

# 1

## Lest we forget

Kupang, 8 May 2013. It was a bright Wednesday morning and I had just recovered from a two-hour motorbike ride from Betun to Atambua and a six-hour bus ride from Atambua to Kupang the day before. During the past few months, I had focused my work in Belu (and Malaka) district, near the border with East Timor, and planned to give myself a break in the provincial capital of Kupang. As I was transferring my field notes on Tetun people's displacement narratives into my laptop, a ring tone on my mobile phone announced a message. It was apparently not a short one:

Good morning, my brother, my apology if this bothers you. On Saturday, the 4th of May, the 743 battalion force, led by the Deputy Battalion Commander cut down all of the banana trees which were planted by the East Timorese community on the side of Timor Raya road and along the drainage around the training field on the east of the Supporting Military Company [Kompi Bantuan] in Naibonat. The old banana fruits were taken home and the young ones were left scattered on the ground. Please pray for us as there has been an order for us to move out of this land we are living on because it belongs to the army. This is the order of the Provincial Army Commander of 161 Wira Sakti, Kupang. We are convinced that our brothers who were born on the west side of this Ancestral Land of Timor will pass along our suffering to the policy decision makers in this country. We are currently experiencing what the aphorism declares as 'after the sweet is taken, the remains are thrown away' [*habis manis sepah dibuang*]. Please do not ever forget the history. Thank you and God Bless You.

This message was sent by Francisco Ximenes, commonly known as Sico, the leader of the East Timorese community in Naibonat camp, Kupang district. Sico and his community fled to West Timor as a result of the destructive Indonesian withdrawal from East Timor in 1999. In that year, then Indonesian president B. J. Habibie announced there would be a popular referendum on autonomy offering East Timorese a tangible option to form their own state. Almost immediately, East Timorese militias, backed by the Indonesian military, began a campaign of violence to ensure that the province of East Timor remained a constituent part of the Republic of Indonesia (see van Klinken et al. 2002: 69; Bertrand 2004: 143). Throughout East Timor, intimidation and acts of violence took place. Initial attacks on residences soon escalated into a pseudo civil war. According to some accounts, soon after the United Nations (UN) announced that an overwhelming majority of East Timor's population (78 per cent) had rejected special autonomy within Indonesia—which was an effective rejection of continued Indonesian control over their territory—large numbers of people were killed in the East Timorese towns of Maliana, Oecussi, Suai and Liquiçá. The capital, Dili, and other towns were torched, about 1,000 people were killed and some 70 per cent of public infrastructure and private housing was destroyed (Dolan et al. 2004: 12; Robinson 2010: 161). As the intensity of violence increased, a stream of refugees left East Timor, many of them coerced into joining the militia exodus, and, by late 1999, an estimated 250,000 East Timorese (more than 30 per cent of the population) had fled to the neighbouring half of the island, West Timor, which was part of the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur, or NTT) (Amnesty International 1999; CAVR 2005).

Most of the displaced East Timorese were located in camps within Belu district, near the border with East Timor, and in Kupang district, near the NTT capital of Kupang. Naibonat camp is located near the Kupang district army reserve barracks and is one of the largest remaining camps for former East Timorese refugees. As a teacher during the Portuguese period who joined the Portuguese army in the years leading up to the decolonisation process, Sico certainly had a flair for emotional language. His melodramatic message, however, spoke to a sincere concern for his community. I immediately rang Sico for some clarification and agreed to catch up with him in Naibonat that afternoon. I asked Augusto da Costa,

the former speaker of the Baucau district House of Representatives (in East Timor), who had initially introduced me to the Naibonat community, to accompany me.

We arrived in Naibonat at about 4 pm and headed straight to Sico's dwelling. 'As you can witness yourself', he said, pointing to where the remaining bananas had been left on the ground. Sico was not in his best form. Augusto, on the other hand, did not want to miss the opportunity to gain firsthand experience and immediately walked around the area with his camcorder capturing the scene while Sico continued to reconstruct events. 'Prior to the Saturday actions,' Sico began, 'there have been two important events taking place here.'

The first was on Thursday, 25 April 2013. About 8 am, two members of the 743 infantry battalion, dressed in their exercise uniforms, approached an East Timorese youth, Arlindo, and began to ask about his background and origins. They emphasised that the land belonged to the army and they were planning to build new barracks in the area, and implied that all the bananas should be cut down or the 743 infantrymen would do the job themselves. A similar encounter took place on the morning of Monday, 29 April 2013. This time it was a larger group of about 20 infantrymen, including the company provost, in their full formal uniforms. They approached Olivio,<sup>1</sup> who was standing in front of his dwelling, and explained to him their plan for the area. Like Arlindo four days earlier, Olivio politely advised them to see the neighbourhood leader (*ketua RT*) for a response.

