the constituent households of Ira Ara and Lere Loho, the contribution of trans-national



employment to local domestic economies is a critical factor, especially given the importance of close family relationships as a feature of sponsorship and chain migration.<sup>31</sup>

In these circumstances there is also the real possibility of resentments and jealousies arising among families who have not benefitted from their neighbours' good fortune; outward displays of friendship towards recently returned overseas workers now tinged with suspicion that they prefigure requests for money. Community leaders are conscious of these tensions and appeal to long-standing patterns of solidarity and mutual assistance between the households of the main clan groups (*ratu*) that constitute the ancestral membership of the two communities. They stress the need for families fortunate enough to succeed in securing sponsorship to assist others with less direct connections. In this regard, the *xefe aldeia* (hamlet chief) of Lere Loho has confirmed that the five constituent paternal *ratu* of the hamlet, Cailoro, Vacumura, Paiuru, Puhumatu and Fara Latu, are all represented in the numbers of young workers overseas. However, sponsorship has not yet extended to all the constituent households of these extended kin groups. A similar sense of shared obligation and social solidarity is also promoted in Ira Ara.<sup>32</sup> There are practical reasons for encouraging a sense of shared endeavour, as one of the direct consequences of so many young people leaving the settlements is the absence of social labour to assist in the many commemorative rituals and social exchanges that remain important customary features of social life. Remittance flows are in some ways a poor replacement for the kinds of interpersonal and reciprocal exchanges that one expects to call upon within a more contained social field. The absent members are nevertheless remembered in sacrifices at the house shrine (*aca kaka*) and prayers directed to ancestors of the house and *ratu*, in order to protect and guard against illness and accident.<sup>33</sup>

In any case, the path to wealth through trans-national employment is not assured. There are always those who struggle to gain or sustain employment, who spend their wages and fail to save, whose remittance intentions are never quite fulfilled, or who return to Dili and dissipate their capital in displays of consumer wealth, flashy cars and dissolute living (*foia foia*). And if a good many of the new Fataluku diaspora never quite manage to return to their roots in the sense of residing once again in the intimate landscapes of their forebears, most do return to Timor-Leste and the cosmopolitan spaces of the national capital, Dili. It is from here that they rebuild their connections, extend further remittances, support siblings and participate in the celebratory exchanges of family and clan that work to strengthen and reproduce resilient cycles of social alliance and customary connection. In this sense the remittance economies that are flourishing in places like Ira Ara and Lere Loho confound any easy dichotomies between bounded local traditions and porous global cosmopolitanism.<sup>34</sup> The customary ties that bind are eminently elastic and their influence is the sustaining link between source communities and their far-flung progeny.

If the objective of improving the quality and design of one's housing remains a priority among many successful migrant connected families, a second significant domestic project for many families is the opportunity for pursuing further education overseas. This sentiment is expressed as a future goal by many of the participants, but also and significantly in consideration of the benefits and opportunities for their younger siblings. There is a widespread understanding among parents in Ira Ara and Lere Loho that for all the comparative financial benefits to be gained from labour migration, in the end the work is a menial form of employment with limited or no career future. As a consequence, and especially among families with multiple children at work in the factories of Dungannon or Crewe, Manchester or Oxford, there is an evident resolve among families and community leaders to pursue education opportunities for younger family members of the community. One aspect of this emergent consensus is the decision among community leaders (*xefe aldeia*) to dissuade younger members of trans-national families to follow their older siblings into the labour factories, and to actively support further learning, most commonly these days to high school or tertiary education in Indonesia. One local resident described this trend as a 'flood' (*banjir*) of young people leaving the settlements and heading across the border to education in preferred sites such as Jakarta, Jogjakarta (Gaja Mada University), Bandung (ITB, IPB), Bali (Udayana) and even Kupang (Unkris) in West Timor.

