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To separate is to sustain

It was approaching Christmas 2012 when I was introduced to Bonifacio Ximenes, a Makasae speaker from the Quelicai region of Baucau. Boni, as he is fondly called, was in his late 40s when I met him. A civilian worker in the Indonesian military sector, Boni is best known by his fellow East Timorese as a specialist on religious issues due to his position as a parish elder of Naibonat camp, about 30 km east of the NTT capital. We lunched together in Boni's dining room while I explained my interest in the way East Timorese view their presence in West Timor. Our conversation began with Boni's description of East Timorese around Naibonat and the location of their settlements. There are approximately 4,500 Makasae speakers remaining in West Timor and most of them live in Naibonat and its surrounding villages, such as Raknamo, Manusak, Tuapukan and Noelbaki. As we moved on to stories of the relationship with Indonesia that forced them to flee East Timor, Boni started to draw on his own experience:

I was 11 at the time Indonesia began to intensify its military operations into Baucau [in 1976]. I have nine siblings and I was the youngest [with] five sisters and four brothers. When the military advance started, all of my brothers fled into the jungle around the mountainous area of Venilale. My oldest brother, José, was our leader and he ordered the five of us to stick together. We regularly moved around the rough mountainous terrain just to get away from the Indonesian soldiers. In 1978 we were approaching the top of Larigutu Mountain and my oldest brother, José, signalled to us to take a rest.

Suddenly Boni fell silent. He bowed his head for a moment and when he looked at me, tears started to flow. ‘Sorry,’ I said gently. ‘No, I just remembered my brothers,’ Boni replied. After a while he moved on:

We sat at Larigutu together and I can still remember my oldest brother, José, saying, ‘We can’t go on like this. We are moving too slowly and running out of water and food. We are all going to die if we stay like this.’ As I was trying to understand what he was saying, he continued, ‘For the future of our family, we have to separate.’ He then asked my older brothers Joachim and Mario to continue their resistance with Fretilin and decided the three of us [remaining] should return and surrender. ‘We should do this to look after one another,’ he concluded. That was the last time I saw my two older brothers. Three of us surrendered and went back to our village in Quelicai.

I shared my sympathy with Boni and decided to put our conversation on hold. I asked him instead to walk me around his neighbourhood. Boni is one of thousands of East Timorese who decided to join the Indonesian military during the occupation. This decision often put them in a difficult situation, and for most of the time they have been widely recognised as Indonesian state collaborators. As collaborators, it was their duty to make sacrifices for Indonesia during the occupation. And, in the lead-up to and immediately after the referendum on autonomy in East Timor in August 1999, an estimated 6,000 members of the Indonesian military of East Timorese origin joined the evacuation and left for West Timor.

As members of the Indonesian military, they were directed into temporary shelters built around the army compound in Naibonat village. Most have remained there ever since. These personnel have also continued their service in various army squads throughout Indonesia and continued 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. The traumatic experiences of the East Timorese of violent colonisation, military occupation, resistance, family breakdown and separation have created numerous stories of sacrifice.

However, the existing literature has thus far emphasised narratives of sacrifice among East Timorese in East Timor. This chapter examines the way the notion of sacrifice is used to reclaim national belonging and entitlements. I focus my discussion on people such as Boni and his fellow East Timorese who were and remain involved with the Indonesian

military. By involvement, I am referring to active and retired soldiers, active civilian employees within the military and former members of militia groups who were displaced and remained in Indonesian West Timor after the referendum.

Their stories deserve attention because this is the group of people often labelled traitors by their fellow East Timorese in East Timor because of their allegiance with Indonesia during the occupation. These stories are also important because they exemplify another striking feature of belonging among East Timorese in West Timor, in addition to the cultural ideas of origin and alliance building discussed in previous chapters.

I argue that stories of sacrifice such as those of Boni and his fellows evoke life histories and shared memories that, in turn, entail their intention to maintain an intimate relationship with their homeland in East Timor and ensure a better future for their society. My understanding of sacrifice, which I draw from a combination of classic anthropological analysis of ritual and contemporary discussion of sacrificial discourse, is central to my analysis and I discuss this in the next section. I then go on to describe sacrifice in relation to national belonging, focusing on the ways in which retired Indonesian military officers of East Timorese origin make use of narratives of sacrifice in their process of resettlement in West Timor and reconciliation with Timor-Leste. In the final part of the chapter, I explore sacrifice from the perspective of former members of East Timorese militia groups and how they used this to negotiate their position in contemporary Indonesian state-building.