Instead of following that advice, the next weekend, the army group cut down all the banana trees in front of the East Timorese who had planted them over the previous 12 years to support their livelihoods. Sico told me:

We know that this land is owned by the army and that they can obviously do whatever they want with it. We also know that the bananas will grow again, but the problem is not the bananas; it is the way the army has acted. You know, those bananas were plants. It means someone has planted them and someone's labour has been invested in it. This requires respect and appreciation and this is the thing they have consciously ignored.

'But why didn't you try to stop them in the first place, then?' I asked.

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1 Olivio and Arlindo are not their real names.

It seemed Sico had anticipated such questions: ‘This was a bait [provocation], and they wanted us to bite. But we were also part of the Indonesian army and key players of this kind of game in the past.’

Sico arranged a community meeting for the next day to hear the views of his fellow Timorese. Apparently, the banana raid was one of their concerns, but the greater issue was an official letter from the commander of the battalion, who had given them a three-month deadline to move out and ‘live in their own land’.

Thomas Cardoso, also known as Mau Rade, the former head of the intelligence unit in Baucau military district, loudly pointed out:

The three-month deadline was an incredibly short period of time to pack all the things and move out, particularly when many of the community members did not have land and housing to move into. They knew we brought nothing from East Timor and now they are kicking us out of here. Are they trying to say that we should return to East Timor because that is our origin land? I suggest in the next three months we should remove our camps on to the main road, because that is the only place where we have access.

As others began to express their concerns, Sico stood up and reminded them about the army’s provocation and they eventually agreed to address the issue in a peaceful and respectful way. In his concluding remarks, however, Sico looked at everyone and spoke gently:

What we have to do is let people know that, for other Indonesians [and he suddenly turned his face to me and I realised I was the only person of non–East Timorese background present], the notion of Indonesia as the land where blood was spilled [*tanah tumpah darah*] is related to blood from the birthing process. But for us, the East Timorese, we spilled our own blood and that of our brothers and sisters to become Indonesian. This is the history they should always remember.

Citing the acronym made famous by Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president, Sico declared: ‘*JAS MERAH*’ (*jangan sekali-kali melupakan sejarah*, which translates as ‘do not ever forget [your] history’).

Sico and his community had calmly watched the army cut down their banana plants and received the letter to clear the camp they had inhabited since 1999. It looked as though they had passively accepted the provocation. In the ensuing days, however, Sico and his community made use of their own networks within the army to get their message across, even extending

their reach across the provincial boundary to higher-ranking officers of the regional army command in Denpasar and army headquarters in Jakarta. In addition, the community initiated a series of engagements with their various representatives in the local parliament, human right activists, religious and political leaders as well as government officers at the national and local levels to find ways to resolve their grievances. What struck me during my involvement in these events was the absence of any suggestion of a return to East Timor. This commitment to remain in Indonesia suggests that, for many East Timorese, their existence in Indonesia—and West Timor, in particular—is no longer a transitory or liminal phase. They have moved on and are indeed East Timorese Indonesians.

The focus of this book is an ethnographic study of belonging and citizenship among former pro-autonomy East Timorese settlers such as Sico and his community who have elected to settle definitively in Indonesian West Timor. In particular, this book explores the way different East Timorese groups organise and represent their cultural and political interests in a new setting. In other words, this book seeks to highlight the diversity of East Timorese identities rather than to restrict them.

## ‘Avoid two (potholes), hit four’

My interest in the East Timorese community struggling to make a new life in West Timor dates back a few years. In 2005, I became a public servant in the NTT provincial government. Having only heard stories of East Timorese issues from Malang in East Java, returning home and entering a government job where I could make use of my knowledge in the development of my region was an exciting prospect. My enthusiasm increased when the official appointment letter, signed by the provincial governor, clearly defined my role as regional resettlement planner in the Ministry of Labour and Transmigration, one of the key players in the East Timorese resettlement program. On the first day of my assignment, I was asked to join a team of transmigration officers to monitor the instalment of water pipelines from a recently built dam at Tulakaboak resettlement area, which housed many East Timorese.

Tulakaboak resettlement area is on the northern coast of Kupang Bay. It was constructed in 2001 as part of the emergency resettlement projects implemented for displaced East Timorese. Tulakaboak is in fact not that far from the provincial capital of Kupang, but poor roads mean it took five

hours to reach the site by car. People living in the area commonly use the expression '*sili dua kena empat*' (literally, 'avoid two [potholes], hit four') to describe the horrible road conditions. The resettlement area comprised 150, 6 m x 6 m houses for 75 West Timorese and 75 East Timorese households. It was located metres from the ocean, but, rather than an idyllic tropical coastal landscape, the area was covered mostly in bare rocks and thornbush. We could only find a sandy beach another 2 km to the north-east, in Panfolok, where fishing boats landed. In Tulakaboak, there was little evidence of crop cultivation. I walked around several blocks and found to my surprise that many houses had been disassembled and/or left empty. It took another several blocks before I even encountered anyone who had remained in the area. The dam and pipeline project were not immediately my point of interest once I noticed that some people were reluctant to stay in the area. I managed to have a brief but effective informal conversation with some residents and received the clear message that the new houses had been abandoned because people had chosen to return to the camps to be closer to their families and livelihood networks.