Reflecting on this trend for seeking educational opportunities outside Timor-Leste, people express a range of motivations. They include general approval of the quality of education training and value for money in neighbouring Indonesia, the lower cost of living as well as the comparative ease of access for East Timorese students with their facility in Indonesian language, cultural understanding and well-worn connections that have facilitated movements of East Timorese students between Indonesia and Timor-Leste for over a generation. In this respect the Indonesian concept of *komunitas* that was adopted by the East Timorese student resistance movement in Indonesia during the 1990s to sustain their solidarity and shared struggle, provides a formative basis for subsequent patterns of the contemporary offshore education experience.<sup>35</sup> Local people have also commented on the fact that those who return from studies in Indonesia present as respectful, well dressed and with heads full of knowledge. They draw unfavourable comparisons with young people who left for medical studies in Cuba and only recently returned after seven years, arrogant, empty-headed and oddly dressed. For their part, students are at least as attracted to the exciting possibilities of travel and new experiences as they are to the prospects of serious study and future careers.

### **Customary moderns and cultural legacies**

In the post-independence social and economic landscapes of displaced settlements like Ira Ara and Lere Loho, residents arguably pursue livelihood options in two apparently divergent ways. One pathway leads inward to

a renewal of emplaced sociality and the complex reciprocal exchanges that reproduce social alliances and local authority founded on ancestral rituals and charter myths.<sup>36</sup> An alternate path leads outward and beyond the intricate social complications and expectations of genealogically ordered communities, into cosmopolitan spaces of mobility, hybridity, translocality and wage employment. James Clifford has described this dichotomy in terms of the metaphorical connections between routes and roots, fixed and entrenched in one sense, on the move in another.<sup>37</sup> But the distinction here is necessarily heuristic, as both orientations inevitably inform, and are increasingly implicated in one another. Fataluku customary cultures are not reproduced simply or solely in the bounded localised spaces of Los Palos and its constituent hamlets (*aldeia*), but are also carried and created anew in the mobile agency and relationships of young Fataluku migrant workers and aspiring students resident elsewhere. Similarly remittance flows of cash are not simply monetised expressions of care or filial duty, but avenues for the flow of new ideas and imaginative possibilities for engaging customary sources. In this extended arena of exchange and reciprocity the local becomes a relation of inter-locality itself<sup>38</sup> with the extension of Fataluku custom and identities into trans-national spaces situated in a series of particular locales, embodied in particular local practices and specific historical and material conditions of travel, work, kinship and communication.<sup>39</sup>

In a recent work, Keane<sup>40</sup> has argued persuasively for the shared elements of ideology that linked Calvinist Protestantism in Sumba (Eastern Indonesia) with the concept of modernity via the separation of 'Christian moderns' from their subordination to ancestral Marapu religion. The Calvinist semiotic ideology, he argues, converges with modernism's concept of human agency and in the process delivers a path for the convert to attain moral and spiritual liberation from the 'delusions' of empty ancestral rituals and fetishised objects of communal veneration. The path of evangelical acceptance here includes two distinctive and critical features, namely, rupture from the traditional past, and progress towards a better future.<sup>41</sup> In the process he argues, Calvinist Protestantism in its more optimistic iterations offers the possibility of self-transformation and increased agency from the restrictions of tradition and customary obligations.<sup>42</sup>

Keane's persuasive linking of certain aspects of universalising religiosity with modernity is a helpful corrective to those who would see secularism as its driving force. But while acknowledging the transformative potential of Christianity in these terms, it strikes me that Fataluku Catholics are rather more equivocal and pluralist in their own religious subjectivities. Arguably Catholicism is never so rigid in its denunciation of indigenous religious forms and is itself prone to a tendency for eliding objects and agencies, the relics of saints, transubstantiation, the worship of *nossa senora* icons.<sup>43</sup> Most Fataluku are only late Twentieth Century Catholics after all and as, 'customary moderns' they seem remarkably adept at combining modernist separations with revivalist ancestral spirit ontologies for instrumental ends. The

methodological reality of spirits, as Bubandt<sup>44</sup> puts it, retains its persuasive force. This is not to deny a broader folk distinction between emplaced customs and mobile modernities, but staying in place or returning to one's origins need not define one's status in these restrictive binary terms. Hence the Fataluku standard refrain of what might be described as only a partial disenchantment that, 'we are *moderen* but...custom remains strong'.<sup>45</sup> The lively Fataluku enthusiasm for trans-national migration in its various forms is simply the latest expression of that accommodation to opportunity.

