

8

Divided loyalties

In this book, I have explored how displacement, belonging and citizenship are perceived and articulated among East Timorese who decided to remain in Indonesian West Timor after the 1999 referendum. East Timorese who supported Indonesia might have lost the referendum, but, as I have argued, their cultural identity as East Timorese was something they never relinquished. These East Timorese might have seen Indonesia as their destination when they first left East Timor following the referendum, but they have managed to retain an abiding sense of national belonging and cultural attachment to East Timor. This is a significant feature of their lives that has made East Timorese society one of more than just winners and losers. For those who fled East Timor after the defeated vote on autonomy, their collective struggle, sacrifice, inspiration and aspirations illustrate their refusal to be easily defined as refugees/IDPs, ex-refugees or new citizens. This means that an understanding of East Timorese displacement, belonging and citizenship in Indonesia must be placed in the context of their continuing attempts to negotiate diversity, navigate complexity and live with dignity.

The connections between displacement, belonging, citizenship and living with dignity that are drawn by East Timorese living in West Timor indicate the emergence of a 'trans-Timor citizenship' phenomenon. This multiple citizenship phenomenon is not new. Scholars have argued that the dynamics of global capital flows, violent conflict and migration have changed the way we understand citizenship. Ong (2006: 15), for example, has argued that 'contemporary flows of capital and of migrants have interacted with sovereignty and rights discourses in complex ways to

disentangle citizenship claims once knotted together in a single territorial mass'. It has also been widely documented that in this new perspective of multiple belongings, newcomers are engaging in 'transborder citizenship' to maintain relationships with their place of origin. Simultaneously, they also work '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 make the notion of trans-Timor citizenship different are the diverse and complex ways in which East Timorese continue to negotiate their lives across national boundaries. In the preceding chapters, I have sought to offer insights into the diverse ways these attachments and connections are realised and reinvigorated. But to illustrate the point another way, let me share some other accounts of my encounters with East Timorese in Belu and Kupang.

Mateus Guedes, a former member of the Aitarak militia group, assisted me in gathering information about East Timorese in Belu over a period of nearly 12 months. In September 2013, I arrived at Mateus's shelter in the temporary settlement of Tenu Bot to bid him farewell. He had just finished his afternoon task of drawing water from the well across the street. The sun had set and we were busy discussing local politics. As this would be our final meeting, I offered to buy him dinner. Happily, Mateus agreed and we rode a motorbike to the Beringin, a restaurant that served spicy Padang cuisine, near the main mosque in Belu.

We collected our food, returned to his shelter and sat around a small table. As we were about to enjoy our meal, I saw Mateus give one portion of the fried chicken to his wife, who took it outside. As far as I know, there was nobody waiting outside. A minute later, his wife returned and Mateus immediately said, '*Avo sira, maun alin sira, ama inan sira, mai ita ha hotu*'.¹ 'Is that some kind of a Tetun dining invocation?' I asked him. 'No,' he answered. 'It is just my expression to acknowledge and invite all of the family in East Timor to join in our dinner.' The fried chicken his wife took outside constituted an offering to his family and ancestors in East Timor. The fried chicken was put on a stone at the front corner of his shelter, orientated towards East Timor.

1 Meaning 'all grandparents, brothers and sisters, mother and father [in Timor-Leste], let us share this meal together'.

Mateus explained that they always remembered their families and ancestors in East Timor whenever they enjoyed a special meal: ‘They are in the East and we are here in the West, but we are still united.’ As we were finishing our meal, Mateus looked at me and said:

Andrey, my friend [*kolega*], when Indonesia decided to let East Timor go, I joined Aitarak to defend Indonesia, but if one day, Indonesia has another offer to let West Timor go, then, I want you to know that I will fight to remain in Timor because I am a Timorese.²

Mateus’s compelling and profound sentiment clearly suggests there are East Timorese who perceive West Timor to be the vehicle for the rediscovery of their Timorese identity. For them, locality matters and therefore their displacement and resettlement are more than simply physical movement or relocation; they are part of their attempt to maintain a cosmological unity. By remaining in West Timor, Mateus negated the political division of East and West Timor by assuming a unified cosmic integration of Loro Monu (the land of the setting sun) and Loro Sa’e (the land of the rising sun).

Mateus is not alone in emphasising the significance of this dual classification to an East Timorese sense of belonging. In my last meeting with East Timorese groups in Kupang district, they also expressed support for this east and west cosmic unity. In their words: ‘If this [West Timor] was not Loro Monu, we would have been left hungry and would have died.’ In another mythologised formulation, an elder from Baucau recalled:

When we arrived here, this was a barren land full of thornbush. But when the first seeds of corn were planted, more than 20 springs emerged, and they have never dried up. This land recognised us, this land is Loro Monu.