The situation in Tulakaboak was apparently not a unique phenomenon. In Belu, many houses built for East Timorese are now housing animals (Kompas Online 2012). It is clear that even though the East Timorese have lived in West Timor for nearly two decades, the issues affecting them are far from resolved. My experience in Tulakaboak and what happened to Sico's community in Naibonat exemplify that dealing with East Timorese issues in West Timor is not simply a matter of physical housing needs. It requires an understanding of the way East Timorese perceive themselves as newly emplaced settlers and how they respond to the challenges they face. My concern in this book, therefore, is less with the pragmatic politics of humanitarian and development assistance than it is with examining the extent to which East Timorese adapt and attribute meaning to their emplacement, and how that meaning is negotiated, interpreted and contested by different East Timorese groups in West Timor.

## Following the East Timorese in West Timor

The island of Timor lies in the Lesser Sunda archipelago in eastern Indonesia, north of Australia. The island covers some 34,000 sq km—approximately the size of the Netherlands. The terrain is rugged and mountainous, with plateaus covering most of the northern coastal range

and a number of peaks in excess of 2,000 m high. The southern coastal area forms a wide plain with estuarine swamps and river deltas built up by progradation. The eastern half of the island, including the enclave of Oecussi and the islands of Atauro and Jaco, were under Portuguese administration for centuries before the 24 years of Indonesian occupation that ended in 1999. The western half of the island was under Dutch colonial administration, but formed part of the Indonesian state since its founding as an independent republic on 17 August 1945.

Thus, of all the Indonesian regions to which East Timorese migrated following the violent reaction to the independence referendum, West Timor presented the most immediately attractive. However, the very fact that it became the ultimate place of residence for the East Timorese who did not want to return to East Timor spoke volumes about the appeal of this half of the island. West Timor has never been a province of its own or an autonomous political entity, but is an integrated part of the composite NTT province that also includes the neighbouring islands of Flores and Sumba. In fact, the term 'West Timor' (Timor Barat) has always been alien to the people in the region, and has never been a point of reference or identification for people from neighbouring islands such as Sumba, Alor and Flores or even the proximate islands of Rote, Savu or Semau.<sup>2</sup> West Timor is simply a new directional term to distinguish the Indonesian part from the other half of the island, the independent state of Timor-Leste.

Administratively, West Timor comprises one municipality and five districts. Kupang municipality is the capital of the province as well as the centre for regional trade and services. Kupang district covers the hinterland of the capital. Further to the east are the districts of South Central Timor (Timor Tengah Selatan, or TTS) and North Central Timor (Timor Tengah Utara, or TTU), which border the East Timorese enclave of Oecussi. The final two districts are Belu, which borders the East

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2 People simply refer to it as Timor rather than West Timor.

Timorese mountain district of Bobonaro, and Malaka,<sup>3</sup> which borders the southern Timor-Leste coastal district of Cova Lima. Ethnolinguistically, West Timor is dominated by the Meto-speaking people who occupy most areas in Kupang, TTS and TTU, as well as a few areas on the western side of Belu. Tetun-speaking people dominate the Belu and Malaka districts, which are also home to Bunaq and Kemak people. Kupang Malay is spoken in the capital, with a few remaining indigenous Helong-speaking people in centres such as Bolok and the island of Semau.

Although my engagement with the East Timorese began in 2005, almost all of the findings presented in this book are based on empirical research undertaken in Belu, Malaka and Kupang districts between October 2012 and October 2013, and during my return to Kupang, from January 2017 to February 2018. Because of the dispersion and diversity of the East Timorese people, I cannot confine my ethnographic inquiry to a specific territorial unit. Thus, during my first 12-month stay, I found myself frequently on the move. I conducted multi-sited ethnographic research by way of what Marcus (1995: 95) identifies as ‘multiple sites of observation and participation that crosscut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global”, the “life-world” and the “system”’.

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3 Malaka is a newly *pemekaran* district formed from Belu. *Pemekaran* (lit., ‘blossoming’) is the term used to describe the formation of new autonomous administrative and budgetary territories in Indonesia. While the formation of new administrative units within Indonesia has taken place since the early years of the republic, this process increased rapidly after the implementation of the Regional Autonomy Law no. 22/1999 and government regulation (PP) no. 129/2000. In 2004, the revised Decentralisation Law (no. 32) was enacted and, in ensuing years, the government reviewed the regulation and introduced PP 38/2007, which presently serves as the key regulation on the formation of new territorial administrations. In 1999, NTT comprised 13 districts and municipalities. In 2013, Malaka district was officially established and was added to the total of 22 districts and municipalities in the province.