## Endnotes

- 1 S. Barnes, 'Origins, precedence and social order in the domain of *Ina Ama Beli Darlari*', in A. McWilliam and E.G. Traube, eds, *Land and Life in Timor Leste: Ethnographic Essays*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, 2011; D. Hicks, 'Community and nation-state in East Timor', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2007, pp. 13–6; P.M. Thu, 'Land forgotten, effects of Indonesian re-settlement on rural livelihoods in East Timor', in D. Mearns, ed., *Democratic Governance in Timor-Leste, Reconciling the Local and the National*, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2008, pp. 143–59.
- 2 A.R. McWilliam, 'Fataluku healing and cultural resilience in East Timor', *Ethnos*, vol. 73, no. 2, 2008, pp. 217–40.
- 3 J.J. Fox, 'The articulation of tradition in Timor-Leste', in A. McWilliam and E.G. Traube, eds, *Land and Life in Timor Leste: Ethnographic Essays*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, 2011.
- 4 See T.M. Li, 'Introduction', in T.M. Li, ed., *Transforming the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power and Production*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Singapore, 1999, p. 2.
- 5 E.G. Traube, 'Planting the flag', in A. McWilliam and E.G. Traube, eds, *Land and Life in Timor Leste: Ethnographic Essays*, ANU E-Press, Canberra, 2011, p. 14; see also E.G. Traube, 'Unpaid wages: local narratives and the imagination of the nation', *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2007, pp. 9–25.
- 6 Drawn from Lautem and Baucau figures, Timor-Leste Census, 2010.
- 7 Timor-Leste Census, 2010.
- 8 W. Keane, 'Money is no object: materiality, desire and modernity in an Indonesian society', in F. Myers, ed., *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, 2001, p. 84.
- 9 A.R. McWilliam, 'Fataluku healing'. The term, *moderen* is a Malay/Indonesian term describing the modern condition.
- 10 U. Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*, Routledge, London, 1996.
- 11 The principal militia group in Lautem was known as Tim Alpha.
- 12 See A.R. McWilliam, 'Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2011, pp. 745–63.
- 13 Known as *varaca* in the Fataluku vernacular.
- 14 In 2011 a program of compensatory payments was introduced that has been designed to assist East Timorese households who lost family members during the independence struggle. The program offers one-off funds to facilitate reburials and longer term pension style support for close relatives.
- 15 Exact numbers are difficult to report given the regularity of departures and the lack of hamlet (*aldeia*) level population figures, but in terms of the local youth population