Rethinking the multiple understandings of sacrifice

The notion of sacrifice has been analysed by a number of anthropologists in their studies of religious practices (Tylor 1871; Robertson Smith 1889; Frazer 1890; Hubert and Mauss 1964; Evans-Pritchard 1965; Buordillon and Fortes 1980; de Heusch 1985) (for an overview, see Bloch 1992; Howell 1996; Milbank 1996; Mayblin 2014). While these studies have provided rich views on the meaning and role of sacrifice in a variety of contexts, they share a view that sacrifice is essentially a form of ritual with two prominent features. The first feature is the role and function of sacrifice, for instance, as a ritual exchange, such as a gift or payment of

debt to ancestors or deities. Sacrifice has also been explained in terms of its role in fostering unity among members of a community or in relation to a deity. Other interpretations describe sacrifice as a way of gaining power from deities or of control of the violence inflicted by deities (Howell 1996: 2). The second feature is the process of sacrificing. In this view, sacrifice is defined as a sequence of ritualised acts comprising formal presentation, consecration, invocation, immolation and, finally, eating or commensality (Hubert and Mauss 1964; Evans-Pritchard 1965).

Seeing sacrifice as a ritual should begin 'by listening to what the people say, by understanding what they think of their practices' (de Heusch 1985: 23). This effort has shed light on the way hunting practices in eastern Indonesia are understood (McKinnon 1986: 348). It has also explained the significance of blood sacrifice during agricultural rituals (Seran 1996: 259) and how to communicate and maintain relationships with ancestors (Renard-Clamagirand 1986: 200). Despite the various interpretations, a common idea I found useful in the context of East Timorese displacement and resettlement in West Timor is the way sacrifice is made to renew life or ensure future wellbeing (Howell 1996: 24). Understanding Boni's story of sacrifice, however, also means examining sacrifice beyond the realm of ritual. This 'other side of sacrifice', as Mayblin and Course (2014: 313) put it, has a diverse meaning that 'emerges beyond the altar and becomes embedded in the full gamut of social life'.

Sacrifice and national belonging

Moving beyond religious and ritual processes, studies of refugee communities have demonstrated the significant role of stories of sacrifice in refugees' efforts to maintain attachment to their country of origin. Among Burundian refugees, for example, this effort is elaborated in the form of 'mythico-history', in which 'the refugee camp had become both the spatial and the politico-symbolic site for imagining a moral and political community' (Malkki 1995: 16). By living in a refugee camp, the Burundians engaged in a purification process to maintain their distinctive identity as one 'people' and keep alive the relationship with their homeland. Malkki's analysis shows how national identity is often constructed through the narrative of suffering.

Stories of popular suffering and sacrifice are certainly not distinct to Burundians. Such a narrative is commonly used to foster national identity in post-conflict societies. In Indonesia, for instance, popular suffering has been associated with the struggle for independence, and national identity is often reinforced through the idiom of ‘the land where blood has spilled’ (*tanah tumpah darah*) (Robinson 2014: 13). East Timorese national identity has also been associated with and contested through people’s suffering and sacrifice during the resistance struggle (see Kent 2016). And, with their diverse and complex experiences during the occupation, sacrifice comes in many forms.

Among the Mambai people in Aileu district, for instance, sacrifice has been associated with unpaid wages, exemplified by former Falintil guerillas and civilians who risked their lives in the clandestine resistance and who gained few opportunities or benefits for themselves in the new nation-state (Traube 2007: 10–22). In Dili, Aitarak Laran people have also used their suffering during the resistance in their claim for the state-owned land on which they are residing (Stead 2015: 84). Stories of suffering have been used by other East Timorese groups to rebuild their lives after their violent and traumatic past as well as to inform the identity and cohesion of their group (for the Idate people, see Bovensiepen 2009; McWilliam and Traube 2011; for the Meto people, see Sakti 2013). Perhaps these multiple idioms of sacrifice are what led Benedict Anderson (2001: 236) to argue that during the occupation, ‘the Indonesian government was unable to incorporate East Timor imaginatively, in the broader, popular sense’. Yet, if the Indonesian Government was unable to imagine East Timor as part of its national community, how can we explain the situation of East Timorese like Boni and many others who left East Timor and decided to stay in West Timor following the 1999 referendum?

Separation as sacrifice

The day after our emotional conversation, I returned to Boni’s house. He was happy to continue his story and admitted that after the brothers’ separation at Larigutu, he tried unsuccessfully to understand the decision of his oldest brother to ‘split up and sacrifice [*berkorban*] for a better future’. Having returned to his home village, in the late 1980s, Boni decided to join the Indonesian military as a civilian worker and was appointed to the military post in the neighbouring district of Viqueque.

Here, he also maintained regular contact with his military colleagues in Baucau, from where they received information about their military operations. He wanted to make sure he was informed if or when an update on his two brothers came through.