Table 1.1 Statistics for NTT and West Timor, 2016

Description	NTT	West Timor					Malaka district
		Kupang municipality	Kupang district	TTS district	TTU district	Belu district	
Area (sq km)	47,931	180	5,526	3,947	2,670	1,249	1,161
Population	5,203,514	402,286	360,228	461,681	247,216	210,307	183,387
Male	2,577,953	206,129	184,314	227,877	122,209	105,187	88,709
Female	2,625,561	196,157	175,914	233,804	125,007	105,120	94,678
Population density (per sq km)	109	2,232	105	97	98	100	94
Number of districts	22						
Number of subdistricts	306	6	24	32	24	12	12
Number of villages and <i>kelurahan</i> (administrative villages)	3,314	51	177	278	193	81	127

Source: BPS (2017).

This idea of multi-sitedness is applied to research of the East Timorese in a series of activities across West Timor. The first principle is to follow the people. During my stay, I followed different East Timorese groups in their camps and resettlement sites. I visited three camps and seven resettlement sites in Kupang;<sup>4</sup> in Belu and Malaka, I visited one camp and 12 resettlement villages.<sup>5</sup> I participated in East Timorese community activities such as meetings, various celebrations and parties including two marriages, a birthday and a graduation, three mortuary ceremonies and funerals, a youth Christmas gathering and one cultural performance. By following people, I also tried to simultaneously follow their stories through numerous informal conversations and some semistructured interviews (see Agar 1980: 110). I conducted informal interviews with a diversity of women and men: young and old, politicians, government employees, farmers, labourers, traders, military personnel and members of the police force.

To explore their livelihood activities, I followed the money by joining some sharecropper farmers in their fields and following gamblers in their various pursuits. I also tried to follow different conflicts and reconciliation processes, including undertaking two week-long visits to Timor-Leste in July 2013 and March 2017. My initial intention was to visit people in the districts, but time constraints restricted my engagement to selected human rights activists and non-governmental organisation (NGO) personnel working on repatriation issues.

Archives provided another source of information for my research, including Portuguese and Dutch colonial records focusing on displacement and cross-border migration. This archival research allowed me to reconstruct the political history of Timorese population mobility. Other sources included a wide range of government and NGO documents and reports, as well as local newspapers.

The final point after following different East Timorese groups over a decade is the significance of time and space. Time and space inform and transform East Timorese identity. In other words, to understand East

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4 The three camps are Naibonat, Tuapukan and Noelbaki. The seven resettlement sites are Boneana, Manusak, Raknamo, Naibonat Sosial, Naibonat 100, Oebelo Atas and Oebelo Bawah.

5 The camp is Tenu Bot. The resettlement sites are Dirun, Kabuna, Manumutin, We Liurai, Kinbana, Haliwen, Harekakae, Weoe, Betun, Kobalima Timur, Raimea and Sulit. While I focused most of my observations in those three districts, along the way from Kupang to Belu (and Malaka), I stayed overnight in TTU and TTS districts to collect stories of East Timorese there.

Timorese identity is to be able to distinguish the ways in which stories are shared in different settings. Without such understanding, or at least an awareness of it, it is likely we will miss the underlying message that East Timorese try to convey.

Let me illustrate the different verbal expressions in different times and places through a story of my engagement with Verissimo de Deus de Magelhaens. The leader of the Aitarak militia known as Group Nine, Verissimo was in charge of the Vila Verde area in 1999. He was one of the main participants in the local roulette-type gambling game called *bola guling* in Atambua. Introducing myself as a researcher writing about Timorese identity politics, I first met Verissimo in November 2012 in his shelter in Tenu Bot camp. Our first conversation lasted for two hours and was full of expressions about the way he had defended Indonesia and the ‘Red and White’ (the colours of the Indonesian flag).<sup>6</sup> The next day, I visited him again, and he explained that he had been struggling for Indonesia since 1975. He was one of 300 Atsabe youths who crossed the border in 1975 to be trained by Indonesian special forces (RPKAD (Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, Army Para-Commando Regiment), now Kopassus) in Belu to become a partisan force.

When I returned to talk to him a week later, he vented his criticisms of Timor-Leste:

What kind of independence do you have if you don't have your own currency? Timor-Leste are now following the Americans and they let the Australians control their oil. Is this what you call independent?

In our next conversation, he began to express his detachment from East Timor: ‘I have bought my own land and I don't care about East Timor. My focus is to make money and build my house here.’

In this formal setting, we can see how Verissimo expressed his strong allegiance to Indonesia and announced his sense of personal deterritorialisation. In so doing, he silences his longing for his homeland in his attempt to impress on me his pure commitment to Indonesia. As time went by, I began to deal with him on a daily basis and, after a while, he asked me to visit the construction site of his new house. Walking together while observing the builders mixing concrete, our conversation in this setting started to change.