2 In October 2017, I returned to Atambua only to find that Mateus had moved out of Tenu Bot. He is now settled permanently in his own house in the neighbouring village of Kuneru. He took his offering stone with him and put it at the corner of his new house, orientated towards Timor-Leste, as always.



Plate 8.1 The new generation of East Timorese casting their vote during the 2013 election for NTT governor

Source: Andrey Damaledo.

While their decision to support Indonesia resulted in them leaving East Timor, the maintenance of their sense of cultural unity with their homeland is what connects them to their East Timorese origins. This is why the proposal to relocate all East Timorese to an island beyond Timor on their arrival in West Timor in late 1999 was highly unpopular and overwhelmingly rejected before it was even discussed. This also explains why many East Timorese who relocated beyond the island of Timor subsequently resettled in West Timor. In other words, by remaining in West Timor, East Timorese are politically displaced but remain culturally and—in a real sense—physically connected.

The significance of the cosmological orientation is inextricably linked to complex ideas about land (*raiz*). Land has always been the primary mode of attachment to place. But it is also an enduring metaphor for living. I have often heard East Timorese proclaim Indonesia as their 'land of life'. Most were East Timorese who worked in the Indonesian public sector during the occupation and were able to maintain their positions in various Indonesian government and public sector agencies. Yet they also emphasise East Timor as their land of origin. In cultural terms, this

'land of life' (*tanah kehidupan*) is often symbolically referred to as their 'cultivated house' (*rumah kebun*). In practice, the cultivated house should always pay tribute to the 'sacred ancestral house' (*rumah leluhur*)—the land of origin. With continuing salary and welfare benefits from Indonesia, many public servants of East Timorese origin have sent money and their children to be educated in Timor-Leste. In turn, they have also looked after East Timorese who are studying and travelling in Indonesia.

In addition to land, another East Timorese metaphor of belonging is the idea of expansion from a central origin. Some East Timorese groups develop this idea by forming new alliances with West Timorese through symbolic and/or physical marriage. Others have done this by reconstructing their new 'sacred house' (*uma lulik*). These new alliances and sacred houses are not simply representations of East Timor in Indonesia. They are subsidiary expressions of the ancestral origin that connects East Timorese who do not want to return to Timor-Leste with their hosts in West Timor and with their relatives in their homeland in Timor-Leste. In this sense, these people use Indonesian West Timor as a means of repositioning themselves to keep the relationship with their ancestral land and relatives in Timor-Leste alive and in balance.

While East Timorese maintain their Indonesian identity cards (Kartu Tanda Penduduk, or KTP) and have actively and successfully participated in three national elections and numerous local elections, they have done so with an understanding that East Timorese in West Timor are not one but many. And in this sense, West Timor is not just another place to seek refuge; it is a culturally and physically appropriate place to build a new life because it is always connected to the land of their ancestors in East Timor. Perhaps, as my friend Mateus has indicated, they are not really Indonesian citizens but trans-Timor citizens in Indonesia.

It is legitimate at this point to ask how these complex ideas of belonging and citizenship might play into the future shape of East Timorese society in relation to both Indonesia and Timor-Leste. To understand what the future could look like for the East Timorese in West Timor, we must first understand a major factor informing continuity and change within East Timorese communities—namely, demography. I have outlined the complexity of demographic trends in Chapter 1, but here I shall concentrate on the changing significance of intergenerational family composition. This is a significant phenomenon because, nearly two decades since the major exodus from East Timor, most East Timorese who joined the Indonesian

military, police force and/or public administration in the early occupation period (the late 1970s) have now retired. The younger generation, who were recruited into the Indonesian public sector in the 1980s, are now entering their early 50s. As the retirement age in the Indonesian public sector is 58, this group will soon be joining their predecessors. This situation also applies to other East Timorese who were recruited by the Indonesian military to form vigilante groups such as Hansip, Kamra and Wanra. A slightly younger group, perhaps, exists among those East Timorese who were born during the period of Portuguese decolonisation. These people were in their mid to late 20s when the Indonesian special forces recruited them to form the Garda Paksi youth group, which was transformed into militia groups in 1999. Former members of this group in West Timor are now aged in their mid to late 40s. Intergenerational changes show that the future of East Timorese in West Timor will be largely dependent on the new generation. This generation has had little to do with the politics of decolonisation and/or occupation. And, as the older generation is retiring, it is likely East Timorese integrationist political ideology will slowly but surely fade away. The lack of enthusiasm and support for this goal by the Indonesian Government itself will ensure this occurs.