Despite his efforts, no information was received about his two brothers when Falintil guerillas were caught by the Indonesian military. After almost 20 years of separation, early one morning in 1996, a messenger rushed into Boni's barracks in Viqueque. He advised Boni that the military had just been successful in taking down some of the Falintil combatants from Baucau. Among these resistance fighters, there was one who had been shot and was now in the army hospital in Baucau. The captive had not said a word except for the name of his home village. Because the wounded captive shared his home village, Boni joined the messenger and headed to the hospital in Baucau:

As a loyal combatant, he did not want to say a word. He looked at me suspiciously every time I came to visit him. He always said, 'You were sent by the Indonesians to dig information from me.' But I never gave up because when he acknowledged his home village, he must have known something about my two brothers. So I visited him in the hospital every day for four days before he started to respond. I remember my first question to him was about his family. He replied that he had nine siblings. It was common for East Timorese to have large families, so I asked about the location of his house. I did not expect his answer to be the house of my parents. I trembled. My hands were shaky and I had to grip the bedside as my heart was beating so fast. 'Is he really one of my brothers that I have missed for nearly 20 years?' I asked myself. Without waiting any further, I called out both names of my parents to him, which startled him. Then I mentioned the name of all of our brothers and finally I said: 'I am Boni, the youngest.' He did not believe what he had just heard. But then a gentle voice from behind me confirmed, 'Mario, he is Boni.' It was the voice of my oldest brother, José, who had just arrived. My brother Mario did not recognise me because he was 13 when we separated. But he certainly recognised our oldest brother, José, who approached the two of us and we hugged each another tightly. We all cried together. I did not realise that the nurses had been watching us from the beginning and they cried for us, too. Later, Mario advised us that our other brother, Joachim, had been killed [*gugur* = fallen] in a battle in Aitana close to Dili in 1986. He died a martyr for the family and the nation.

The reunion with Mario reunited Boni's family. But for Boni, it was also a reminder of José's last message in Larigutu. Because of Boni's employment in the Indonesian military, Mario was subsequently granted amnesty and released after his recovery—a happy fate other Falintil fighters did not share. Boni continued his work with the Indonesian military in Viqueque until late 1999. When the result of the referendum was announced, Boni decided to join the military evacuation and was again separated from his brothers and sisters. Yet, they knew their purpose remained the same: to secure the future of the family.

For Boni, national belonging is imagined as a passage of sacrifice that involves not only a strong narrative of separation, but also one of salvation. Boni's strong emphasis on separation and salvation represents a distinct feature of an imagined East Timorese community in West Timor. It is distinct because it barely recognises the Indonesian national struggle against the separatist movement. Nor does it support East Timor's national struggle and resistance against occupation. Sacrifice for the nation mediates these two opposing views and creates a consolidation of a sense of belonging that accommodates both Indonesia and East Timor. It does so by recognising the shared experience of many East Timorese who struggled to secure the future of their family and their society during the violent conflict.

Boni is not the only East Timorese who expressed his belonging in terms of separation and salvation. Between the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Indonesian military intensified its operations in East Timor, many people had to make strategic separations to keep their family alive. A former member of the Indonesian military admitted to me:

When Indonesia came in, some members of my family ran into the jungle and joined the resistance. But I decided to stay and join the Indonesian military. I did this so that I could save East Timorese when they were captured.

The decision of families to separate was widely unpopular among East Timorese, but knowing it could potentially sustain their future and that of their society, many East Timorese elected to split up.

The decision to separate is not a new response by East Timorese; it has been their effective survival strategy since colonial times. During the brutal military campaigns of the mid-nineteenth century, for example, a Portuguese officer reported that East Timorese gave them 'men for the war, but [also] as many or more to their allies' fighting against the

Portuguese (Gunn 1999: 168). This frustrated the Portuguese because the East Timorese from these opposing camps often engaged in combat, but, as the officer noted, their kinship relationships prevailed and 'when it comes to the point of fighting each other they fire into the air' (Gunn 1999: 168), thereby avoiding harming their kinsmen. A similar strategy was applied during the Japanese invasion in World War II. A former militiaman living in Atambua, near the border, told me his father:

was among the Kemak group who smuggled the Australian Special Forces out of East Timor in the Second World War. But my adopted father [godfather] was among the Kemak people who fought alongside the Japanese troops against the Australians. If they did not do that, I would not have been here to talk to you right now.

The notion of separation and salvation offers important insights into East Timorese ideas of national belonging. Separation serves as a link to integrate East Timorese with Indonesia, while salvation reconnects them with East Timor. In this sense, East Timorese national belonging is imagined not as an Indonesian integrationist ideology or the secessionist idea of a resistance group. Rather, it emerges through the shared historical experience of sacrifice and a common desire to sustain their society. With such experience and desire, East Timorese in West Timor remain deeply attached to their origin places in East Timor while moving on with their lives in Indonesia.

Service as sacrifice

We have seen the forward-looking nature of national belonging and what East Timorese such as Boni have highlighted to be essentially a life renewal process. This national identity is what Hobsbawm (1990: 8) defines as a:

dual phenomena, constructed especially from above, but which cannot be understood unless it is also analysed from below, that is, in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interest of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.