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<sup>6</sup> A typical topic for most, if not all, former East Timorese militiamen with whom I spoke.

Verissimo told me that although he had decided to build his house in West Timor, his obligation towards East Timor would never be forgotten. When we returned to his shelter and ate together, he recalled several attempts on his life since his arrival in West Timor. These were made in response to Verissimo's efforts to protect pro-independence supporters who joined his evacuation group. He was almost killed when he tried to send these pro-independence supporters back to Dili in 2000. 'But I knew what I did and the ancestors knew it, too,' he said, describing his successful efforts and how the ancestors' blessings had kept him safe. In this different setting, I did not hear much about Indonesia. What I heard instead were stories of Verissimo's longing for Atsabe and East Timor.

In late August 2013, I visited Verissimo one evening, at about 8 pm. His shelter was rather quiet so I asked where everyone was. He said he had just sent his wife to Timor-Leste because his mother-in-law was gravely ill. He had given his wife almost all of his savings (about IDR20 million, or A\$1,900) to make sure everything was taken care of. Two days later, his mother-in-law passed away and Verissimo sent one of his sons with more money—the money he had saved to complete his new house in Kabuna village (Belu district). He now redirected these savings to the mortuary rituals and funeral arrangements in Atsabe.

Verissimo's actions represented the opposite of the views he had expressed not so long ago—that he no longer cared about East Timor. After more than 16 years in temporary shelter, in May 2016, Verissimo moved out of Tenu Bot camp to settle permanently in Kabuna village. His oldest son has been working in Dili and his other children cross the border frequently to visit their home village in Atsabe. Sadly, Verissimo passed away in December 2016, only eight months after moving into his own house on his own land. He was buried in his backyard, but only temporarily, because, in his final words, Verissimo wished that one day his children would return his remains to Atsabe for a reunion with his ancestors.

Verissimo's story exemplifies two striking features of researching East Timorese in West Timor. First, space forms part of the identity that East Timorese attempt to maintain and negotiate. In the public domain, East Timorese will expose their prescriptive narrative of 'defending the Red and White' as a form of allegiance to Indonesia. In their private domain or in informal settings such as gardens and rice fields, kitchens and dining rooms, stories of their relationship with ancestral land resonate louder. This suggests that East Timorese stories are situational and expressed verbally for specific purposes. This also brings the issue of

time into consideration. On average, my shortest conversation with these people lasted about four hours. In most instances, we talked for the whole day and there were numerous times when we finished our conversation beyond 2 am. During this seemingly endless talk, the information I was seeking was often expressed only at the very end of our conversation—when I was too tired to memorise even a short statement.

The second feature is related to action. The actions of East Timorese often speak louder than their words and sometimes help to explain what is not expressed verbally. It is also interesting, in this case, that while some East Timorese announce their political allegiance to Indonesia, they never really escape their cultural obligations towards East Timor. Performing cultural obligations does not require announcement; action speaks for itself and is what an East Timorese does as an East Timorese. Seen in this light, I would like to emphasise that investigating East Timorese requires a significant investment of time combined with continued observation and reflection on data from different settings.

## Navigating East Timorese complexity

The most notable challenge of a multi-sited ethnographic approach is the fact that one simply cannot follow everything, especially when the journey time between districts is up to six hours by road. While it is difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of any one Timorese group, such an approach did enable me to develop a broad network of relationships with various East Timorese groups and to observe similarities and differences among them. Following different East Timorese groups in West Timor led me to recognise their complex identities and dispersion. Because of their number and spread, there have been various attempts to simplify the situation of the East Timorese living in West Timor.

Labelling them as refugees, or militias—and therefore brutal, violent and intolerant—is one of the more potent of these simplifications. This, however, provides little understanding of the complexity of East Timorese identity. These East Timorese might have had Indonesia as their destination when they left East Timor after the referendum, but it would be a mistake to perceive them as a uniform community economically, politically, socially, geographically or ideologically or, crucially, as ethnically homogeneous. In other words, examining the life of the East Timorese means recognising that they are not one, but many.



Plate 1.1 An East Timorese procession in Raknamo resettlement site, Kupang, October 2012

Source: Father Jefri Bonlay.

It has been estimated that more than 14,000 government employees and about 6,000 members of the military and police force with their core and extended families left East Timor. About 4,500 government employees were part of the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs (Depdagri) and decided to resettle and continue their career in various government agencies in NTT.<sup>7</sup> Army personnel and police officers have also continued their service in various squads throughout NTT and continue to draw salary and other employment benefits within the Indonesian security forces. Over time, they have also become eligible for pensions and retirement benefits under the Indonesian civil service system. Apart from this formal sector, many East Timorese are subsistence farmers. Some still live in camps, surviving by working as sharecroppers on land owned by local West Timorese.