There are three major characteristics of this new generation. First, they were born during the Indonesian rule of East Timor, but grew up in Indonesian West Timor. Second, regardless of the difficulties faced in camps and resettlement sites, this generation grew up in a time when Indonesia itself had entered a period of radical political reform and democratisation. This is a generation that has grown up with an understanding that newly reformed Indonesia recognises Timor-Leste as an independent and sovereign state. Third, this generation has been educated in the Indonesian system and speaks the Indonesian language fluently. These features suggest the future of East Timorese in West Timor is likely to take on new sociopolitical forms and agendas.



Plate 8.2 Pro-autonomy East Timorese in Raknamo, Kupang district, performing a traditional dance, wearing the scarf of Timor-Leste

Source: Father Jefri Bonlay.



Plate 8.3 The new generation of East Timorese in Naibonat camp (one is wearing a Fretilin t-shirt) have accommodated symbols of resistance in their identity

Source: Andrey Damaledo.

The emerging trend among those who have finished their university education is to move to Timor-Leste for work, usually drawing on extended family connections. This indicates that a sense of unity among East Timorese on both sides of the border will continue to grow while sensitivities around the international border that separates them will decline. The future is likely to see a marked improvement in access and movement across the border. Over time, this may grow into a shared national consciousness that even imagines Timorese territorial reunification. So far, in terms of national security, this is seen as a potential threat, given Indonesia's traumatic history of disintegration and concerns about the illegal movement of people and criminal activity such as fuel smuggling (which is driven by marked price differentials between the two countries). In response, more military posts have been built along the border,³ although this would not be effective enough on its own to stop reunification given the strong relations between East Timorese in West Timor and those in Timor-Leste.

For this reason, I would argue that the East Timorese desire for a unifying cultural identity should be seen as a potential opportunity—an opportunity for greater reconciliation as people continue to negotiate their lives and belonging in both countries.⁴ For those who have been able to make peace with their past, increased mobility could be seen as their ultimate return. Between 2011 and 2017, almost 200 East Timorese gave up their Indonesian citizenship and returned permanently to Timor-Leste.⁵ For many others who have been able to come to terms with their displacement and resettlement in West Timor, visits to Timor-Leste are recognised as a return to the homeland. Increased reconciliation and cross-border contact means more social and economic networks. In recent years, growth in the number of transport businesses jointly initiated by East Timorese on both sides of the border clearly indicates that East Timorese are becoming more entangled in a surprisingly mutual way. And this mutual collaboration is what will inform and contribute to improved bilateral relations between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The Indonesian language will also play a pivotal role in the future of island-wide interaction.

3 I note that the expansion of military posts is occurring in other parts of Indonesia, too. An increase in newly recruited soldiers in recent years played a role in this expansion.

4 Many East Timorese told me that they prefer their traditional *Nabe Biti Bo'ot*, or grass-root reconciliation (and justice) process compared to the formal elite-level meetings. See Babo-Soares (2004) for a discussion of the *Nabe Biti Bo'ot* process.

5 See Thu (2015) for a discussion of the return of the Waima'a people in Baucau village of Caicua.

This leads to my second point about the potential mutual partnership. Officially, a bilateral partnership between Indonesia and Timor-Leste was initiated in July 2002 through the signing of a joint communiqué on diplomatic relations and the establishment of a joint commission for bilateral cooperation. This partnership was taken further in late 2004 with the initiation of the joint Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF), which provided a basis for both countries' further cooperation in the name of a 'forward looking, inclusive and non-discriminatory' framework (CTF 2008: 288). This was recognised by president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in his address to the Timor-Leste parliament in early April 2005: 'In the heart of the Indonesian people, the people of Timor-Leste have always been our close relatives. We are two nations and we are two states.' In line with his two predecessors, Yudhoyono sent a clear message that territorial ambition had been Indonesia's motivation in the past, but the newly reformed Indonesia respected and recognised the sovereignty of Timor-Leste. He further outlined that Indonesia is 'committed to develop a mutual partnership [with Timor-Leste], so that the two nations can rise up together towards a brighter future' (Yudhoyono 2005: 291–2).

This message was echoed by former Timor-Leste prime minister Xanana Gusmão when he visited Indonesia in early May 2008, just a month after the CTF finished its work. He said:

Our future relations must be built around a strong partnership that promotes peace and security, as well as new opportunities of prosperity, freedom, justice, tolerance and democracy for our neighbouring and friendly countries ... Let us reinvent new partnerships, formulating serious cooperation proposals, as a way to defend the freedom of our brother countries. Our common history is made by our two peoples. Let us create the conditions for friendship and solidarity among them to grow stronger and stronger. (Gusmão 2008: 6–12)

In January 2016, during his state visit to Dili, Indonesian President Joko Widodo pledged to enhance the close friendship between the two countries and reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to be the main partner in the development of Timor-Leste. This partnership has been manifested in various sectors apart from the judicial work of the CTF. In the trade sector, for instance, both countries have since mid-2003 signed various agreements, memorandums of understanding and letters of intent to boost the exchange of goods and services. The results of these agreements have so far been satisfactory, with a total trade value of US\$580 million in 2017—a significant increase from US\$175 million in 2010. Indonesia's

main export commodities to Timor-Leste are groceries, office supplies, vehicles, palm oil, cement and tobacco. Timor-Leste, meanwhile, has exported coffee, water buffalo, candlenut and timber. These trade activities have also been followed by increased investment in Timor-Leste by the Indonesian private sector. To date, there are about 400 Indonesian businesses operating in Timor-Leste, including nine major state-owned companies, with a total investment of nearly US\$600 million.