In this light, Radcliffe and Westwood (1996), in their discussion of nationalism in Latin America, argue that ordinary people actively remake the idea of the nation constructed from above. In the case of East Timorese in West Timor, this process is manifest in their distinct stories of sacrifice, which represent a sense of belonging that transcends state boundaries and confirms people's ongoing relatedness and continuity of life in East Timor.

The day after my meeting with Boni, I went to see Francisco Ximenes, who was also living in Naibonat camp. Boni addressed Francisco as *compadre* because Francisco is the godfather to one of Boni's children. For other East Timorese in Naibonat, Francisco is simply known as Sico. A former member of *Tropas*, the Portuguese colonial army, Sico's last assignment in East Timor was in the enclave of Oecussi. When Indonesia occupied East Timor and took over Oecussi, Sico and his fellow *Tropas* surrendered to the Indonesian army. 'My knowledge of the Indonesian language put me as the interpreter', said Sico as he recalled the event when the Indonesian Government, represented by governor El Tari of NTT, arrived in Pante Makasar to claim Oecussi in 1975. With their military experience, Sico and his fellow *Tropas* were incorporated into the Indonesian military and served in stations across East Timor during the occupation. 'Wherever I was appointed,' Sico said, 'my mission was always to serve the society.' And indeed, during his service in Manatuto, 'we built a church together with the community'. When he was removed to Ende on the neighbouring island of Flores, he helped build a mosque with the community there. After his service in Ende, Sico was appointed to serve with the Indonesian military in Baucau, his home district. During the period leading up to the 1999 referendum, Sico and other East Timorese in Baucau received news that the notorious Besi Merah Putih—a pro-Indonesia militia formed in Liquiçá district in early 1999—was planning to advance on Baucau.

Almost immediately, the commander of Baucau military station gathered Sico and other Indonesian military personnel for an emergency meeting. Sico said the Indonesian soldiers of East Timorese origin made it clear they did not want the militia in Baucau. He recalled saying in the meeting:

They [Besi Merah Putih] were formed to commit violence against the community and we won't let that happen in Baucau. If they claim that they want to defend and keep the community safe, then what are our three established groups, Railakan, Saka and Sera, here for?

Railakan, Saka and Sera were three established militia that supported the operations of Indonesian special forces in East Timor. Members of these groups were mostly former Falintil guerillas from Baucau who had surrendered and then joined the Indonesian military. Their representatives were in the meeting and all declared their rejection of Besi Merah Putih's presence in Baucau.

With no outside militia groups in Baucau, order was maintained in the lead-up to the referendum. But this situation changed dramatically after the result was announced. Indonesia started to evacuate all Indonesian military personnel and their families to West Timor. Observing the chaotic situation in Baucau, Sico came to realise that Baguia, his home subdistrict 60 km east of Baucau, had been overlooked in the evacuation effort not only because of its remote location and difficult terrain, but also because the road passed through one of the strongholds of Falintil guerillas led by Lere Anan Timor. Sico therefore made an unpopular decision to head back to Baguia. As he recalled:

In my mind, armed engagement was inevitable if the military station in Baguia was left behind. So, on the morning of 9 September, I borrowed a Mitsubishi T-120 pick-up truck, the official car of the head of the subdistrict, and headed to Baguia on my dangerous mission. But I had always maintained good relations with people from different political persuasions so when I arrived in Laga I went to the local church of Don Bosco parish and met my long-time spiritual friend, Father João de Deus Pires, SDB. I told Father João about my mission and asked for his support to advise Lere and his men to make way for us.

I arrived in Baguia late in the afternoon and everyone was surprised that I had been able to make it through. In quick order, we had a convoy of seven fully loaded Hino army trucks and I led this evacuation of all the military personnel and families out of Baguia. Prior to our departure, I briefed everyone that I had coordinated the departure and had Lere's agreement to make way for us as long as we kept our weapons locked. However, 'If the Falintil stop us', I emphasised, 'let me firstly get down and negotiate. But, you should remain on full alert because if I raise my right thumb, then it is an order for you to open fire on everyone that I am talking to.'

Without interruption, the Baguia convoy arrived safely at the evacuation point in Laga about 10 pm. While the people were camped along the seashore, waiting to be evacuated by warship, Sico continued his journey and joined his extended family in Baucau. The next day, they took part in a massive air evacuation by Indonesian airforce Hercules carriers, which took them to Kupang. In early 2000, Sico sent his parents and relatives back to East Timor. A year later, he sent his oldest daughter, a midwife, to serve in Dili. He continued his military career in Kupang and served as the officer in charge of a military post on Rote Island for two years before returning to Kupang, where he joined his fellow East Timorese

in Naibonat camp. Sico officially retired from the Indonesian army in 2004, but he decided to stay on in Naibonat camp and lead the East Timorese there.