From a political point of view, these people were formerly associated with four political factions of the pro-autonomy campaign in 1999: the East Timor People's Front (Barisan Rakyat Timor Timur, or BRTT), the Forum for Unity, Democracy and Justice (Forum Persatuan, Demokrasi dan

<sup>7</sup> Their decision to transfer to the Indonesian civil service in Kupang protected their service benefits and salary.

Keadilan, or FPKD), Integration Fighters Force (Pasukan Pejuang Integrasi, or PPI) and the more recently formed Alliance of Sociopolitical Organisations Supporters of Autonomy (Aliansi Orsospol Pendukung Otonomi). Many have transformed themselves and continue to pursue their political ambitions through mainstream Indonesian political parties.

The East Timorese who have decided to remain in West Timor come from all 13 districts in Timor-Leste. They came in different waves by different modes of transportation. People from the eastern parts of East Timor, such as Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque, now reside in Kupang district, in the far west—the area to which they were conveyed by the Indonesian air and sea evacuation efforts. East Timorese from the central and border regions joined the land evacuation and currently reside in the border districts of Belu and Malaka.

Religiously, most East Timorese are Catholic, but there are about 500 Protestant East Timorese who built their own church in Silawan village along the international border; most are former members of the Balibo congregation. There are also about 150 East Timorese Muslims who have settled in Boneana on the western tip of Timor.

From a gender perspective, women have always been integral to East Timorese society in West Timor and I have noticed they are always keen to meet new people in their community. Whenever I approached an East Timorese household, I was always introduced to the mother and/or wife of that family; however, that was all. Following introductions, the women would disappear into the house and any further interaction with that family was limited mainly to the father and/or husband. There is an East Timorese expression '*feto rona deit, mane poder barak liu*', which means a 'woman should only listen because it is the man who has more power' (see Pakereng 2009: 8). This expression does not mean that women are powerless compared with men. Rather, it refers to the different gender roles and authority in dealing with outsiders or guests. And, indeed, women were only occasionally present during my visits, and only then to serve me food and drink. Rarely was I able to engage them in conversation, and I tended to rely on the views and reflections of fathers and husbands, who readily voiced their opinions. As I dealt mostly with men, my research has a distinctively masculine cast and offers little in the way of women's perspectives. But I note that in spite of these cultural barriers, a few East Timorese women do have leadership roles in resettlement politics or negotiate access with their village counterparts.

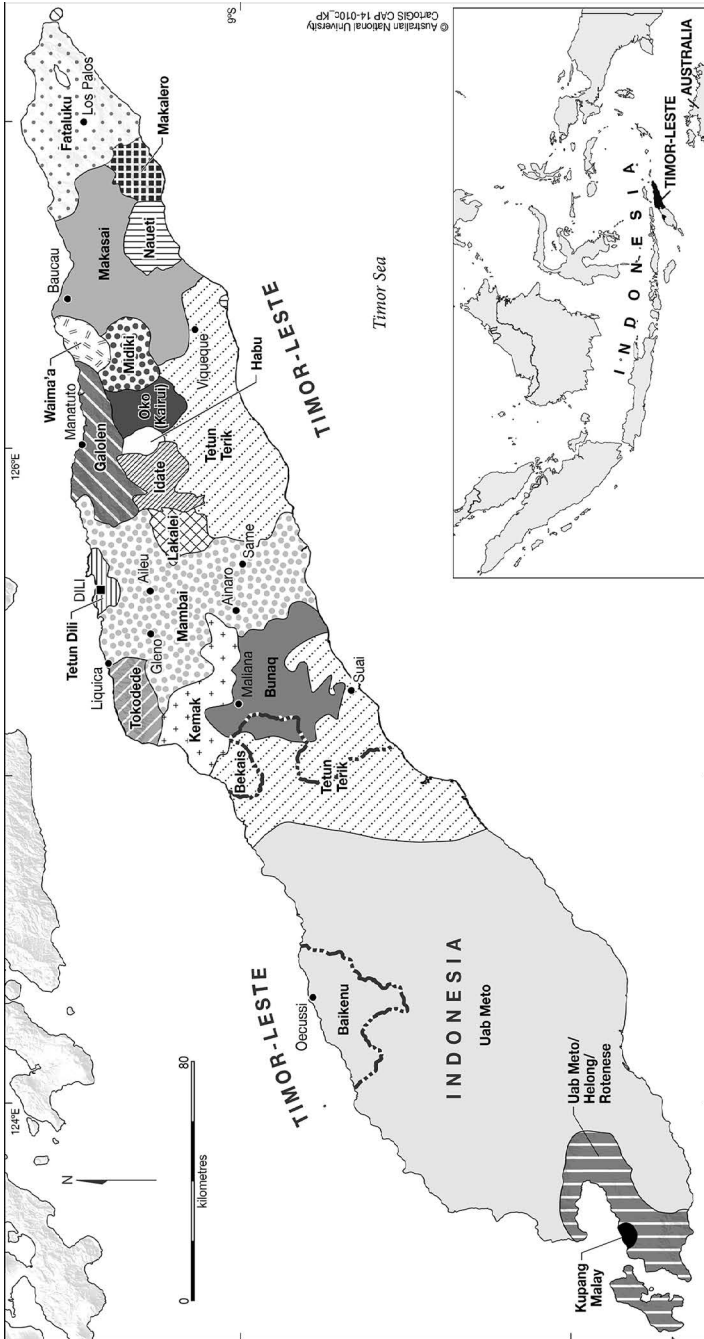
East Timorese are diverse in their political, geographical and religious backgrounds and, crucially, not all East Timorese belong to the same ethnic group. The *Language Atlas of the Pacific Area* (Wurm and Hattori 1981–83, cited in Fox 2003: 6), for instance, recognises 17 different languages in East Timor and at least double that number of dialects. These different ethnolinguistic groups are currently dispersed throughout West Timor. From their mode of evacuation, the current location of these different groups can be viewed as a reversal of the map of East Timor. Ironically, among the major ethnolinguistic groups from the eastern part of Timor-Leste, those from the far east choose to reside in Kupang district, while people from the west of Timor-Leste are concentrated in the border areas, in Belu and Malaka districts (see Chapter 2 for location details).