Other sectors have followed the positive trend of trade. In education, for example, since 2005 there have been commitments by some universities in Indonesia—particularly in East Java province, such as Airlangga in Surabaya and Brawijaya in Malang—to provide scholarships for East Timorese students who want to pursue higher education in Indonesia. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education, as of May 2017, about 2,100 East Timorese have made use of this opportunity. Other accounts estimate the number to be about 5,000, with a large number of students studying at universities in Kupang, Bali, Yogyakarta and the capital, Jakarta.

In the security and defence sector, 100 officers of Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL) have received training in Indonesia in criminal investigation, traffic policing and intelligence. In early 2005, an East Timorese police officer joined Indonesia's exclusive education program for promising police leaders (SESPIM (Sekolah Staf dan Pimpinan, or Staff and Leaders School of the Indonesian Police Force)). The Indonesian army and the Timor-Leste Border Patrol Unit regularly hold joint patrols and meetings along their shared 269 km land border. Recently, Timor-Leste expressed interest in strengthening this security and defence partnership by purchasing Indonesian-made weapons. To promote better cultural understanding, an Indonesian cultural centre has been operating in Dili, offering language and art courses as well as regular information sessions on Indonesian higher education scholarships.

This growing relationship among institutions has been followed by a growing network of person-to-person relationships. During my visit to Timor-Leste, I frequently heard the expression, 'We rejected the Indonesian military regime, not the Indonesian people'. As a result, in 2007, more than 2,000 Indonesians lived and worked in Timor-Leste (KBRI Dili 2013). As of 2016, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that nearly 9,000 Indonesians had made Timor-Leste their second home (Kemlu RI 2016). Indonesians in Timor-Leste come

from different parts of Indonesia and are working collaboratively for their shared interests. Indonesians from NTT, for example, are now serving as nuns and pastors in various Catholic convents and churches in Timor-Leste. Others are working in car or motorbike repair shops. With NTT's proximity to Timor-Leste, migrants from the province are also working in other sectors, such as construction, travel businesses, retail and pharmacy.

Indonesians from South Sulawesi living along the Rua Campo Alor (Kampung Alor) have been effectively working with East Timorese traders to sell household products to people in remote areas of Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque. Indonesians from Java are well known in Dili for their furniture-making, carpentry and construction skills. Indonesians from Java, Padang and North Sulawesi have been successful in their culinary businesses, employing both Indonesians and Timor-Leste citizens. Partnerships between Indonesians and citizens of Timor-Leste have been more intimately exemplified in 'cross-marriage' (*kawin silang*). Thousands of Indonesians married East Timorese during the occupation and after the referendum and their families are key to Indonesia and Timor-Leste's future relationship.

Timor-Leste and Indonesia appeared to remain intricately entwined at social, political, cultural and personal levels (Bexley 2009; Bexley and Nygaard-Christensen 2013; Nygaard-Christensen 2013; Peake et al. 2014). With Timor-Leste gearing up to become a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), much freer movement across members' borders will be guaranteed. This could significantly increase the flow of people, goods and logistics between Timor-Leste and Indonesia. In this sense, Indonesian and East Timorese social networks across national boundaries are an enduring asset that could significantly contribute to mutual cross-border management and constructive partnerships between both countries in the future.

The East Timorese in West Timor are at the forefront of the renewed partnership between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Trans-Timor citizenship as a vernacular form of belonging and entitlement could help us understand a wide range of interactions between and networks among Indonesians and Timor-Leste citizens. It shows the significance of a messy, complex and detailed sociopolitical allegiance of people whose lives have been overturned by extraordinary events. The devastating setbacks inflicted by the referendum on East Timorese who supported Indonesia were followed by their struggle to rebuild their lives and maintain their

dignity and identity. Rather than simply tales of being uprooted from their homeland, stories of East Timorese in West Timor are accounts of connection, of abiding commitment and of divided loyalties. In the future, this will provide a more nuanced understanding of how people conceptualise their changing ideas of citizenship and national identity. Perhaps we should not take for granted the national boundary between Indonesia and Timor-Leste, because many people continue to negotiate their lives and families across that border.

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