In spite of his emphasis on serving the nation, what is striking about Sico's story is its similarity with Boni's. In their view, national belonging is not bounded by political ideology. Rather, it is understood as a shared desire to serve and create a better future for their community. This shared memory and intention to serve the nation are what keep Sico, Boni and many other East Timorese connected to East Timor although they are residing in West Timor. A Baucau elder in his 80s who once led the Railakan militia force explained the meaning of serving one's nation:

Those new militia groups believed that killing your own people, burning their houses and destroying their properties was their service to the nation? I would say they were all stupid! Serving your nation is about ensuring the future of your society. We joined Indonesia simply for that reason, and you can see the result: Baucau was relatively peaceful during the referendum and, although many of us decided to remain in West Timor, we always had good relationships with our brothers and sisters in East Timor. I have visited East Timor 10 times since 1999 and enjoyed every single trip.

Viewing the nation as a future project embraces the experiences of other East Timorese striving to maintain peace and sustainability amid the political division and physical devastation of newly independent Timor-Leste. Although the 'sacrifice' of East Timorese resettled in West Timor tends to be overlooked in the mainstream historical narratives, this shared aspiration has been effective in explaining, in so many cases, why many East Timorese have reconciled their relationship with Timor-Leste while retaining their presence in West Timor.

Rewritten history of sacrifice

Idioms of sacrifice among East Timorese in West Timor can undoubtedly account for the significance of maintaining belonging to East Timor as well as Indonesia. According to Anderson (1983: 15–16), members of a nation cannot possibly meet and know every other member, but they are imagined through a sense of sharing and belonging to a common national community. This imagined community is constructed through print culture, including newspapers, popular novels and the imposition

of a national language, among other things. The result is that ‘the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ Anderson (1983: 15–16). Indonesia recognises the significance of shared sacrifice in the formation of national belonging. Sacrifice in the Indonesian nationalist ideology derives from the Arabic term *watan*, which is translated in terms of the Indonesian idiom ‘the land where blood has spilled’ (*tanah tumpah darah*), which ‘encodes the notion of a common unity through connections to the soil, and spilled blood connotes shared sacrifice’ (Robinson 2014: 13). Here, Indonesian nationalists seek to cultivate Indonesia’s struggle for independence to reinforce national unity.

This idea was taken further by Suharto’s New Order regime during its attempts to incorporate East Timor within Indonesia. In 1992, the Directorate General of High School Education in the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Education published a senior secondary school textbook entitled *The History of the East Timorese Struggle (Sejarah Perjuangan Rakyat Timor Timor)*. The textbook claims the East Timorese spirit to free themselves from colonialists was initiated in 1959 in Viqueque and is evident in plans to carry out a rebellion at the end of that year. Support for the plan was strong and spread to Aileu, Same, Ermera, Baucau and other areas. Meetings were held to plan the rebellion. These meetings resolved that the rebellion would be initiated on 31 December 1959. To position East Timorese in the Indonesian nationalist ideology, the book describes how:

the leaders and the people who were involved in the rebellion had to drape red and white ribbons [the colours of the Indonesian flag] around their necks and wear red and white insignia.

This is a significant point because it indicates that, since 1959, some East Timorese have been willing to ‘integrate’ with Indonesia, essentially legitimising the subsequent military occupation. To reconcile these events, the book ends on a theme of sacrifice by outlining the fate of the leaders of the rebellion, who were eventually ‘sent into off-shore prison exile in Angola, then a Portuguese colony in Africa’.¹

Three elements of Indonesian nationalist ideology are embedded in this account of the East Timorese rebellion in Viqueque: the notion of struggle against colonisation, the use of the Indonesian nationalist symbols of ‘Red and White’ and the sacrifice of East Timorese rebels. Through this

1 For a comparative perspective, see Atkinson (2003).

account, the New Order regime identified the 1959 Viqueque rebellion as an early attempt by the East Timorese to integrate with Indonesia (Chamberlain 2007: 55; Gunter 2007: 35). Indeed, many East Timorese Naueti speakers from Viqueque (particularly Uato Lari and Uato Carbao subdistricts), now resettled in West Timor, returned to this version of ‘history’ when I asked them about their decision to remain in Indonesia.

But rather than emphasising the fictional Indonesian narrative of rebellion supporter Antonio Metan’s heroic effort to raise the red and white flag in Uato Lari, these other accounts put greater stress on the loss of loved ones. For example, one elder from Uato Carbao told me: ‘Our family was killed by the Portuguese in 1959 although they had nothing to do with the rebellion.’ This suggests that some East Timorese, particularly from Uato Lari and Uato Carbao, conceive of their belonging to Indonesia in different terms. Their image of ‘one people’ is not based on the utilisation of Indonesian nationalist symbols from the 1959 revolt. Rather, it is shaped by the sacrifice of their families during Portuguese colonisation—a sacrifice they were forced to make again during the 1975 political upheaval when their family members who supported the politics of integration were killed by Fretilin supporters.