The final point to add to the complexity of East Timorese residing in West Timor is their numbers. Upon the arrival of the East Timorese in 1999, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 250,000 people had crossed into West Timor. As of 31 December 2002, the UNHCR officially declared the end of refugee status for those East Timorese and, by May 2003, it claimed 225,000 people had returned to Timor-Leste, with only 25,000 East Timorese remaining in West Timor. Later that year, for the purposes of the 2004 Indonesian general election, the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs conducted a registration census and found that 125,455 East Timorese remained in Indonesia, with 117,616 living in NTT. In 2005, the Indonesian Government announced the end of humanitarian and development assistance for East Timorese and the NTT conducted another census, which estimated that 104,436 East Timorese were resident in the province, 90 per cent of whom were located in West Timor. Drawing on additional data, I estimate there to be more than 88,000 East Timorese in West Timor: 18,000 in Kupang and about 60,000 in Belu and Malaka, with 10,000 in TTU and TTS (see Table 2.6).<sup>8</sup>

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8 I was fortunate that my fieldwork coincided with another registration census on East Timorese conducted by the most reliable census agency, Statistics Indonesia. This was funded by the Indonesian Ministry of Public Housing as part of its housing project for East Timorese. On completion of the census, I flew to Jakarta and visited the ministry to view the results. To my surprise, the project manager advised me that his office could not release the official results because they had no idea 'who are these East Timorese in West Timor'. He told me that everyone in West Timor seemed enthusiastic to be recognised as East Timorese because they knew registration often resulted in development assistance. On the other hand, there were some East Timorese groups who refused to be registered. The result of the census had still not been released by the conclusion of the housing project in 2014.





Map 1.1 Timorese ethnolinguistic groups

Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

## On displacement, belonging and citizenship

This book sets out to understand the way in which different East Timorese groups in West Timor have rebuilt their lives after the violent and destructive separation from their homeland. A handful of studies have looked at this issue, but the East Timorese—like many refugees and communities displaced by conflict—are often labelled as passive victims of the external macropolitical situation that forces them to flee their homeland in search of security and protection as well as humanitarian services (see, for example, IDMC 2010, 2015; ICG 2011; UN-Habitat 2014). This understanding of displacement illustrates the relations of power that operate within refugee movements and the politics surrounding humanitarian aid (Kunz 1973: 131; Shacknove 1985: 276; Zetter 1991: 51). What it lacks, however, are perspectives on the lived experiences of those refugees or displaced people.

Anthropological analysis can shed light on this issue, particularly if we follow Harrell-Bond and Voutira's (1992: 7) definition of refugees as:

people who have undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition', or in a state of 'liminality'.

A significant contribution of liminality to the understanding of displacement is the idea that transition is inherently a transformative process rather than a fixed event. Liminality 'occurs in the middle phase of the rites of passage which mark changes in an individual's or a group's social status and/or cultural or psychological state' (Turner 1974: 273).