- (17–25), these figures probably represent a majority of hamlet members.
- 16 Two of its related members and current residents include former Fataluku regional FALINTIL commanders of Ponta Leste, now Deputado Renan Selak and Military Commander Aluk.
  - 17 Settlement neighbours in the nearby forested hills for generations past, the populations of Ira Ara and Lere Loho were forcibly resettled into Los Palos after the mass surrender of resistance forces at Matebian in 1978 and suffered severe privations for some years in their closely guarded compound.
  - 18 D. Nicholson, *The Lorikeet Warriors: East Timorese Nationalist Resistance, 1989–1999*, B. Arts Honours Thesis, University of Melbourne, Australia, 2001.
  - 19 See A.C. Bexley, *Youth at the Crossroads: The Politics of Identity and Belonging in Timor-Leste*, PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 2009, pp. 68–73; N. Rei, *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2007.
  - 20 Political asylum was not limited to Fataluku activists from Los Palos. Other settlements in Lautem have also had access to sponsors now resident in the UK. They include significant numbers of former FALINTIL and student activists from villages (*suku*) such as Asaleino (with more than thirty individuals in the UK including many who received political asylum in the 1990s), Lorehe, Mehara, Moro and Luro among the prominent locations.
  - 21 People have expressed their disappointment with earlier refugees from 1975 who established new and prosperous lives in Portugal and Australia, but have chosen not to assist their relatives and compatriots in Timor-Leste. They lack a ‘spirit of social solidarity’ according to some.
  - 22 Key figures in the migration networks have been a number of former Priests at the *Collegio do Dom Bosco* (Don Bosco Catholic Mission) established in 1947 in Fuiloro just outside Los Palos.
  - 23 Names of Fataluku respondents are pseudonyms.
  - 24 Renaldo’s cousin [Mother’s sister’s son] lived in Oxford at this time.
  - 25 Oxford and Metro London became something of a centre for East Timorese migrant workers for a number of years, but since 2005 and beyond reportedly there has been a greater dispersal of East Timorese to multiple cities in the UK including Crewe, Peterborough, Bristol, Cardiff and Manchester.
  - 26 The Telegraph, ‘Interactive graphic: youth unemployment in Europe’, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/8564500/Interactive-graphic-Youth-unemployment-in-Europe.html>, 9 January 2012.
  - 27 B.M. O’Connell, ‘Old time farewell for those never coming back’, *The Weekend Australian*, 31 December 2011. In a somewhat similar vein, the article showcases the trend in rural Irish constituencies, such as county Clare where, in a radius of twenty kilometres, the respondent knew of sixty-three young Irish who had moved abroad, mostly to England, including some cases where up to five members of the one family had relocated.
  - 28 The majority of migrants are male but young women are also well represented.
  - 29 Deirdre McKay refers to these flows of cash remittances as ‘care chains’, ‘Sending dollars shows feelings – emotions and economies in Filipino migration’, *Mobilities*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 175–94.
  - 30 A.R. McWilliam, ‘Exchange and resilience’.

- 31 D. Conradson and D. McKay, 'Translocal subjectivities: mobility, connection and emotion', *Mobilities*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2007, pp. 167-74.
- 32 Which is also represented by five paternal origin groups of Latu Loho, Naza, Cailoro, Puhumatu, Lili Vacumura.
- 33 A.R. McWilliam, 'Fataluku healing'.
- 34 J. Friedman, 'From roots to routes: tropes for trippers', *Anthropology Theory*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2002, pp. 21-36.
- 35 A.C. Bexley, *Youth at the Crossroads*, pp. 92-4.
- 36 For example, A.R. McWilliam, 'Fataluku healing'; A.R. McWilliam, 'Exchange and resilience'.
- 37 J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1997.
- 38 J. Friedman, 'From roots to routes'.
- 39 N. Tapp, 'Transporting culture across borders - the Hmong', in K. Robinson, ed., *Asian and Pacific Cosmopolitans: Self and Subject in Motion*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK and New York, 2007, p. 224; see also A. Wise, 'Nation, transnation and diaspora: locating the East Timorese long-distance nationalism', *Sojourn*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2004, pp. 151-81.
- 40 W. Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007.
- 41 *ibid.*, p. 48.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 52.
- 43 A view supported by Webb Keane's own interlocutors who viewed Catholics as 'hardly more modern than Sumba's own unconverted ancestral ritualists', *ibid.*, p. 2.
- 44 N. Bubandt, 'Ghosts with trauma: global imaginaries and the politics of post-conflict memory', in E.E. Hedman, ed., *Conflict, Violence and Displacement in Indonesia*, Cornell Southeast Asia Program, Ithaca, N.Y., 2008, pp. 275-302.
- 45 A.R. McWilliam, 'Fataluku healing'.