When the Indonesian military assumed control over most of East Timor in 1978, many East Timorese from Uato Lari and Uato Carbao claimed the reward of their sacrifice by assuming social, political and economic privileges from the Indonesian administration. The first head of the subdistrict (*camat*) of Uato Lari appointed by the Indonesian Government, for instance, was the son of Antonio Metan (Gunter 2007: 36). In 1999, these people tried to maintain their political alignment with Indonesia and left their homeland. Currently, there are about 1,500 Naueti speakers residing in West Timor.

Displacement and resettlement in West Timor have amplified their ideology of shared sacrifice, which includes their brothers and sisters still living in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, they view themselves as continuing to make sacrifices because they are living outside the land of their ancestors. For some, this sacrifice has been compensated for by the continuation of their careers in the Indonesian military or as civil servants, which will eventually entitle them to a government pension. For others, however, it seems a return to be reunited with their ancestors in Timor-Leste will be the ultimate reward.

Silence as sacrifice

Among East Timorese such as Boni, Sico and other active and retired army personnel, it is common to hear narratives of sacrifice that are directed towards reconciliation and future aspirations. However, in East Timor's long and complex military occupation and resistance struggle, diverse narratives of sacrifice are inevitably at work. For some East Timorese, particularly former militiamen, sacrifice is not about reconciliation, but about reconstruction of their identity. For them, sacrifice is not defined by whether people remain in West Timor or return to Timor-Leste. It is, rather, about maintaining silence in post-referendum and politically reformed Indonesia. Silence is a crucial marker of identity among the East Timorese. Culturally, silence is associated with the sacred (*lulik*) and is therefore understood as a source of potency (Therik 2004; Bovensiepen 2014: 121). In the political realm, this source of potency translates as an act of denial or partial recognition of the violence and human rights violations in East Timor during the occupation and, in particular, during and after the 1999 referendum.

East Timorese militia groups allegedly involved in such crimes choose to exclude the Indonesian military as the sponsor of their atrocities. This silence is considered a sacrifice because the East Timorese position themselves as a substitute for the Indonesian military. This view creates the conditions for what Anderson (1983: 44) has referred to as 'purity through fatality', where the national imagination is constructed through participation in collective sacrifice, regardless of its consequences.

Some former militiamen told me they are purely Indonesian because 'although we were not part of the Indonesian struggle to gain independence, we were part of the struggle to defend that independence by defending Indonesia's interest'. Joining pro-Indonesia militia was one such sacrifice. More importantly, it was in the aftermath of militia activity—involving killings and destruction in East Timor—that the sacrifice of the former militiamen was put to the test. By remaining silent about their actions during and after the referendum, these former pro-Indonesia militiamen claim they are continuing to defend Indonesia's national interest. Silence here has a sacrificial value because it is performed for a national cause. And, in so doing, the hope is to confirm the militiamen's imagined belonging within the Indonesian nation-state.

The rhetoric and reciprocity of sacrifice

Staying silent has transformed former militiamen into loyal nationalists, but such a transformation can only be maintained as long as there is some compensation for their suffering. When compensation fails, the flipside of silence emerges: public rhetoric. This is clearly exemplified by former members of the Mahidi (*Mati Hidup dengan Indonesia*), a militia group formed in Ainaro subdistrict in Cassa, currently living in Malaka district near the southern border of Cova Lima. In late 2011, these predominantly Bunaq speakers broke their long silence by drafting an open letter to more than 30 relevant parties, including the Pope, the presidents of Indonesia and Timor-Leste, the UN Secretary-General and the President of the United States.² The 50-page document began with the public rhetoric of their version of history. Unlike the Naueti speakers of Viqueque, however, the Bunaq speakers' version omitted the 1959 rebellion and started instead with the political situation in 1975.

Another significant difference was the language they used to describe events. Rather than seeing Indonesia's action in East Timor as integration, it was framed as invasion and annexation—idioms considered taboo by supporters of Indonesia. The notion of sacrifice was mentioned frequently in relation to repressive military operations, the exclusion of East Timorese and appointment of people from other parts of Indonesia to lead military and government departments, as well as control of economic resources by the military. The narrative moved on to describe the 1999 referendum that led these people to become displaced to West Timor. Here, the language of sacrifice was expressed through the sentiment of exclusion from humanitarian and development assistance, disputes with local communities and the longing to reunite with their families in East Timor.

The public rhetoric contained in the letter took ideas of sacrifice in a different direction from previous narratives. Sacrifice, according to the former Mahidi group, was invested with the idea of reciprocity. Indeed, as explained to me by one of the main authors of the letter, Indonesia had broken its promise to secure the lives of former Mahidi militia in West

2 One of the main authors of the letter told me: 'If God had a residential address, He would certainly be included in the list of recipients.'