This transformative process reminded me of Manuel Conceicao, a Kemak elder whom I met during my visit to Manumutin village in Belu district in 2013. As a former head of a village in Atsabe, in East Timor, Manuel had mobilised hundreds of his villagers to West Timor after violence broke out in Ermera following the referendum. While they were camped in the football stadium on the outskirts of Atambua, Manuel organised the return of most of his followers to their home village. At the same time, he approached Carlos Naibuti, an influential Kemak elder from the house of Bei Leto, an established Kemak group in Belu district whose members originally came from the village of Deribate, in Ermera subdistrict of Hatolia and who had migrated to West Timor in 1912. Recognising their

shared ancestral land in East Timor, Manuel performed a ritual exchange and gifted woven cloths (*tais*), goats and some 'money for betel-nut' (*uang sirih-pinang*) to Carlos. In return, Carlos offered his land in Manumutin village for Manuel and his followers to settle down. There are currently more than 70 Kemak households of Atsabe origin living on the site.

Despite the involuntary nature of his people's flight, Manuel's effort exemplifies the case that displaced people are not passive victims of violent conflict. Rather, they remain active social agents who continually try to create and recreate meaning about their displacement. Displacement, in other words, is not necessarily about loss of place, but is a transformative process of 'place-making, of regaining control and establishing oneself in the new life circumstances' (Korac 2009: 7). The transformative process of displacement and cross-border migration has also changed the way we understand citizenship. In this context, we must explore another form of transnational and multiple belonging in which newcomers are not only trying to maintain a relationship with their place of origin, but also actively working 'to protect themselves against discrimination, gain rights, or make contributions to the development of that state and the life of the people within it' (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001: 25). What is clear from these studies is that individuals or a group of people can belong to more than one nation-state and they can also move back and forth within and between nation-states.<sup>9</sup>

The way Manuel secured his land through cultural exchange highlights the significance of the notions of origin, ancestry and alliance in our understanding of East Timorese placemaking and citizenship practice in West Timor. East Timorese, like other Austronesian societies, use their ancestral land of origin to mark their identity and to claim belonging to a particular locality (Fox 2006c; McWilliam and Traube 2011). Here, locality is not about physical setting. Rather, I read it as a 'phenomenological quality' (Appadurai 1996: 178) that entails a series of interconnected places forming ancestral pathways. In this sense, when the East Timorese consider their land of exile as forming part of their ancestral pathways, their displacement is one that entails not only loss and separation, but also alliance and connection.

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9 Discussion of transnational citizenship among immigrant communities generally revolves around ideas of multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka 1995), cultural citizenship (Rosaldo and Flores 1997; Rosaldo 2003), diasporic citizenship (Laguerre 1998) and flexible citizenship (Ong 1999). For a discussion on the dynamics of citizenship in the modern nation-state, see Bloemraad (2006) and Reed-Danahay and Brettell (2008).

## ‘Moving back and forth’

This book follows people like Manuel to depict alternative versions of human experience that are vital for our understanding of placemaking, national identity and citizenship practice among formerly displaced people. This book is divided into three general sections to demonstrate different aspects of East Timorese displacement and citizenship practices.

Chapters 2 and 3 locate East Timorese displacement in their historical and macropolitical contexts. Here, I am concerned to illustrate the different ethnohistorical waves of East Timorese displacement to West Timor that occurred from early 1900 until 1999. These chapters also highlight the way external institutions such as the UNHCR and the Indonesian Government deal with the East Timorese and construct their identity as outsiders and/or an inferior type of citizen. The long history of East Timorese displacement and their position in the contemporary refugee/internally displaced person (IDP) geopolitical arena present a distinct perspective on the challenges of placemaking practices.

From the historical and external encounters, I shift the focus of my discussion to the internal dynamics of East Timorese placemaking practices. Chapters 4 and 5 represent the significant ideas of origin, ancestry and alliance among different East Timorese groups. These chapters compare and contrast the experience of East Timorese who share ancestral alliances with others in West Timor with those who do not. This exercise provides an argument that, while the identity of many refugees and displaced communities has undergone deterritorialisation, the discourse and actions of East Timorese in West Timor reveal locality to be a significant feature of belonging to a place.

Following cultural ideology, the next two chapters turn my focus to East Timorese political ideology. Here, I seek to highlight the significance of East Timorese narratives of suffering and sacrifice to maintain a relationship with their homeland as well as to foster their new identity in Indonesia. This includes the way they have transformed the political landscape of the region. I end with a reflection on East Timorese vernacular citizenship to describe the complex ways they perceive themselves in the Indonesian part of Timor.

When I embarked on this study, an East Timorese elder said of their continuing border crossings that ‘we are like ants, moving back and forth but we always remain as one’ (*ita ema nu’u dei nehe tau malu/nu’u nehek tau malu dalam lakotu*). The structure of this book, as a study of people on the move, is also one that moves from the past to the present, from the external to the internal, from outsiders to insiders and from the cultural to the political. I hope through these movements I have not only chronicled the journeys of East Timorese whose lives have been overturned by extraordinary events, but also recovered stories of their dignity and struggle to maintain connections with their homeland and move on with their lives in Indonesia.

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