Timor. ‘They promised to give us houses and secure our livelihoods, but did otherwise by letting us stay in camps and working on local people’s land,’ he stated.

Former members of the Mahidi group living in West Timor spoke with a united voice in telling their narrative of sacrifice and articulating their expectation that the Indonesian Government would reward them. And they were not alone in this view. Other former members of militia groups have expressed the view that ‘the Indonesian military encouraged us to love the nation [*cinta tanah air*],³ but how can we maintain our love for this nation when there is no land [for us] and no water to drink?’ This clearly suggests the narrative of sacrifice is about not just commemoration, but also remuneration. This cultural idea of reciprocity offers a lens through which to understand the exchange value of sacrifice. This different understanding of sacrifice articulated by the Mahidi group was a consequence of growing feelings of abandonment felt by some East Timorese in response to what they perceived as their unreciprocated patriotic service to Indonesia.

Songs of sacrifice

Having concentrated my fieldwork around the border area, in May 2013, I was invited by Boni and Sico to return to Naibonat camp and observe a gathering between the provincial army commander (*Komandan Korem 161 Wirasakti*) and active and retired army personnel of East Timorese origin. As an active member of the Indonesian army, Boni was assigned to liaise with retired East Timorese personnel. Sico, as an elder of Naibonat camp, was appointed to host the event. The collaboration of Boni and Sico resulted in a novel gathering in the camp that day. Along the narrow dirt track to the camp, a line of woven palm leaves tied to the wooden fence provided a decorative entrance. It was a decoration similar to that used in East Timorese marriage exchange rituals when the wife-takers are welcomed by the bridal affinal group.

A shower of rain the previous day had freshened the appearance of the camp. Around the chapel, where the event was going to take place, a group of East Timorese women dressed in their finest pink *kebaya* lined up with

3 In Indonesian, ‘homeland’ is expressed as the composite phrase *tanah + air*, which literally means ‘land and water’.

their small drums around their arms, set to perform the *Likurai* dance. About 10 am, the brigadier general arrived and the women welcomed him with their drums, singing:

Welcome to the camp, Provincial Military Commander
We usher you with joy and pride
You come to serve the nation
We accept you with pure heart
We have sacrificed our body and soul
For the Red and White
We have sacrificed our body and soul
For the Red and White

As they ushered him to the chapel, the women repeated the chorus:

We have sacrificed our body and soul
For the Red and White
We have sacrificed our body and soul
For the Red and White.



Plate 6.1 East Timorese women in Naibonat camp prepare to usher the provincial military commander into the chapel

Source: Andrey Damaledo.



Plate 6.2 Boni (wearing tie) and his big family in Naibonat, Kupang district
Source: Bonifacio Ximenes.

The so-called social communication event was attended by hundreds of active and retired soldiers of East Timorese origin, so it was not surprising the theme of sacrifice immediately resonated. The factor of occupation—working within the Indonesian army—provided a framework that enabled East Timorese to recall their memories of sacrifice. Another factor was age. Narratives of sacrifice are popular among the older generation of East Timorese because they have experienced different struggles during the different periods of colonisation and occupation. But what surprised me was the statement Sico made when given a chance to speak. He stood and declared that the East Timorese sacrifice was not yet over. After receiving a round of applause from the audience, he continued, stating that the East Timorese presence in West Timor demonstrated that their continued sacrifice for the nation and recent history should not be forgotten by Indonesia. In other words, Sico implied that the presence of East Timorese in West Timor should be understood as a living historical legacy for Indonesia.

Here the political nature of East Timorese sacrifice is considered in material form. The Indonesian national memory of East Timor has been commemorated most notably at the Seroja Cemetery—a specific monument—which remembers the soldiers who fell during the invasion and occupation.⁴ For many East Timorese, Seroja commemorates the

4 Seroja Cemetery is in Atambua, West Timor, near the current airport.

past. Their future lies in their continuing presence in West Timor and their memorial materialises not in built form, but in the existentiality of collective individuals. As Sico explained to me after the event: ‘We hope our sacrifices presented a meaningful lesson for Indonesia to deal with its citizens.’

Sico was referring to the state’s violent responses to issues of separation and disintegration in contemporary Indonesia. On other occasions, many East Timorese often commented, ‘We are here, look at us’, in response to continued oppression of citizens in other parts of Indonesia. From this perspective, the presence of East Timorese in West Timor constitutes a living historical monument—one that symbolically displays their national belonging in two interrelated ways. First, as a reminder that military occupation in East Timor forced many people to be separated from their families and homeland. Second, and introspectively, a lesson that repressive military operations are not effective in bringing peace to society.

Conclusion

The discussion thus far suggests there are ‘multiple sides of sacrifice’ (Lambek 2014: 432) among East Timorese in West Timor. But whether emphasising separation, service, silence, reciprocity or commemoration, these ideas share a common underlying inspiration—namely, the sustainability of East Timorese society. For this reason, let me draw three points by way of a conclusion. First and foremost are the related East Timorese concepts of a cultural code of reciprocity and public rhetoric of sacrifice. It is clear that sacrifice is understood as an exchange process and, therefore, when it is performed for a national cause, it must be rewarded. This understanding mirrors the policy of compensation and reward that has been implemented in Timor-Leste towards former resistance fighters (veterans).⁵ In Indonesia, these concepts should not be underestimated, in part, because they are in line with contemporary Indonesian nationalist ideas of defending the nation (*Bela Negara*). If an imagined Indonesia is based on a simplistic idea of defending the nation regardless, it would seem that East Timorese rhetoric of sacrifice remains influential and their claims for compensation remain valid for as long as this takes.

5 For further discussion of this compensation policy in Timor-Leste, see Wallis (2013: 143).

The second point is related to the idea of reconciliation. Sacrifice among East Timorese in West Timor is reconciliatory in nature, but the idea of reconciliation is not about forgiving and forgetting. It is about forgiving and learning to make sure that future generations will not suffer similar consequences. This learning process applies to both Indonesia and Timor-Leste. For Indonesia, the existence of East Timorese in West Timor demonstrates that repressive military responses towards issues of secession across Indonesia will not be effective in bringing about a peaceful and just society. Instead, such repressive responses lead to a breakdown in family relationships and cause long-term suffering for the whole society. For Timor-Leste, their common enemy—the so-called pro-autonomy East Timorese—now remain in West Timor. Although the possibility of return still exists, most have decided to remain in West Timor and consider their separation from their homeland as a kind of sacrifice. In so doing, they hope people in Timor-Leste are no longer focused on the past. Rather, they should be united towards the future, which means joining efforts to combat their new common enemies: poverty and inequality.

The final point I want to make is that by asserting their sacrifice, East Timorese in West Timor mediate the divisive political ideologies and obscure state boundaries by reintegrating all East Timorese into an imagined shared future project.⁶ The success of such a project is yet to be determined, but evidence so far suggests it is proceeding along the right path. Many East Timorese in Timor-Leste have sent their children to be looked after by their own parents (the children's grandparents) who now live in West Timor. With the role of carer comes the transmission of memories. But, as I have pointed out, the violent and dark past is now being internalised by the grandparents. In its place they have discovered a new narrative—one that is still based on sacrifice but that will bring a better future for all East Timorese regardless of their political allegiance.

For East Timorese, a shared, better future is not possible without reproduction. 'We are separated but we need to continue to reproduce so there will be East Timorese everywhere' is a common answer I received whenever querying the large number of children in East Timorese families. A baby boom is common in many post-conflict societies; however, the emphasis on future East Timorese population expansion also points to a process of intergenerational memory transmission. The retired soldiers

6 For a comparative perspective, see Anderson (1999).

and older generation of East Timorese in West Timor seem to have isolated their dark and violent past within themselves and now transmit a shared desire for reconciliation and a brighter future to the younger generation. As many East Timorese elders said to me:

We [the old generation] were ‘conflict people’ and lived in the past. The future is in our children. They had nothing to do with the conflict and they are the future of all East Timorese.

This idea of reproduction helps to explain why East Timorese representatives from both sides of the border are present at every life-cycle ritual and celebration. In mid-September 2013, Boni invited me to his daughter’s wedding. He insisted I come because he wanted to present me with something special. As someone born and raised almost entirely in West Timor, I had attended many wedding parties, but that of Boni’s daughter was one of the largest in terms of people, food and general excitement. These elements, however, were not what Boni wanted me to witness. Rather, he wanted me to understand that this wedding was not merely a life-cycle celebration; it was another fruit of the stories of sacrifice and separation he had recounted to me almost a year before. And nobody could understand his feelings better than his older brother José, who came from Baucau to attend the wedding.

Throughout the wedding ceremony and celebration, Boni shared his seat with his older brother and the tears running down Boni’s face during the family photo session spoke of their shared sacrifice and aspirations. In early 2018, Boni contacted me about his youngest daughter’s university graduation. Big brother José came again from Baucau and joined Boni to witness his daughter walking to the stage, marking the emergence of a highly educated generation within their family. What is clear from Boni, and by extension many East Timorese who have opted to live in West Timor, is that their decision to join Indonesia was one made not just to save themselves, but also to save their families and, beyond that, the future of East Timorese society.



Plate 6.3 Francisco (Sico) Ximenes (in brown *batik* shirt) attends Boni's daughter's graduation party

Source: Bonifacio Ximenes.



Plate 6.4 Boni celebrates his daughter's graduation

Source: Bonifacio Ximenes.

This text is taken from *Divided Loyalties: Displacement, belonging and citizenship among East Timorese in West Timor*, by Andrey Damaledo, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.